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Prepared for China Central  
Radio & Television University

# English Language Teaching Methodology

(Part 1)

中央广播电视大学“专升本”指定教材

## 英语教学法

(上)

Help Yourself to a  
BA Course Series

“专升本”高级英语自学系列教程

(13)

外语教学与研究出版社

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顾曰国 主编

(13)

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(试用本)

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(试用本)

顾曰国 主编

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# **Help Yourself to a BA Course Series**

## **“专升本”高级英语自学系列教程**

*Help Yourself to a BA Course* is a series specially designed for those self-study learners who want to upgrade their English from intermediate to advanced levels. It is thematically structured and five-skill integrated on activity/task basis. It consists of two modules: English Language Communication Module and Professional Training Module. Module 1 caters for general learners of English, and Module 2 provides up-to-date professional training for senior middle school teachers of English.

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*English in Daily Life*

*English at Leisure*

*English at Work*

*English in Current Affairs*

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*English for Studying*

*Cross-Cultural Communication*

*English in a Changing World*

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*Language and Linguistics — A Workbook*

*English Language Teaching Methodology (1)*

*English Language Teaching Methodology (2)*

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Print materials are supplemented with both audio and video cassettes.

**Successful completion of the course leads to a *benke* certificate (equivalent to BA non-hons in Britain) validated by the State Education Commission via China Central Radio & Television University.**

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# The Third Year Pack

## Checklist

### Materials Provided:

(trial version available for Autumn Semester)

- ◆ **A Guide to Success 3: Professionalism**  
with 1 audio cassette
- ◆ **Language and Linguistics: A Workbook**  
with 1 audio cassette
- ◆ **English Language Teaching Methodology (1)**  
with audio and video cassettes

(trial version available for Spring Semester)

- ◆ **English Language Teaching Methodology (2)**  
with audio cassette and video cassettes
- ◆ **Practical Project Design**

### Materials Students Should Provide Themselves:

- ◆ **2 assignment notebooks (standard A4 size recommended)**
- ◆ **1 rough notebook**
- ◆ **1 self-assessment record notebook**
- ◆ **2 blank cassettes for speaking practice**
- ◆ **a tape recorder**

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# Preface

Dear Student,

This is Part 1 of the course *English Language Teaching Methodology*. The course consists of two parts, the first of which you will study in the first semester, and the second of which you will study in the second semester. This course is divided into eleven units that cover all the important aspects of language teaching, including the teaching of the four main language skills: Reading, Listening, Speaking and Writing. The teaching of Pronunciation, Grammar, and Vocabulary, are also covered. The practical details of the role of translation in language teaching, lesson planning, classroom management and language testing are also included.

The aim of the course is to broaden your knowledge of the bases on which the Communicative Approach is based and to offer you a wider variety of teaching strategies and skills, which you can experiment with and adapt to the teaching situation you are working in. The course book is however only just a beginning in this learning process and the real learning will only take place when you start to apply the knowledge you have gained and improve your teaching.

In order to help you reflect upon and apply the methodology you gain from the course, you are required to keep a **diary**, which will form the basis of the seminars with your tutor. At the end of each unit there is an evaluation questionnaire. You are expected to answer those questions in your diary and be prepared to share your answers at the seminars. You are also expected to record in the diary anything you try out in your lessons with an evaluation of its success or failure. By doing this right the way throughout the course (Parts 1 and 2), you will be well prepared to cope with the *Practical Project Design*, your final course of your 3-year study.

Note that at the end of each unit, there is a bibliography attached. It is for your reference only. That is, if you want to further pursue the topic in question, you can go on to read the books or papers included in the bibliography. If you do not want to do any further study, you do not have to look for those books and read them. They are optional, and you will not be examined on them.

We hope you will find this useful and practical. We wish you every success in your studies!



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# Unit 1 Introduction

## Objectives

By the end of this unit you should have:

- reflected upon how and why you are teaching English;
- reflected upon how and why your students are learning English;
- understood the main trends in the recent history of English language teaching;
- understood the beliefs upon which the methodology you are using is based;
- reflected upon your own development as a teacher.

## Warm-up

Read through these quotations from middle school teachers and decide which ones you agree with most:

1. The most important thing for me is to get my students through the state exams. That is my job.
2. The most important thing for me is to get my students to love English and to enjoy the English lessons as much as possible. That way they will learn naturally. My job is to motivate them.
3. The more practice I give my students in communicating in English (all four language skills), the more able they will be to use English in the real world and to pass any proficiency exam they are given.
4. In order for my students to succeed in English, they need as much exam practice as possible. The best way I can help them is provide that exam practice, so they will be confident about passing the state exams.
5. What gives me most satisfaction is teaching a good class of students and seeing them get high marks in the exams.
6. What gives me most satisfaction is taking a low level class and seeing them make progress in English during the course, even though their exam results are still lower than the best classes.
7. For me the best type of student is one who is able to memorise the textbook, learn vocabulary and grammar and pass the exams.
8. For me, the best type of student is one who enjoys learning English, puts a lot of effort into it in class, contributes to the lesson and experiments with language creatively.

9. I am training students to get through the education system as successfully as possible. That is how I am judged by my colleagues and the school leaders.
10. I am training students in skills that they might need in life. My satisfaction comes from hearing from my students, long after they have graduated from school, that what I taught them was useful to them in their life.

Maybe you could write your own opinion on your teaching, if it is different from those above.

I see my job as \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

There is no feedback to this task, but I will ask you to come back to it later. The purpose of it is to get you thinking about your job and why you are doing it, what gives you satisfaction in it, and what your students really get out of it.

## **Activity 1 Learning and Teaching English in China**

### **Task 1 Why Are Our Children Learning English?**

*First of all, can you try to answer the question in the title in your own words?*

Chinese schoolchildren learn English because \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

*Here is a list of reasons given by other teachers. Tick the ones you agree with.*

Chinese schoolchildren learn English . . . .

1. . . . because the Ministry of Education insists, so they have to pass exams in it.
2. . . . so that they can help foreign visitors in their district.
3. . . . because it's necessary if they want to enter university.
4. . . . because learning a language is an intellectual challenge, so English is learnt in order to train certain intellectual skills.
5. . . . as computers are used more commonly these days, and if you have English you

can more easily extend your use of computers.

6. . . . because once they are professionals, they need English to keep in touch with what is going on in their profession world-wide.
7. . . . because if they eventually get a job in trade (import-export) , English will be very important to them.
8. . . . because one can't succeed in China these days without proficiency in English.
9. . . . because it gives them greater access to scholarships abroad.
10. . . . as in a few years nearly all Chinese people will be able to travel abroad, so English will be useful for that purpose.
11. . . . because being able to read and listen in English gives them access to more information and can improve their knowledge of the world.
12. . . . only because they have to, it will be of no use to them in their future lives.

Can you add any more? Maybe you could ask your students to provide their own reasons for learning English.

### **Feedback**

Of course there are no right and wrong answers. I do hope you didn't tick number 12 though. It may be impossible to know now what sort of skills your students will need in the future, but you should not rule out the other possibilities. You never know what changes might take place in the future. Your answers may depend very much on the area you live in, as the opportunities are greater for those living in the more developed coastal areas of China, but don't forget that students from less developed areas may be in greater need to develop language skills in order to advance. You will notice that a lot of the statements have to do with information — getting and giving information are very common and necessary skills in life. If your students want to further their education, professional training, and improve their careers, English might always be useful to them. Try to get their minds beyond the feeling that they are just learning English to pass exams, but that what they are doing in the English class is gaining skills that might help them in life.

## **Task 2 How Was English Taught in the Past?**

I think you will agree that the purpose for learning English in China has changed in recent years due to the Open Door Policy. China now has far more contacts abroad, in education, culture, trade and the professions. There are many development projects taking place in the country, for example in agriculture, which often involve an English-speaking foreigner passing on certain skills to the local Chinese community. In the past one didn't need to listen and speak in English; everyday communication was not a goal. These days things are different. Communication is very much a goal and you will have noticed that your school textbooks have changed accordingly. Have you found that your teaching has changed over the last few years? The purpose of this course is to broaden

the range of teaching skills you have available to you. We would like to open your eyes to what have proved to be effective methods of teaching English with communication as a goal and give you a chance to try them out and evaluate them for yourself.

Before we go any further forward, let's give ourselves the chance to look back, to see where we've come from. Do you remember how you were taught English at school? Take a few minutes to think back over that and try to describe the method that was used. The following questions have been given in order to help you.

1. What happened at the beginning of each lesson?
2. How did you as the student have to prepare for the lesson?
3. How did you feel during your lesson?
4. What steps did the teacher follow?
5. What was the textbook like?
6. What did you do in class?
7. What did the teacher do?
8. Where did he or she sit or stand? Did he or she move around?
9. Did the teacher bring anything into class?
10. How much homework did you have? What sort of tasks were they? How were they corrected?
11. What did you enjoy most about your classes?
12. What did you not enjoy at all?

Now, only you can answer those questions. You might have had a very dynamic and conscientious teacher who inspired you and motivated you to learn English. If that was the case, then it probably had more effect on you than the method that was used. That's something that you should always keep in mind as a teacher: your relationship with your students and with the subject you are teaching, will always have an important effect on the students' learning. Let's have a look at the method used.

In most traditional teaching situations, the students had to learn lists of new vocabulary with their Chinese translations before the lesson. The teacher would come into the classroom, sit or stand at the front, and rarely move away from the blackboard. The textbook probably contained a lot of texts on Chinese topics, many of which would have been translated from the Chinese (often stories the students already knew in Chinese), lists of new vocabulary, comprehension questions, examples of grammar structures with some Chinese explanation, and exercises practising the structures. The structure of each unit was the same, so the students knew what to expect from it. In class, the students probably had to read the text, maybe aloud after the teacher, or individually as nominated by the teacher. The students would have to do the comprehension questions and the teacher probably asked students to answer the questions orally. If a student made a

## Unit 1 Introduction

mistake, he or she would be very embarrassed. The teacher probably explained the structures included in the text and the students had to do the exercises in the book, writing them in their exercise books. These were probably checked orally in class, student by student. Finally, the students would probably have to prepare a summary of the text and stand up and deliver it to the class. Sometimes this wouldn't be a summary at all but a memorised version of the text. Students sat in rows, faced the front, and the teacher had absolute control over the activities and over the language used. Students didn't speak unless they were asked to by the teacher.

Is that situation familiar to you? Clearly the aim of the class was not communication.

How did you train to become a teacher? Were you taught any teaching methods that were different from the one described above? Who taught you? Did you observe anyone teaching during your training? If so, what did you observe for? What did you learn from the observation? Who observed you when you first had to teach a class? What did you learn from your observer/supervisor? Think carefully about your own training and try to describe it. Write it down and be prepared to summarise it to your colleagues at your first tutorial. It might be interesting to compare notes and experiences.

I was trained as a teacher in this way: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Now you are an experienced teacher, in what ways do you think your training prepared you well for the classroom? In what ways did it not prepare you? How have you managed to cope with unfamiliar situations? Do you think that teachers go on learning all their career? Are you prepared to learn more about teaching and learning English now? I hope your answer is yes!

### **Task 3 What Are Your Objectives?**

*You have been asked a lot of questions, which have probably made you think very deeply about your experience as a teacher and learner. You probably have some ideas now about what you want to gain from this course in order to improve your teaching. Take a few minutes to think about them and write them down now.*

What I would like from this course: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **Feedback**

I can't promise that we will grant you all your wishes, but I hope you will try to gain some-

thing very useful from the course.

Before we go on to look at the methodology currently being used throughout the world in the teaching of English as a foreign language (TEFL). Let's take a look at how and why it came about. The next part of this unit will be about the main changes that took place in the methodology of TEFL.

## **Activity 2    Developments in English Language Teaching Methodology**

### **Task 1    What Is Language For?**

*Try to answer the questions below before you read the following passage.*

1. What is language? \_\_\_\_\_
  2. What is the purpose of language? \_\_\_\_\_
  3. Why has the purpose of learning a language changed in China? \_\_\_\_\_
- 

What is language and what is the purpose of language? You can now give complicated answers to these two questions after you have finished *Language and Linguistics — A Workbook*. We can do well here with a simple answer: Language is a means of communication with other people. If that is so, then what is the purpose of teaching and learning language? We all learn our mother tongue in order to function in our home community. When we come across people brought up in a different language community, we might need to communicate with them too; they might have food that our community lacks, so we have to engage in commerce and trading, for this we need a common language. This was the earliest need for learning another language, a second or foreign language. These days our lives are more complicated than that, but trade between nations is still one of the most common reasons for learning a foreign language.

Why do schoolchildren in China need to learn English? Many of them would say that they do not need to learn it, especially those in remote farming areas. Those in the big cities, however, can see that an ability to communicate in English might help them get a better job that would mean dealing with non-Chinese people, in tourism, education or trade. Those who enter other professions such as medicine or scientific research might



also see the need to be able to communicate in English in order to attend international conferences in their profession or read professional journals, so that they can benefit from the research done in other countries. They might even have the opportunity to study abroad. For those who might not have such close links with foreign nationals, they might learn English for enjoyment: for reading books, newspapers, and magazines in their local library; for listening to English-medium radio broadcasts or pop songs; or for watching films or television programmes in English. If they are very ambitious they might see learning English as a means to progress educationally and move out of their local community, or bring trade into it.

## **Task 2 The Grammar-Translation Method**

*Before you read the next part, try to answer these questions. If you know nothing, then make a guess at the answer. Anyway, please write down what you think before you read. Then once you have read, check back with your answers and see if you still agree with them.*

1. What is the Grammar-Translation Method? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What was the purpose for learning Ancient Greek and Latin in the west in the past? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What language skills did the students of Ancient Greek and Latin have to have? \_\_\_\_\_

If communication is the main goal of learning a language, then how should it be taught? Language learners must be given opportunities to communicate in the language in the classroom, in the way that they would need to in real-life situations. Learning activities should then have a communicative purpose and they should be a rehearsal for real-life performance. But why is it not always taught like this? Let's look back to the history of language teaching and learning.

Language teaching was first formalised in the west for the teaching of Ancient Greek and Latin. It was considered important for well-educated students to learn these classical languages in order to understand the bases upon which western democratic society was founded. In order to truly understand the writings of the ancient Greek and Roman philosophers, it was considered that they had to be read in the original. They would lose something essential if read in translation. For example, there are several words in Greek

for “love”, so if you were reading a treatise about these different forms of love in translation, the Greek words would have to be used in order for the reader to know which concept was being discussed, otherwise the text would not make sense. The word “democracy” itself is of Greek origin, and can be understood better if the origin can be examined. However, the people who spoke these languages were dead, so it was not necessary to learn how to communicate in them. The purpose of learning them was to be able to read them.

This is how the Grammar-Translation Method came about. The grammar of the classical language had to be described and broken down into learnable chunks: verbs were conjugated, nouns were declined, tenses were explained and exemplified. The vocabulary also had to be listed and learned with a great deal of attention paid to the morphology of the words, how they were made up and combined. The rules of pronunciation were described, they were regular, and they had to be learnt only so that the texts could be read aloud. The general method used in the classroom was as follows: the text would be the basis of the lesson, its vocabulary drawn out and learnt with the mother-tongue translation, the grammar points drawn out and explained in the mother tongue, some practice was done with translating sentences containing these structures and words (first target language into mother tongue, then mother tongue into target language), then the text would be read aloud sentence by sentence and each one would be translated. The students would normally be tested by having to perform translations. Does this sound familiar?

How would the syllabus be organised? Well, usually it was designed around grammatical structures. Each lesson would teach a grammar structure, starting with simple ones, like the verb “to be”, and progressing through to more complex ones, such as verb tenses. Tables of grammar rules and forms would be learnt and in the early stages the texts would be specially written to illustrate the particular grammar point being taught by that lesson.

Do you think the students taught by that method would then be able to go out and do their daily shopping in that language or buy travel tickets, invite its speakers to dinner, explain their family situation to them? Well, maybe, but with difficulty, and it was not necessary as there were no speakers of the language to communicate with.

*Now go back to the questions above and check your answers.*

### **Feedback**

1. It's a language teaching method based on the study of texts in the target language, which have to be explained and analysed in the mother tongue and then translated.
2. To be well educated and study the roots of democracy. It was more of an intellectual activ-

ity.

3. Reading, writing to a certain degree, and translation.

### **Task 3 A Functional-Notional Approach**

*Before you continue reading, try to answer the following questions :*

1. Imagine you have to teach Chinese to a foreign teacher who is planning to live in your town for a year or two. She needs Chinese in order to help her live without too many problems. She wants to learn for four hours a week for about 20 weeks. What will you teach her? Can you write a quick description of the syllabus (teaching plan)?

---

---

---

2. How did you describe the course? Is it the same as the English course you teach your students? Why? /Why not? \_\_\_\_\_

---

*Now before you read on, try to give answers to the questions below, even if only a guess.*

3. What effect did the formation of the European Common Market have on the teaching of foreign languages in Europe? \_\_\_\_\_

---

4. What is a functional-notional syllabus? \_\_\_\_\_

---

The big breakaway from the Grammar-Translation Method in schools in the west came with the founding of the European Community in 1957 as a reaction to the divisions caused by the Second World War. A Common Market was to be established so that members could trade with each other freely and eventually travel, work and live in each other's countries. Research was encouraged and sponsored by the Council of Europe in the 1960s on the ways in which members of Europe could best learn to communicate with each other in common languages. The result came as a description, not of the individual grammars of each of the languages, but of the common functions one had to perform in society in any language in order to survive. It was an attempt to specify the most important communicative needs that are likely to arise in everyday situations and

suitable language forms that could be learnt for coping with those needs. For example, one had to know how to count in order to ask for quantities of goods and pay for them; one had to be able to ask for things, information and directions; one had to be able to offer or give things, information and directions; one had to be able to apologise, invite, accept or decline invitations, describe a place or a person, explain how to use something, etc. These are called language functions: the things we do in real life, or more technically speaking, speech acts (remember the term?). Such a syllabus, a list of functions, could be used in almost any living language with a few variations. This is how the publication called *The Threshold Level*, edited by van Ek, came about in the early 1970s, under the auspices of the Council of Europe. It assumed a "general" learner who wants to cross the "threshold" (or doorstep) into a reasonably normal life in the foreign country, or who wants to interact with foreign visitors in his own country. It had a great influence on the teaching of foreign languages in Europe at that time.

The syllabus described the situations that the learner might find himself in, the language activities he is most likely to take part in, the functions of language that are most useful, the topics that are important and common, and the general notions which he might need to express.

To explain more clearly:

**a notion** is an abstract concept, for example, *location, number, ownership, frequency, duration, dimension*, etc.

and

**a function** is what you do with the language when you interact with people, for example, *give directions, buy goods, ask a price, claim ownership of something ("That's my bike!"), state how often you do something, say how long a film lasts, describe an object*, etc.

The **topics** necessary for your learners might be *sports, the school day, travelling to school, food, drink, festivals, family, occupations, clothes*, etc. The **situations** would specify where and when the communication takes place and who with, such as: *inviting a guest to a restaurant; telling a foreign friend about your home life, your school and your hobbies; apologising to your teacher for being late*.

This brings us on to another aspect of language use that was being studied at the time: it was not just important to know the forms of the language (the grammatical structures and the vocabulary), but it was also important to know which ones you use, when and with whom. A function could be expressed by many different forms. As an example,

## Unit 1 Introduction

imagine you want the window opened, how would you ask the following people to do it?  
i) your child ii) your teacher iii) a stranger on a train iv) your friend

Did you use the same expression each time or did you use different forms and address people differently?

In English they might be:

- i) *John, open the window for Mummy.*
- ii) *Sir, do you think we could have the window open, please?*
- iii) *Excuse me, would you mind opening the window?*
- iv) *Mary, could you open the window, please?*

All those different expressions carry the same function, *asking someone to open the window*, but imagine how rude you would be considered if you said to your teacher “*Open the window!*” Or how ridiculous you would sound if you said to your son, “*Excuse me, would you mind opening the window?*” In English that over-politeness in an inappropriate situation would mean that you are very angry and are being sarcastic.

Similarly one form can have many functions. Let’s look at the expression “*Is there any more tea?*” What function could it have?

- i) If you are the guest, you could be asking for your tea to be topped up. (Meaning, “*May I have some more, please.*”)
- ii) If you are the host, you might be asking the guest to check the tea-pot so that you can fill it up if necessary. (Meaning, “*Shall I make some more?*”)
- iii) If you are writing a shopping list, you might be asking your husband/wife if you need to buy more tea. (Meaning, “*Do I need to buy more?*”)
- iv) If you are in the shop and there is only one packet of tea on the shelf, you might be asking the shopkeeper if there are any more, because you want to buy two packets.  
(Meaning, “*I want to buy some more.*”)

Let’s have a look at the simple word “*yes*”. How many ways can you say it to show its different functions? Pay attention to the intonation.

You could make that one word have the following meanings, depending on the intonation you use:

- i) *Yes (I’ve told you before, now stop bothering me).*
- ii) *Yes (at least, I think so, but I’m not quite sure).*

- iii) Yes (*that's a brilliant idea, let's do that*).
- iv) Yes? (*Are you sure? I'm not convinced you're right*).

*Now go back and look at your answers to the questions before this section and think about them again, then read the feedback below.*

### **Feedback**

1. Let's look back at the syllabus you designed for teaching Chinese to your foreign teacher. Did you think about the things she would have to do in her life in China? Did you list topics, such as, *food, sport, travel, school, etc.*? Did you also have functions, such as, *asking for and paying for food in the market, buying clothes, buying household goods, getting a bicycle repaired, talking about hobbies and sports, buying train tickets, asking the way, asking about the school timetable, ordering dishes in a restaurant, etc.*? These are the things that foreigners have to do when they live in China. The most useful sorts of lessons you could give would be based around those functions and situations, so that the learner could practice real-life communication. The vocabulary and grammar would need to fit into those useful functions.
2. That's not quite the same as the design of the syllabus you use for teaching English to Chinese schoolchildren, is it? That's because their needs are not so clearly obvious as those of the foreign teacher. It is easy to see why the foreign teacher is learning Chinese and what she has to do with it on a daily basis. Her course is also relatively short, so you don't have time to go into the complexities of the grammar or the study of Chinese poetry, for example. Your schoolchildren will need a more thorough grounding in English grammar and will have to learn a lot of vocabulary as specified by the Ministry of Education syllabus. They will, however, also be taught by means of situations and useful communicative functions.
3. The formation of the European Union, as it is now called, had a great effect on encouraging the citizens of Europe to study each other's languages in a very practical way so that they would be able to live and work in each other's countries. The main aim would be on communication, which would include all four language skills, and there was a common language syllabus drawn up for all European languages, described in notions and functions.
4. There is an example of a functional-notional syllabus above, in the answer to Question 1. The language taught would not be described in only grammatical forms, but also topics, situations, functions (things you do with the language) and notions (concepts).

## **Task 4 Social Aspects of Language**

*Please answer the question below, before you continue reading. Then read to check if your answer is correct.*

1. How can we define Sociolinguistics? Sociolinguistics is...
  - a) ... the study of culture and the comparison of cultures between different countries.

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- b) ... the study of the social culture of the classroom, the roles teachers play and the customs followed by the students.
- c) ... the study of the relationship between language and society, including the social functions language fulfils in a society.
- d) ... the study of language teaching and how to make learners sensitive to language appropriacy.

Your answer: \_\_\_\_\_

Research done in Applied Linguistics in the 1950s-1970s made it clear that it was not enough to know only the grammatical forms of the language, and that the user of a language also needed to know who to use them with and in which situations. These are matters of politeness and familiarity, for example, and using the expressions appropriate to the situation. This study is known as **Sociolinguistics**, which covers the social situations in which language is used and the effect it might have. Dell Hymes added the term “communicative competence” to the language of Applied Linguistics, to show that “linguistic competence” (knowledge of the language systems and forms) was not enough if we wanted to be able to **use** a language appropriately. He also stressed that **appropriacy** was as important as **accuracy** in language use. Using an inappropriate expression or word can cause offence. Foreign language teachers began to realise that they needed to make sure their learners were sensitive to that aspect of language use. It is, of course, impossible to cover in the language course all the situations that the learners are likely to be involved in, but one can cover enough to enable learners to see that there are differences in the types of language they use to different people in different situations. A language cannot be taught without the culture (or cultures) to which it belongs. English belongs to many different cultures, but the differences are not great enough that they should worry the non-native English teacher. Generally, what is polite in Britain is usually polite in America, Canada, Australia, Ireland, and so on. So, a common core can be taught.

We shall not dwell in too much detail on communicative competence in this unit, as it will be developed further in Unit 2.

### **Feedback**

The correct definition is (c). The study itself has nothing to do with teaching language, that would be the application of Sociolinguistics to foreign language teaching.

Let's go back to the classroom and see how all this fits together in the English lesson. We have said that the purpose of learning a language is usually for communication.

Communication involves all four skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing. When a person is in front of you, you communicate by speaking, listening to his response and replying appropriately. Speaking without listening is rare, so the two should be combined in the language classroom. Who usually speaks in the classroom? If the teacher speaks all the time then the students never get the chance. If you nominate each student to speak aloud, then in a 45-minute class each of the 45 students, for example, can only speak for a maximum of one minute, if you allow them all to talk. If you put the students into pairs, and the pairs all speak at the same time, then each student can speak for up to 20 minutes! If the person you want to communicate with is not in front of you, then you have to write to each other. Students can write to their fellow students and reply to each other's responses. This would involve both reading and writing. Skills are often combined in other ways in real life, for example, we often read a public notice and discuss it with our friends, asking their opinions and seeing if we agree or not. We might read a novel and discuss it with our friends too, to see if they interpreted it in the same way as we did. You might have to read an instruction and then communicate it to your colleagues in a way they understand. You might take a phone call for your friend and have to write a message for her. A group of you might get together and discuss how to write a joint letter to your local town council, or boss, or newspaper, complaining about a situation. Maybe even in your family, you might discuss how one of you should write to a distant relative. In real life, the language skills are combined. So, in the classroom, we have to set up situations, in which students can recreate these real-life activities.

Let's have a quick look at the rest of the research that was taking place at the same time.

## **Task 5 Parallels Between First And Second Language Learning**

*Read the following text to answer the questions below.*

1. What does **acquisition** mean and how is it different from **learning**? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What is the Natural Order of language acquisition? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What were the objections to the Audio-Lingual Approach? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



4. What is the significance of error-making in foreign language learning? \_\_\_\_\_

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The parallel between acquiring one's first language, or mother tongue, and learning a second or foreign language was drawn as the basis of research into language learning for much of the 60s and 70s. Krashen, an American researcher in Language Acquisition, defined the term **language acquisition** as gaining use of a language without any conscious learning, such as the way babies acquire their mother tongue. Learning a language involves putting conscious effort into it, rather than just absorbing it. Krashen described the Natural Order of language learning, based on first language acquisition, as having a silent period while the learner listened to the language in meaningful situations, followed by a period when the learner uttered words and phrases in the language. It was considered that the learner's listening skills developed first, and so eventually his speaking skills would follow. Then, reading would be formally taught and finally writing would be taught after adequate reading input had taken place. This follows the order in which we acquire our first language skills.

The Behaviourist psychologists had followed the research of Pavlov, a Russian psychologist famous for his experiments with dogs and their reaction to certain stimuli. Behaviourist psychology was the basis of the Audio-lingual Method of language teaching, which involved giving the learner stimuli in the form of prompts, and praising the correct response or punishing an incorrect response, until the right one was given. Errors were not tolerated in case they led to bad habit formation and only correct language was accepted in the classroom. Mother-tongue use was also not accepted, as the only language to be heard or spoken was the target language in order to encourage the learner to think in it. The syllabus was usually structurally based and the classroom tasks were all in drill form. Emphasis was laid upon using oral language in the classroom, some reading and writing might be done as homework.

This is what the transcript of a typical Audio-Lingual lesson might look like:

Teacher: Did you go to work yesterday?  
Student: Yes, I ...  
Teacher: "went"  
Student: Yes, I went to work yesterday.  
Teacher: Ask me "go to the cinema".  
Student: Did you go to the cinema yesterday?

- Teacher: (*nods in silence*)  
Student: Yes, you went to the cinema yesterday.  
Teacher: Good. "your wife... market"  
Student: Did my wife go to the market yesterday?  
Yes, she went to the market yesterday.  
Teacher: Good. "your son... school"  
Student: Did my son go to school yesterday?  
Yes, he went to school yesterday.  
Teacher: Good. Ask me... "doctor's"  
Student: Did you go to the doctor's yesterday?  
Teacher: (*shakes her head*)  
Student: No, you . . . . went not to the doctor's yesterday.  
Teacher: (*shakes her head disapprovingly*)  
Student: No, you did not went . . . ?  
Teacher: (*again shakes her head*) Ask me again.  
Student: Did you go to the doctor's yesterday?  
Teacher: Good. No. . .  
Student: No, you did not go. . . ?  
Teacher: Good, good. Repeat.  
Student: No, you did not go to the doctor's yesterday.  
Teacher: Good! Now ask me again.  
Student: Did you go to the doctor's yesterday?  
No, you did not go to the doctor's yesterday.  
Teacher: Good! Now. . . did not. . . short. . . didn't.

You can see how the teacher tries to talk as little as possible and just gives prompts for the student to ask and answer questions himself. The teacher gives praise when the student speaks correctly and disapproval when he makes a mistake, and tries to take him back over the stages to get him to correct the mistake himself. You can also see how the language used is not very natural, for example how often do you ask yourself, "Did my son go to school yesterday?" and then give yourself the answer, "Yes, he went to school yesterday"?

When Chomsky, the American linguist, described his generative-transformational grammar in the 1960s, he based it on a fact which the previous researchers had ignored. When a young child learns to speak for the first time he makes certain utterances that he has certainly not heard those around him say before. It had been considered that children copy their parents' language utterances before they start to use language freely. It is, however, quite common to hear young speakers of English coming out with the sentence, "Yesterday, we goed to the zoo". What sort of error is this? Clearly the speaker has not copied it from someone else, but he has generated it himself. What does it tell

us about the process of language learning that takes place in the child's mind? No-one has explained the rules of grammar to this three-year-old child, but he has somehow worked out a rule for himself, namely that actions that took place in the past are expressed with a word ending in an "-ed" sound. He has then applied this to a verb that does not take this ending. Chomsky explained this as a language learning device that is in the mind of every young child that enables him to learn whatever his mother tongue is, processing grammar and syntax. This implies that error-making is a natural part of language learning, as is experimenting with the language and trying out structures in new situations and applying what one knows to what is new to see if it is acceptable. The child who does this usually gets corrected by a parent, but not overtly. The most common form of correction used is the parent saying the sentence again with the error corrected: "*Oh, you went to the zoo yesterday, did you?*" Gradually, the child will correct himself and produce the sentence correctly. And so the errors made by language learners tell us how far their language has developed and what their particular problems are.

This shows us that language is not learnt merely by copying what is said or written. Learners have to be given the chance to experiment with language, try out things for themselves, generate their own sentences and have the opportunity to make mistakes. If the language they produce is always controlled by the teacher then they never have the opportunity to experiment with language, work out its structure for themselves or express their real meaning. Look at the Audio-Lingual lesson above, do you think that student was able to express his real meaning in the classroom? Do you think he automatically transferred what he learned in the classroom to his real-life communication needs?

It was also shown that there are differences between learning the first and a second language. One already has a knowledge of one language system when one learns the second language and so can draw similarities and differences between the two. The second language learner has the advantage of knowing one language system already, but the disadvantage of already thinking in that language. Therefore, it is difficult for the second language learner not to translate as he is learning. This translation can be helpful, but it can also be the cause of certain errors, such as applying a grammatical rule from the first language inappropriately to the second language. This is not the only source of errors though, as the learner might have misformed or misunderstood the application of a rule in the second language and be applying it wrongly to a situation. There are many different sources of errors, which we shall look at later, and the correction of them will depend on the exact meaning the learner is trying to express.

### **Feedback**

1. Language acquisition refers to the way we acquire our mother tongue without consciously or formally learning it. Learning a language requires some formal training and conscious ef-

fort.

2. The Natural Order, as defined by Krashen, consists of Listening to a great deal of meaningful language input, then Speaking, then Reading to a great deal of meaningful input, which is formally taught, and finally Writing.
3.
  - We do not learn language parrot-fashion, that is by imitating what is said to us.
  - By using only teacher-given stimuli for language production, the learner cannot learn how to express his own meaning.
  - Drills as the only teaching technique cannot teach learners how to cope with all the language situations they might need in real life.
  - Making errors does not necessarily lead to bad habit formation, look at the example of children acquiring their first language.
  - Using only the target language in the classroom ignores the fact that learners of a second language already have their mother tongue and might need to refer to it sometimes, make comparisons with the new language, or explain their learning problems in it.
4. Learners make errors when they are trying out the new language they have learnt. They need to experiment with the new language and test their theories about it. This is a natural part of language learning. That is not to say that errors should not be corrected, but there are many different types of errors and different situations in which they can be created. All this should be taken into consideration before the teacher decides if, when and how to deal with them. (There will be more about this in later units.)

## **Task 6 Expressing One's Meaning**

*Please answer the following question before reading further.*

What is the danger in teaching learners only to memorise dialogues in the foreign language being learnt?

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Giving the learner opportunities to practise and try out language on his own or with a partner without the constant attention and correction of the teacher has also become an important aspect of language learning. The learner has to be allowed to think, use his creativity and work out the use of the language for himself. The final aim of the language class should be to enable the learner to express his own meaning in the language and not just to repeat utterances he has heard before. Foreign teachers in China are well used to the situation of meeting Chinese schoolchildren who have learnt English at school and want to practise it with them. But what often happens is that the child has been taught a list of questions with set responses, and if you reply to one of his questions with an answer he has not learnt, he will ignore it and ask you the next question on his list. So you hear some strange conversations like this:

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- Child: Hello. How do you do?  
Foreigner: Hello. How do you do ?  
Child: My name is Tiger.  
Foreigner: Oh, hello Tiger. Are you from this town?  
Child: I study at primary school. What about you?  
Foreigner: Well, I'm a teacher actually. Are these your friends?  
Child: I'm from Wuxi. Where are you from?  
Foreigner: Scotland. Do you know where Scotland is?  
Child: What's the weather like today?

As you can see it is not a very natural conversation and very little real communication has taken place, as the child is not listening to the foreigner's responses, or if he is, he does not understand them. What do you think the child will be able to report back about this conversation? Probably nothing except, "I spoke to a foreigner today". Little information has actually been transferred, but the child has used the questions he has been taught, although mostly inappropriately.

### **Feedback**

Well, as we have seen in the example above, memorising dialogues does not lead directly to being able to converse with someone freely in the foreign language. There have to be some further stages, so that the learner has the chance to substitute what he wants to say for what is in the learned dialogue. He also has to be taught how to cope with unexpected answers. In other words, there needs to be some real communication practice in the lesson.

## **Task 7 "A Worthy Old Teacher"**

*Let's look at a description of a Chinese school written in the 1930s. First read the questions below and try to think about the answers as you read.*

1. What motivates the students in this school to learn? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. What does it tell us about the attitude to education at this time? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

... But at last all was prepared and arrangements made to send the boys to a small school near the city gate kept by an old man who had in past years gone up for government examinations and failed. In the central room of his house therefore he had set benches and tables and for a small sum at each feast day in the year he taught boys in the classics, beating them with his large fan, folded, if they were idle or if they could not repeat to him the pages over which they pored from dawn until sunset.

Only in the warm days of spring and summer did the pupils have a respite for then the old man nodded and slept after he had eaten at noon, and the dark small room was filled with the sound of his slumber. Then the lads whispered and played and drew pictures to show each other of this naughty thing and that, and snickered to see a fly buzzing about the old man's hanging, open jaw, and laid wagers with each other as to whether the fly would enter the cavern of his mouth or not. But when the old teacher opened his eyes suddenly — and there was no telling when he would open them as quickly and secretly as though he had not slept — he saw them before they were aware, and then laid about him with his fan, cracking this skull and that. And hearing the cracks of his stout fan and the cries of the pupils, the neighbours said,

“It is a worthy old teacher, after all.” And this is why Wang Lung chose the school for the one where his sons should go to learn.

On the first day when he took them there he walked ahead of them, for it is not meet that father and son walk side by side, and he carried a blue kerchief filled with fresh eggs and these eggs he gave to the old teacher when he arrived. And Wang Lung was awed by the old teacher's great brass spectacles and by his long loose robe of black and by his immense fan, which he held even in winter, and Wang Lung bowed before him and said,

“Sir, here are my two worthless sons. If anything can be driven into their thick brass skulls it is only by beating them, and therefore if you wish to please me, beat them to make them learn.”

*From Pearl S. Buck's The Good Earth, Washington Square Press, 1994, pp. 165-166.  
(First published in 1931.)*

### **Feedback**

1. The boys were clearly motivated to learn only by fear of being beaten with the schoolteacher's fan. As soon as the teacher took his eyes off them, they stopped studying and played.
2. The parents seemed to think that their children (notice that only boys were educated) would only learn if they were beaten. So, learning was seen as something which was painful and should involve hard work and suffering. Do you think this attitude still exists?

## **Task 8 The Humanist Approach**

*Read the following passage in order to answer the question below. Try to make your answer as full as possible.*

What have we gained from the Humanists in our approach to teaching a foreign language?

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You may wonder why that last passage was inserted in our description of the developments in foreign language teaching. Well, it's there to illustrate an attitude to education which contrasts very sharply with the one you are to read about.

The last group of researchers in language learning we shall look at is the Humanist school. Various language teaching methods arose in the 70s in particular in North America and in Europe, which concerned the learner as a whole person, also referred to as the "holistic" approach. They were concerned with treating a learner not just as a student in the classroom, but as a human being with feelings and emotions. (Recall our discussion of students' *zizunxin* or *lian* and *mianzi* in Unit 6 of *Language and Linguistics — A Workbook*.) They aimed to lower the inhibitions of the language learner, which are seen as the greatest barrier to language production on the part of the learner.

Why do you feel nervous of speaking in English? What are you afraid of? Is it because you feel you will make a fool of yourself if you make a mistake?

Try to put yourself into a frightening and stressful situation and imagine the effect that has on your production of a foreign language. Imagine you are suddenly asked by someone very important in your society to stand up and speak, with no time to prepare, to a huge gathering of the native speakers of this language and to do it without making any errors, as error-making in their language would be seen as an insult to them. How would you feel? What effect do you think this would have on your ability to speak this foreign language?

Now try to imagine the opposite situation, in which you feel completely at ease, relaxed, happy and not worried by any errors you might produce. This latter situation is the one that the Humanists try to recreate in the classroom. There is no pressure put on the learner to produce language until he feels confident enough to do so and errors are tolerated, not punished. The emphasis is on acceptance and encouragement.

i) In the method known as Total Physical Response (TPR), you only have to listen and act on commands in the foreign language until you feel comfortable enough to give the commands to others. The learner is given the following types of commands: "Stand up and go to the front desk. Pick up the red book from the desk and give it to another student. Now go back to your place and sit down." These instructions can get more complicated to cope with more complex language. For example, "If you ate fish yesterday, then stand up" or "If you were being taught English at this time yesterday, then hold up your textbook". This combination of language use and action responses is meant to combine both hemispheres of the brain and so help the learner to memorise the language better. You know when little children learn to sing a nursery song,

there are often gestures that go with the song, so the children sing and move at the same time. This has the same effect as TPR.

What do you think are the restrictions of this method? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you think it would be equally effective with all age groups and language levels? \_\_\_\_\_

### Feedback

It has been argued that one cannot teach the complexities of a language only by means of giving and responding to instructions. This method is not, however, meant to be the only one to use in a course, it can be used along with other methods. It seems to be more suited to young learners, as adults might resent being given orders all the time, and it is encouraging and helpful to beginners in a language, as they might appreciate the lack of pressure on them to produce language. You see it fits in very nicely with Krashen's Natural Approach.

ii) In Community Language Learning, students sit around a table with in comfortable chairs and with a tape-recorder in the middle. When a student wants to say something, he whispers it in his mother tongue to the teacher who is standing behind him, who then translates it into the target language and the student repeats that whilst it is being recorded on a tape. Before the tape-recorder is turned on, the teacher makes sure the student can pronounce his utterance correctly. The teacher has to be very active at this stage and runs around behind the learners, ready to translate for whoever wants to talk next. At the end of this student-created discussion, the tape is replayed and the tapescript is worked on in the lesson. The actual lesson based on the tapescript, including its vocabulary and grammar, can be very similar to the sort of lessons you are familiar with, but the difference is that the text is totally controlled and created by the students.

A typical discussion might look like this:

David: Helen, where did you go at the weekend?

Helen: I went to Suzhou.

Margaret: Did you visit the gardens?

Helen: Yes, I went to three different gardens. They were beautiful.

David: Did you buy anything there?

Helen: Yes, I bought a painting of the canals. Jason, have you been there?

Jason: Yes, a long time ago. I liked it very much.

David: Is it easy to get there?

Helen: Yes, there's a direct train from here.



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What advantages and disadvantages can you see in creating texts in this way for language lessons? \_\_\_\_\_

**Feedback**

The main advantage is that students learn to say exactly what they want to say. They choose the topic and talk about what interests them. This keeps them motivated and interested in the lesson. The danger is that students may want to say things way above their level of proficiency in the language, so the teacher sometimes has to simplify what they say. Of course, it is not suitable to use with a very large class or one having to follow an examination syllabus, but it could be used with smaller groups who want to learn the language for their own interest.

iii) In Suggestopedia, particular attention is paid to the comfort of the classroom, the learning environment: the lights are soft, the chairs are comfortable, there is soothing music playing in the background, texts are read to the students gently by the teacher, while they have their eyes closed and use their imagination to bring the text to life. Finally the texts are given to the students with a parallel translation in their mother tongue and they work through it asking the teacher questions about things they don't understand in it.

What do you like about this method? \_\_\_\_\_

Why do you think translations of the text are given? \_\_\_\_\_

**Feedback**

What is very nice about this method, and most of the humanistic methods, is the attention paid to the comfort of the student and the pleasant environment of the classroom. To provide soft armchairs, carpets and have soft music playing, is not practicable in normal state-run schools, but why shouldn't we pay a little more attention to the classroom environment and make the chairs more comfortable and decorate the walls with interesting posters? Learning should, after all, be a pleasurable experience.

The reasons for the translations of the texts is to provide support for the learners if they choose to use it. The translations are there to help the learner make sure he has gained the full meaning of the text.

All these methods, which may seem a bit extreme and impractical to your own teaching experience, have something important to tell us about how to make the learners feel more relaxed. Lessons should be have a happy and enjoyable atmosphere and language learning can be made into a fun activity. If teachers frighten the learners, they will feel

threatened and will not be in the optimum situation for learning and producing the language.

Do you remember how you felt as a schoolchild when the teacher asked a very difficult question and then nominated you to stand up in front of the class and give the correct answer? What motivated you to learn? Sometimes it was just fear of the teacher and being punished or humiliated for making mistakes. This can lead to a hatred of the subject you have to study and as soon as you have the opportunity to stop studying it, you will. This is not conducive to good study. Working with the learners feelings and emotions, making learning a happy positive experience, will surely result in increased motivation to learn more.

*Now go back to the question you were asked at the beginning of this task and complete your answer. Then check with the feedback below.*

### **Feedback**

The Humanists taught us to consider our learners as real people with normal human feelings and to make the learning experience as enjoyable as possible for them. In language teaching it was considered very important to lower the inhibitions that cause a barrier to language production.

## **Task 9 An Eclectic Approach**

*Before you read this section, have you any idea what "eclectic" means? Write your definition here if you think you know, or write down a guess if you don't know.*

I think "eclectic" means \_\_\_\_\_

*Now read on and come back to your definition at the end of this task and write the correct definition.*

These days, language teaching tends to take into consideration all the research that has been done on language teaching and learning, and on language use. There is not really one method that is used, but teachers tend to take what they think is useful and important from different methods. As you know, every class is different and what works with one does not always work with another. When you mix up a wide range of methods and approaches according to what suits your situation, we tend to describe that as "eclectic", which means "a bit of everything". For example, someone who has "eclectic taste" in music, might like jazz, blues, classical, folk, and pop: he cannot be put into one category. And so, as teachers we often tend to adopt parts of certain approaches,

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methods, or techniques that we feel would suit the interests and needs of our classes.

The Communicative Approach takes a broad view of all the research that has been carried out into language learning and tries to incorporate the best aspects of all of it into the classroom. It is not a strictly prescriptive method, as it is understood that every teacher is different, every learner is different, every class is different, and the weaknesses and strengths of everyone concerned in the language learning process need to be considered and worked on. It is also based on the view that full communicative competence can only be reached if the learner has adequate opportunities to meet the language used in its authentic form, that means texts that have been written or spoken by native speakers for native speakers. Classroom tasks should be based as much as possible on real-life tasks, so that the leap from classroom to real world is not so great. In real life we use language when we want or need to communicate with others, we have a sense of purpose (we know why we use language), a sense of audience (we know who it is we are communicating with) and we know in which situation we are communicating. We also usually know whether we have communicated effectively or not, by the response of our interlocutor (the person we are speaking or writing to), which is our feedback. We also know if we have understood a message fully when we can pass it on to someone else in our own words or act upon it. All these conditions need to be recreated in the classroom. Every activity should have a communicative purpose, which should be made clear to the students. They should know what they are doing and why. There are activities which aim to improve accuracy and others which aim to improve fluency, and there is concentration on appropriacy of language use leading towards full communicative competence. We will look at the Communicative Approach in much more detail in Unit 2.

*Can you now identify different aspects of the different methods you have examined in this task that exist in the way English is taught in China?*

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### **Feedback**

The answer to this depends very much on the way you have experienced and observed English teaching in China. You were probably able to find some aspects of the Grammar Translation Method in the way you were taught English and in the English lessons you have observed. Perhaps you still use some aspects of it yourself. In the Audio-Lingual Method, you might have recognised the drilling techniques as something familiar. What about the Humanist Approach, is there anything familiar to you there? Have you ever tried any TPR activities in your lessons? What about getting students to sing songs in English for enjoyment? What about playing games to practise grammar and vocabulary, I think we can count them as Humanist activities. Have you added any more? Well, you have probably discovered that the method you use is also quite 'eclectic'.

I will leave you to define 'eclectic' by yourself, as you should be able to work it out from the text.

## Activity 3 Course Design

There are two main ways of organising the syllabus of a course of instruction: one is to start from the subject of study and break it down into learnable units; the other is to start with the learner and his needs and find what he needs to learn according to the purpose of his learning. In language teaching, it is not so simple to break down the content into learnable units. The way one does it depends very much on one's philosophy of language. As we have seen before, language can be broken down into structures, or skills, or it can be considered from what it is intended to achieve, such as functions. Let's have a look at the different types of syllabus you might come across in language teaching.

### Task 1 Different Types of Syllabus

*See if you can identify the following types of syllabus. Match the types of syllabus with the examples of them below.*

1.	Structural syllabus	
2.	Topic Syllabus	
3.	Functional Syllabus	
4.	Situational Syllabus	
5.	Skills Syllabus	

A.

- Unit 1 First day at school
- Unit 2 In the restaurant
- Unit 3 At the market
- Unit 4 Buying clothes
- Unit 5 At the doctor's
- Unit 6 At the hairdresser's

B.

- Unit 1 Food
- Unit 2 Sport
- Unit 3 Work
- Unit 4 Travel
- Unit 5 Shopping

Unit 1 Introduction

Unit 6 Pollution

C.

Unit 1 Introducing yourself  
Unit 2 Talking about your hobbies  
Unit 3 Asking the way, Giving directions  
Unit 4 Making apologies  
Unit 5 Inviting, Accepting and refusing invitations  
Unit 6 Describing a house

D.

Unit 1 **Reading I** a) Skimming  
b) Scanning  
c) Working out the meaning of words  
Unit 2 **Writing I** a) Identifying and creating topic sentences  
b) Composing general statements with supporting examples  
c) Identifying and using linking expressions

E.

Lesson 1	<b>To be</b>	I am, you are, he/she/it is, we are, they are
Lesson 2	<b>To have</b>	I/you/we/they have, he/she/it has
Lesson 3	<b>Present Continuous Tense</b>	What are you doing? Are you -ing? Yes, I am. No, I'm not.
Lesson 4	<b>Simple Present Tense</b>	What do you do? Do you...? Yes, I do. No, I don't.
Lesson 5	<b>Simple Present Tense: 3rd person singular</b>	Does he...? Yes, he does. No, he doesn't.
Lesson 6	<b>There is/are</b>	How many... are there? How much... is there?

**Feedback**

- |        |        |
|--------|--------|
| 1. - E | 4. - A |
| 2. - B | 5. - D |
| 3. - C |        |

Which one is most familiar to you? The syllabuses we use today are often a mixture of situational, functional, structural and skills.

## Task 2 Needs Analysis

*Try to answer these questions before you read, then read and check your answer.*

1. How would you define **learners' needs** in language learning? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. How can a **needs analysis** be carried out? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

We saw in Activity 2, Task 2 that the Grammar-Translation Method was usually based on a structural syllabus. The content of study came from the language itself, which it was felt could best be broken down into structures. The coursebook would start with the simplest structures and progress through to the more complex structures. This organisation of language has nothing to do with the way it is used, or with the social function it carries. There was, therefore, often a large leap for the student to make from what he learnt in the classroom to what he would do with the language in real life. The syllabus would be the same for all students, regardless of what their individual purposes for learning the language might be.

In Activity 2, Task 3, we saw that *The Threshold Level*, developed by van Ek from the research done by the Council of Europe on language learning and use, was influential in language teaching in many ways. It made a huge departure in syllabus design as well. It started not from the language itself, but from what the learners would have to do with the language, its functions. In other words, it started from studying the **needs** of the learners. The aim of promoting the teaching of other European languages in Europe, as we saw earlier, was that the people of Europe would be able to travel and work freely in each others' countries. So in order to find out the best way to teach language for those ends, the starting point for planning a syllabus was discovering what people would have to do with the language and how they would use it. Then, as we saw, a list of functions were drawn up that were common to all languages. So, any European language could be taught from that list of functions. You have to be able to *apologise* in all languages, you have to be able to *ask for and give directions*, or *invite someone to dinner*, regardless of which language you are using. These are things that we do, and we use language to help us do them.

At this time there was also a big increase in Europe in the number of professional people, particularly business people, who were travelling to and from other countries and needed to learn languages in order to communicate with their foreign counterparts. The 1960s and 70s saw a large wave of private language schools being established in or-

der to provide for the needs of the professional community. These schools catered mainly for adults, often on an individual or small group basis. Professional people would come to the schools with very precise needs for language learning that usually had to do with their work. Doctors might need to write and present papers on their research at international conferences; economists and engineers might need to learn a language in order to travel to a less developed country as consultants, advising the country's ministers on how best to develop their resources, for example; business people might need to learn a language in order to do trade with other countries. This affected the way language was taught. These learners were considered clients of the language teaching services. They were busy and did not have time to learn anything that was not relevant to their needs. So, in order for the language school to provide the most suitable course possible for them, the learners' needs had to be studied in great detail, such as the papers they might have to deal with in their work, or the social contexts they might be involved in, and a language course was designed accordingly. Each client, or group of clients, would have their own specially designed course. The term **English for Specific Purposes**, or ESP for short, started to be used quite commonly. It was considered that the learners had specific needs, and so a General English course was not suitable for them.

If you look back again at Task 3 in Activity 2, when you had to design a Chinese course for a foreign teacher in your town, you will probably find that you based your syllabus on an imaginary needs analysis. You were not able to find out exactly what your client would have to do with the language, for this you would need to have more detailed discussions with her, but you used your general knowledge and some guesswork of what a foreigner would need Chinese for. Your course, therefore, would be quite specifically designed to meet her needs.

When further research went into how to carry out need analyses, it was discovered that the learners' needs were not the only important factors. It was not enough to study only what the learner had to do with the language, but also what the learner lacked. For example, it might be discovered that a travel agent would need to read plane, train and bus timetables, interpret them, and explain them to clients. If the travel agent can already do this adequately, then there is no point teaching this in the course. It is not a **lack**. He only needs to be taught what he *needs* and *lacks*. So, for example, he might sometimes have to describe a place that he has visited to clients in order to recommend it to them, and although he might not need to do it very often, he may lack the skills to do it effectively. He might see this as important and wish it to be on the course. There may be another skill that he lacks, but that is so rare that he almost never has to do it, such as describe how a native dance is done in a particular place. If this is considered low on his list of priorities, then there is no point teaching it. So the contents of the course should include what the learner needs, lacks and what is important given the time restraints. There is one other factor that the course designer might include in the course

and that is what the learner **wants**. These might not be needs, but might be considered important by the learner. Maybe our travel agent likes to listen to songs in the language he is learning and would occasionally like the teacher to teach him the words of some songs, or give him a listening task with a song. These are the learner's wants, and our course should also include some of these to keep the learner motivated to study.

Now you may think that this has not much to do with designing courses for teaching language for schoolchildren. Our children's needs are general because we don't have a clear idea of what they will do with the language in the future. But what is important about the realisation that learners have individual needs, lacks and wants, is that courses can always be adapted to a certain extent to include them. The procedure of designing courses also developed from the idea of a needs analysis, even when the needs might be very general.

Let's go on to look at the stages of course design, at what has to be done in order to produce a course of language study.

But first, go back to the question you were asked at the beginning of this task and complete your answer to it. Then check the feedback below.

### **Feedback**

1. Learners' needs are the things that they have to do with the language in real life and are closely tied to their purposes for learning the language.
2. A needs analysis is done by studying what the learner has to do in the language. Sometimes this is done by means of a questionnaire to or interview with the learner and sometimes it is done by going into the learner's workplace, for example, and collecting samples of the paperwork he has to deal with and the social situations he has to engage in.

## **Task 3 The Stages of Course Design**

*First of all, try to put these stages of course design in the correct order. Then read through the text to see if your answer was correct.*

- Stage 1 \_\_\_\_\_  
Stage 2 \_\_\_\_\_  
Stage 3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Stage 4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Stage 5 \_\_\_\_\_  
Stage 6 \_\_\_\_\_  
Stage 7 \_\_\_\_\_



## Unit 1 Introduction

- a. selection of content
- b. diagnosis of needs
- c. determination of what to evaluate and how to evaluate
- d. formulation of objectives
- e. selection of learning experiences (tasks/activities/exercises/etc. )
- f. organisation of content
- g. organisation of learning experiences

This is Taba's model of curriculum processes (Taba, 1962:12). The first stage is the needs assessment or analysis. Once it has been decided what the learner needs to do with the language, the general goals of the course are specified. Then the practical considerations of the course have to be examined (the length of the course, frequency and length of lessons, and so on), and suitable learning objectives have to be decided upon. That means that the objectives reflect what the learner can expect to achieve by the end of the course. After that, the content of the course has to be selected; that is, what needs to be and can be covered by the course in order to reach the stated objectives. The content then needs to be organised in such a way that the learner can progress through it logically and with ease. These two steps are generally referred to as syllabus design. Once the content has been specified, then the learning experiences, which might take the form of exercises, or tasks, possibly including role-plays and simulations of real-life activities, have to be selected and designed. They are then organised to fit in with the organisation of the content. Finally, it must be determined what should be evaluated and at what stage during the course and how that should be designed, in other words what sort of assessment procedures should be carried out. There are two main ways of deciding on what to evaluate: one is to base it on the course objectives and try to test whether the objectives have been achieved; the other is to base it on what has actually been taught in the course, rather than on what should have been taught. The assessment activities should reflect those that were taught in the course. So, if, for example, role-play was used a lot as a learning experience in the course, it should be used in the assessment procedure as well. If, on the other hand, writing essays was not taught in the course, then it should not form part of the assessment procedure.

### **Feedback**

Stage 1 - b	Stage 5 - e
Stage 2 - d	Stage 6 - g
Stage 3 - a	Stage 7 - c
Stage 4 - f	

## **Task 4 The Design of Senior English for China**

Let's take as an example the design of the Middle School textbook in China, *Senior English For China*, and see what stages it followed.

*Could you label each paragraph with the relevant stages (1-7) from the Tabá model?*

### **1. Stages \_\_\_\_\_**

The Ministry of Education first provides the coursebook writers with a detailed syllabus, which has been decided upon from years of experience and much discussion on the part of English language teaching specialists in China. This syllabus contains everything the Ministry feels that a Chinese schoolchild should cover in order to reach the level of proficiency necessary for entering further education or employment.

### **2. Stages \_\_\_\_\_**

The syllabus consists of three main strands: a lexical syllabus, a structural syllabus, and a functional syllabus. The lexical syllabus consists of a list of words and phrases, which have to be included in the textbook and should be taught to be part of the students' active knowledge. The structural syllabus provides a list of structures that has to be organised progressively (that is from simplest to more complicated), and the structures have to be recycled so that the first use of a structure is dealt with, then in a later lesson revised, while its second use is added. All the structures in the textbook have to be taught overtly so that they enter the students' productive use, that means the students should be able to use them not just recognise them. The functional syllabus consists of a list of functions, which are to be taught by means of the dialogue in the first lesson of each unit. There is also a skills component to the syllabus, in that all four skills are to be taught.

### **3. Stages \_\_\_\_\_**

Included in the content of the course would be, apart from the dialogues already mentioned, reading and listening texts. These texts were to be specially written to illustrate the use of the specified structures and lexical items. Reading and listening skills were to

## Unit 1 Introduction

be taught by means of the texts and the tasks designed to go with them. Speaking skills were to be taught by means of the functional dialogues and other activities in the units. Writing and listening skills were also to be taught in the activities following the main texts. The methodology upon which the coursebook was designed was to reflect the pedagogical changes taking place in China, and was to be based upon the Communicative Approach.

### **4. Stage \_\_\_\_\_**

The means of assessment would be the mid-term and end-of-year examinations, which would assess the students' competence in using the structures, lexical items and functions specified in the syllabus. The mismatch that you might have noticed between the syllabus and the examination appears in the assessment of the four language skills. For example, the students' speaking skills are not yet assessed by the examination. This could be for practical reasons and might change in the future. The examination is also very much based on the content of the syllabus and not on the students' communicative competence.

Unfortunately, the examination always has a large impact on the teaching of a course, so if skills are not tested, they might not be taught. The main aim of the teaching and learning is often to get students to pass the exams and not to improve general language proficiency. This can be identified as an unofficial need of the students. The students' objectives, therefore, may have little to do with the course objectives, but more to do with passing the examination.

### **Feedback**

- Paragraph 1 - Stages 1 & 2
- Paragraph 1 - Stages 3 & 4
- Paragraph 1 - Stages 5 & 6
- Paragraph 1 - Stage 7

On this note, we are brought back to the Warm-up activity you started this unit with. I promised you we would come back to it. Have you changed your opinion of your answers to that activity? How do you see your role as a teacher now?

Let's go on to look at ways you can improve your life as a teacher.

## Activity 4 Your Own Development as a Teacher

In *A Guide to Success 3: Professionalism*, you were asked to think deeply about your role as a professional and the qualities and values you respect. Now I would like you to experience an activity which applies “humanism” to teacher development. In other words, you are thought of as a whole, complete human being, and not just as a teacher with the specific role imposed on you by the education system. This activity gets you to think about yourself as a person with a life outside and inside teaching.

### Task 1 What Are Your Best Qualities?

For this task I want you to think about the things you are good at in your life generally, not in teaching. For example you might be a very good cook, a good mah-jong player, a good artist, or you might be the sort of person people come to with their problems. Are you a good organiser? Do elderly relatives depend on your nursing ability and care? What are you good at? Think about this for a few minutes and write a list of all the things you can think of that you are good at. If you need to, then ask your partner or other relatives to help you make this list. Make the list as long as you can.

Things I am good at: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Now the next step is for you to try and identify the qualities and abilities that are necessary for each of those things you are good at.

For example, if you are good at playing the card game Bridge, you probably possess a very good memory, have a good analytical mind, you probably have quick reactions and are quick-thinking, and are able to understand other people’s reactions and predict what they will do. If you are good at calligraphy, you must have a very good eye for art and design, you are probably very creative and like to see beauty around you, unlike other types of artist you are probably also very neat and tidy, and you must have great patience.

Now fill in the table below. You can add more rows if necessary.

Things you are good at	Necessary qualities or abilities

When you have completed your table, look down the list of qualities and abilities. These are the good qualities that you have. Do you recognise your strengths? Are there any that are common to several of the things you are good at? These are probably your strongest qualities.

## **Task 2 How Can You Improve Your Teaching?**

The next step is for you to think of ways of applying your strengths, your good qualities and abilities, to your work as a teacher. If you have artistic ability, do you apply that in your use of the blackboard or the overhead projector, or in the design of student worksheets? Could you use it more? What about your ability to listen to other's problems, sympathise with them and give advice, do you employ that ability with your class? Do you try to find out what your students learning problems are? Do you listen to them sympathetically when they explain their problems, and do you give them good advice about how to develop better study techniques? Do you have a very good sense of timing (often common to good cooks, for example)? How is that best utilised in the classroom? Are you good at planning lessons and getting students to complete their tasks in time and pushing them on to the next ones, in other words keeping the pace of the lesson moving, but as closely as possible to the students' speed of learning? If you are creative, do you use your creativity to the maximum in designing interesting tasks for the learners? If you have a very good imagination, do you make up stories to tell your students in order to illustrate the language points you are teaching and train their listening skills?

*Now try to answer the following questions. This task would be most effective if you could discuss it with a partner at your tutorial.*

1. What are you good at in teaching? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

2. How could you use your good qualities and abilities to improve your teaching?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

One of the purposes of these questions is to get you to think of yourself as a whole person, not in separate roles as teacher, parent, friend, organiser, but to put them all together, so that you can apply your strengths to whatever you do. The other purpose is to get you to think about ways in which you can make your teaching more interesting and satisfying, both for yourself and your students, and maybe this can also benefit your colleagues too.

If you are to function well as a teacher, you must be happy. We hope to add to your happiness by showing you a broader range of teaching skills that you can add to your own and try to employ to good effect. By experimenting with new ideas and skills in teaching and adding your own personal strengths to adapt them to your students, we hope you and your students will benefit greatly in enjoyment, motivation and efficiency in teaching and learning English.

This task was adapted from that designed by Julian Edge in *Co-operative Development* (1992). It works best when it is discussed between two or more people, as you have the chance to help someone else express his views and be helped to express yours. Teachers do not function in isolation and similarly they can develop best when working in teams on joint projects. Fellow teachers can inspire, encourage and support each other. So, wherever possible we encourage you to discuss what you learn from this course with your colleagues and ask them to help you try out the new ideas.

*Now go back to where you defined your objectives near the beginning of this unit: would you like to change or add to any of them after working through this unit?*

## **Review of This Unit**

This has been the Introductory Unit to the course in English Language Teaching Methodology. In the Warm-up and Activity 1 you examined your own reasons for

## Unit 1 Introduction

teaching and your students' reasons for learning English. You reflected upon the way you were taught English in the past, the way you were trained to teach English and the way you now teach English.

In Activity 2 you examined the history of English language teaching from the Grammar-Translation Method to the Functional-Notional Approach, which became popular after the formation of the European Union. We looked at the effect of the research in Applied Linguistics carried out by such influential people as Dell Hymes and Krashen. We saw that the social aspect of language is very important and that in our lessons students need to know how to express their real meaning. You looked critically at the Audio-Lingual Method and its basis in Behaviourist Psychology and at the Humanist Approach, which has a lot to teach us about treating our students as real human beings with feelings of their own. And finally in this Activity, we came to the conclusion that these days most teachers use an eclectic approach, which means they try to adopt the best from different methods and adapt them for their students.

In Activity 3, we covered the topic of course design, by studying the different types of syllabus used in language teaching, and the importance of starting a course from the results of a needs analysis to find out what our students really need to learn. We looked at the different stages of course design and applied them to the design of the Senior Middle School textbooks.

In the final Activity, you experienced a humanist activity in teacher development. You were asked to examine your own abilities and strengths and to try and apply them to your teaching. The result, if you succeed, will improve the quality and your enjoyment of your teaching and, in turn, will affect the quality and students' enjoyment of their learning in your lessons.

This course is concerned with you and your development as a teacher. We hope to provide you with many ideas about teaching English as a foreign language that will be useful to your lessons and result in your improvement as a teacher, and also in your students' improvement in their learning achievements. But please remember, that there is not only one way to improve. First of all, you must want to improve your teaching and you must be prepared to try out new things, evaluate them critically, try to improve them and keep trying them out. New techniques in teaching rarely succeed on the first try. The teacher must feel confident about what he or she does and the students sometimes have to be convinced of the benefit of it. Keep an enquiring mind, an openness to new ideas, a sense of practicality and some determination to solve the problems you encounter, and you may well succeed!

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\* \* \* \* \*

## **Evaluation of this unit**

You have been asked to keep a diary during your study of English Language Teaching Methodology (Parts 1 and 2). Use it to record anything you think is important as you are working through these units and experimenting with your lessons.

*Now please write the answers to these questions in your diary.*

1. What have you learnt from this unit?
2. What has been most useful to you?
3. What do you think you can apply to your teaching?
4. How do you intend to do this?
5. Are there any problems that you have encountered in this unit?
6. How do you intend to deal with those problems?
7. Did you at any point change your attitude towards some aspect of teaching or learning English? If so, at which point was it?
8. Is there anything more you would like to know?



## **Unit 2 The Communicative Approach**

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# Unit 2 The Communicative Approach

## Objectives

By the end of this unit, you should:

- have a general idea of what it means to develop learners' communicative competence and what that involves;
- be aware of the importance of knowledge about language processing and be able to apply your understanding of it to the teaching of all the language skills, as well as to the selection of supplementary materials;
- understand the basic principles of communicative language teaching;
- be able to follow the general guidelines for the teaching of language skills;
- be able to use information-gap and role-playing activities to practise the learners' communicative skills.

## Warm-up

Look at the following interaction patterns

(1) A→B one person speaks to another

(2) A→B one person speaks to two others

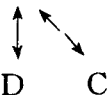


(3) A→B one person speaks to several others



(4) A↔B two people speak to each other

(5) A↔B three or more people speak to each other



Now think back over your day from the moment you got up, but exclude the time you spent teaching in the classroom. For every time you spoke or engaged in conversation with anyone, decide which of the above interaction patterns applies to your communication.

## Unit 2 The Communicative Approach

For example:

- i) I got up and spoke to my husband this morning → (4)
- ii) Over breakfast, my husband and daughter and I spoke to each other → (5)
- iii) As I left the house, I met my neighbour and we greeted each other → (4)
- iv) Then I went into a shop and asked the shopkeeper for something → (4)
- v) ...

What did you find was the most common interaction pattern in your day? Was it (4) or (5)? How many times did you experience (1), (2) and (3)?

Now think back over your last lesson, what was the most common interaction pattern? I think if you're honest, you'll find that it was (3): T→S (also expressed as T→Ss).

Does this pattern reflect real-life communication? Are your students really learning to communicate (that means speaking and listening) with each other in English?

Now look back at your day's acts of communication. Did they have a purpose? Can you go through each one and find out what was the purpose of communication in each case? For example, were you informing someone of something? Were you asking for information? Were you using language to control someone's behaviour? Like telling a child to do something or not to do something: "Finish up your breakfast! Go and brush your teeth!" Were you talking to someone just to be friendly? For example, "Oh hello Mrs Brown, how are you today?"

When you have finished writing the purpose of each of your acts of communication, think back again to your last lesson. Did your students have any real reason to communicate? Were they just answering your questions to show you that they knew the right answer? Did you already know the answer before you asked the question? When the students talked to each other, were they telling each other something the other didn't know? In other words, did they have a real reason to communicate? Or did they speak just to practise the language point they were learning, or were they just 'reading a part'?

Next time you teach, try to pay attention to these aspects and find out how much the communication in your classroom reflects real-life communication? If you can, record your lesson on audio tape and listen to it afterwards. Note down how many minutes are spent on:

1. you speaking to the whole class T→Ss
2. students speaking individually to you in front of the whole class S→T
3. students speaking to each other S↔S or Ss↔Ss.

By doing this you will find out how much "teacher talking time" (TTT) and "student

talking time" (STT) take place in your class. Try to predict beforehand what the proportion of each is, then see what the tape tells you. You may be surprised to find that teachers usually talk for much longer than they realise.

Listen to your tape again and evaluate the "quality" of the communication taking place. Was it meaningful? Were students expressing their real meaning? Now keep this in mind as you go through this unit and see if there is anything you can do to increase the STT in your class and improve the quality of the communication.

## **Activity 1 Communicative Competence**

In the last unit, we reflected upon the fact that English teaching in China is now experiencing a significant change. What's the significance of this change, and what should the teachers be doing? These are among the questions this course (both Parts 1 and 2) attempts to answer. But first, let's see what communication means to language learners.

### **Task 1 The Characteristics of the Traditional Approach**

How did you teach the former textbooks? Did you start with new words or sentence structures or something else? Did you tell your students when and where and to whom the sentences could be used? Please consider the brief teaching plan provided below and see if it is familiar to you. Try to say what the focus of this class was?

- Stage 1 The students read aloud the new words and expressions by imitating their teacher. The teacher tries to help them remember the meaning of each word by reading it mechanically again and again.
- Stage 2 The students read the pattern drills aloud in the same way as they did with the new words for the same purpose, and then translate them one by one into Chinese.
- Stage 3 The teacher then begins to deal with the text, sentence by sentence and paragraph by paragraph: explaining the language points, dwelling upon the grammar rules, analysing the sentences, providing the Chinese equivalents, giving the examples to demonstrate the usage of certain words and expressions.
- Stage 4 The teacher teaches grammar rules. The teacher explains and illustrates them by pointing to examples in the text or by taking examples from dictionaries or grammar books.
- Stage 5 Students do the written exercises, such as filling in the blanks with the

correct form of the verbs, adverbs, or prepositions, or they do multiple-choice exercises.

### Feedback

You may find this way of teaching was very common in the early 80s. However, things are changing now. But you can still see the powerful influence of this traditional method even in a very modern English classroom in China.

In general, we might characterise this approach as one which presents and practises only the structures of the language. In this type of lesson, language items are practised several times in order to establish the structures in the memories of the students. The students trained by this approach eventually acquire the ability to store in their mind isolated words, to learn and apply grammar rules, and to compose grammatically correct sentences.

But the problem lies in the fact that the ability to compose sentences is not the only ability we need in order to communicate. More importantly, we need to know the exact **communicative intention** each sentence carries. By communicative intention, I mean the real meaning of the utterance. In other words, it is what the speaker wants to do through the language he uses.

You may not agree with me when I say that being able to compose grammatically **correct** sentences does not mean being able to compose or understand the **right** or most **appropriate** sentences which express the speaker or writer's real intentions, and which are also suitable to the situation in which the communication is taking place. You may argue "Don't we mean exactly what we say?" The answer is "No". The fact is, in human communication, a certain sentence can be understood very differently in different circumstances.

## Task 2 What is Your Real Meaning?

*Please consider this example:*

When two Chinese people meet, A says to B: "*Have you had your lunch?*"

1. What does A want to do by saying this? You may choose from the following list:
  - a) A genuinely wants to know if B has eaten the meal. It is a question for information.
  - b) A wants to invite B to a meal. This is a polite beginning of an invitation.
  - c) A wants to say "Hello". It is an informal greeting.

Your choice: \_\_\_\_\_

2. If you were B, how would you respond to A?

Your answer: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Feedback**

From our Chinese tradition, we interpret this sentence as an informal greeting (c), rather than a genuine question to know whether B had the meal or not. Our response, accordingly, can be "Yes, and you?", even in spite of the fact that we haven't had the meal yet. Therefore, the question form in this case has nothing to do with a search for real information. Instead, it has the same function as "Hello". It implies that you want to be friendly with the person you meet and want to show that you care about his/her welfare.

From this example and many other examples in our real life, we can see that we don't always mean exactly what we say. Once I overheard a little boy at the zoo saying to his father, "Dad, over there, there is another big hippopotamus!" His father answered, "Oh, yes, isn't it huge." Shortly afterwards, the boy repeated his sentence again, and this time, instead of looking at the animal, he looked at his father. Eventually, the father understood, and carrying the boy on his shoulders, they moved together to the other side of the pool to see the hippopotamus over there. What the little boy meant was that he wanted to be carried over to see the other hippopotamus. But, he wished to express this desire to his father in an indirect way in order not to appear to be demanding and selfish. From this example, we can see that from a very early age, we acquire the ability to understand and use one of the features of human communication, that is expressing a desire in an indirect way without stating it directly. So, the literal meaning of a sentence may not match the real intention of the speaker.

Therefore, for our students, knowing how to make correct sentences is only one part of what we mean by knowing a language, which is of course an essential part, but it has very little value on its own; it has to be supplemented by a knowledge of the appropriateness and the functional value of the language when it is used as a normal means of communication.

Let's look at further examples of those two concepts: the **functional value** of language and its **appropriateness**.

### **Task 3 Expressing Functional Meaning**

Communication takes place only when we use the utterances (that is, anything we say)

## Unit 2 The Communicative Approach

to do something for us. For example we use sentences to describe things, make requests, give orders or ask for information, and so on. Thus, we say language carries **functional meaning**.

*Suppose that you have left the door open and that you want someone to close the door. How many linguistic forms can you use?*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

### **Feedback**

Here some possible answers:

1. Could you close the door after you, please?
2. Close the door!
3. It's awfully draughty in here, isn't it?
4. Would you mind closing the door, please?
5. Were you born in a field?
6. Close the door please, John.

This list can be very long as more and more situations pop into your mind. From this, we can see that just as a single linguistic form can express a number of communicative functions, a communicative function can also be expressed by a number of linguistic forms.

In the above example, the communicative function, i. e. "to get someone to close the door", is expressed by a variety of sentences. But in real communication, we use only one sentence instead of saying all the sentences. Here the speaker faces the problem of choosing the most appropriate sentence suitable for the situation and social environment. For example, "You've left the door open" could serve the purpose of asking someone to close the door from a teacher to a pupil, but not from a teacher to a head-teacher. In that case, the teacher may very well choose another form, say "Could you please close the door?" or "Would you mind closing the door?".

From the above analysis, we can conclude that in real communication, three basic skills are involved:

1. the ability to understand language structure and vocabulary and to compose structurally correct sentences;
2. the knowledge of possible communicative functions of linguistic forms (e. g. Have you had your lunch? = a greeting or an invitation);

3. the ability to take into consideration the knowledge of the situation and social factors and relate them to linguistic forms, in order to interpret or express the intended meaning.

As a conclusion, we argue that it is absolutely necessary to teach the second and the third abilities in that list, because the teaching of the structure can only provide students with a basic knowledge of the essentials of the language, but a knowledge of how to compose correct sentences cannot automatically lead to the ability of using the sentences in communication. Students have to be provided with opportunities to meet and use the language in real communication, so as to build up the relationship between the communicative functions and the sentence structures and to develop strategies for interpreting language in actual use.

## **Task 4 The Appropriateness of Language**

A native speaker knows what language is appropriate in a given situation and to a given person. Look at the situation below and write down what you would say. Add others after the example done for you.

What would you say when you invite a very close friend to dinner tonight? You might say:

1. "Let's have dinner together this evening."
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

### **Feedback**

Here some possible answers you might have thought of:

1. Let's have dinner together this evening.
2. Come to my place to have some dumplings tonight.
3. It's my treat tonight.
4. Why don't we eat together this evening?

You may have thought of many other examples.

But would you use the same language to invite a business acquaintance or your boss? I'm sure you would switch to more formal language, such as:

1. Would you please stay to have dinner with us?
2. \_\_\_\_\_



3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Feedback**

1. Would you please stay to have dinner with us?
2. We'd feel honoured if you could come to our place and have a meal with us tonight.
3. If you have time, we'd like to invite you to a Chinese restaurant tonight.

Similarly, a student may say to his classmate "Shut the window, will you?" But to a stranger on a bus, it would be more appropriate to say, for example, "Excuse me, would you mind shutting the window?"

We can see from the above examples that to different people, we use different structures, just like wearing different clothes on different occasions. When you are going to a formal occasion or to meet an important person, you will surely select suitable formal clothes to go with the situation. Similarly, your choice of language is also decided by your understanding of where, when, and to whom you are talking, as well as what you want to say. Your choice of language, just as your choice of clothes, should be appropriate to the social situation.

What has this idea of appropriateness of language to do with English language teaching? Well, let's see.

*Please read this dialogue and answer the questions .*

A is a student and B is the teacher of English. A is invited to B's place.

*A : Give me a glass of water .*

*B : Here you are .*

- 1) Is there anything wrong with A's request? If you were A, what would you say?
- 2) How do you imagine B feels?

Your answers: \_\_\_\_\_

**Feedback**

This is not an appropriate request from a student to a teacher. It should be "May I have a glass of water, please" or another more polite form of request. If B were a native speaker of English, he would think A was rather rude and arrogant. If a child spoke like this, he would be considered spoilt and bad mannered.

Inappropriately used expressions may leave unfavourable effects on the hearer. Students, without any knowledge of the appropriateness of language but able to produce structurally perfect sentences, are making potentially more serious errors because native

speakers would contribute the words to an offensive attitude rather than inadequate learning. In other words, if a student shows that he/she can produce correct language, the listeners (native speakers) would expect him/her to have some knowledge of appropriateness too, whereas a student with very limited language would be forgiven more easily for errors of inappropriateness. The unfavourable psychological effect might eventually lead to the breakdown of communication or friendship.

## **Task 5 What is Communicative Competence?**

From the previous tasks, we can see that teaching just the language structures is far from enough to help build up the students' ability to communicate in the language. This is because language doesn't occur in isolation; it occurs in a situational and social context and is used to express social and functional meanings. Observation of children's acquisition of their first language has shown that they acquire a knowledge of and ability to use sentences not only grammatically, but also appropriately to the context in which they are made.

*The following two sentences are made by the same Chinese girl at different ages. If you heard her say these, would you correct her?*

1. 馒头吃 (aged 2), (real intention: I want to eat buns.)
2. 你没有假期了, 奶奶, 你得等到去八宝上了才放假呢。(aged 7), (real intention: You're retired. You don't have holidays any more.)

Your answer: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Feedback**

I think none of us will try to correct the little girl for her first sentence, even though it's grammatically wrong. However, her grandmother was, of course, furious when hearing the second sentence, and told the girl's mother about this. Her mother punished her and told her that saying such a thing is not polite. The little girl at first felt she was wronged, but eventually she understood the insulting overtone of the sentence and promised not to say this to anyone again.

From this example, we realise that for correcting children in their acquisition of their first language, we pay less attention to structural correctness than to contextual appropriateness. In other words, we judge the correctness of a sentence not in terms of grammar, but whether it is suitable for the particular situation. In this way, a child acquires competence in what to say, when to say it, when not to, and what to talk about with whom, when, where, and in what manner. In short, a child becomes able to use the

language to do things (i. e. speech acts) for himself, such as giving directions or making complaints, taking part in speech events, such as social chit-chat, and to measure his success or failure by the response of others. This competence is called **communicative competence**.

## **Task 6 The Development of Communicative Competence**

The key question language teachers would ask is how to help students to develop communicative competence. Here we need to look at the research that has been done on first language acquisition. We can draw some insights from it.

*Please consider the following question and try to put your answers in the form below. (Review Unit 9 of Language and Linguistics – A Workbook, if necessary.)*

What are the factors which help a child acquire the first language?

	<b>inner factors</b>	<b>outer factors</b>
1	born with the device to learn language	
2		adults ready to response
3		
4		

### **Feedback**

	<b>inner factors</b>	<b>outer factors</b>
1	born with the device to learn language	sufficient communicative input
2	desire and need to communicate	adults ready to response
3	communication-orientated practice	encouragement/punishment from adults (adequate feedback)
4	complete involvement in the communicative context	all the contextual factors are available for the child to process and to develop communicative strategies

To summarise the above, the child learns to communicate by being in situations in which he has to communicate, and he gets the necessary amount of language input from those around him. Can we create the same situation in the classroom? Many would say that it

is unrealistic to try and copy and establish the first language acquisition environment in the classroom. The classroom itself is an artificial environment for real communication to take place. As we have already seen from first language acquisition, communication stems from the necessity to communicate and this element is usually absent in the classroom situation. For example, students often have to ask each other questions, for the sake of practising certain structures, to which they know the answer, so nobody is exchanging any new information. There is no need and hence no motivation for them to use the language. The result of this is that there is no chance for their communicative competence to develop.

However, as we have already seen from the warm-up tasks, English learning in China is focusing more and more on the development of communicative competence. To meet the changes, we, as language teachers are, changing our teaching methods. One of the methodologies we are using today is commonly known as **Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)**. We will go on to learn more about it and how it may help us to develop communicative competence of our students.

In this activity, we have seen that the traditional approach to language teaching can not meet the communicative demands of the changing society. In language teaching it is not enough to teach just grammatical structures, for this cannot automatically develop the learners' communicative competence. We need to involve the teaching of functional meanings and the social appropriateness of a language form. The development of communicative competence depends on communication in real-life situations.

## **Activity 2 Language Processing and Production**

CLT derives from many sources of study. The discussion in Activity 1 stems from the study of language which stresses that language has not only structural meaning, but functional and social meanings as well. The speaker of the language uses his linguistic competence and communicative competence (knowledge of the situation and the social relationships of the people involved) for successful communication.

Another source of study, which has contributed greatly to the development of CLT is that of the cognitive process of communication — what actually happens in the brain as language is learnt and produced.

## Task 1 The Knowledge Involved in Language Processing

Please read the three texts below. How difficult do you think they are?  
Try to identify the reasons for their difficulty and tick the right box.

	Text A	Text B	Text C	Text D
1. I don't know the language.				
2. No title or previous text, and without knowledge of where, when, and to whom the sentence is written/spoken, it is difficult to guess the meaning of the text.				
3. I don't read this type of writing very often. So this type of text is difficult for me.				
4. I don't have the proper background or world knowledge to use to help my comprehension.				
5. The topic discussed is too difficult and is beyond my comprehension.				

### Text A

- I'll be surfing the net this evening.
- Don't work too hard

### Text B

Harap gunakan kotak perlindungan yang disediakan untuk menyimpan baterai anda apabila ia tidak digunakan. (Please use the protection case provided to store your battery when not in use.)

### Text C

#### *Concepts of Privacy*

For the Arab the location of the person in relation to the body is quite different. The

person exists somewhere down inside the body. The ego is not completely hidden, however, because it can be reached very easily with an insult. It is protected from touch but not from words.

#### **Text D**

##### **Cool Wool®**

Cool Wool® are  
confident natural clothes  
that work with you right  
through to  
the weekend.

Sand, stone, clay-  
the gentle colours of earth  
are spiced up  
in easy suit jackets  
that mix with skirts  
and long softly cut pants.

Cool Wool,  
Wool rich blends and naturally together  
make getting  
dressed as easy  
as Sunday morning,  
every day  
of the week.

#### **Feedback**

##### **Text A**

Does it help you if I tell you that the dialogue took place at home, in front of a computer. You have then got the contextual clue that here "net" means not a fishing net, but the "Internet" system in computer networking. The first speaker wants to search the "Internet" system for certain information. With this contextual knowledge, which helps you to determine the meaning of the word "net", you can understand the sentence, provided that you know what the "Internet" is. If you don't have the background knowledge of "Internet", you still have the problem of understanding this sentence. Therefore the difficulty of comprehension is 1 or 4 or both.

##### **Text B**

This text is probably totally incomprehensible to you, because it is written in Indonesian. In fact the ideas involved and the way of presentation would not be difficult if it were written either in Chinese or in English. So the difficulty of comprehension is 1.

**Text C**

The language in this text is definitely not very difficult. We can understand most of the words and the structures are simple. But we find it very difficult to follow the meanings expressed by these familiar words. There are two reasons for this. Firstly the “concept of privacy” discussed in the text is a very abstract idea and unfamiliar to us. So the topic is difficult for us to understand. Secondly, the privacy of Arabs in contrast to that of the Chinese is analysed. This leaves us little background knowledge to use to help comprehension. So the difficulty of comprehension is both 4 and 5.

**Text D**

Text D is an advertisement for clothes. You may find reading this type of text difficult because you are not familiar with advertisements in English. This type of text has its own conventions in writing. In fact, different types of text, for instance, academic, narrative, instructional, or even recipes, have their own conventions in writing. The understanding of the conventions for each type of text can help both in reading and writing them. The study of these conventions is part of the study of discourse analysis.

In conclusion, we can say that when trying to work out the meaning of a piece of language or trying to express your own meaning, you probably need to use all the three types of knowledge: the knowledge of language, discourse knowledge, and background knowledge. The following two tasks concentrate on the theory and the application of background knowledge.

## **Task 2 The Contribution of Background Knowledge to Text Comprehension**

Background knowledge, covers a wide range of information and experience stored in the memory: for example, general knowledge of scientific facts and historical events; the beliefs and conventions of culture; local knowledge about the place where we live; and the individual experiences of social and private lives. In this task we are going to examine the contribution of background knowledge to text comprehension.

This is the beginning sentence of a short story “The Witches’ Loaves” written by O. Henry, an American writer who wrote stories in English for an English-speaking audience.

Miss Martha Meacham kept the little bakery on the corner, . . . the one where you go up three steps and the bell tinkles when you open the door.

Do you have any questions in mind when reading this sentence? Do you think you can

understand the atmosphere and the intended feelings created by the sentence?

Try answering the following questions.

1. Where is the bell? Why is it there?
2. Why did the author use "the bell" instead of "a bell" since this bell has not been mentioned before and nor has it any unique reference?
3. What kind of bakery is it? Please choose from the following adjectives:  
*cosy or large    ordinary or unusual    pleasant or businesslike  
old fashioned or modern*

Your answers:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### Feedback

1. A bell usually hangs over the door of a small shop. When a customer opens the door, the bell rings to inform the staff that there are people coming in. Since such a shop is very small and usually a family business, there is often only one person working there. The shop assistant may be working in some place where he can't see customers coming in and the sound of the bell will give him the signal to come out to serve the customers.  
You may find this question rather difficult to answer. You'll have to make a guess, but the puzzle in your mind cannot be clarified as you go on reading the story, because the writer took it for granted that the reader had sufficient background knowledge of the "little bakery on the corner".
2. To English or American readers, the small bakery is such a familiar place that they almost go there everyday! The use of the definite article "the" indicates to the reader that the little bakery is the one both the reader and the writer are familiar with and the environment and the things inside are taken as known, in other words, a typical small family bakery. The steps and the bell that usually hangs over the door are such common features of any small shop that no native-speaking English reader would fail to relate the description to any small bakery familiar to him.
3. A mental picture of the kind-hearted Miss Meacham and her cosy, pleasant, and old-fashioned bakery shop is quickly established, which is a necessary first step in the full understanding of the story. However, to Chinese readers, it is difficult to establish such a picture.

Similarly, most non-Chinese readers would find it difficult to understand this story written by the Chinese writer Ru Zhijuan. The name of the story is "Lilies".

Read the following passage taken from the story and try to work out the background knowledge necessary for non-Chinese readers to fully understand the meaning. Then an-



swer the questions below.

**Characters:** a young woman who is represented in the story as “I” and a young male messenger in his late teens.

**Time:** 1946, the beginning of the civil war between the People’s Liberation Army and Kuomintang force.

**Event:** the young messenger was supposed to accompany “I”, the young woman, to the first-aid post. “I” was too tired to continue walking and chose to sit down opposite the young messenger.

The reaction of the young messenger to the woman sitting opposite him was described by “I”, the woman as follows:

He “was panicking as if he were sitting next to a time bomb. Ill at ease, he felt it was impolite to turn his back on me, but it embarrassed him to look at me and he couldn’t very well get up either. Trying hard to keep a straight face, I asked where he was from. Flushed up like a Guangong, he cleared his throat several times and told me: Tianmushan.”

### Questions

1. Do you think you understand the behaviour of the young soldier?
2. What kind of person is he and do you think he is a nice guy?
3. Why can’t a non-Chinese reader understand the behaviour of the young messenger? What background knowledge is lacking?

Your answers:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### Feedback

1. Most Chinese readers would smile knowingly at this description because we are aware of situation of man-woman relationships in China at that time and are familiar with the bashful attitude towards women of a young farmer’s lad.
2. The young messenger’s reaction to girls of his own age is interpreted by Chinese readers that he was a decent man, honest and trustworthy. If he talked to girls freely, he would be regarded as an unreliable person, even a dandy.
3. Background knowledge such as the above and the social relationship of men and women in the 40’s should be introduced to foreign readers before full comprehension is expected.

From the above analysis, we can see that language processing is a constructive process and what is understood involves far more than what is presented on the page or in the sound stream.

### Task 3 The Application of Background Knowledge

Having seen the importance of background knowledge in language processing, please consider whether there are certain aspects of your teaching which should be changed.

*First, let's have a look at this example and try to answer the questions after it.*

This is a reading text about an American wedding.

The ushers seated some of the bride's friends on his side of the church so things wouldn't look off balance.

1. From your experience, you know clearly that the following expressions are new to your students: *the ushers, the bride, look off balance*. If these words were explained, would that erase all their difficulty in comprehending the text?
2. Before reading a culturally-loaded text, i. e. a piece of text the comprehension of which requires a knowledge of the culture in which it is set, what should a teacher do to help comprehension? Use the text about an American wedding as an example to illustrate your point.

Your answer:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
  2. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

#### Feedback

1. You may find that an explanation of unknown lexical items cannot necessarily lead to satisfactory comprehension, because the students still don't know the reason why the bride's friends sitting on either side of the church has anything to do with balance.
2. Background knowledge of American wedding conventions is, in fact, the key issue here in comprehension. In this case, an introduction of the American wedding conventions should be given before or during the reading process. There are various methods of introduction that the teacher can use, he can also use the students as a resource.

You see, usually the bride's family and friends sit on one side of the church and the bridegroom's on the other. If, for example, the wedding is taking place far away from where the bridegroom comes from and few of his family or friends could be there, there might be an imbalance in the seating arrangements in the church.

Well, one conclusion we can draw is that the difficulty of a text lies in both the use of language and the amount of background knowledge a reader needs to share with the writer in order to understand his meaning. When our students do not possess all the background knowledge demanded by the text, they should be provided with it before or during the reading process.

If we agree that the difficulty of a text lies in both the use of language and the amount of background knowledge required, we can say that a text simple in language is not necessarily easy to understand. What are the criteria for us to choose, for example, supplementary reading materials for our students?

The two passages below are transcripts of radio reports on the same event, but for different audiences. Which one would you choose for your students? Please give your reasons.

**Text 1**

The film *Amadeus*, about Mozart, picked up eight Oscars at last night's award ceremony. The award for Best Supporting Actress went to Dame Peggy Ashcroft in *A Passage to India*. She had flu and did not collect it herself but is said to be delighted.

**Text 2**

The film world's most famous awards, the Oscars, were announced in Hollywood last night, with the usual mix of surprise and disappointments. Most of the Oscars went to the American film *Amadeus*. This is a story about the composer Mozart and won eight Oscars, including Best Film of the Year. British films did not do as well as was hoped, although one of the top awards did go to a British star. Dame Peggy Ashcroft won her first Oscar at the age of 77, for Best Supporting Actress in the film *A Passage to India*.

Your answer:

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**Feedback**

When we select a text, we must consider both the difficulty of the language and the amount of background knowledge required.

Seen from the point of view of the language used in the two passages, Text 1 is simpler. It contains fewer shorter sentences. Also the sentences in Text 1 are less complex: only one has more than one verb, and "but" or "and" are used to connect sentences instead of clauses. So from the point of view of language, there are several reasons to say the first text is simpler to understand than the second.

However, the scriptwriter of the first text expects the audience already to possess a certain amount of topical knowledge, such as the Oscar Awards, Mozart, and Dame Peggy Ashcroft,

while the writer of Text 2 fills in relatively more background knowledge. Please compare the ways in which the same information is presented in the two news items.

	Amadeus	Oscars	Mozart	Dame Peggy Ashcroft
Text 1	the film about Mozart			
Text 2	the American film. This is a story about the composer Mozart	the film world's most famous awards	the composer	British star, won her first Oscar at the age of 77

From the analysis above, I must say that making the choice depends on your knowledge of the students. If they know quite a lot about Oscars and Mozart, but are rather weak in language, the first text might be a good choice. If their English is more advanced, but they have little background knowledge on this topic, the second text might be a better choice.

## Task 4 Differences Between Oral and Written Communication

When we are developing appropriate classroom activities, it is important to be aware of the differences between spoken and written language, because the two types of language, which exist to fulfil different functions, demonstrate different characteristics.

Please read the following two examples, and decide which is a recording of spoken language and which is a written text.

### Example 1

The use of this type of equipment ensures greater efficiency in the handling of office procedures leading to increased customer satisfaction.

### Example 2

You can use this equipment like this  
and for all the things you have to do in the office  
and so you can handle them more efficiently  
and this will lead to customers being happier  
as things go more quickly.

### Feedback

The first text is a written text while the second is more likely to be a spoken text.

Which features distinguish spoken text from written text?

Some would say spoken language is simpler than written language. This is true in certain sense, for example, on a lexical level, the words “office procedures” in the first text is replaced by “things you have to do in the office” in the second text. Moreover, on the level of structure, this is also true. Take the above two sentences as examples again. Although it’s shorter, the first sentence has only one rather complicated clause, while the second sentence has several simpler clauses. Though the connection of these clauses can be problematic to learners, many would still find it easier to understand the second sentence. It is argued by researchers that in terms of productive skills (writing and speaking skills), the two modes of language, written and spoken, indicate two different kinds of complexity: the spoken language is complex in the way clauses are linked together, while the written language is complex at the level of clause. While, in terms of receptive skills (listening and reading), several simpler clauses in a sentence seem easier to comprehend than one complex clause.

The second feature to distinguish written language from spoken language is the heavier lexical density, which makes writing seem more complex. **Lexical density** refers to the number of **content words** per clause. The first sentence consists of only one clause but there are thirteen content words in it (*use, type, equipment, ensures, greater, efficiency, handling, office, procedures, leading, increased, customer, satisfaction*), which makes the lexical density 13. However, the second sentence has got 14 content words which are distributed in 5 clauses, giving a lexical density of 2.08.

The third feature is the tendency to use nouns instead of verbs in written language. We see the examples of “the use of” in sentence 1 changing to “you can use” in sentence 2, and “the handling of” changing to “you can handle”. Let’s try to think of some other examples of this:

Spoken: Good learners *reflect* on how they learn.

Written: *Reflection* on their learning strategies is a characteristic of good learners.

The fourth important difference comes from the fact that writing is often less dependent on immediate context than speech. In other words, in a certain way, writing is context independent, whereas speech is more closely tied to its context. The significance of this difference lies partly in the high frequency of using demonstrative words in spoken language, such as *this one, over there, near the door* or *bring that here*, which, in order to be understood, have to be accompanied by gestures that the listener can see. In writing, there is a lack of direct access to the reader’s feedback. So, a writer, who is in a more disadvantaged position than a speaker, is unable to adjust his message to enable his reader to understand. Therefore, a writer must make assumptions about the reader’s

knowledge and anticipate any possible difficulties a reader might have, and decide, before creating a text, what to include and what to omit from the text.

What is the classroom application of this understanding? Let's consider a problem that you may find when doing classroom observation:

When observing a class at work, you find that the students can produce well structured and reasonably grammatical written texts, but are less successful when it comes to speaking. What might be the reasons for this deficiency and what suggestions would you give to the teacher of this class?

Your answer:

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### Feedback

One possible reason is that the students are learning language from written texts more than from oral texts. Their production of bookish-sounding language when they speak indicates that their lack of exposure to spoken language prevents them from acquiring its specific features, which are different from those of written language. To solve this problem, the teacher could employ several strategies, one of which is to develop more authentic listening activities in class, getting the students more actively involved in real oral communication.

Having understood the differences between written and spoken language, it also helps us choose authentic listening materials, which really reflect the features of spoken language.

Please read the following conversation. Do you think you can use it as a listening text to develop your students' understanding of oral language? Why or why not?

Mario, an Italian teenager who is staying with the Murray family in Britain for the purpose of learning English, gets involved in a conversation about art and history with Mrs. Murray, and Susie, her daughter.

Mrs. Murray: Mario, why do you think Italy has produced so many great artists over the years?

Mario: I suppose the reason has to do with our history. First of all there were the Ancient Romans who put a lot of emphasis on art. Then, Italy was divided into many different kingdoms and principalities. Each of the local rulers was competing with the others to produce the most beautiful buildings and decoration. They would select the best artists and pay for them to decorate their palaces and churches, so that everyone would say that theirs were the most beautiful.

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The tradition was established and it continued as artists heard about it and went to Italy for work.

- Susie : Britain has also had kings and queens. Surely, we should have the same tradition?
- Mario : Well, maybe Britain has always remained fairly isolated, so the competition with other monarchs and their influence on fashions was never so strong.
- Mrs Murray: We have had many famous painters, of course, but not as many as Italy, where I think the power of religion also had a strong influence. Many of the famous paintings of Italy were dedicated to the church.

### **Feedback**

You may agree that this dialogue is more a written text than a natural conversation. The complex and precise sentences the speakers produce are typical of edited writing than unplanned speech. The text lacks features of spoken language, such as contractions, hesitation, fillers, repetition, self-correction, restarted utterances, etc.

This task warns us teachers against the assumption that speech is simply a spoken form of writing. In this dialogue, both the forms of language used and the density of the information in the dialogue are quite different from the typical features of real conversation — especially between native and non-native speakers. So the listening material presented to learners as samples of interaction ought to reflect the natural patterns of oral communication in which listener and speaker work their way towards mutual understanding.

## **Task 5 Some Basic Characteristics of Oral Communication**

Besides the language features which differentiate spoken and written texts, there are distinctive characteristics in oral communication that a learner should be aware of.

In oral communication, there are often two or more participants involved. They are required to make a collaborative effort to sustain the development of the conversation. It has been observed that in a piece of natural English conversation, **turns** will be taken smoothly, with only little overlap and interruption, and only very brief silences between turns. People take turns to speak when they are requested to or when they feel they have something to contribute to the conversation. If neither of these takes place, the person who is currently speaking may continue.

**🔊 Listen to the following dialogue and pay close attention to how speakers take turns to speak.**

Listen to the dialogue now.

### **Feedback**

One feature of turn taking is the way speakers predict one another's utterances and often complete sentences for them, or overlap with them when they complete. Another feature is what is usually called back-channel responses, such as Mm, yeah, right, sure, really, etc.. This doesn't mean the speaker wants the turn to speak. On the contrary, it only shows the listener is attending to the message and encourages the speaker to continue. Therefore, natural conversation often seems chaotic because of back-channel responses, utterance completion and overlaps.

Having discussed turn-taking in conversation, what do you think is the value of it in teaching English? Do you think we need to teach our students turn-taking? Do you think in our mother-tongue conversation, we take turns in the same way as in English?

Your answer:

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### **Feedback**

If you think of a natural conversation in Chinese, you may realise that we also take turns. This is not something unique to English. Therefore, it is not a question of telling our students that speakers take turns; they know this naturally from their own language. However, what really needs to be taught and practised are the appropriate linguistic expressions for getting the turn and keeping the turn in formal and informal situations.

There are specific linguistic devices for getting the turn and interrupting the normal flow of speech. Can you think of any?

For example:

1. Sorry to interrupt, but...
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

### **Feedback**

Here are some possible expressions that you might have come up with (there are of course more):

1. Sorry to interrupt, but...
2. If I may, Mr. President, I would like to add...
3. I wonder if I might say something, ...
4. Can I just come in here? ...
5. Can I interrupt for a moment?...
6. Hold on...
7. Hang on a minute, ...



8. Shut up, will you. Otherwise I can't get a word in.

There are still a lot to add to this list. But one thing that deserves our attention is that the expressions vary greatly in level of formality and appropriateness to different situations and social contexts. For example the last expression in the list is very informal and sounds rather rude, but the second one is very formal and very polite.

These are the conversational phrases for interrupting. There are expressions for preventing interruption by pre-planning, such as "There are three things I want to say".

Another thing that we need to make our students aware of is that turn-taking is a matter of cultural behaviour, which includes body language, as well as linguistic cues. The significance in the understanding of the cultural aspect is that transference from Chinese conventions to the English context is not acceptable and should be avoided.

Of course, the key issue is to develop proper activities to generate a natural sort of turn-taking. The traditional classroom has normally very ordered turn-taking under the control of the teacher, and students rarely speak out of turn. In contrast to this, the activities in communicative language teaching, such as role plays, pair and group discussions, can go a certain way towards achieving the goal.

But problems arise when students are left to their own to take turns in communication. For example, students are busy thinking or organising their own speech, but paying little attention to the contribution of others. If this is the case, then the natural patterns of back channel, utterance completion, and so on, simply don't occur. Can you think of any other problems? Can you find any solutions to the problems?

### **Feedback**

Another problem that I can think of is that a few bright or more advanced students dominate the conversation and grab too many turns.

A solution to the first problem is to build the activity on the basis of an information gap, which means that without a full understanding of the other person's message, one cannot complete the task. In this way, students are forced to listen carefully and use many communication techniques to obtain the necessary information. Filling an information gap is also the essence of natural communication. We usually communicate when we have information to give or to obtain. We don't usually deliberately tell people what they already know.

The problem of dominant speakers can be partially solved by giving students with such a tendency restricted roles in activities, and give quieter students more active roles so they are required to face the challenge of a major speaking role in the task.

From this activity, we see that language processing means the application of not only linguistic knowledge, but also many other kinds of knowledge, such as background

knowledge. In language teaching, the proper use of background knowledge can help comprehension. In this activity, we have also seen some of the differences between oral and written language, and identified some of the specific features of oral communication. These can help us in the teaching of communicative skills.

## **Activity 3 Introduction to Communicative Language Teaching**

Since its beginning in the 1960's, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has developed into a comprehensive teaching and learning methodology, which has had a profound effect on classroom materials and practice.

The goals of CLT have been elaborated in Activity 1. We can say that the goal of CLT is to develop students' communicative competence. In other words, the goal of CLT is to use language for communicative purposes. In this Activity, we will analyse some specific features of CLT.

### **Task 1 Syllabus**

If you have the new textbooks you are now teaching, turn to the content page, and you will immediately find the difference between the old and the new. With each unit of the new textbooks, there are 3 columns: functional items, topics and structures. Could you, based on your understanding of communicative competence discussed in Activity 1, explain briefly the reasons for this arrangement?

Your answer:

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### **Feedback**

Because of the emphasis on the functional and social meaning of the language, as well as its communicative orientation, the objectives of language learning are defined in various terms rather than the learning of structures and vocabulary alone. A CLT syllabus will describe generally:

1. the situations in which students might typically need to use a foreign language (e.g. organising travel, going shopping, etc.);

2. the topics they might need to talk about (e. g. personal details, education, shopping, etc.);
3. the functions they need language for (e. g. describing something, requesting information, expressing agreement, etc.);
4. the vocabulary and grammar structures needed for these objectives;
5. the skills required in typical situations (e. g. reading, listening, speaking, or writing skills).

The new design of the syllabus indicates to our teachers that English teaching focuses no longer on the mastery of grammar structures and vocabulary, but on a more comprehensive training of communicative competence.

## Task 2 Authenticity

Another characteristic of CLT is the concept of **authenticity**. What does authenticity mean? Well, we usually describe a text in a foreign language as authentic if it is written for native speakers to read or spoken for native speakers to listen to. It is not simplified in any way for the convenience of learners of the language. This can include a very wide variety of texts, from simple labels on goods to scientific articles. We describe a task as authentic if it is close to the sort of thing one would do in real life. Authentic language would be the sort of language that native speakers would use to each other. So, authenticity in the language classroom includes the use of authentic materials, designing authentic classroom activities, and the teacher speaking authentically to the students.

A non-authentic text, in language teaching terms, is one that has been written specially for language students.

What sort of authentic texts can we find? Can you give some more examples?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### Feedback

You may find many examples of authentic materials, such as English novels, poems, advertisements, instruction manuals, songs, films, lectures, speeches, radio announcements, news reports, plays, etc.

But why is authentic material recommended in CLT? To answer this question, let's first answer another question. When you learn to swim, do you learn it by going to the swimming pool, getting into the water and practising in the pool or do you learn it by reading books on how to swim and practising in your wash basin or bath tub?

Your answer:

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### **Feedback**

I can hear some of you say, "Of course, I go to a swimming pool". And others say, "I learnt it in the small river in our village." No matter where you go, you do not learn to swim by reading books on swimming and practising at home. You go to a place where your whole body can be immersed in the water and you can feel the floating force of the water. So to learn a skill, the most effective way is to practise it in the authentic situation (swimming pool) with authentic media (enough water to immerse your body).

Although language learning is not as simple a process as learning to swim, because it is not solely a "motor skill", but also a "cognitive skill", it demonstrates, to a certain extent, my point. Inside the classroom, students of English should be given opportunities for engaging in real-life communication. The non-authentic materials, however, just like the water in a wash basin or bath tub, do not prepare our students for coping with the language they hear and read in the real world outside the classroom. We should remember that what we do in the classroom is just a rehearsal for what we will have to do in real life.

Therefore, since most of our students have little exposure to authentic language outside the classroom and even fewer opportunities to practise it in authentic situations, communication skills should be rehearsed in the classroom with authentic materials.

The reasons for using authentic texts are as follows:

- The language is natural, so students will learn how speakers of the language actually use it.
- Students can learn more about the language by examining the discourse (how the text is organised and language is used to hold it together) and more about the background culture, which will help them comprehend future texts.
- Real life is brought into the classroom, so that students can see the immediate relevance of what they are doing in class to what they might have to do later in life.

You will see, later in the following units, how students can only build up a feeling for the language if they are exposed to enough authentic text. They will get a feeling of how words are used in a natural way and how language changes according to the different situations in which it is used and the different types of people who use it.

### **Task 3 The Application of Authenticity to Classroom Teaching**

You may say, "Well, all this sounds very good. But when I start selecting and using authentic materials in my class, problems arise". Problems include:

1. The texts in our textbooks are not authentic if we use the definition given above as a criterion. But the textbooks follow the CLT approach. How do you explain this?
2. It's difficult to find proper authentic materials to illustrate certain language points.
3. Authentic materials are too difficult for my students.

In the late 1970s, Widdowson argued for a further development on defining authenticity. He suggested separating it into two aspects: communicative "genuineness" and communicative "authenticity". He defined a text as genuine if it follows the convention of that type of text. The convention determines the choice of grammatical structures, the use of words and other proper discourse structure. So if a text *looks* and *sounds* like an actual text, but is composed by a language teacher or textbook compiler to be used in the class, it is a genuine text as good as a real one for the purpose of teaching communication. Therefore it is acceptable that the textbooks, though claiming to follow CLT methodology, use specially written texts for teaching purposes.

Authenticity, in Widdowson's view, should be used to describe an appropriate response of a reader or listener to the text. In other words, when teachers design tasks for the text, the tasks should be communicatively appropriate, rather than purely structural. For example, when students are asked to listen to a weather forecast, which may be genuine but composed by a language teacher, one possible task is to get students to do a dictation and the other task is to get students to decide whether to go for a picnic or not that day. The second task is authentic because it reflects an appropriate response from the listener in a real life situation; whereas the first task is inauthentic because it focuses merely on language and hardly anyone in the real world needs to take down every word of a weather forecast. So the first task lacks a communicative element.

Here, we have touched on the issue of task authenticity. However, one thing we should bear in mind is that when we design a learning task, it may consist of several steps and not every step needs to be authentic. However, these inauthentic steps may eventually lead to a communicative activity. Take the weather forecast for example. If your students are beginners of English, you might well get them to concentrate first on the temperature of the day or whether it is rainy, fine or cloudy. Then the second task is to

make a telephone call to arrange where to go that day with a friend based on the weather information they have just got. Here, taking down the temperature or adjectives to describe the day may not sound authentic, but by carrying out such tasks, students are practising skills which will be useful in the real world.

*The following are two reading texts, please read both of them to do the following:*

1. Decide which one is genuine and which one is not genuine, then
2. Design an authentic task for the genuine text.

#### **Text 1**

This is Kate's flat. It is not tidy. Kate is not a tidy person. There are many books and magazines on the floor and on the table. There are many dirty cups and glasses on the table too. There are cigarette ends in the ashtray and empty cigarette packets on the table. There are many records and cassettes on the floor around the hi-fi system. There are stains in the carpet.

#### **Text 2**

- Anne: Well, what did you think of Kate's flat?  
Mary: Oh, to tell you the truth, it wasn't really to my liking. It was so ... so untidy!  
Anne: Really? I didn't know Kate was such an untidy person.  
Mary: Oh, yes, it looked as though it hadn't been cleaned for weeks. There were things all over the floor — you know, records and cassettes, books, magazines ... and there were stains on the carpet.  
Anne: Oh, dear.  
Mary: Yes, and the table ... it was covered in cups and glasses, and empty cigarette packets. Oh, yes, and the ashtray was full of cigarette ends ... yeah ... and smelt awful.  
Anne: I wonder how she can live like that?  
Mary: Well, I don't know, but I know I can't.

#### **Feedback**

**Text 1** is obviously written with considerable language control and sounds artificial. Such texts are not really useful in the teaching of reading skills because they are so unlike authentic language. The intention behind the text is to show the meaning of the structure "there is/are", not to train students in reading skills. It would not be suitable, therefore, for reading skills training.

Though the English of **Text 2** is fairly simple, it could be so in real life. Many authentic tasks can be designed according to the listening material. Here is only one example.

**Step 1. Ask the students to listen to the dialogue and fill in the blanks.**

**Examples are:** There were \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, on the floor.

There were stains in the \_\_\_\_\_.

There were cups and glasses \_\_\_\_\_ the table. etc.

**Note 1.** This is not a authentic task, but focusing on language point. However, it provides the foundation for the next step.

2. If the students are more advanced in language proficiency, teachers don't need to go through this step.

**Step 2.** If you were Kate, and you happened to overhear the dialogue, how would you feel? You hate other people calling you untidy, what would you do when you returned to your flat? Talk to one of your classmates about your action of cleaning up the following day.

**Note 1.** This task checks the students' listening comprehension and is also close to the sort of situation that could happen in real life.

2. It provides students with practice of certain grammatical structures, such as Simple Past Tense (e.g. I emptied the ashtrays, picked up the records) some prepositions such as "on", "in".

## Task 4 Roles of Teachers

Do you agree with this point, that a teacher **cannot** simply be described as an "instructor" in class, whose major role is to pass on the knowledge? What are the other roles of teachers in the class?

To answer these questions, let's first see what you normally do in class as a teacher: Here are some possible answers for you to choose from. Tick (✓) the ones that describe the activities that you carry out as a teacher. If you do something else, please write that down in the spaces provided below the list.

1. Read out the new words and texts to the students to set up an example of pronunciation and intonation;
2. Explain language points and the meanings of new words and sentences;
3. Translate the new words and texts into Chinese;
4. Conduct a drilling exercise after the introduction of a new language point;
5. Organise students to do activities by giving instructions;
6. Give examples of how to do an activity after the explanation and instruction;
7. Elicit ideas from students;
8. Walk around the classroom, when the students are doing activities, to see if any of them needs help, both in ideas and language;
9. Give feedback and deal with errors;
10. Take part in the students' discussion or conversation if necessary;
11. Change the pace of the class by various means (e.g. use a combination of fast and slow activities);
12. Maintain discipline;

13. Give encouragement and suggestions during an activity.

I also do some other things, such as:

14. \_\_\_\_\_

15. \_\_\_\_\_

16. \_\_\_\_\_

*Please keep the list — we shall refer back to it later.*

## **Feedback**

This is an open-ended question and there are no right or wrong answers. The selection is personal.

The point in doing this task is that it makes us reflect on the roles we play in class. It is quite obvious that we function in more than just the role of “instructors”. There are many other roles we play. For example, we sometimes work as classroom managers or an activity participants. A number of writers on methodology and teacher training have proposed various ways of labelling the language teacher’s potential roles in class. These are adapted from Harmer (193: 200-204):

- A. The teacher as controller of everything that goes on in the classroom. He controls not only what the students do, but when they speak and what language they use;
- B. The teacher as manager, organising the activities;
- C. The teacher as assessor, giving feedback and advice, as well as correction and grading;
- D. The teacher as participant (co-communicator) in an organised activity such as debate or role play;
- E. The teacher as prompter to encourage students to participate or make suggestions about how to proceed in an activity;
- F. The teacher as resource, that is a source of language and knowledge;
- G. The teacher as instructor, actually teaching the new language points and training students in language skills.

Now, please go back to the list of things you do in class. Try to group them according to the teacher’s roles as defined above. Please write your number (1, 2, 3, ...) after the proper letter (A, B, C, ...).

For example, •

- 8. Walk around the classroom, when the students are doing activities, to see if any one needs help, both in ideas and language;

When a teacher is doing this, he/she is playing the function of resource, therefore you



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would put it next to. . .

- A. controller \_\_\_\_\_
- B. manager \_\_\_\_\_
- C. assessor \_\_\_\_\_
- D. participant \_\_\_\_\_
- E. prompter \_\_\_\_\_
- F. resource 8
- G. instructor \_\_\_\_\_

### Feedback

A.	controller	(1), (2), (3), 4, 12
B.	manager	5, (6), (7), 11
C.	assessor	9
D.	participant	10
E.	prompter	7, 13
F.	resource	1, 2, 3, 8
G.	instructor	1, 2, 3, 6

As you can see, some teacher activities can fit more than one role, so you may find you want to put the same number in two different categories.

You may also have more teacher activities and teacher roles to add to the list.

I think up to now you have a better idea of the multiple roles the teacher play in the classroom. However, there are some more points worth noticing.

1. Generally speaking, in communicative language teaching, the teacher is a facilitator of students' learning. His role is less dominant than in a teacher-centred method.
2. The role of the teacher changes following the aims of the class. The teacher may function more as a controller if he is mainly doing presentation of new language points, whereas he is more of a resource or prompter or participant once a communicative activity starts.
3. Many things a teacher does in class may not belong to a single one role. The teacher may function as a prompter, a organiser, or a controller as the same time, as we noticed in the task above. For example, when he is organising a role play activity, the teacher should first design and organise and allocate the roles to each student in the group. He is an organiser. At the same time, he gives examples on how to carry out the activity, and if the example is given by students, he should give feedback or corrections. In this case he is a prompter as well as an assessor.

Now we know that a teacher plays multiple roles in class. Can you, from your teaching

experience, predict any problems or things which should not be done while implementing such roles?

Read the following statements and decide, in each case, whether it is the correct thing to do in class. If you think it is inappropriate, please suggest what should be done instead.

**i) As an assessor:**

1. In drill type activities, the mistakes students made can be left unattended.
2. During a communicative activity, whenever a teacher finds a mistake, no matter in what sense, grammatical or cultural or any other aspect, he should stop the student and correct it.

Your answer:

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**Feedback**

Both the statements describe inappropriate behaviour for the teacher. Since the purpose of a drill is to practise the accuracy of the language, and the teacher should be totally in control, and errors should be corrected immediately to help the students realise what has gone wrong and to put it right. In a communicative activity, on the other hand, it is advisable that the teacher waits until the activity has been completed and then gives feedback on both the performance and the language. If he does it during the process of communication, the intervention may divert the students' attention from negotiating and exchanging information. If this is the case, the significance of the activity is lost and no or very little learning is taking place. When fluency is being trained, the students should not be interrupted.

As a conclusion, it is vital for the teacher to be sensitive to his students in his role as assessor and to realise when correcting is inappropriate.

Now, let's turn to some other teacher roles and decide what is appropriate behaviour for them.

**ii) As a manager:**

1. It is not necessary to pre-plan the instruction or support the instruction by pictures, demonstrations, or examples.
2. Since the students can understand their teacher's English perfectly well, it is not necessary to check the understanding of instructions before they start the activity.
3. If any misunderstanding occurs during the activity, a teacher can always stop the stu-

dents and give further explanation and instructions.

Your answer:

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**Feedback**

The first two statements are things that should definitely not be done when organising an activity. It is always advisable to plan beforehand what information the students will need for the activity and how to say it clearly and concisely in class. It would be even better if the instruction is supported by pictures, demonstrations or examples, if necessary. For example, if an information gap exercise is being used, students must be told not to look at each other's material. If they do, the point of doing the activity is lost. Therefore, the instructions the teacher gives are of vital importance because if the students have not understood clearly what they are going to do, they will not be able to perform their task satisfactorily.

The third statement has no fixed answer, because it depends on the seriousness and the number of students who misunderstand the instruction. However, we should spare no effort preventing the situation from happening. If, in spite of all our efforts, misunderstandings do occur, we should make a quick decision about whether to stop the whole class and present the activity in a different way or to go to the group with problems and help them out privately. It is always recommended to detect and repair misunderstandings as quickly and efficiently as possible while the activity is in progress.

**iii) As a prompter, participant, and resource person**

1. When a communicative activity starts, the teacher is left with nothing to do, since non-teacher-intervention is important in a genuine communicative activity. He can sit in front of the class and do some private reading until the time is up.
2. In a communicative activity, teacher participation means teacher domination, because the students tend to listen to their teacher rather than communicate with him.
3. The more help a teacher gives in a communicative activity, the more successful the activity can be.

Your answer: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Feedback**

None of the three are advisable.

Even though the teacher is less dominant in a communicative activity, and we have stressed the importance of teacher non-intervention where a genuinely communicative activity is taking

place, it doesn't mean that a teacher is left with nothing to do. He still has very important roles to perform. The teacher should walk around the classroom, monitoring the progressing of the activity, listening for mistakes and errors for feedback and providing help if needed. So the teacher should play an active part in communicative activity.

There is no reason why a teacher should not participate as an equal in an activity. There are many advantages. It can sometimes improve the atmosphere in the class, and give the students a chance to practise with someone who speaks the language better than they do. However, the danger is that the teacher tends to dominate the communication, because the students give the floor to the teacher easily and keep silent during the process of teacher talking. The teacher should be fully aware of it and make sure it does not happen. Teachers can use various techniques to get students involved in the communication. For example, he may hold back his own opinions and ask the students for theirs.

In communicative activities, the teacher should always leave room for the students to negotiate meaning, to discover ways of making up for their language deficiency in order to pass on the message. This is part of the learning process and important practice of communicative strategies necessary for real life communication. If, however, the teacher gives help whenever there is a problem, the opportunity for the students to solve the problems by themselves is lost. Therefore, the idea is that the teacher should stimulate and prompt the students with questions or providing clues rather than giving straightforward answers. He should be helping them *only* when it is really necessary.

## **Task 5 Roles of Students**

Let's now consider the roles of students. Since we have seen in the previous task that teachers can be more than just instructors, do you agree that students are not simply "passive recipients" of the teacher's instructions? Look at the following two pairs of statements about the roles of students. Which statement in each pair do you agree with, and why?

i)

1. A student is the passive recipient of the teacher's instructions.
2. A student is an interactor and negotiator in class who is capable of giving as well as taking information and knowledge.

ii)

1. A student is a listener and performer who has little control over the learning.
2. A learner must take responsibility for his own learning, developing autonomy and skills to become an "good" language learner.

Your answer:

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### **Feedback**

If you see your students as active contributors to a lesson, bringing along their own knowledge, experience and feelings, and if you see them as learners who will continue to learn independently from you, then you will agree with the second statements of each pair.

In the grammar translation method class, students were often seen as passive recipients of the knowledge with no control over the content of their learning. However, these days we see the roles of students differently. Like the teacher, they may have multiple roles. They sometimes sit silently and listen to the teacher who is playing the role of controller or language resource. At other times, when the teacher is playing the role of organiser or assessor, so the role of the students changes to participant, interactor or negotiator. They participate in the communicative activities, interact with their peers or teachers, negotiate and exchange information. Moreover, during the communicative activity, the students can also function as a resource, or assessor for their classmates. It is not a rare situation that in class we see one student first turn to his classmates for help and only when the answer is not satisfactory, does he turn to the teacher. It is quite common because students find asking their peers for help less threatening and less embarrassing than asking the teacher. So a student in a communicative language teaching class is expected to contribute much more than he would have in a grammar translation class.

The second pair of statements raises the important issue of students developing awareness of themselves as learners, and also developing learning techniques to be efficient students. Much research has recently been done in trying to identify effective learning strategies.

As English teachers, we find that some students are better than others. What are the characteristics of a “good” language learner? “Hardworking” is one. Can you think of more?

Your answer:

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### **Feedback**

You may contribute the success of some students in language learning to such qualities as being hardworking, having a good memory, having high motivation and interest, being self-confident, and so on.

Recent studies on the learning strategies of good language learners indicate that, besides those qualities, there are some other characteristics exhibited by them. For example, they have adopted a range of roles which are relatively uncommon in the grammar translation class. "Good" language learners are more adaptable, creative, inventive, and most of all independent. Rubin and Thompson (1983, in Nunan, 1991: 171) suggest that "good" learners tend to exhibit the following characteristics as they go about learning a second language:

1. Good learners find their own ways of learning which work best for them.
2. Good learners organise what they have learned through various techniques for easy reference.
3. Good learners are creative and experiment with language.
4. Good learners make their own opportunities, and find strategies for getting practice in using the language inside and outside the classroom.
5. Good learners learn to live with uncertainty and develop strategies for making sense of the target language without wanting to understand every word.
6. Good learners use mnemonics (rhymes, word associations, etc. to recall what has been learned).
7. Good learners learn to live with errors and learn from errors.
8. Good learners use linguistic knowledge, including knowledge of their first language in mastering a second language.
9. Good learners let the context (background knowledge and other extra-linguistic knowledge) help them in comprehension.
10. Good learners learn to make intelligent guesses.
11. Good learners learn formalised routines and chunks of language as a whole (idioms, routinized expressions, dialogue extracts, etc.) to help them in the expression of interpersonal functions.
12. Good learners learn communicative strategies to keep the conversation going (paraphrasing, using gestures and asking for help, etc.)
13. Good learners learn different styles of speech and writing and learn to vary their language according to the formality of the situation.

What do you think of the list? Has it made you change your opinion of why some students are successful language learners and some are not? Maybe you could design your own research into the learning strategies your students employ to see how successful they are.

In this activity, you have been introduced to some of the basic features of communicative language teaching. One of the most important was the authenticity of the materials and the activities. Teachers have multiple roles in class and they often perform more than one role at the same time. Like teachers, learners also play multiple roles in communica-

tive language teaching. Teachers are there to help them to become independent learners.

## Activity 4 Communicative Activities

At this stage, it may be useful to consider briefly what we hope to achieve through communicative activities in the classroom, because this will determine our attitude towards them and what place we give them in our overall methodology. Littlewood (1981) summarised some of the contributions that communicative activities can make to language learning under four headings:

1. They improve motivation
2. They provide "whole-task practice"
3. They allow natural learning
4. They can create a context which supports learning

### Task 1 Necessity, Unpredictability, and Choice

Communication is an exchange between people, of knowledge, of information, of ideas, of feelings. What are the features of genuine communication? Please consider the following example in which a man (A) speaks to a woman (B) at a bus stop:

A: Excuse me.

B: Yes?

A: Do you have a watch?

B: Yes... why?

A: I wonder if you could tell me what the time is?

B: Certainly... it's three o'clock.

A: Thank you.

B: Don't mention it.

#### Questions

1. Why does the man start the conversation?
2. When he starts to talk to the woman, does she have any idea what he is going to say?
3. Do the speakers have to use exactly the same expressions as in the dialogue? Can they change their sentences to other forms and still express the same meanings?

Your answers:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### Feedback

1. The man who starts the conversation may have many reasons for speaking: he may want to get into conversation with the woman because he thinks she looks attractive, and the question about the time may simply be an excuse to start the conversation. Another possibility is that he may genuinely want to know the time. No matter in what cases, there is a purpose for him to speak. So necessity is one of the features of communication.
2. When the man speaks to the woman, what he is going to say or ask is something new to her. She has no way to predict in advance what is going to happen. Communication is full of surprises. So unpredictability is the second feature of communication.
3. To achieve the same communicative purpose, the speaker has a range of linguistics forms to choose from. He will choose the language he thinks most appropriate in the social situation for the purpose. For example, he might have asked, "Excuse me, do you have the time?" So choice of language is the third feature of communication.

## Task 2 The Nature of Communicative Activities

In the classroom, we should try to design authentic communicative activities, which reflect the features of real communication. What is the nature of communicative activities?

*Please consider the following activities. Are they communicative? Can you make some generalisations about the nature of communicative activities?*

1. "Jigsaw" listening or reading — the students read or listen to different texts, then they exchange with each other the information they have gained from them.
2. Drilling exercises.
3. The teacher refers to a picture which everyone in the class can see and asks questions about the picture.
4. Mini-research and questionnaires — students walk around the class to do a mini-investigation on certain topic they are interested in by asking the other students questions.
5. Students make sentences following the given pattern or sentence structure.
6. Students present their own ideas or opinions on certain topic.
7. Students read the text aloud.
8. Students speak according to the roles assigned to them in a given situation.



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Your answer:

The communicative activities are: \_\_\_\_\_

The non-communicative activities are: \_\_\_\_\_

**Feedback**

The communicative activities are: 1, 4, 6, 8.

The non-communicative activities are: 2, 3, 5, 7.

*Now can you draw some conclusions on the nature of communicative activities and write them down below? The first one is done for you as an example.*

1. Students must have a desire to communicate. If they do not want to be involved in communication then that communication will probably not be effective.

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Feedback**

See if your list is close to the one below.

**Some conclusions on the nature of communicative activities**

1. *Students must have a desire to communicate. If they do not want to be involved in communication then that communication will probably not be effective.* In jigsaw listening/reading, the students who have an incomplete picture of the text, are eager to know the missing part. They should also have another task to perform afterwards using the whole information. This creates a desire to communicate.

2. *Students should have some kind of communicative purpose: in other words they should be using language in some way to achieve an objective, and this objective (or purpose) should be the most important part of the communication.* When doing mini-research and questionnaires, the students have a objective to achieve by using the language, whereas in drills, or other non-communicative activities, the purpose of speaking is for the sake of speaking itself.

3. *Students' attention should be centred on the content of what is being said or written and not the language form that is being used.* When students make sentences fol-

lowing a given pattern or sentence structure, they are concentrating on the language forms rather than the message carried by the sentence. This will not help them in the ability to express their real meaning in real-life conversation.

4. *Students will have to deal with a variety of language (either receptively or productively) rather than just one grammatical construction.* When students speak according to the roles assigned to them in a given situation, they are using the variety of language which is appropriate to the role and the situation they are in.
5. *While the students are engaged in the communicative activity the teacher should not intervene, such as telling students that they are making mistakes, insisting on accuracy or asking for repetition, etc.* This is often the case with non-communicative activities, such as in drills. The focus of communicative activities, however, is more on fluency and appropriate use of the language.
6. *There are no material controls to restrict the students' choice of what to say and how to say it.* When students are reading the text aloud, they are under the firmest control of the material. However, in other communicative activities, such as presenting their own ideas or opinions on certain topic, there is no restriction on what language they choose to use. They have the freedom in their own hands to choose the most appropriate language in the situation to express their real meaning and say what they want to say.

### **Task 3 Types of Communicative Activities**

Littlewood (1981) proposed two main categories of communicative activities, namely: **functional communication activities** and **social interaction activities**.

*Please read the following text and then fill in the table with information about the two categories of communicative activities.*

#### ***Functional communication activities***

From the discussion in Activity 1, we know that language has functional meanings. Therefore, we can devise communicative activities for the classroom which emphasise this functional aspect of communication. The main purpose of the activity is that students should use the language they know in order to get their meaning across as effectively as possible. Success is measured primarily according to whether they cope with the communicative demand of the activity. A typical example of this kind of activity is an information-gap task, which will be further illustrated in the next task.

#### ***Social interaction activities***

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We also see from Activity 1 that the appropriateness of language is another important aspect of communication. The students should have the ability to take into consideration the functional meaning of different language forms, and their social meaning as well. The competent language user chooses language which is not only functionally effective, but is also appropriate to the social situation he is in.

We can also devise communication activities which place emphasis on social as well as functional aspects of communication. Students must still aim to convey meanings effectively, but must also pay greater attention to the social context in which the interaction takes place. Success is now measured not only in terms of the functional effectiveness of the language, but also in terms of the acceptability of the forms that are used in the particular situation. Role-play is one of the most important techniques for creating a wide variety of social situations and relationships in the classroom.

	<b>Functional communication activities</b>	<b>Social interaction activities</b>
<b>emphasis</b>	the functional aspect of communication	
<b>aim</b>		1. convey meanings effectively 2. pay greater attention to the social context in which the interaction takes place
<b>standard for success</b>	cope with the communicative demand of the activity	
<b>typical examples</b>		

**Feedback**

	<b>Functional communication activities</b>	<b>Social interaction activities</b>
<b>emphasis</b>	the functional aspect of communication	the social as well as functional aspects of communication
<b>aim</b>	use the language they know in order to get meanings across and effectively	1. convey meanings effectively; 2. pay greater attention to the social context in which the interaction takes place

<b>standard for success</b>	cope with the communicative demand of the activity	1. functional effectiveness of the language; 2. the acceptability of the forms that are used in the particular situation
<b>typical examples</b>	information gap activities	role-play activities

## Task 4 Information Gap Activities

Real communication is often initiated because of the existence of an information gap. The speaker has the information which the listener does not know or the speaker wants to know information that the listener has. This information gap creates the need and the desire to speak/write and the curiosity to listen/read. In the classroom, we will want to create the same kind of information gap if we are to encourage real communication.

“Information gap activities are those in which students are given different bits of information. By sharing this separate information they can complete a task” (Harmer, 1983: 90). Information gap materials normally consist of two sets, set A and set B. Students sit in pairs. One looks at worksheet A while the other looks at worksheet B. The two sheets each carry part of the information needed to solve a problem. The students then have to transfer the information to each other by asking and answering questions. They must not look at each other’s worksheets.

*Let’s have a look at some examples of information gap activities.*

### Information Gap Activity 1

In this activity, students have to ask each other questions to fill in the blanks in their information sheet.

What sort of questions would Student A need to ask in order to get the missing information?

Your answers: \_\_\_\_\_

**Student A**

**What can you find out about these two islands?**

ISLAND	LOCATION	POPULATION	CLIMATE	VEGETATION	PRODUCTS
Walakiki		253,000		Tropical rain-forest in parts, palm trees on the coast	
Nordlund	In the North Sea		Long cold winters with thick snow and ice, short cool summers with long days.		Fish, oil (off-shore), ponies (local breed), shipbuilding.

✂

**Student B**

**What can you find out about these two islands?**

ISLAND	LOCATION	POPULATION	CLIMATE	VEGETATION	PRODUCTS
Walakiki	In the middle of the Pacific Ocean		Tropical, hot and humid, with a monsoon season.		Coconut, fish, fruit, coral, pearls, weaving, tourism.
Nordlund		176,500	Few shrubs, small flowers in springtime.		

**Feedback**

Student A needs to ask Student B: "Where is Walakiki?" or "Where is Walakiki located?", "How many people live in Nordlund?" or "What's the population of Nordlund?", "What's the climate like in Walakiki?", "What sort of vegetation does Nordlund have?", "What does Walakiki produce?" or "What are Walakiki's main products?"

**Information Gap Activity 2**

This activity was designed for use with Unit 30 of *Senior English for China*, Book 1B, to go with the texts "An Interesting Life".

What sort of questions would Student A have to ask in this activity?

Your answers: \_\_\_\_\_

**Student A**

Date	Name of Event	What they did	How much money they collected
1 1984		36 famous British and Irish pop singers made a record: "Do they know it's Christmas?"	
2	Live Aid		10 million dollars
3 1986		People all over Britain organised sports and games to collect money.	

**Student B**

Date	Name of Event	What they did	How much money they collected
1	Band Aid		8 million pounds
2 13 July 1985		Two pop concerts, lasting 17 hours, were organised in Britain and the USA at the same time.	
3	Sport Aid		? (Don't know.) But the total from all the events is 92 million dollars.

**Feedback**

Student A would have to ask: "What is the name of the first event?", "How much money did Band Aid make from their record?", "When did Live Aid take place?", "What did they do?", "What happened in 1986?", "How much money did they collect?"

These are examples of one type of information gap activity, that of completing a form with some blanks in it. There are other types, which could be, for example, two simi-

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lar pictures, which students have to describe to each other in order to find the differences, or a crossword, which they have to complete having only half the answers in it. You will be able to examine these in more detail in later units.

Well, now you know what information gap activities look like, you may have started to consider how you could use them in your classes and have already anticipated some problems you might encounter. Can you suggest any possible problems?

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_

### **Feedback**

1. The most obvious problem is the size of the class. You may argue against using information gap activities in your class because this sort of activity is quite easy to organise if it is with a small class, but things are different if you are teaching a class of sixty or more students. You know from experience that by the time the two sets of worksheets are handed out properly to each student, and you have stopped students looking at each other's paper, you have lost several minutes. You may even have lost control of the class.
2. The second problem most teachers anticipate is that of materials reproduction. Because teachers have limited access to ready-made materials, or to photocopy machines, it is very difficult to have enough hand-out materials for each student.

There may be many other problems that you have thought of that concern your individual teaching situation. But none of these problems are insoluble. In fact, many information gap activities can be conducted in a simple and cheap way in large classes whilst still remaining exciting and effective.

Can you think of any less costly ways of using information gap activities in your class in which you don't need to photocopy and hand out many materials?

For example, you could put the information (maybe pictures) on large posters or the blackboard for some of the students to see and describe to the others.

Your answer: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **Feedback**

The simplest form is to use a blackboard drawing or one poster. All the students in the class look at the same thing and do information gap activities. You may question this because there seems no information gap if everyone can see the same poster. But indeed, there can be, if it is well prepared. For example, you can have drawings of, say 10 people. They should be male and female, young and old, bearded and clean-shaven, wearing glasses or not, with and without a necklace or a tie, etc. In short, there should be a range of people, each closely related

to others in several ways, but with distinctive features. To play, one of a pair chooses a face but does not tell the choice to the partner, who has to make guesses until the chosen face is found. Such questions might be:

- |                               |                            |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Is the person male or female? | Is she old or young?       |
| Does she wear glasses?        | Is she wearing a necklace? |
| It must be number seven!      |                            |

Another form is to turn the alternative rows of students around, so that half the class is facing the students behind them. In this way, only the front facing rows can see the information on the blackboard or poster. Similarly, two different posters can be put up, one on the front blackboard and the other one on back wall. Then one is visible to the front-facing students while the other can be seen by those facing the back of the room. The pairs exchange information until they have completed the assigned task.

Let's look at another example of an information gap activity.

For example, imagine you are an English teacher in Senior One. There are sixty students in your class. You are teaching Unit 25, "The science of farming", *Senior English for China*, Book 1B. Look at the Dialogue on the first page of the unit. This is a dialogue about the weather and what the speakers will do in such weather conditions. Having finished the first three steps concerning the dialogue, you want to carry out an information gap activity, talking about the weather and making suggestions, which is a function that has been taught in the previous unit.

The situation you design is like this: Your students are salesmen and saleswomen for a large company. They are planning their business trip to Sydney, Australia. They are phoning their agents in Sydney and making arrangements for the trip. At the end of the phone conversation, they inquire about the weather there and the agents in Sydney give them information on the weather as well as suggestions on what to wear and what to bring, such as an umbrella or warm clothes.

What should you prepare for this information gap activity and how would you arrange your class?

Your answer:

The things to bring to the class: \_\_\_\_\_

The classroom instructions: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **Feedback**

Here are some suggestions for your activity.

**The things to bring to the class:**

1. A large map of Australia, with indications of weather conditions (general condition, tem-



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perature, wind, humidity, etc.). You may use the sort of signs we often see on the television weather broadcasts or write the weather conditions down in words.

2. A raincoat, an umbrella, and other things to illustrate the vocabulary you would like to teach. (We call these real objects that you bring in “realia”.) Note: this is optional

**The classroom instructions :**

**Step 1 : Introduce the situation and their roles :**

The students facing front are salesmen and saleswomen for a large company, planning their business trip to Sydney, Australia. They are phoning their agents in Sydney (the students who will be facing back) and making arrangements for the trip.

**Step 2. Assign the task :**

At the end of the phone conversation, they should inquire about the weather in Sydney and the agents in Sydney should give them information on the weather as well as suggestions on what to wear and what to bring, such as umbrella or warm clothes.

**Step 3. Check comprehension**

The teacher checks if the students understand what to do and how to do it; provide possible sentence structure and vocabulary; gives a sample demonstration if necessary.

**Step 4. Rearrange the class**

The teacher gets the alternative rows of students to turn around, facing their partner; reminds them of their roles; tells them the allocated time for this activity

**Step 5. Attach the two maps to the proper places where the students can see.**

**Step 6. Start the activity**

The teacher reminds the class the roles, the task and the time. Then the teacher tells the students to start the activity.

**Step 7. Feedback**

Let's take another activity designed for *SEFC*, Book 1B, Unit 25, “The science of farming”, Part 2, Practice: *What is it made of? What is it made from?* When you have finished doing the activity required by the textbook, and you want an information gap activity to consolidate the structure, how would you design it? You may use posters, drawings or real things (“realia”) to help.

Things you might want to bring to the class for this activity: \_\_\_\_\_

The classroom instructions: \_\_\_\_\_

**Feedback**

In fact you may bring anything you have available to the class, which can be used to practise the structure: for example, food, furniture, cooking utensils, clothes, etc. You can also bring posters with pictures of objects on them.

**The classroom instructions :**

**Step 1. Deal with the new words if any.**

The teacher helps the students to identify every object and makes sure they know how to say them in English.

**Step 2. Assign tasks**

One of a pair should choose an object but does not tell the choice to the partner. He then describes the object, its size, colour, use, and the material to make it, etc. The partner must guess what the object is.

**Step 3. Check understanding**

The teacher checks comprehension. It is advisable to give an example between the teacher and a capable student or between two students.

For example:

**Teacher:** Normally, it's white and in the shape of a cylinder. However, people also make it into many beautiful shapes and colours. It's made of wax, and wax is made from petroleum oil. We use it when there is no electricity to give us light.

**Student:** A candle.

**Teacher:** Yes, you're right. Now it's your turn.

**Step 4. Start the activity**

The teacher tells the students the allocated time for this activity, and how many turns are expected. The students are then ready to start.

**Step 5. Feedback**

In this activity, you don't need to get the students to turn around. Even though they are looking at the same things, there is information gap created by the speaker.

These are some examples of information gap activities. Once you have tried a few, you will easily imagine more in the same way.

## **Task 5 Role-Play Activities**

Doing role-play activities is a way to practise, or rehearse, situations that may happen in real life. The purpose of this is to prepare the students for the real-life language use.

In role-play activities...

... "students are asked to:

1. Imagine themselves in a situation which could occur outside the classroom. This could be anything from a simple occurrence like meeting a friend in the street, to a much more complex event such as a series of business negotiations.
2. Adopt a specific role in this situation. In some cases, they may simply have to act as themselves. In others, they may have to adopt a simulated identity.
3. Behave as if the situation really existed, in accordance with their roles."

(Littlewood, 1981: 49)

Here we will introduce three kinds of role-play activities. They are:

- role play controlled through cued dialogues,

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- role play controlled through cues and information,
- role play in the form of debate or discussion.

*Let's have a look at examples of each type adapted from the middle school textbooks.*

**Type 1: Role play controlled through cued dialogues**

A and B are good friends. One Saturday evening, they happen to meet each other in the street.

Learner A	Learner B
You meet B in the street. A: Greet B. B: A: Ask B where he is going. B: A: Suggest somewhere to go together . B:  A: Accept B's suggestion. B:	You meet A in the street. A: B: Greet A. . A: B: Say you are going for a walk. A: B: Reject A's suggestion. Make a different suggestion. A: B: Express pleasure.

You would normally give the students their cues printed on separated cards, so one student gets the instructions for Student A and his partner gets the instructions for Student B. This gives the interaction some of the unpredictability involved in "real" communication: each student must listen to his partner before formulating a definite response. However, the cues like this enable them to predict a large proportion of what their partner will say and prepare them with their own responses. This makes it easier for a student to use language forms which have just been taught and which have not been internalised and become automatic. This kind of exercise can prepare students to take part later in fully spontaneous interactions.

For more advanced students, this can also be used but the language in the cue card is more cryptic, as in this example:

<b><i>In the restaurant</i></b>	
Waiter:	Greet. Assign table. Offer menu
Customer:	Order meal (any questions?)
Waiter:	Describe dishes. Help with choice.
Customer:	Choose. Drinks?
Waiter:	Serve. Check all OK.
Customer:	Bill? Check it. Comments? Pay.
Waiter:	Thanks and farewells.

If it is difficult for you to give each student a role card, you can use the techniques we introduced in information-gap activities: write down the cues beforehand on two large separate sheets of paper and put them on the front and back of the classroom. Half of the students turn around to face their partners.

Now let's design a role-play activity controlled through cued dialogues from the material in *Senior English For China*, 1B, Unit 18: "Nature", Lesson 69, Part 2, Practice: *Building a new science lab*.

Student A is taking part in performances to collect money for a new science lab, and Student B is a newspaper reporter about to interview Student A about his intentions and the purposes of this project. Can you design the cue card for the dialogue between the student and the reporter? The situation for each student is given below.

***Student A***

You are a university medical student and you like acting very much. Your university is planning to build a science lab for cancer research. The students and staff of the medical school are organising performances to raise money from the public.

***Student B***

You are a reporter for China Youth Daily. You've heard about the performances at the Medical School but you are not very clear about why they are being organised. Anyway, you think it's a very good idea and you want to make it known to as many people as possible. You have come to interview one of the students who is taking part in the performance. You have several questions to ask about the purposes of the project and about the project itself.

***The cues for the dialogue are:***

Reporter: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Student: \_\_\_\_\_

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Reporter: \_\_\_\_\_  
Student: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Feedback**

Reporter: purpose of the project?  
Student: science lab & equipment  
Reporter: purpose of science lab?  
Student: cancer research  
Reporter: why project is needed?  
Student: buy advanced equipment and computers  
Reporter: how much money needed?  
Student: \$ 5,000  
Reporter: ways of collecting money?  
Student: put on performance  
Reporter: what sort, where and when?  
Student: . . . . .  
Reporter: comment and encouragement and good wishes  
Student: thanks and farewell

You may have designed it slightly differently. Remember to remind the students that these are prompts and not proper question forms. So, for example, the prompt: *why project is needed?* becomes a full question: *Why is the project needed?*

Another important aspect of role play is the classroom organisation and the instructions given by the teacher. These must be well-planned before the lesson and clearly explained to the students. It is very important that the students fully understand what they have to do in their roles and that they have the necessary language to make their performance effective.

This is a possible outline of the stages involved in using a role play:

1. Introduction and demonstration (led by the teacher)
2. Implementation (led by the students)
3. Feedback (led by the teacher)

This is the first type of role-play activity. I hope this gives you some idea of how it works in the class. Now let's go on to the next one: role play controlled through cues and information.

### **Type 2: Role play controlled through cues and information**

The students who play the roles are given different role cards, one containing cues and

the other related information.

For example: Student A is a hotel guest and Student B is the hotel receptionist.

The cue card for student A might look like this:

**Student A:** You arrive at a small hotel one evening. You meet the manager and

1. ask him/her if there is a room available;
2. ask him/her the price for one night, including breakfast;
3. tell him/her how many nights you would like to stay;
4. ask where you could get a good meal in the town;
5. say what time you would like your breakfast;
6. ask if they can give you a morning call tomorrow morning.

The information card for student B might look like this:

**Student B:** You are the manager of a small hotel that is famous for its friendly, homely atmosphere.

1. You have a single and a double room vacant for tonight.
2. The prices are: \$ 37.5 for the single room and \$ 50 for the double room.
3. Breakfast is not included and it costs \$ 4.50 extra per person.
4. Breakfast is served from 7:30 till 9 in the morning.
5. Guests can have tea and toast in their room in the morning, for \$ 1.50.
6. In the street behind the hotel, there is a nice, clean restaurant serving delicious local food.
7. Morning calls are part of their service.

In this type of activity, the main structure for the conversation comes from A's cues. A can introduce variations and additions. For the most part, B's role requires him to respond rather than initiate, though he may also introduce topics himself such as asking how many nights A would like to stay. Both A and B can use different language structures suitable to their identities.

*Could you now write the role cards for the following situation:*

A foreign tourist who has arrived in Beijing and now wants to travel to Shanghai for a few days, and a travel agent who has the information about flights and trains to and from Shanghai.

### **Feedback**

This is the sort of information you need to provide to ensure the students can perform the

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role play.

**Student A:** You are a foreign tourist who has just arrived in Beijing and you want to go to Shanghai for a few days. Ask the travel agent about how you can travel there and get details of the ... times

- length of travel
- days of travel
- prices (return)

**Student B:** You are a travel agent. A foreign tourist comes into your office and wants to go to Shanghai. You have details of the trains and flights. Return tickets cost twice as much as singles.

Train	Days	Departure Time	Arrival Time	Price (one way)
E105	Daily	07.00	01.00 (next day)	130 Yuan (hard seat) 190 Yuan (soft seat)
E126	Daily	20.00	14.00 (next day)	130 Yuan (hard seat) 190 Yuan (soft seat) 250 Yuan (sleeper)

Flight	Days	Departure Time	Arrival Time	Price (one way)
MU 5213	Daily	08.30	10.25	900 Yuan
CA 305	M, W, F	11.15	13.10	900 Yuan
MU 507	M, Th, Sa, Su	17.30	19.25	900 Yuan

In this kind of activity, the control of the teacher become looser and the students' creativity increases. However, there is still some control over the students' production of the language. This control is getting weaker in the next type of role-play activity.

**Type 3: Role play in the form of debate or discussion**

The situation is about a real or simulated issue. The learner's roles ensure that they have adequate shared knowledge about the issue and different opinions or interests to defend.

In *SEFC*, Book 1B, Unit 20, Lesson 77, Part 2: Discussion, the topic is that of the jobs men and women can do and whether there is any difference in the type of jobs they are good at. How can we adapt this to a discussion role-play? Can you think of the roles for your students on this topic and give their possible opinions?

***Women are better at some jobs than men, but why are there more men at the top?***

Student A:  
Profession: \_\_\_\_\_;  
Opinion: \_\_\_\_\_.

Student B:  
Profession: \_\_\_\_\_;  
Opinion: \_\_\_\_\_.

Student C:  
Profession: \_\_\_\_\_;  
Opinion: \_\_\_\_\_.

Student D:  
Profession: \_\_\_\_\_;  
Opinion: \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Feedback**

Here is a suggested answer for you, but remember yours may be different and just as good:

**Student A:**

**Profession:** a female doctor

**Opinion:** In the medical field, men and women are equally as good, but women are usually more sympathetic to the feelings of their patients. It is more difficult for women to reach high positions because of family responsibilities.

**Student B:**

**Profession:** a male traffic policeman

**Opinion:** Male drivers have more traffic accidents than women, not because they are worse drivers, but because they are more confident so take more risks, drive faster, and sometimes drink and drive. Women drivers are more cautious, but sometimes too slow at making decisions.

**Student C:**

**Profession:** a male middle school headmaster

**Opinion:** There are more female teachers than male teachers because of the low salary, but not for any other reason. The female teachers usually have more family responsibilities, so do not take on extra work duties. Male teachers have more time to do extra work, which is why they get promoted more to higher positions.

**Student D:**

**Profession:** a female company director

**Opinion:** Women are better partners in business because they are more co-operative, sympathetic and willing to listen to other people's problems than men. Women are better at working in teams than men and can reach decisions more easily through discussion. The problem is that not all men want to work for women or even do business with them.

You may give different roles to different people. It is all acceptable so long as you provide your students with a clear picture of their opinions on the issue of the role of men and women.



This activity can also work as a follow-up activity after a reading text, if it provokes an interesting issue to discuss. In fact, many reading texts in *Senior English for China*, Book 1B, for example, can trigger interesting discussions or debates. Of course, more supplementary reading materials in support of or against the idea are often needed, if the discussion is to be a real success.

In this task, we have seen three types of role-play activities. We have also learned to design these three types of activities, using the materials of our new textbooks. If you are going to try out some of these techniques in your class teaching, I am sure your students will enjoy them and get used to the new type of activity quickly. Why not try it now?

In this activity, we have seen that there are three basic features to communication: necessity, unpredictability, and choice of language. The communicative activities in the classroom should reflect these features. We have introduced two types of activities, information gap and role-play, which practise mainly the functional meaning of the language and the appropriate use of the language respectively. We hope you may try to introduce these activities into your classroom teaching. More detailed introduction of these activities can be found in other units of this book.

## **Review of This Unit**

Now, we have finished all the tasks for this unit. Let's think back together to what we have been doing in this unit.

First, in the Warm-up, we looked at the different interaction patterns that we engage in every day and reflected upon the situation in our classrooms. In Activity 1, you were presented with tasks showing that language teaching includes not only teaching grammatical structures, but also functional meanings and social appropriateness, in order to develop the learners' communicative competence.

In Activity 2, we saw the importance of background knowledge in language processing and applied this to the teaching of reading and listening, as well as to the selection of supplementary materials. We concluded that the difficulty of a text to our students lies in both the language and the background knowledge shared with the writer. Teachers should either introduce the background knowledge or, if possible, elicit it from the students to overcome the language difficulties. This activity also introduced the differences between spoken and written languages, and some basic features in oral communication.

Activity 3 was devoted to the presentation of some basic principles of communicative language teaching, such as the functional syllabus, authenticity, and the roles of teachers

and students.

The last activity was focused on the teaching of communicative skills. First, we looked at the features of real communication and applied them to the design of communicative activities. Then we categorised two types of communicative activities: functional communication activities and social interaction activities. Lastly, we introduced examples for these two types of activities: information gap and role-play, to practise the learners' communicative skills.

Take some time now to go over the tasks again to see that you fully understood them. You may also check with the objectives with which we started the unit and see if you feel you have successfully achieved them.

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Lynch, T.	1996	<i>Communication in the Language Classroom</i> Oxford University Press
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\* \* \* \* \*

### **Evaluation of this unit**

*Now please write the answers to these questions in your diary.*

1. What have you learnt from this unit?
2. What has been most useful to you?
3. What do you think you can apply to your teaching?
4. How do you intend to this?
5. Are there any problems that you have encountered in this unit?
6. How do you intend to deal with those problems?
7. Did you at any point change your attitude towards some aspect of teaching or learning English? If so, at which point was it?
8. Is there anything more you would like to know?

## Tapescript

### Activity 2

#### Task 5

- Jane: Well, what did you think of Wimbledon this year?  
Jacky: Oh, exciting, wasn't it?  
Norman: Good to see a British player doing well at last.  
Jane: Oh yes, at last, er... Hen...  
Jacky: Henman.  
Jane: Yes, Henman.  
Norman: He did really well, didn't he?  
Jane: Yeah.  
Norman: I mean, considering we haven't had a Brit in the semi-finals for ... twenty-five years.  
Jacky: Twenty-five years!  
Jane: Yeah, amazing! And he's still quite...  
Jacky: He's still young.  
Jane: Young. Yeah.  
Jacky: Oh, he has a good chance of getting there next year.  
Jane: Mm.  
Norman: Sampras doesn't show any signs of slowing down though, does he?  
Jane: No, his serve... it's so... fast.  
Jacky: Incredibly fast!  
Jane: Still we have a hope with young ...  
Norman: Henman? Yes, he might make it.

**Unit 3 Focus on Reading**

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# Unit 3 Focus on Reading

## Objectives

At the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- understand that reading is an active process and is meaning-focused;
- have a clear idea about different approaches towards reading: bottom-up approach, top-down approach and interactive approach;
- be able to use major reading strategies: skimming, scanning, inferring, etc.;
- be able to teach reading in three stages: pre-reading stage, while-reading stage and post-reading stage.

## Warm-up

Among the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing), reading might be the most familiar to our Chinese learners of English. In a way, we learn English mainly through reading. Then, what is reading? Please write down your understanding of reading.

I think reading is \_\_\_\_\_.

In the former textbooks of this series, you have been asked to do various reading tasks. Can you still remember any of them?

Examples of the reading tasks I have done are \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

As an English teacher, how do you usually teach a reading lesson to your students?

My teaching of a reading lesson involves \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## Feedback

Your answers to the first and the last question may vary from person to person, for different people may have different understandings of them. The reading tasks you have been asked to do so far mainly focus on the training of reading strategies: for example, reading for gist (getting the main idea), reading to locate specific information, inferring writer's attitude, etc. Actually, this unit on the teaching of reading will focus on these questions. It would be interesting to see whether your responses already reflect the contents of this unit, or whether by the end of the unit your attitude towards reading has changed.

# Activity 1 Introducing Reading

## Task 1 What Is Reading?

*As mentioned in the Warm-up, different people may understand reading in different ways. Read the following statements and decide whether you agree with them or not.*

1. Reading is recognising the written words in a text. ( )
2. Reading is the ability to articulate the words and pronounce them correctly. ( )
3. Reading is an active process. It constantly involves guessing, predicting, checking and asking oneself questions. ( )
4. Reading is the ability to understand the written words and respond to them in proper ways. ( )
5. Reading means getting meaning out of a given text. ( )

## Feedback

You probably disagreed with 1, and 2. Did you? The problem with statement 1 is that reading is not just the ability to recognise words, but the reader also needs to make sense of what he reads. In statement 2, articulating words and pronouncing them correctly cannot be called reading, it is merely decoding — translating written symbols into corresponding sounds. Statements 3, 4, and 5 reflect the nature of reading, that is, reading is an active process, during which the reader tries to understand the meaning of a given text.

## Task 2 Why Do We Read?

People usually read different things for different purposes. Look at the items in the box below and underline those that you usually read in your mother tongue.

newspapers and magazines, novels and short stories, letters, telegrams, specialised articles, street maps, recipes, menus, signs, notices, information leaflets, dictionaries, advertisements, teaching materials, labels on packets and containers

Have you finished the task? You will find that you read quite a range of text types. Have you thought of the purposes for reading them? Please write those purposes down. The first one has been done for you as an example.

I read **newspapers and magazines** in order to keep informed of the current affairs.

I read \_\_\_\_\_

I read \_\_\_\_\_

### Feedback

There are no correct answers for these questions. You may have various purposes for reading different types of texts. In general, there are three main reasons why people read.

- One is reading for survival. This kind of reading serves your immediate needs or wishes. For example, parents read the label on a medicine bottle to see if it is suitable for a sick baby and to see how much to give. They also read the safety regulations on toys to see if there is any danger for their child.
- The next one is reading for learning and information, which means that reading can help extend your general knowledge of the world. Much of your day-to-day reading, like reading newspapers and magazines, specialised articles, teaching materials, dictionaries, is for this purpose.
- The last one is reading for entertainment or pleasure. Quite different from reading for survival which involves an immediate response to a given situation, and reading for learning and information which is also goal-driven, reading for entertainment is done for its own sake — the readers don't have to do it. We read novels, stories and poems as a leisure activity. Many people have found that reading for pleasure in any language tends to improve language fluency. Do you agree?

### Task 3 How Do We Read?

When picking up a text, how do you usually read it?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Read the following descriptions, tick (✓) those which suit your situation.

1. I usually start reading a text by recognising words, word connections, and phrase

patterns as well as sentence patterns, then I can rapidly and automatically get meaning from the text. ( )

2. When reading a text, I first identify the topic, purpose and structure of the text, then I make guesses, predictions during reading. In this way, I create meaning from the text as a whole. ( )
3. I think the meaning of a text is more than the sum of the individual words and sentences. When reading a text, I start by predicting the probable meaning, then I get to read and understand the words and phrases in the text to check whether that is really what the writer means. Sometimes I go the other way round. That's to say, I combine the above 2 ways in my reading. ( )

### **Feedback**

Have you ticked your choices?

- Statement 1 exemplifies the “bottom-up” approach to reading that you learnt about in Unit 2. That is, the reader builds up the meaning of a text on the basis of decoding smaller units: first words, and phrases, then sentences and paragraphs, and finally working out the meaning of the whole text.
- Statement 2 is an example of the “top-down” approach to reading. In this way, the reader uses his or her knowledge of the topic or of the type of the text and makes predictions about what the text will contain, then these predictions are checked by reading and trying to understand the text. This way of reading a given text is sometimes compared to an eagle's eye view of a landscape, you get to see the global view of the text before you dive into the details of it.
- Statement 3 demonstrates the “interactive” way of reading, which means the reader uses bottom-up and top-down ways together, and the two ways interact with each other in the understanding of a text. The reader may shift from one focus to another during the process. That means he might to predict the context of the text by using his knowledge of the topic (top-down), then look for key words (bottom-up) to check the prediction, or get the main gist of the text by skimming it quickly (top-down) and examine the writer's choice of vocabulary for understanding the implied meaning.

The “interactive” way of reading has come to be accepted by more and more people. It makes use of background knowledge, context, and expectations (top-down processing). At the same time, it also incorporates recognising letters and words rapidly and picking out important words or phrases, picking out details which give the key to the general meaning. It is a comprehensive approach and reflects the real nature of the reading process. We should be flexible as readers and employ whatever techniques and strategies that are suitable to the reading purpose and the type of text.

### **Task 4 What's the Problem?**

It is not uncommon that sometimes when you take up a text in a foreign language, you



### Unit 3 Focus on Reading

recognise every word but still fail to grasp its meaning. So what's the problem? And where does the difficulty lie?

Let's look at the following example.

*Defender Zhang, of China's league champions Dalian Wanda, scored his header at the 24th minute of the second half from a corner kick. (China Daily, 4/10/97)*

To understand the above passage, the reader needs to have a certain amount of background knowledge in the field of football, in order to understand such terms as "defender" and "header", and also the rules of the game, for "the second half" and "corner kick", otherwise, it may not make much sense.

The background knowledge needed to interpret a given text is called "schema" (see also Unit 9 of *Language and Linguistics — A Workbook*). It originates from all the particular experiences the reader has had. It is an organised structure as well, including the relationship between its component parts.

"Schema" plays a very important role in understanding a given text. Many pre-reading activities are designed with this purpose in mind. The teachers usually spend time in activating the students' existing schema, or providing it if it didn't exist, before teaching a text. For example, if the students are going to read a story about Henry Kissinger, the teacher may try to activate their relevant background knowledge by asking such questions as: "How much do you know about Henry Kissinger"? They may respond by saying something they know about his life, his political career as a diplomat, especially his role in the improvement of Sino-American relations, and so on. The students then might be told what sort of text it is, in order to predict what sort of information will be there. So, if it is a biography, we expect to find details of Kissinger's birth and parents. If it is an article criticising his political decisions, we would probably not expect that sort of information there, but a more specialised account of his political activities. Asking students to predict the contents from the topic and from the text type are examples of activating their "schema", that is, using their experience of the structure they are familiar with in certain types of texts. We will come across more of such pre-reading activities later on in this unit.

## **Task 5 Being an Efficient Reader**

In the former tasks of this Activity, you have looked at the nature of reading, the purposes for reading, three ways of approaching reading and lastly utilising "schema". Now think about what you might need to have in order to become an efficient reader in a for-

eign language, such as English.

In order to read efficiently in a foreign language, the reader needs to \_\_\_\_\_

---

*Now read the following statements, tick the answers you agree with :*

1. clear purposes ( )
2. adequate knowledge of grammar ( )
3. sufficient amount of vocabulary ( )
4. relevant background knowledge (schema) ( )
5. automatic decoding skill (i. e. quick recognition of vocabulary and grammar) ( )
6. reading strategies ( )

### **Feedback**

You have probably ticked all of the above. If you have, then good! Actually, they can be classified into the following categories: language skills (2, 3, 5); background knowledge (4); reading strategies (6) and employing different reading strategies to suit different reading purposes (1). They are all important in effective reading. In a word, improving reading efficiency and the teaching of reading all focus on these major factors.

This brings us to the end of Activity 1. It has been necessary to go through some of the theory of what reading actually consists of before going on to anything practical. Before teachers can teach reading skills, they need to understand what they are. In the next activity, we will come to something more down-to-earth — the various reading strategies you employ while reading a text.

## **Activity 2 Identifying Major Reading Strategies**

In Activity 1, we looked at the kind of things you usually read, and your purposes for reading them. You are also aware of the fact that people tend to use different reading strategies in order to achieve different purposes.

*Now think about how you usually read the following :*

a newspaper, a train timetable, a dictionary, medicine instructions, articles on language teaching, a legal document

When you pick up a newspaper, you don't usually read every word. Instead, you read through the headlines, titles and subtitles quickly to get a general idea about what is written on the page and find out if there is anything interesting there. This skill is called **skimming**. You may not have an idea beforehand about what your reading material is about.

Sometimes you glance quickly through a text in order to find a specific piece of information, for example a number in a telephone directory, a departure time in a train timetable, the meaning of a word in a dictionary, or the dosage of a medicine in the instructions. This skill is called **scanning**. You usually employ this skill when you know beforehand what you want to see, you are looking for something particular, but you don't need to read every word.

As for the materials such as stories, novels, articles on language teaching, or legal documents, you need to read them more carefully and deeply. You try to understand not only the surface meaning, but also the meaning behind it. To do this, you need to **read in detail** and employ **inference** skills (look for implied meaning that is not stated openly), and sometimes your knowledge of **text structure** too.

In this activity, these four major reading strategies are going to be examined. Sample texts are used to demonstrate how to use them in effective reading.

## **Task 1 Skimming**

As mentioned before, skimming is not careful reading. The reader usually moves his eyes over the text very quickly just in order to get the gist of it or to decide whether it is worth reading more deeply or not. Skimming enables readers to look efficiently for something that interests them, without spending too much time reading what is unnecessary or uninteresting.

*Skim through the following passage (Text 1) within 1-2 minutes and then find out its main idea.*

### **Text 1**

Providing no serious natural disasters happen, a bumper harvest is expected next year. Meanwhile outputs of animal husbandry and agriculture keep growing. Yet three problems exist despite the rosy picture.

The first is the decline in cotton production. The total sown area of cotton has decreased yearly. This year, the figure slid to its lowest in 10 years, at 4.53 million hectares, 90 percent of the

planned area and 133,000 hectares less than 1996. Of the 10 provinces which have annual cotton production over 100,000 tons, only Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region managed a 10 percent growth. Owing to the fact that the decrease of cotton sown areas takes place mostly in high-yield regions, the national cotton production this year is likely to be affected. If a solution, to check the tendency, cannot be developed, a new round of tension in cotton supply and demand is likely to occur.

The second problem is that farmers find it difficult to sell grain. The third consecutive bumper grain harvest was recorded this summer. However, many grain production areas suffered from insufficient storehouse and capital, increased deficit and an inefficient grain distribution system. Delayed payment for grain to farmers also hurt, as they faced the rising cost of agricultural production means. As a result, an increase in grain output does not lead to an income increase for farmers. Difficulties in selling grain dampen the farmers' enthusiasm and cast a shadow on grain production and agriculture development.

The third problem is that the farmers' annual income does not lead to optimism. At present, income from household-operating business amounts to 60 percent of the farmers' cash income, which is the main part of their net income. In the first half of this year, income from household business increased at a slow pace, affecting their total cash earnings. As a result, farmers will not be able to spend much on living and agricultural investments. This will have a negative impact on rural markets and rural economies.

To solve these problems, it is important to purchase summer and autumn grain, deepen the grain circulation system reforms, seek various ways to increase the farmers' income and relieve their burdens.

From *China Daily*, 4/10/97

*Now complete this statement :*

The passage mainly talks about \_\_\_\_\_

### **Feedback**

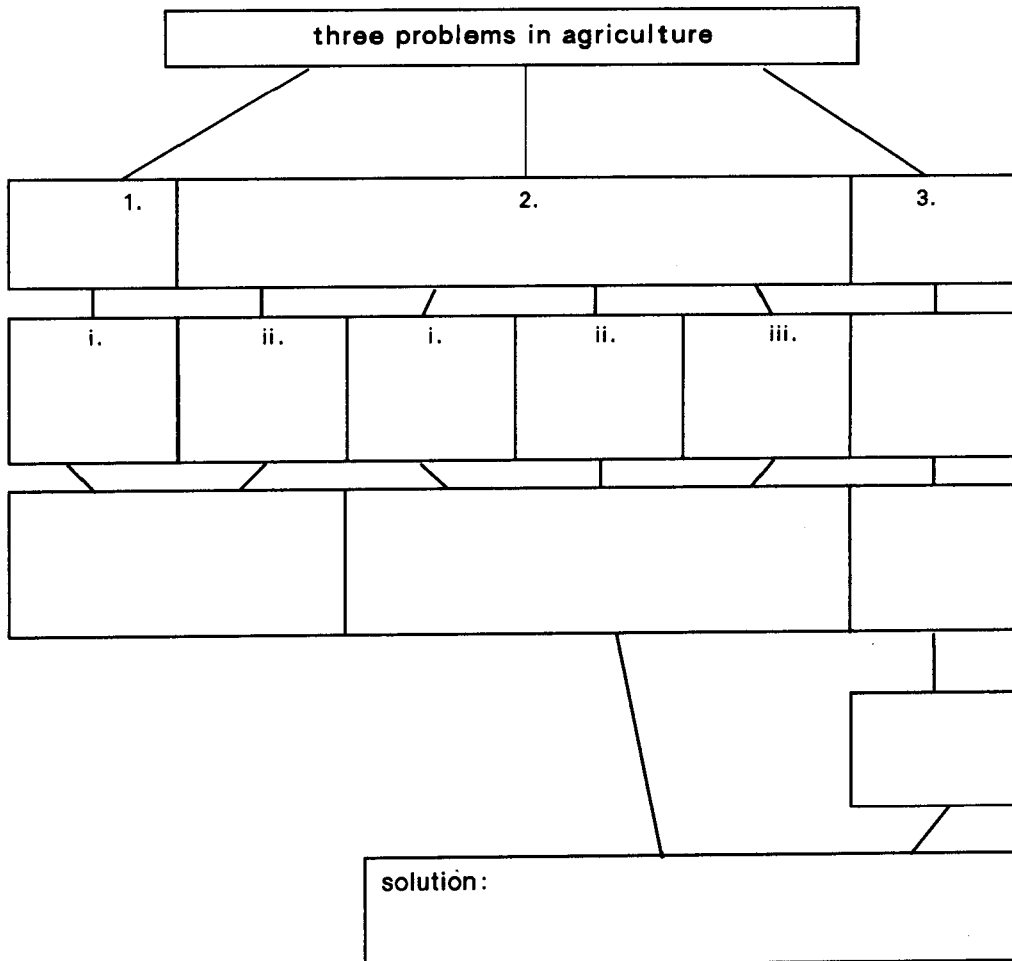
This task is not difficult, is it? You can find that the text is mainly about the three problems existing in agriculture. The three problems are actually mentioned in the topic sentences of the respective paragraphs. Can you go back to the text and mark them now?

You should have marked these sentences:

1. The first is the decline in cotton production.
2. The second problem is that farmers find it difficult to sell grain.
3. The third problem is that the farmers' annual income does not lead to optimism.

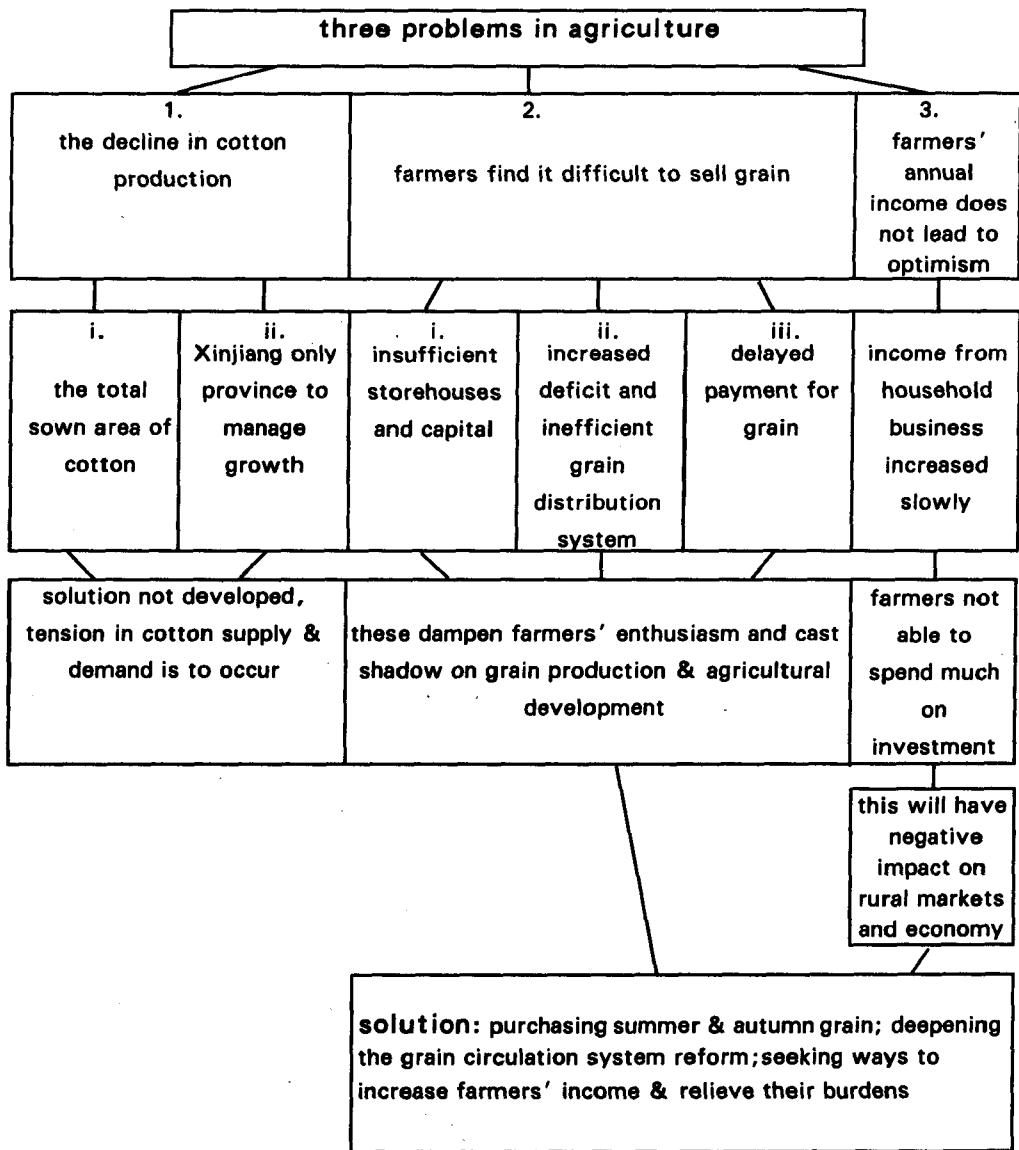
Unit 3 Focus on Reading

Read the text again, this time more carefully and extract the relevant information to fill in the following diagram.



**Feedback**

This task requires a more detailed study of the text. Have you got the relevant information? Check your answer with the following diagram.



Now let's do another skimming activity.

Skim through Text 2 in 3-5 minutes in order to match the titles with the sections numbered sections.

**Titles**

- Using the Internet for information search and retrieval
- Defining the Internet by its uses
- Communication on the Internet

- Sharing resources over the Internet
- The definition is good enough for me! What's next?

**Text 2**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

Even if you'd already used the Internet for years, you still might be wondering exactly what it is and what you can do with it. One way people like to define the Internet is by how they use it, not by what it actually is. All the information I can look at with a tool like Netscape or all the people to whom I can send electronic mail — that is the “Internet” that I know and love. Such a use-based definition is actually adequate for most people. To understand a use-based definition of the Internet, let's ask a simple question: What do people do with a network like the Internet? The three things that we have found to be common uses of the Internet can be broadly categorized as communication, information retrieval, and resource sharing.

2. \_\_\_\_\_

The Internet provides a cheap and efficient means of communication. Probably the most common method of communication of the Internet is called electronic mail, or e-mail for short. E-mail provides a facility for someone to send an electronic letter or message to anyone connected to the network. Teachers might use e-mail to send a message to peers to discuss classroom ideas. Students might use e-mail to make friends around the world or participate in collaborative learning projects.

Typically, e-mail is person to person, but just like in regular mail, there are also mailing lists to address a group of people. These mailing lists, often called **LISTSERVs**, can serve as a valuable resource for communicating with your peers or finding out about new curriculum ideas. Although mailing lists serve as a very good direct forum to a large group of people, they are quite private methods of conferencing and require a user to actively “subscribe” to the list. A more public electronic forum for discussion on the Internet is called **USENET news**. **USENET** provides large numbers of newsgroups or conferences that have open participation. Like **LISTSERVs**, **USENET** can provide a valuable forum for both students and teachers alike to communicate.

3. \_\_\_\_\_

The Internet is really made up of a bunch of computer networks all over the world joined together. We should not forget the computers that are on these member networks. Each of the systems connected to the Internet may contain large volumes of information for the users to download, and we can use the Internet as a transportation mechanism to get at this information. If we think abstractly about the concept of information available over the Internet, we *might imagine a huge cloud or “space” of documents*. This could be the cyberspace that people like to talk about all the time. To gain access to all the wonderful information found in cyberspace, we need to use an information retrieval tool.

There is a variety of Internet information retrieval tools out there. One of the simplest and oldest tools is called FTP, for file transfer protocol. FTP is a very simple facility that allows you to transfer a file from the Internet down to your machine. Sounds simple enough, but there's one catch. How do you know what you want to download? There is so much information in cyberspace we need a special tool or service just to locate what we want. So we see that, in reality, unless we want to casually browse or "surf" the Internet hoping to stumble across interesting information, we need first to search for and then retrieve our desired data.

4. \_\_\_\_\_

A common motivation for setting up a small network in your classroom is to share a valuable resource, such as a laser printer, among students or teachers. Believe it or not, most people seem to forget that the Internet is often used in the same way. Putting a large supercomputer on the Internet and making it accessible to the masses is one way people share computing resources. Many universities and government agencies have put databases, library card catalogues, and other programs for educators to access on-line. With Telnet, for example, teachers can use the Internet as a way to access a remote educational resource. Logging into a distant database or library card catalogue are probably the most common examples of educational resource sharing over the Internet.

5. \_\_\_\_\_

There are probably a lot of other uses for the Internet that we have not mentioned, but the major ones are communication, information retrieval, and resource sharing. We'll take a closer look at how you can use the Internet and the resources listed in this guide in later chapters. If you want a more complex definition of the Internet, there are plenty of introductory Internet books available on the market. So let's get a move on since you are probably itching to get at all the educational resources available on the Internet. But before you jump to the resource section of this book, we have first to take a look at getting connected to the Internet.

### **Feedback**

The answer is:

1. Defining the Internet by its uses
2. Communication on the Internet
3. Using the Internet for information search and retrieval
4. Sharing resources over the Internet
5. The definition is good enough for me! What's next?

*Read through the text again and take notes on the main information to fill in the table below. Remember that we use abbreviations in note-taking for speed and economy of space. Notes are just there to jog your memory as to the main meaning of the text.*



Uses	Explanation
1.	i)  ii)  iii)
2.	-  e.g. FTP
3.	-  e.g. Telnet

**Feedback**

This task is not very difficult, is it? Have you filled in the table with the relevant information? Now compare your answer with the following:

Uses	Explanation
1. <i>Communication</i>	i) <i>e-mail — send message to individual person — anyone connected to network</i>  ii) <i>mailing lists, e.g. LISTSERVs — forum with a large group of people — have to 'subscribe' to list — private</i>  iii) <i>USENET — more public — open participation — for newsgroups or conferences</i>
2. <i>Information Retrieval</i>	<i>— much info. provided by other systems — can download — obtain info. — need to use info. retrieval tool</i> <i>e.g. FTP (file transfer protocol) — transfer files from Internet to your computer</i>
3. <i>Resource Sharing</i>	<i>— can put resources on Internet for sharing</i> <i>e.g. Telnet — for Ts to access remote educ. resource</i> <i>— or log into database or library card catalogue</i>

*From the information in the table, write a summary of the text. Do not look back at the original text. Aim at using about 150 words. There is a suggested summary written for you below, but you should try not to look at it until you have written your own.*

**Feedback** (This is just a suggested summary from the information in the table.)

**Summary**

There are three main reasons for using the Internet. The first is communication, the most

common form of which is e-mail, i. e., a way of sending messages to people who are connected to the network. There are also mailing lists for contacting more than one person, such as LISTSERVs, which can provide a forum for a large number of people who subscribe to it keeping it private. For more open access, USENET provides a public forum for newsgroups or conferences.

Secondly, you can use the Internet to download a large body of information, provided by other systems. For this purpose you need an information retrieval tool, such as FTP (file transfer protocol) to transfer the files to your computer.

Finally, you can also put resources onto the Internet for sharing with others. For example, Telnet is a system used by teachers to access remote educational resources. You can also log onto a database or library card catalogue system.

Were your notes effective enough for providing all the main information necessary for the summary?

## **Task 2 Scanning**

Scanning means locating specific information you, the reader, want from the text. You do not necessarily follow the order of information in the passage, but can go back and forth to read the part of the text relevant to your purpose. Scanning is "invaluable" when you are reviewing a text, doing research, writing a paper, or seeking specific information for other purposes. It is the usual way people work with directories, dictionaries, tables, indexes, and maps. It is also a time and energy saving activity, which should help you increase your reading speed and efficiency. Now let's do two scanning exercises.

*In Text 3 below, you will find the instructions for a medical product. Scan through it as quickly as possible to find the answers to the following questions.*

1. What does the name of the medicine suggest to you?
2. What is the maximum dosage for a nine-year-old child?
3. If you are driving your family to the ferry and you already feel very uncomfortable and nauseous (or sick), would you take Saileasy now?
4. Which of the following are correct?  
Saileasy should never be taken by....
  - a) elderly people
  - b) children under 2 years old
  - c) assembly line worker
  - d) pregnant women

Text 3

**SAILEASY** is the best answer to travel sickness, use for the prevention of seasickness and avoid those uncomfortable symptoms: nausea, dizziness and vomiting.

**DIRECTIONS FOR USE:** to prevent seasickness, take first dose one hour before boarding.

**DOSAGE; ADULTS:** 1 to 2 tablets every 4 to 6 hours, not to exceed 8 tablets in 24 hours.

**CHILDREN 6 to 12 years old:** 1 tablet every 6 to 8 hours, not to exceed 3 tablets in every 24 hours.

**CHILDREN 2 to 6 years old:** 1/2 tablet every 6 to 8 hours, not to exceed 1 1/2 tablets in every 24 hours.

**NOT SUITABLE FOR CHILDREN UNDER 2 YEARS OF AGE.**

**Warning:** **SAILEASY** may cause drowsiness. Do not drive a car or operate heavy machinery while taking this medication. Avoid alcoholic beverages. Pregnant women should consult a doctor before taking this medication.

**Feedback**

The answers to the questions are:

1. The name of the medicine **SAILEASY** comes from "sail + easy" which might mean something that can make your travelling by boat (e.g. sailing) easy and comfortable.
2. The maximum dosage for a nine-year-old child is 3 tablets a day.
3. No, you shouldn't take **SAILEASY** while you are driving, as it may cause drowsiness (sleepiness).
4. (b) is correct. Elderly people are not mentioned. Assembly line workers are not mentioned, although those who operate heavy machinery should not take it. Pregnant women are not forbidden to take it, but should ask their doctor first.

*Now scan through this extract from a dictionary, Text 4, to answer the following questions as quickly as you can. Time yourself doing the activity and try to complete it within 5 minutes.*

1. How do you pronounce **tankard**?
2. Is the verb **tantalise** transitive or intransitive?
3. What's the American expression for a tank that contains petrol in a car?
4. Which preposition is used before the noun **tannoy**?
5. Is the noun **tangle** countable?
6. What's the meaning of the expression: "It takes two to tangle"?
7. How do you form the noun from the adjective **tangible**?

8. Would an American call a coin a "tanner"?
9. Can feelings be "tangled"?
10. Who would use **tannin** and what for?

## Text 4

## tangerine

1474

**tan-ge-rine** /ˈtændʒəˈriːn/ [C] a small sweet fruit like an orange with a skin that comes off easily

**tan-gi-ble** /ˈtændʒɪbəl/ [ADJ] 1 **tangible proof/results/benefits** etc proof, results, advantages etc that are easy to see so that there is no doubt: *Welfare reform has not yet brought any tangible benefits.* —opposite **INTANGIBLE** 2 **formal** able to be felt by touch —**tangibly** *adv* —**tangibility** /ˈtændʒɪˈbɪləti/ [N] [U]

**tan-gle** /ˈtæŋɡəl/ [V] [I,T] to become twisted together or make something become twisted together in an untidy mass: *My hair tangles easily.* | *tangle sth* *Somebody's tangled all these cables under my computer.*

**tangle with sb** *phr* [V] [T] *informal* to argue or fight with someone: *I wouldn't tangle with him if I were you.*

**tangle** <sup>2</sup> [N] [C] 1 a twisted mass of something such as hair or thread: *Her hair was full of tangles after being out in the wind.* | *tangle of branches/weeds/threads* etc *We had to cut our way through a tangle of branches.* 2 a confused state: *My emotions were in a complete tangle.* 3 *informal* [+with] a quarrel or fight

**tan-gled** /ˈtæŋɡəld/ also **tangled up** [ADJ] 1 twisted together in an untidy mass: *The telephone cord is all tangled up.* 2 complicated or made up of many confusing parts: *What she needed was time to sort out her tangled feelings.*

**tan-go** /ˈtæŋɡəʊ-ɡoʊ/ [N] plural **tangos** [C] a lively dance from South America, or a piece of music for this dance

**tango** <sup>2</sup> [V] [I] 1 to dance the tango 2 it takes two to tango *spoken* used to say that if a problem involves two people then both people are equally responsible

**tank** /tæŋk/ [N] [C] 1 a large container for storing liquid or gas: *The hot water tank is leaking.* | *fish tank* (=for keeping fish in) | *petrol tank* *BrE* / *gas tank* *AmE* (=part of a vehicle for holding petrol) 2 also **tankful** the amount of liquid or gas held in a tank: *I'll do over 400 miles on a full tank.* 3 a heavy military vehicle that has

a large gun and runs on two metal belts fitted over its wheels 4 a large artificial pool for storing water —see also **THINK-TANK**, **SEPTIC TANK**

**tank** <sup>2</sup> [V]

**tank up** *phr* [V] [I] especially *AmE* to put petrol in your car so that the tank is full

**tan-kard** /ˈtæŋkɑːd/ [N] [C] a large metal cup, usually with a handle and lid, used for drinking beer —see **picture at CUP**

**tanked up** /ˈtæŋkəd/ also **tanked** /tæŋkt/ *AmE* [ADJ] (not before noun) *slang* drunk: *Jim gets really funny when he's tanked.*

**tank-er** /ˈtæŋkə-ər/ [N] [C] a vehicle or ship specially built to carry large quantities of gas or liquid, especially oil —see also **OIL TANKER**

**tank top** /ˈtæŋk tɒp/ [N] [C] 1 *BrE* a piece of clothing like a **SWEATER** but with no sleeves (**SLEEVE** (1)) 2 *AmE* a piece of clothing like a shirt but with no sleeves (**SLEEVE** (1))

**tanned** /tænd/ [ADJ] having a darker skin colour because you have been in the sun —see **picture on page 412**

**tan-ner** /ˈtænə-ər/ [N] [C] 1 someone whose job is to make animal skin into leather by tanning (**TAN** (3)) 2 *BrE* old use **SILVER** (=a coin)

**tan-ne-ry** /ˈtænəri/ [N] [C] a place where animal skin is made into leather by tanning (**TAN** (3))

**tan-nin** /ˈtæniːn/ also **tan-nic acid** /ˈtænik ˈæsjd/ [N] [U] a reddish acid used in preparing leather, making ink etc

**tan-noy** /ˈtænoɪ/ [N] [C] *BrE* **trademark** a system for giving out information in public places by means of **LOUD-SPEAKERS**: *over the tannoy* *What were they saying about flight delays over the tannoy?*

**tan-ta-lize** also **-ise** *BrE* /ˈtæntəl-aɪz/ [V] [T] usually **passive** to show or promise something that someone really wants, but then not allow them to have it

**tan-ta-liz-ing** also **tantalizing** *BrE* /ˈtæntəl-aɪzɪŋ/ [ADJ]

(Extract from *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, 1995, printed in China.)

## Feedback

This task is not difficult, is it? Timing is the most important element. If you managed to get the answers within 5 minutes, then you are a quick and efficient reader. If you took longer, then you need to improve your reading speed. Did you read the questions before looking at the text? You certainly should have done. For effective scanning only read what is necessary.

1. /ˈtæŋkəd/
2. It is a transitive verb.
3. The American expression is "gas tank".
4. The preposition used before the noun tannoy is "over".
5. Yes, it is countable.
6. It is used to mean that if a problem was caused by two people then both of them are equally responsible.
7. Tangible + ility = tangibility.
8. No.
9. Yes.
10. Tannin is a reddish acid used in leather making, so it is used by a "tanner" (a leather maker).

## Task 3 Inferring

Inferring means making use of syntactic, logical and cultural clues to discover the meaning of unknown elements. These may be the writer's opinions and attitudes which are not directly stated in the text. The writer's specific choice of words or language types may reflect his real meaning. We often call this skill "reading between the lines". It is something you do when you are far away from home and receive a letter from your family: you know they do not want to give you bad news in order not to worry you, but sometimes you can tell from what is **not said** or from the choice of words used that something is not altogether right, you have "read between the lines".

Making inferences while reading usually helps the reader to achieve a better understanding of the text. One point worth mentioning is that inferences must be made with care and supported by evidence. Now let's try some inference exercises.

*Read Text 5 and prepare to do the following tasks.*

### Text 5

The recent financial turmoil in the Southeast Asia has held the spotlight of international commentary on Asian economic performance much of this year.

It is widely agreed that bubble real estate industries, weak governmental regulation of the banking sector, and international currency speculators were mainly responsible for the financial crisis. But a recent Japan Economic Journal article, titled "Asian Economy Undergoing Radical Changes", draws the sensational conclusion that "China is to blame for it". It argues that China's lowered *Renminbi yuan* exchange rate in recent years has made its exports more competitive than those of Southeast Asian countries. This is a normal measure needed for promoting China's economy.

It is more justified to say that Japan, not China, was more directly connected with the recent financial turmoil of Thailand. The devaluation of the baht was related to its dollar-pegged exchange rate system. Since 1995, the exchange rate of the Japanese yen against US dollar has continued to decline, which caused the dollar-pegged baht to be overvalued. Japan's lowering of its exchange rate against the US dollar produced some of the negative effects upon Thailand's exports.

The Japanese newspaper's dishonest attitude is improper. The international community should not be confused by such a fallacious argument.

**1. Inferring the meaning of lexical items.** Can you figure out the meaning of the following words from the **context** (*that is, the sentences, information, and grammar*)

that surround the words)?

- i. sensational \_\_\_\_\_
- ii. baht \_\_\_\_\_
- iii. dollar-pegged \_\_\_\_\_
- iv. fallacious \_\_\_\_\_

**Feedback**

Based on the context in which these words occur, we can guess that: sensational means intended to excite in a way you disapprove of; baht refers to the currency used in Thailand; dollar-pegged refers to a currency, the value of which is closely tied to that of the dollar; fallacious means false (or based on false ideas).

This inferring of meaning is an important skill for a language user who will often meet unknown words. So, it is necessary to train students in the same way, to help them guess the meaning of unknown words rather than explaining them all beforehand, if you want to help your students develop as efficient readers. Otherwise, the students will get used to being given “pre-processed” texts, to being “spoon-fed” by the teacher, and will never make the effort to cope with a difficult passage on their own or develop the necessary skills to do so.

**2. Inferring attitude and opinion** . Can you see the author’s attitude and opinion? If so, how?

The author’s attitude is \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Feedback**

The author feels indignant and angry about the Japanese accusations and criticises them as groundless. We can work this out from the words he uses that have a negative connotation, like “sensational conclusion”, “dishonest attitude”, “improper” and “fallacious argument”, when he describes the Japanese argument. In addition, the author uses more positive phrases, such as “it is widely agreed that...”, “a normal measure”, “it is more justified to say that...” to defend his own argument that China’s action is necessary and that China has nothing to do with the financial crisis.

Authors usually do not directly state their views, but the reader can get some clues, such as the words they use, to draw conclusions about their attitude and opinion.

**3. Can you sense the purpose of this article? Where did it probably appear?**

This article aims to \_\_\_\_\_  
 It probably appeared in a \_\_\_\_\_

**Feedback**

It probably appears in a business magazine or a newspaper. It aims to inform the international community that Japan's accusations are groundless.

4. Read the text again and extract the relevant information to fill in the following notes.

**Cause of the financial crisis**

**I. Japan's argument**

(a)

(b)

**II. China's counter argument**

(a)

(b)

(c)

**Feedback**

Here is a suggested answer (but remember notes are personal, so yours might be a little different):

**I. Japan's argument:**

- (a) China to blame for economic crisis in Asia
- (b) lowered RMB exchange rate makes its exports more competitive

**II. China's counter argument:**

- (a) lowered RMB exchange rate = a normal measure
- (b) Japan = more directly connected with recent economic crisis in Thailand
- (c) decline in exchange rate of Japanese yen against US dollars caused baht to be overvalued

Now let's do another inferring exercise. Sometimes what is written in a text is not necessarily fact. In order to understand the text, one needs to "read between the lines" and distinguish facts from opinions.

*Read through the following article (Text 6) to say what kind of text it is and where it might come from.*

**Text 6**

When we developed The Peninsula, Hong Kong in the early twenties, it was a marketing breakthrough. Its founder saw clearly the need for deluxe accommodation in Hong Kong and responded by selecting the territory's prime location and spared no expense in construction and

features.

And now history repeats itself.

The new 740-room Kowloon Hotel, standing proudly behind The Peninsula, Hong Kong, is another breakthrough. Built with the business traveler in mind, The Kowloon Hotel offers superior accommodation with the latest in-room communications technology.

We are committed to providing the best service to travelers worldwide. We made that commitment with our first hotel, The Peninsula, Hong Kong, and we continue to honor it with our latest, The Kowloon Hotel.

In fact, we live up to our commitment in all Peninsula Group operations, from the deluxe Manila Peninsula to the spacious Garden Hotel in Guangzhou to the highly-acclaimed Jianguo Hotel in Beijing and the recently restored Repulse Bay Restaurants in Hong Kong.

And we will continue the commitment with our newest hotels, the Portman Hotel in San Francisco (A Peninsula Group Hotel Affiliate), opening July 1987 and the Portman Shanghai, opening mid-1989. Rather than rest on its laurels, the Peninsula Group understands that it is only as good as its last success.

The text is \_\_\_\_\_.

It might come from \_\_\_\_\_.

### Feedback

From the language used and its style, we don't have much difficulty in getting at the answer: it is probably an advertisement. It might appear in a newspaper, a magazine or an information leaflet.

*Look at the following statements taken from the text and decide which of these are facts (F) and which of these are opinions (O).*

1. It was a marketing breakthrough. ( )
2. The founders spared no expense in construction and features. ( )
3. Built with the business traveler in mind, The Kowloon Hotel offers superior accommodation with the latest in-room communications technology. ( )
4. We are committed to providing the best service to travelers worldwide. ( )
5. In fact, we live up to our commitment in all Peninsula Group operations. ( )
6. The Jianguo Hotel is highly acclaimed. ( )
7. The Repulse Bay restaurants have recently been restored. ( )
8. Rather than rest on its laurels, the Peninsula Group understands that it is only as good as its last success. ( )



## Feedback

The answers are the following:

1. O 2. F 3. O 4. O 5. O 6. O 7. F 8. O.

It is interesting to notice that in the advertisement more opinion sentences (which are “subjective”) are used than facts (which are “objective”).

## Task 4 Recognising Rhetorical Structures

A normal text is not a random collection of sentences. Rather, it has a unity, and its components — sentences, groups of sentences and paragraphs — are related in a meaningful way to each other. In order to comprehend what the writer is saying, the reader has to be aware of these relationships. And rhetorical structures refer to the complex network of relationships within a text. It is the structure of the underlying ideas and the connections the writer makes between them. The reader’s speed and accuracy in decoding a message largely depends on his knowledge as to how the message is woven into a text.

The most common text structures are **chronological order; cause and effect; comparison and contrast; classification; process; definition**. In this task, we will just take first three types as examples to demonstrate how we can facilitate our comprehension through identifying rhetorical structures of texts.

### 1. Chronological Order

A reader may sometimes come across texts describing the historical background or development of something. Such texts are usually developed on a time basis or chronological order (i. e. the earliest or oldest first, most recent or newest last). Thus understanding of these texts largely depends on the ability of tracing the time sequence.

Before you read Text 7, prepare to do the following tasks.

### Skimming for choosing the best summary sentence

*Skim quickly through this article to find out which of the following three summary sentences best expresses its topic :*

1. This article talks about the rivalry between the English and Scottish universities over the years.
2. This article talks about the developments in education in Great Britain since the Middle Ages.
3. This article outlines the history of the foundation of the British universities.

## Text 7

The origins of universities in the United Kingdom date back to the Middle Ages. The first ones to be established were in England; Oxford University was founded in 1185 and Cambridge in 1209. The first Scottish university, St. Andrews, was founded in 1412 and it was closely followed by Glasgow in 1415, Aberdeen in 1494, and Edinburgh in 1582. There were no new universities founded in England until the nineteenth century, when Durham University was established in 1832 and London in 1836. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries a number of civic universities were founded, which had developed from provincial colleges mainly in the big industrial cities. These included Manchester in 1880 and Birmingham in 1900. At this time the federal university of Wales, which comprised three colleges, was founded in 1893.

In the 1940s and 50s further civic universities were founded, for example in Nottingham in 1948, Southampton in 1954, and Exeter in 1957. It was, however, in the 1960s that the largest expansion of British universities took place. This expansion took place in three different ways: most of the existing universities were enlarged; several existing colleges were developed into universities; and seven new universities were founded. Amongst that final group were the universities of Kent, in south-east England, and Warwick, in the Midlands, which were founded in 1965. These new universities, unlike the older civic universities, were situated outside the town on a campus of parkland, surrounded by countryside.

In 1969 the Open University was established, which is a non-residential university providing part-time degree courses, taught by means of postal correspondence and different forms of media, such as television and radio broadcasts, along with regional residential summer courses. It has had a large impact on the adult working and unemployed population, providing them with the means to further their study and increase their qualifications.

All the universities receive government grants, except Buckingham (founded in 1983), which is the only independent university in Britain receiving its funds from private sources. Student fees and private donations are also important sources of funding for all of the universities.

## Feedback

### Skimming: choosing the best summary sentence

Summary 1 is not correct because the article does not really mention the rivalry between the English and Scottish universities.

Summary 2 is not correct because only the dates of the foundation of the universities are mentioned, we are not told anything about the educational policies of the time.

Summary 3 is the closest, as the article does indeed outline the history of the foundation of the different universities in Britain.

## Scanning for note-taking



Date	University founded	Comments
1948	Nottingham	civic
1954	Southampton	civic
1957	Exeter	civic
1965	Kent & Warwick	campus universities, out of town in country
1969	Open University	non-residential, part-time degree courses, by correspondence, TV & radio, & summer courses.
1983	Buckingham	only private university, no government grant

Summary writing is also a very important skill that demands efficient reading. You have already done a lot of practice in your *English for Studying* course. With this text you can experience three kinds of summary training exercises:

1. **Choose the best summary sentence:** skimming task to be given before reading.
2. **Correct the summary:** correction of factual errors to be given after comprehension tasks have been done.
3. **Give your reaction to the text:** answers to questions asking for the reader's reaction to the text can also form a sort of personal summary.

### Correct the following summary

*Read the following summary and correct the factual errors in it. Is all the relevant information there? Would you add anything else?*

The universities of England, Scotland and Wales date back to the twelfth century. Oxford and Cambridge are the oldest, followed by London in 1893. More were built in the Welsh industrial cities of Manchester and Birmingham in the nineteenth century. In the 1960s a large number of new universities were created from colleges outside the main cities.

### Feedback

#### Corrections

- only the universities of England date back to the twelfth century
- Oxford and Cambridge were followed by the Scottish universities of St. Andrews, Glasgow, Aberdeen and Edinburgh

- Durham University was the third university to be founded in England
- Manchester and Birmingham are English industrial towns, not Welsh
- Birmingham University was founded in 1900, the beginning of the twentieth century
- only some of the new universities in the 1960s were created out of colleges, seven completely new ones were founded
- those created out of colleges were not situated outside the main cities, only the newly created ones were

**Omissions**

- the foundation of the Scottish universities in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries should be mentioned
- the federal University of Wales comprising three colleges should be mentioned
- the foundation of the Open University in 1969 should be mentioned
- the sources of funding for the universities should be added with the fact that there is only one totally private university, Buckingham (1983)

**What is your opinion?**

*Try to answer the questions below as completely as you can. Give your reaction to the information in the text.*

1. Did anything in the article surprise you?
2. Did anything particularly interest you?
3. Is there anything else you would like to know that the article doesn't tell you?

**Feedback**

Here are some reactions that our teaching colleagues made to the article:

1. I was very surprised to see how old the universities of Oxford and Cambridge were, but I was astonished to see that they were the only English universities until the founding of Durham and London at the end of the nineteenth century. I was also surprised to know that the Scottish universities are so old. I was interested in the difference between the universities founded in the early twentieth century in the big industrial cities and the ones created in the 1960s on campuses outside the cities. I wonder what was the reason for building them out of the towns, was it to do with the price of land or the best atmosphere for studying?
2. I am surprised that there is only one private university in Britain and I wonder how good its reputation is. I would also like to know who its students are and how it makes money. Why aren't there more private universities?
3. I was surprised to read how old the universities of Oxford and Cambridge were and I wonder why they were built at that time and who by. I would like to know what they taught and to whom. I also wonder if today it is easier to get a job if you are a graduate from one of those universities, because they are so famous.
4. The text tells us nothing about the students of the universities. I would like to know what percentage of schoolchildren in Britain go to university and how many foreign students there are. I also want to know if the universities give scholarships to foreign students.

**2. Comparison and Contrast**

Some texts are organised in a comparison-contrast pattern, in which the similarities and differences of two items are compared and contrasted. Here are some words and phrases used to signal the “comparison and contrast” relationship: “similarly”, “likewise”, “correspondingly” (comparison); “on the other hand”, “in contrast”, “conversely” (contrast).

*Read the following short paragraph and then fill in the notes to show its pattern of development below.*

Foreign businessmen who use English as their language of business are often at a disadvantage when they are negotiating with British businessmen who have English as their first language. Foreign businessmen will often have trouble saying exactly what they wish to say whereas native speakers do not have to worry about the need for linguistic accuracy which gives them more time to think about other things as the negotiation continues. Foreign businessmen may also have trouble understanding informal or idiomatic English which may sometimes leave them confused or not fully understanding what the native speakers have to say. Native speakers on the other hand, may use this disadvantage as a way of deliberately making foreign businessmen feel insecure thus giving them a further, although very short term, advantage in the negotiation process.

	<b>Foreign businessman</b>		<b>British businessman</b>
1.		1.	
2.		2.	
3.		3.	

**Feedback**

Have you filled in the notes? This is a possible answer:

	<b>Foreign businessmen</b>		<b>British businessmen</b>
1.	at a disadvantage	1.	at an advantage
2.	having trouble saying exactly what he wishes to say	2.	not worrying about linguistic accuracy, more time to think
3.	having trouble understanding informal or idiomatic English, thus feeling confused or not fully understanding the native speaker's words	3.	using this to make foreign businessman feel insecure and give them a further, though very short term, advantage in the negotiation process.

From this, you can see that the comparison-contrast pattern moves horizontally. Sometimes, the comparison-contrast pattern can be developed vertically. That is, it first discusses item 1, and then moves on to contrast item 2 (see task b under Text 8). Some people think that

the horizontal pattern is clearer in that it keeps on reminding the reader of the comparison/contrast relationship. However, if the writer has a lot of information, these continual reminders can become boring for the reader.

### 3. Cause and Effect

Writers sometimes develop their texts in a cause-and-effect pattern when they wish to analyse the reasons for particular actions or events (causes) and results or outcomes of those actions or events (effects). The typical signals used are “because”, “causes”, “the reason is”, “the reason for”, “leads to”, “produces”, “creates” and “makes”.

*Read Text 8 and do the tasks below.*

#### a. Understanding the text structure

*Match the paragraphs in the text with their topics. Write the paragraph numbers on the line.*

1. \_\_\_\_\_ The advantages of workaholism
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Reasons that people like work
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Problems of workaholism
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Feelings of “normal” workers about their jobs
5. \_\_\_\_\_ A definition of workaholism

#### Text 8

1

It is customary for most workers in the western world to spend eight or nine hours a day on their job. They work because they have to, as **they** need to earn enough money for all their necessities: food, accommodation, clothes, transport, education, and so on. About one third of their lives is spent at work, but many of them hate **it**. They may concentrate on how many more hours or minutes they have to work before they can go home, or how many weeks and days before they can take their next holiday.

2

In contrast to **this**, there are actually some people who really enjoy work, so much so that they *love* to work, spending as many hours at work as they can and even taking work home with them. These are *workaholics*, who are addicted to work, as much as other addicts might be addicted to drugs or alcohol.

3

Workaholism can be a serious problem for various reasons. First of all, because workaholics prefer to work than do anything else, they often do not know how to relax or create spare time for entertainment activities, such as doing sports, or going to the cinema, theatre, or dancehall. Above all, they hate to sit and do nothing. This inability to rest can cause health problems, such as heart attacks or nervous disorders. In addition to **that**, the families of workaholics often suffer due to the lack of attention and time the workaholic gives **them**. **This** could result in marital breakdowns.

4

On the other hand, workaholism can have positive effects too. It has been shown, for example, that many workaholics have great energy and show a keen interest in life. Moreover, if their work gives them pleasure, then they can be very happy people. The work itself provides their entertainment. Besides **that**, their jobs also present them with a challenge, which can keep them busy and creative. Workaholics often continue working long after the average worker has retired, which can keep them fit and active well into their eighties and even nineties.

5

Let us examine the reasons for workaholics enjoying their work so much. There are of course several advantages to work. The most obvious one is the paycheck that one receives each month, which is very important. But work offers more than just financial security, it also provides people with self-confidence. When you have conquered a challenging task or created something of good quality, you have a feeling of satisfaction. Psychologists claim that work can give people an identity and that it is by participating in work that **they** get a sense of self and individualism. Additionally, jobs provide people with a socially acceptable way of meeting others and making friends. Although some people get addicted to their work, this addiction can be seen as a reasonably safe, and sometimes even advantageous, one.

**Feedback**

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

**b. Identifying comparison and contrast**

*Read paragraph 3 and 4 carefully and extract the relevant information to fill in the following notes.*

**Workaholism**

**I. Negative effects**

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_

**II. Positive effects**

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_

**Feedback**

Have you got the answer? It is quite clear, isn't it? Have you noticed that the comparison-contrast relationship develops in a vertical pattern?



Workaholism

I. Negative effects

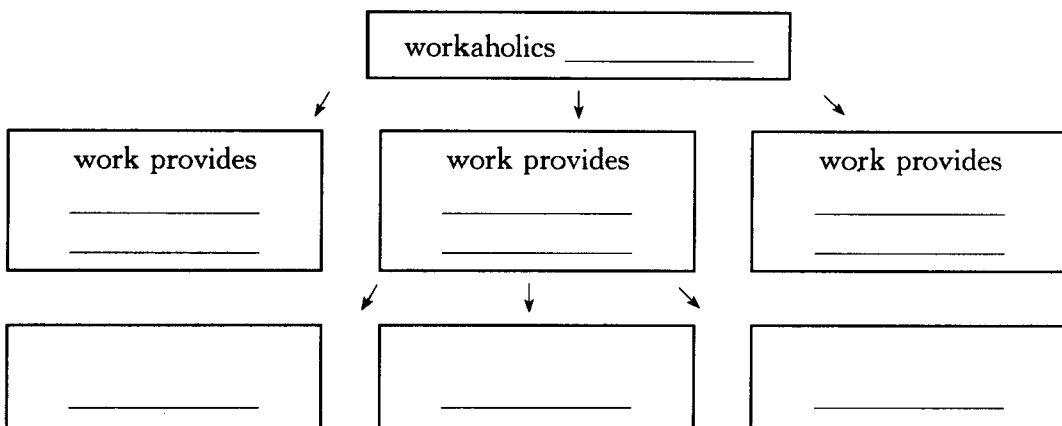
1. Workaholics don't know how to relax.
2. Their inability to rest can cause health problems.
3. Their families suffer due to lack of attention.
4. Workaholism could lead to marital breakdowns.

II. Positive effects

1. Workaholics are energetic and show interest in life.
2. They are happy people.
3. They are kept busy and creative.
4. Work keeps them fit and active well into their 80s and even 90s.

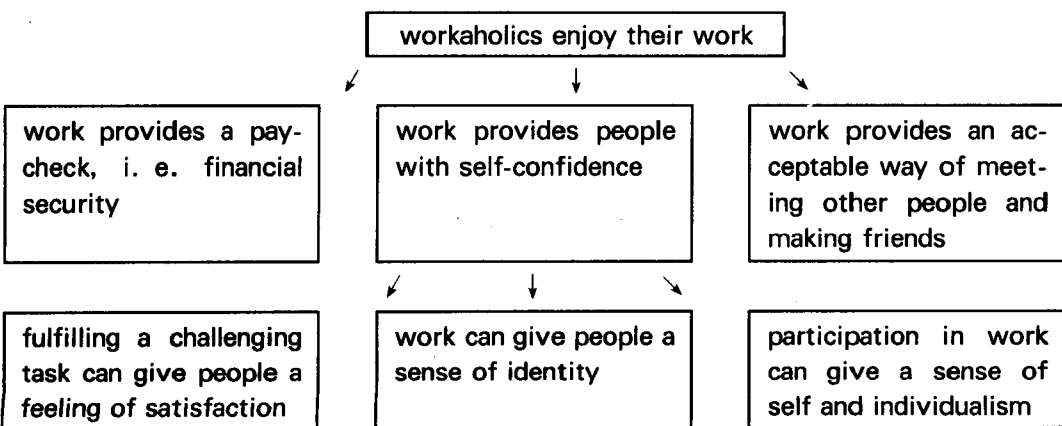
c. Identifying cause and effect

Read Paragraph 5 carefully and draw out the best information to fill in the following diagram.



Feedback

Have you filled in the diagram? Check your answer with the following suggested answer:



**d. Reference**

Cohesive devices link independent sentences together to create a unified and coherent text. A powerful cohesive device is the use of repeated references to a thing or concept. If readers are unable to recognise these links, serious misunderstandings can result. Therefore, one goal of a reading course could be to help students recognise and interpret reference devices.

*Which words and phrases do the words printed in bold in the text refer to?*

- 1. they \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. it \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. this \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. that \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. them \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. This \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. that \_\_\_\_\_
- 8. they \_\_\_\_\_

**Feedback**

- 1. most workers
- 2. work
- 3. people who don't enjoy work
- 4. their inability to rest
- 5. the families of workaholics
- 6. the fact that the families of workaholics often suffer
- 7. The work itself provides their entertainment
- 8. people

## **Activity 3 The Three Stages of Teaching Reading**

In the first two activities, we looked at the nature of reading and the reading process, and practised the major reading strategies. In this activity, we'll come to the teaching of reading in the classroom. Do you still remember that at the very beginning of this unit you were asked to reflect upon your teaching of a reading lesson in the classroom. What are your reflections? Are there any problems with the way of teaching reading that you used to have?

Your reflections are \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

The problems with teaching reading are \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

There are various answers that you might give to these two questions. Generally speaking, a typical English class in the Chinese middle school is traditionally conducted in the following way:

- the “new words” from the text are learnt in lists with their Chinese translations;
- the teacher asks the students to read the text aloud sentence by sentence, paragraph by paragraph, interrupting them to correct their pronunciation;
- the teacher explains the meaning of words and phrases in English and Chinese and draws the students’ attention to certain grammatical points;
- the students’ comprehension of the text is checked by the teacher asking questions and nominating students to answer;
- after this, the teacher and students will do the language exercises from the textbook.

1. What do you think are the problems with this way of teaching reading?
2. How motivated do you think the students are to study this text at the beginning of the lesson?
3. Does the teacher do anything to increase their motivation?
4. How do you think the students feel during the teacher’s lengthy explanations of the phrases and grammar points in the text?
5. Is this interesting for them?
6. Will they remember and use what is being lectured to them?
7. Has any effort been made to make the students remember what they have read and learned from this text?
8. Can they apply it the next time they have to use English?
9. Do you think it is clear to them what they have gained from this lesson?

Think about those questions for a while and try to write down some answers before you read on.

How can we improve our way of teaching? One way is to teach reading in three stages: pre-reading stage, while-reading stage, and post-reading stage. Each stage has a different goal and deals with different reading strategies. The overall aim is to train the students to be efficient readers in the foreign language. Other aspects have to be considered as well though, such as the students’ interest and motivation. An interesting text can

arouse the students' will to read, but teachers often have no choice in the texts they have to teach. In that case, the activities must stimulate the students' interest by challenging them, providing them with a chance to use their imagination and creative ability, and encourage them to use the language and information gained from the text.

We will deal with each of these stages in the following tasks and provide texts and activities to illustrate them.

## **Task 1 Pre-reading Stage**

What do you think the purpose of the pre-reading stage is? Remember that "pre-reading" means before the text is read. Give yourself a couple of minutes to think about this before you read on.

The aims of the pre-reading stage are three-fold: (a) arousing the students' interest in the topic or type of text; (b) motivating students to read the text by providing a purpose for reading; (c) preparing the students for the content of the text.

It should be pointed out that not all three aims are relevant to all text types. Sometimes the topic of the text itself is very interesting, in which case the students may be eager to read it. So, the teacher does not have to spend too long on motivating them to read. In some texts, the language may be well within the students' proficiency with few or no unknown elements. It would be pointless in that case to deal with the language elements beforehand, but it may be worthwhile to draw students' attention to the way they are used in the text, once they have read it. One thing that is always necessary, is the **purpose** for reading the text, because, as we saw before, different purposes for reading employ different reading skills. In order for the students to be efficient readers, they need to know which reading skill they need to employ.

One of the reading strategies practised in this stage is the skill of anticipation — forming predictions about what is to be read. Usually predictions are made on the basis of various clues provided by the text.

What can the teacher do to get the students to predict the contents of the text? Write down all the ways you can think of. Then read the list below to see if you have the same or different activities.

Your answers: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The students could be asked to

- examine the accompanying visual information (diagrams, maps, photographs),
- reflect on the title or the topic,
- state what they already know about the topic,
- state what they would like to know about the topic,
- write their own questions that they want the text to answer,
- answer the teacher's general questions about the text type or topic (oral or written),
- brainstorm the topic in groups or whole class,
- guess the topic by looking at key words from the text (given, and if necessary taught, by the teacher).

These are the usual type of activities done in the pre-reading stage.

Now let's design some pre-reading activities for some given texts. Keep in mind, though, that the type of activity you design should be suggested by the text. Never forget the reasons people would have in real life for reading such a text.

*The text below has paragraph headings blanked out for a while-reading activity, which you will look at later. Forget that for the moment and just read it as a normal text.*

### **Text 9**

1. \_\_\_\_\_

Age is a relative concept. Each of us will know that people in their sixties who regard themselves as "old", are therefore seen as old by everyone else. We will also know people in their seventies, eighties or even nineties who remain very much part of society and who are mentally if not physically agile.

2. \_\_\_\_\_

"Old" also varies from country to country and place to place. The Vilcabamba Valley in Ecuador, for example, is known locally as the "Valley of Old Age" or the "Island of Immunity" where many people live to be over 100. No one really knows why, but a number of factors have been suggested, including the altitude, a mainly vegetable diet with little fat, reasonable work conditions, comparatively little stress, the beneficial effects of a certain kind of tree which recycles air — and the relative isolation of the valley. Further down in South America, in Potosi in Bolivia, life expectancy is at the other extreme — people don't expect to live beyond their 40th birthday. Mining is the main occupation. The miners and their families suffer from harsh conditions, poverty, overwork, accidents, silicosis and other forms of lung poisoning. Therefore, in Vilcabamba, you may not be considered "old" until you are 90. In Potosi, you might be "old" at 30.

3. \_\_\_\_\_

So if we can't even really generalize about the meaning of "old", can we say that there is an

“ageing crisis”? Under current conditions and in the light of today’s population predictions, I think the answer must be “yes”. As more and more people live longer and their numbers increase both in actual numbers and relative to the general population, there will be fewer people to care for them if and when they need it. The dependency ratio, as it is called, is also affected by the increasing financial pressures put on families, particularly in the Third World. More and more women everywhere are working. Because women form the vast majority of carers, this also affects the numbers of people able to support elderly members of the family. As governments reduce spending on pensions and health systems in an attempt to keep taxes low or to conform to the “structural adjustment” policies imposed by the International Monetary Fund, it is old people who are likely to suffer most. For example, one of the main reasons the people in Africa or Asia or South America give for having large numbers of children is to “provide security” in old age. If people know that they could remain independent and yet be supported in their old age, then they would not feel the need to have so many children. Nor would they fear the isolation from society that arises from not having children.

4. \_\_\_\_\_

As it is, “old” people — both in the North and the South — have been increasingly isolated from the rest of society in retirement homes which were seen as the model of how to deal with old age. Another model which claims to help people to live more independently is “care in the community”. What it usually means is “care in the family” and in most cases it comes from the need to find a cheap solution to the problem of caring for the old. This is all very well, but it puts the burden of caring very much back into the family — usually the women. While families can in some cases provide the support needed, the breakdown of the extended family and the squeezing of household resources have often led to neglect of, rather than succour for, the elderly. When resources are stretched, the old are likely to be the ones who go without.

5. \_\_\_\_\_

It is precisely for this reason that in most of the world, “old” people continue to work until they die. They have no choice. They need to earn an income — however small — or they don’t eat. Indeed, people may even have to work harder as they get older, taking on the manual labour that younger people do not want to do. Many have to uproot themselves — old women who outlive their husbands are forced to leave their villages to seek work in the cities. In most Third World countries, older people figure as part of the huge informal economy, selling vegetables on the streets or recycling garbage.

6. \_\_\_\_\_

The World Bank has suggested a “three-pillar” approach to financing the old which is based entirely on pensions. But even according to the World Bank, an estimated 60 per cent of the world’s labour force and 70 per cent of old people, are part of the informal economy — they have no pension plan and are unlikely to save.

7. \_\_\_\_\_

Kasturi Sen, a specialist on ageing and policy issues, has quite a different strategy towards this problem. She calls it the “life-cycle” approach. The circumstances that people find themselves in when they are older, she says, is simply a continuation to the situation that they have been

### Unit 3 Focus on Reading

in throughout their lives. If you are poor, overworked and in ill-health when you are young, these conditions are likely to be the same or worse when you are old. She argues that in order to improve the quality of peoples' lives — and especially the lives of women, who in most societies live longer — policies should aim at improving education in earlier life, helping people to move in and out of the labour market, and enabling women to take out financial credit and buy land. Better nutrition and access to contraception would improve health. These things, she says, would do more than anything also to “reduce the possibilities of acute vulnerability in later stages of life”.

(Adapted from “Ageing with attitude” from *The New Internationalist*, February 1995)

Imagining you would teach this text to a senior middle school class, think about the pre-reading activities you might design for it. Remember to think about why you would read such a text. What purpose would you have? Think about the topic and what the students already know and what they might be interested to know. Now, write your activities in the spaces below.

*The possible pre-reading activities I design for this text are :*

**Activity 1:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Activity 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Feedback**

What are your pre-reading activities like? I have also designed two pre-reading activities for this text.

#### **Activity 1**

The teacher may bring in pictures (they might be taken from newspapers, magazines or advertisements) reflecting the life and work of old people, and then ask students to discuss in groups about the life of old people: their joys and worries, troubles and problems.

*If the pictures are interesting they may provoke the students to contribute their ideas freely to the topic. In doing so, the teacher not only activates students' existing knowledge about the “problem of the old”, but also arouses students' interest in reading the text.*

#### **Activity 2**

Before teaching the text, the teacher may ask students to discuss in pairs or groups the following questions:

1. How do you understand the concept of “age”?
2. What do you think are the factors that lead to long life? And the factors that are harmful to our health?
3. What problems may appear when one gets old?

4. Can you suggest some solutions to the problems?

While the students are discussing these points, the teacher should circulate around the class and give any help that is necessary with the vocabulary and expressions the students need. The teacher can also listen for some interesting arguments and ask those groups to share them with the whole class after the discussion.

*The students may come up with various answers out of their discussions. That is good! These questions are actually covered in the text they are going to read. After their discussions, the teacher may ask them to read the text and to check whether their responses are the same as or different from the author's. Therefore, this activity provides a purpose for the students to read the text.*

Now let's look at **Text 10** taken from *Senior English for China*, Book 2A. Read the text and decide what kind of pre-reading activities you would use with a 2nd-year senior middle school group?

**Text 10**

If you are just starting to collect stamps, here is some advice.

At the beginning, collect as many stamps as you can. The ones which you decide not to keep can be traded with other people. Never throw stamps away.

Don't keep the envelope, unless it is unusual. However, do keep the envelope if it is the first date when that particular stamp is used. Some people are very interested in these "first day covers".

Sooner or later you will decide that you want to collect a certain kind of stamp. It may be stamps from a particular country, or stamps of a particular kind, like stamps with a bird design on them, for example. This will make your collecting much more interesting. You can then look for new ones to add to your collection.

Do join a group. There is a lot to learn about stamps and others can help you. Also it is great fun. You will soon learn which stamps other people are collecting and they will start to trade stamps with you too.

Go to stamps sales and buy whatever you can afford. You can often pick up packs of used stamps very cheaply.

Old stamps that have not been used are usually more expensive than used stamps. Perhaps at the beginning you may only afford used stamps.

Sooner or later, you will find something unusual. It may even be valuable. Finally, remember that stamp collecting is fun. It can be exciting to get stamps which you do not have yet. Also, many stamps have unusual and beautiful designs, so enjoy them!



Your suggested pre-reading activities are :

Activity 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Activity 2: \_\_\_\_\_

### Feedback

Here are the two pre-reading activities I have designed for the text. Of course, yours might be different from mine.

#### Activity 1

Before teaching the text, ask students to discuss in pairs or in groups of four the following questions:

1. What are your hobbies?
2. Do you like collecting stamps? Why or why not?
3. You are going to read a text giving advice about stamp collecting, write down three questions you want this text to answer.

*Alternatively, the teacher may ask students to do the following role-play activity.*

#### Activity 2

The role-play activity will be conducted with the following procedure:

1. Ask students to form pairs: A and B.
2. Suppose A is beginning to collect stamps, now he is asking B, who is his good friend and a devoted stamp-collector, for his advice on stamp-collecting.
3. Students A and B exchange their roles or they can turn around and form two new pairs with the students behind them. They perform the same role-play, but with different partners, to make it more interesting.

*As mentioned before, the pre-reading stage aims to arouse students' interest in the topic of the text and to motivate them to read the text, and these two activities are designed with these purposes in mind. Through discussion of the first two questions in Activity 1, the students' existing knowledge about their hobbies and stamp-collecting are drawn out and enriched, and they feel more ready to read the text. Question 3 gets the students to provide their own reason for reading the text. They will want to see if their questions are answered. It involves prediction skills, as it gets the students to think about what they expect from such a text, which is activating their schema of this type of text.*

*Activity 2 will also help students to form predictions about what they are going to read. After finishing the role-play, the teacher can easily lead the students to the text by saying "Now, could you please read the text quickly and to see whether the advice you offered (or were offered) is the same as that given in the text? How many points are the same? And how many are different?" Therefore, students will read the text purposefully, constantly*

*checking and confirming their predictions.*

*The language in the text is not difficult and there is no need for preparational work at this stage.*

## **Task 2 While-reading Stage**

This stage mainly focuses on the exploitation of the text. It aims to help the reader understand the content and structure of the text, as well as the author's purpose in writing it.

In **Activity 2** of this unit we have looked at the main reading skills: skimming, scanning, reading for detail, drawing inferences about the author's purpose and intention. The typical sort of activities to train such skills are

- skim reading to get the gist (main idea) of the text,
- locating specific information,
- transferring information from the text to a diagram, table, form, map, graph or picture,
- taking notes on the main points, or on specific points of the text,
- drawing a diagram to show the text structure,
- answering factual questions on the text,
- answering inference questions on the text (reading between the lines),
- putting the events in the correct order,
- stating if statements given about the text are true or false,
- working out the meaning of words and phrases in the text from the context,
- examining referents in the text and stating what they refer to,
- putting the paragraphs of a jumbled text back in the correct order,
- giving sections of a text appropriate headings,
- giving the text an appropriate title (also possibly a post-reading activity).

It needs to be kept in mind that while-reading activities should begin with a general or global understanding of the text, and then move to a more detailed study of smaller units, paragraphs, sentences and words. The reason for doing this is that larger units provide the context for understanding the smaller units. For example, a paragraph or sentence may help the reader to figure out the exact meaning of a particular word.

*Now let's go back to Text 9 and read it again. Then try to design some while-reading activities for it. Two particular questions should be in your mind:*

For what purpose would someone read this?

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How can I help my students to understand it fully?

Remember that the purpose of a reading lesson is to **teach** not **test**! You are there to **help** your students become efficient readers with their own reading strategies and skills. You are not there to explain or translate the text to them so that they don't have to read it themselves. Neither are you there to punish those students who have not yet developed efficient reading strategies. There may be a lot of unknown vocabulary in this text, try to concentrate on helping students to get the main idea of the text and only deal with a few key words or those that can be worked out from the context.

*Your suggested while-reading activities are :*

**Activity 1:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Activity 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Activity 3:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Feedback**

Have you finished the task? Here are some possible while-reading activities I have designed for the text:

**Activity 1**

Read the text through and discuss in pairs the following questions.

1. Why does the author say that "Age is a relative concept"?
2. Why is there an "ageing crisis" ?
3. What are the models of dealing with old age? What are their disadvantages?
4. Do you think the "three-pillar" approach will work? Why or why not?
5. What is the "life-cycle" approach? How do you look at it?
6. What is the intention of the writer in writing the article? Did she achieve her purpose?

*These questions have been designed in such a way as to get the students to discuss the answers, which cannot be picked out straight from the text. Students have to use their inference skills.*

**Suggested answers :**

1. It depends on how people look at their age. For example, people in their sixties who regard themselves as "old" will be seen as "old" by everyone else, but those who keep active and see themselves as useful members of society still, will be seen by others in the same way.

2. This lies in the following factors : (a) People who live long lives are increasing both in ac-

tual numbers and in percentage of the general population, so there will be fewer people to take care of them; (b) The increase in old people to support puts more and more financial pressure on families; (c) With more and more women going out to work, there are fewer left at home to care for the elderly; (d) As governments try to cut down on pensions and health benefits, old people are likely to suffer most.

3. Two models of dealing with old age are explicitly mentioned. One is "retirement homes"; the other is "care in the community".

The greatest disadvantage with the first one is that old people living in "retirement homes" tend to feel lonely and "isolated from the rest of society"; while "care in the community" usually meaning "care in the family" puts the burden of caring for the old back into the family — usually the women. With the "breakdown of extended families" (that is large families all living under the same roof) and the "squeezing of household resources", old people tend to be neglected, rather than cared for.

The third model which is not directly mentioned is that a lot of people continue to work until they die. Though financial independence gives old people more respect from others and consequently more dignity, the kind of jobs they may have to take are usually not suitable for their age.

4. The "three-pillar" approach suggested by the World Bank, aims to finance the old and is entirely based on pensions. As indicated in the text, most old people are part of the informal economy, which means they may be working illegally, have no pension plan and are often unable to save any money for their retirement. Therefore, this approach can only work for some elderly people, not for all.

5. The "life-cycle" approach can be briefly summarised like this: the situation old people find themselves in is "a continuation of the situation that they have been in throughout their lives". In other words, the "problem of the elderly" concerns us not only in old age, but in youth and middle age as well. Therefore, we must start improving the quality of people's lives when they are young.

I think this approach throws new light on the problem of the elderly, it enables people to dig into the source of the problem, and aims to solve it once and for all.

6. In writing this article, the author intends to call people's attention to the "problem of the elderly" ("ageing crisis") and then discuss ways to solve the problem. It is informative and awareness-raising in purpose. Do you think it has succeeded? Has it made you more aware of the problem?

It needs to be remembered that comprehension questions must be carefully designed, otherwise, students may simply take out answers from the text without really understanding them. Good comprehension questions compel students to read the text carefully and try to understand what is written and then infer the answer from the text.

## Activity 2

Read the text carefully and match the paragraphs with the following titles.

Why is there an "ageing crisis"?

### Unit 3 Focus on Reading

One suggested way of financing the old  
Models of dealing with old age  
Age is a relative concept  
What is the “life-cycle” approach?  
“Old” varies from country to country and place to place.  
Old people continue to work until their death

#### Key

- Para 1. Age is a relative concept*
- 2. Old varies from country to country and place to place*
  - 3. Why is there an “ageing crisis”?*
  - 4. Models of dealing with old age*
  - 5. Old people continue to work until their death*
  - 6. One suggested way of financing the old*
  - 7. What is the “life-cycle” approach?*

#### Activity 3

Read the text again and try to infer the meaning of the following words from the context.

1. ... who are mentally if not physically agile. (Para 1)
2. ... , rather than succour for the elderly. (Para 4)
3. When resources are stretched, (Para 4)
4. Many have to uproot themselves (Para 5)

*What is important here is not that the students give the correct answers, but that they can show each other how to work out the answers, so the teacher should get them to provide evidence from the text for their answers. This sort of activity is more suitable for pairs and groups, so that they can discuss it together.*

#### **Possible answers for your reference :**

- 1. “Agile” means “active”, which can be worked out as the paragraph contrasts people in their 60s who feel they are old, with people in their 90s who still play an important part of society (and are mentally , but not physically ).*
- 2. “Succour” means “help given in difficulty”, and there are many clues in this paragraph, such as “care” and “support” .*
- 3. “Stretch” might be explained as “made to last longer by careful use”, the students might know this word in another context, for example “stretch nylon”, or “stretching exercises”, so in regard to financial resources they can imagine what it means.*
- 4. From the word formation: up + root, and the phrase “leave their villages to seek work in the cities”, we can easily work out that the word means “remove from their homes”, like a plant being pulled out of the earth.*

Now please look at **Text 11** (*Senior English for China*, Book 2A) and think of possible while-reading activities for the text.

#### Text 11

1. At present, most of the world's energy is made from fuels that are found in the earth. Gas, coal and oil are burnt to produce electricity. But the problem is that these fuels cause a lot of pollution. When they are burnt, new gases are formed, which cause the temperature of the air around the entire earth to rise. Besides, sooner or later these fuels will run out. They are being used too fast, and too much energy is wasted.
2. Energy can also be made from nuclear power. However, now and then serious accidents at nuclear power stations may happen. What is needed is greater safety at these power stations.
3. What we need to do is reduce our use of energy and use natural forms of energy which are free and which will last for ever. These types of energy are the sun, the wind, the sea, water, as well as heat from the centre of the earth.
4. The sun provides a lot of energy. Heat from the sun can be used by day to heat the water in panels which are fixed to the roof of a house. The panels are painted black so that they get hotter in the sun. Water is passed through these panels and is heated by the sun.
5. For centuries, wind power has been used for turning grains into flour and also for pumping water. It is also used for making electricity by turning the arms of a tall machine. The largest machines can produce enough electricity for a village of 300 homes.
6. It is possible to make electricity by building a dam across the sea. As the sea rises, water flows through the dam and produces electricity. When the sea has fallen, gates are opened and the water that rushes out turns the wheels to make electricity. So far, only one of this kind of dam has been built, in France. It produces 0.1% of the electricity needed in France.
7. In some parts of the world, the heat inside the earth is used for energy. Water is pumped into the earth and rises to the surface as steam. The heat can be used to heat houses and other buildings. It can also be used to make electricity.
8. Whether more countries in the world can use these natural forms of energy in future remains to be seen.

*The possible while-reading activities I design for the text :*

**Activity 1:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Activity 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Activity 3:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Feedback

Have you finished the task? Here are the while-reading activities I have designed for the text:

#### Activity 1

Skim through the text quickly and then choose the most appropriate topic title from the list below.

- a. Defining energy
- b. Nuclear energy
- c. Natural energy
- d. Fuel energy

*From the text it is not difficult to find out that it mainly talks about "natural energy", which is dealt with in paragraphs 3-8. The text doesn't define "energy" and only briefly introduces "fuel energy" and "nuclear energy".*

#### Activity 2

Match the paragraphs in the text with their topics. Write the paragraph numbers on the line.

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_ Fuel energy
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_ Solar energy
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_ Energy from water
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_ Natural energy
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_ Nuclear energy
- 6. \_\_\_\_\_ Energy from wind power
- 7. \_\_\_\_\_ Energy from the heat inside the earth
- 8. \_\_\_\_\_ Conclusion

The answer is: 1. — Para 1; 2.— Para 4; 3.— Para 6; 4. — Para 3; 5.— Para 2; 6.— Para 5; 7. — Para 7; 8. — Para 8.

#### Activity 3

Read the text again, this time more carefully and try to locate relevant information to fill in the following table.

Kinds of energy	Sources	Explanations
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*You may fill in the table as follows:*

Kinds of energy	Sources	Explanations
<i>fuel energy</i>	<i>gas, coal and oil</i>	<i>—they cause pollution and will run out</i>
<i>nuclear energy</i>	<i>nuclear power</i>	<i>—serious accidents happen in nuclear power stations; greater safety needed</i>

<i>natural energy</i>	<i>sun</i>	<i>—heat from the sun used to heat the water in black (painted) panels fixed to the house</i>
<i>roof</i>		
..	<i>wind</i>	<i>—wind power used for turning grains into flour, for pumping water and for making electricity by turning the arms of a tall machine</i>
..	<i>water</i>	<i>—building a dam across the sea: when sea rises, water flows and produces electricity; when sea falls, water rushes out of the gate and turns the wheel to make electricity</i>
..	<i>heat inside the earth</i>	<i>—water pumped into the earth and rises to the surface as steam; steam used to heat</i>
<i>houses</i>		<i>and other buildings and to make electricity as well</i>

#### Activity 4

Discuss in pairs and try to answer the following comprehension questions.

1. Why is fuel energy not an ideal form of energy?
2. What is the problem with nuclear energy?
3. According to the text, what are the features of the natural forms of energy?
4. How is solar energy produced?
5. How can water produce energy?
6. What's the author's attitude toward the energy problem? What kind of energy does the author favour? How do you know?

*The answers:*

1. *Fuel energy is not an ideal form of energy due to the following factors: (a) These fuels cause a lot of pollution; (b) When they are burnt, these fuels will cause the temperature of the air around the earth to rise; (c) These fuels will run out sooner or later.*
2. *The problem with nuclear energy is that serious accidents at nuclear power stations may occur.*
3. *They have two features: One is that they are free; the other is that they will last for ever.*
4. |
5. | *The answers to them can be found in the table in the notes on Activity 3.*
6. *The author thinks that we should save and "reduce the use of energy" for "much energy is wasted". He also seems to favour natural forms of energy. We can arrive at the an-*



swer through the words and sentences he uses, e.g., "... use natural forms of energy which are free and which will last for ever".

### **Task 3 Post-reading Stage**

Quite different from what is done in the while-reading stage, post-reading work is not directly connected with the text, but usually "grows out" of it. It has two aims: one is to consolidate or reflect on what has been read in the text; the other is to relate the text to the students' own knowledge, interests, or views. If you have used the text to teach new language, then the post-reading stage should also give the students the chance to consolidate that language by using it freely.

The kinds of post-reading activities that are usually employed are:

- oral discussion of the topic of the text,
- role-play a different situation from that of the text but using the same characters, or role-play the same situation as in the text but using different characters,
- writing a summary of the main content of the text,
- comment on the content of the text,
- retelling the story of the text,
- finishing the story (orally or in writing), that means either predicting an ending or changing the ending to one of your own choice,
- listening to or reading some supplementary materials about the topic.

You might want to use a combination of these. As you have probably noticed, post-reading work usually contributes to the development of all the language skills and may involve using other skills than just reading. In real life, we often discuss what we have read or sometimes we write about it, giving our own opinions on the topic or argument. As teachers, we give students a sense of responsibility to read a text, when they know that they will have to use the information gained from it to do something else.

Now let's try to design some post-reading activities on **Text 9**.

*The post-reading activities you design are :*

**Activity 1:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Activity 2:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Feedback

Now compare your activities with the ones below and see which ones you prefer.

#### Activity 1

The teacher may ask students to form groups of four and discuss the following two topics:

1. Beside those mentioned in the text, can you suggest some other ways in dealing with old age?
2. Is there an "ageing crisis" in China too? Why or why not?

*Students may relate what they have learned from the text to their experience of real life and may express their views on these two topics freely.*

#### Activity 2

The teacher may also be able to ask students to do a writing task after reading the text.

Write a short paragraph under each of the following headings:

1. What I expected the text to say
2. What I found interesting in the text
3. What the text made me think more about

*This activity also gets students to think about the content of the text and express their own views on it. It is an attempt to "personalise" the text, that is to relate it directly to the students' real life experience. The students could be asked to share their comments with others in pairs or in small groups. The teacher could read out some of the more interesting ones or ask each group to select and read out the most interesting comments.*

#### Activity 3

The teacher may ask students to go to their local community or neighbourhood in pairs or simply by themselves to do a mini-survey on at least four elderly people, and then write a written report based on the result. This could then be presented to the class.

#### Mini-survey

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Age \_\_\_\_\_  
Hometown \_\_\_\_\_

Sex \_\_\_\_\_  
Occupation (before retirement) \_\_\_\_\_

#### Questions

1. Who do you live with?
2. How do you support yourself?
3. What do you do now?
4. Have you got any problems? What are they?
5. How do you deal with these problems?

#### Answers

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Unit 3 Focus on Reading

6. What kind of things do you hope the society and people around can do for you? \_\_\_\_\_

*The class could collect all their answers and present them on posters on the wall of their classroom. The activity "grows out" of the text and gets students to think about and investigate the situation of the elderly people in China. Students may compare their findings with the text and then they will be able to gain some new insights towards this problem.*

Now let's look at **Text 12** from *Senior English for China*, Book 2A, and design some post-reading activities on it.

**Text 12**

Once upon a time, a London journalist wanted to see which shops offered the best advice and service. She thought that the shop assistants in the best wine shops might judge their customers by their clothes. So she decided to test this in her research.

The woman put on a long raincoat. She did up the buttons in such a way that one at the bottom was not done up. Then she went to six different wine shops. She said that she wanted to buy two bottles of wine for a special dinner and explained what food she was planning to cook. She also said that she did not mind how much money she spent. In fact, the meal which she was planning to cook was not an important meal. So good, ordinary wine would in fact be suitable.

At one shop, the assistant almost laughed at her. He judged that, because she was a woman, she did not understand about wine. In another shop, the assistant treated her very well and advised her to buy some ordinary, but very pleasant wine. The situation in the sixth shop was the most interesting. The assistant did not take her seriously, and advised her to buy two bottles of very expensive wine. What was worse, this wine was not at all suitable for drinking with a meal. Finally, he did not give her the right change, but kept back five pounds.

A week later, her complete report was printed in the newspaper, including the names of the shops that she had visited.

*The post-reading activities you design for the text :*

**Activity 1:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Activity 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Activity 3:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Feedback**

I have also designed some post-reading activities on the text, and they are just put here for your reference.

### Activity 1

The teacher may ask students to discuss in pairs or in groups of four the following questions:

1. Have you or your family, or your friends ever been ill-treated by shop assistants (or waiters)? Describe the experience in as much detail as you can.
2. What qualities do you think a good shop assistant (or waiter) should have?
3. Do we have the same problems in the Chinese service trades? Have you got any suggestions towards these problems?

*These three topics are all about the text and also "grow out" of it. In doing them, the students not only have the opportunity to consolidate what they have learned but also to practise their speaking skills.*

### Activity 2

Suppose you are the journalist in the text, now write a letter of complaint to the manager of the sixth shop about your experience there. The length of the letter should be 100-150 words and it should include the following points:

1. The assistant didn't treat you seriously.
2. The assistant advised you to buy two bottles of a very expensive wine.
3. The wine was not suitable for drinking with a meal.
4. The assistant did not give you the right change.

## Task 4 Teaching a Reading Lesson

In the former three tasks, we dealt with the pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading stages separately. And we need to be aware of the fact that this three-stage approach should not be carried out mechanically for every text. In some cases, the teacher may cut out the pre-reading stage and lead students directly into the text, if the text is interesting. In other cases, post-reading work may not be necessary, especially if you feel you have "exhausted" the topic in the while-reading activities. However, the advantages of adopting the three-stage approach in teaching a reading lesson are obvious: firstly, it takes into consideration and makes use of students previous knowledge of the language and of the world and uses this as a basis for involvement, motivation and progress; and secondly, it integrates the practice of all four language skills in teaching a reading class.

Now we'll demonstrate the teaching of a reading lesson in classrooms by combining these three stages together. The text is an authentic one taken from *China Daily*, 4 October 1997.

**Authentic Text: from *China Daily* (4/10/97)**

**Section 1: Pre-reading**

*Look at the picture below and say where you think it takes place and what is happening.*



**Section 2: While-reading**

**i. Skimming**

*Now skim very quickly through the first paragraph of the newspaper article that accompanied the picture to see if your interpretation changes.*

Local boy Zhang Enhua's header helped the Chinese National Football Team taste their first victory, beating Saudi Arabia 1-0 in the second round of the Asian Zone World Cup France '98 qualifying tournament in Dalian, Liaoning Province, yesterday.

Now what does the picture mean to you? What's the situation? What is the man feeling? Does the text refer to the picture? Have you changed your interpretation of the picture?

**ii. Word-attack and text-attack skills**

*Read the first paragraph again to answer the following questions.*

1. Where is Zhang Enhua from? How do you know?
2. How many matches have the Chinese team won?
3. What does "header" mean? How can you work it out? Why is this information given?

*Now read the second paragraph to answer the following questions.*

4. What is Zhang's position? Why is this information given?
5. Can you draw a diagram to show how the goal was scored?
6. How much longer did the match last after the goal was scored?
7. Was the match easy for the Chinese team after that?
8. Which words in the first two paragraphs might be used to describe a battle? Why have they been used?

Defender Zhang, of China's league champions Dalian Wanda, scored his header at the 24th minute of the second half from a corner kick. After that the Chinese successfully held off consistent attacks from the Asian champion Saudis.

**iii. Information-transfer**

*Now read the rest of the article and try to fill in the tables below with the information in the text.*

**Group A**

Country	Wins	Draws	Losses	Points

**Group B**

Country	Wins	Draws	Losses	Points
?				
?				
?				
?				

### Unit 3 Focus on Reading

Yesterday's match was the third encounter between the two sides in the last four years. The Chinese beat Saudi Arabia 2-0 in the semi-finals of the 1994 Asian Games in Hiroshima, Japan, and lost the 1996 Asian Cup quarterfinal match 3-4 after being ahead 2-0 in the first 15 minutes.

The Chinese were badly in need of a victory in Cup qualifying play. In their first match, also in Dalian, the Chinese were two goals ahead of the Iranians with just 30 minutes to go, but lost 2-4. In their away match in Doha, Qatar, the Chinese were held to a 1-1 draw.

Now China and Saudi Arabia both have four points from one win, one draw and one loss in the Group, which also includes Kuwait.

The Chinese team leave Beijing today for Kuwait for a road match on October 10.

Ten Asian teams were divided into two groups. The winners advance to France. The winner among second-place teams also qualifies. The loser will play the Oceania Group winner, namely, Australia, for the fourth berth.

Group A leaders Iran have seven points from two wins and one draw.

The Group B leaders were South Korea, winning a maximum nine points from three matches.

### **Section 3: Post-reading**

#### **i. Write your own title**

*Can you give this article a suitable title and write a caption under the photograph? Remember to choose your words carefully and show the importance of this situation.*

*(Classroom activity: the following task can be done in class with a group of students, but not as an individual activity.)*

#### **ii. Role Play**

*In pairs role-play an interview that takes place between a football reporter and the man in the photograph.*

#### **Interviewer**

Find out as much as you can about this supporter, where he is from, what he does, how

he came here. Ask him as much as you can about his involvement in Chinese football and find out why he is so emotional about this victory and what it means to him.

### **Football Supporter**

Decide what you will tell the interviewer about your background, where you are from, what you do, how you came here. Be prepared to describe your devotion to Chinese football and especially what this victory means to you.

*Teacher's Notes: allow the students about ten minutes to prepare their role. Put the interviewers together in pairs or groups of four to help each other work out the questions they are going to ask. Put the supporters together in pairs too so that they can help each other plan their stories (they don't have to give the same information). Then, put the students in pairs — interviewer facing supporter — and allow them to carry out their interview freely without interruption. Before they start give them a time limit of 10 minutes. Walk around and listen to their interviews without distracting them, then at the end give some feedback on common errors or good performances. Maybe, if you have time, get one interesting pair to perform their interview in front of the others.*

### **Key**

#### **Pre-reading**

*The answer is totally open and up to your own interpretation.*

*You may think the man is sad about something because he looks as though he is crying. You might think it is a sporting activity as the man is carrying a national flag.*

#### **While-reading**

i.

*Once you have skimmed the article, you realise that the situation is a football match and that China has just won a World Cup qualifying match. The man therefore must be a devout supporter, as he is carrying the Chinese flag, so he must be crying from happiness. You might have changed your interpretation completely according to the new information you now have.*

*There is no reference in the text to the picture, so we make assumptions about the man's connection to the situation described in the text. This is an example of our application of schema theory. We are using our knowledge of the world to interpret what we see.*

ii.

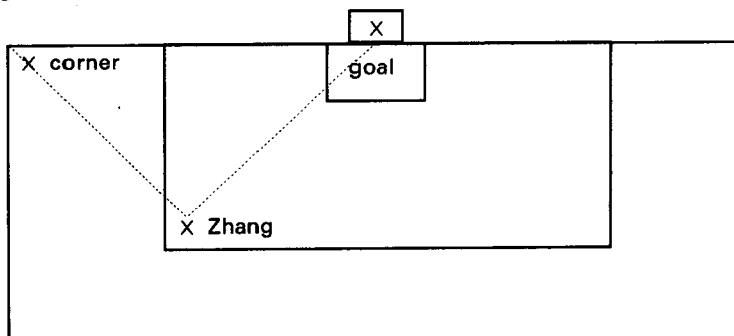
1. Zhang Enhua is a "local boy" and as the match is being played in Dalian, that means he is from Dalian.
2. The Chinese team "taste their first victory", which means this is the first match they have won.
3. The word "header" looks as though it is a noun made up of the root "head", which we understand, and the suffix "-er". From our knowledge of the world, we know that in football, you can only touch the ball with the foot, leg or head, so we can assume that "header" describes a hit of the ball with the head. It is difficult to be so precise with a



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header, so that makes this goal remarkable.

4. We see the expression “Defender Zhang”, so we assume his position is in defence and that he is not a “forward”. We do not have his exact position. This also makes the goal remarkable, as we usually expect goals to be scored by the forwards.
5. Your drawing should look something like this:



6. 21 minutes. We know that a football match consists of two halves of 45 minutes each, making a match 90 minutes in total. This goal was scored in the 24th minute of the second half, which means 69 minutes had been played, and that 21 minutes must be left. (There is sometimes some extra time at the end covering time lost in injuries, but this was not mentioned in the text.)
7. It sounds as though the match was not easy for the Chinese team after that, as they had to hold off “consistent attacks” from the Saudi team, who were obviously desperate to score a goal themselves. “Consistent” means constantly repeated, and “attacks” implies that the Saudi team were trying to get near their goal to score.
8. “Victory” and “attacks” are both words used to describe battle combat. The image is that of a hard battle, with both sides fighting to win. It enhances the competitive atmosphere of the game.

iii. (according to the text)

**Group A**

Country	Wins	Draws	Losses	Points
<i>Iran</i>	2	1	0	7
<i>China</i>	1	1	1	4
<i>Saudi Arabia</i>	1	1	1	4
<i>Qatar</i>	?	1	?	?
<i>Kuwait</i>	?	?	?	?

**Group B**

Country	Wins	Draws	Losses	Points
<i>South Korea</i>	3	0	0	9
?				
?				
?				
?				

### Post-reading

#### Write your own title

*The actual title given was China 11 score precious win. You might prefer your own title. The word "precious" expresses the importance of the win for the Chinese team.*

*The caption under the photograph was :*

**Chinese football fans are moved to tears after China beat Saudi Arabia 1-0 in the Asian qualifying Group A match yesterday at Dalian, Liaoning Province in Northeast China. The result keeps China's hopes alive of playing in the 1998 World Cup in France.**

*Your caption might have been a better one. The important thing is to explain the emotion displayed in the photograph as one of hope or elation because of the successful score of the football match and its significance.*

## Review of This Unit

In this unit you have examined the language skill of reading and what is involved in becoming an efficient reader in English. You have also been asked to reflect on your experience both as a learner of English yourself and as a teacher of English.

In Activity 1 we looked at the sort of reading we do in real life and identified the skills we employ when reading for different purposes. The emphasis throughout this unit has been on reading to extract information in the most efficient way possible and to understand a writer's real meaning.

In Activity 2, you worked through a number of different tasks designed to train the different reading skills. You should now be aware of what your students need to do in order to improve their own efficiency in reading in English.

In Activity 3 you examined the three-stage approach to the teaching of reading and you practised designing your own tasks on both authentic and non-authentic reading material suitable to your own students.

Now you have worked through this unit, we hope you have started to think more deeply about what is involved in reading in a foreign language. Once you have considered the real problems your students are going through and what they should be aiming to do, you can work out how to teach reading skills in a more efficient way. We have given you some suggestions about ways of tackling reading texts in your English lesson, but we hope that you will experiment and try to design a wider variety of better ways to teach reading. Remember that as a teacher you should have a wide variety of teaching strategies available to you, so that the most suitable ones can be chosen for each text, which will not always be the same. In order to motivate students to read widely and efficiently

in English, you need to make sure your lessons are interesting, varied, unpredictable and suitable to your students and the texts you are using. Now it is up to you to put all this into practice in the classroom!

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Evaluation of this unit**

*Now please write the answers to these questions in your diary.*

1. What have you learnt from this unit?
2. What has been most useful to you?
3. What do you think you can apply to your teaching?
4. How do you intend to this?
5. Are there any problems that you have encountered in this unit?
6. How do you intend to deal with those problems?
7. Did you at any point change your attitude towards some aspect of teaching or learning English? If so, at which point was it?
8. Is there anything more you would like to know?

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# Unit 4 Focus on Listening

## Objectives

By the end of this unit you should be able to:

- understand what real-life listening involves
- identify major listening skills
- design effective listening tasks
- select suitable listening materials
- teach listening in three stages: pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening stages

## Warm-up

Rarely if ever do we pass a day without listening to something. In the morning we listen to the news on the radio. During the day we listen to all kinds of people such as friends, neighbours, colleagues, waiters or shop assistants for their ideas, suggestions, complaints, compliments or even criticisms. At night we enjoy ourselves by watching television, seeing films or attending concerts, which also involves listening. In a word, every day we listen to different people for various purposes and in a variety of situations.

Listening is so important in our daily life that more and more foreign language teachers have become concerned with developing students' listening ability. However, few teachers would say it is easy to teach listening. There are two main reasons. First, since listening is a mental activity carried out in one's head, it is very difficult to know exactly what mental processes are involved as one tries to extract meaning from an aural text. Hence the difficulty for a teacher to monitor the listening processes of his students or to detect the problems his students might encounter. Second, to listen successfully, students should not only understand the language itself but have knowledge of such things as the topic, the context, the speakers and so on. Therefore, when teaching listening, a teacher needs to tackle more than just his students' language problems. However, given the significance of listening in real life, fewer and fewer teachers can afford not to include listening as part of their language teaching. If you yourself have ever taught listening and experienced similar difficulties, or intend to teach it in the future, this unit is intended to help you, and many other teachers just like you, to learn how to give effective listening classes.

To help your students become successful listeners, you should, first and foremost, make sure they understand what successful listening is. As a teacher, have you ever thought about that? If not, why not do it now?

*Read the following statements about successful listening. Put a tick in the brackets next to those you agree with and a cross next to those you disagree with.*

1. Successful listening requires the listener to understand every word spoken to him. ( )
2. Listening is successful as long as the listener gets the information he wants. ( )
3. A successful listener should be able to demonstrate his success by reproducing the aural message word for word. ( )
4. To achieve successful listening, the listener not only needs to understand what is directly expressed, but to identify what is indirectly meant such as the relationship between speakers, the moods or attitudes of the speakers. ( )
5. The degree of success of a particular listening performance could be evaluated according to the listener's interpretation of what has been said. ( )

Those are ideas held by certain people about successful listening. Now write down in the space below your own definition of successful listening.

Your answer: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### **Feedback**

Different people may give different definitions to successful listening. It is, however, generally held that if a listener makes the correct interpretation of the directly-expressed meaning, or the indirectly-expressed meaning, if there is any, of what has been said, he is successful. And he should be able to demonstrate his success by correctly reproducing, though not necessarily in a word-for-word form, the aural message. It is worth pointing out that successful listening does not always require the listener to understand every word, but requires him to catch what he regards as important according to his listening purpose.

## **Activity 1 What Is Real-life Listening?**

### **Task 1 Why Do People Listen?**

Most of what we do, we do with a purpose. And so it is with listening. In real life,

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whenever we listen, we tend to have a purpose. That is the difference between hearing and listening. We hear things without trying consciously to and without applying any attention. We listen to things with a purpose and pay attention to the message being communicated.

*Look at the real-life listening situations below and then write down why people listen in each situation.*

1. A passenger listens to an announcement at airport.
2. A child watches a cartoon on television.
3. A waiter takes orders in a restaurant.
4. A housewife listens to her neighbour's greeting in a supermarket.
5. An old lady listens to a radio drama.
6. A man who can judge for himself the weather conditions still listens to a stranger remarking "The weather is fine, isn't it?"

#### **Feedback**

1. The passenger listens to the airport announcements with the purpose of getting information about the flight he is going to take.
2. The child watches the cartoon on television with the purpose of being amused and enjoying himself.
3. The waiter listens to the customer giving the order with the purpose of knowing what food he wants, so that he can tell the chefs.
4. The housewife listens to her neighbour's greeting with the purpose of showing friendliness.
5. The old lady listens to the radio drama with the purpose of entertaining herself.
6. The man listens to the stranger talking about the weather with the purpose of appearing polite and friendly.

The above exercise covers only a few examples, but it illustrates that people in real life listen for a range of purposes. Although the purposes are many and varied, they can broadly be classified into three groups: a) to extract information, b) to maintain social relations, and c) to be entertained.

Complete the following table by classifying the listening purposes in the above situations. Write the number of the situation above next to the type of purpose for listening it exemplifies. Then, try to add some more examples to each type of purpose.

Type of purpose	Situation	Further examples
a) to extract information		
b) to maintain social relations		
c) to be entertained		

**Feedback**

Type of purpose	Situation	Example
a) to extract information	1, 3	Listening to radio or television news; listening to a colleague giving the time and place of a meeting; listening to instructions on how to do something or use a piece of equipment.
b) to maintain social relations	2, 5	Exchanging greetings with a friend, a shopkeeper, a colleague, etc.; exchanging pleasantries and small talk with people at a reception.
c) to be entertained	4, 6	Watching television drama, films, quiz shows, etc.; listening to radio comedy programmes; listening to a friend telling a joke; listening to a poem being read aloud.

**Task 2 What Do People Listen to?**

Just as listening purposes are diversified, so are the texts that people listen to every day, which range from the advertisements on television, to weather forecasts on the radio, to announcements at the railway station, and to a chat with a friend on the telephone. Listening texts are different from one another not only in that they centre on different topics, but in that they are produced in different contexts, conveyed through different media, and uttered by different speakers. Listening texts can take place in different contexts ranging from formal to informal. Examples of the former include a speech made by a government official at a conference, the defence of a thesis by a PhD student in front of a board of examiners, or the presenting of an award to someone who has achieved great standards in his field. Those of the latter, that is, the informal situations, include a joke told by a friend at a party, gossip between friends in the street, or talking with colleagues over the lunch table. In terms of medium, a text can be delivered through television, radio, telephone, loudspeakers, and of course air (that is, face to face). In



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addition, listening texts can be monologues produced by only one speaker or conversations involving two or even more participants. They can further be divided into those among acquaintances and those among strangers.

**🔊** Listen to the following listening texts . While you are listening to each text , try to complete the table below by ticking in the proper box .

Text	Context		Medium				Number of speakers			Relationship between speakers	
	formal	informal	radio	TV	phone	air	1	2	3	strangers	friends
1											
2											
3											
4											

**Feedback**

Text	Context		Media				Number of speakers			Relationship between speakers	
	formal	informal	radio	TV	phone	air	1	2	3	strangers	friends
1		✓			✓			✓			✓
2		✓		✓					✓	✓	
3	✓					✓		✓		✓	
4	✓		✓				✓				

**Task 3 How Do People Listen?**

Despite the fact that people in real life listen to a diversity of texts, their approaches to understanding them are more or less the same. Then what goes on in a listener's head when he processes a spoken message? Before he listens, the listener always has an expectation of what is to be said. When he listens, he matches what he expects with what he hears and activates his knowledge about the language and background information to extract the meaning. Language and background knowledge constitute the two main sources of information the listener can resort to in achieving understanding. When he relies on the former, the listener segments the stream of speech into its constituent sounds, link these together to form words, chain the words together to form clauses and sentences and so on, which is termed as the *bottom-up* approach to listening, which

was explained to you in Units Two and Three. In addition to the knowledge of language, the listener also calls upon the knowledge of topic. The use of inside-the-head knowledge, that is, knowledge about the context, speaker or topic, which is not directly encoded in words, to work out the whole meaning first, is referred to as the *top-down* approach to listening. An effective listener, like an effective reader, is not one who sticks to only one of these two approaches throughout the whole listening process, but one who knows how to make use of both approaches at the same time.

You have so far learned some theoretical knowledge about the process of listening, now would you like to apply it to some practical problems? Read the following statements made by three students about the problems they meet when listening to English. And then write down the possible causes of these problems as well as your suggested solutions.

**Student A:** *When I listen to English, what worries me most is my limited vocabulary. If I come across a new word, I stop to think about its meaning and so miss the next part of the speech.*

**Student B:** *Sometimes, even though I know every word, I can still not get the meaning. It seems that if I want to improve my listening ability, language is not the only enemy I have to fight against.*

**Student C:** *Listening causes me a lot of headaches. And it becomes especially difficult when the topics are unfamiliar to me.*

### **Feedback**

The problem of student A is that he depends too much on the bottom-up approach. His limited knowledge of English prevents him from gaining understanding only by means of the bottom-up approach. To solve the problem, he should learn to approach listening in a top-down manner, namely that he should know how to utilise the background knowledge already stored in his head to help him achieve comprehension when his knowledge of English is found to be inadequate and learn to predict and guess what the speaker will say.

Unlike student A, student B has not as much trouble with the language, but what he needs is the background knowledge. The knowledge about language enables him to understand the meaning of utterances, but at the same time he has to know enough background knowledge to make sense of them. The difficulty student B has in listening illustrates the fact that successful listening involves an interaction between the bottom-up and top-down approaches. The solution to student B's problem is therefore to inform himself of sufficient knowledge relevant to the topic or the culture behind the language.

Listening causes student C a lot of headaches for a couple of possible reasons. One might be

his inadequate language proficiency. And another might be his lack of background knowledge. These two obstacles keep him from making a full use of either bottom-up or top-down approach to gain comprehension, which makes him find listening difficult. And listening will become even more difficult when he is unfamiliar with the topic. Because in this case he has no choice but to entirely draw upon the bottom-up approach, while it often fails him due to his low level of language. If student C hopes to experience less difficulties in listening, he should try to acquire such language proficiency and background knowledge that enable him to approach listening either in the bottom-up or top-down way.

## Activity 2 What Are the Major Listening Skills?

When people listen in their mother tongue, they consciously or unconsciously employ particular listening skills. What skill they use depends on their listening purposes. When a listener, for instance, watches a drama, he concentrates on every word spoken by the actors; whereas when he listens to a weather forecast on the radio, he probably attends only to some specific information, say, the temperature of the place he is in. It is obvious that the listening skill adopted by the listener in the former case must be different from that in the latter case. It can thus be concluded that successful listening also entails the proper choice of listening skills. But what are the major listening skills? And when should they be used? In this Activity, we shall take a closer look at the different listening skills that we employ.

### Task 1 Listening for Gist

Let us start with **listening for gist**, an important listening skill used by people when they try to get a general idea of what they hear, which is just like reading for gist.

**🔊** Listen to the following texts and answer the multiple-choice questions below on the main gist of the texts.

1. In this dialogue, the speakers are talking about \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a) going on a picnic
  - b) attending a concert
  - c) having a party
  - d) holding a meeting

2. This piece of news focuses on \_\_\_\_\_.
- the President's economic policy
  - the President's first visit to foreign countries
  - the President's meeting with the Foreign Minister
  - the President's holiday
3. This text is concerned with \_\_\_\_\_.
- what you dream about
  - why you dream
  - dreams and health
  - what dreams can tell you

**Feedback**

Your answers should be 1. a)      2. b)      3. d)

**Task 2    Listening for Specific Information**

The skill of **listening for specific information** enables the listener to pick out from the whole text what he regards as important or relevant. This is the listening equivalent of the reading skill of scanning. When using such a skill, the listener does not focus on the meaning of every word, but concentrates only on the information he needs.

**🔊 Listen to the following airport announcements and fill in the blanks in the following table with the information you hear on the tape.**

Airlines	Flight number	Destination	Boarding gate number
Pan American	?	Sydney	?
?	BA 359	New York	?
Northwest	?	?	19
Indonesian	?	Paris	?

**Feedback**

Airlines	Flight number	Destination	Boarding gate number
Pan American	AM 647	Sydney	18
British Airways	BA 359	New York	24
Northwest	NW 243	Rome	19
Indonesian	GA 825	Paris	22

### Task 3 Listening for Detailed Information

**Listening for detailed information** is another important skill used by the listener to obtain a detailed knowledge of a topic. Unlike the listener who adopts the skill of listening for gist, the listener who employs this skill is not satisfied with getting only a general idea, but tries to secure an exact and detailed picture.

**🔊** Listen to the following passage and decide whether the following statements are True (T) or False (F).

1. The first compass was invented in China more than 3,000 years ago.
2. The handle of any spoon spun upon a dish will point southwards when the spoon stops.
3. The spoon was replaced by the steel needle in the compass in the 11th century AD.
4. The magnetised needle will fail to point south when it is put in a cup of water.
5. The modern compass is made up of a dish and a magnetised steel needle.
6. The compass spread from China to other parts of the world before the 13th century.

#### Feedback

The answers should be: 1.- F 2.- F 3.- T 4.- F 5.- T 6.- F

### Task 4 Inferring

As you saw in Unit Three, when people read, they sometimes need to read between the lines. And when people listen, they may need to do the equivalent, that is listen for what is not directly stated. The skill which helps people to “listen between the lines” is called **inferring**. It is a skill which allows the listener to decode what is indirectly expressed, including the relationships between speakers, the moods or attitudes of the speakers, the physical setting of the text, and so on.

There are several sources for a listener to rely on when he is trying to make an inference. One is intonation. A sentence, if produced with different types of intonation, can express totally different meanings. For instance, if a person says “Close the door, please” with a rising intonation, he may be making a polite request. But if he utters the same sentence with a falling intonation, he may be expressing annoyance or criticism of the other person’s forgetting to close the door. Another source is the speaker’s choice of words. If a speaker uses a lot of formal words, he is probably speaking in a formal situation, such as to his boss in the office. On the other hand, if most of his words are

colloquial, he is likely to be chatting with someone he is familiar with, such as one of his friends in a bar. In addition, if the listener can see the speaker, watching the facial expressions, gestures or body movements can also help him to infer the speaker's attitudes or moods.

**🔊** Listen to the following conversations and while you are listening, try to infer the attitudes of the speakers, and the relationships between them, as well as the places where these conversations take place, by completing the following table.

Conversation	Attitude		Relationship	Place
	man	woman		
1				
2				
3				
4				

**Feedback**

Conversation	Attitude		Relationship	Place
	man	woman		
1	friendly	friendly	friends	in the street
2	respectful	impatient	student and teacher	in the classroom
3	polite	polite	interviewer and interviewee	in the office
4	dissatisfied, angry	polite	waitress and customer	at the restaurant

**Task 5 Note-taking**

**Note-taking** is, in fact, a skill which combines listening and writing, because it requires the listener to write down, either word for word or in his own words, what he considers important while listening. Note-taking is widely used by people in their daily lives. We take down telephone messages for friends and members of our family, we write down directions for getting to a friend's house, we write down the time and place of a meeting our boss wants us to attend, we take lecture notes, in fact we write down every piece of information we're told that we don't want to forget.

**🔊** Let's suppose that Mrs. Brown is your next-door neighbour, and she listens to a radio

programme called "Uncle Tom's Kitchen" every morning, from which she has learned to cook a variety of dishes. In this morning's programme, Uncle Tom introduces a special way of making apple pie. Mrs. Brown listens to it as usual and takes careful notes, which she leaves on the kitchen table. Unfortunately, her cat jumps onto the table and knocks over the milk bottle. The milk flows out and spoils part of the notes, which leaves them incomplete. Mrs. Brown is going to attend a friend's birthday party this afternoon, and so she asks you to listen to the programme when it is repeated in the afternoon and to complete the notes for her. When you take the notes, you do not need to use exactly the same words as those on the tape, but it is necessary for you to get the meaning right.

### How to make Apple Pie

#### Ingredients

\_\_\_\_\_ cooking apples      1/2 lb \_\_\_\_\_  
1 lb pastry dough      \_\_\_\_\_ butter  
pinch of \_\_\_\_\_ nutmeg

#### Procedure

1. Get two pieces of \_\_\_\_\_ Spread one \_\_\_\_\_.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ apples and \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Put apples in pan, add \_\_\_\_\_, small squares of \_\_\_\_\_, pinch of \_\_\_\_\_, cloves and \_\_\_\_\_, mix well Sprinkle \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Place \_\_\_\_\_ over the pie. Slit \_\_\_\_\_ into pie top.
5. Place pie in \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Take out, \_\_\_\_\_ and serve.

#### Feedback

##### Ingredients

2 lbs cooking apples      1/2 lb *sugar*      few *cloves*  
1 lb pastry dough      4 oz butter      1/2 *lemon*  
pinch of *cinnamon*      pinch of *nutmeg*

##### Procedure

1. Get two pieces of *rolled out dough*. Spread one on *bottom of baking pan*.
2. *Peel* apples and *slice into thin pieces*.
3. Put apples in pan, add *sugar*, small squares of *butter*, pinch of *cinnamon*, cloves and *ground nutmeg*, mix well. Sprinkle *lemon juice over the top*.
4. Place *other piece of dough* over the pie. Slit *6 steam holes* into pie top.
5. Place pie in *pre-heated oven at 375 °F for 40 mins*.
6. Take out, *let cool* and serve.

## Activity 3 Designing Effective Listening Tasks

In the last two activities, you have been playing the role of a student learning some theories about listening. From this activity onwards, you will switch your role back to that of a teacher and think about how to help your students become successful listeners of English.

### Task 1 Guidelines for Designing Effective Listening Tasks

From your own experience, what are the things a teacher should take into account when he is designing a listening task? Put a tick next to those that you think contribute to designing effective listening tasks.

1. The listening skill the students are expected to develop ( )
2. The English level of the students ( )
3. The availability of the teaching equipment ( )
4. The interests of the students ( )
5. The problems the students may encounter ( )

*If there are any other factors which you think are important but not mentioned above, write them down in the space below.*

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#### Feedback

Well, you probably ticked all of those, and rightly so. There are quite a few things for a teacher to consider before he sets out to design a listening task. Firstly, he should be clear about the purpose of the task, that is, what listening skill he wants the students to develop through doing the task. Secondly, he should take into account the students' interests, needs, language level and potential problems. In addition, the practical aspects of the class size, time available, and teaching aids should also be considered.



## **Task 2 Designing Tasks to Develop the Skill of Listening for Gist**

Let's have a look at a text from the middle school textbooks and see what sort of task we can design for it.

### **Listening text 1**

One method of improving comprehension is reviewing multiple choice questions which were answered wrong or incorrectly. The first thing the students should do is to read the question again very carefully. A surprising number of students get wrong answers simply because they have not read the question carefully enough. Next, the reader should look back to see where the question is answered in what you have read. Answers to a fact question are very easy to find. For the thought or inference question, however, the students may have to reread parts of the text dealing with the question and try to decide how the correct answer was arrived at. The task for the reader is to see what a correct answer looks like when it is included in the text.

(Adapted from *Senior English Textbook, Listening Workbook, Book 2A, 1997, PEP*)

If you are to design a task to develop the skill of listening for gist based on the text above, what form would you like the task to take? Put a tick in the bracket next to those that you think are appropriate forms.

1. After listening, the students are required to decide upon a title for the text. ( )
2. After listening, the students are required to write out the answers to a few questions about some specific aspects of the text. ( )
3. After listening, the students are required to write a summary of the text in a few sentences. ( )
4. While listening, the students are required to look at a list of words and circle those used by the speaker. ( )
5. While listening, the students are required to fill in some blanks with the words in the text. ( )
6. After listening, the students are required to identify from a list the main points of the text and then put them in the order in which they are mentioned. ( )

### **Feedback**

Tasks 1 and 3 are designed to develop the skill of listening for gist. But notice that to do them effectively, the student probably needs to listen more than once. An easier task for first listening would be to give the students a list of topics and ask them which one the text was about. Task 6 also demands general comprehension of the text, but is more detailed than the

others, so would expect a higher level of student or listening to the text for several times.

Deciding upon a title, sequencing the main points and writing a brief summary are all useful tasks to develop the skill of listening for gist. However, they differ from one another in the amount of response required of the listener. The listener's response is, in fact, a commonly-used criterion to measure the complexity of a listening task. According to it, all listening tasks fall into four categories: a) those requiring no response, b) those requiring short responses, c) those requiring longer responses and d) those using listening as a basis for study or discussion.

It is important for a teacher to be able to evaluate the degree of complexity of a listening task. Otherwise, how can he know whether the task is suitable to his students' level or not? It is equally important for him to know how to grade a listening task. When a listening coursebook writer designs a task, he has in his mind the target students. These students, however, may be somewhat different from the actual students in the teacher's class. It is, therefore, obviously unwise for the teacher to ask his students to get on with the task without thinking in advance about whether it suits them or not. If the teacher does feel the need to adapt the task to make it either easier or more challenging, what can he do? The following exercise gets you to think about that problem.

Look at the following three listening tasks and rank them in the order of difficulty by putting numbers 1-3 in the brackets, using "1" to refer to the easiest task and "3" the most difficult. And then explain in the space provided why you ranked them in that order.

- A. After listening, the students are required to write down the main points of the text. ( )
- B. After listening, the students are required to tick out of a list the main points of the text. ( )
- C. After listening, the students are required to identify from a list the main points of the text and then put them in the order in which they are mentioned. ( )

### **Feedback**

Task B, that asks the students only to find out from a list the main points of the text, is the easiest, because it has offered them both the correct and incorrect answers, so all they need to do is to match what they hear with what they see and to pick out the correct ones. Compared with that, Task C, that requires the students first to identify and then to put the main points in the correct order, is more difficult in that it involves more of a response from the student. The most challenging task among these three is Task A, that requests the students to write down the main points, for it not only asks them to sort out the main points from the spoken message but to reproduce the points in writing. It thus requires of the students the highest amount of response.

## **Task 3 Designing Tasks to Develop the Skill of Listening for Specific Information**

Let's look at another text from the middle school textbooks and see how we can design tasks for training the students to listen just for specific information.

### **Listening text 2**

If you ask an Englishman about the press in his country, he will talk mostly about the weekly magazines and daily newspapers, most of which belong to five big companies. Maybe the most famous of all British newspapers is "The Times". About 650,067 copies are sold a day. The most popular daily newspaper in Britain is called "The Sun". Its circulation is about 4,060,409 copies, which is the highest in Europe. The next most popular daily paper is the "Daily Mirror", which has a circulation of 2,535,998. People also like to buy the Sunday papers and the most widely read of those is called the "News of the World". It has a circulation of 4,722,306.

(Adapted from *Senior English Textbook, Listening Workbook, Book 2A, 1997, PEP*)

*Based on the text above, design three tasks intending to develop the skill of listening for specific information.*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### **Feedback**

The following three tasks are offered only for your reference. The ones you designed might be just as good, or even better. The important thing to keep in mind though, is the purpose one would have for reading such a text and the purpose the writer had for writing it. Clearly, the main points of interest are the names and numbers of circulation of the main newspapers in Britain, so your tasks should focus on that.

**Example 1.** *While listening, look at the list below and circle the names and numbers mentioned on the tape.*

The Daily Telegraph	1,064,906
Daily Mail	1,788,100
News of the World	4,722,306
Daily Express	1,273,230

The Times	650,067
The Sun	4,060,409
Daily Mirror	2,535,998

Example 2. While listening, fill in the table below with the information on the tape.

Newspaper	Daily Circulation	Features
	650,067	
		enjoying the biggest circulation of a daily paper
Daily Mirror		second most popular daily
	4,722,306	

Example 3. While listening, fill in the blanks with the information you hear on the tape.

If you ask an Englishman about the press in his country, he will talk mostly about the weekly magazines and \_\_\_\_\_, most of which belong to five big companies. Maybe the \_\_\_\_\_ of all British newspapers is "The Times". About \_\_\_\_\_ copies are sold a day. The most popular daily newspaper in Britain is called \_\_\_\_\_. Its circulation is about 4,060,409 copies, which is the highest in Europe. The next most popular daily paper is the "Daily Mirror", which has a circulation of \_\_\_\_\_. People also like to buy the \_\_\_\_\_ and the most widely read of those is called the "News of the World". It has a circulation of \_\_\_\_\_.

Now rank the tasks you designed in order of difficulty, starting from 1 as the easiest.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Feedback**

Of course this depends on your tasks, but think clearly about the amount of response expected from the listener. Here are three tasks ranked for you.

- The easiest = Example 1 above.
- While listening, look at the two lists below, and match the names mentioned on the tape with their circulation numbers.

The Daily Telegraph	2,535,998
Daily Mail	4,060,409
News of the World	1,064,906
Daily Express	1,273,230
The Times	1,788,100

Unit 4 Focus on Listening

The Sun

650,067

Daily Mirror

4,722,306

3. Most difficult = While listening, write out in the space below the names of the newspapers mentioned on the tape and the number of copies each newspaper sells every day.

## Task 4 Designing Tasks to Develop the Skill of Listening for Detailed Information

### Listening text 3

More and more people have tried to kick the habit of smoking in the past fifteen years. This movement began when people found that many illnesses were caused by smoking. Today in many countries, people are not allowed to smoke in public places such as parks, restaurants, theatres and schools. A notice must be on every package of cigarettes that smoking is dangerous to health.

Today, "No Smoking" signs can also be seen everywhere in China, but the problem is that many smokers pay no attention to the sign and still smoke in public places. Many more things will have to be done to make everyone know that smoking is bad for the health of the nation.

(From *Senior English Textbook, Listening Workbook, Book 2A, 1997, PEP*)

*Based on the text above, design three tasks for developing the skill of listening for detailed information.*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### Feedback

The following tasks are designed for your reference.

1. While listening, choose the best answer to each of the following questions according to the information on the tape.
  - i) In the past fifteen years, more and more people have tried \_\_\_\_\_.
    - A. to smoke
    - B. not to smoke
    - C. to sell cigarettes
  - ii) People are allowed to smoke freely \_\_\_\_\_.
    - A. on buses

- B. in schools
- C. at home

iii) The notice on every cigarette packet tells people that smoking is \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. good for health
- B. dangerous for some illnesses
- C. harmful to health

iv) The problem in China today is that \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. more and more people have become smokers
- B. people are allowed to smoke in fewer and fewer public places
- C. many smokers do not pay attention to the "No Smoking" sign in public places

2. While listening, decide whether the following statements are true (T) or false (F).

- a) More and more people have got into the habit of smoking. ( )
- b) People have tried to give up smoking because they found that smoking can cause diseases. ( )
- c) People are not allowed to smoke in all restaurants. ( )
- d) Not all cigarette packets have a notice that smoking is dangerous to health. ( )
- e) Today, "No Smoking" signs can be seen at few public places in China. ( )
- f) In China, more efforts need to be made to make people realise smoking is a bad habit. ( )

3. Answer the following questions according to what you hear on the tape.

- i) What have more and more people tried to do in the past fifteen years?
- ii) What effect can smoking have on people's health?
- iii) What have many countries done to discourage people from smoking?
- iv) What can be found on the package of cigarettes?
- v) What problem does China have in banning smoking?

How would you rank the above tasks in order of difficulty?

*Now rank the tasks you designed in order of difficulty.*

- 1. (the easiest) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_

### Feedback

Of the three tasks in the Feedback above, exercises 1 and 2 require little response from the listener in terms of writing, but they do demand a lot of reading at the same time as listening, which is quite demanding in itself. As the multiple-choice questions are quite short, they probably demand less reading than the True/False questions. So the easiest is probably exer-

cise 1, with exercise 2 next, then exercise 3 as the most difficult as it demands the student to rewrite the information from the text in order to answer the questions.

## **Task 5 Designing Tasks for Developing the Skill of Inferring**

Now let's work on a dialogue and design some tasks for using it to infer information about the situation or the speakers and their attitudes.

### **Listening text 4**

*(Miss Fang goes into Mr. Markin's office and talks to him for the first time. The following dialogue takes place between them.)*

- Miss Fang: Hello. Excuse me. I'm Connie Fang.  
Mr. Markin: Hello, Miss Fang. Welcome to our company. I'm David Markin. Please have a seat.  
Miss Fang: Thanks.  
Mr. Markin: Are you getting on all right?  
Miss Fang: Yes. The weather is much warmer here than in Canada, and everyone is kind.  
Mr. Markin: Good. When did you arrive in America?  
Miss Fang: I came last Friday. Miss King met me at the airport.  
Mr. Markin: Did you have a good trip?  
Miss Fang: Yes, thanks. It was fine.  
Mr. Markin: Well, Miss King has the key to your office. Her office is on the second floor. Here are some papers to read first.  
Miss Fang: OK. I will finish them as soon as possible.  
Mr. Markin: No hurry. Do let me know if you need anything.  
Miss Fang: Thank you. It's nice to be here.

*(From Senior English Textbook, Listening Workbook, Book 2A, 1997, PEP)*

Based on the text above, design three tasks intended to develop the skill of inferring.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### **Feedback**

The following three tasks are given for your reference.

1. Answer the following questions according to what you hear on the tape.
  - 1) Where does this conversation probably take place?
  - 2) What is the relationship between the speakers?
  - 3) What are the attitudes of the speakers towards each other?
2. Read the following statements about Connie Fang and decide whether they are true or false according to what you hear on the tape.

- 1) She comes from China. ( )
- 2) She enjoys her stay in America. ( )
- 3) She will work in Mr. Markin's company. ( )
- 4) It is the first time that she meets Mr. Markin. ( )
- 5) She is now talking with Mr. Markin in his office. ( )
- 6) When she talks with Mr. Markin, she is polite and friendly. ( )
- 7) She will become one of Miss King's colleagues. ( )

3. Look at the following list of adjectives and circle those that you think can be used to describe David Markin.

polite, serious, cold, intelligent, considerate, kind, careless, stubborn, friendly, proud, humorous.

*Now again put the tasks you designed into their order of difficulty.*

1. (the easiest) \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### **Feedback**

Again this depends on your tasks. Below, you will find three varieties of exercise 3 in the Feedback above, describing David Markin. They have been arranged in order of difficulty.

1. Look at the following list of adjectives and circle those that you think can be used to describe David Markin.  
*polite, serious, cold, intelligent, considerate, kind, careless, stubborn, friendly, proud, humorous*
2. Write down three adjectives to describe David Markin.
3. After listening, write a description of David Markin. Try to find evidence from the tape to justify your description.



## **Task 6 Designing Tasks to Develop the Skill of Note-taking**

For training the skill of note-taking, you should select a text that is suitable for that task. That means that it should be the sort of text that we listen to in daily life and take notes from.

### **Listening text 5**

First aid means the aid or help that be given to an injured person first before any other help arrives. If a serious accident happens, the first thing we should do is to telephone for help instead of waiting for an ambulance to come. But we can also do something to save someone's life before a doctor comes. For example, if someone cuts himself, wash the area of the cut, dry it and cover it. If he is bleeding badly, you must try to stop it by holding a piece of dry clean cloth firmly onto the bleeding point until the bleeding stops or help arrives.

Since many injuries happen every day, it is necessary for us to have some knowledge about "first aid" so that we can save a person's life and sometimes ourselves.

(From *Senior English Textbook, Listening Workbook, Book 2A, 1997, PEP*)

*Read the text above and then based on it, design three tasks which should be all intended to develop the skill of note-taking.*

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### **Feedback**

The following three tasks are given for your reference.

Supposing you have been chosen as the representative of your class to listen to a lecture about "first aid". When you listen, you need to take some notes because after you go back, you will give your classmates some information about the lecture.

1. Listen to the lecture and note down the definition and importance of "first aid".

First aid means...

First aid is important because...

Listen to the lecture and complete the following outline of the lecture with the main points of the lecture.

**First Aid**

- i) First aid refers to ...
- ii) If something serious happens, what we should do first is to...
- iii) Before a doctor comes, there are also things for us to do such as...
- iv) First aid is very important, because...

3. Listen to the lecture and note down its main points in the form of an outline.

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Think carefully about the level of your students and how much you can expect them to listen and write at the same time.

- 1. Which of the above exercises in the Feedback, demands the most writing?
- 2. Which exercise demands the least amount of writing?
- 3. Which exercise provides the most guidance for students?

**Feedback**

- 1. Exercise 3 demands the most writing.
- 2. Exercise 1 demands the least writing.
- 3. Exercise 2 provides the most guidance for students, but also expects the students to produce a lot of detail.

You must decide how much you can expect from your students.

It should be mentioned at this point, that while you are teaching note-writing, it might be wise to give your students some guidance in how to abbreviate words so as to write them as quickly as possible. For example, in notes we often write “&” instead of “and”, and we shorten certain words in ways that we recognise them, such as “poss.” for “possible”, or “shd” for “should”. We also tend to leave out definite and indefinite articles. You must remind students, though, that when they come to write their notes out in full sentences, they should not use these abbreviations. You could design a task for your students to write a full text from abbreviated notes in order to give them practice in this skill, just like the ones you had to do in *English for Studying*.

## Activity 4 Selecting Suitable Listening Materials

You may have noticed that a lot of the listening texts provided in your supplementary textbooks consist of monologues, which are probably the least common forms of listening text that we have to deal with in real life. Sometimes we find it is not enough to use just the listening texts that are provided for us in the school textbooks, and we may want to design some classroom activities on texts that we collect ourselves. This way we can provide a much greater variety of texts for our students. This also gives our students a chance to practise listening to authentic texts. Let's look at the guidelines we should follow in selecting and exploiting those texts.

### Task 1 Finding Listening Materials

*Some sources of listening material have been listed below. Tick those that you think might contribute to developing students' listening skills.*

1. Published cassettes; ( )
2. Television or radio programmes; ( )
3. Teacher's talk; ( )
4. Classmates' talk; ( )
5. Foreign visitor's talk; ( )
6. Video tapes. ( )

*If you know any other sources of listening material which are not included in the list above, write them out in the space below.*

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### Feedback

Did you tick all of them? Well, as you probably worked out, all the above-listed sources of listening material can be used or adapted to train students' listening skills. Published cassettes are the most commonly used listening materials, because they are easily accessible and require only a tape-player. Video tapes are another good source of listening material in that they not only give students practice in listening, but allow them to see the speakers and their physical setting, which may help in decoding the message. Radio and television programmes also provide authentic listening materials. You can record those you think suitable and play them in

the class as long as your action does not violate the copyright restrictions. In fact, the exchanges in a class between the teacher and students or those among the students themselves, constitute valuable listening contexts, provided these exchanges take place due to some genuine communicative purpose, such as the teacher giving instructions, making explanations or managing the classroom, the students asking for clarification, repetition, help, airing views or discussing problems, so on. Teachers can tell stories and jokes and even read out quiz questions. If possible, you can invite some foreign visitors into your class to talk to the students about some aspect of their culture, this can also enrich students listening experience by giving them an idea of what it is like to listen to a native speaker or other English speaker face-to-face.

You might also have mentioned using songs as a source of listening material, as young people usually like listening to pop songs and there are many pop songs in English available.

## **Task 2 Live Presentations or Recorded Material?**

Based on the medium, listening materials can be classified into **live presentation** and **recorded material**. A person is listening to a live presentation when he and the speaker can communicate directly with each other. Otherwise, he is listening to recorded material. Look back at the list in Task 1 and group the items into the category of live presentation or that of recorded material by completing the table below.

<b>Live presentation</b>	<b>Recorded material</b>

### **Feedback**

<b>Live presentation</b>	<b>Recorded material</b>
1, 2, 6	3, 4, 5

What are the advantages and disadvantages of using each in the classroom? Put your ideas down in the table below.

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Live presentation	Recorded material

**Feedback**

Here are some notes provided for you. Did you have more?

Live presentation	Recorded material
It is usually easier to understand.	It makes accessible to the students different speakers who speak with different accents and at different speeds — widening the students' listening experience. This might be the students' only experience of listening to native speakers.
The listener can see the speaker's facial expressions, lip movements, gestures or body movements — all these visual clues aid his comprehension.	When a point fails to be got, the recorded material can be played over and over again without altering the words, intonation or tones until the point has at last been caught.
Since the speaker sees the listener as well, he can adjust his speed or language accordingly if he sees the listener has difficulty in understanding.	Listening without being able to communicate with the speaker can prepare the students for those real-life situations where the communication is one way, such as from the radio, television or films.
When he misses a point, the listener can at once stop the speaker and ask for clarification.	Providing a variety of media can interest and motivate students in the classroom.
Since people in real life mostly listen to the live presentation, exposing students to this type of listening material will surely prepare them for coping with real-life situations.	Having to use equipment might cause problems, if the electricity supply is not stable, or if the school cannot afford a sufficient amount of tape-players. If the equipment is not well kept, it may provide interference to students' understanding.
Relying on the teacher or classmates provides the listener with a limited range of accents.	

Given the fact that both the live presentation and recorded material play their own roles in developing students' listening ability, the teacher should not only use one to the exclusion of the other.

### **Task 3 Authentic or Non-Authentic Listening Material?**

Another way to categorise listening material is in accordance with authenticity. A text is **authentic** if it is uttered out of a genuine communicative need. On the other hand, if it is produced as an imitation of real-life communicative, it is **non-authentic**. As we saw in Unit Two, we usually categorise anything that is produced for native speakers of the language as authentic, and anything that is produced specially for learners of the language is non-authentic.

In order to examine exactly what real authentic listening sources sound like, try to carry out the following experiment.

Find a situation, in which you know you can concentrate on a conversation taking place between different people in Chinese. This could be the staff room of your school, a shop, a family home, a bus, a restaurant, a doctor's waiting room — anywhere that provides a place where people are engaging in natural conversation. Try not to be observed (ideally you would record this, but that is rarely practicable), and take a copy of the sheet below with you. Note down on the sheet any examples you hear of the features listed there.

<b>Features</b>	<b>Your comments</b>
Pronunciation	
Intonation	
Rhythm	
Speed	
False start	
Incomplete sentences	
Speaking at the same time as each other	
Changing topic	
Background noise	

What did you discover? Was the pronunciation clear and regular? Or were there regional

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variations and some unclear pronunciations? Was there anything particular about the intonation? Did the speakers stress certain words to provide emphasis? Did they use intonation to express their feelings or attitudes? What about the rhythm of their speech, was it regular or did it vary very much? Was the speed of their speech regular or did it also vary very much? How fast was it? Did you find any false starts, that is, did the speakers start to speak, then stop and start again in a different way? Did they speak in full complete sentences, or were there a lot of incomplete sentences? Did the speakers speak at the same time as each other? Was it difficult to hear what every speaker was saying? Did they change topic in the middle of the conversation? How did they do this? Was it easy to follow the conversation? Was there any background noise? Could you hear everything they were saying?

What you heard in Chinese probably provided the features of natural speech in any language, with a few variations. At least this gives you a good idea of a normal conversation and what it really consists of. How useful do you think it would be to use the conversation you examined to teach a learner of Chinese as a foreign language? Would you want to adapt the conversation in any way?

*Now you have looked at authenticity in some detail, could you write an answer to the next question?*

Should we use authentic listening texts in our English lessons?

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#### **Feedback**

Of course our eventual aim is for our students to be proficient enough in English to cope with authentic speech, but that is a very long-term aim. There are strong arguments for using authentic texts in the lesson, as students need to be prepared for real-life listening. There are however many practical problems. Where do teachers obtain such texts? Even radio and television texts are usually scripted and so not totally natural. Anything that has to be recorded in a studio also has to be scripted. It is not easy or practicable to record native speakers speaking naturally, as the presence of the tape-recorder already has an effect on the speech. Recording people outside a studio usually involves getting a lot of background noise, which gives undue strain to the listener and destroys the purpose of the listening, or discourages the learners.

The usual solution to this problem and the one that has been used in the previous coursebooks in this course, is to try to write *authentic-sounding* speech, recorded by native-speakers, or near-native speakers in a studio, to make it sound as close as possible to natural speech. A number of the features of spontaneous speech can be included. The speed of delivery usually depends on the level of the learner. You may have noticed that in your first-year courses the

speed of speech was quite slow, and in the second-year courses it speeded up quite considerably, so that by the third year you should be able to follow authentic speech delivered at naturally speed. The important thing is to start off at the level your students can cope with, but not stay at that level for ever. You should keep them challenged by increasing the speed and the level of difficulty of the task, so that their skills gradually improve. If students are only taught to listen to very easy and slowly-delivered speech, then they will panic when it comes to listening to authentic speech. And remember that not all authentic speech is fast or difficult.

Another point made in Unit 2 was the importance of *authenticity of task* no matter what sort of text you use, your task should have a communicative purpose, which should be made clear to the students beforehand so that they can decide which listening skill to use.

## **Task 4    Selecting Suitable Listening Materials**

Have you ever selected listening materials for your students? If so, which criteria do you have in mind for measuring the available material, so that it suits your students? Look at the following criteria, and tick those which you think should be taken into account when selecting listening materials.

1. I take language into account when selecting listening materials, and I prefer a text the language of which is
  - a) exactly at the current level of the students.
  - b) slightly above the current level of the students.
  - c) slightly below the level of the students.
  
2. I take length into account when selecting listening materials, and I prefer
  - a) a short text of, say, half a minute or less.
  - b) a long text of, say, more than two minutes.
  - c) a text of between half a minute and two minutes.
  
3. I take content into account when selecting listening materials, and I prefer a text the content of which contains
  - a) information my students are very familiar with.
  - b) concepts totally unknown to my students.
  - c) topics interesting to my students and some information that is new to them.
  
4. I take the use of visual support material into account when selecting listening materials, and I prefer a text illustrated by
  - a) some pictures, graphs or charts.
  - b) no pictures, graphs or charts.



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5. I take the style of delivery into account when selecting listening materials, and I prefer a text spoken by
  - a) RP speakers.
  - b) speakers with regional accents.
6. I take the speed of delivery into account when selecting listening materials, and I prefer a text spoken at
  - a) normal speed.
  - b) slower than normal speed.
7. I take spontaneity into account when selecting listening materials, and I prefer a text which is
  - a) totally spontaneous.
  - b) scripted, but produced as close as possible to spontaneous speech.
  - c) totally scripted and clearly spoken in full grammatical sentences.
8. I take the quality of production into account when selecting listening materials, and I prefer a recording which contains
  - a) distracting background sounds.
  - b) tolerable background sounds.
  - c) no background sounds.

#### **Feedback**

There are no fixed answers to this exercise, and different teachers who teach different students at different schools will naturally make different choices. However, there are still a few principles for a teacher to apply when he tries to select for his students suitable listening materials. The eight questions in this exercise in fact cover the eight essential factors any teacher should take into account when selecting listening materials.

1. Language is often the first thing many teachers would consider. Whilst you do not want the language to be beyond the level of comprehension of your students, you do want them to learn something, so the language should provide a challenge to the students so that they feel they gain something new from it and really use their listening skills to the full.
2. As for length, a listening text of between half a minute and two minutes is in most cases suitable. If it is too short, it will not allow the students enough time to get used to the topic or speaker's voice or tone. If it is too long, it might put too much of strain on the students, who can be easily distracted or demotivated due to boredom or tiredness.
3. In terms of content, there is little doubt that a listening text which is interesting and thought-provoking is best for the students, for only such a text can stimulate them to try all the means to extract the meaning. Students are not motivated to listen to something

they already know and might be demotivated if the concepts are beyond their understanding. They should listen to something that interests them and contains some new information for them to find out.

4. A listening text illustrated with some pictures, maps or charts is often desirable, as it can give the students useful visual support, especially when the topic is unfamiliar. This graphic material can also be very useful to the teacher in designing tasks, such as labelling a map or a picture, interpreting information in a graph, giving a suitable caption to a picture or drawing.
5. With regards to the style of delivery, students should be introduced to the listening texts spoken with a variety of accents rather than being limited only to those with the standard one, so as to prepare them to understand different people in real-life situations.
6. Remember that texts spoken at a speed slower than the one normal for its purpose, will lose a great deal of its natural rhythm and intonation, and therefore leave the students with a wrong impression of "real" spoken language.
7. The question of spontaneity of a listening text was discussed at length in the last task. Much depends on the level of your students, but remember that the eventual aim is to understand and produce natural spontaneous speech.
8. As you probably noticed in your examination of authentic Chinese speech, it is difficult not to have some background noise. The problem with the classroom situation is that the quality of recording or playing equipment might already place a strain on the listener, which could be aggravated by undue background noise on the tape. However, unobtrusive background sounds, such as music, traffic, people around speaking quietly, weather conditions, can add a realistic flavour to the context and also give an indication of the physical setting.

## **Activity 5 Conducting a Listening Class**

### **Task 1 Pre-listening Stage**

The whole process of a listening class can be explained in terms of a film shooting analogy. The teacher can be thought of as a "director" and the students "actors" and "actresses". Before the shooting, the director gives the actors and actresses an introduction of the play, tells them how they are expected to act and sometimes involves them in some kind of warm-up activities to get themselves ready for the shooting. When it comes to the actual shooting, the director will give the whole stage to the actors and ac-

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tresses, with him standing behind the scene, monitoring and observing. After the shooting, the director will get the actors and actresses together again, making comments or diagnosing problems. A listening class, just like the film shooting, is also divided into three stages: pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening stages.

As the name suggests, the **pre-listening stage** refers to the period before the students start listening. And the activities carried out by the teacher or students at this stage are called **pre-listening activities**. The main purpose of the pre-listening stage is to introduce enough about the topic, type of text or purpose for listening in order to activate the students' schema and get them ready to predict what they will hear and make sense of it. Most of all the students must have a purpose to listen and employ the most appropriate skills. Sometimes the pre-listening activity can form the purpose for listening, such as giving the students a title and asking them to predict what will be said, then listen to check their predictions, or they could be asked to write questions they want the text to answer. The teacher could give the students the key words from the text and ask them to predict the content or topic of the text, then they could listen to check that prediction.

As we saw in examples in units Two and Three, sometimes it is necessary for us to give some background information about the topic or people involved in order for the students to make sense of the text. Whatever is done at this stage should motivate students to listen to the text. Explaining everything the students will listen to does not help the students to develop listening skills, it actually takes away their reason and motivation to listen. Similarly, allowing students to listen without giving them a purpose also does not develop good listening skills, as the students do not know which skills to employ and so listen inefficiently by trying to memorise every word for fear of what the teacher will ask them to do.

*Now write down what you think are the purposes of pre-listening activities?*

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#### **Feedback**

Pre-listening activities may serve several purposes. First, they can help students establish listening expectations. There are few occasions in real life when people listen without some idea of what they are going to hear. Therefore, giving students expectations will make the classroom listening more like listening in real life. Besides, only by knowing what to expect, are they be able to choose the listening skills appropriate to their purpose. Second, pre-listening activities can activate students' prior knowledge about the topic, which will turn out to be very helpful when they try to understand the speaker's message. The third purpose is to solve

for students potential language or knowledge problems by providing with them in advance the explanations of some new words or related background knowledge. In addition, pre-listening activities can warm students up and arouse their interest in listening.

**Listening Text 1**

Kate is going to the supermarket to buy some food. First, she decides what she needs to buy at home. How much bread does she need? What kind of vegetables? Is there enough fruit? Next, Kate makes a shopping list. She is going to buy two chickens, some cabbage, four tomatoes and two loaves of bread. She is going to buy 3 bottles of milk and 12 eggs. But she's afraid she hasn't got enough money, so she'll have to stop at the bank on her way to the supermarket.

(From *Senior English Textbook, Listening Workbook, Book 2A, 1997, PEP*)

*Read the text above and try to design a pre-listening activity for it. Below is a checklist of pre-listening activities. You may either refer to it or design your own. You also need to make a brief statement of the purposes of your activity.*

1. The students have to study some visual or reading materials related to the listening text and then based on them to answer some questions or to have a discussion.
2. The students have to make a list of words they suppose are likely to occur in the listening text.
3. The students are given the topic and have to make predictions about the content of the listening text.
4. The teacher gives some background knowledge about the listening text.
5. The new words or expressions are demonstrated and explained by the teacher.
6. The students are asked to predict the language features of the listening text.
7. The students are asked to express their own opinions about the idea to be developed by the listening text.

*Describe your activity in the spaces below.*

**Purpose** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Activity** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Feedback**

The following task is offered as an example.

**Purpose**

1. To establish the students' listening expectations.

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2. To activate the students' prior knowledge about shopping.
3. To give the students a real purpose to listen and speak to each other.
4. To warm the students up and arouse their curiosity about what will be said.

#### Activity

Tell the students they will listen to a text about a girl named Kate who is going to do some grocery shopping. Each of them is then given a worksheet as follows, on which is a shopping list. The students are asked to discuss with their partners, predicting what Kate will possibly buy and then write the items out on the list.

**Worksheet**

**Shopping List**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_

In the next stage, the students will listen to the tape to check whether any of their predicted items are on Kate's list. On a second listening they might correct their list so that they have all the details of Kate's list written down.

## **Task 2 While-listening Stage**

What follows the pre-listening stage is the **while-listening stage**, the period in which students perform the act of listening. This is the stage in which students actually carry out all the activities while the teacher observes and operates the machine. The activities done by the students at this stage are **while-listening activities**. Their purpose is for students to employ a certain listening skill. As we have experienced earlier on in the unit, these skills might be listening for gist, listening for specific information, listening for detail, and inferring.

There are many activities that could be designed for this stage, but it is important that the skills employed are suitable to the type of text. The purpose for listening should be as close as possible to the purpose the text would have in real life.

The most common classroom activity carried out at this stage is answering questions, but in fact answering questions on what we heard is only one of many things we do with

the information gained. We might transfer the information to another context, such as filling details in a form, labelling a piece of graphic material, taking notes, or correcting something already written. There are other activities that can be carried out in the lesson, such as ticking off items in a list, drawing the picture or diagram, carrying out the actions, arranging events or information in the correct sequence, and so on. It is important that the teacher finds out if the students have fully comprehended the text and whether there have been any problems in doing so. These problems have to be dealt with, so that students can improve their listening efficiency. Remember that the teacher's purpose is **to teach not to test!**

*What, in your own words, are the purposes of the while-listening stage? Write your answer down in the space below.*

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### **Feedback**

Although the forms of while-listening activities are many and varied, the purposes they are intended to achieve are more or less the same. There are in general two main aims: one is to extend the students' ability of matching what they expect to hear with what they actually hear and of utilising their knowledge of the language and the world to decipher the meaning; the other is to train students to approach listening with specific skills based on certain purposes and contexts.

Now read the text below, Listening Text 2, and try to design a while-listening activity for it. Below is a checklist of while-listening activities. You may either refer to the list and adapt one of the options or design an activity of your own. Remember that your activity should be suitable to the purpose for listening to such a text. You also need to make a brief statement of the purpose of your activity.

1. The students tick off from a list the words mentioned in the listening text.
2. The students fill out a form with the information from the listening text.
3. The students note down part of or the whole listening text.
4. The students do some drawings or actions according to the listening text.
5. The students sequence the sentences or paragraphs based on the listening text.
6. The students have to spot and correct errors.
7. The students have to judge whether some statements about the listening text are true or false.
8. After the students have listened to part of the listening text, the teacher stops the recorder and asks them to predict how the text will continue.

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### Listening Text 2

Once upon a time there was a tribe that lived in a beautiful river valley next to a wide river that provided them with many fish and enough water to grow all the vegetables they needed. In the forest behind their houses they hunted wild animals and never went short of food. The men were skilful hunters and fishermen, and the women made beautiful clothes and jewellery, and cooked delicious dishes.

One day when the men were out fishing they saw a large crocodile, larger than they had ever seen before. They were very frightened, but they decided they needed to kill the beast. They chased the crocodile all day and tried with knives, spears and nets to catch and kill it. Eventually, when they were all very tired, they managed to catch the crocodile in a net, but before they could kill it, it turned to them and said, "I have done nothing to harm you, but you want to kill me. For this you will suffer and never live in this valley again." The men were frightened by the words, but they killed the crocodile.

That evening, as the women were cooking the crocodile meat, there was a terrible storm with heavy rain and hailstones as large as coconuts. All the houses of the village were washed away and all the people were drowned in the river. From that day on, no-one lived in the valley, except the crocodiles.

*Now design your own activity and describe it in the space below.*

**Purpose** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Activity** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Feedback

The following tasks are offered as an example. This is a story, so the details and order of events are important.

**Exercise 1: Purpose** — to listen carefully for details of a story. (The words are in *bold* only for the teacher.)

*As you listen to the story, make corrections in the text below.*

Once upon a time there was a tribe that lived *on* a beautiful *mountain* next to a wide *lake* that provided them with many fish and enough water to grow all the *fruit* they needed. In the forest behind their houses they *kept domestic* animals and never went short of food. The men were skilful *farmers* and fishermen, and the women made beautiful *carpets* and jewellery, and cooked delicious dishes...

**Exercise 2: Purpose** — to use one's background knowledge of stories to predict the logical order of the events and to listen for detail to check one's predictions.

*You are going to listen to a story. Before you listen, discuss with a partner which order the following events will take. Put them in the order you expect. Then, as you listen, correct the order of the events in the story.*

- No-one lived in the valley, except for the crocodiles.
- The crocodile meat was cooked.
- The houses were washed away and the people drowned.
- They saw a large crocodile.
- The men went fishing in the river.
- The crocodile was killed.
- There was a terrible storm with heavy rain and giant hailstones.
- The crocodile said to the men: "You will never live in this valley again."
- The men chased the crocodile for a long time.
- A tribe lived happily in the river valley.
- The crocodile was caught in a net.

Now try to design a while-listening activity for Listening Text 3, which is of a totally different nature.

### **Listening Text 3**

- Mary: Paul, where are you going? Isn't it your turn to do the housework today?  
Paul: Oh sorry, but I promised the guys I'd play football with them this morning. I'll do it tomorrow. Oh no, wait, we're going to visit your mother tomorrow, aren't we?  
Mary: Oh, Paul! You do this every weekend!  
Paul: What? Do what?  
Mary: Get out of your duties, that's what! You're always making other arrangements with people, when you know it's your turn to do things in the house!  
Paul: I don't do it deliberately. It's just that the guys and I decided this in the pub last night, and the weather's good, so we should take advantage of it. I'm sorry. I will do the chores at some time.  
Mary: But when? Do you really think I'm going to put up with all this mess until you can be bothered to clear it up? Anyway, that's not the point, we made an agreement and I'm the only one who sticks to it. It's high time you started pulling your weight around the house!  
Paul: Oh Mary, don't get upset. It's not worth spoiling the weekend over.  
Mary: Oh that's typical. You just can't see the problem, can you?  
Paul: Don't worry Mary, I'll do some cleaning when I get back. Sorry, have to go, the guys are waiting for me. Bye.



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**Purpose** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Activity** \_\_\_\_\_

**Feedback**

This is a good text for teaching inference skills. Here is the sort of exercise you might design for it.

**Purpose** — inferring people's attitudes from their intonation and use of expressions.

1. What is the problem?
2. How does Mary feel?
3. How does Paul feel?
4. What is Mary's attitude to Paul?
5. What is Paul's attitude to Mary?
6. What intonation does Mary use when she says "Oh, Paul!"? What does that show about her attitude?
7. What intonation does Paul use when he says "Oh Mary, don't get upset"? What does that show about his attitude?
8. Which expressions does Mary use to express her annoyance?

*Now try to design another while-listening activity with Listening Text 4.*

**Listening Text 4**

Right. Now, to open the CD drive, you press this little black button here on the top. See? It's marked "Eject". Then this thing here like a drawer comes out. Then, you put the disk in like this. You see? You place the disk in flat with the printed side face up. You have to hold it with your fingertips on the edge, otherwise you could damage it by putting your fingerprints on the surface. To close the drawer, don't push it in. Press the "Eject" button again and the drawer will close automatically. Now to play the disk, you just press this grey button on the side, the one with the play arrow on it. Okay?

**Purpose** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Activity** \_\_\_\_\_

**Feedback**

**Exercise 1: Purpose** — learn the language of instructions, especially associated with machinery or equipment; listening for specific information.

*(For this task, the teacher will need either a real CD player or a picture of one to teach the*

vocabulary listed below first in a pre-listening activity.)

Now place the words below (just learned) in the text as you listen. Some words might be used more than once.

Verbs: *put place press hold*  
*damage push*

Nouns: *drawer arrow button*

Right. Now, to open the CD drive, you \_\_\_\_\_ this little black \_\_\_\_\_ here on the top. See? It's marked "Eject". Then this thing here like a \_\_\_\_\_ comes out.

Then, you \_\_\_\_\_ the disk in like this. You see? You \_\_\_\_\_ the disk in flat with the printed side face up. You have to \_\_\_\_\_ it with your fingertips on the edge, otherwise you could \_\_\_\_\_ it by putting your fingerprints on the surface.

To close the drawer, don't \_\_\_\_\_ it in. Press the "Eject" button again and the \_\_\_\_\_ will close automatically. Now to play the disk, you just \_\_\_\_\_ this grey \_\_\_\_\_ on the side, the one with the play \_\_\_\_\_ on it. Okay?

If you can draw well, then it would be best if you could give the students a picture of the machine and ask them to label it according to the different stages and the specific vocabulary.

### **Task 3 Post-listening Stage**

The last period of a listening class is the **post-listening stage**. The activities conducted at this stage are the **post-listening activities**. In a number of teachers' mind, the post-listening stage is a period in which the teacher checks his students' answers, points out their problems or explains the listening text. These are all the traditional activities frequently done in a listening class. In recent years, however, there has been a trend to engage students in some kinds of speaking or writing activities after they have finished listening. And the successful completion of such activities is build upon the comprehension of listening text. The purpose of this stage is to consolidate what has been learned by the students. They can use the new information and language gained from their listening in a different context and connect it with the language they already have. So, for example, if you have been using a listening text to draw students' attention to intonation patterns expressing certain attitudes, you would want them to use that information in a role-play in which they might have to express the same attitudes. If you have been using the listening text to teach the students how to take notes, then they should be using those notes for some writing or speaking purpose, such as explaining something to someone, or writing out someone's views on a problem. If new vocabulary has been

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learned from the listening activity, then it should be practised at this stage in an activity that requires it. So, if the text was about newspapers and the students learned such expressions as “daily”, “weekly”, “circulation” and “copy”, then they could be encouraged to use those by writing about or discussing the most popular Chinese newspapers, especially if the teacher is able to provide them with the relevant circulation figures.

*Can you now write down what you see as the purpose of the post-listening stage in the space below.*

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#### **Feedback**

The main purpose of this stage is for the student to consolidate what he has learned. He listened for a purpose, now he uses the information or language he acquired to do something else, using his productive skills.

*Read the Listening Text 1 above again and try to design a post-listening activity for it. Below is a checklist of post-listening activities. You may either refer to the list or design your own. You also need to make a brief statement of the purpose of your activity.*

1. Choose the best summary from a list of three.
2. Write your own summary of the content of the listening text.
3. Having examined the language expressing certain attitudes and feelings, perform a role-play in which you can use those expressions to show the same attitudes in a different context.
4. Solve a given set of problems using the information you have learnt from the listening text.
5. Hold a discussion with your group on the topic in the listening text.
6. Act out a role-play between people involved in the listening text.
7. Write a letter to your local authorities complaining about the situation described in the listening text.
8. Write the end of a story, or give an alternative ending to a story.
9. Write a parallel text about the same situation in your experience.
10. Write similar instructions for using a piece of equipment you are familiar with, or for playing a game.

*Describe your activity in the space below.*

**Purpose** \_\_\_\_\_

**Activity** \_\_\_\_\_

**Feedback**

The following task is offered as an example.

**Purpose**

1. To get students to relate the listening text to their own personal experience.
2. To encourage the students to use the language they have learnt from the listening text.
3. To give the students a real purpose to listen and speak to each other.
4. To encourage the co-operation among classmates.
5. To challenge the students creativity and acting ability.

**Activity**

**Role-Play**

Get students into pairs and give each member a role card. Kate now goes into the grocer's to buy the goods on her shopping list. The other student is the grocer and has a list of things available and prices.

<b>Grocer</b>		
You have the following goods in your shop:		
carrots	20p a pound	milk 16p a pint
tomatoes	30p a pound (about four)	butter 35p a quarter pound
potatoes	18p a pound	eggs 45p a dozen
bread	25p a loaf	chicken 2 pounds 35p each
Note: you have no cabbages today.		

<b>Kate</b>
You have exactly 2 pounds 50 pence. Try to get everything on your shopping list, if you can.

*What post-listening activity would you design for the story in Listening Text 2?*

**Purpose:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Activity:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Feedback

We listen to stories because they appeal to our imagination and we want to be entertained by them. The post-listening task should encourage our young students to draw on their imagination and their creative ability. Here is an example you might like to try.

**Exercise: Purpose** — use comprehension of text to predict what will follow.

You might want to stop the story at this point:

*That evening as the women were cooking the crocodile meat, . . .*

Then ask the students to write the end of the story in groups. You would then ask the different groups to read out their endings and ask the class to vote on the best one. Then you could play them the real ending. You will probably find that they are now very motivated to listen to it.

## Task 4 Using Songs

There is one type of authentic material that is very easy to get hold of in English and that is the recorded song. Songs can be used for a variety of purposes and they can always be enjoyable.

*Before you read any further, have you any ideas about how songs can be used in English lessons? Write down all the ways you can think of, then read on and see if your ideas have been mentioned or not.*

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- They can be used in warm-up activities at the beginning of the class;
- They can be used to practise grammatical structures, as we will see in a later unit in Book Two;
- They can be used to illustrate certain topics or themes;
- They can be used just to motivate students to improve their listening skills.

One thing you might try to do is to ask members of the class to record their favourite song in English and hand it to you on tape with the words written down. (I have often found that when I am unable to get the exact words of a recorded song, my students, who have much sharper hearing than mine, can pick out the words with much greater accuracy.) You can then put them all together on one "class cassette" and design a worksheet to go with each song, when you have time. Then at different points during the year, you can spend a few minutes at the beginning or end of a class listening to one

of the songs and working through the activity you have designed for them.

One word of warning about current pop songs: the language of songs is often ungrammatical and very colloquial, using a lot of slang. The danger is that the students might pick it up and think it is correct language that they can use, so it might be worth your while dealing with it in class and showing them that it is not acceptable in normal use. It is possible for you to prepare a worksheet on just that, of course, to make students aware of the slang used in songs and get them to rewrite the lines grammatically correctly. For example, it is important to teach the students that “ain’t” is often used for “isn’t”, “aren’t”, “hasn’t”, or “haven’t”, that “got to” often becomes “gotta”, “going to” becomes “gonna”, “want to” becomes “wanna”, and double negatives are often used. Then the students can rewrite these lines grammatically correctly:

- \* I ain’t got no satisfaction → I haven’t got any satisfaction
- \* He ain’t heavy, he’s my brother → He isn’t heavy, he’s my brother
- \* I ain’t got no money → I haven’t got any money

Can you now rewrite the following lines from songs?

- 1. I ain’t got nobody → \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Don’t need no coffee in my cup → \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. You know, I gotta go → \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. Don’t wanna discuss it → \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. Everything is gonna be alright → \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. I don’t wanna wait no more → \_\_\_\_\_

**Feedback**

- 1. I haven’t got anybody
- 2. I don’t need any coffee in my cup
- 3. You know I have to go (I have got to go)
- 4. I don’t want to discuss it
- 5. Everything is going to be all right
- 6. I don’t want to wait any more

How else can we use songs? Sometimes it is good to use a song as a lead-in for opening a topic that you are about to deal with in a reading or listening text. For a text about the arguments and disagreements between different generations of a family, a song like “Father and Son” can be used to introduce the topic, or for a text about vegetarianism, the song “Meat is Murder” can open the debate. If you look hard, you can probably find many songs with different themes that can be exploited imaginatively in the lesson.

To show you what you can do while listening to a song, we have chosen a traditional Irish folk song as an example. First read through the words of the song and try to de-

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sign an activity for your students to do while they are listening to it.

**She Moved Through the Fair**

My young love said to me,  
my mother won't mind  
and my father won't slight you  
for your lack of kind.  
She stepped away from me  
and this she did say,  
"It will not be long love  
till our wedding day".

She stepped away from me  
and she moved through the fair  
and fondly I watched her move here  
and move there.

She went her way homeward  
with one star awake,  
as the swan in the evening  
moved over the lake.

Last night she came to me,  
my young love she came in.  
So softly she entered,  
that her feet made no din. \*  
And she came close beside me  
and this she did say,  
"It will not be long love  
till our wedding day".

\* din — means "noise"

**Feedback**

In order to show you what is possible, we have created a different task for each verse.

1. The first one is the most common, and that is filling in the blanks. But have you ever created it as an information gap activity? In this way, Student A and Student B have different worksheets with different blanks in them.

**Student A**

My young \_\_\_\_\_ said to me,  
my mother won't mind  
and my \_\_\_\_\_ won't slight you  
for your lack of kind.

**Student B**

My young love said to me,  
my \_\_\_\_\_ won't mind  
and my father won't slight you  
for your lack of \_\_\_\_\_.

She \_\_\_\_\_ away from me  
and this she did say,  
"It will not be \_\_\_\_\_ love  
till our wedding day".

She stepped away from me  
and this she did \_\_\_\_\_  
"It will not be long love  
till our \_\_\_\_\_ day".

At the end of the song, the students have to check their answers by reading one line each to each other. So, Student A reads the first line with the word he has put in the blank to Student B, while Student B checks if he has written the word correctly.

2. In this task, the students have been given the lines of each verse in the wrong order, so they have to listen carefully and number the lines as they listen. While they are listening, they have to exercise scanning as well as listening for specific words. You might ask them to try to put the words in the right order before they listen.

and fondly I watched her move here  
she stepped away from me  
as the swan in the evening  
and she moved through the fair  
with one star awake  
and she went her way homeward  
moved over the lake  
and move there

3. The next task is similar, but the lines have been broken in half and the students have to match the beginning of each line with its correct ending. This is more suitable for a song with long lines. The students again have to use their scanning skills as they look for the correct ending while they listen, and they have to listen for specific words.

last night she  
my young love  
so softly she  
that her feet  
and she came  
and this she  
it will not be  
till our

made no din  
wedding day  
close beside me  
came to me  
long love  
entered  
came in  
did say

Did you design any more imaginative activities? Let's hope you can try these techniques out on your students and see if they enjoy them and if it encourages them to improve their listening skills.

## Review of This Unit

In this unit we have looked quite thoroughly at the teaching of listening skills. This is an area that is often ignored in our English lessons, as students are often expected to listen



#### Unit 4 Focus on Listening

to tapes at home and do the exercises in their workbooks as homework. Remember that you cannot help students solve their listening problems if you have no idea what they are. I hope you now agree that a certain amount of your class time should be spent with your students on developing their listening skills, as it is often the students' weakest ability in English and it is a very important one for communication.

In Activity 1 we looked at the sort of listening we do in real life and identified the skills that we employ in real-life communication. We saw that like reading, listening can be broken down into different skills used for different purposes. We looked at the sort of problems that your students might be experiencing when they listen to English and the approach they might take to listening.

In Activity 2 you experienced different learning tasks designed to train the various listening skills. We hope that by working through those tasks as though you were the student, that you found out what your students might experience if they had to complete such tasks.

In Activity 3 we looked in more detail at how we can design effective listening tasks for training the appropriate listening skills. You were asked to work with the sort of texts you might use with your students and to design tasks for training the different listening skills.

We discussed, in Activity 4, how we can select our own listening materials for supplementing the texts that are made available to us in the school textbooks. We looked at the sort of criteria that might be used to select those materials and we discussed the importance and practical problems of using authentic material.

Finally, in Activity 5, we examined the three-stage approach to the teaching of listening and you practised designing activities for your students with different types of texts for training different listening skills. We hope you will go on practising your ability to design such tasks and that your students will benefit accordingly.

## Tapescripts

### Activity 1

#### Task 2

1.

- Diana: Hello.  
Calvin: Hi, Diana. It's me, Calvin.  
Diana: Oh, hi, Calvin. How are you?  
Calvin: Fine. Say, are you free Saturday night?  
Diana: Umm...let me see. Yeah, I am, actually. Why?  
Calvin: Well, would you like to go to the cinema with me?  
Diana: Oh, that's a wonderful idea.  
Calvin: Great. Maybe we can have dinner together first. There's a new Italian restaurant in Madison Street. Do you fancy going to eat there?  
Diana: Sure, why not? When and where do you want to meet?  
Calvin: How about I pick you up at your house around seven o'clock?  
Diana: Okay. That sounds fine.  
Calvin: Right. See you then.

2.

- Host: Good evening, viewers! Welcome to "What do you think?" Today we've invited some guests into the studio to discuss the problem of cars in our daily lives. Do we really need them? Are they worth the expensive and pollution they're causing us? Now, let's meet Linda. Linda's the manager of a high street shop. What do you think Linda? Do we really need cars in our daily life?
- Linda: I would say "yes". In my case... I live in the suburbs, while I work in the centre of town. I drive to work everyday. I mean, I... I just couldn't do without the car. I think cars make it possible for people to work... to work far from home. I mean, I live in a lovely country cottage, which is not on a bus route... or a... a train... a railway line, and there's just... just no way I could carry on my present job and live in this house, if I hadn't... didn't have a car.
- Host: Okay, well, let me introduce John at this stage. Now John, you're a postman, right? Well, John, what do you think? Do you agree with Linda?
- John: Absolutely not! If you're using the car just to get in and out of work everyday, then that's just a total waste! I mean the thing is, there is a public transport system for that purpose. And if it's not... if it doesn't go to

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the place you live in, you have to campaign the local authorities to improve the situation.

Linda: Well, it's not that easy! First of all it takes a long time for the... the Town Council to even listen to you... and then... there's the problem of queues. I mean, if I tried to get a bus when my shop closes, at... er... that's at five thirty... the queues are incredible and I don't see why I should be squeezed in like a sardine, when I can afford my own car and travel in comfort.

Host: Okay, Linda, we hear your argument, but what about the problem of pollution? Isn't that... (*fade out*)

**3.**

Bill: Excuse me, please allow me to introduce myself. I'm Bill Jones. I work for IBM... in the... er... the Sales Department.

Ella: Oh, nice to meet you, Mr. Jones. My name is Ella Blair. I'm with Nissan.

Bill: Oh please, call me Bill. Nissan, eh? Good company. Can I ask which department you're in?

Ella: Personnel.

Bill: Hmm. That sounds interesting.

Ella: Well, it's not bad. I'm quite happy there. Oh, I wonder if you'd be kind enough to pass me the pepper?

Bill: Certainly. Here you are.

Ella: Thank you.

Bill: You're welcome.

**4.** This is the BBC World Service. I'm Victor Hanley. This is the nine o'clock news. An earthquake shattered Afghanistan yesterday. No casualties have yet been reported, but several villages have suffered serious damage. After the three-day meeting in Tokyo, American and Japanese negotiators have reached an agreement on the balance of trade in modern technology products. American Space Agency officials say the space shuttle Challenger is scheduled to be released from Cape Canaveral, Florida, next week. The curtain fell on the World Cup Soccer Competition on Sunday with Italy winning the championship in a two-nil defeat of Brazil. Millions of people around the world watched the closing ceremony on television. That is the end of news headlines.

## Activity Two

### Task 1

1.

Jack: Hi, Susan. Have you got any plans for the weekend?

Susan: No, not really. Why?

Jack: Well, Bill and I were thinking of giving a party. Would you like to come?

Susan: I'd love to. What can I bring?

Jack: Nothing. Just bring yourself. Oh, I almost forgot. Could you tell the girls in your dorm about the party?

Susan: Sure. By the way, what time do you want people to show up?

Jack: Around seven. And also please tell the girls not to wear anything formal. It'll be a causal affair.

Susan: Okay.

2.

The president is to leave on Monday for visits to Brazil and Argentina. During her visit, she will hold talks with the leaders of these two countries on several political and economic issues. Officials say it will be the President's first visit to foreign countries since she was elected to office in May this year. President Robinson is expected to return home on Friday.

3.

Do you dream at night? You would probably say "yes". But do you look back at your dream when you wake up the next morning? You may well say "no". Psychologists suggest that you take your dreams more seriously because they may sometimes tell you important information about yourself. Dreams can sometimes give you an indication of an illness you might be suffering from without knowing it. For instance, if you dream of your heart being stabbed, you might have a potential heart condition. Besides that, dreams can also make you aware of something you have missed during the day. For example, if you dream of failing an exam, your dream is maybe trying to remind you of an upcoming event you have forgotten to prepare for. In short, although dreams do not always come true, it can at least do you some good to spend some time giving your dreams a second thought.

### Task 2

1. Pan American Airlines to Sidney, Flight Number AM647, is boarding now at Gate Number 18. Pan American Airlines, Gate Number 18.

2. Your attention, please. British Airways Flight Number BA359 for New York is now

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boarding at Gate Number 24. Passengers please proceed to Gate Number 24.

3. Northwest Airlines Flight Number NW243 to Rome is now boarding. Will passengers for Rome please go to Gate Number 19.
4. This is the final call for passengers travelling to Paris. Indonesian Airlines Flight Number GA825 is now boarding. Passengers are kindly requested to proceed to Gate Number 32.

#### **Task 3**

##### **The Invention of the Compass**

The invention of the compass in ancient China made great a contribution to the development of navigation. More than 2000 years ago, it was discovered that if a spoon made of natural magnetite was spun upon a dish, its handle would point southwards when it stopped. This device was the earliest form of compass. In the 11th century AD, the Chinese made significant improvements to the primitive compass. They first rubbed a steel needle against natural magnetite and then floated the needle in a cup of water. Because the needle was magnetised, it would invariably point south even in the water. Later on, the needle was fitted with a dish, which became the forefather of the modern compass.

China was the first country in the world to use the compass. This invention did not become known to the rest of the world until the beginning of the 13th century.

#### **Task 4**

1.

Mike: Jane!

Jane: Hi, Mike! Haven't seen you for ages. How are you getting on?

Mike: Just fine, thanks. And you?

Jane: Oh, not so bad. Actually, Mike, I'm getting married next month.

Mike: Really? I just can't believe it. Who is the lucky man?

Jane: Jeff Smith. He's a university professor — knowledgeable, humorous, and, of course, very nice. I met him one month ago at a cocktail party and he phoned me just the next day. He later told me that at the first sight he knew I was the right woman he had been waiting for all these years.

Mike: How romantic! Look, there's a cafe down the street. Why don't we go and have a cup of coffee there? I'd like to know more about Jeff and your forthcoming wedding.

Jane: That's a terrific idea. Let's go.

2.

Tom: Excuse me, Mrs Blake.

Mrs Blake: Yes? Oh, it's you again, Tom. Well, what seems to be the problem this time? I really don't understand why you are always have so many silly questions.

Tom: But, Mrs Blake, I think there is a misprint in the paper.

Mrs Blake: It isn't very likely, is it?

Tom: It says "You have get two apples", but I remembered once you taught us to say "You have got two apples".

Mrs Blake: That's right.

Tom: Then what shall I do, Mrs Blake?

Mrs Blake: Use your head. It can't be simpler. Just correct it and then get on with your exercises. Be quick. We haven't got much time left.

3.

Miss Brown: Good morning, Mr. Thompson. My name is Mary Brown.

Mr Thompson: Good morning, Miss Brown. Take a seat, please.

Miss Brown: Thank you.

Mr Thompson: Well, Miss Brown, could you please tell me about yourself.

Miss Brown: Yes, of course. I'm eighteen years old and just graduated from Peterson Secretary School. I read your ad. in the newspaper and know that you are looking for a secretary.

Mr Thompson: OK. Now, Miss Brown, could you tell me what you can do?

Miss Brown: I can do whatever a secretary is expected to do, such as typing, receiving phone calls, sending faxes, or writing reports.

Mr Thompson: Well, Miss Brown, it seems your qualifications for the job are excellent. Could you tell me what kind of salary you are expecting?

Miss Brown: I saw in the ad that this position offers a salary of around \$ 800 a month.

Mr Thompson: That's right.

Miss Brown: That would be fine with me.

Mr Thompson: And is there anything you'd like to know about the job?

Miss Brown: No, not so far.

Mr Thompson: Good. Thank you for coming, Miss Brown. I've enjoyed meeting and talking with you. We'll let you know the result as early as possible.

Miss Brown: Thank you. I appreciate the time you've given me.

4.

Customer: Waitress!

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- Waitress: Yes? What can I do for you?  
Customer: Where is your manager?  
Waitress: What's wrong, Sir?  
Customer: I'd like to make a complaint. I've never had food as bad as this. There's too much salt in the salad. The meat tastes like leather. And I've even found a fly in the soup.  
Waitress: I'm really sorry. May I bring you another helping?  
Customer: No, thank you. I've got no appetite left. If you really want to be helpful, bring the manager here right now.  
Waitress: But our manager is not in at the moment, I'm afraid.  
Customer: All right. Then I'll be right here waiting for him.

**Task 5**

Today, I'm going to tell you how to make an apple pie. Though you may have known pretty well how to make apple pie or even cooked hundreds of them yourself — it's such a popular dessert, isn't it? — if you make it in the way I'm going to show you today, I bet you'll come up with the most delicious apple pie you've ever tasted. Now, it's time for us to get down to work. Before you start, you should get the following ingredients ready: two pounds of cooking apples, about a pound of pastry dough, a pinch of cinnamon, half a pound of sugar, four ounces of butter, a pinch of ground nutmeg, a few cloves and half a lemon. The first thing you need to do is to get two pieces of rolled-out dough. Spread one on the bottom of a baking pan and leave the other for later use. Next, peel the apples and slice them into thin pieces. Put the apple slices into the pan and then add the sugar, some small squares of butter, a pinch or two of cinnamon, cloves and ground nutmeg and mix well. After that, sprinkle on the mixture the juice of half a lemon. When all these have been done, take the other piece of rolled-out dough and place it over the pie. Before you put the pie into the oven, there is one more important thing you should not forget, that is, to slit six steam holes into the pie top. Then you put the pie into a pre-heated oven at 375 degrees Fahrenheit and leave it there for forty minutes. Remember, forty minutes. When the time is up, take the pie out, but don't serve it until it gets cool. So you see, it's the easiest way to make the best apple pie in the world. Why don't you try it now!

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# Unit 5 Focus on Speaking

## Objectives

By the end of this unit, you should be able to:

- have become aware of the main features of oral communication;
- have drawn implications for teaching speaking skills from the nature of oral communication;
- be able to design speaking activities relevant to the units of your own textbooks and to the objectives of your syllabus;
- be able to assess student performance in speaking activities using a variety of methods.

## Warm-up A Questionnaire About Teaching Speaking

Below is a questionnaire about teaching speaking skills, answer the questions according to your own teaching experience. Write your answers in the given spaces.

### Questionnaire

1. Do you do any activities especially aimed at enhancing your students' speaking skills?
2. What speaking activities do you often do in class?
3. What speaking activities do you like?
4. What speaking activities do your students like?
5. Who talks most of the time, you or your students?
6. Which language do you use most of the time, English or Chinese?
7. Which language do students use most of the time, English or Chinese?
8. Which type of interaction takes place more often in your lessons, you to your students (T→Ss) or students to students (Ss→Ss)?
9. What is a successful speaking activity?
10. What are the problems you encounter in trying to achieve success?

*Now listen to two middle school teachers talking about their experience of teaching speaking. As you listen, think about the questions below, then write down your answers.*

1. Which teacher do you have most in common with?
2. Why do you think the first teacher's students seem to lack imagination and the second teacher's students are very creative and funny?
3. Why do you think the first teacher's students are shy and nervous about speaking in front of the others?
4. Have their comments provoked more thought in you? Do you want to add anything to the answers in your questionnaire?

### **Feedback**

1. Only you can answer this.
2. Is it really a difference between the students of the two teachers, or has it more to do with the different atmosphere in the two classes? The second teacher seems to use her own imagination a lot, she creates her own activities based on the dialogues and texts in the textbooks, and she encourages her students to add ideas of their own. She doesn't interrupt her students when they are talking and lets them express themselves freely, so they probably feel more confident in the classroom and free to make jokes.
3. The first teacher gives her students very controlled situations. She doesn't seem to add many activities to those in the textbook, so the students are used to her telling them what to do and what to say. They might be frightened to add something new or different in case the teacher doesn't approve. She seems to put a lot of emphasis on accuracy and expects her students to speak without mistakes all the time. This could make the students feel frightened to speak freely in case they make mistakes and the teacher criticises them. The students probably feel safer just reading aloud from the book, as that way they will make fewer mistakes.

Now we have looked at two very different attitudes towards teaching speaking. You must decide which one you want to aim for. Do you think you teach speaking skills adequately? Do you think you could improve? Can the following activities help make your speaking class more successful? Can they offer you a magic pill to "cure" all your problems? Well, as you know, things are not as easy as that. Maybe we can offer you some suggestions for improving your teaching of speaking skills. Why don't you read on and find out what they are.

## Activity 1 The Nature of Speaking

By studying this title, you may say "Oh, no. I don't want to work on theories". It is true that theories can sometimes be off-putting, but by learning the nature of speaking, you will be well-prepared for the discussion of what and how to teach speaking in a language classroom that comes in Activity 2.

### Task 1 Features of Spoken Language

This task focuses on the features of spoken language in general. This does not necessarily mean that you will find them all in every spoken text, but they are features that distinguish spoken text from written text. Read the following statements and state which ones, in your experience, are the characteristics typical of written language and which ones are typical of spoken language. Write "W" for written and "S" for spoken on the given lines.

W or S

- |    |   |  |       |
|----|---|--|-------|
| 1. | a | It is generally produced in complicated sentence structures.                   | _____ |
|    | b | It is generally produced in fairly simple sentence structures.                 | _____ |
| 2. | a | It is always produced in complete sentences.                                   | _____ |
|    | b | It is sometimes produced in incomplete sentences.                              | _____ |
| 3. | a | It is generally produced in informal, simple or common vocabulary.             | _____ |
|    | b | It is generally produced in more formal, more precise, less common vocabulary. | _____ |
| 4. | a | It is produced with correct grammar and good organisation                      | _____ |
|    | b | It is characterised by broken grammar, false starts, hesitation, fillers, etc. | _____ |
| 5. | a | It is produced with little or no repetition or redundancy.                     | _____ |
|    | b | It is produced with a high proportion of repetition or redundancy.             | _____ |
| 6. | a | Its organisation is largely unplanned.   | _____ |
|    | b | Its organisation is generally planned.   | _____ |
| 7. | a | It has a high density of information.  | _____ |
|    | b | It has a low density of information.   | _____ |

8. a It is context dependent (It is comprehensible even without background information). \_\_\_\_\_  
 b It is context independent. (Background knowledge is necessary to understand exactly what is being expressed.) \_\_\_\_\_

**Feedback**

The right answers should be:

- |        |     |        |     |
|--------|-----|--------|-----|
| 1. a—W | b—S | 5. a—W | b—S |
| 2. a—W | b—S | 6. a—S | b—W |
| 3. a—S | b—W | 7. a—W | b—S |
| 4. a—W | b—S | 8. a—W | b—S |

**Task 2 Features of Oral Communication**

Oral communication is such a natural part of our lives that quite often we are not conscious we are actually following a set of unwritten rules. Below are the descriptions of some of these rules. Which ones do you think are followed in daily oral communication? Write Y for those you think “yes”, and N if you think “no” on the given lines beside each statement.

Statement	Yes/No
1. Neither the content nor the amount of what is said is specified in advance.	_____
2. It is a two-way process between speaker(s) and listener(s).	_____
3. There is some response from the receiver.	_____
4. The speakers change from time to time (take turns).	_____
5. The verbal message is often accompanied by a non-verbal message (e.g. facial expressions, gestures, body positioning).	_____
6. It consists of both short and long turns.	_____
7. It allows hesitation and pauses.	_____
8. It contains fillers (e.g. “er” . . . , “um” . . . , “uh”)	_____
9. It involves false starts and repetitions.	_____
10. It requires appropriateness in degree of formality, the topics, selection of vocabulary, etc. to the status, age and gender of the speakers and the situation.	_____

**Feedback**

Well, you should have ticked them all, as the statements are all true in describing oral communication and they are all features unique to speaking as opposed to written communication.

## Unit 5 Focus on Speaking

Now listen to and look at the following conversation and see which of the above rules are applicable. Tick their numbers below if you find evidence of them in the text:

1    2    3    4    5    6    7    8    9    10

### **Conversation**

Jenny: Dave, what did you think of the visiting lecturer yester... the ... er... visiting lecturer's talk, I mean?

Dave: I thought it was... um... how shall I put it?... interesting. Erm... but not exactly suited... aimed at the audience... the group that was there. Too academic for most undergraduates. Difficult to follow. You know what I mean?

Jenny: Yeah. But someone should have told him that... you know....

Dave: Right!

Jenny: .... um... briefed him about who he was speaking to.

Dave: Maybe he thinks undergraduates should be at that level.

Jenny: Oh god!

Dave: Well, you know these guys who sit in their ivory towers, they lose track of what's going on in the real world. All tied up in their research all the time. What did you think of him, Joe?

Joe: What? Who?

Dave: The guy yesterday.

Joe: Oh, Professor whatshisname?

Dave: Yeah. Salimer, or something.

Joe: Oh, I couldn't understand a thing. I was lost after the first set of statistics.

Jenny: And all that jargon!

Joe: Complete waste of time. I could've been playing football.

Dave: Mr Smith?

Mr Smith: Yes, Dave.

Dave: We were just talking about the visiting professor yesterday.

Mr Smith: Uh-ha.

Dave: It was a bit beyond us really.

Mr Smith: Yes, I'm afraid he did make it rather too academic, didn't he?

Jenny: I thought it was just me... you know... um... that I was too stupid to take it in. I'm glad to hear the others feel the same.

Mr Smith: Oh Jenny, I'm sorry it had that sort of effect on you.

### **Feedback**

You should have ticked all of them, except maybe for point 5. We have no evidence in a written conversation of non-verbal gestures being used, but they might have been there in reality.

If we watched the conversation on video tape, we could pay attention to the non-verbal message, such as gestures, facial expressions, position of bodies. Did you notice the slight change in style of speech when Mr Smith, presumably their university teacher, joined the conversation? This is an example of point 10. The sentences tended to be more complete, and more background information was given (e.g. "the visiting professor yesterday" as opposed to "the guy yesterday").

### Task 3 Language and Communication Techniques

Language teachers, as well as students, need to become aware of what native speakers do in oral communication if we aim to achieve speaking competence in English. Such awareness can be acquired through observation and exploration. Below is a list of considerations that we may have in speaking activities. Which questions are you aware of asking yourself when you speak in English? Tick one of the columns: **Always**, **Sometimes**, **Rarely** or **Never**. When you have completed for yourself, you could carry out a mini-research project by asking your colleagues and students to complete the questionnaire.

Considerations	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1. Is my pronunciation correct?				
2. Is my grammar correct?				
3. Did I choose the right words?				
4. What is the appropriate collocation of this verb / noun?				
5. What should I do to encourage the conversation to go on?				
6. Should I show support and understanding to other speakers now and then?				
7. How do I start the conversation?				
8. What should I say to end the conversation?				
9. Where should I put my hands and how should I stand?				
10. Should I ask other speakers to join in?				

Unit 5 Focus on Speaking

11. Is the topic I chose appropriate to everyone?				
12. How should I make my request sound polite?				

**Feedback**

Does your result fit this conclusion? In speaking activities, we tend to focus more on linguistic aspects rather than on communication techniques. That is, you have more ticks under always and sometimes for the first few questions in your questionnaire and more ticks under rarely and sometimes for later questions. We worry more about using correct language than about how we are managing or organising the communication, but as we shall see, communication techniques are also important.

**Task 4 Listening and Speaking**

Listening has been well-explored in Unit 4. The reason why it is picked up again here is its integral relationship with speaking. Read the following statements about the nature of oral communication, the roles of speaking and listening, and decide if you agree with them. Tick on the appropriate lines.

Statement	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree
1. Oral communication is a two-way process between a speaker and a listener.	_____	_____	_____
2. Misunderstanding or poor understanding in listening may lead to breakdowns in communication.	_____	_____	_____
3. Speaker and listener are constantly changing roles in conversations.	_____	_____	_____
4. Speaking involves responding to what has been heard.	_____	_____	_____
5. Our ability to understand is more extensive than our ability to speak.	_____	_____	_____

**Feedback**

All the statements are true in natural oral communication. As teachers, we should not ignore the role listening plays in speaking and we should encourage our students to be good listeners as well as good speakers to ensure a successful communication.

## Activity 2 A Framework for Teaching Speaking Skills

### Task 1 What Should Be Expected in a Speaking Activity?

Did the tasks in Activity One make you think about their implications for the teaching of speaking skills? If our aim is to enable students to communicate as naturally as possible in English, the characteristics of spoken English and oral communication may help us a great deal in deciding on the following questions. Give a brief answer of "Yes" or "No" on the given lines.

Questions	Answers
1. Is an extensive knowledge of grammar necessary for learning spoken English?	_____
2. Is an extensive vocabulary necessary for learning spoken English?	_____
3. Should we expect our students to produce accurate language every time they speak?	_____
4. Should we expect our students to begin speaking in English when they first learn the language?	_____
5. Should we encourage our students to plan fully everything they are going to say before they participate in a conversation?	_____
6. Should we encourage our students to participate more in conversations which involve more than one person than preparing one-person speeches?	_____
7. Should we encourage our students to respond to what the teacher or their classmates say whenever they feel like it rather than sit there and listen passively?	_____
8. Should we focus our students' attention only on verbal communication and ignore non-verbal communication?	_____
9. Should we make our students aware of the role such features as the age, sex, and status of the participants play in a conversation, as well as the time and place it takes place, and how these affect the styles of speaking?	_____



## Feedback

If you have fully comprehended the issues raised in Activity One, you shouldn't find any difficulties in giving the right answers to the above questions. The answers should be:

- 1 No, not necessarily.
- 2 No, not necessarily. A lot of communication can take place with a basic level of vocabulary and grammar.
- 3 No, otherwise they will never learn to communicate spontaneously or fluently.
- 4 Yes.
- 5 No (for the same reason as No.3).
- 6 Yes, as this reflects what happens in real life. How often do we have to make speeches?
- 7 Yes, as this encourages them to be more actively involved in the lesson and encourages them to express their opinions in English as often as they can.
- 8 No, non-verbal communication is very important, especially as it is different in different cultures. Videos of English speakers taking part in natural conversation can demonstrate a lot of these differences.
- 9 Yes, as these features are all important in communicating effectively. Think about how a speaker can cause offence by using the wrong register in addressing a particular person.

## Task 2 A Speaking Syllabus

Having talked so much about the nature of oral communication and its implication for teaching speaking skills, you may become impatient of not having an answer to the question "What exactly should I teach my students in oral classes?". Given the restrictions of the timetable, what are the basics that should be taught? Before we answer this question, let's study the dialogue below.

- Li Lei: Sam, what are you going to do tomorrow?  
Sam: Nothing much. Why?  
Li Lei: We're going to watch a football game. Would you like to come too?  
Sam: I'd love to! What kind of football, American or soccer?  
Li Lei: Soccer. But we don't call it soccer in China. We call it football.

(From *Junior English for China Students' Book 2*, p.27)

*Here is a list of things this dialogue contains. Can you put them under their proper headings below?*

- a. making an invitation (Would you like to come?) and accepting an invitation (I'd love to)
- b. football game, American football, soccer
- c. the usage of "to be going to do something"
- d. the linkage of a consonant with a vowel sound ("what are", "would you")

- e. sports (football)
- f. facial expressions, hand movements, etc. (If the teacher does the demonstration in addition to having the students listen to the recording.)
- g. making a pre-invitation before the real invitation (What are you going to do tomorrow? )
- h. how the word "football" is understood by Chinese learners of English and by Americans.

1. Topic:	
2. Grammar:	
3. Vocabulary:	
4. Pronunciation:	
5. Function:	
6. Conversation technique:	
7. Non-verbal Communication:	
8. Cultural information:	

**Feedback**

The right answers should be:

- 1-e    2-c    3-b    4-d    5-a    6-g    7-f    8-g

As you can see, a short dialogue like this one contains more than just grammar and vocabulary. Among the eight items on the list, 4-7 are typical elements in oral communication. Can we conclude that the teaching of speaking skills should include these elements? What are the basic functions and conversation techniques commonly performed in our everyday communication? Make your list in the given spaces below.

Functions	Conversation Techniques

*Compare your list with the list below and tick those functions and conversation techniques that you have covered in your speaking classes in the past.*

**Functions:**

- a    give permission
- b    complain and apologise
- h    ask for information
- i    describe a sequence of events

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- |   |                        |   |  |
|---|------------------------|---|--|
| c | make requests          | j | make / accept / refuse invitations         |
| d | state intentions       | k | indicate and ask about likes and dislikes  |
| e | ask for and offer help | l | make arrangements involving time and place |
| f | make suggestions       | m | ask for and give advice and opinions       |
| g | give instructions      | n | express possibilities and certainties      |

**Conversation Techniques:**

- |   |                              |   |                                     |
|---|------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| a | start and end a conversation | g | prevent interruption                |
| b | hesitate                     | h | check understanding                 |
| c | draw the attention of others | l | ask for repetition or clarification |
| d | interrupt others             | j | avoid silence                       |
| e | bring other people in        | k | show understanding                  |
| f | keep the conversation going  |   |                                     |

Pick out the speaking activities of the first five units from the middle school English textbook you are using and try to break them down under the headings of **topics, vocabulary, grammar, function, conversation techniques** as you did in this task by filling in the form below. A completed form like this makes a good speaking syllabus.

Lesson	Topic	Vocabulary	Grammar	Function	Conversation Technique
1					
2					
3					
4					
5					

**Feedback**

Bring your syllabus to the tutorial session and exchange information with other students.

Ask yourself this question: When you use these dialogues in class, do you focus only on

grammar and vocabulary?

Now, do you have a clear idea of what is beyond such a focus?

### **Task 3 The PPP Model — Definitions**

Once we have a nicely-designed speaking syllabus, what do we need to do next? Yes! We have to make it work in the classroom. The procedure of an oral lesson aiming at teaching new language items can be idealised into three stages known as the PPP model. What do the three P's stand for?

They are *Presentation*, *Practice*, and *Production*.

The descriptions of these three stages are given below. Can you match each description with a P? Write your answer in the box below.

- a. In this stage, students are given the opportunities to use the newly presented language items in a controlled framework. This may be done by drills, or by repeating parts of the dialogue presented in the first stage. This stage is intended to develop accuracy skills.
- b. At this stage, the teacher introduces the new language items to be learnt. The teacher focuses the students' attention on model sentences, dialogues or other types of texts and checks their understanding of the new language items.
- c. At this stage, learners have the opportunity to integrate the new language items with the old through activities that give free and extensive expression aimed at developing fluency skills.

	<b>a, b or c</b>
<b>Presentation</b>	
<b>Practice</b>	
<b>Production</b>	

#### **Feedback**

The answer should be: presentation — b   practice — a   production — c

So, the presentation stage is to present the new language to the students in meaningful contexts and make sure they understand what it means and how it is used. The practise stage is for the students to practise this new language, first in a very controlled way and gradually

adding more of their own language to it. The production stage is for the student to use the language freely, incorporating it in what they already know.

There is more information about these three stages than simple definitions. Please go on to the next few tasks.

## Task 4 The PPP Model — Focuses

As the speaking lesson moves from the presentation stage to the production stage, many other factors may change with this. Look at the table below and decide which one in each pair below is likely to apply to the early stage of the PPP model and which one to the later stage. Tick along the appropriate lines of the table.

	From Presentation to Practice	From Practice to Production
<b>1. focus of the lesson</b>		
a. learner-centred	_____	_____
b. teacher centred	_____	_____
<b>2. role of the teacher</b>		
a. as a controller	_____	_____
b. as a co-ordinator	_____	_____
<b>3. role of the learner</b>		
a. reproducing language	_____	_____
b. creating language	_____	_____
<b>4. typical activities</b>		
a. role play / communication games	_____	_____
b. drills	_____	_____
<b>5. class organisation</b>		
a. class work / individual work	_____	_____
b. pair / group work	_____	_____
<b>6. focus of the activities</b>		
a. accuracy	_____	_____
b. fluency	_____	_____
<b>7. degree of control</b>		
a. highly teacher-controlled to less teacher-controlled	_____	_____
b. teacher-controlled to more student-controlled	_____	_____

8. <b>nature of correction</b> a. immediate correction b. delayed correction	_____ _____	_____ _____
9. <b>type of interaction</b> a. teacher to student b. student to student	_____ _____	_____ _____

**Feedback**

The answer should be:

	From Presenta- tion to Practice	From Practice to Production		From Presentation to Practice	From Practice to Production
1a		✓	5a	✓	
b	✓		b		✓
2a	✓		6a	✓	
b		✓	b		✓
3a	✓		7a	✓	
b		✓	b		✓
4a		✓	8a	✓	
b	✓		b		✓
			9a	✓	
			b		✓

**Task 5 The PPP Model – In Practice**

Now it is time for you to ask yourself this question : Do I follow the PPP model in my speaking lesson? Decide to what extent you agree with the following statements before you give an answer to this question . Tick on the appropriate lines .

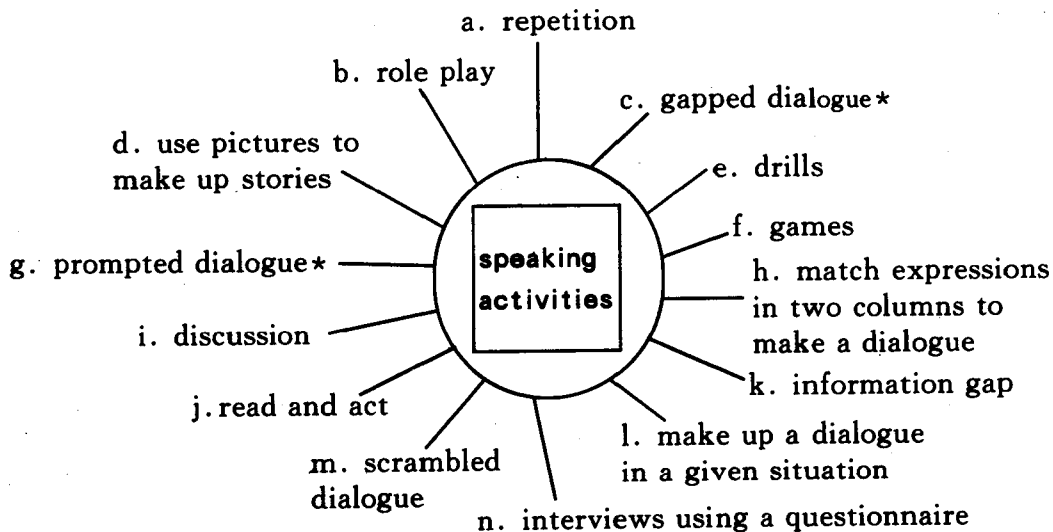
	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree
1. This model is an idealisation and oral lessons in practice may have variations.	_____	_____	_____
2. The three stages may occur more than once in one class session or they may spread over more than one class sessions.	_____	_____	_____
3. The three stages may appear in a different order.	_____	_____	_____

## Feedback

The three statements may all be true in practice. For example, the production stage may take place at the beginning of a lesson to help the teacher decide how and how many of the new language items should be introduced; one class session may concentrate on one stage (e.g. production stage) where the students can consolidate what they have learnt and enhance their fluency skills. Whatever model you have adopted in your oral class, new language input and opportunities to practise the new language are two essential elements to improve your students' speaking skills.

## Task 6 From Control to Communication

*In the Warm-up, you were asked to give a list of activities you often do in your oral lessons. Look at the following brainstorm diagram. Are these activities included in your list?*



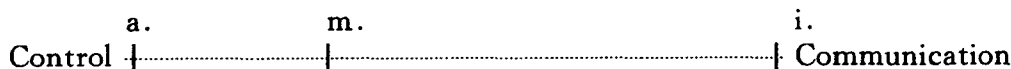
- \* gapped dialogue = filling in blanks in a dialogue
- \* prompted dialogue = make up a dialogue according to cues

*(All the above activities in the diagram are taken from the Junior and Senior English Textbooks published by Higher Education Press in 1996.)*

As we have seen, the presentation stage is usually very teacher-controlled. The teacher decides who speaks and what is to be said. There is much emphasis on accuracy at this stage. During the practice stage, activities go from teacher-controlled to more student-controlled. During the production stage, the student should have much more control. That means he chooses what to say and how to say it. Maybe the teacher has given a

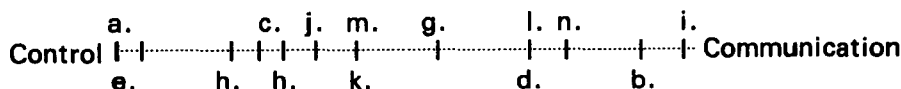
situation or a topic in which the students act or discuss. The emphasis here is on fluency as the students should be communicating freely.

Each of the speaking activities above can fit in to a certain stage of the lesson according to the amount of teacher-control that is exercised. Can you put the alphabetic codes (a, b, c) of the activities along the Control-Communication continuum? A few of them have been done for you?



**Feedback**

Here is a suggested answer:



You'll notice that f. games was not put on. Where would you put it? It could be anywhere really in the continuum, as there are many different types of games that can be used: some for accuracy (very controlled) and others for fluency and creativity, which would be placed at the other end.

The whole answer is of course open to discussion, as many of these activities can vary with the amount of control or freedom they entail. For example, k. information-gap, could have different amounts of control (e.g. giving each other information from a table, could be quite close to "control", but summarising a part of a story would be much nearer "communication". Similarly, j. could be further towards "communication" if the student is allowed to change the dialogue and add his own expressions, but if he just has to memorise the dialogue then it should be closer to "control".

Those activities at the beginning of the continuum are likely to appear at the early stage of the PPP model (that is presentation and controlled practice) and those at the end are useful for the later stage (that is free practice and production). Different types of activities also apply to students at different levels. For example, beginners may benefit more from controlled activities while advanced students may find communicative activities more rewarding.

**Task 7 From Accuracy to Fluency**

Oral accuracy refers to the speaker's full control of the grammar and pronunciation in communication. Oral fluency can be defined as the ability to express oneself intelligibly, reasonably accurately and without too much hesitation. Using the same list of activities



in Task 6, can you put the alphabetic codes of the activities along the Accuracy - Fluency continuum?

Accuracy ..... Fluency

**Feedback**

Was your answer any different from that of Task 6? Probably not, as at the early stage of the PPP model, more focus should be laid on accuracy whereas at the later stage, fluency becomes the focus of teaching. Of course, the amount of the teacher's control is expected to decrease as the activities progress from accuracy-focused to fluency-focused. Examples for control-communication and accuracy-fluency activities can be found in Activity Three.

**Task 8 A Successful Speaking Activity**

In the Warm-up, you were asked to list the elements of a successful speaking activity. Review your list and compare it with this one below. Now give an assessment score to each element based on your own students' performance in oral communication (from 5 the highest to 1 the lowest).

<b>Successful Elements</b>	<b>Your Class Assessment Score</b>
a) Students talk a lot in English.	_____
b) Students' participation is even (The class is not dominated by a few talkative participants).	_____
c) Students' motivation is high (Students are interested in the topic, eager to speak and share their own information with others).	_____
d) Language use is of an acceptable level (Students speak with appropriate accuracy and fluency, new language is comprehended and incorporated in their production).	_____

*Do you think your students score high or low? What are the reasons you have identified as obstacles to successful speaking activities on the students' part? Tick the following reasons that might explain what happens in your lessons and add to the list if possible.*

- a. They are not interested in the topic.
- b. They are not happy with their partners or group members.
- c. They have language problems (vocabulary, new expressions, pronunciation, etc.) in expressing themselves clearly.

- d. They are not familiar with the topic (e.g. they are asked to talk about something they have never experienced).
- e. They are ignorant of some cultural constraints (e.g. they ask questions that are too direct to strangers).
- f. They don't know what to do.
- g. They are afraid others would laugh at their English.
- h. They don't think they can learn anything from the activity.
- i. They are frightened of making mistakes.
- j. They are annoyed if the teacher is not listening to them or is not there to correct them.
- k. \_\_\_\_\_ (please add to the list)

**Feedback**

I hope you haven't ticked them all! Identifying the reasons behind the problems is the first step to take. Now we should look at possible ways of dealing with these problems.

**Task 9 Confront the Difficulties**

I guess neither you nor your students need to be convinced that one of the main purposes in learning English is to be able to speak it. You must have put a great deal of effort into getting students to speak English in class but you may not always get what you want. Like most other teachers of English, you may have a 'speaking lesson' in which you do most of the talking. If this is the case with you, you may need to ask yourself the following questions listed in Column A in the table below. Please write your answers in Column B.

A. Questions	B. Your Answers
1. Do you always make an effort to prepare your students for the speaking activity?	
2. Do you always make it clear to the students what is expected of them?	
3. Is there always a follow-up to the speaking activity?	

Below are some examples of "teacher talk" in a speaking class. They actually give you some useful suggestions of what to do with the three questions above. Can you decide which question each of the following deals with? Write the question number in the final column.

Topics	Teacher Talk	Question Number
a. hobbies	<p><i>Now let's watch a video clip. I would like you to answer one question after you watch. The question is: what are these people doing in the video?</i></p> <p><i>(The teacher writes the question on the blackboard.)</i></p>	
b. shopping for clothes	<p><i>Now I would like you to role-play this dialogue. Please do it in the following steps:</i></p> <p><i>(The teacher writes the steps on the blackboard.)</i></p> <p><i>Step 1: decide with your partner who plays the shop assistant and who plays the customer.</i></p> <p><i>Step 2: Read the sample dialogue playing your roles.</i></p> <p><i>Step 3: Use the sample dialogue as an example and make up your own dialogue.</i></p> <p><i>Step 4: Practice your dialogue and get ready to do it in class.</i></p>	
c. housework	<p><i>(The teacher makes a list of housework duties on the right of the blackboard and their matching pictures on the left in random order.)</i></p> <p><i>Work with your partner. Match the phrases on the right with the pictures on the left.</i></p>	
d. asking the way	<p><i>All of you have done a very good job. There is one thing I would like to point out. At the beginning of the task, I asked you to use polite expressions to ask the way instead of just saying "Where is the bank?". And you have added "can you tell me" or "I would like to know" before your question. If you use these expressions, you need to turn the questions that follow them into a statement. That is you should say "Can you tell me where the bank is?", not "Can you tell me where is the bank?"</i></p> <p><i>(The teacher writes the examples on the blackboard.)</i></p> <p><i>Now, let's make more questions with "can you tell me".</i></p>	

<p>e. favourite food</p>	<p>(The teacher prepares a questionnaire on favourite types of food and asks the students to interview their partners and note down their answers.)  <i>When you have all the answers ready, prepare a short description of your partner's diet. For example: "my partner likes vegetables. He eats a lot of them every-day. But he doesn't eat much meat because he thinks it's not good for his health."</i></p>	
<p>f. asking and offering help</p>	<p><i>Great! So in this activity, we have learned several expressions for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>how to ask for help</i></li> <li>• <i>how to offer help</i></li> <li>• <i>how to give thanks.</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Let's make a list of the expressions you have used in your dialogue for each of these groups.</i></p>	

**Feedback**

Your answers should be:

- a. (1) b. (2) c. (1) d. (3) e. (2) f. (3).

Students need orientation to the topics of their speaking activities. Examples a) and c) give ways of arousing the students' interest and building up their vocabulary for later speaking tasks. Students may also need information on how to go about the tasks. Examples b) and e) stress the importance of giving staged instructions and a demonstration of what is expected of them. A clear explanation of the rationale of the tasks, as well as the use of feedback are important ways to give students a sense of achievement or progress at the end of the task. Examples d) and f) may give you an idea of such. If the speaking activity doesn't come out in the way you expected it to, don't blame the students. Ask yourself what *you* can do to improve the situation. Getting students to work in pairs and groups involves a lot of organisation. This will be dealt with in Unit Ten.

**Task 10 The Role of the Teacher in a Speaking Class**

You would take it for granted that as a teacher, your job in the classroom is to "teach". This isn't quite true all of the time. You are expected to be an actor/actress, who will have to play different roles at different times. Read the list of roles below and decide which ones you have played in a speaking class. Place your ticks on the appropriate lines.

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Roles	Job	Your answer
a. conductor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to make sure that the students know what they have to practise and to see that they practise it effectively</li> </ul>	_____
b. organiser	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to organise the activities so that the students can practise in pairs.</li> </ul>	_____
c. monitor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to check what the students are doing</li> </ul>	_____
d. stimulator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to get the students to interact</li> </ul>	_____
e. demonstrator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to provide new input and to show or explain how the language is used</li> </ul>	_____
f. corrector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to decide what, how much, when and how to correct</li> </ul>	_____
g. helper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>to give help when there is a need</li> </ul>	_____

**Feedback**

Do you find yourself playing different roles at different times? In the PPP model, the teacher has greater control at the presentation stage and often acts as a demonstrator. At the practice stage, the teacher is expected to be an organiser, a conductor and a monitor. At the production stage when the situation is more student-directed, the teacher plays the role of a stimulator and a helper. The role of a corrector is carried out throughout these three stages, but the timing, the way, and the focus may be different at each stage.

## Activity 3 Designing Speaking Activities

### Task 1 Considerations in Designing a Speaking Activity

Each middle school English textbook has an attached Teacher's Book with suggested lesson plans for speaking activities. How do you deal with these plans? Below are the ways some teachers may adopt. Tick under the appropriate boxes below to describe your situation.

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
1. I follow the lesson plan in the teacher's book.	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. I read the lesson plan and make some minor changes to it.	_____	_____	_____	_____

3. I read the lesson plan and make big changes to it. \_\_\_\_\_
4. I read the lesson plan but I don't follow it. \_\_\_\_\_
5. I plan my lesson without reading the lesson plan in the teacher's book. \_\_\_\_\_

So are you a teacher who doesn't always accept a lesson plan as it is in the teacher's book? If yes, then for what reason do you find the need for changes? In other words, what are your considerations when you design your speaking activities? Can you list these considerations in the space below?

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Column A below has a list of considerations in designing speaking activities; while Column B elaborates these considerations by listing questions that need to be asked in each consideration. Can you match the question with the appropriate consideration? Write the corresponding alphabetic codes in the brackets.

Column A (considerations)	Column B (questions)
1. design ( )	a) Is the content of the activity relevant to students' lives? Do they have plenty to say about their own feelings or opinions? Does the activity involve competition, problem-solving?
2. language input ( )	b) Can students make full use of the newly learned language items in their activities?
3. language output ( )	c) What roles are students expected to play and how should they play them?
4. information input ( )	d) How long will the activity take? Is the activity easy to manage?
5. information output ( )	e) Is any new information built into the speaking activity? Can students learn about new things besides the language itself?
6. interaction ( )	f) What language items are students expected to learn?
7. interest/involvement ( )	g) Can students get the teacher's or their classmates' comment at the end of the activity so that they not only have an information-focused outcome but also know what they did well and in what they still need improvement?
8. feedback ( )	

- h) What is the purpose of the activity? Is there a result, solution, answer requested at the end of the activity which is information-focused, not language-focused?

Now check your list with the list in Column A above. Do you have many in common? Maybe you have used different terms. Maybe you have more considerations than those that have been listed. The basic idea is that you need to think very carefully when designing your speaking activities to ensure their successful implementation in classroom practice.

### Feedback

Your answers for the matching task should be: 1-d, 2-f, 3-b, 4-e, 5-h, 6-c, 7-a, 8-g. You may say to yourself: "Gosh! Do I need to consider all of them when I design a speaking activity?" The answer is: "Yes, if you want to make it successful".

## Task 2 Dialogues — Presentation

How do you present a dialogue? Below are some fragments of English classes where Dialogue A in the box below (taken from *Junior English for China*, Students' Book 2, Unit 15, Lesson 57) is presented. Read the dialogue and decide what language input the dialogue aims at and how you would like to present such language input. Write your answers on the given lines below.

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### Dialogue A:

Kate:	Hello, 7-5-4-double 6-2.
Li Lei:	Oh, hello. Could I speak to Jim, please?
Kate:	I'm afraid he's out at the moment. He's at the cinema. Can I take a message?
Li Lei:	Yes. Could you ask him to call me, please?
Kate:	Sure! What's your name, please?
Li Lei:	Li Lei.
Kate:	Could you spell that, please?
Li Lei:	L-I, Li. L-E-I, Lei. My telephone number is 6-7-double 8-3-4.
Kate:	6-7-double 8-3-4. Right.
Li Lei:	Thanks a lot. Bye.
Kate:	Bye.

*Now read each fragment below and answer the questions that follow.*

**Fragment A:**

The presentation goes through the following procedure:

1. The teacher asks the students to read Dialogue A after him.
2. The teacher asks the students to read the dialogue in pairs.
3. The teacher introduces the structure "Could you... please" from the dialogue and asks the students to translate sentences on this model into Chinese.
4. The teacher asks several pairs to read the dialogue in class.
5. The class goes on...

**Fragment B:**

The presentation goes through the following procedure:

1. The teacher introduces the structure "could you ... please" and drills the students by giving cues.  
E.g. The teacher: "Call me". The students: "Could you call me, please."
2. When satisfied with the students' performance, the teacher asks the students to read Dialogue A in pairs.
3. The class goes on...

**Fragment C:**

The presentation goes through the following procedure:

1. The teacher asks the students to read Dialogue A in pairs.
2. The teacher asks questions based on the dialogue. The teacher would like the students to discover the usage of "could you ... please" and the opening and ending of a telephone dialogue by answering these questions.
  - a. How does Kate start the dialogue and how does Li Lei respond?
  - b. How does Li Lei end the dialogue and how does Kate respond?
  - c. How does Li Lei ask for the person she wants to speak to?
  - d. How does Li Lei make the request to have Kate ask Jim to call her?
  - e. How does Kate ask Li Lei to spell her name?
3. The teacher asks the students to read Dialogue A again in pairs.
4. The class goes on....

**Fragment D:**

The presentation goes through the following procedure:

1. The teacher has prepared Dialogue B on a piece of paper. He chooses two pairs of good students and asks them to read out Dialogue B first and then he asks them to read out Dialogue A. The students who listen are required to identify which dialogue sounds more polite. Dialogue B is shown below:



**Dialogue B:**

Kate: 7-5-4-double 6-2.  
Li Lei: Jim, please?  
Kate: He's out at the moment. He's at the cinema. Can I take a message?  
Li Lei: Ask him to call me.  
Kate: What's your name?  
Li Lei: Li Lei.  
Kate: Spell that.  
Li Lei: L-I, Li. L-E-I, Lei. My telephone number is 6-7-double 8-3-4.

2. After the students pick out Dialogue A as the polite dialogue, the teacher asks the pairs to read the two dialogues again and the other students to note down what makes Dialogue A sound more polite.
3. The teacher writes down the students findings on the blackboard.
  - Use "could you" and "please": e. g. Could you spell that, please? Could I speak to Jim, please? Could you ask him to call me, please?
  - Use greetings at the beginning and goodbyes at the end: e. g. Hello. Bye.
  - Respond to what the other speaker says: e. g. Can I take a message? — Yes. Could you ask him to call me, please? — Sure!
  - Use "thank you": e. g. Thanks a lot.
4. The class goes on ...

**Fragment E:**

The presentation goes through the following procedure:

1. The teacher tells the students that they are going to work in pairs and make telephone calls. Then the teacher asks Student A in each pair to face the front of the classroom and Student B the back of the classroom.
2. The teacher asks all Student As to read the information on the front blackboard: *You call your friend Jim and find that he is not at home. Ask his sister (brother) to take a message telling Jim to call you. Your number is: 678834.* The teacher asks all Student Bs to read the information on the back blackboard (or on a piece of paper pinned to the back wall): *You are at home. Your brother Jim is out. Someone will call you looking for Jim. Tell him/her that Jim is out and ask if you can take a message. Ask for the caller's name and telephone number.*
3. When students on both sides are ready, the teacher removes the information from the blackboards and asks students to face each other.
4. The teacher asks each pair to start their telephone conversation. Students B have to

start first.

5. When the students have finished the pair work, the teacher asks them to open the book and read Dialogue A. The teacher also asks the students to compare Dialogue A with the dialogue they just did and decide which one sounds more polite and what makes it sound more polite.
6. The teacher asks the students to listen to and read Dialogue A again and identify the relationship between Kate and Li Lei by raising questions like: a) Do Kate and Li Lei know each other? b) Where is Kate now? c) How old could they be? d) In what way does their relationship affect the formality of their conversation?
7. Same as 3 and 4 in Fragment C.

*Can you answer the following questions?*

1. Which fragment is similar to your plan?

---

2. Which fragment would you like to try?

---

3. What language items do these lessons aim to teach?

---

4. How is the structure “could you . . . please” introduced in the five fragments? Which one(s) has the most students’ involvement in discovering this structure as a polite device?

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5. In what respect(s) does Fragment C differ from Fragment D?

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6. In what respect(s) do Fragments C and D differ from Fragment E?

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7. Can you see any advantages or disadvantages in trying Fragment D and Fragment E with a large class?

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## Feedback

1. Only you can answer this question.
2. Ditto.
3. Polite requests using the model expression "Could you..." or "Could I...".
4. A. — T explains structure after Ss read dialogue.  
B. — T explains structure, then drills, then Ss read dialogue.  
C. — Ss read dialogue, T asks questions getting Ss to discover the function of the structure for themselves.  
D. — T gets Ss to listen & compare polite version with impolite version of dialogue to elicit the polite structure from them.  
E. — T gets Ss to role-play dialogue *before* reading or listening to it, then Ss listen to dialogue and compare, thus drawing their attention to the new structure.  
Fragments C, D & E involve the students the most, in that order with E involving them the most.
5. In Fragment C, the T directs the Ss' attention to the new structure by means of questions.  
In Fragment D, Ss discover the structure for themselves by comparing the two dialogues.
6. In Fragment E, as Ss have been asked to role-play the situation first, they will probably be more motivated to listen to the dialogue on tape to compare it with their own. They will quickly realise the objectives of the lesson when they see there is a lack in their ability to do something.
7. The teacher can prepare the extra dialogue (D) or the dialogue prompts (E) easily in advance on a piece of paper or on a blackboard. It does not require making worksheets for all members of the class.

## Deductive and Inductive Approaches

What we have seen demonstrated above are the deductive and inductive ways of teaching new language items. In Fragments A and B, the teacher taught the structure deductively. That is, he presented it to the students and explained it to them before they practised it. In Fragments C, D and E, the teacher taught the structure inductively, which means he tried to get the students to work it out for themselves without having to explain it to them. By careful questioning, the teacher can lead the students to the correct conclusion. We will say more of these two approaches when we come to the teaching of grammar in a later unit of your course.

In presenting the new structural item, we should primarily try to achieve two things:

- i) to establish the form. That is to enable the students to recognise the new structure well enough to be able to produce it themselves — to supply clear models of the structure. And

- ii) to establish the meaning which means to make absolutely clear the usage of the structures, so that when the students produce them, they know what they are saying — to present the models in a readily understandable situation: acting it live in the classroom; using some true statement which is known by the students; using a fictional situation (such as events or a state of affairs in a picture or a text).

We saw above some different ways of presenting new language.

- i) Presentation by examples and explanations.
- ii) Presentation of an oral model contextualised in a situation.
- iii) Presentation through role-play.

In your own teaching, which presentation techniques do you regularly use? Can you think about the advantages and disadvantages in doing so? It is a good idea to experiment with all of them instead of sticking to one.

Here is another dialogue. Decide your teaching focus and the ways you are going to present it. Bring your plan to the tutorial session to share with other learners.

(The dialogues are taken from *Junior English for China*, Students' Book 2, Unit 22. Lesson 85.)

**Dialogue 1**

- A: Excuse me. Where's North Street Hospital, please?  
B: Go along this street, and take the second turning on the right.  
A: Thank you very much.

**Dialogue 2**

- A: Excuse me. Which is the way to East Park, please?  
B: Let me see. Er, walk along this road and turn right. Go on until you reach the end. You'll find the park in front of you.  
A: Thanks.

### **Task 3 Dialogues — Practice**

After the teacher makes sure that the students have thoroughly understood the intended key vocabulary/structures in a dialogue, he steps into the second stage: **practice**. This stage, as explained in Activity 2, Task 4, contains more student involvement and less teacher control. Practices such as split exchanges, gapped dialogues, read and act, scrambled dialogue, information gap and prompted dialogues can be used at this stage. Read the following fragments of lessons and decide in what way they may be improved.

**Fragment A:**

*practice focus*: to make a request using "could you ... please".

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(The teacher draws a table on the blackboard with two columns. Column A has a list of requests and Column B has scrambled responses to these requests.)

The teacher's instructions to the students are like this: Work with your partner. Match each request in Column A with its corresponding response in Column B and read them out loud.

### **Fragment B:**

*practice focus*: to ask the way and give directions.

(The teacher prepares two sets of gapped dialogues as shown below:)

#### **Dialogue A**

A: Excuse me. Where's \_\_\_\_\_, please?

B: Go along \_\_\_\_\_, and take \_\_\_\_\_ on the right.

A: Thank you very much.

#### **Dialogue B**

A: \_\_\_\_\_ North Street Hospital, \_\_\_\_\_?

B: \_\_\_\_\_ the street, and \_\_\_\_\_ the second turning \_\_\_\_\_.

A: \_\_\_\_\_.

The teacher's instructions to the students are like this: Work in pairs. Student A in each pair will have Dialogue A and Student B will have Dialogue B. Do not show each other the dialogue. Fill in the missing words by asking each other questions.

### **Fragment C:**

*practice focus*: to invite and persuade your partner to visit the Great Wall with you.

The teacher's instruction to the students are like this: In this task, the student invited refuses at first, with his/her partner's persuasion, he/she accepts the invitation at last. They appoint the time of starting and the place where to get on the bus.

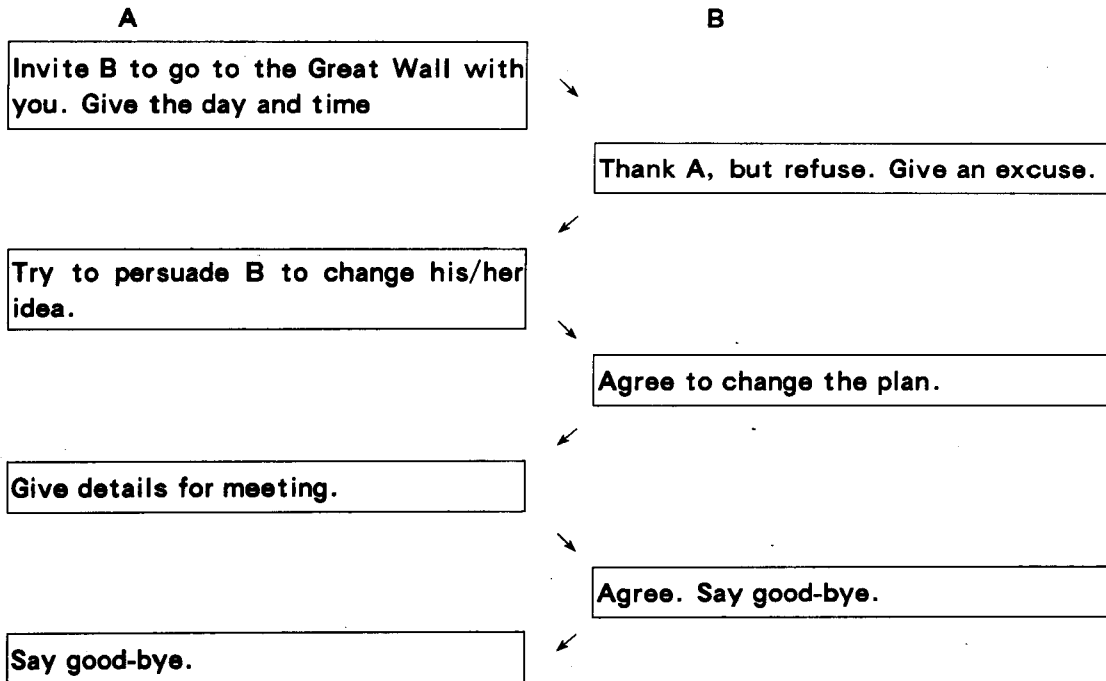
### **Feedback**

Fragment A: no speaking is involved. The students can complete the task without having to speak apart from reading aloud. This task can be improved like this: the teacher prepares the requests and the responses on cards. The class is divided into two sides. Side A has all the requests cards and Side B has all the responses cards. To find the corresponding response, students from Side A should make their requests verbally to everyone they meet in Side B and listen to their responses until they find their partners with the matching request and response. When everyone has found a partner, the teacher can check their performance by asking each pair to read out their cards. This task allows Side A students to practise "could you ... please" structure several times and to give them a purpose to listen to different possible responses, and Side B students to listen to different requests and give their responses.

Fragment B: this is a randomly gapped dialogue without a focus. How could it be possible for students to ask questions on those gaps such as "\_\_\_\_\_ North Street Hospital, \_\_\_\_\_?", "\_\_\_\_\_ the street"? It would be better to practise asking these questions with a simple map that the teacher has prepared. Students are given two versions: A has certain

places labelled and B has other places labelled, they must have some in common. Then A is given a list of places that he has to ask B to direct him to, and B is given another list to ask A to direct him to.

Fragment C: the instructions are very confusing. To make the exchanges in the dialogue clearer, a flow chart may be very helpful, as shown below:



Notice the sentence structures in the flow-chart. Each instruction will start with a concrete verb. Now, can you produce a flow-chart for the following dialogue? Fill in the empty boxes in the flow chart below with your own prompts.

- Waiter: Hello, can I help you?  
 Guest: Yes, please. Could I have a menu, please?  
 Waiter: Sure. Here you are. What would you like to eat?  
 Guest: Could you recommend the specialities of your restaurant?  
 Waiter: Certainly. Beef dishes are great.  
 Guest: Fine. I will have steak then.

**waiter**

**guest**

**Feedback**

**waiter**

**Greet the guest and offer you service**

**Respond to the guest and ask him what he wants to eat**

**Recommend the beef dishes**

**guest**

**Respond to the waiter and ask for a menu**

**Ask for the specialities of the restaurant**

**Order a steak**

One word of warning: the prompts should not contain words that are too difficult for the

students to understand. If there is no way round this, then a translation of the difficult words in Chinese in brackets after them would be acceptable.

## **Task 4 Dialogues — Production**

At the production stage, the teacher is expected to exert the least control over the students' output, but this doesn't mean that the teacher provides no guidance to the students. Role-plays will be the most commonly used method to ensure that the students can use effectively what they have learned in real communication. At this stage you really want students to make up their own dialogues naturally and in such a way that they really have something to say to each other. That means you have to give them situations that are interesting and that your students can relate to.

Let's have a look at two lesson extracts and see which one is designed better in order to elicit more participation from the learners. Both of them have reached the production stage of the same lesson.

*Language Focus*: advising someone to do something, using the structures "should" and "ought to". The students have been presented with and have practised "advising people to do things" using "should" and "ought to".

### **Fragment A**

The teacher sets up the following *situation*:

Tom Steele will soon finish school. He wants to become a doctor. He asks his headmaster and his father's friend, also a doctor, what he should do to succeed.

**Tom Steele**: Ask your headmaster, Mr Mullins, what you should do to become a doctor. Then ask your father's friend, Dennis Lawson, what he thinks you should do.

**Mr Mullins**: Tom comes to you to ask to become a doctor. Advise him on what he should do (e.g. study hard, get good grades in Sciences, apply to Medicine School).

**Dennis Lawson**: Your friend's son, Tom, wants to become a doctor. You remember how difficult it was to get accepted by Medicine School, advise him to study hard and get the necessary grades.

**Procedure**: The teacher explains the situation and then gets the students into groups of three to act their roles. When they have finished, she asks one group to re-enact their role-play in front of the class.

### **Fragment B**

The teacher sets up the following *situation*:

Mary Brown left teaching fifteen years ago in order to devote her time to her family. Now her daughter is old enough to look after herself, and Mary seems to have much



more time on her hands, so she is thinking of going back to teaching. She wants to discuss this with her family in order to find out their views and seek their advice.

**Roles :**

**Mary Brown:** You are interested to hear what each member of your family has to say and you do not want to do anything against their wishes. Try to decide what is the best solution.

**Michael Brown:** You are Mary's husband. You think it is a good idea for Mary to go back to work, especially as the family may need the extra income. You are actually worried about the security of your job, as more and more workers are being laid off these days. You don't want to make your family panic by telling them the real reason, so try to concentrate on the positive side of Mary's work as a teacher to convince her to go back. Try not to let your father advise her not to, as you know his reasons are only selfish.

**Mr Brown Senior:** You are Mary's father-in-law. Mary has been a good daughter-in-law to you: she has cooked for you every day, done all the housework, looked after your health and provided you with company. You are seriously worried that if she goes back to work, she will neglect all these duties and you will have to manage alone again. Your health is not getting any better and you feel you need her more than ever now. Try to find ways of persuading her not to go back to work, without sounding selfish. Try to remind her about the stress of teaching and the importance of her place in the home.

**Jenny Brown:** You are Mary's daughter. You are worried that your mother will be persuaded to do something for the wrong reasons. You know your father is thinking more about the increase in family income if your mother goes back to work, you know also that your grandfather doesn't want her to work, because he wants her to stay at home and look after him. Try to make your mother do what is best for *her*.

**Procedure :** The teacher gives out the role cards, each pair getting the same role. Then she gets the pairs to discuss the situation and what they think they can do in their role. She is happy to answer any questions at this stage about anything they have not understood and any help they might need with what to say. When the students feel they have prepared their role, she then puts them in groups of four, each one with a different role, and tells them to start with Mary Brown explaining to the others why she has called them together and asking their opinion. The teacher gives them a time-limit of 15 minutes, by which time, Mary must have made her decision. At the end, the teacher asks each Mary Brown to explain what she decided and why. She then deals with the language problems she heard while the role-plays were taking place.

*Now try to answer the following questions :*

1. Which role-play would provoke the most speaking from students?
2. Which one was easier for the students to relate to?

3. Which one was more interesting for students to take part in?
4. Which one contained some conflict in the situation and the intentions of the people involved?
5. Which one catered for both male and female students?
6. Which role-play involved the most organisation?
7. Which teacher seemed better prepared?
8. Which of these two activities would you like to try with your students?

### **Feedback**

1. Do you agree with me that B would provoke more speaking? Let's go on to examine why.
2. Probably only you can answer this question, as you know your students. As for A, it is not necessary to tell students these days that they have to study very hard to get to university and of course especially for Medicine. Students know this very well, so surely they can relate to this situation to a certain degree. B presents a family situation, that the students may not have direct experience of but they have all at some time been involved in some family conflict and can easily imagine what to say.
3. Do you agree with me again that B is more interesting for students? They can be creative, argumentative, and can enjoy themselves doing this role-play. A is a rather serious role-play that doesn't allow for much creativity on the part of the participants.
4. A contains no conflict, as both advisers will say the same thing. Therefore, there is little room for discussion. The design of the role-play in B has conflict built into it in order to provoke discussion, disagreement, arguments and the chance to give different opinions.
5. Did you notice that A had only male roles and that B had an equal amount of male and female roles? This could affect the way your students relate to the activity. After all, let's remember that boys and girls do have some separate interests.
6. Of course B involved much more organisation and this could put some teachers off. You need to think out beforehand how much organisation it takes and come well-prepared. To weigh up the pros and cons, remember that the most interesting things we can do in the lesson, do usually involve more organisation. The more you do it, the easier it becomes to set up. You might find the language in the role cards in B has to be simplified a little for your students. This often happens when we find a good idea from somewhere else.
7. The teacher in B was well-prepared for the amount of organisation the activity required. Notice that she first put the students into pairs of the same role and gave them time to think about what they would say. Remember that we often need to get our ideas clearly thought out before we can just perform in a foreign language. Notice too that she gave the students a time-limit and a definite goal to the activity. In A, the students were not really given a clear goal nor a time limit. What use do you think the acting out of the role-play by one group in front of the class at the end serves?
8. This has to be your choice, but try to imagine what would provoke active participation from your students.

## **Task 5 Information-gap Activities**

Depending on how they are designed, information-gap activities can form part of the

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practice stage or the production stage, or sometimes even the presentation stage. As you have already seen, Unit 2 has an extensive discussion on information-gap activities. In this task, we will mainly work on how to set up gaps. Read the following fragments and decide how the gap is formed in each activity.

**Fragment A:**

*language focus:* ask for quantities/school facilities

Student A with Card A comes from No. 101 middle school and Student B with Card B comes from No. 21 Middle School. Each has the information of the teaching facilities their own schools has. Find out the number of facilities of the other school by asking each other questions.

**Card A (No.101 Middle School)**

Facilities	No. 101 Middle School	No. 21 Middle School
classrooms	30	
language labs	2	
computer labs	1	
physics labs	2	
basketball courts	4	
football grounds	1	
volleyball courts	0	

**Card B (No.21 Middle School)**

Facilities	No. 101 Middle School	No. 21 Middle School
classrooms		25
language labs		4
computer labs		0
physics labs		2
basketball courts		2
football grounds		0
volleyball courts		1

The gap is formed by using \_\_\_\_\_.

**Fragment B:**

*language focus:* describing a person

Students A, B and C are at a party. Student A has Picture A, Student B has Picture B

and Student C has Picture C. Each one knows the named persons in their own picture and wants to know the names of the rest at the party. They have to describe their appearances to each other and find out the names of the other people.

**Picture A**



Picture B



Picture C



The gap is formed by using \_\_\_\_\_.

**Fragment C:**

*language focus:* hotel registration

The teacher asks all the students in the even lines to face the front of the classroom and those in the odd lines face the back of the classroom. The teacher prepares the following information on either the blackboards or sheets of papers pinned to the front and back walls.

**Information for students facing the front :**

You are a hotel receptionist. You need to help your guests fill out the registration form when they check in by asking them questions.

<i>Blue Sea Hotel</i>	
Name:	_____
Address:	_____
ID number:	_____
Telephone number:	_____
Duration of stay:	from _____ to _____

**Information for students facing the back :**

You are a guest who is registering at the Blue Sea Hotel. Answer the receptionist's questions by using the information below:

You are Thomas Brown (Betty Brown). You live at 15 West Road, Camden Town, London. Your ID number is 1902342. Your telephone number is 621825. You plan to stay at this hotel from July 12th to 15th.

When the students are ready with the information and understand what they have to do, the teacher asks the students to turn towards their partners and work in pairs.

The gap is formed by \_\_\_\_\_.

**Fragment D:**

*language focus:* biography of a person

Student A with Card A and Student B with Card B have different information about Martin Luther King. They need to ask each other questions to fill in the missing information.

**Card A:**

.....

Martin Luther King was born in \_\_\_\_\_, in Atlanta, Georgia, in the south-east of the US, the son of \_\_\_\_\_. As a boy, he enjoyed basketball, tennis and especially football. He spent a lot of time \_\_\_\_\_ and did a paper round to earn money.

.....

**Card B:**

.....

Martin Luther King was born in 1929, in \_\_\_\_\_, in the south-east of the US, the son of a minister of the church. As a boy, he enjoyed \_\_\_\_\_. He spent a lot

of time talking and reading and \_\_\_\_\_ to earn money.

.....

The gap is formed by using \_\_\_\_\_.

### Feedback

Fragment A: The gap is formed through tables with missing information. The teacher needs to prepare the information on the cards.

Fragment B: The gap is formed through pictures.

Fragment C: The gap is formed through a situation and a form. The teacher prepares the necessary information by using the blackboards or pieces of paper pinned to the front and back wall.

Fragment D: The gap is formed through a reading text with missing information.

*Read the four fragments again and identify if the following statements about the information-gap activities in them are true or false. Mark T for true and F for false in the brackets.*

1. All the four activities are done in pairs or groups who have different pieces of information. ( )
2. All the four activities have a definite ending so that the students know that they have reached it. ( )
3. The language practised in the four activities is in the form of questions and answers. ( )
4. Speaking is integrated with listening, as the students have to negotiate meanings to complete the task. ( )
5. The students need to know if they have filled in the gap successfully at the completion of the tasks. ( )

### Feedback

All the statements are true and are common to all information-gap activities.

## Task 6 Role-play Activities

Well, role-play activities were discussed in depth in Unit Two and in our section on "Production", but it is worth looking again at the aspect of setting them up, as that seems to cause much concern to middle school teachers in China. In this task, we will look at two examples of such activities and assess them. Read Fragments A and B below and enter A or B under Yes or No to the following questions.



Questions	Yes	No
1. Do the students have adequate information for the chosen situation?		
2. Is the situation interesting enough to keep the students' attention?		
3. Are the students familiar with the roles they play?		
4. Is there a clear purpose to the role-play so that the students know when they have reached a conclusion?		
5. Has the language needed for performing the role-play been taught and practised by the students beforehand?		
6. Is there a clear language function?		
7. Do the students have time to prepare for their performance on their own or do those of the same role have the opportunity to prepare their role together before they go into their role-play groups?		
8. Is there any feedback given? Does the feedback focus on adequacy and appropriacy as well as accuracy?		

**Fragment A:**

*Stage One: Language Preparation*

After the teacher has introduced the usage and the structure of the past continuous tense and leads the practice of the structure in a mime game, he starts to prepare the students for a role-play activity.

*Stage Two: Role-play Preparation*

The teacher explains to the students that they will get into groups of four and the situation is as follows:

A woman (Mary Smith) was killed at a quarter past eight in the evening. She was hit over the head with a baseball bat. As she fell she hit her watch and it stopped at eight fifteen. So we know that's when she was killed. Now, who killed Mary Smith?

A detective is trying to solve a murder mystery. He inquires about what people at the house were doing when the murder took place by asking questions "What were you doing between seven and eight o'clock yesterday evening?".

The only people in the house at the time were:

- John Smith: Mary's husband
- Tim Black: Mary's driver
- Daisy Jones: Mary's maid

Each of the group members is going to play one of the above roles with the help of a role card. The teacher tells the students that if they think another person is lying, they should tell the detective. For example, "No, he wasn't watching television, he was walking in the garden. I saw him." Then the teacher gives out the role cards and gives the students some time to prepare for their roles.

### **Role Cards**

#### **Detective**

You must question each of the people in the house and find out what they were doing at the time. You can ask them more questions if you need to. Find out if anyone is lying. Finally you must solve the murder mystery and say who you think was the murderer.

#### **John Smith**

You are Mary's husband. You love your wife very much. You are very sad about her death.

At 7 o'clock you went out for a walk. You came back at 8:30.

When you came back, you saw Tim Black, the driver, washing the car.

#### **Tim Black**

You never liked Mary Smith. She was never nice to you. You are happy she is dead, but you will not tell the detective this.

Tell the detective that you were out all evening. You left the house at 6 o'clock and drank beer in a pub. Tell him you came back at 10 o'clock.

#### **Daisy Jones**

You are very sad Mary Smith is dead. You liked her very much.

When the family finished dinner, at 7 o'clock, you went to the kitchen and washed the dishes.

You finished the washing-up at about 8:30. You went to your room and saw Mr Smith coming back from his walk.

### *Stage Three: Role-play*

When the students are ready, the teacher asks them to get into their groups and do the role-play.

### *Stage Four: Feedback*

At the end of the role-play, the teacher asks the students who the detective found as the

murderer. Finally the teacher deals with any errors that he heard cropping up frequently as he went around listening to the different groups.

**Fragment B:**

*Stage One: Preparing for the Role-play*

The teacher tells the students that they will work in groups of four. One of the students in each group will play a real estate agent who wants to sell houses to the others. The other three members are interested in buying a house. The teacher asks the real estate agent to think about the houses he has and write down brief descriptions of these houses and the house buyers think about what kind of houses they would like to buy and write down their descriptions.

*Stage Two: Role-play*

The teacher asks the students to get in groups and do the role-play.

**Feedback**

Obviously Fragment A will lead to a more successful role-play than Fragment B. The questions you were asked to work on actually covers important aspects in organising a role-play activity. If the role-play activity you design can give Yes answers to all the questions, it can expect good performance of your intended plan.

## **Activity 4 Evaluating Students' Speaking Performance**

### **Task 1 Error Correction**

It is widely agreed that the teacher should monitor his students' performances in the English activities in class. But there is less agreement about what the teacher should do once the student makes a mistake. What do you do in such a situation? Tick under the appropriate columns in the table below.

	Never	Sometimes	Often	Always
1. Make immediate corrections.	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. Ignore it completely.	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. Delay making corrections until the end of the activity or class.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. Encourage students to formulate their	_____	_____	_____	_____

- own judgements on whether they have made mistakes and ask for corrections from the error-makers, other students, a group of students or the whole class.
5. Make concrete suggestions for improvement or ask students for advice for improvement. \_\_\_\_\_
  6. Test for efficacy of the corrections. \_\_\_\_\_
  7. Help students to see why they have made such mistakes. \_\_\_\_\_
  8. Correct mistakes that are common to everyone and deal with individual problems separately. \_\_\_\_\_

### Feedback

The list actually offers a range of options towards the treatment of mistakes. Which one to be selected depends largely on the stage of the lesson and the purpose of the activity. For example, immediate correction may appear more during the presentation and early practice stages, while delayed correction may be more highly desired during the production stage. Many teachers prefer to give the student who made the error the first opportunity to correct it, as that way he will be more likely to remember it better. If he cannot correct it, then it might be worth getting other students to correct it for him, and only give the correction yourself as a last resort. We should not let the students get too dependent on the teacher for correction, as that way they will become too passive and not take responsibility for their own learning. As teachers, we should always be instructive and encouraging, and remember to mention good things as well as bad. You know yourself as a learner how motivating it is to receive praise for work well done.

## Task 2 Using an Error Sheet

Students may learn nothing if they only receive a mark at the end of a speaking task. What they really need is information on what they have done well, what went wrong, and how it can be improved. Such information is known as "feedback". Make a list of things you always comment on when giving feedback to your students at the end of speaking activities in the space below:

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*Now compare your list with the list below.*

- a. pronunciation (individual sounds, linkage, weak forms, stress, intonation, etc.)

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- b. grammar
- c. appropriacy of vocabulary and expressions (the degree of formality, the degree of politeness, etc.)
- d. fluency
- e. non-verbal communication

**Feedback**

Are the two lists similar? Remember that the list doesn't suggest that every time you give feedback on your students' speaking performance, you need to cover everything in the list. As the purposes of the speaking activities vary, you need to have a corresponding focus in your feedback. The teacher can walk around the classroom with an error sheet, record the errors the students make under the appropriate headings, and correct common errors at the end of the activity. The error sheet may appear like this:

Pronunciation	Grammar	Appropriacy	Fluency	Non-verbal Communication

**Task 3 Using an Observation Sheet**

Observation sheets are useful for speaking activities in group work, especially when the communication skills rather than the linguistic elements are the focus of the activities. This gives students the chance to be the observer instead of the teacher. Things to be observed depend on the focus of the speaking activity. Remember the role-play activity introduced in Activity Three, Task 6? It is designed to practise the past continuous tense. Do the students achieve the aim of the task in their role-plays? You can assign an observer to each group to assess their performance by using the observation card below:

**Instructions to Observer :**

Please read this handout carefully before you begin observing. If you have any problems, please ask. Do not allow any member of your group to read this handout. You are going to observe the members of your group taking part in a role-play. Towards the end of the period of observation, you need to give answers to all the questions.

**Observer:** You have to watch the group quietly and notice the following things:

1. Did anyone in the group speak Chinese? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Did anyone forget to use the verb “**be**” in the past progressive tense?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Did anyone misuse the verb “**be**” in the past progressive tense?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Did anyone forget to use **the main verb with “-ing”** in the past progressive tense?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. Did anyone use wrong **structures** when they asked or answered questions in the past progressive tense?
  - a) in statements \_\_\_\_\_
  - b) in WH-questions \_\_\_\_\_
  - c) in yes-no questions \_\_\_\_\_
  - d) in answers to questions \_\_\_\_\_
6. Did the detective find the murderer? Yes. / No.

The observation card above focuses on the linguistic aspect of the task. Let’s design another observation card which focuses more on communication skills. Suppose the aim of the speaking activity we would like our students to observe is to encourage students to use both verbal and non-verbal techniques to encourage others to speak in the discussion. Write the instructions to the observer in each group and make a list of actions you would like him/her to observe.

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**Feedback**

Compare your instructions and list with the following.

**Instructions :**

*Please read this handout carefully before you begin observing. If you have any problems, please ask. Do not allow any member of your group to read this handout. You are going to observe the members of your group taking part in a discussion. Towards the end of the period of observation, you need to write down a number under the appropriate line to indicate how many times each of the following actions is performed.*

## Observation Sheet:

Action	Number of times
1. Smiled and nodded	
2. Showed agreement by saying "yes", "that's true", "you're right", etc.	
3. Encourage others to continue by using "ah ha", "mmmm", etc.	
4. Helped the speakers find the right words or expressions.	
5. Did something else when others were talking.	

Try this observation sheet in your class and see how it can help with the students' speaking performance. At the end of the group activity, ask your "observers" to comment on how the group interacted. You may be surprised how observant some students can be. This activity has the advantage of focusing the students' attention on the way they are communicating, not just on what they are saying.

## Task 4 Using Audio-visual Aids

If you have access to record players or video recorders, they may become useful tools in giving feedback to your students' performance in speaking activities. Their advantages are obvious in the following aspects:

- they make it easier for the teacher to identify the students' areas of weakness;
- they give both the teacher and the students the opportunity to assess their progress over a period of time;
- they provide opportunities for students to hear again their own performance and that of other students and assess it themselves;
- video-recorded materials allow for the possibility of focus on the non-verbal aspects in communication.

*Below is a suggested procedure for using audio-visual aids in evaluating students' performance. Can you arrange them in their correct order?*

- Measure the students' progress by comparing their performance at the beginning of a semester and at the end so that it gives both the teacher and the students a sense of achievement.
- Use a record sheet or an observation sheet for the feedback either from the teacher or from the students or both.

- c. Listen or watch.
- d. Decide what you want to concentrate on. Make up a grid or checklist or design a record card or an observation card to help you focus the attention.
- e. Transcribe an extract and work on it or ask your students to work on it with a specific focus.
- f. Give advice or ask for the students' advice on how performance can be improved.

### **Feedback**

The right order should be: d-c-e-b-f-a.

## **Task 5 Using a Self-assessment Card**

It is considered the teacher's job to assess students' performance and achievement. Have you ever thought what would happen if the students were involved in such assessment themselves? Below is a self-assessment form focusing on the students' performance in pair and group work. The numbers on the right indicate the times the students do the assessment so that they can compare their performances over a period of time. To fill in the card, students just tick after those performances they did in pair and group work in English lessons. This should be done at four different times during the semester or within a month. Find out how your students like this card and how the ticks in each column change by using this card in your English class. If you would like a different focus such as the students' co-operation with other classmates, students' interest in the topics, etc., you can design your own self-assessment card and try it in your class. Bring your students' feedback to such kind of assessment to the tutorial session and share it with the others so that you can evaluate the effectiveness of such an activity.

<b>Performances in pair and group work</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
1. I spoke English most of the time.				
2. I volunteered to speak in front of the whole class.				
3. I put interest and effort into pair/group work.				
4. I helped other classmates.				
5. I looked for help from the teacher and my classmates when I had questions.				
6. I learnt new things.				

## **Review of This Unit**

We have tried to identify the most important points about teaching speaking skills in English. In Activity 1, we examined the features of spoken language and oral communication in general, and saw how different they were from those of written language. You



were asked to reflect upon your experience as a language learner and user and as a teacher of English communication skills, so that you could identify your problems in speaking in English and those of your students.

In Activity 2 we examined in more depth the framework in which we teach communication skills, starting from the syllabus and going on to the way we stage the activities in our lesson. We studied the presentation-practice-production model in particular. And in Activity 3 we looked at how to design certain important techniques in the speaking class, especially the handling of dialogues and information-gap and role-play activities. You were asked to examine the rationale behind the design of such activities and how they could be used to best effect.

In Activity 4, we looked at the problem of how and when we should give feedback to students on their performance in speaking English and by what means we can assess them and they can assess themselves.

We hope we have given a useful range of activities that you can use in your lessons and that you look upon the teaching of speaking skills in English with a renewed confidence. We hope you will try out some of the activities in your classes and discuss the results with your fellow students in the tutorials.

If you are teaching pronunciation, or going to teach it, you are advisable to continue with *Appendix: Focus on Pronunciation*. We offer you some suggestions and tips on how to do it.

## Tapescripts

### Warm-up

**Teacher 1:** I use the dialogues in the textbooks to teach the students to speak. I get them to listen to the dialogues on tape and then read them aloud with the tape. I think this teaches them correct pronunciation, stress and intonation. Then sometimes I get them to make up some similar dialogues in pairs and ask the best ones to perform in front of the class as a model.

Students usually like doing pair work, but if I don't tell them what to say, they stay silent because they're not good at using their imagination. Sometimes I have to use Chinese to explain to them why they are doing something.

I think they are successful if they use what they learned in the dialogue

and if they speak without mistakes. They are still very shy about speaking and if they have to speak aloud in front of the others they get nervous.

**Teacher 2:** I try to give my students as much speaking practice as possible, as I think they really need it. I use the dialogues in the textbooks to teach the communicative function, then after the students have listened to the dialogues on tape, we examine the stress and intonation of the dialogue and they practise reading it aloud in pairs. Then I give them more exercises based on the dialogue and finally get them to make up their own dialogues in pairs. Then we sometimes do role-plays based on the situation in the dialogue, but I encourage them to add their own ideas to it. We also do a lot of group discussions and role-plays based on their reading texts.

My students enjoy speaking very much. I give them the instructions for what they have to do — usually in English, but sometimes I use Chinese to check they have understood me — and then it's up to them. I try not to interrupt them when they are speaking, as I want them to become fluent and not to depend on me for corrections all the time.

For me a successful speaking activity is one where the students all speak, all have something to say, speak fluently and clearly, without making too many mistakes, and seem to enjoy themselves. Sometimes they create very funny situations and make the others laugh. The main problem I have is that some very talkative students dominate and keep the less confident ones quiet. I have to go round and check this doesn't happen.

### **Activity 1**

#### **Task 2**

#### **Conversation**

Jenny: Dave, what did you think of the visiting lecturer yester... the ... er... visiting lecturer's talk, I mean?

Dave: I thought it was... um... how shall I put it?... interesting. Erm... but not exactly suited... aimed at the audience... the group that was there. Too academic for most undergraduates. Difficult to follow. You know what I mean?

Jenny: Yeah. But someone should have told him that... you know....

Dave: Right!

Jenny: ... um... briefed him about who he was speaking to.

Dave: Maybe he thinks undergraduates should be at that level.

Jenny: Oh god!

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- Dave: Well, you know these guys who sit in their ivory towers, they lose track of what's going on in the real world. All tied up in their research all the time. What did you think of him, Joe?
- Joe: What? Who?
- Dave: The guy yesterday.
- Joe: Oh, Professor whatshisname?
- Dave: Yeah. Salimer, or something.
- Joe: Oh, I couldn't understand a thing. I was lost after the first set of statistics.
- Jenny: And all that jargon!
- Joe: Complete waste of time. I could've been playing football.
- Dave: Mr Smith?
- Mr Smith: Yes, Dave.
- Dave: We were just talking about the visiting professor yesterday.
- Mr Smith: Uh-ha.
- Dave: It was a bit beyond us really.
- Mr Smith: Yes, I'm afraid he did make it rather too academic, didn't he?
- Jenny: I thought it was just me... you know... um... that I was too stupid to take it in. I'm glad to hear the others feel the same.
- Mr Smith: Oh Jenny, I'm sorry it had that sort of effect on you.

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## Appendix Focus on Pronunciation

### Objectives

When you finish this section on teaching English pronunciation, you should be able to:

- understand the basic concepts of intelligibility, accuracy and sound discrimination, which are among the common concerns in pronunciation learning in a foreign language;
- be acquainted with a variety of classroom techniques for teaching English pronunciation;
- learn to make informed decisions about pronunciation teaching within the specific educational context of your own classroom.

### Warm-up

The following activities will be mainly about the teaching and learning of English pronunciation in a Chinese classroom. As a teacher, I find it a daunting task to speak up in English in front of my class. Not only the contents of my lessons are presented in what I say, but the very words would be representing a way of speech in English: both of which will be picked up by many a sensitive ear. Where pronunciation is concerned, questions arise, such as:

- Should teachers have good pronunciation?
- How important is the teachers' good pronunciation?
- How feasible is it for a Chinese teacher to acquire good pronunciation in English?
- What do we mean by "good" pronunciation?

Such questions are quite general and answers may vary from person to person, from classroom to classroom, from course to course. Teachers often have to make decisions as to the when, where, what and how of their own teaching. We will begin this part of our discussion on pronunciation teaching with some reflections on our own first learning experience. In doing so, we hope to achieve a better understanding of the process of learning and the needs of our students. With such an understanding we hope to go on

with our enquiry into the teaching of English pronunciation in a less pedantic but more sympathetic approach.

## Activity 1 Encountering English

### Task 1 My First Learning Experience

**🔊** *You can either go on to read the following account, or you can listen to me on the cassette.*

I started learning English in 1976 when I became a middle school student. I had lessons with Chinese teachers. They showed us how to read the alphabet, as well as the English words and sentences in the textbook. In the second year, I met my first real English teacher: Xiong Laoshi. He was “real” because he specialised in English and was trained as an English teacher. The 1970s was a period when materials in English were scarce and hard to obtain. There were fifty of us in one class. I remember Xiong Laoshi used to carve on page after page of blue stencils in order to get extra handouts printed. I always did well in the grammar exercises Xiong Laoshi gave us, and I still feel, after all these years, proud of myself and grateful to my teacher!

I feel proud of my teacher, too, — an important reason being that he was then among the few in my school who REALLY spoke English! My classmates and I admired the way he talked with the foreign visitors at our school. Sometimes he would even speak a little English in class with us! Xiong Laoshi might have an accent, as I was told some years later. But I never noticed, nor was I bothered.

My first major influence in pronunciation actually came from a radio course presented by university lecturers; I followed it for two years in my spare time. It was mainly a reading course, but I had to listen very attentively in order to follow the teachers. I also remember doing a lot of reading aloud, apart from the other exercises.

I met my first native-speaker teacher, Pat Adler, after I entered college. Pat was from New Zealand and spoke English in a standard accent. But, as you may well have guessed, it took a while for me to get used to her English and understand her lectures. To me, her English sounded a bit “strange”, and was obviously “too fast”!

**What about you?**

*Write about your first encounter with English, as well as the major influence you had then on your English pronunciation.*

With such reflections on our own learning experience, we as teachers may become more sympathetic of the learning problems of our students. Take my own account for example.

Profile of my first learning experience relating to English pronunciation:

- When? — In the 1970s.
- How old? — A teenager.
- Where? — (A) in a traditional classroom, which was focused on grammar exercises.  
— (B) on a radio course, which followed a standard intensive reading approach.
- First teachers — Chinese teachers in my middle school and from college.
- First major influence in pronunciation learning — the radio course.
- Learning problem — being unable to understand a native speaker teacher after studying English for several years in middle school.

When you have thought about your own experience, talk to another teacher on this course, if possible. You can look for similarities and differences in your learning experiences. In the next task, we will look into some of the common issues in pronunciation learning.

## **Task 2 Intelligibility, Accuracy, and a Near-native Accent**

The spoken word is really the first thing to notice when we attempt to learn a new language. We start by imitation, and go on to develop skills in using the new language in various situations. We can try to be accurate. Or, at least, our speech should be **intelligible** so that we sound clear enough to make ourselves understood. Unintelligible speech leads to no understanding or misunderstanding, and communication will break down. In learning the pronunciation of a foreign language, intelligibility seems to be a basic criterion of assessment and a sensible goal to obtain.

Here are three examples, each with a student talking about his/her pronunciation learning.

 *Listen and identify their personal learning goals.*

**Student A:** "I must learn beautiful pronunciation, or I would feel embarrassed to speak up. Standard pronunciation sounds nice and leaves good impressions on others."

**Student B:** "I think in high school I should try to learn good pronunciation as much as I can. In college, I should concentrate more on the content of my speech instead of the details in my pronunciation. Communication of meaning is more important. So, as long as my pronunciation is clear enough, that'll be all right."

**Student C:** "My pronunciation is very poor. I have tried again and again to improve it, but I still speak English with a lot of pronunciation mistakes. Maybe I am not suitable for foreign language learning."

*Please write your comments on these students' ideas as you try to identify their learning objectives.*

**Comments on Student A**

Student's learning objectives: \_\_\_\_\_

My comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Question cues:*

What do you think is involved in "beautiful pronunciation" as mentioned in Student A's talk? Do you consider your own pronunciation as "beautiful"? Have you noticed any of your colleagues, friends, or your students, whose English pronunciation you would consider "beautiful"? Can you describe it?

**Comments on Student B**

Student's learning objectives: \_\_\_\_\_

My comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Question cues:*

Do you believe that the younger the students are, the better they are at learning good pronunciation? Do you agree with Student B that learning to communicate meaning is more important than improving one's pronunciation?



**Comments on Student C**

Student's learning objectives: \_\_\_\_\_

My comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Question cues:*

Do you also feel that poor pronunciation is a sign of poor language learning ability? If yes, why? If not, try to suggest how you would help Student C.

**Feedback**

Student A's learning objective — "beautiful pronunciation".

This objective, though quite common, is vague in its connotation. Usually it refers to a near-native accent in a standard dialect, for example, BBC English or VOA English. But if we call BBC English "beautiful", what about London Cockney or the Scottish dialects? It may thus imply favouritism towards certain language varieties.

Student B's learning objective — intelligible pronunciation, good enough for communication. This student is aware of the communicative function of language and is keen on using English for practical purposes. The factor of age is considered important to account for the success in pronunciation learning.

Student C's learning objective — correct pronunciation.

This student is anxious to get rid of pronunciation errors, believing that correct pronunciation is a must for foreign language learning. On the one hand, I believe that everybody can improve pronunciation if he/she wants to. Methods of pronunciation learning vary, but it is possible to find a suitable approach. On the other hand, we do not necessarily have to sound perfect before we allow ourselves to use English in communication. In fact, lots of people speak English with a foreign accent or even with errors. As language teachers, we should probably aim at a reasonably good level of command of English, including our pronunciation.

\* \* \* \* \*

Did you give more or less similar answers to the ones I have written above? Are there any differences between your analysis and mine? How would you account for the differences, if any? Here comes more discussion on the above comments.

Student A sounds to me an idealist. Indeed, we would all like to sound nice when we speak, and this self-assessment is important for us to build up self-confidence. However, we would also have to be careful about what we mean by "beautiful". If it is a value judgement on a language, it is then partial and unjustified, as in human communication there is no such a thing as one accent which is "beautiful" while another "ugly". Any accent is "beautiful", at least, to the speakers of the particular speech community. It is true that a certain dialect has been cho-

sen to be used as the standard language. This is done mainly for ease of public communication. Such dialect is often the one taught to foreign learners, simply because it is more useful or convenient. Eliza in George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* sounds perfectly sweet to the ears of her Cockney folk. Only Professor Higgins insisted on the Standard accent because he had in mind to land Eliza in the English upper class. So our judgement on a "beautiful" accent may have reflected social discrimination against certain linguistic varieties.

Of course, "beautiful" pronunciation may also be an innocent compliment on a clear and natural speech. Learning near-native accents is often considered a difficult and long-winded process. Younger students may do better in pronunciation learning than adults. If you hope to achieve a near-native pronunciation, you will have to consider

- a) which native speaker to imitate, the English, the American, the Canadian, or the Australian, etc.
- b) whether it is desirable for you to sound like a British person, or an American, or a Canadian, or an Australian, etc.
- c) whether you would be welcome as a member of the speech community. In other words, would you be welcome as an American as you sound like an American.

The issue is more complex than it appears. The choice is not necessarily personal; it may also be social or even political. (Recall the identity issue discussed in Unit 8 of *Language and Linguistics — A workbook*.) The most preferable choice may or may not be a near-native accent. So, what do you think a teacher should do to his/her own pronunciation?

Student B is the practitioner of the communicative approach in foreign language (L2) learning. Two points came up here: a) the age factor in pronunciation learning, and b) the criterion of "intelligibility" in L2 pronunciation. In recent years, the concept of intelligibility has been described as a "sensible" goal for pronunciation learning in the literature of ELT. It is considered practical, useful and more attainable for most people. It is also a reality in cross-cultural communication that many speakers of foreign languages have managed to communicate very well even with their "foreigner's accent".

Student C is the pessimist. This student is probably too sensitive about pronunciation errors and feels upset or embarrassed about them. How could a teacher help? We will leave this question open for the moment and we hope to return to it soon.

In a class of fifty, students may develop various goals for their pronunciation learning due to their interest, motivation and personal differences in aptitude and age. It is always helpful to find out the students' expectations to best inform ourselves.

### **Task 3 An Attainable Objective for Pronunciation Teaching**

This is an assignment. You should write a short essay of 150-200 words on this question.

***What is an attainable objective in teaching English pronunciation for my class?***

This question relates to the practical concerns in the day-to-day teaching. An analysis of the educational situation is a necessity for any teaching practice. For pronunciation teaching, such an analysis can reveal, surprisingly, sharp differences between the needs and objectives of learning, apart from some specific groups such as the Senior 3 students in the middle schools preparing for their college entrance exams.

Your essay should include three parts:

- your description of and reflections upon your own experiences of teaching;
- your ideas about the age factor, the effect of imitation, the type and amount of exposure and input;
- your identification of attainable learning objectives for your class.

Attainable objectives may, in general, refer to either near-native accent or intelligibility. You should try to argue for your beliefs concerning pronunciation teaching.

Here are some cue questions for you to start off with:

- According to the curriculum or syllabus, are you expected to devote some class time to teaching pronunciation?
- Do you actually devote some of your class time to pronunciation teaching?
- What is your expectation of your students' achievement in pronunciation learning?
- Do you always correct their pronunciation errors whenever you notice them?
- What are your "complaints", "worries", or "difficulties" in dealing with English pronunciation with your class?
- Do you feel that pronunciation makes an issue at all for your class? In other words, do you tend to ignore pronunciation in your teaching activities so that you have time for the class to practise grammar or to try out other kinds of activities?

In other words, your teaching situation can be analysed and assessed in relation to the following factors.

- 1) Personal factors: personal learning needs and preferences; individual student differences, such as age, sex, and aptitude;
- 2) Social factors: social needs, beliefs and attitudes, related learning objectives;
- 3) Environmental factors: input, exposure, cultural (dialectal) differences.

Take your essay to the next seminar and share what you have written with your fellow students and with the tutor.

It is important to learn to relate our thinking to the realistic situations. If we always keep our educational goals and the students' needs in mind, we will be in a much better position to help them develop as good users of the target language.

In the next activity, we will look at different aspects of pronunciation.

## Activity 2 What to Teach

### Task 1 Reflections

In this part of the discussion, we will be using the following sounds symbols to transcribe the English pronunciation.

**The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) for the English sounds include**

(A) the vowels

/i:/ /ɪ/ /e/ /æ/ /ɑ:/ /ɒ/ /ɔ:/ /ʊ/ /u:/ /ʌ/ /ɜ:/ /ə/ (/ə/)  
/eɪ/ /aɪ/ /aʊ/ /ɔɪ/ /əʊ/ /iə/ /eə/ /ʊə/

(B) the consonants

/p/ /b/ /t/ /d/ /k/ /g/  
/s/ /z/ /f/ /v/ /θ/ /ð/ /ʃ/ /ʒ/  
/tʃ/ /dʒ/ /tr/ /dr/ /ts/ /dz/  
/m/ /n/ /ŋ/  
/l/ (/ɫ/) /r/ /h/  
/w/ /j/

Note:

- ◆ The long vowels /i:, ɔ:, u:, ɜ:, ɑ:/ are transcribed in different symbols from their short counterparts /ɪ, ɒ, ʊ, ə, ʌ/. Using the same symbols for the pair can be misleading to learners. Though similar, they are different in their places and manners of articulation and therefore should be represented by different symbols.

**Aspects of pronunciation include**

- ◇ sounds . . . . . the vowels and consonants of English, e.g. /i:/ & /p/;
- ◇ combination of sounds . . . pronunciation of words, e.g. /'ɪŋɡlɪʃ/;
- ◇ word stress. . . . . the stress in a word and shifts of stress,  
e.g. /'kɒmbaɪn/, /kəm'baɪn/ & /kɒmbɪ'neɪʃn/;
- ◇ strong & weak forms . . . the importance of the different syllables in maintaining the rhythm of the speech, especially the model verbs and auxiliary verbs, e.g. /hæv/ as the strong form of “have”, while /həv/, /əv/ & /v/ as the weak forms;
- ◇ linkage of sounds . . . . . the liaison of sound in natural speech,  
e.g. [ə'kʌp əv'ti:] (“a cup of tea”)  
[ə n 'ɪŋɡlɪʃ pəʊs'tkɑ:d] (“an English postcard”)  
[glæ. tu 'mi:tʃju:] (“Glad to meet you.”)
- ◇ rhyme & rhythm. . . . . Take this rhyme for example,  
/ ' - ' - ' - ' /  
“Twinkle, twinkle, little star,  
/ ' - ' - ' - ' /  
How I wonder what you are.”
- ◇ pitch & intonation. . . . . The function of pitch and intonation in conveying meaning,  
e.g.            - - -     ↘  
A: I'm a student. ( I'm telling you about myself.)  
                 ↗  
B: Yes. ( Go ahead. I'm listening.)  
                 - - - - -     ↘  
A: I study Chinese literature. (Now, more about myself.)  
                 - - -     ↘  
B: How interesting! ( I see. Tell me more. )
- ◇ filler words . . . . . The sounds which do not convey meaning but can help to maintain communication, e.g. **uh huh, um, er, oh, ah, Well.**

Complete the following statements after each list .

- I. What is taught to the students in the English course in a middle school includes
- a) IPA of English sounds,
  - b) pronunciation rules,
  - c) intonation and rhythm.
  - d) Any others? (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**In my school, we teach** \_\_\_\_\_ .

**II.** What is expected of the teachers includes

- a) IPA symbols for English sounds,
- b) description of their places and manners of articulation,
- c) pronunciation rules,
- d) intonation and rhythm.
- e) Any others? (Specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**To teach my class well, I need** \_\_\_\_\_

**III.** In your subjective judgement and experience, are there any aspects of English pronunciation which have been problematic for your students?

**For my class, I have come across the following areas of difficulty in teaching pronunciation:**

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## **Task 2 Discrimination and Articulation**

Now you will look at some of the sample teaching materials for pronunciation. These are some of the good examples of teaching pronunciation which have been used successfully in some people's classes. But it does not necessarily mean that you must copy these "excellent models" into your own class. The task will require you to identify the teaching objectives these exercises may serve. Think of their usefulness as you read on. The materials for the ten samples have been recorded onto the cassette. So you can also use the recording to help you continue the tasks.

**☛ Identify the teaching objectives of each sample, and write them in the appropriate spaces below.**

Sample 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix : Focus on Pronunciation

- Sample 2: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Sample 3: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Sample 4: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Sample 5: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Sample 6: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Sample 7: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Sample 8: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Sample 9: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Sample 10: \_\_\_\_\_

**Sample 1: "I can say my ABC"**

Work in pairs: Read aloud the English acronyms in Chinese pinyin and in English. Pay attention to the differences between the Chinese pronunciation and the English pronunciation.

	In Pinyin	In English
ABC	ei-bi-sei [ 'ei'bi'sei ]	/'er'bi:'si:/
VCD	vei-sei-di ? [ 'vei'sei'di ]	/'vi:'si:'di:/
WHO	dabuliu-eiqu-o [ 'dʌbuliəu'etʃɪ 'əu:]	/'dʌblju:'ertʃ'əʊ/
UN	you-en [ 'jəʊ'en ]	/'ju:'en/

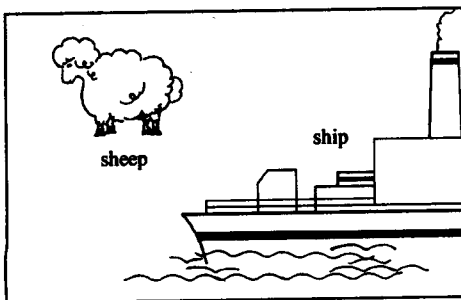
**Sample 2: "What did you say?"**

*Variation 1*

Listen and identify what the conversation was about.

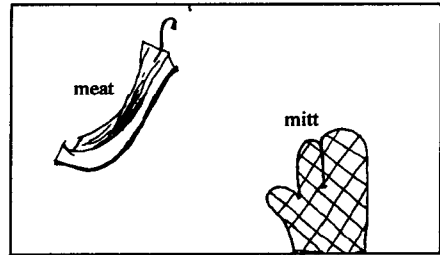
*Variation 2*

Recite, or read aloud, the dialogues in pairs in the manner of a natural conversation:



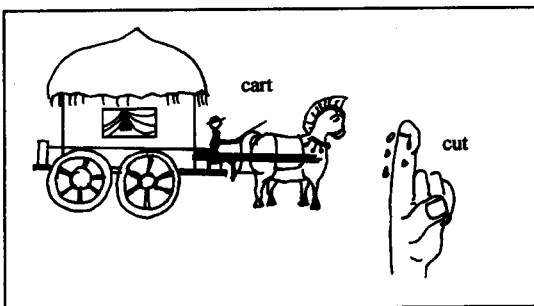
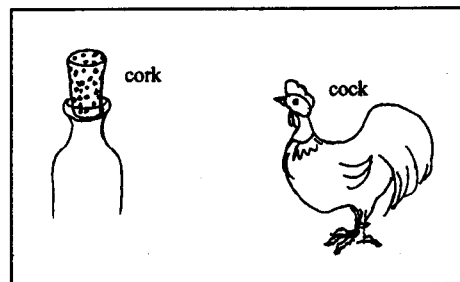
- A: Mary went to see the ship.  
 B: What did you say?  
 A: I said Mary went to see the SHIP.

2. A: I forgot to use the mitt.  
B: What did you say?  
A: I said I forgot to use the MITT.  
B: Oh, did you get burned?



3. A: Luke, over here!  
B: What is it?  
A: I was just asking LUKE to come over here.

4. A: I am looking for the cork.  
B: Pardon?  
A: I said I was looking for the CORK.



5. A: I've got a small cut.  
B: I beg your pardon?  
A: I said I've got a small CUT.  
B: Oh! Did you cut yourself?

**Sample 3: Solve your arithmetic or algebra problems**

*Variation 1*

Class work: Teacher read aloud some arithmetic or algebra problems for the class to dictate and then compare results.



## Appendix: Focus on Pronunciation

### Variation 2

Pair work: Students take turns to read aloud the problems and compare the equations afterwards.

The slashes mark the pauses.

$2 \times (3 + 5) = 30$      Read: *Two times / three plus five / equals thirty.*

$2 \times 3 + 5 = 11$      Read: *Two times three / plus five / equals eleven.*

$(12 + 8) \times 9 = 180$      Read: *Twelve plus eight / times nine / equals one hundred and eighty.*

$12 + 8 \times 9 = 84$      Read: *Twelve plus / eight times nine / equals one hundred and eighty-four.*

$A \times (B - C) = X$      Read: *A times / B minus C / equals X.*

$A \times B - C = Y$      Read: *A times B / minus C / equals Y.*

### Sample 4: "What's John doing tomorrow?"

Read the following statement with marked stress, i. e. the syllable in **bold capitals**.

'John is 'going with 'me to 'buy some 'fruit in the '**MARK**et.

'John is 'going with 'me to 'buy some '**FRUIT** in the 'market. ?

'John is 'going with 'me to '**BUY** some 'fruit in the 'market.

'John is 'going with '**ME** to 'buy some 'fruit in the 'market.

'John **IS** 'going with 'me to 'buy some 'fruit in the 'market.

### Sample 5: Read a child's song

Rain, rain, go away,  
Come again another day,  
Little Johnny wants to play.

### Sample 6: Tell a joke

Teacher: Where does your Mum come from?

Child: Alaska.

Teacher: Don't bother. I'll ask her myself.

(\* In "northern" English, the vowel in "ask" is pronounced /æ/)

### Sample 7: Sounds which are "missing"

1. admire [ə?'maɪə]
2. advanced [ə?'vʌnst]
3. Antarctic [æ'n'tɔ:?'tɪk]

4. basketball [bɑ:skɪ?bɔ:t]
5. breakfast ['bre?fəst]
6. broadcast ['brɔ:kəst]

**Sample 8: "Pardon?" — four ways of saying it**

- Anthropomorphism is bad in science.
- Pardon?

*Which is the closest to the Chinese sounds?*

1. ['pɑ:dən]
2. ['pɑ:ʔn]
3. ['pɑ:rdən]
4. ['pɑdən]

**Sample 9: What do they actually say?**

Step 1: Read the transcription in the square box and think what they are.

Step 2: Listen and write the expressions as you hear them.

Step 3: Discuss the questions:

- a) Which is easier to recognise, the written transcription, or the spoken words?
- b) How easy or difficult do you think these expressions are in terms of pronunciation?
- c) Do you say these expressions in the same way as transcribed?

1. ['æ'n'dʒju:] (And you?)
2. [aɪ 'mɪʃju:] (I miss you.)
3. ['glæ? tu' mi:tʃju:] (Glad to meet you.)
4. ['plezə] (Pleasure.)
5. [aɪ 'geʃju wu? 'kʌm] (I guess you would come.)

**Sample 10: Read the following story**

The schwa ? ( /ə/ & /ɪ/ are used to replace the unstressed syllables. )

The babi wəs əbaut eɪt months old. ət fɪrst hɪ wəs əsleep. Half ən hour latə hɪ wɔkəd əp ənd bɪɡən tə kri. "Don't cry," I said. I talkəd tə hɪm. Bət hɪ lʊkəd ət mi ənd kriəd hɑrdə ənd hɑrdə. I tɜndən ɔn tə rædiə. Hɪ stɔpəd kriɪŋ ənd lɪsənəd tə tə mju:zɪk. Aftə ə fɛw mɪnɪtəs hɪ stɑrtəd tə kri əɡaɪn. "Listen tə me," I said. I stɑrtəd tə sɪŋ. Thə babi wɑtʃəd ənd lɪstənəd, ənd hɪ dɪdn't kri ɔnɪ mɔr. Thən I meɪd fæs ənd ʃʌmpəd lɪk ə mɔnkɪ. Thə bʌbi lɑ:ʃəd ənd lɑ:ʃəd.

## Feedback

Here is the key to the task.

- Sample 1: hearing differences in Chinese sounds and English sounds
- Sample 2: sound discrimination by contrast
- Sample 3: identifying tone units or “though groups” in spoken English
- Sample 4: pitch change in conveying meaning
- Sample 5: English rhyme & rhythm
- Sample 6: connected speech: contractions & liaison in context
- Sample 7: incomplete plosion
- Sample 8: variations in accents
- Sample 9: sound merge in some English daily expressions
- Sample 10: the unstressed syllables in context

\* \* \* \* \*

Here is more discussion on the issue of what to teach in pronunciation.

In the sample exercises, the various aspects of English pronunciation are illustrated. We know from experience that to learn to say the sounds is only the first step towards good pronunciation. One starts by listening to the sounds and rhythms of natural English speech, which are practised by imitation and then used in one’s own speech in conversation or other forms of oral performance.

Apart from the individual sounds, we also have to learn the words with the right stress and connections. Here we must learn the word stress, sentence stress, weak forms of structural words (e.g. auxiliary verbs, or prepositions) in connected speech, and intonation patterns of sentences, etc. Hence it is important to understand that learning pronunciation in a foreign language does not only mean learning the individual speech sounds, but also learning a way of speech which involves other factors.

Thus, if we want to learn good pronunciation, we need to make conscious and consistent efforts. We discussed the meaning of “good pronunciation” in the previous activity. For our purpose of learning, we mean, by “good” pronunciation, any of the accents which are generally accepted and used as the standard voice in public communication. These, traditionally, include mainly the Received Pronunciation (RP), or what we call the BBC English, for a British accent, and the Network Standard, or what we call the VOA English, for an American accent. The choice of accents is a matter of personal preference and social influence. There is not one accent which is “better” than others. Hence, it is up to us whether we want to speak like a native-speaker or to keep our foreigner’s, i.e. Chinese, accent. As an English teacher, one is encouraged to acquire good pronunciation, which is natural, accurate and clearly intelligible.

In the next activity, we will look at some more general approaches for teaching English pronunciation and discuss the rationale behind our own teaching ideas.

## Activity 3 How to Teach

### Task 1 Teaching English Pronunciation in the Chinese Context

Answer the following questions according to your situation.

I. Are these also the main difficulties for your students in their continuous speech?

- any particular sounds, e.g. /æ/, /au/, /θ ð/, /ʒ r/, /v w/ & /n l/
- liaison, e.g. *in a*
- consonant cluster, e.g. *bl-* as in “black”; *br-* as in “browse”
- incomplete plosion, e.g. “*ate the food and drank the beer*”; “*good news*”
- weak forms of model verbs and auxiliary verbs.

II. Do these errors occur in your students’ pronunciation?

- |                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| 1. is [is]               | 9. people / trouble / able / bicycle<br>[ˈpi:po]/[ˈtrʌbo]/[ˈeɪbo]/[baɪsɪko] |
| 2. all [au]              | 10. light vs night  |
| 3. always [ˈɔ:rwɪz]      | 11. well [ver]  |
| 4. usually [ˈju:ruəlɪ]   | 12. merry vs marry [ˈmerɪ]  |
| 5. horse vs house [haus] | 13. men vs man [men]  |
| 6. morning [ˈmɔ:rnɪŋ]    | 14. modern [ˈmɔ:dən]  |
| 7. the (book) [zə][lə]   | 15. London [ˈleɪndən]   |
| 8. the (air) [zə]        | 16. Thank you. [ˈsen kjur]  |

Now, using the table below, try to summarise the pronunciation problems and compose a target check list for your own teaching.

<b>My class has problems in the following aspects of English pronunciation</b>	<b>My class can do well in the following aspects of English pronunciation</b>	<b>The target of pronunciation learning for my class can be stated as follows</b>

## **Task 2 A Natural Approach**

What is a good way to teach English pronunciation? The correct answer lies in the mind of the classroom teacher. Below there is a collection of eight different techniques to teach the pronunciation of the English dental fricatives: /θ, ð/. When you have looked at all the samples in the list, try to decide which techniques or which combination of techniques you are going to use, if you were to teach these two English sounds to a new class in your school.

**📞** *Now here are the samples. You can also use the recorded materials on the course cassette to help you assess these techniques.*

### **Sample 1: Say after the teacher**

Teacher: Please repeat after me — /θ/

Students: /θ/.

Teacher: /ð/.

Students: /ð/.

### **Sample 2: Talk with the teacher**

Student: sank you, teacher.

Teacher: Say — thank you.

Student: Thank you.

Teacher: Good. — You're welcome.

**Sample 3: Practise while listening to the tape**

/θ/	/θ/
thick	this
thin	those
thinks	these
thirteen	there
three	then
theatre	with
both	mother
path	father
teeth	together
healthy	although

**Sample 4: Compare and practise the pair**

/θ/	/s/
thank	sank
thick	sick
thin	sin
thing	sing
think	sink
thumb	some

**Sample 5: Understand the places and manners of articulation**

The teacher tells the class:

Now look at this diagram. /θ/ & /ð/ are the two dental fricatives in English. When you pronounce these two sounds, you should first place the tip of your tongue between your teeth. Then let out the air in the narrow passage between your tongue and your teeth so that you make a hissing noise. The sound you produce now should be /θ/, a voiceless dental fricative. Now, at the same place of articulation, you use your voice now to produce a sound. If you place a finger at your throat, you should be able to feel the vibrations of your vocal cords. When you do this, the sound you produce should be /ð/, a voiced dental fricative. Now have a try and see if you can make it.



**Sample 6: How to practise /θ/ & /ð/?**

When you say /θ/ & /ð/, you could use a mirror to see if

Appendix: Focus on Pronunciation

you placed the tip your tongue in between you teeth. You can actually feel your tongue touching the back of your teeth. If you find this difficult try putting your finger in front of your mouth and touching it with your tongue like this:

**Sample 7: Tongue twisters**

*Practise the tongue twisters below.*

1. What about this one: *Six thick thistle sticks.*
2. If you are ambitious, try this one: *King Thistle stuck a thousand thistles in the thistle of his thumb. A thousand thistles King Thistle stuck in the thistle of his thumb. If King Thistle stuck a thousand thistles in the thistle of his thumb, how many thistles did King Thistle stick in the thistle of his thumb?*

3. Here is another one.

*Whenever the weather is cold,  
Whenever the weather is hot,  
We'll weather the weather,  
Whatever the weather,  
Whether we like it or not.*

**Sample 8: Reading a poem**

*Read the following poem. Pay attention to the rhyme and rhythm of the poem.*

I'm 'thankful for a 'thousand 'things:  
For 'faithful 'earth, for 'birth and 'breath,  
For 'thought and 'health and 'strength and 'mirth,  
And 'maybe, 'when it 'comes, for 'death.

*Now complete this sentence:*

**In a new class in my school, I would try to go through the following procedures:**

---

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---

There are two main areas which may influence your choice of technique:

- 1) whether to teach **separated** drills or **integrated** lessons
  - **syllabus**: Does your syllabus allow time for focused drills?
  - **time**: How much time do you have for spending on focused pronunciation drills?
  - **targets**: What are your specific targets of pronunciation teaching in a certain course?
  
- 2) what to choose to focus on in your class
  - **distinctive sounds**: How easy or difficult is it for your students to learn the distinctive sounds?
  - **high frequency sounds**: Which high frequency words are most problematic for your students?
  - **learner(s)**: How old are they and how motivated are they to learn pronunciation well?
  - **learning objectives**: What are the general learning objectives of your English class, and, hence, for your pronunciation teaching?

It is not our job in this section to prescribe a specific technique for you to use in your classroom. In fact, you could try out all the ones we have suggested and see how they go in your classroom. We prefer to advocate a natural approach towards pronunciation. We cannot force people to change accents in a short period of time, and as teachers we need to understand that learning a new way of articulating speech sounds requires adaptation and effort over a certain period of time. Maybe we can teach the content knowledge about English speech sound within a short time, say a few weeks, but such knowledge cannot immediately be turned into real practice.

For a teacher who teaches young learners good pronunciation, for example, we might suggest the following principles.

1. The principle of optimal quality spoken input — so that young learners can “pick up” the language as they hear it spoken.
2. The principle of optimal encouragement for peer correction and self monitor — so that they are corrected naturally but do not feel threatened by the teacher’s “criticism” of their English.
3. The principle of leniency in pronunciation errors in continuous speech — so that the students are allowed to develop fluency and also learn to concentrate on negotiating meaning.
4. The principle of “least effort” on younger learners’ acquisition of English pronunciation — so that problems in pronunciation are not painstakingly treated in laboratory



methods but dealt with in active and enjoyable learning activities.

The most important thing is that the students produce clear and natural speech. Being able to use language effectively in communication is crucial. The classical assumption that teaching pronunciation is teaching the articulation of sounds is simplistic and not motivating for the majority of students. There is a lot more in our voice and speech which goes beyond the simple form of the written symbols. Teachers who speak well are the live examples of effective articulation of speech sounds and their meanings. Therefore, the teacher has the responsibility to provide quality input. We should not assume what is difficult for adults in learning pronunciation will be difficult for our students. Learners vary and a supportive rather than a critical teacher would be a great asset to the progress of the learners.

## **Review**

In this appendix, we focused on the teaching of pronunciation. In Activity 1 you were asked to reflect on your own learning experience in order to discover what the early influences were on your pronunciation skills. You were asked to identify the goal of improving your own pronunciation and that of improving your students' pronunciation. We examined the factors that are involved with pronunciation, such as intelligibility and getting one's meaning across as clearly as possible.

In Activity 2, we focused on what needs to be taught in terms of pronunciation skills. We examined the particular features of English pronunciation, such as the weak forms and the importance of stress and intonation. You were asked to identify your learners' particular problems in pronouncing English sounds effectively.

In Activity 3, we examined some teaching techniques that can be used in helping our students to overcome their pronunciation problems and to draw their attention to specific aspects of English pronunciation.

We hope these activities have proved useful to you and that you now feel more aware of what needs to be done and of the possible ways in which it can be done to train Chinese students to pronounce English clearly and intelligibly.

## Evaluation Questions

*Now please write the answers to these questions in your diary.*

1. What have you learnt from this unit?
2. What has been most useful to you?
3. What do you think you can apply to your teaching?
4. How do you intend to this?
5. Are there any problems that you have encountered in this unit?
6. How do you intend to deal with those problems?
7. Did you at any point change your attitude towards some aspect of teaching or learning English? If so, at which point was it?
8. Is there anything more you would like to know?

## Tapescripts

### Activity 1

**Task 1: My first learning experience**, read by a Chinese teacher of English.

*I started learning English in 1976 when I became a middle school student . I had lessons with Chinese teachers . They showed us how to read the alphabet , as well as the English words and sentences in the textbook . In the second year , I met my first real English teacher : Xiong Laoshi . He was “ real ” because he specialised in English and was trained as an English teacher . The 1970s was a period when materials in English were scarce and hard to obtain . There were fifty of us in one class . I remember Xiong Laoshi used to carve on page after page of blue stencils in order to get extra handouts printed . I always did well in the grammar exercises Xiong Laoshi gave us , and I still feel , after all these years , proud of myself and grateful to my teacher !*

*I feel proud of my teacher , too , — an important reason being that he was then among the few in my school who REALLY spoke English ! My classmates and I admired the way he talked with the foreign visitors at our school . Sometimes he would even speak a little English in class with us ! Xiong Laoshi might have an accent , as I was told some years later . But I never noticed , nor was I bothered .*

*My first major influence in pronunciation actually came from a radio course presented by university lecturers ; I followed it for two years in my spare time . It was mainly a reading course , but I had to listen very attentively in order to follow the teachers . I also remember doing a lot of reading aloud , apart from the other exercises .*

*I met my first native-speaker teacher , Pat Adler , after I entered college . Pat was from New Zealand and spoke English in a standard accent . But , as you may well have guessed , it took a while for me to get used to her English and understand her lectures . To me , her English sounded a bit “ strange ” , and was obviously “ too fast ” !*

### Task 2

**Student A:** *“ I must learn beautiful pronunciation , or I would feel embarrassed to speak up . Standard pronunciation sounds nice and leaves good impressions on others . ”*

**Student B:** *“ I think in high school I should try to learn good pronunciation as*

*much as I can. In college, I should concentrate more on the content of my speech instead of the details in my pronunciation. Communication of meaning is more important. So, as long as my pronunciation is clear enough, that'll be all right."*

**Student C:** *"My pronunciation is very poor. I have tried again and again to improve it, but I still speak English with a lot of pronunciation mistakes. Maybe I am not suitable for foreign language learning."*

**Activity 2**

**Task 2**

**Sample 1: "I can say my ABC"**

The English acronyms read aloud in Chinese pinyin and in English.

	In Pinyin	In English
ABC	ei-bi-sei [ 'ei'bi'sei ]	/'eɪ 'bi: 'si:/
VCD	vei-sei-di ? [ 'vei'sei'di ]	/'vi: 'si: 'di:/
WHO	dabuliu-eiqu-o [ 'dʌbuliəu 'etʃ 'əʊ ]	/'dʌblju: 'etʃ 'əʊ/
UN	you-en [ 'jəʊ 'ən ]	/'ju: 'en/

**Sample 2: "What did you say?"**

Listen to these dialogues and pay attention to the stress.

(sheep / ship)

- A: Mary went to see the ship.  
 B: What did you say?  
 A: I said Mary went to see the SHIP.

(meat / mitt)

- A: I forgot to use the mitt.  
 B: What did you say?  
 A: I said I forgot to use the MITT.  
 B: Oh, did you get burned?

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( look / Luke )

3. A: Luke, over here!  
B: What is it?  
A: I was just asking LUKE to come over here.

( cork / cock )

4. A: I am looking for the cork.  
B: Pardon?  
A: I said I was looking for the CORK.

( cart / cut )

5. A: I've got a small cut.  
B: I beg your pardon?  
A: I said I've got a small CUT.  
B: Oh! Did you cut yourself?

**Sample 3: Solve your arithmetic or algebra problems**

- $2 \times (3 + 5) = 30$      Read: *Two times/ three plus five/ equals thirty.*  
 $2 \times 3 + 5 = 11$      Read: *Two times three/ plus five/ equals eleven.*  
 $(12 + 8) \times 9 = 180$      Read: *Twelve plus eight/ times nine/ equals one hundred and eighty.*  
 $12 + 8 \times 9 = 84$      Read: *Twelve plus/ eight times nine/ equals eighty-four.*  
 $A \times (B - C) = X$      Read: *A times/ B minus C/ equals X.*  
 $A \times B - C = Y$      Read: *A times B/ minus C/ equals Y.*

**Sample 4: "What's John doing tomorrow?"**

- 'John is 'going with 'me to 'buy some 'fruit in the 'MARKet.  
'John is 'going with 'me to 'buy some 'FRUIT in the 'market.?  
'John is 'going with 'me to 'BUY some 'fruit in the 'market.  
'John is 'going with 'ME to 'buy some 'fruit in the 'market.  
'John IS 'going with 'me to 'buy some 'fruit in the 'market.

**Sample 5: Reading a child's song**

Rain, rain, go away,  
Come again another day,  
Little Johnny wants to play.

**Sample 6: Telling a joke**

Teacher: Where does your Mum come from?

Child: Alaska.

Teacher: Don't bother. I'll ask her myself.

**Sample 7: Sounds which are "missing"**

1. admire [ə?'maɪə]
2. advanced [ə?'vʌnst]
3. Antarctic [æ'n'tɔ:?'tɪk]
4. basketball [bɑ:skɪ?'bɔ:t]
5. breakfast ['bre?'fæst]
6. broadcast ['brɔ?'kæst]

**Sample 8: "Pardon?" — four ways of saying it**

— Anthropomorphism is bad in science.

— Pardon?

**Which is the closest to the Chinese sounds?**

1. ['pɑ:dən]
2. ['pɑ:ʔn]
3. ['pɑ:rdən]
4. ['padən]

**Sample 9: What do they actually say?**

1. ['æn'dʒju:] (And you?)
2. [aɪ 'mɪʃju:] (I miss you.)
3. ['glæ? tu 'mɪ:tʃju:] (Glad to meet you.)
4. ['plezə] (Pleasure.)
5. [aɪ 'geʃju wʊ? 'kʌm] (I guess you would come.)

**Sample 10: Read the following story**

(The schwa /ə/ & /ɪ/ are used to replace the unstressed syllables.)

The babi wəs əbaut eight months old. ət first hɪ wəs əsleep. Half ən hour latə hɪwəke əp ənd bigan tə cry. "Don't cry," I said. I talked tə hɪm. Bət hɪ looked ət mɪ ənd cried hardə ənd hardə. I turned on thə radio. Hɪ stopped crying ənd lisənəd tə thə

Appendix: Focus on Pronunciation

music. Aftə ə few minətes hi startəd tə cry əgain. "Listen tə me," I said. I startəd tə sing. Thə babi watchəd ənd listənəd, ənd hi didn't cry ani more. Then I madə facəs ənd jumpəd like ə monki. Thə baby laughəd ənd laughəd.

**Activity 3**

**Task 2**

**Sample 1: Say after the teacher**

Teacher: Please repeat after me — /θ/

Students: /θ/.

Teacher: /ð/.

Students: /ð/.

**Sample 2: Talk with the teacher**

Student: sank you, teacher.

Teacher: Say — thank you.

Student: Thank you.

Teacher: Good. — You're welcome.

**Sample 3: Practise while listening to the tape**

/θ/	/θ/
thick	this
thin	those
thinks	these
thirteen	there
three	then
theatre	with
both	mother
path	father
teeth	together
healthy	although

**Sample 4: Compare and practise the pair**

/θ/	/s/
thank	sank
thick	sick

thin	sin
thing	sing
think	sink
thumb	some

**Sample 5: Understand the places and manners of articulation**

The teacher tells the class:

Now look at this diagram. /θ/ & /ð/ are the two dental fricatives in English. When you pronounce these two sounds, you should first place the tip of your tongue between your teeth. Then let out the air in the narrow passage between your tongue and your teeth so that you make a hissing noise. The sound you produce now should be /θ/, a voiceless dental fricative. Now, at the same place of articulation, you use your voice now to produce a sound. If you place a finger at your throat, you should be able to feel the vibrations of your vocal cords. When you do this, the sound you produce should be /ð/, a voiced dental fricative. Now have a try and see if you can make it.

**Sample 6: How to practise /θ/ & /ð/?**

[A teacher's voice] When you say /θ/ & /ð/, you could use a mirror to see if you placed the tip of your tongue in between your teeth. You actually can feel that your tongue touches the back of your teeth. If you find this difficult try putting your finger in front of your mouth and touching it with your tongue like this:

**Sample 7: Tongue twisters**

1. What about this one: *Six thick thistle sticks.*
2. If you are ambitious, try this one: *King Thistle stuck a thousand thistles in the thistle of his thumb. A thousand thistles King Thistle stuck in the thistle of his thumb. If King Thistle stuck a thousand thistles in the thistle of his thumb, how many thistles did King Thistle stick in the thistle of his thumb?*
3. Here is another one.  
*Whenever the weather is cold,  
Whenever the weather is hot,  
We'll weather the weather,  
Whatever the weather,  
Whether we like it or not.*



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**Sample 8: Reading a poem**

I'm 'thankful for a 'thousand 'things:

For 'faithful 'earth, for 'birth and 'breath,

For 'thought and 'health and 'strength and 'mirth,

And 'maybe, 'when it 'comes, for 'death.

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