



# Materials Evaluation and Design for Language Teaching

Second Edition

IAN McGRATH

EDINBURGH TEXTBOOKS IN APPLIED LINGUISTICS

SERIES EDITORS: GIBSON FERGUSON, ERIK SCHLEEF  
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# Materials Evaluation and Design for Language Teaching

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# Materials Evaluation and Design for Language Teaching

Second Edition

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Ian McGrath

EDINBURGH  
University Press

To Natasha,  
with my thanks for her unfailing support.

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# Series Editors' Preface

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This series of single-author volumes published by Edinburgh University Press takes a contemporary view of applied linguistics. The intention is to make provision for the wide range of interests in contemporary applied linguistics which are provided for at the Master's level.

The expansion of Master's postgraduate courses in recent years has had two effects:

1. What began almost half a century ago as a wholly cross-disciplinary subject has found a measure of coherence so that now most training courses in Applied Linguistics have similar core content.
2. At the same time the range of specialisms has grown, as in any developing discipline. Training courses (and professional needs) vary in the extent to which these specialisms are included and taught.

Some volumes in the series will address the first development noted above, while the others will explore the second. It is hoped that the series as a whole will provide students beginning postgraduate courses in Applied Linguistics, as well as language teachers and other professionals wishing to become acquainted with the subject, with a sufficient introduction for them to develop their own thinking in applied linguistics and to build further into specialist areas of their own choosing.

The view taken of applied linguistics in the Edinburgh Textbooks in Applied Linguistics Series is that of a theorising approach to practical experience in the language professions, notably, but not exclusively, those concerned with language learning and teaching. It is concerned with the problems, the processes, the mechanisms and the purposes of language in use.

Like any other applied discipline, applied linguistics draws on theories from related disciplines with which it explores the professional experience of its practitioners and which in turn are themselves illuminated by that experience. This two-way relationship between theory and practice is what we mean by a theorising discipline.

The volumes in the series are all premised on this view of Applied Linguistics as a theorising discipline which is developing its own coherence. At the same time, in order to present as complete a contemporary view of applied linguistics as possible other approaches will occasionally be expressed

Each volume presents its author's own view of the state of the art in his or her topic. Volumes will be similar in length and in format, and, as is usual in a textbook series, each will contain exercise material for use in class or in private study.

Alan Davies  
W. Keith Mitchell



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This is also an appropriate place to thank the publishers who responded to my requests for samples of materials by generously supplying the books (and many more) on which I have drawn for my examples: Cambridge University Press, Express Publishing, Garnet Publishing, HarperCollins, Heinle/Cengage, Helbling Languages, Macmillan and Oxford University Press.

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# Introduction

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## 1 MATERIALS EVALUATION AND DESIGN AS APPLIED LINGUISTIC ACTIVITIES

Those with a responsibility for the development and administration of language learning programmes in either educational or workplace settings will need little persuading that materials evaluation and design, along with, say, syllabus design, learner assessment and the study of classroom processes, as aspects of curriculum planning and development, are centrally important applied linguistic activities.

The value of work on materials has also been recognised for some time within the academic community. Johnson (1989a), for instance, writing of three phases in the development of applied linguistics, describes the second phase as one in which work on needs analysis, the syllabus, materials design, the roles of teacher and learner and classroom interaction brought the language curriculum 'more closely into line with our new and broader understanding of communicative competence and the processes of language acquisition and use' (1989a: xi). Byrd (1995a: 6) notes that 'materials writing and publication has become a professional track within the professional field of teaching ESL'. Byrd's comment comes from her introduction to a collection of papers (Byrd 1995b) written by members of the Materials Writers Special Interest Section within TESOL, the American-based international association of teachers of English to speakers of other languages; a further collection (Tomlinson 1998) was produced by the British-based international Materials Development Association (MATSDA), which also publishes a regular journal; and a Materials Writing Special Interest Group has been formed within the British-based International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL).

Acceptance of the appropriateness of materials as a field of serious study, from the perspective of evaluation, design or research, has also been reflected in the increasing inclusion of materials evaluation and design as a field of study within BEd and Master's programmes, and the (still small, but growing) number of students pursuing doctoral research, together with the not unrelated increase in publications, one of which is tellingly entitled *Applied Linguistics and Materials Development* (Tomlinson 2013a).

In fact, books on materials evaluation and design for English language teaching would now fill a shelf of a modest bookcase. Ranged chronologically, this would include: Madsen and Bowen (1978), Candlin and Breen (1979), British Council (1980), Cunningsworth (1984), Dubin and Olshtain (1986), Grant (1987), Sheldon (1987a), McDonough and Shaw (1993, the 2003 second edition, and McDonough et al., the 2013 third edition), Byrd (1995a), Cunningsworth (1995), Hidalgo et al. (1995), Graves (1996), Tomlinson (1998, and the 2011a second edition), Fenner and Newby (2000), Graves (2000), McGrath (2002, the first edition of this book), Johnson (2003), Renandya (2003), Tomlinson (2003, and the 2013b second edition), Mishan (2005), Tomlinson (2008), Gray (2010), Harwood (2010a), Mishan and Chambers (2010), Tomlinson and Masuhara (2010a), Tomlinson (2011a), Tomlinson (2012), McGrath (2013), Tomlinson (2013b), Garton and Graves (2014), and Harwood (2014a). Tomlinson's (2012) state-of-the-art article illustrates the range of activity beyond such publications. And a full collection should really include early items such as Jordan (1983), books on curriculum which contain sections on materials, such as Johnson (1989b), Richards (2001) and Macalister and Nation (2015), as well as publications more narrowly focused on English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Articles on materials frequently appear in *English Teaching Professional*, *Modern English Teacher*, *English Teaching Forum*, the *ELT Journal* and more specialist journals such as the *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* and *English for Specific Purposes*.

And materials writers and teachers blog merrily.

## 2 THE IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

To state that materials evaluation and design (seen as separable) are applied linguistic activities is to make two further claims: that on the one hand they are oriented towards practical outcomes (some might say 'the solution of problems') that necessitate relevant experience and specialist knowledge/skill, and on the other that this specialist knowledge/skill is something that is possessed by applied linguists (rather than any other group of experts). So does this mean that to evaluate or design materials language teachers have to be applied linguists (in the sense that they have successfully completed a suitably broad and rigorous programme) and that if they are not we cannot expect them to be capable of carrying out either of these functions?

A functional separation between classroom teachers and others whose work has an impact on language learning may be a helpful way of thinking about the implications for education and training (see Figure 1); however, there is a danger that if applied too narrowly such differentiation has the effect of disempowering those at the lowest level.

In describing their pyramid model, Brumfit and Rossner (1982) are at pains to point out that the decisions made at higher levels must take account of lower-level decision-making and that in taking informed decisions at the classroom level teachers need to mediate between higher-level decisions and actual conditions. Seen in this light, the teacher is not simply someone who executes higher-level decisions but someone

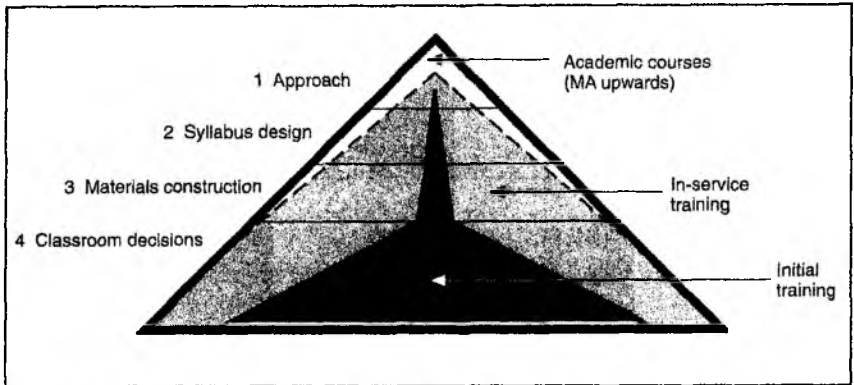


Figure 1 The decision pyramid (Brumfit and Rossner 1982: 230)

who considers if (and if so, how) these decisions can be implemented in the light of classroom realities. Thus, to refer to the right-hand side of the diagram, an appropriate objective for an in-service programme (and this need not be at Master's level) would be to enable classroom teachers to construct their own materials if this seemed desirable.

One of the implications of this view is that teacher education programmes must prepare teachers, psychologically as well as theoretically and practically, for this role, a role which involves evaluation as well as creativity. A second consideration, made explicit in the model, is the need to distinguish in a principled way between pre-service and in-service education.

## 2.1 Pre-service teacher education

It is not uncommon on initial training courses for trainees to be encouraged to produce their own materials, and there are good reasons for this. Views about teaching and learning change, textbooks change in tune with these, and teachers must be able to respond flexibly to such changes. Thus, there is value in trainees learning to analyse learners' needs and set appropriate objectives and then going on to plan lessons and develop materials to meet those needs *if suitable materials are not available*. However, if this means that there is little opportunity to practise working with existing textbooks that are potentially suitable or that the use of textbooks is actually discouraged, then the emphasis of such courses is misguided. For most language teachers working within formal school systems, the textbook is for a variety of reasons 'the visible heart of any . . . programme' (Sheldon 1988: 237), hence the term *coursebook*. Given institutional and external constraints, there is little prospect that this situation will change. To recognise this is to acknowledge the need for a rather different orientation in teacher education courses from that indicated above. What is important is that teachers should see the coursebook not as *the course* but as an aid to fulfilling the aims and objectives which they have themselves formulated. The implication for initial training courses is obvious: trainees need to develop the



capacity to evaluate existing materials in relation to the teaching–learning context and their teaching purposes. Guidance in materials design (principally in the form of adaptation and supplementation) could then be logically related to the perceived inadequacy of existing materials in relation to course objectives and/or learner needs.

### **2.2 In-service teacher education**

One of the advantages that experienced teachers have over their inexperienced colleagues is that the former's experience consists in part of being able to predict how learners will cope with and respond to certain types of published material. Thus, when experienced teachers teach using a coursebook that they know well, they will have a sense of what to use and what not to use, what to adapt and where to supplement. In many cases less adaptation and supplementation would be necessary if the textbook had been selected more carefully. It seems logical therefore that one of the most important foci for in-service education should be guidance in the selection of course materials, both textbooks and other materials. A recent survey of English teachers in Sweden (Allen 2015) confirmed that whereas the inexperienced prefer to rely on coursebooks to provide a structure for their lessons and as a source of extended reading practice material, experienced teachers are increasingly using online materials and see coursebooks simply as a 'fall-back' resource. Even where materials selection lies outside the control of individual teachers, there may be opportunities for them to contribute to selection decisions on an individual or group basis, either by presenting a case for the abandonment of ineffective materials or for the adoption of one set of potentially suitable materials rather than another. If, as is often said, knowledge is power, then wider awareness of materials evaluation procedures and an understanding of the concepts that typically underpin evaluation criteria might encourage those who have been silent to speak. Teachers themselves are also likely to appreciate guidance in materials design in a broad sense (adaptation, supplementation, the development of stand-alone materials); as indicated above, this would flow naturally from dissatisfaction with existing materials.

The suggestion made here, then, is that the more teachers know, understand and can do, the more capable they will be of carrying out the mediating function referred to earlier, especially in relation to materials. This does not mean that language teachers have to be applied linguists in the sense that they have followed a Master's degree, but it does mean that they need to possess the confidence and at least basic competences to (1) make informed decisions about the choice and use of materials and (2) source, adapt and develop materials when existing materials are found to be inadequate.

## **3 THIS BOOK**

### **3.1 The aims of the book**

In the years since the first edition of this book was published there have been some changes in the landscape, not least those associated with technological developments.

Despite such changes, the same basic needs remain as far as teacher education is concerned. Teachers still need advice on how to:

- evaluate coursebooks and other core materials systematically
- source and evaluate other materials
- adapt materials
- design their own materials.

When I set out to write the first edition I had in mind a ‘How to’ book. As normally used, this phrase is applied – sometimes disparagingly – to practical guides. My intention was to write a book that would be seen as practical by teachers but would also exemplify *a way of thinking* (about materials, about the teacher’s responsibility, about the ways in which learners can contribute) that would give a secondary meaning to the ‘How to’ label. I can remember saying, as a student – many years ago – towards the end of an MSc in Applied Linguistics (in Edinburgh): ‘I’ve learned a lot from this course, but I think the most important thing I’ve learned is how to think critically.’ In one sense, this book springs from that insight (reflected in the frequent recurrence of the words ‘systematically’ and ‘principles’). However, it derives more directly from the experience over the last thirty plus years of teaching courses, often elective, in materials evaluation and design as components of Master’s courses in the UK and overseas, and of running workshops on materials design as part of specialist courses or at conferences. The elective courses and workshops are always well subscribed. This not only points to the value that teachers attach to materials, but also points to their wish for guidance in choosing materials, adapting these and preparing their own. This book is an attempt to meet that need in a different form.

### 3.2 The structure of the book

Since this is a volume within a series on applied linguistics, the assumption has been made that the primary readership will be teachers with some experience of teaching. This assumption has influenced both the structure and the content of the book. The linear development of Chapters 2–6, from the selection of materials to materials adaptation and then supplementation, is based on experience of working with practising teachers, but takes little for granted in terms of prior training; subsequent chapters, on topics such as systematising the design process, involving learners in materials design and in-use and post-use evaluation of materials, will obviously be of most relevance to experienced teachers. The final chapter, which brings together a selection of special topics (for example, materials and culture, materials and syllabus, materials and research, and finally a short section on materials and teacher education), has been included for those with an interest in *studying* materials or *teaching about* materials.

### 3.3 The new edition

For the purposes of this new edition, all chapters have been revised and updated, and new content has been added on, for example, differentiation, digital resources,

and learner involvement in materials production and materials evaluation. In the previous edition, suggestions for further reading were included at various points in each chapter. These are now collected in a single section at the end of each chapter. The extracts from teaching materials included in appendices have also been selected to reflect the range of materials currently available from mainstream publishers. My own experience of using the book on assessed teacher education courses over the last twelve years and feedback from course participants has also led to some changes in tasks, and particularly the decision to include the Reflection, Discussion, Action activities at the end of each chapter. Many of these are intended to prompt the reader to reflect critically on the relevance of what they have read to their own teaching context and professional practices, and to consider the implications for change. On my own courses, they have encouraged the sharing of experience, insights, intentions and reports of action (through face-to-face discussion or contributions to an online forum); they have also been the basis for written assignments, including a reflective journal.

### 3.4 Using the book

I imagine some using the book as a 'set text', reading prescribed sections in their own time and discussing these and working through tasks in class. The letter K next to a Task (e.g. 2.4K) signifies that a Key or Commentary can be found on pp. 301–19. Some I see in libraries, using the book as a resource for assignments or their own research. Others, who are not following a course but are keen to do better the things they do every day, may search the book for guidance and inspiration. Within the latter group there may be little clusters of practising teachers with common needs (such as how to select materials in a more systematic way), who will choose to use specific sections of the book as a basis for discussion or coordinated activity.

What this implies is that there is no one way to use the book. Although it has been planned in such a way that it can be used as a set text, it is not in itself a course. The lecturer who decides to adopt it will, I am sure, use it as I have myself used the first edition – like any coursebook, as a resource, selecting, adapting and supplementing according to time constraints, course participant factors (including participants' own priorities) and an understanding of what is appropriate in that context. Lecturers working in pre-service contexts with trainees who are engaged in teaching practice may even wish to stand the book on its head, as it were, starting at Chapter 4 (materials selection and adaptation for lesson planning) and dealing with the content of Chapters 2–3 (selecting coursebooks or other core materials), a prospective rather than an actual need, only just before trainees graduate.

I have previously argued (McGrath 2000) that by developing skills in materials evaluation and design, teachers also develop the capacity for greater professional autonomy. Having recently had the good fortune to work with in-service teachers in Singapore, and seen what changes are possible within one semester part-time courses lasting only thirty-six hours when teachers have access to their

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own classrooms for experimentation, I am more than ever convinced that this is the case.

### 3.5 The hope

My hope is that what I have written will be of value to all teachers with an interest in this topic, irrespective of their experience, level of training and their present circumstances (studying, teaching or combining the two). My particular hope is that it will embolden readers to take at least one step beyond where they stand at present: that, for instance, those who currently carry out only impressionistic materials evaluation will do this more systematically; that those who evaluate systematically at the point of selection will continue that process by evaluating systematically materials in use; that those who have in the past made only minimal changes to the materials they use will develop the confidence to make more substantial changes when these are called for, and be able to justify these by reference to their own principles. These are, of course, progressive steps away from textbook-dependence and towards teacher autonomy. But I also hope that those who have thus far taken on themselves all the responsibility for materials evaluation and development will be persuaded to involve learners and colleagues and that institutions will be prepared to facilitate cooperative initiatives. All stand to benefit.

Ian McGrath  
Nottingham, July 2015



## Materials, courses, teachers

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**Which materials? – Ways of thinking about materials – Coursebooks and teachers' attitudes – Coursebooks – yes or no?:** who needs published materials?; arguments for and against the use of coursebooks – **Course planning and coursebooks:** a course; course planning; courses, coursebooks, teachers – **Textbook selection:** the importance of systematic selection processes – inputs to evaluation – **Materials evaluation as a cyclical process – From evaluation to design**

### 1 WHICH MATERIALS?

If we take a broad view, materials for learning and teaching languages could include 'realia' (real objects such as a chair or a shoe or a piece of fruit) and representations (a drawing or photograph, for example, of a person, house or scene). Such *non-verbal* materials can be exploited effectively to 'help to establish direct associations between words and objects and clarify meanings' and to 'stimulate learners to produce language, spoken and written' (McGrath 2013: 4). Advice on their use can be found in books and articles that deal specifically with the use of visual aids or resource-poor teaching contexts (see 'Further Reading' at the end of this chapter).

The focus of this book, however, is primarily on *verbal* materials, written and spoken text materials, and any related images, still or moving. In addition to published materials, such as textbooks, worksheets and computer software which have been specifically designed for language learning and teaching, these include authentic materials – for instance, off-air recordings or newspaper articles – selected for teaching purposes by the classroom teacher; teacher-written materials, including exercises and activities to accompany authentic materials; and materials produced by learners. The advantage of verbal materials like these over non-verbal materials is that they consist of both language and content: 'the form in which ideas are expressed may serve as examples of language use' but the language also carries content, 'ideas to which learners may react and from which they may learn' (McGrath 2013: 4). This dual focus, on content and language, is seen very clearly in what has come to be known as content and language integrated learning (CLIL).

This chapter sets out, in a preliminary way, my views on the desirable

relationships between teachers, learners and materials in the planning of an English language course. **Section 2** deals with ways of thinking about materials, **section 3** with teachers' attitudes to textbooks specifically, and **section 4** with the arguments for and against textbooks. The conclusion reached is that in many situations a textbook is a convenient resource. This leads into a discussion in **section 5** of where textbook selection fits into the process of course planning. Subsequent sections consider inputs to textbook evaluation (**section 6**), a cyclical approach to materials evaluation (**section 7**), which has relevance beyond the use of a textbook, and finally what I see as the close relationship between materials evaluation and materials design (**section 8**). The chapter ends, as do all the chapters in the book, with an invitation to reflect, discuss and act on what you have read, a review and preview section, and some suggestions for further reading.

## 2 WAYS OF THINKING ABOUT MATERIALS

In addition to the distinctions already made, between non-verbal and verbal materials and between different categories of verbal materials, there are a number of other ways of classifying or thinking about materials. One common classification is based on the purposes for which target learners are learning English, that is, whether they need general English, English for specific work-related purposes (ESP), such as business, medicine or tourism, or English for academic purposes (EAP). The advantages and disadvantages of so-called 'global' materials, those produced by international publishers and intended for use throughout the world, and 'local' materials, those produced by a publisher in a specific country or by a ministry of education or large institution for use in that country, have also been discussed (e.g. Alptekin and Alptekin 1984; Phillipson 1992; Canagarajah 1993; Lund and Zoughby 2007; Dat 2008; Hadley 2014). On a more specific level, Tomlinson has also made a very useful four-way distinction between materials which are

*instructional* in that they inform learners about the language, . . . *experiential* in that they provide exposure to the language in use, . . . *elicitative* in that they stimulate language use, or . . . *exploratory* in that they facilitate discoveries about language use. (2001: 66, emphases added)

In theory, the textbook can serve all the purposes highlighted by Tomlinson, or at least be exploited by a skilful teacher to serve all these purposes, and its significance for both learners and teachers is widely acknowledged. One of my former MA students from Hong Kong wrote: 'In Chinese, "study" means "read the textbooks". From the first day I went to school, I had to bring my textbooks. Throughout my school years, I learned with textbooks' (Yuen 1997). Where there is a pre-existing syllabus, a textbook can put 'flesh on the bones' of the syllabus (Nunan 1991: 208). A textbook can also 'suggest the intensity of coverage for syllabus items, allocating the amount of time, attention and detail particular syllabus items or tasks require' (Richards and Rodgers 1986: 25). In addition to providing this support for teachers, textbooks also provide support for learners (Cunningsworth 1995). As Richards (1998b: 125) has

noted, it is hardly surprising that 'the most commonly found elements in second and foreign language classrooms around the world are teachers, learners and textbooks'. It is equally unsurprising, given the centrality of textbooks in many teaching contexts, that 'the textbook', as a term, has largely given way to 'the coursebook'.

### 3 COURSEBOOKS AND TEACHERS' ATTITUDES

Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) fascinating *Metaphors We Live By* testifies to the power of metaphors in everyday life. Metaphors can also offer a useful insight into the way teachers perceive coursebooks. The Chinese teacher I quoted earlier went on to describe her attitude to coursebooks as follows: 'Since becoming a teacher I have mixed feelings towards the textbook. Sometimes I hate it and sometimes I love my inevitable teaching partner. This seems unlikely to be a perfect marriage; however, I cannot ask for a divorce' (Yuen 1997).

#### Task 1.1

Here are a number of other metaphors suggested by teachers from very different contexts:

*A coursebook is . . .*

a recipe      a springboard      a straitjacket      a supermarket

a holy book      a compass      a survival kit      a crutch

1. How do you interpret each of these metaphors? In what sense can a coursebook be said to be 'a recipe', for example? Do you think everyone uses a recipe in the same way?
2. Which of the metaphors do you find most interesting? Why?
3. Which is the most appropriate, in your view?
4. What would be your own metaphor for a coursebook? Why have you chosen this?

Two opposing themes are apparent in the metaphors listed above: that of *control* and that of *choice*, with that of *support* being somewhere between the two. The choice by an individual of a control metaphor, say, rather than a choice metaphor will almost certainly be influenced by the context in which that individual works, but it also has important implications for the way in which a textbook is used. In this respect, one metaphor, that of the coursebook as holy book, is particularly worrying for its undertones of transferred responsibility and undue veneration for the authority of the printed word. Richards (1998b: 131), who warns against the 'reification' (or 'unjustifiable attribution of qualities of excellence, authority and validity') of textbooks, comments:

Teachers in some parts of the world . . . tend to assume that any item included in a textbook must be an important learning item for students, and that



explanations (e.g. of grammar rules or idioms) and cultural information provided by the author are true and should not be questioned; they assume they do not have the authority or knowledge to adapt the textbook. They likewise believe that activities found in a textbook are superior to ones that they could devise themselves. (1998b: 131)

Since the possibility of conflict exists between a teacher's way of thinking about a coursebook and that of his or her learners – for instance, learners may 'reify' the textbook and the teacher see it merely as a springboard – there is value as well as interest in teachers seeking to uncover learners' attitudes (McGrath 2006). We come back to this point in Chapter 9.

### Task 1.2

1. What do you understand by the terms *coursebook-led* teaching and *coursebook-based* teaching?
2. If you use a coursebook, would you say your teaching is coursebook-led or coursebook-based? Is this your own choice?
3. In the following quotation, a teacher uses an extended metaphor to describe her understanding of these terms. Read what she has written and then answer the questions that follow.

**In coursebook-led teaching, the content of teaching is completely prescribed and standardised by the coursebook, and the role of the teacher to the coursebook is rather like that of a worker to the assembly line. That means, in coursebook-led teaching, there is nearly no mental challenge for the teacher. What they need to do is just follow the instructions step by step. Coursebook-based teaching allows the teacher to adapt or modify the content of teaching. The relationship between teacher and coursebook designer is more like one of colleagues working on the same project than technician and engineer in coursebook-led teaching.**

In the eyes of administrators, coursebook-led teaching is much easier to monitor and control. If everything in teaching follows the arrangement prescribed in the coursebook, the teaching process is as smooth as product processing in manufacturing industry. Even for the teacher him- or herself, teaching is also easy. This belief coincides with the universal law in industry. That is, to gain the maximum profit with minimum cost. An essential principle underpinning coursebook-led teaching is economy. The means for increasing profit in industry could inspire us in teaching, but it should not be over-emphasised.

From the perspective of teacher development, coursebook-based teaching provides more opportunities for the teacher since

teachers need to take the initiative to meet the particular needs of learners. Because teachers have closer contact and access to their students than coursebook designers do, their adaptation of supplementation of the coursebook can be localised to suit the context. Furthermore, the teacher's ingenuity can be well displayed in coursebook-based teaching. No coursebook can predict and cover every scenario, so it is always necessary for teachers to contribute their own wisdom to teaching, even though this may be based on the framework available in a coursebook.

In contrast to the principle of economy under coursebook-led teaching, the principle behind coursebook-based teaching represents the spirit of humanity. However, the teacher's autonomy and freedom is usually restricted by factors such as time, finance or the pressure from authority, and even the teacher's own experience. To achieve the teaching goals either in the long run or the short term, a compromise between the spirit of humanity and the principle of economy is therefore needed. (Freda)

(a) Make a note of the differences identified by the writer.

Coursebook-led teaching	Coursebook-based teaching

(b) What is her conclusion?

(c) How far do you agree with what she says?

(d) Do you think the metaphor she has chosen is appropriate?

Coursebook use spreads along a continuum. At the ALWAYS USE end are those whom we might call 'coursebook-led'; such teachers 'teach the book' because that is what they are required to do or think they are required to do. At the other end are those who NEVER USE a coursebook because they disdain to do so or are unable to find something suitable. Occupying the space between the two extremes are teachers who claim that they *base* their teaching on a book or a number of books and those who only make use of a book for limited and specific purposes. The distinction between coursebook-led and coursebook-based teaching (implicit in the metaphors 'holy book' and 'springboard') is an important one. We will come back to it at the end of the chapter and in Chapter 4. At this point, however, we turn to the arguments for and against the use of coursebooks.

## 4 COURSEBOOKS – YES OR NO?

### 4.1 Who needs published materials?

It is worth noting that although the principal users of textbooks are teachers and learners, others also have a vested interest. Those in positions of authority, from officials in a ministry of education, say, down to the head of department in an individual school, will wish to ensure that there is some degree of standardisation and continuity in relation to what is taught. A set textbook is one way of ensuring this, other ways being official syllabuses, an inspectorial system and public examinations. In many countries, there will be a textbook committee within the ministry whose function is to approve books for use within the school system. Seen in this light, 'the book', as it is often known, is an instrument of control within systems that emphasise accountability and the status quo. Textbooks can also be used by those in positions of authority to facilitate curricular change. When this is the case, the book serves as both an instrument of change and a means of supporting teachers during such a period, a view that has been persuasively argued by Hutchinson and Torres (1994). Parents may also have an interest. Those who are in a position to help their children, either directly or by employing a private tutor to provide remedial help, will find it easier to do so if they can see what the child is supposed to know or be able to do and have something concrete against which to measure their progress. Training officers in companies employing teachers of languages for specific purposes (LSP) may have similar reasons for preferring a book to the use of a combination of photocopied and teacher-produced materials. It is perhaps a little ironic to refer also to the vested interests of textbook writers, publishers and even governments (for whom linguistic spread is associated with the spread of influence), but the financial motives of these groups do have an effect on the way in which textbooks are produced and marketed and ultimately on teaching and learning (Phillipson 1992; Pennycook 1994; Canagarajah 1999; Gray 2010; Harwood 2014b).

### 4.2 Arguments for and against the use of coursebooks

In 1953, Michael West wrote an article entitled 'Is a textbook really necessary?' and gave the answer: 'A textbook is necessary: the pupil keenly feels the need of one . . . even with a lesson every day, much of today's teaching has faded by tomorrow' (West 1953: 64, cited in Kelly 1969: 261). In the half century that followed, a number of other arguments were made in favour of coursebooks. The most frequently voiced are summarised below. The summary draws on Grant (1987), O'Neill (1982, 1993), Hutchinson and Torres (1994), Ur (1996), Harmer (2001), Richards (2001b) and Prodromou (2002). More recent publications make very similar points.

#### *Why teachers and learners need a coursebook*

1. A coursebook is a map. It shows where one is going and where one has been.
2. It provides language samples.

3. It offers variety.

*Why learners need a coursebook*

4. It defines what is to be learned and what will be tested.

5. It reinforces what the teacher has done and makes revision and preparation possible. It thus offers support for learning outside class.

*Why teachers need a coursebook*

6. It provides a structure for teaching.

7. It saves time. To prepare materials from scratch for every lesson would be impossible.

8. It offers linguistic, cultural and methodological support.

9. It is easy to keep track of what you have done and to tell others where you have reached (e.g. when reporting to the head of department or briefing a substitute teacher).

Another point which is sometimes made by teachers is that if a coursebook represents a new approach to language teaching which is illustrated and clearly explained in the teacher's book, then this can be a useful form of professional development (Nunan 1991; Hutchinson and Torres 1994; Edge and Wharton 1998). When these explanations include advice on how to conduct particular types of activity that are not specific to the book in question (e.g. how to organise and manage small group work or role play, or how to correct spoken errors), teachers' books also provide more general on-the-job training for inexperienced teachers (Richards 1998b). Teachers working in contexts in which access for learners to 'real' spoken or written materials is difficult also attach particular value to coursebooks that include these. The 'samples' referred to in point 2, above, might, after all, be simply the specially written (non-authentic) texts found in traditional textbooks. Both teachers and learners also tend to respond positively to the visual appeal of modern coursebook packages, which convey cultural information through visual means as well as through words on the page (Harmer 2001).

These arguments notwithstanding, a number of well-known figures have voiced strong reservations about coursebooks. Rinvolucri, in typically outspoken fashion, describes coursebooks as 'a human, cultural and linguistic disaster' (cited in Harmer 2001: 5). Brumfit (1979: 30) claims that although textbooks can help teachers, 'many of them don't' and that 'even the best textbooks take away initiative from teachers by implying that there is somewhere an "expert" who can solve problems' for the teacher and individual students – in short, that teachers come to depend on them. One possible effect, discussed in a number of papers by Richards (e.g. 1993, 1998b), is that if teaching decisions are based largely on the textbook and the teacher's book, this leads to the de-skilling of a teacher. The argument is as follows: If the person doing the teaching cedes to the textbook writer responsibility for planning what happens, he or she gradually loses the capacity to exercise the planning function, that is, 'lack of use leads to loss' (Apple and Jungck 1991: 230, cited in

Richards 1998b: 132). As a result, 'the teacher's role is trivialized and marginalized to that of little more than a technician' (Richards 1998b: 132). How one reacts to this argument will probably depend on interpretations of the words 'largely' and 'based'. Harmer (2001) has pointed out that critics of coursebooks tend to present a view of teachers slavishly following textbooks which has little justification in reality. Richards's (1998b) brief review of literature on textbook use, which extends to the use of textbooks in areas other than English language teaching, suggests not only that experienced teachers are selective in what they use but also that pedagogic reasoning skills do not atrophy over time.

In considering the pros and cons of textbook use, it is necessary to make a distinction between the book itself and how that book is used. There is general agreement, for example, that global coursebooks can never meet local needs – or, to put it in a more extreme form, that every classroom is unique (Davison 1976; Williams 1983; Cunningsworth 1995; Maley 1998). However, two possible courses of action follow from this. The first is to take from a coursebook what is useful, shape it to learners' needs and supplement it. This is, in effect, the critically selective and creative approach advocated in, for example, McGrath (2013) and what coursebook writers say they expect teachers to do (Harmer 2001; Bell and Gower 2011). The second option is to reject coursebooks out of hand, leave them to gather dust on shelves and in warehouses – or dispose of them in the more theatrical ways that some authors attest, by dropping them into wastepaper baskets, throwing them out of windows, or burning them (see respectively Harmer 2001; Tomlinson 2013d; Thornbury and Meddings 2001). The rejection option obviously raises the question of what should replace the coursebook.

The alternative suggested by Brumfit is to replace coursebooks with 'resource packs, sets of materials with advice to teachers on how to adapt and modify the contents' (1979: 30). This idea is developed in a well-known paper by Allwright, who demonstrates convincingly by reference to goals, content, method and guidance that 'the management of language learning is far too complex to be satisfactorily catered for by a pre-packaged set of decisions embodied in teaching materials' (1981: 9). He therefore argues for the provision of *learning* materials which, in the form of a 'learners' guide to language learning' and 'ideas books' and 'rationale books' for teachers, and supported by learner training and an appropriate focus within teacher training, would allow for the cooperative management of learning by learners and teachers. In the same vein, Prabhu (cited in Maley 2011) has suggested 'semi-materials' and Maley himself 'flexi-materials' (2003, 2011), with the teacher taking responsibility for deciding which materials to use and how to make use of them (see Chapter 7).

These proposals have fallen on deaf ears as far as major publishers are concerned, and instead of less we have more. The coursebook and accompanying teacher's book have been succeeded by the coursebook package composed of multiple components. This development has not met with universal enthusiasm. For instance, Littlejohn has commented that 'the extent to which materials may now effectively structure classroom time from a distance . . . has increased considerably' (2011: 180); and Bruton has suggested that 'by attempting to do too much, coursebooks actually

achieve less than they could' (1997: 283). Thornbury's (2000) 'Dogme for ELT' (or what has come to be known as 'teaching unplugged' – a reference to the rejection of modern technology) goes further than this. (The term 'dogme' comes from the manifesto 'Dogme 95' published by a Danish film collective, which called for a return to basics in film-making.) Thornbury's position is that 'Teaching should be done using only the resources that teachers and students bring to the classrooms – i.e. themselves – and whatever happens to be in the classroom' (Thornbury 2000). In later papers by Thornbury and others who share his views there has been some softening of this line and it now seems to be accepted that textbooks can be used, albeit 'sparingly' (Thornbury and Meddings 2002: 36).

The majority view adopted in the professional literature is that if a suitable book is available, it makes sense on practical grounds to make use of it. After all, coursebooks are a convenient aid (e.g. Cunningsworth 1979; O'Neill 1982; Hutchinson and Torres 1994; Harmer 2001; Prodromou 2002; McGrath 2013). This is the view adopted in this book. However, we should not underestimate the responsibility that this places on teachers. The next section indicates the nature of that responsibility.

## 5 COURSE PLANNING AND COURSEBOOKS

### 5.1 A course

One very minimal definition of a course might be: 'a planned series of learning events'. This definition draws attention to the *planning* involved; it distinguishes between a one-off event such as a talk or workshop and a *number* of such events; it suggests that the events will be *linked* in some way; it specifies that one of the intended outcomes is *learning*; and it implies that – to further justify the reference to *learning* – student learning will be assessed in some way, even if this is only by the learners involved. What such a definition does not include, of course, is any reference to the considerations that go into the planning or, indeed, the planning process.

#### Task 1.3

Here is a teacher talking about her teaching context:

The allocated time for teaching is tight. I must figure out how much time I can devote to training my students in speaking and listening, and, at the same time, I must also make sure to maintain enough time to handle grammar and language points which are tested in our national matriculation examination. What is more, my students in this key school have very high expectation from teachers. They want to go to the top universities in China or go to study abroad, which requires them not only writing ability and grammar knowledge, but also speaking and listening competence. (Ms Wa, cited in Zhong and Davison 2008: 130–1)

1. Ms Wa, who bases her teaching on a coursebook, identifies a number of factors that influence her course planning. How would you summarise these?
2. Look at the quotations from two more teachers in Appendix 1.1. Is either of the situations described similar to your own? What factors do you consider and what stages do you go through when planning your courses?

## 5.2 Course planning

Writers on course design (or, more broadly, curriculum development) might differ as to how they approach the planning process (see, for example, Richards 2013 on forward, central and backward design), but they agree on one point: that decisions about materials are not the first step in the planning process. Yalden, for instance, notes: 'A syllabus should be, in the first instance, a statement about content, and only in a later stage of development a statement about methodology or materials' (1987: 87). In the kind of forward planning that Richards associates with communicative language teaching (CLT) the first step is to establish aims for the course (i.e. the whole year if one will be teaching the same class for that long), drawing on what is known of the official syllabus (if any), public exam (if any), learners and teachers, and institutional resources and constraints. Having formulated our aims, which may be in the form of learning outcomes (what learners will know or be able to do by the end of the course), we can proceed to specify content (the language syllabus and perhaps topics) and consider the process (method/learning activities) through which the learning outcomes can be achieved. Only at this point is it appropriate to select or recommend materials which will serve as an aid and resource for teachers and learners.

When a coursebook is selected as the primary material to be used the next stage is the preparation of a scheme of work (detailed planning for units of time such as terms, months or, in the case of an intensive course, weeks). Graves refers to this stage, which necessitates careful study of the materials, as 'getting inside the textbook' (2000: 176). This is the time when decisions are made about the time needed to deal adequately with specific elements in the scheme of work and the implications for the use, non-use or reordering of particular parts of the coursebook (Acklam 1994). It is also a time when decisions are made about the need for supplementation.

## 5.3 Courses, coursebooks, teachers

Let us recap. Most people would probably agree that if a course does not have fairly specific aims, it may easily become aimless, that is, lacking a clear purpose. When there is no external structure in the form of an official syllabus or a public examination, teachers may hand over (consciously or unconsciously) responsibility for the formulation of aims to a coursebook – in that they accept unquestioningly the foci, structure, emphases and content of the book. However, textbooks are written to be relevant to as large a number of students as possible – which also means as wide a range of teaching–learning contexts as possible. It follows that no one book can be

perfect for a particular institution, let alone a particular class within that institution or an individual within a class. This means that at the selection stage (see below and Chapters 2–3) and again after a book has been selected teachers need to think carefully about how the book can contribute to the aims of *their* course and what changes will be required to ensure that it meets the needs of *their* students. Basing a course on a book does not mean teaching the book.

## 6 TEXTBOOK SELECTION

### 6.1 The importance of systematic selection processes

The selection of a textbook for use in a particular context may be determined by any one of a number of different individuals or groups other than the teacher who will ultimately use it: a ministry of education (which may have commissioned a single textbook series for nationwide use), a state board (in the USA), a school principal, a head of department, a director of studies (in a private language school) or a group of teachers within the institution concerned. Yet even where teachers have no direct control over textbook selection it is important that they be able to adopt a critical stance in relation to the material they are expected to use. This implies an awareness of learner needs and contextual constraints; and the willingness and capacity in the light of this awareness to make decisions concerning the selection from the textbook of what is appropriate, and the exploitation, adaptation and supplementation of this as necessary. These aspects of materials evaluation by teachers are dealt with in Chapters 4–6. In the remainder of this chapter and in Chapters 2 and 3, the main focus is on the process of initial textbook selection.

The decision to use one textbook rather than another cannot be taken lightly. Since the textbook tends to be the main teaching–learning aid, in school systems at least, it influences what teachers teach and what and to some extent how learners learn. For institutions and often individuals textbooks are a financial investment. For teachers they require an important investment of time. Having taken the trouble to familiarise themselves with a new coursebook and its accompanying teacher's book, recordings, workbook and so on, and plan lessons based on these, teachers will normally be very reluctant to change books the following year, even if they are free to do so.

These considerations notwithstanding, textbooks are only too often chosen in an arbitrary fashion. How many of us have rued the decisions made by others! How many of us have been so impressed by a conference talk or author demonstration, by a persuasive bookseller or publisher's representative, or by an author's or publisher's reputation, that we have ourselves made a rash choice! As Grant points out, we may even be deluded by the surface appearance of a book: 'Most of us have had the experience of publishers' representatives calling round and dazzling us with their new books. Many of these books are beautifully presented, with jazzy covers and attractive artwork which distracts the eye and dulls the brain' (1987: 119). Many years ago, Brumfit, referring to EFL textbooks, commented that 'masses of rubbish



is skilfully marketed' (1979: 30). Since there has been no slowing-down in the production of language teaching materials, and since some of this is presumably still 'rubbish', it is clearly important that teachers and others who select textbooks and/or other materials for a specific context at least be able to distinguish between what is likely to be more and less suitable.

## 6.2 Inputs to evaluation

The most secure basis for deciding which textbook to select is to try out the materials with the students (or the kind of students) for whom they are intended (Cunningsworth, 1995; Harmer 1991a, 2015). This is particularly desirable where large-scale or long-term adoptions are involved. Where two or more coursebook series are being considered, it may be possible to organise a short-term comparative trial.

An alternative to trialling within an institution is to obtain information from other users. The local bookseller or publisher's representative should know if a coursebook is being used by other similar institutions. Careful questioning of teachers who have used the materials under consideration – or, better still, an opportunity to observe the materials in use – may give strong indications as to the potential suitability of the material. Indeed, it would be preferable to attempt to obtain feedback of this kind before taking the decision to embark on the kind of trialling suggested above.

If neither feedback from other users nor prior trialling is possible, we are left with 'armchair evaluation'. Although this may appear to be a poor substitute for use-based evaluation, the two are not mutually exclusive. As Figure 1.1 indicates, where

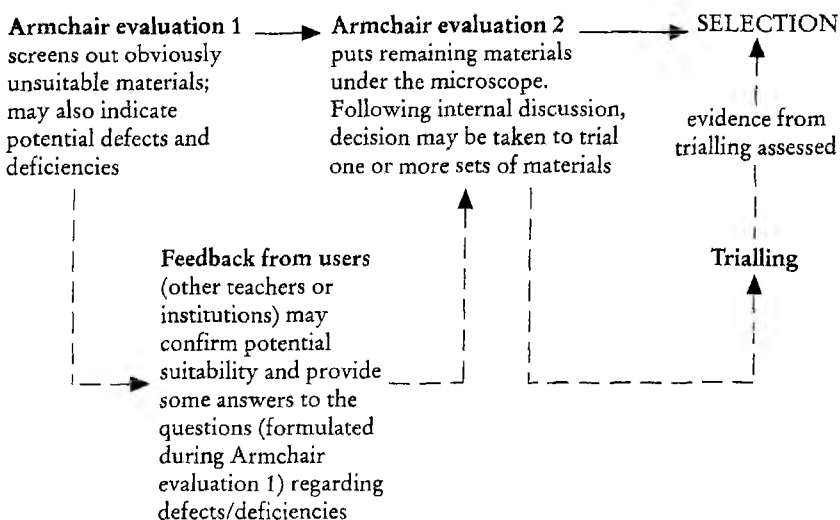


Figure 1.1 Possible steps in materials evaluation for selection

use-based evaluation is possible (whether in the form of feedback from teachers or observation of use within the institution) this should ideally be guided by prior armchair evaluation.

Possible approaches to armchair evaluation are discussed in Chapters 2 and 3.

## 7 MATERIALS EVALUATION AS A CYCLICAL PROCESS

There are two levels in a systematic approach to materials evaluation, whether of a textbook or other types of material. The macro level consists of a series of stages within a cyclical framework. These stages will be referred to as *pre-use*, *in-use* and *post-use*. The micro level is concerned with the design of instruments and the collection and analysis of data at each of the separate stages (see Chapters 2, 3 and 9). In this section, our focus is on the macro level.

As noted in the previous section, so much can depend on making the right decision about materials that it pays (in terms of money and time) to be as rigorous as possible when evaluating. This is one reason why the emphasis in much that has been written about materials evaluation has been on **pre-use evaluation** in relation to coursebook selection. Ellis (1997) refers to this stage as 'predictive' evaluation, drawing attention to the fact that it is insufficient in itself. As Nunan points out,

while we can exercise professional judgement in answering questions such as, 'does the introduction, practice and recycling of new linguistic items seem to be shallow/steep enough for your students?', ultimately, such questions can only be settled with reference to their actual use. (1991: 211)

In short, the effectiveness of materials can only be established through use.

In fact, the planning of every lesson based on a coursebook should involve evaluation, as we shall see in Chapter 4, and notes made following each lesson on the suitability or otherwise of the materials can represent an invaluable form of continuing, **in-use evaluation**. Where several teachers are using the same materials, periodic meetings focusing on what worked well and less well, learners' difficulties with the material, and the implications for adaptation and supplementation are forms of in-use evaluation that can benefit all concerned.

At the end of the course, most teachers and students will want to close the book with a sigh of relief and forget about it. Nevertheless, it is worth spending a little time on **post-use evaluation**. At this stage, it should be possible to assess in a more comprehensive way the effects of using the materials, for instance by considering short-term effects such as motivation, or long-term effects measured by retention or application of learning (Tomlinson 1999). Ellis (1998), who suggests that the same procedure be followed for this kind of 'retrospective' evaluation as was used for selection, notes that this is rarely done. The reality, of course, is that teachers the world over seem to be under increasing pressure and at the end of a term, semester or year, who can blame them if they fail to close the circle? And yet there may be useful lessons to be learned, insights that can feed in to subsequent teaching using the same materials and/or to the process or criteria by which they were selected.

Learners can also be involved in both in-use and post-use evaluation. They may have experience of using other materials and therefore be able to make comparisons; even if they have not, they can still express a view on the suitability of the materials they have used. Like in-use evaluation, post-use evaluation is most reliable when it draws on the experiences of several teachers and several groups of learners.

We return to in-use and post-use evaluation in Chapter 9.

## 8 FROM EVALUATION TO DESIGN

Stevick offers a few crumbs of encouragement to would-be authors, but he also makes the point that the evaluative criteria we use in judging the work of others should be our guide when we design our own materials:

More than courses in French, Spanish, German, or English, a course in a seldom-taught language is likely to be the brain child of one author, conceived in desperation, brought forth in obscurity, and destined to be despised and rejected by all other men. Sometimes rejection is inevitable, but often it is the result of hasty, or unperceptive, or unappreciative examination of the existing book . . . guidelines for evaluation may be applied to the efforts of others, but also to one's own handiwork both before and after it is completed. (1972: 102)

In the second part of this quotation, Stevick seems to me to be throwing down a two-stage challenge: to develop guidelines which enable us to evaluate materials in a thoughtful, perceptive and appreciative manner (Stage 1); and to be as critical of our own materials as we are of those produced by others (Stage 2). Responding to these challenges is not easy, but it is my belief and experience that the effort involved brings its own rewards: that through becoming better evaluators, we equip ourselves to be better materials designers. With time, self-criticality and persistence, the qualities we admire in the work of others should start to shine through in the materials we produce, making learning more effective, teaching more satisfying, and learning and teaching more fun.

## REFLECTION, DISCUSSION, ACTION

- What do you see as the most important point in this chapter?
- Look again at section 4 (arguments for and against textbooks). What is your experience of using textbooks? Which of these points best reflect your views? Can you add any additional arguments for or against textbooks?
- Do you think you need to do anything differently as a result of what you have read?

## REVIEW AND PREVIEW

This chapter has introduced a number of ways of thinking about materials and particularly textbooks (attitudes to them, the role they play, their use, and their

evaluation (the importance of careful evaluation and a three-stage approach to this). Subsequent chapters offer guidance at the level of both principle and practice in dealing *systematically* with such tasks as materials evaluation for selection, materials evaluation for lesson planning, and the processes of adaptation, supplementation and the preparation of 'stand-alone' materials. Although the emphasis within the book as a whole thus shifts progressively from evaluation to design, evaluative criteria remain an important dimension.

As Chapter 2 makes clear, however, evaluative criteria should not be our first or only concern when it comes to textbook selection.

## FURTHER READING

**Materials in resource-poor environments:** Hadfield and Hadfield (2003a, 2003b) suggest ways of teaching with (next to) nothing, as does Marsland (1998).

**Arguments for and against coursebooks:** see the pairs of articles referred to in this chapter: Allwright (1981) and O'Neill (1982), Harmer (2001) and Thornbury and Meddings (2001). Harwood (2005), who distinguishes between strong and weak anti-textbook views, considers similar issues in relation to English for academic purposes. Criticisms of coursebooks are classified and reviewed in McGrath (2013).

**Dogme/Teaching Unplugged:** see Thornbury and Meddings (2009). Scott Thornbury's website, [www.thornburyscott.com/tu/sources.htm](http://www.thornburyscott.com/tu/sources.htm), offers convenient access to a variety of the early papers and a number of resources. Harmer (2010) offers a counter-argument.

**Metaphors:** blogposts by Nathan Hall (<https://eltreflections.wordpress.com/2013/08/25/travelling>) and Lizzie Pinard ([reflectiveteachingreflectivelearning.com/reflections/25/10/2013](http://reflectiveteachingreflectivelearning.com/reflections/25/10/2013)) contain interesting, extended discussions of their preferred metaphors. McGrath (2006) reports on a comparative study of teachers' and learners' metaphors for coursebooks.

# Choosing materials: first steps

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**A critical mindset – Taking stock of the situation: context analysis and survey of learner needs – Materials analysis – Methods of analysis and evaluation:** the impressionistic method; the checklist method; the in-depth method – **First-glance evaluation:** the argument for first-glance evaluation; criteria for first-glance evaluation; a procedure for first-glance evaluation

## 1 A CRITICAL MINDSET

In Chapter 1 we distinguished between three main stages in evaluation, which we termed pre-use, in-use and post-use evaluation. In this chapter and the next, we take a closer look at the first of these stages: the evaluation of materials, and particularly coursebooks, with selection in mind. There are, of course, teachers who do not see the selection of materials as a particular issue. Many are not in a position to choose the materials they use because that decision is made for them; others have chosen coursebooks or other materials some years ago and see no reason to change. At the other extreme, there are teachers who do not use coursebooks and are therefore constantly faced with selection decisions. It is my view that, whatever their current situation, teachers who are equipped with an understanding of systematic evaluation processes are in a position to make an informed selection decision or contribute to decision-making processes if the opportunity arises and, just as important, they are also more likely to bring a critical mindset to the materials they are using. As we shall see, this critical mindset can be applied not only to materials, but also to approaches to materials evaluation suggested in the professional literature, including those proposed in this book.

In all these situations, it will be argued, it pays to make the process of selection as systematic as possible, and the first step in such a process is to establish key features of the context in which the materials will be used and the needs of those – learners and teachers – who will be using them. **Section 2** thus discusses context analysis and needs analysis. **Section 3** draws attention to an important – and sometimes neglected – distinction between materials analysis and evaluation. **Section 4** considers methods of analysis and evaluation, with a particular focus on checklists. **Section 5** argues that when important materials selection decisions have to be made

a two-stage process is desirable; one possible approach to the first stage, 'first-glance' evaluation, is then described.

The selection of supplementary materials is considered in Chapters 5 and 6. Text selection is a particular focus of Chapter 6.

## 2 TAKING STOCK OF THE SITUATION: CONTEXT ANALYSIS AND SURVEY OF LEARNER NEEDS

Teachers selecting a textbook or other published materials for use in a familiar teaching situation will be well aware of the multiplicity of factors in that situation which will need to be taken into account (even if, for one reason or another, these cannot fully determine the ultimate selection). However, those who are selecting materials for a new course, for a new type of student and especially for an unfamiliar teaching context will need to carry out some form of context analysis and/or survey of needs in order to ensure that they too are fully aware of the contextual and learner factors that need to be considered. For both groups, but particularly for the second group, it is worth drawing up a list of these factors before proceeding to the next stage involving the examination of potential materials. This list will constitute the fixed element (the variable element being the materials under consideration) in what has been described as a matching process (Hutchinson and Waters 1987; Littlejohn 2011). It should be emphasised, however, that the list is fixed only in the sense that it defines a particular teaching–learning context at a particular point in time, and that while 'matching' may be a convenient way of referring to what goes on, the term undoubtedly belies the complexity of the process.

The point has been made by Cunningsworth that 'course materials are not intrinsically good or bad – rather they are more or less effective in helping students to reach particular goals in specific situations' (1979: 31). Although we might wish to take issue with the first part of this statement (materials can surely be both ineffective *and* intrinsically bad), the second part – with its implication that evaluation needs to be learner- and context-related – seems uncontroversial. Surprisingly, the importance of a prior analysis of contextual and learner factors is not always acknowledged in discussions of materials evaluation and selection. This section looks in turn at the micro context (characteristics of the learner group and the teacher(s) who will use the material, the programme and the institution) and the macro (external) context.

The following summary of the learner factors that need to be considered in materials selection draws on Daoud and Celce-Murcia (1979), Matthews (1991), Harmer (1991a), Cunningsworth (1995), Spratt (2001), Masuhara (2011) and McDonough et al. (2013):

1. age range
2. proficiency level in the target language (and homogeneity within the learner group)
3. first language (all the same?)
4. sex distribution (single sex? If mixed, what proportion of male/female?)

5. academic and educational level
6. sociocultural background
7. occupation (if relevant)
8. reasons for studying the target language (if applicable)
9. attitudes to learning (including attitudes to the language, its speakers, the teacher, the institution)
10. previous language learning experience (of the target language and any other languages)
11. language learning aptitude
12. general expectations (of the course/textbook/teacher/own role)
13. interests (insofar as these are generalisable)
14. specific wants
15. preferred learning styles
16. activity preferences.

While some of the items on this list will be known or can be easily ascertained (e.g. 1–7), others require some level of research. The findings from one group will not necessarily be transferable to another.

It is also possible in many situations to identify **learners' needs** in relation to the target language. Some possible categories in such a profile are listed below. These are based in part on Bruder (1978), Daoud and Celce-Murcia (1979) and Harmer (1991a). In a context where there is a defined syllabus and/or a public examination, which itself defines what needs to be known, the syllabus/exam will be the starting point for a profile of needs. If a class share the same first language, known points of difficulty can be listed (see 7 and 8 below), and where there is a shared need to be able to function in the same study or work context (e.g. an English-speaking university, a call centre, a global company), this will also suggest specific foci (1, 2, 3, 8, 9 and possibly 10). If students are known to have specific weaknesses, there will also be a remedial component (7, 8 and possibly 10).

1. dialect (e.g. British vs American English)
2. language skill emphasis, if relevant (e.g. ability to interact orally)
3. contexts and situations of use, which may require different levels of formality or different registers
4. subskills
5. notions
6. functions
7. language system (grammar, vocabulary, phonology) emphasis
8. language forms (e.g. specific structures, vocabulary items, features of stress or intonation)
9. whether language systems will be used productively, receptively or both
10. attention given to mechanics (handwriting, spelling, punctuation).

Procedures for needs analysis would include syllabus analysis, analysis of past examination papers, diagnostic tests and other analyses of student performance

(e.g. scrutiny of previous written work, classroom observation), feedback from other teachers, student questionnaires, interviews and group discussion, and, in the case of ESP, document analysis and job analysis.

There are also **teacher factors** to be considered (Bruder 1978; Cunningsworth 1995; Masuhara 2011). These would include:

1. language competence (as target language users and analysts but also as speakers of the learners' first language)
2. familiarity with the target language culture (and that of the learners, where this is homogeneous)
3. methodological competence and awareness (including ability to adapt course-book and prepare supplementary material)
4. experience of teaching the kind of learner for whom the materials are being selected
5. attitude to teaching and to learners
6. time available for preparation
7. beliefs about teaching–learning, preferred teaching style, preferred method.

The respective needs in relation to textbooks of teachers who are native and non-native speakers of the target language and of inexperienced and experienced teachers are discussed by Ariew (1982) and Johnson et al. (2008); Skierso (1991) contains a useful summary. The fact is that teachers tend to function as mediators between published material and learners, and can choose to work with the intentions of the materials writer or undermine them (Maley 1995). Where several teachers are involved in a course it is therefore essential for the course coordinator to be aware not only of their competences but also of their beliefs and attitudes.

Information will also be needed on **the institution(s)** and **the specific programme** for which the material is intended. This would include:

1. level within the educational system (e.g. kindergarten, primary, secondary, tertiary)
2. public sector (state) vs private
3. role of the target language (e.g. English-medium vs English as curriculum subject)
4. time available for the study of the target language (per week/per academic year)
5. timetable (whether the language is typically taught in single or double lessons or after lunch/at the end of the day)
6. class size
7. physical environment (e.g. classroom size, flexibility of seating, acoustics)
8. additional resources available (e.g. cassette recorder, video recorder, overhead projector, photocopier, computers, satellite TV, interactive whiteboard, reprographic facilities)
9. aims of the programme
10. syllabus



11. form of evaluation
12. decision-making mechanisms and freedom given to teachers.

A similar list can be found in McDonough et al. (2013), and examples of pro-formas on which such information can be summarised can be found in Skierso (1991).

The institution exists within the larger educational system and, indeed, within an **overall sociopolitical system** in which social, cultural, religious, economic and political issues can all have an influence (British Council 1980; Malamah-Thomas 1987; McDonough et al. 2013). This argues for a more macro level of analysis which takes account of such factors as the following:

1. aims of education (which may influence, for instance, curriculum content, the nature of the public examination system, teaching methods and roles of teacher and learner)
2. language policy and the role of the target language within the country (which may have widespread effects, including economic support for language learning; learner and teacher access to speakers of the target language and authentic materials; attitudes to language learning; target language competence as a requirement for access to tertiary education; the use of the target language in tertiary-level instruction; and in the case of English, the preference for, say, British or American English)
3. aims of language education (usually stated in a national syllabus)
4. cultural and religious considerations.

### **Task 2.1**

1. Imagine you have been asked to advise on the selection of a coursebook for one class in your own teaching situation. Draw up a chart for the analysis of contextual and learner factors.
2. Which boxes can you complete easily? Which would require you to collect information? How would you collect this information?

## **3 MATERIALS ANALYSIS**

When the object of the exercise is to select, it is tempting to jump straight into evaluation. In the previous section, however, it was suggested that context analysis and needs analysis are a necessary step before evaluation can take place. This section deals with an equally important pre-evaluation stage: materials analysis.

The distinction between analysis and evaluation is an important one (Graves 2000; Littlejohn 2011; Tomlinson 2013c). At its most basic level, analysis is a process which leads to an objective, verifiable *description*. Evaluation, as the word suggests, involves *the making of judgements* – about, for example, quality or suitability. When we compare a description of a textbook, say, with a description of a context in order to establish in a preliminary way whether that textbook might be suitable for that context, we are evaluating. If time is short – as it usually is – we might

decide to skip analysis or try to combine it with evaluation. If we do, we take a risk because the two processes, though logically related, are different. In its simplest form, analysis seeks to discover what is there (Littlejohn 2011) whereas evaluation is more concerned to discover whether *what one is looking for* is there – and, if it is, to put a value on it. In evaluating we look selectively, with particular expectations in mind, and in looking selectively we may miss the unusual and reject the innovative.

Analysis is most demanding when we are dealing with a textbook, and particularly a textbook package, and one might question whether it is always necessary. After all, textbooks published by well-known publishers and written by well-known authors carry a stamp of authority. Is there really any need to dissect them? Well, yes, there is. It is only by establishing, as a first step, what is there that we can make a judgement about how well that might suit our particular context.

The purpose of textbook analysis, then, is to provide a description, but this description can be at different levels of sophistication. Beyond the most basic level, the concern is to understand what assumptions and beliefs lie beneath the surface and what effects can be anticipated; analysis involves inference and deduction. The process thus becomes progressively more subjective but also more illuminating (Littlejohn 2011), as can be seen in Table 2.1.

The analysis at level 1 could be carried out by looking at what the materials say about themselves (on the back cover, in the introduction), at the information provided in a publisher's catalogue, and by looking quickly through the materials.

**Table 2.1** Textbook analysis at three levels (based on Littlejohn 2011: 185–97)

Level	Focus of analysis	Examples of features to be considered
1	'what is there'	publication date; intended users; type of material; classroom time required; intended context of use; physical aspects, such as durability, components, use of colour; the way the material is divided up across components; how the student's book is organised, and how the learner and teachers are helped to find their way around
2	'what is required of users'	tasks: what the learner has to do; whether their focus will be on form, meaning or both; what cognitive operations will be required; what form of classroom organisation will be involved (e.g. individual work, whole class); what medium will be involved; who will be the source of language or information
3	'what is implied'	selection and sequencing of content (syllabus) and tasks; distribution of information across teacher and student components; reconsideration of information collected at levels 1 and 2

**Components/support for teacher**

What do the materials consist of in addition to the student's book?

- teacher's book
- tests (may also be in student's book, sometimes 'disguised' as 'Review')
- workbook (may also be integrated with student's book or online)
- audio recordings (may be available as CD, packaged with student's book)
- video recordings
- pictorial materials (e.g. flashcards, wallcharts)
- online practice materials
- other.

**Date of publication**

When were the materials published?

Are all the components available?

**Cost**

What does the student's book cost?

What do the other items cost?

**Target learners**

What kind of learners is the material intended for?

- age
- level
- interests.

**Target teaching context**

What kind of teaching situation is the material intended for?

- type of course (e.g. general English, exam-oriented)
- location
- total time required
- lesson length
- syllabus
- self-study.

Figure 2.1 Towards a level 1 materials analysis template

Figure 2.1 contains a first draft of a template that might be used for a level 1 analysis of a coursebook.

**Task 2.2**

1. What would you want to add to or change in the template in Figure 2.1? Remember, the aim is simply to *describe* the material in a preliminary way.
2. Work as a group if possible to try out the questions (with any changes that you have made to it) to analyse *two* sets of materials. Make a note of the time it took you to do this.

3. Did the template bring out the key differences between these materials or would you now want to make any (further) changes to it?

As you will have noticed, the questions require little more than a tick or a short answer and, at least as it stands, the whole procedure should have taken very little time. Appendix 2.1 contains a section of a more elaborate schedule in which the details of a level 1 analysis are recorded.

Following level 1 analysis, the logical next step would seem to be finer-grained analysis, as implied in Littlejohn's (2011) three-level approach. However, an alternative would be to move straight to a form of preliminary evaluation, returning to analysis later. This might even be a necessary economy when a number of course-book packages are being considered for possible adoption.

At level 2, the analyst would need to carry out a more careful examination of extracts from the materials (student's book, teacher's book and ideally other components, if these exist) in order to arrive at a sense of what is envisaged. Littlejohn comments: 'It is precisely in the nature of classroom tasks that materials designers' assumptions about the best route to classroom language learning become clear, and in consequence, teacher and learner roles become defined' (2011: 190).

Such detailed analysis also serves a further purpose:

It is also through an analysis of tasks that we can most effectively test out the various claims made for materials. If, for example, the materials claim to be 'learner-centred' yet we find that by far most of the tasks involve the learners in 'scripted response' and in working with content supplied by the materials, there would appear to be a serious mismatch. Similarly, if the materials claim to promote cognitive work and problem-solving, but we find that this forms a very small part of the 'mental operations' required and that the rest of the tasks involve simple 'repetition', then we would have reason to doubt the accuracy of the claim. (Littlejohn 2011: 190)

The analyses carried out at levels 1 and 2 feed in to the third level of analysis, where the focus is on drawing conclusions regarding such questions as the aims of the materials (the underlying aims may, of course, differ from the stated aims), the anticipated roles of teacher and learners, and the rationale for the selection and ordering of content and tasks. The overall outcome should be that the analyst can reach a general understanding of the philosophy underlying the materials.

#### 4 METHODS OF ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

Three basic methods can be discerned in the literature on textbook evaluation, and these are broadly applicable to the evaluation of any materials for teaching-learning. For convenience, these will be referred to as *the impressionistic method*, *the checklist method* and *the in-depth method*. As we shall see, however, certain proposals cut across these categories and for this reason the terms are not entirely satisfactory.

#### 4.1 The impressionistic method

Impressionistic analysis is concerned to obtain a general impression of the material. As Cunningsworth's (1995: 1) term 'impressionistic overview' suggests, one form of this is wide-ranging but relatively superficial. In the case of global textbooks, that is, textbooks intended for the international market, such an overview typically involves glancing at the publisher's 'blurb', that is, the brief description of the book on the back cover, and at the contents page (for an indication of the syllabus type and coverage), and then skimming through the book looking at organisation, topics, layout and visuals. This kind of overview, which equates roughly to Littlejohn's analysis level 1, is of course inadequate if it constitutes the sole basis for textbook evaluation and selection.

It is also possible to gain an impression of a book by looking rather more carefully at representative features, such as the design of a unit or lesson, or more specific features, such as the treatment of particular language elements (Cunningsworth 1995: 2) or, through analysis of exercises, for instance, the author's view of learning (Hutchinson 1987). Johnson (1986: 55) suggests a combined approach which starts with the kind of 'guided browsing' described above but which is followed by both analysis of a single unit and examination of the treatment of the language skills across the book as a whole. It will be clear from these examples that the distinction between 'impressionistic' and 'in-depth' methods is not as neat as it might be.

#### 4.2 The checklist method

Like the impressionistic method, the checklist method is not a watertight category. However, in that it contrasts *system* (and therefore ostensible *objectivity*) with *impression* (and implicitly *subjectivity*), it seems appropriate to deal with it separately.

In its most literal sense, a checklist consists of a list of items which is 'referred to for comparison, identification or verification' (*Collins English Dictionary* 1992), the items being 'checked off' (or ticked) once their presence has been confirmed. Shopping lists and packing lists are checklists in this sense. The *use* of checklists for specific evaluation purposes is discussed later in this chapter and in the next. Here we deal briefly with their advantages and limitations.

Compared with the most obvious alternatives, impressionistic evaluation involving dipping into a book and in-depth evaluation based on close analysis of features or sections, the checklist has at least four advantages:

1. It is *systematic*, ensuring that all elements that are deemed to be important are considered.
2. It is *cost effective*, permitting a good deal of information to be recorded in a relatively short space of time.
3. The information is recorded in a *convenient* format, allowing for easy comparison between competing sets of material

4. It is *explicit* and, provided the categories are well understood by all involved in the evaluation, offers a common framework for decision-making.

The systematicity of the checklist method is well brought out by Skierso (1991), who quotes Tucker (1978):

A textbook evaluation checklist should consist of a comprehensive set of criteria based on the basic linguistic, psychological, and pedagogical principles underlying modern methods of language learning. These criteria 'should be exhaustive enough to insure assessment of all characteristics of the textbook. And they should be discrete enough to focus attention on one characteristic at a time or on a single group of related characteristics' (Tucker 1978, p. 219). (Skierso 1991: 440)

Checklists also have potential limitations. For instance, the systematicity (or inclusivity) referred to above is only a strength if the criteria or categories of which a checklist is composed are relevant to the specific context in which it is to be used. An 'off-the-shelf' checklist will need tailoring to suit a particular context (Williams 1983; Bahumaid 2008), and this can involve a good deal more than simply deleting checklist items which are inapplicable. Moreover, as Williams (1983) has noted, a checklist cannot be a static phenomenon. The categories in all materials evaluation checklists, like those in other forms of apparently objective evaluation instrument or observation schedule, are as much a reflection of the time at which they were conceived and of the beliefs of their designer as are published materials themselves. And a checklist which only focuses on one component of a coursebook package, such as a student's book, is inevitably limited in terms of what it can reveal about the package as a whole.

### Task 2.3

In Appendix 2.2, you will see two complete checklists (A and E) and extracts from three others. Look at the criteria in A and E.

1. What differences do you notice?
2. Which of these differences seem to you to be a reflection of the time at which the checklist was conceived?

### 4.3 The in-depth method

In-depth techniques go beneath the publisher's and author's claims to look at, for instance, the kind of language description, underlying assumptions about learning or values on which the materials are based or, in a broader sense, whether the materials seem likely to live up to the claims that are being made for them (see Littlejohn's Levels 2 and 3 in Table 2.1). As indicated in an earlier section, procedures recommended include a focus on specific features (Cunningsworth 1995), close analysis of one or more extracts (Hutchinson 1987), or thorough examination of two or more units using predetermined questions (Johnson 1986; McDonough et al. 2013).

While such techniques have the virtue of ensuring that the selection process is a more considered affair, they may also have certain disadvantages:

1. *Representativeness of samples*: the samples (e.g. exercises, lessons, units) selected for analysis may not be representative of the book as a whole, and this may distort any judgement.
2. *Partiality*: because in-depth analysis is normally narrowly focused (being based either on a particular section of the material or one or more threads running through it) it gives only a partial insight into what the material offers.
3. *Time and expertise required*: some proposals for in-depth evaluation would involve a good deal of time; others require expert knowledge (e.g. of language description) that is not available. Though it can be argued that the time spent on evaluation is well spent if a potentially unsuitable textbook is rejected, there may be more economical ways of arriving at this decision.

This section has suggested that used in isolation each of these methods has its limitations as well as its specific uses. This argues for an integrated approach in which evaluative purpose dictates the method selected at any one time. Such an approach would involve at least two stages. The first of these, here referred to as **first-glance evaluation**, serves to eliminate from further consideration any obviously unsuitable materials. As Figure 2.2 indicates, two further stages, involving close evaluation, may be needed before a final selection can be made.

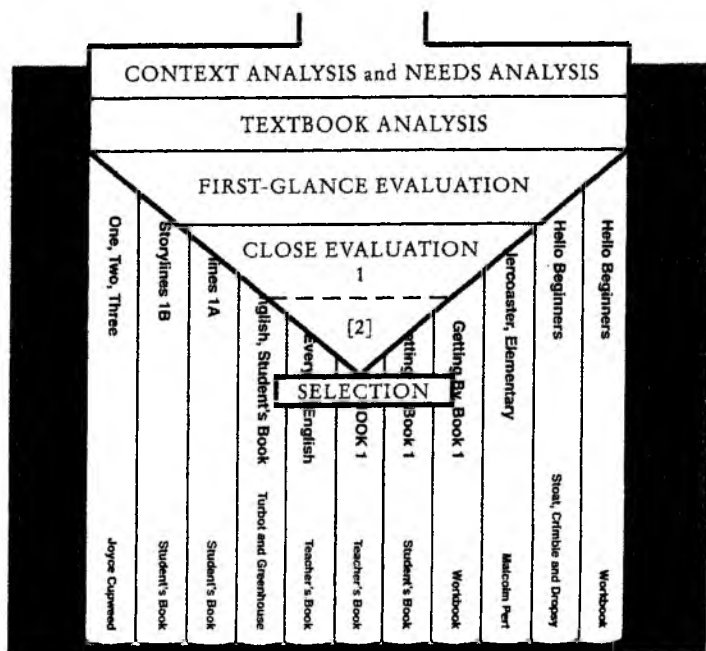


Figure 2.2 An approach to materials evaluation for adoption

## 5 FIRST-GLANCE EVALUATION

### 5.1 The argument for first-glance evaluation

Faced with the need to choose a new coursebook from a number of competing possibilities, we are tempted to make economies. And this might have the fairly obvious consequence that we make a decision that we subsequently regret. An earlier section of this chapter has suggested that evaluation ought to be preceded by analysis, but three-level analysis of the kind recommended by Littlejohn (2011) is not always feasible. Picture this. Spread out on the table are six piles of material. Each pile contains a student's book and what Grant (1987) has called 'add-ons' – a teacher's book, CD, a workbook and possibly other ancillary materials. If what is at issue is the adoption of a multi-level course (i.e. a series), there may be several students' books, teachers' books, and so on. And instead of six sets of material there might be eight or ten. It would take hours to go carefully through even one or two piles.

The alternative, however, is not to look through everything with precisely the same degree of care, but to make an initial selection of those materials which pass the test of what we will call **first-glance evaluation** (McGrath 2002), and then submit these to closer examination. When the materials to be selected will be used by more than one teacher it is obviously desirable if all those who will be affected have an opportunity to participate in this process. The place of first-glance evaluation in the process leading to materials selection is shown in Figure 2.3.

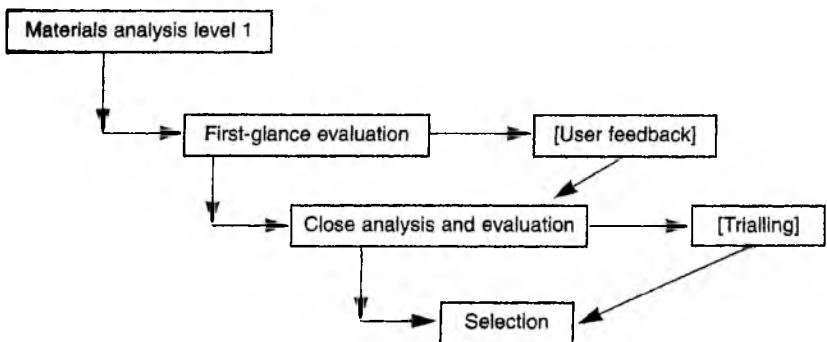


Figure 2.3 From analysis to selection

### 5.2 Criteria for first-glance evaluation

Close examination of similar suggestions by other writers reveals that it is not always easy to draw a clear line between first-glance evaluation and close evaluation. Grant's CATALYST test for 'initial evaluation', for example, comprises 'the eight



criteria by which we can decide whether a textbook is suitable for our classroom' (1987: 119). The criteria are laid out in the form of the acronym CATALYST – the textbook, like a chemical catalyst, being seen as something which brings about change:

- C Communicative?
  - A Aims?
  - T Teachability?
  - A Available add-ons?
  - L Level?
  - Y Your impression?
  - S Student interest?
  - T Tried and tested?
- (Grant 1987: 119)

Leaving aside the question of contrivance, Grant's list contains two criteria that would be difficult to apply without close examination of the materials: *Communicative?* (glossed on p. 119 as 'Is the textbook communicative? Will the students be able to use the language to communicate as a result of using the book?') and *Teachability?* ('Does the course seem teachable? Does it seem reasonably easy to use, well organised, easy to find your way around? (1987: 119)).

A similar point can be made about the much more extensive set of prompts suggested by McDonough et al. (2013). Adopting a more structured approach, they distinguish between 'external' and 'internal' evaluation, using the terms almost literally. External evaluation, which constitutes a form of initial evaluation, is based on what can be gleaned from the cover of a book, including the back cover, where the publisher's blurb is typically found, the introduction and the table of contents. Materials which pass this test are then subjected to internal evaluation, that is, careful scrutiny of the lesson materials.

External evaluation, as discussed by McDonough et al., should yield information on the following:

- intended audience
- proficiency level
- context of use (i.e. general English vs ESP)
- organisation of teaching material (time taken to cover units/lessons)
- the views of the author(s) on language and methodology and the relationship between language, the learning process and the learner.

Other aspects of the materials that can be established at this stage are as follows:

- whether materials are designed as a main course or as supplement to a main course
- whether there is a teacher's book and if it is in print/available locally
- whether a vocabulary list is included
- what kind of visuals are included and what use is made of these

- whether layout and presentation are clear
- whether there is any cultural bias or cultural specificity
- whether there is any bias in relation to the presentation of minority groups and/or women, and whether a particular country/society is presented in a balanced way
- the cost of any digital components and whether they are an integral part of the package
- whether there are tests and, if so, the suitability of these.

(Based on McDonough et al. 2013: 55–8)

While this seems a more principled approach to preliminary analysis and evaluation than that proposed by Grant, it also makes demands on a scale that is perhaps out of proportion to the purpose. First-glance evaluation should be a matter of establishing whether there is a rough match between learning context and needs on the one hand and materials on the other; anything beyond that is best incorporated within a more detailed analysis. In McDonough et al.'s (2013) list, criteria relating to the views of the author(s), the use made of visuals, and bias, for instance, all seem to belong more appropriately to a more systematic or in-depth evaluation; and even within the external/internal framework advocated by these authors the latter two categories fall on the wrong side of the line.

### 5.3 A procedure for first-glance evaluation

For the purposes of first-glance evaluation, what is needed is an instrument which is effective in distinguishing between materials which are potentially suitable and clearly unsuitable but which can also be administered quickly. The example checklist in Figure 2.4 has been designed with these purposes in mind.

The relationship between this checklist and that intended for level 1 analysis (Figure 2.1) will be obvious. Descriptive information (e.g. the cost of the materials to students or institution, the availability of tests, and assumptions about the teaching time needed) recorded at the analysis stage now serves to answer evaluative questions framed with a particular context in mind.

In the checklist in Figure 2.4 (see p. 38), the specific criteria within each area have been selected so that they can be assessed without lengthy examination of the material. Provided that the evaluator has the necessary information (i.e. context, needs and level 1 analyses have been carried out) and samples of the material are to hand, the whole process need take no more than ten minutes. (Remember that the purpose at this stage is simply to filter out obviously unsuitable materials, not to make a final choice.)

#### Task 2.4K

1. How appropriate are the criteria listed in Figure 2.4 for your own teaching situation? Would you want to delete certain items? Add any items?
2. Do you think the Yes/No format of the checklist is appropriate?

<b>Practical considerations</b>	
all components available?	Y/N
affordable?	Y/N
multi-level (i.e. series)?	Y/N
<b>Support for teaching and learning</b>	
additional components:	
– teacher's book?	Y/N
– tests?	Y/N
– audio materials?	Y/N
suitable for self-study?	Y/N
<b>Context relevance</b>	
suitable for course:	
– length of course?	Y/N
– aims of course?	Y/N
– syllabus?	Y/N
– exam?	Y/N
suitable for learners:	
– age?	Y/N
– level?	Y/N
– cultural background?	Y/N
suitable for teachers:	
– required resources (e.g. CD player) available?	Y/N
– evidence of suitability (e.g. piloted in local context?)	Y/N
<b>Likely appeal to learners</b>	
layout?	Y/N
visuals?	Y/N
topics?	Y/N
suitable over medium term (i.e. unlikely to date)?	Y/N

Figure 2.4 Example of a checklist for first-glance evaluation

3. If you were using this checklist, or something similar, how would you decide which materials to reject from further consideration?
4. Once you have reached a decision on questions 1–3, read the Commentary in the 'Tasks: Keys and Commentaries' section, which offers a rationale for the specific criteria included in the checklist. Additional criteria that may be considered important in particular situations are italicised.

Deciding how much importance to attach to individual criteria is a matter of judgement. If a criterion is not important for a particular context, it should not be

included in first-glance evaluation (or any evaluation for that matter); nevertheless, certain items may still be more important than others. With this in mind, it is conceivable that a set of materials be judged unsatisfactory in respect of one or more criteria, yet still be felt to merit closer examination. However, any argument among evaluators about whether materials meet or do not meet criteria may well point to a problem with the criteria themselves.

The issue of how strictly to enforce criteria is also relevant at the higher level of *categories* of criteria.

In the flowchart in Figure 2.5 the categories (headings) from Figure 2.4 have been prioritised as part of a procedure for first-glance evaluation. As will be clear, the

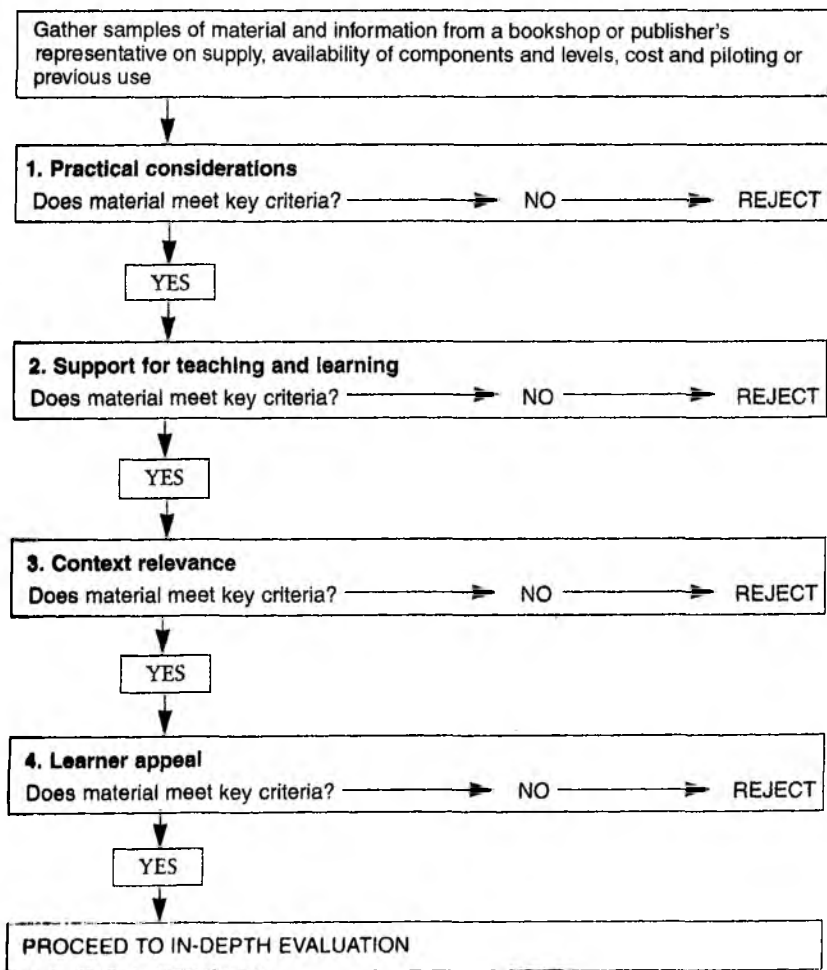


Figure 2.5 A procedure for first-glance evaluation

implication is that if the material under consideration does not meet the key criteria in a category (whatever those are), it is immediately discarded.

In deciding on a procedure for first-glance evaluation, a key consideration is economy. The intention is to eliminate any obviously unsuitable materials without spending any more time on these than is absolutely necessary. First-glance evaluation is meant to function as a broad filter. To defer a decision about materials that 'fail' on one of these general categories (or any alternative categories that you might prefer) is simply to make more work for another day. The same can be said for less decisive ways of judging the material: to use a numbered or descriptive scale rather than *Yes/No* is a hindrance rather than a help to decision-making. For this whole process to be valid, however, the general categories must be accepted as essential by (and ideally suggested by) all those involved in the evaluation.

The reasons for the order adopted in the flowchart are as follows: (1) practicality: if materials are not affordable, there is no point in considering them any further; this criterion can also be evaluated quickly and any obviously unsuitable materials rejected without further ado; (2) materials must facilitate the work of a teacher; again, a criterion that can be evaluated quickly; (3) resourceful teachers can compensate for some weaknesses, but if the materials fail on too many items of the relevance test, then they have to go; note that more judgement is involved at this stage than the two previous stages; and (4) last but not least, the learner test – which requires experience or empathy or the elicitation of learners' opinions, and is therefore more demanding. Though differences in circumstances will mean that individual evaluators or institutions might attach different levels of importance to these four general categories – and perhaps for this reason therefore order them differently – there can be little doubt that all should figure in first-glance evaluation.

If the overall approach and the categories are agreed, two or three more steps remain to be taken. The first is to determine the criteria within each category (and those in Figure 2.4 might serve as a starting point). It is then necessary to decide whether all of these are essential (note the word 'key' in the flowchart) or whether some are simply desirable. If these decisions are being taken by a team, this will probably lead to interesting discussions about priorities, and might ultimately lead to the conclusion that all the criteria used in first-glance evaluation should be essential.

## REFLECTION, DISCUSSION, ACTION

- Some materials selection decisions have serious implications – for instance, because of the cost of the materials or their importance to teachers and learners. Where this is the case, do you agree that some kind of preliminary evaluation of materials (i.e. first-glance evaluation) is desirable before looking at them in detail (close evaluation)? Have you had any experience of this kind of two-stage evaluation? If so, what form did the first stage take and how useful was it?

- Look at Figure 2.5 and the commentary on this. What do you think about the categories, the format, and the rationale presented for this approach to first-glance evaluation? Which criteria would you include in each category?
- If you disagree with the approach suggested in the flowchart or any of its features, how would you approach first-glance evaluation? You may wish to refer to other ideas mentioned in this chapter or design your own flowchart.

## REVIEW AND PREVIEW

Deciding which of a number of sets of materials is 'best' cannot, of course, be answered in the abstract. But if we ask instead, 'Which would be the most suitable?' we still need some terms of reference before we can venture an answer: suitable for what purpose? for whom? in what situation? and judged by what criteria?

This chapter has outlined the first steps in a systematic approach to armchair evaluation for materials selection. Step 1 involves a form of stocktaking: the consideration of relevant contextual factors and, if any aspect of the context is unfamiliar, the gathering of additional information. This is followed by analysis of the materials. The methods used for this purpose have been characterised here as impressionistic, checklist and in-depth. As this characterisation implies, analysis can take place on a number of levels. The resulting description is then compared with the needs identified in the target situation to establish the potential suitability of the materials. This might be an extremely lengthy process if several sets of materials are being considered. The concept of first-glance evaluation, when a specially designed checklist is used to eliminate from further consideration any obviously unsuitable materials, has therefore been proposed to reduce the time required at the evaluation stage.

Chapter 3 suggests how the final decision might be reached.

## FURTHER READING

**Introductory reading on coursebook evaluation:** Grant (1987), Sheldon (1988), Cunningsworth (1995: ch. 1).

**Materials analysis, including task analysis:** Ellis (2011), Littlejohn (2011).

# Choosing materials: close evaluation

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**From first-glance evaluation to close evaluation – Close evaluation using a checklist:** approaches to checklist design; categories; criteria; determining format; trialling and revising checklists – **In-depth analysis – Collaborative evaluation – Making the final decision**

## 1 FROM FIRST-GLANCE EVALUATION TO CLOSE EVALUATION

As we have seen in previous chapters, materials – for instance, exercises, texts or tests, in print, recorded or online – can aid learning and teaching in a variety of ways. The extent to which they function as aids (that is, how effective they actually are) will partly depend on how they are used by teachers and learners, but it also depends on the care with which they are chosen. This point applies to all teaching materials, but it is crucially important when it comes to coursebooks.

Because the selection of a coursebook package can have such a significant impact on learners and teachers the decision-making process needs to be careful and systematic. Dudley-Evans and St John compare selecting materials to selecting a partner: both ‘involve making choices and decisions. To make good choices we need to have good criteria on which to base our decisions’ (1998: 173). The suggestion made in Chapter 2 was that during a preliminary armchair evaluation stage (first-glance evaluation), the most unsuitable materials are weeded out. If reliable user reports are available on any of the remaining sets of materials, this might permit more of these to be eliminated from further consideration. The remaining materials can then be examined in more detail during a second armchair evaluation stage (close evaluation). Trialling, if this is possible, will then be a final check on the suitability of materials provisionally selected.

If user reports are unavailable and trialling is impossible, then close evaluation takes on even more importance. In this chapter, two methods of close evaluation will be discussed. A checklist will again be proposed as the most effective way of gathering comparable data systematically; but the contribution of in depth analysis, as a supplement to a checklist, will also be considered.

## 2 CLOSE EVALUATION USING A CHECKLIST

### 2.1 Approaches to checklist design

Where close evaluation is to be based on a checklist there are probably three basic options, each of which might be combined with one or more of the others. These are set out in Task 3.1.

#### Task 3.1

1. What do you see as the pros and cons of each of these options?
  - (a) *Borrow and adapt*: look at all the checklists available, published or otherwise. Choose the one that looks most suitable. Make any modifications to content or format that seem necessary.
  - (b) *Originate*: brainstorm ideas for a checklist (content and format).
  - (c) *Research*: find out what end users (teachers and learners) consider to be important.
2. Can you think of any other possible approaches?

We will return to these questions towards the end of the chapter.

Whichever option one adopts, there is a need to work through a number of stages. These relate to the choice of evaluation criteria – and perhaps the grouping and ordering of these, the way in which criteria are formulated (the prompts), and the way the evaluator is required to respond to the prompts (the response format).

Figure 3.1 illustrates one way of sequencing these steps. As can be seen, it assumes that individual criteria will be grouped into broader categories.

- Step 1 Decide categories within which criteria will be organised (see section 2.2).
- Step 2 Decide criteria and formulation of these within each category (see section 2.3).
- Step 3 Decide overall format of checklist (see section 2.4).
- Step 4 Decide ordering of categories and criteria within these (see section 2.4).
- Step 5 Decide format of responses (see section 2.4).

**Figure 3.1** Possible steps in the design of a checklist for close evaluation of materials

### 2.2 Categories

Let us begin, then, by thinking about categories. Grant states:

the perfect textbook does not exist, but the best book available for you and your students certainly does. Such a book should satisfy three conditions:



- It should suit the needs, interests and abilities of your students.
- It should suit *you*. (The best book in the world won't work in your classroom if you have good reasons for disliking it.)
- The textbook must meet the needs of official public teaching syllabuses or examinations.

(Grant 1987: 118)

The three conditions are then amplified in the form of three checklists, each containing ten questions.

Task 3.2 encourages you to do some preliminary thinking about categories, criteria and format for close evaluation. The design process as a whole is then discussed in more detail.

### Task 3.2K

Imagine that you have decided to devise your own checklist in order to assess the suitability of a book for your own use with a class of students you know well in a situation where there is an official syllabus and/or where students will take a public examination at the end of the year. You feel that Grant's approach, focusing on the student, the teacher and the context, offers a logical starting point.

1. Draft four items in each of the following categories (twelve items in all):

- (a) suitability for students
- (b) suitability for teacher
- (c) suitability for situation.

You will need to think about whether the items should be in the form of questions or statements, and what kind of response would be appropriate.

2. Appendix 3.1 contains extracts from Grant's three-part questionnaire. Compare the items you have devised with those of Grant – how similar are they? Do you think all Grant's questions are appropriate to the categories in which they appear? What further questions might you want to ask in each of these categories?
3. What do you think about the format of Grant's questionnaire (e.g. number of categories; number of questions (ten per section); response format; scoring system)?
4. Discuss your answers.
5. Look at the commentary on this task in the 'Tasks: Keys and Commentaries' section. Did you come to the same conclusions?

While it is obviously possible to question the detail of Grant's checklist, there is much to be said in favour of his starting point: the need to consider suitability for students, teacher and situation.

What is clear from examination of the more recent published checklists and other sources (see 'Further Reading' at the end of this chapter) is that while there is

considerable variation as to detailed criteria and the terms used to describe criteria, there is some agreement concerning the broad areas of focus or categories within which criteria can be grouped. Although the categories are not always made explicit, checklists typically take account of (1) contextual constraints; (2) the needs of learners; and (3) the needs of teachers, that is, the three categories in Grant's checklist. Garinger's (2002) four-category framework includes the first of these ('program and course'), but is otherwise an exception, the other three categories being skills, exercises and activities, and practical concerns. Richards (2001c) has five categories: the first three correspond to those of Grant (programme factors, teacher factors and learner factors – reflecting respectively the concerns of the programme, teachers and learners); category four relates to content and organisation; and category five to pedagogical factors (method and the design of activities and exercise-types).

Most published checklists use some form of categorisation (see the extracts in Appendix 2.2). In the more recent examples in Appendix 3.2, from Shave (2010), McDonough et al. (2013) and Harmer (2015), the authors simply indicated a range of factors that might be considered in relation to each of the criteria listed and these have been set out in the form of category-criteria to make comparison easier.

### Task 3.3

1. Look at the criteria in each of the lists in Appendix 3.2. Which of these are analysis questions (capable of being answered 'Yes' or 'No') rather than evaluation questions? Which could be included in first-glance evaluation?
2. What similarities can you see between the three lists in Appendix 3.2?
3. Do you see any value in grouping criteria into categories?
4. What categories, if any, would you include in your own checklist for close materials evaluation? You may wish to look at the examples in Appendices 2.2 and 3.1 as well as those in Appendix 3.2 before giving an answer.

## 2.3 Criteria

The process of generating and grouping criteria is not simply a matter of (1) deciding categories; and (2) deciding criteria – or vice versa. The reality is rather messier. Brainstorming often throws up criteria alongside general categories and categories may in turn suggest criteria. This sorting process is important, however, because once a tentative decision has been reached concerning categories, the comprehensiveness and relevance of the specific criteria listed under these can more easily be assessed.

### 2.3.1 Universal vs specific criteria

Although there is, as we have seen, a degree of consensus as to the categories to be included in a checklist for textbook evaluation, there is far more variation at the level of criteria.

Much of the discussion on materials evaluation is posited on the assumption that the evaluator has in mind fairly well-defined end users (learners, teacher(s)) and context. As a result, discussions of evaluation criteria tend to be – and where materials selection is involved need to be – context related. Important though this emphasis is, it is helpful to make a distinction between what Ur (1996) has termed *general* criteria and Tomlinson (2013c) *universal* criteria (i.e. the essential features of any good teaching–learning material) on the one hand and *local* (or context-related) criteria on the other.

### Task 3.4

Ur gives as examples of general criteria: ‘clear layout and print’ and ‘provide periodic review or test sections’ (1996: 184). Examples in Tomlinson include: ‘engage the learners affectively’ and ‘cater for different learning styles’ (2013c: 37).

The list of criteria below draws on the ideas of Singaporean teachers who were asked what they saw as ‘the best materials’.

1. Write ‘U’ next to those which you see as universal criteria and ‘L’ next to those which for you are local. Put a question mark next to any which you feel could be in either category.
  - a. Have clear objectives
  - b. Are age-appropriate
  - c. Encourage collaborative learning
  - d. Meet curriculum objectives
  - e. Are progressive (in terms of difficulty, and increasing independence)
  - f. Promote engagement
  - g. Contain varied activities
  - h. Are adaptable/flexible
  - i. Have clear, concise instructions
  - j. Generate interest (e.g. through visual appeal, fun activities)
  - k. Have educational value
  - l. Provide an appropriate level of support and challenge (differentiation)
  - m. Use local contexts/are related to learners’ experience

(McGrath 2012)
2. What other universal criteria can you think of, that is, features that you associate with all good materials? (You may find it helpful to think about what you most liked about the materials you used as a language learner or the materials you have most enjoyed teaching with.)

Local criteria can be thought of as a subset of *specific* criteria. Tomlinson (2013c) suggests four categories of specific criteria:

- *Media-specific* criteria: that is, those which relate to the particular medium used. In reference to audio-recorded material, for instance, one might consider the audibility of the recording.
- *Content-specific* criteria: that is, those which relate to the nature of the material, such as the choice of topics, situations or language in a business English book or the texts included and skills covered in a book focusing on the development of reading skills.
- *Age-specific* criteria: that is, the suitability of the material (e.g. visuals, cognitive challenge) for the age group for which it is intended.
- *Local criteria*: that is, the appropriateness of the material for the particular environment in which it is to be used (see the list of institutional, programme and sociopolitical factors in Chapter 2).

In the Singaporean teachers' list we thus find reference to a number of local criteria but also concern that materials be age appropriate, and Huang (2010) found that the Taiwanese teachers in her survey had both local requirements and media-specific expectations.

If a group of teachers were faced with the task of drawing up a list of criteria to evaluate material of a particular kind, they would almost certainly come up with both universal criteria and specific criteria in each of the categories suggested by Tomlinson, especially the last. The value of making these categories explicit is that it prompts us to draw up sets of criteria to ensure that each relevant category is systematically considered.

Clarifying for ourselves the distinction between universal criteria and specific criteria on the one hand and essential and desirable characteristics on the other can serve two purposes. The universal/specific distinction leads to the identification of a set of 'core' criteria which can be applied irrespective of evaluation method in any situation; the essential/desirable distinction establishes a principled basis for rejection (if essential features are lacking, the material should almost certainly be rejected, however many desirable features it contains).

### 2.3.2 Formulating criteria

Although checklist criteria can take the form of questions, as in the examples from Grant (1987), they are most frequently in statement form. The wording of both questions and statements merits careful consideration, as we shall see.

#### *Transparency of criteria*

One problem with many checklists is that they tend to take for granted understanding of certain concepts which may be unfamiliar to or only partially understood by potential teacher-users.

### Task 3.5

1. Look through the extracts below from published checklists. Which terms might not be understood by teachers in your teaching context?
2. How would you explain these terms or rephrase them so that they were clearer?

- appropriate sequencing of grammatical patterns
- adequacy of drill model and pattern displays (i.e. clarity of instructions for learner)

(Tucker 1975)

- sentence length reasonable for students of that level
- vocabulary load (number of new words in each lesson) reasonable

(Daoud and Celce-Murcia 1979)

- based on a contrastive analysis of English and L1 sound systems
- gives practice in controlled composition in the early stages

(Williams 1983)

- spiral approach
- enough communicative activities

(Grant 1987)

- attention to grammatical accuracy
- balance of language skills (enough attention to reading and writing)

(Matthews 1991)

- enough roughly tuned input
- *practice of individual skills integrated into practice of other skills*

(Harmer 1991b)

- plenty of authentic language
- encourages learners to develop their own learning strategies

(Ur 1996)

- wide range of cognitive skills included
- textbook cost-effective

(Garinger 2002)

The best way to check whether criteria work in the way they were intended to is, of course, to try them out, to see how transparent they really are. If two evaluators give the same materials very different scores for the same criterion, then you have a problem.

Task 3.6 focuses on the concept of communicativeness, but it will probably also involve you in considering allied concepts such as authenticity and integration. There is also the little question of what we mean by 'enough'.

### Task 3.6

One of the criteria in Grant (1987) is 'enough communicative activities'.

1. Look at the extracts in Appendix 3.3 from a variety of published materials. Which of the tasks are more/less 'communicative'?
2. Do you think all activities can be or should be communicative?
3. How much is 'enough'?

This is not the place for a detailed discussion of the principles of communicative language teaching. However, most theorists and practitioners would probably agree on the following.

In communicative language teaching:

- there is attention to meaning and use as well as language form
- purposeful communication between learners is encouraged (and information-gap and opinion-gap tasks are ways of providing for this)
- the classroom is seen as a place where learners rehearse (by doing authentic tasks on authentic texts) for real-world target language use
- learners should have opportunities to express their own meanings in their own words
- the term 'communicative' does not only apply to speaking activities.

**Task 3.6** is not meant to imply that communicativeness is something that teachers should necessarily be looking for in a coursebook, or that each and every text or task should be communicative. In relation to this and any other criterion, context sensitivity is important. Moreover, while we must keep faith with our beliefs in the sense that we do not simply surrender to the requirements and constraints of the situation in which we find ourselves, compromise will often be necessary between the desirable and the possible. Rossner (1988), whose paper on 'Materials for communicative language teaching and learning' includes an analysis of extracts from a number of randomly selected coursebooks, supplementary materials and resource books, comments shrewdly:

Interestingly, teachers have themselves used terms like *communicative* less and less frequently over the last five years. This may be because they view as unfortunate the implications of the communicative movement; namely, that what went before or what goes on outside it was or is not 'communicative'; that only work that can be classified as *communicative* in Breen and Candlin's (1980) sense of the term is useful; or because they find the demands implicit in full adoption of the approach impossible to meet. Rather, teachers have become accustomed to seeing teaching/learning as a process in which the focus must shift along a continuum . . . (1988: 141)

Whether it is true that teachers use the term 'communicative' less than they did (and Rossner is referring to the period from the early 1980s) may depend on the circles in which one moves. What is certain is that the pendulum swing that was evident

in the 1970s has now been corrected, and teachers are in general more aware of the need to locate their teaching at points along a form-focused/communication-focused continuum that suit their learners' needs.

More broadly, as far as the more general issue of formulating criteria is concerned, there is also a problem with non-specific quantitative terms like 'sufficient', 'adequate', 'enough' or 'plenty of', since each evaluator may have his or her own (subjective) view of what these mean. Tomlinson (2013c) rightly sees this whole issue as one of reliability: it is important that every evaluator understand a criterion in the same way.

### *Dated criteria*

As the last two tasks will have demonstrated, it is important to ensure that checklist criteria are transparent to those who will use them. Another problem with published checklists, as noted in the last chapter, is that they date almost as fast as materials. We expect materials to reflect new insights into language description, theories of learning and teaching, and changes in society. These changes should also be reflected in the content of checklists. If we are using a checklist designed by someone else or using someone else's checklist as the basis for our own design, we need to be able to 'see through' the criteria to the assumptions that underlie them. Where they appear to be out of date or do not match our own beliefs, we need to make the necessary changes.

## **Task 3.7**

1. Go back to the extracts in Task 3.5. Pick out examples of three criteria in those extracts which reflect views on language, learning or teaching that differ from your own.
2. What modifications would you make to these items or what alternative items would you include to reflect your own views?

### *Double trouble*

One of the items in Grant's (1987) checklist is: 'Does it achieve an acceptable balance between the relevant language skills, and integrate them so that work in one skill area helps the others?' It is not difficult to see that there are two questions here, nor that there are problems with both questions.

The first question is: 'Does it achieve an acceptable balance between the relevant language skills?' This assumes that evaluators within a specific context will agree on the 'relevant' language skills, but it also relies on them to have a similar understanding of 'acceptable balance' (see the discussion of 'Transparency', above).

The second question asks if there is provision for integrated skills work 'so that work in one skill area helps the others'. It is not entirely clear to me what 'helps' means here. Although I would not myself question the assumption that integrated skills work is desirable, I would see this as a complement to work on single skills (see 'Methodological assumptions', below). Leaving aside these issues of criterion

formulation, however, what is perfectly obvious is that double questions pose a problem for the evaluator, especially when the answers to the two questions are different.

### *Methodological assumptions*

Littlejohn argues that one potential problem with criteria is that they ‘typically . . . contain implicit assumptions about what “desirable” materials should look like’ (2011: 181) – and therefore, we might add, how learners learn or how teaching should be conducted. His critique of specific criteria in the checklists of Byrd (2001) and Garinger (2002) illustrates these concerns:

Thus we have evaluative questions such as ‘Are the exercises balanced in their format, containing both controlled and free practice?’ (Garinger 2002); and ‘Do illustrations create a favourable atmosphere for practice in reading and spelling depicting realism and action?’ (Byrd 2001: 425). Each of these areas, however, will be debatable: a balance of free and controlled practice will depend on your own view of how a second language is best acquired; and the relationship between a ‘favourable atmosphere’ and the depiction of ‘realism and action’ is likely to vary depending on the reader/viewer. (Littlejohn 2011: 181)

‘The principal problem’ for Littlejohn, however, ‘is that most of these evaluative tools are presented as checklists which do not offer the teacher-analyst much assistance in how to ascertain if a particular feature is present or absent’ (2011: 181–2); and this provides the basis for his advocacy of materials *analysis* (see Chapter 2, section 3).

While the central point, that criteria should ideally be methodologically neutral, is an important one, Littlejohn’s comments are also based on beliefs and assumptions. One is the belief that materials analysis should be separate from and precede materials evaluation – a belief which I happen to share, but a belief nonetheless. A second is that any judgement should be based on evidence. A third, much more dubious, is that materials evaluation (as opposed to materials analysis) can be a value-free undertaking. The reality is that evaluation *is* value-laden, but this will be less of a problem if evaluators (1) look critically at the criteria formulated by others; (2) are aware of their own values and how these might influence their judgements; and (3) in specifying criteria for use by others first make an effort to investigate the values of these evaluators *and* the values of the ultimate users.

## **2.4 Determining format**

A materials evaluation checklist has to fulfil a number of potentially conflicting functions:

1. provide comprehensive information of the sort that will support and facilitate evaluation
2. and comparison



3. while making as few demands on the evaluator as possible (e.g. be easily understandable; easy/quick to complete)
4. lead to the selection of materials which are appropriate for the context (in the fullest sense, including suitability for the teachers who will use them)
5. but also contribute to the *advancement* of learning and teaching in that context.

As will be clear, there is likely to be a tension between breadth and depth, between informativity and economy, between the needs of the evaluator and the needs of the checklist designer – if these are different people – and between the forces of conservatism and innovation. Though this last issue (point 5) poses a number of difficulties that can probably only be tackled in the context of a wider developmental process, the other requirements can be largely met through instruments and procedures that minimise the chance of decisions being taken on the basis of individual subjective judgement. Up to this point we have concentrated on the selection and formulation of criteria. We now turn to issues of format.

#### 2.4.1 *Information*

It is probably useful to include at the top of the checklist a section summarising basic information about the book under consideration (see Appendix 2.2 for ideas). This may well have formed part of level 1 analysis and first-glance evaluation.

#### 2.4.2 *Item format and response*

Thereafter, the basic decision to be made is between open-ended questions on the one hand and on the other statements or prompts, the response to which is a tick or a score. Open-ended questions have their advocates, on the grounds that they require more of an investment on the part of the evaluator and are therefore more likely to be answered thoughtfully. However, a checklist in which statements or questions are combined with a numerical response can probably be completed more quickly and the responses (of different evaluators or the same evaluator regarding different books) compared more easily. A basically closed format of this kind can also incorporate space for a comment (see, for example, the extract from Harmer 1991b in Appendix 2.2) which explains and amplifies the response. The additional information generated in this way can be of value if a comparison is made between the contrasting views of different evaluators on specific criteria.

#### 2.4.3 *Sequencing of categories and specific criteria within these*

At some point during considerations of layout, it will be necessary to think about the ordering of items and categories. User convenience and logical interrelationships need to be taken into account, but this is essentially a matter of judgement. The

process of sequencing of criteria within a category may, however, lead to the realisation that certain criteria overlap.

#### 2.4.4 Rating, weighting, scoring

Some checklists (e.g. Tucker 1975; Daoud and Celce-Murcia 1979; Williams 1983; Sheldon 1988; Skierso 1991) include a **rating** scale. Although a *Yes/No* answer format may be appropriate for certain types of question (e.g. those concerning the presence or absence of a particular feature), a rating scale permits qualitative judgements to be made (i.e. a response to the questions *How much? How well?*). Numerical rating scales typically contain three to five points. Scales of five points appear to allow for finer judgements, but there is a strong argument for a four-point scale (rather than three or five), which makes it impossible for the evaluator to choose the non-committal central point.

Hutchinson and Waters warn: 'Note that the highest number of points does not necessarily indicate the most suitable materials, since the points may be concentrated in one area' (1987: 105). They therefore advise: 'Look for the widest spread of desired features and concentrations in the areas you consider most important' (1987: 105).

An alternative approach is to give prominence to specific features by allocating them a higher **weighting** on a designated scale (e.g. 1–3) (Daoud and Celce-Murcia 1979; Williams 1983). This also permits a checklist which has been developed elsewhere to be fine-tuned to the requirements of a particular context. Ur (1996), who – like Tucker (1975) – rather confusingly uses the term 'rating' for what others have called 'weighting', proposes a five-point weighting scale using ticks, question marks and crosses rather than numbers. She has this suggestion to make about deciding weightings:

In deciding on the rating [*sic*] for each item, it might help to ask yourself: if this quality were missing, would I therefore not use this book? If so, then you obviously think the quality essential or very important. If, however, the quality is desirable, but its absence would not necessarily stop you using the book if all the other criteria were fulfilled, then perhaps a single tick [indicating 'fairly important'] may be enough. (1996: 185)

Similarly, Skierso (1991) suggests a three-point scale to indicate 'Absolutely essential' (A), 'Beneficial, preferred' (B) and 'not applicable' (N) or 4, 2 and 0 if a numerical scale is preferred. Czerwionka and Gorokhovsky (2015) emphasise the need to relate the weighting to the requirements of the course for which the materials will be used. Thus, on their five-point scale, 5 = 'ideal for program' and 1 = 'complete mismatch with program'. Appendix 2.2 contains an extract from Williams's checklist, which uses both rating and weighting scales.

If the evaluation is to involve several people, the coordinator of the evaluation can determine how to weight each criterion on the scale, although there is a strong argument for making this a participatory exercise. When one of my former MA students

from Taiwan introduced a checklist into her secondary school, teachers spent several meetings discussing criteria and weightings, but agreed that this was time well spent (K.-M. Liao, personal communication). (See also Skierso 1991; Chambers 1997; Czerwionka and Gorokhovskiy 2015, and section 4.)

The great advantage of quantifying responses in this way is that once the 'score' for each criterion has been calculated by multiplying rating and weighting scales –  $W(\text{eighting}) \times R(\text{ating}) = \text{score}$  – and the scores subtotalled and totalled, it is a simple matter to make comparisons between competing sets of materials both globally and in relation to specific criteria or sets of criteria. Table 3.1 shows an extract from such a comparison.

Table 3.1 Extract from a weighted rating scale for the comparative evaluation of textbooks (partly completed)

Criteria	Series A			Series B	
	W (1–3)	R (1–4)	W × R	R (1–4)	W × R
1. Practical considerations					
– cost	2	3	6	2	4
– durability (cover/binding/paper quality)	2	1	2	3	6
– size of student's book	1				
– teacher's book includes student's book materials	2				
– multi-level (and number of levels)	3				
		Subtotal		Subtotal	

Note: W = predetermined weighting (1–3), R = rating (1–4)

Let us suppose that an institution is looking for a new series of books to replace the ones they have been using, and is comparing just two sets of books, A and B. Let us also suppose that this evaluation is taking place in a context where cost and durability are relatively important for learners and convenience a consideration for teachers. Table 3.1 shows an extract from a partially completed checklist in which these factors have been differentially *weighted* on a scale of 1–3 (where 3 = very important) and the textbooks have been *rated* against a number of criteria on a scale of 1–4 (where 4 indicates an extremely positive judgement).

In this example, two sets of books are being compared (series A and B). This part of the checklist focuses on 'Practical considerations'. The *pre-determined weighting* (W) for 'cost' is 2, indicating that in the view of the evaluator/evaluation team this is an important (but not very important) consideration. The *rating* (R) awarded by the evaluator on this criterion for series A is 3, equivalent to 'good', and the result of multiplying weighting by rating is 6. By comparison, series B did less well on

this criterion, with a final score of 4. However, if we move on to the next criterion, 'durability', we can see that the higher cost of series B is offset, in the opinion of this evaluator, by its superior durability. Working through the other criteria in this section in the same way would give us a subtotal for the section as a whole.

While it would be unwise to assume that this kind of scoring system is inherently more reliable than a purely impressionistic judgement, a clear difference between scores *is* a strong indication that the materials with the higher overall score are likely to be more suitable. Equally important, however, is the fact that the scores for sections relating to language content should also indicate, in a more specific way than an impressionistic judgement and in a clearer way than a verbal response to an open question, which features of the materials are weak and would need supplementation if that particular set of materials were selected. In the Taiwanese example referred to above, this is exactly what happened. Because they had prior knowledge of weaknesses and gaps in the coursebook series that had been selected, teachers were in a position to prepare supplementary materials in readiness for the introduction of the new materials (K.-M. Liao, personal communication).

### Task 3.8

#### EITHER

##### A. Group task

1. Form a group of, say, four to six people. Ideally, group members should be teaching learners of a similar type (age, level, needs) and preferably in the same or a similar context.
2. Devise a checklist which can be used to evaluate competing coursebooks for the kinds of learners/context you have in mind. Since coursebook packages normally include not just a student's book but various add-ons such as teacher's book, DVDs, online practice materials, etc., you should consider whether to include *media-specific* criteria for use with one or more specific components of the package. You may wish to divide up the task among members of the group, but you should all agree on the final checklist.
3. Choose two coursebook packages and use your checklist *individually* to evaluate these. To save time, half of the group could focus on one set of materials and the other half on the other set. It is, however, important that the evaluation be carried out individually, so that judgements can be compared.
4. Compare your findings. Bear in mind that the main focus of this task is to establish how useful the checklist is in enabling you to reach a decision rather than how suitable the materials are judged to be.
5. Evaluate your checklist and consider how it might be improved.
6. Reflect on the value of the process and, in particular, the pros and cons of working as a group.

OR

### **B. Individual/pair task**

1. Form a pair. Ideally, you should both be teaching learners of a similar type (age, level, needs) and preferably in the same or a similar context. If you are not, you will need to brief your partner on the context you have in mind.
2. Choose one textbook package which you are both interested in evaluating.
3. Work *individually* to devise a checklist. Since coursebook packages normally include not just a student's book but various add-ons such as teacher's book, DVDs, online practice materials, etc., you should consider whether to include *media-specific* criteria for use with one or more specific components of the package.
4. Use your own checklist to evaluate the materials.
5. Make a note of what changes you could make to improve your checklist.
6. Use your partner's checklist to evaluate the materials. Make a note of any changes you wish to suggest to his or her checklist.
7. Compare your judgements of the materials.
8. Tell your partner what changes you are thinking of making to your checklist and ask for his or her comments and suggestions.

After you have worked through Task A or Task B, you might like to reconsider the question posed in Task 3.1 (how to go about checklist design). My own answer would be as follows: if teachers other than me are going to use the material, I would first try to find out what matters to learners and teachers (option C – see Appendix 3.4 for possible interview prompts), then add my own ideas (option B), and finally check against published checklists to make sure I have not missed anything important, but also to compare with my own ideas about organisation and format (option A). I would leave option A until last because I do not want to be too influenced by what has been developed for contexts other than my own.

## **2.5 Trialling and revising checklists**

Like questionnaires, an evaluation checklist should ideally be tried out. This applies even if it is to be used only by its designer. A realistic trial would involve the designer (or preferably someone else) using the checklist to evaluate, for example, one coursebook which he or she has used and another with which he or she is unfamiliar. In relation to the known book, this should give a rough indication of whether the checklist captures known strengths and weaknesses – in other words, whether it accords with experience; the unknown book may turn out to have features which are not picked up by the checklist. Evaluating either book may reveal that there are problems with the criteria themselves: that a particular criterion is too wide, for example; that two criteria can be conflated into one; or that a single criterion has

a dual focus. In essence, this is the process outlined in Task 3.8. Following such a trial, the checklist can be revised and offered to other colleagues for individual or group evaluation. This may indicate that further revisions are needed; it may also reveal unexpected differences of opinion within the group of evaluators – differences that can only be resolved through discussion. This whole process is best thought of as exploratory. As Hutchinson and Waters suggest: ‘You should use the materials evaluation process as a means of questioning and developing your own ideas as to what is required’ (1987: 97).

### 3 IN-DEPTH ANALYSIS

Recent years have seen the emergence of packages of materials designed, or so we are led to believe, to provide everything the teacher and learner might need and clear instructions for use. Littlejohn (2011), among others, has suggested that we look inside what he calls the ‘Trojan Horse’ represented by materials to see exactly what we are getting.

Checklists are convenient. However, they can encourage rather superficial judgements. Cunningsworth (1995), who is clearly in favour of checklists, nevertheless also suggests detailed analysis of one or two units and close analysis of the treatment of specific features (his examples being the treatment of the present perfect in English with particular reference to meaning and use; the use of articles; intonation; and discourse features, that is, language above the level of the sentence). This approach is taken further by a number of writers all of whom share an interest in learning and the learner. In a paper entitled ‘What’s underneath?: An interactive view of materials evaluation’, Hutchinson (1987) argues for and exemplifies a kind of close analysis – in this case of a single extract – that affords an insight into the view of language learning on which the materials are based. Candlin and Breen (1987) propose a two-phase approach involving a detailed series of questions. Phase one is designed to shed light on the following:

- (a) the aims and content of the materials
- (b) what they require learners to do
- (c) what they require the teacher to do
- (d) their function as a classroom resource

and thereby permit a judgement as to the *usefulness* of the materials. Phase two focuses on the following:

- (a) learner needs and interests
- (b) learner approaches to language learning
- (c) the teaching–learning approach in the teacher’s own classroom.

The question prompts which form the basis for phase one are summarised in Appendix 3.5A and those for phase two are reproduced in Appendix 3.5B; in the original paper, both sets of prompts are glossed. Taken together, the questions constitute a framework for detailed evaluation with reference to learners’ needs

(questions 1–3 in Appendix 3.5A and questions 19–30 in Appendix 3.5B) and learning style preferences (questions 31–4 in Appendix 3.5B), but also encourage teachers to draw on their own experience of and beliefs about language learning and teaching (questions 7 and 9–11 in Appendix 3.5A) and think in concrete terms about the implications of using the materials for their own role (questions 12–15, and perhaps 8, in Appendix 3.5A).

The authors note that the procedure has been extensively used in workshops on materials evaluation, and it seems likely that in such a setting and with careful scaffolding it would lead to rigorous analysis of the materials in question; offer a framework for future evaluation which is both wide-ranging and searching; and, by virtue of the questions in Parts II and III of Appendix 3.5B, contribute in a broader way to individual and institutional professional development (presumably one of the aims of the workshops).

Although there is nothing about the prompts that makes them intrinsically unsuitable for individual use, the demands they make in terms of detailed analysis and effort means that they are likely to be used on an individual basis only by the most dedicated. There may also be an issue concerning the analytical expertise required. The same point might be made of the second and particularly the third stages in Littlejohn's (2011) framework for textbook analysis.

Examples can help, of course. Lasnier et al.'s (2000) report for the European Commission sets out a series of 'quality indicators' identified in the course of a Socrates/Leonardo project. Each of the nine indicators – Relevance, Transparency, Reliability, Integrity, Practicality, Attractiveness, Flexibility, Awareness, Generativeness – is elaborated through a number of questions (see the extract below); extracts from published language learning materials (for English and other languages), which have been selected as examples of good practice, are then discussed in the light of the indicators.

## RELEVANCE

### Design – characteristics of the target group

What has been done to ensure that the characteristics of the target group have been taken into account?

Have the following characteristics been identified:

- Age group;
- Educational sector, e.g. Secondary School
- Orientation, e.g. general, subject-specific, job-specific . . .

(Lasnier et al. 2000: 16)

The emphasis in this chapter has been on the design of checklists for close evaluation. The justification for this bias is that a carefully designed checklist will in many situations offer the most economical and at the same time most reliable means of reaching a decision concerning the relative suitability of competing textbooks. This is not to deny that other methods may also have a part to play in the evaluative process. In-depth analysis in particular may be used as an alternative to a checklist or in conjunction with a checklist. In institutions where staff are divided as to the value of

evaluation methods, both approaches might be used in parallel by different evaluators and the results compared. In-depth analysis can also be used, as acknowledged above, in cases where checklist-based evaluation has failed to suggest a clear preference.

#### 4 COLLABORATIVE EVALUATION

In most situations, the responsibility for materials evaluation does not have to rest with an individual. Where two or more teachers are to use the same materials, there are advantages in their working together to agree on what they want from materials (Chambers 1997), that is, the criteria by which they will judge, and how to establish the suitability of the materials they are considering using – the approach to be used. This means that the criteria that eventually find their way into the evaluation checklist or other instrument will be explicit, the result of consensus, and – because they have been thoroughly discussed – well understood. Even if teachers are teaching learners at different levels of language proficiency they can still agree on the process by which they will select materials, and if they are teaching in the same context many of the same criteria will apply. Czerwionka and Gorokhovskiy, who surveyed a group of ten teachers one year after a collaborative approach to textbook selection had been implemented, found that seven of the ten ‘strongly believed that the inclusion of a team of teachers facilitated a decision that aligned with the program’ and two of the remaining three thought that the process ‘probably helped’ (2015: 7).

The obvious problem is that anyone who has not been involved in the design of the checklist (and is therefore an ‘outsider’ in a sense) will need some time and help to get ‘inside’ the criteria. Where evaluation is organised in such a way that the materials to be evaluated are shared out and individuals take responsibility for evaluating one or two books it is particularly important that everyone interpret and apply criteria in the same way. It follows that before group evaluation involving ‘outsiders’ takes place the coordinator needs to take everyone through the criteria and allow opportunities for clarification of anything that is unclear. It is also useful to include an element of ‘practice’ in such a briefing session by looking at a book with which everyone is familiar and checking that all would make similar judgements about its key features. A similar procedure should be followed whenever anyone new has to be inducted into an evaluation team.

#### 5 MAKING THE FINAL DECISION

The discussion thus far has perhaps given the impression that if textbook evaluation is carried out carefully, it will inevitably lead to the right result. Ellis (1998) points to the rather uncomfortable fact that it may be difficult to reconcile strengths and weaknesses in the same textbook; and this leads him to quote Sheldon’s observation, ‘coursebook evaluation is fundamentally a subjective, rule-of-thumb activity’ (1988: 245).

To be taken seriously, materials evaluation has to address the questions of validity and reliability – the development of criteria by consensus, especially if end users



are involved, can perhaps overcome the problem of validity, and careful briefing of evaluators may counter the problem of the reliability of evaluator judgements. One problem remains. However carefully and systematically comparative materials evaluation is conducted, it cannot really resolve the problem of choice between competing textbooks which obtain a similar overall rating yet have very different patterns of strengths and weaknesses. This is a rather different point from that raised by Ellis; it is also more important. Coursebook evaluation, as treated here, is not only the evaluation of individual sets of material against criteria, but also the *comparison* of different sets of material against those criteria. Although this process should reveal the particular strengths and weaknesses of each set of materials considered, the primary aim is to use this information to select the most suitable materials for the context and not – at this stage, at least – to agonise over tensions within a specific set of materials. In fact, the weighting of key criteria (see above) may help evaluators to distinguish between significant and less significant weaknesses, within and across the materials under consideration. If this tactic fails to indicate that one coursebook package is more suitable than the other, the final decision has to be made on the basis of instinct, feel or general impression. This may seem a paradoxical abandonment of reason in favour of emotion, and a surrender to the pessimism implicit in Sheldon's position. It is not: on most occasions, reason will be sufficient, and a principled decision will be possible; on others, reason will take us almost to the point of a decision, and whatever decision is finally taken will therefore have been taken largely on rational grounds. There is inevitably a subjective element in textbook selection, but we can seek to minimise this.

## REFLECTION, DISCUSSION, ACTION

- If you use a coursebook in your teaching, what have you learned from this chapter about coursebook selection that could usefully be applied in your situation? If you do not use a coursebook, do you feel that the ideas discussed in this chapter have any relevance for the way you approach materials selection?
- Section 2 of this chapter has suggested a number of key points to bear in mind when designing an evaluation checklist. For instance, criteria should be transparent (understood in the same way by all users of the checklist); and each criterion should refer to only one feature of the materials. Look back through section 2 to add to this list of points. Then create a checklist based on the template in Table 3.2 which you can use to evaluate any materials evaluation checklist, including your own.

Table 3.2 Template for evaluation of materials evaluation checklist

	Yes (✓) No (X)	Comment
All criteria transparent		
All criteria single-feature		

- Use the checklist you have just prepared to look critically at the materials checklist you designed in Task 3.8. Make any changes you feel to be necessary.

## REVIEW AND PREVIEW

Chapter 2 discussed the first of two stages for the evaluation of coursebook packages. This chapter has explored in some detail the second of these stages (close evaluation). Again, systematic evaluation using a checklist offers certain advantages over other approaches, not least in identifying weaknesses in the package selected. However, any checklist needs to be carefully tailored to the needs of learners and the teaching context, and the need for periodic updating recognised. For practical purposes, a checklist which makes use of rating and weighting scales should prove an adequate indicator as to the relative suitability of the materials under consideration and serve to highlight any particular defects or deficiencies. Ideally, the materials should then be trialled, but if this is not possible and the time and expertise are available, there is value in extending the evaluation process into a further stage, involving one of the techniques of in-depth analysis.

Chapter 1 put forward a number of reasons why teaching using a textbook may be desirable as well as, for many teachers, necessary. It also made the point that teachers need to exercise judgement concerning the extent to which and the way in which they use books. Coursebook-*led* teaching, went the argument, cannot be justified; coursebook-*based* teaching can. In the next chapter we begin to look at what coursebook-based teaching might mean in practice.

## FURTHER READING

**Coursebook evaluation and checklists:** numerous checklists have been designed for the systematic evaluation of coursebooks. Of these, by far the most detailed is Skierso (1991). Halliwell (1992) has a chapter on choosing a coursebook for primary-age learners and the Pearson website at [www.pearsonlongman.com/young\\_learners/PDFs/choosing-a-coursebook.pdf](http://www.pearsonlongman.com/young_learners/PDFs/choosing-a-coursebook.pdf) has a short article on coursebook evaluation and Halliwell's checklist. Cunningsworth (1995) contains checklists covering a variety of aspects. The European Commission produced quality criteria that were used to identify examples of good practice in European language learning materials (Lasnier et al. 2000). Teachers' books have also received attention (Coleman 1985; Cunningsworth and Kusel 1991; Skierso 1991; Gearing 1999). Tomlinson (2013c) describes an approach to criteria development and checklist design.

**Checklist comparisons:** checklists are compared in, for example, Riazi (2003) and Mukundan and Abour (2010). Roberts (1996) questions the value of checklist comparison.

**Teachers' own evaluative criteria:** McGrath (2013: ch. 5) discusses teachers' own criteria and surveys a number of textbook evaluation studies.

**Specific analytical-evaluative perspectives:** many studies of coursebooks have taken a specific linguistic perspective, often comparing the language of the coursebook with that of natural communication, as evidenced in corpus data. Studies have also focused on non-linguistic aspects of coursebooks. These include culture and the representation of social groups. McGrath (2013) and Harwood (2010b, 2014b) contain useful surveys of both linguistic and non-linguistic studies.

# Coursebook-based teaching: selection and adaptation

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**Coursebook-based teaching in practice** – **Lesson planning**: four evaluative processes; from objectives to lesson structure – **Selection, deletion and replacement**: relevance; processes and principles – **Adaptation**: defining adaptation; the purpose of adaptation – **Adaptation as addition: the three 'Es'**: extemporisation; extension; exploitation – **Adaptation as change**: foci and forms of change; principles motivating change; a principled approach to adaptation; taking account of learner differences

## 1 COURSEBOOK-BASED TEACHING IN PRACTICE

Chapter 1 put forward a number of reasons why teaching using a textbook may be desirable as well as, for many teachers, necessary. It also made the point that teachers need to exercise judgement concerning the extent to which and the way in which they use books. Coursebook teaching, went the argument, cannot be justified; coursebook-based teaching can. This chapter begins by looking at what coursebook-based teaching might mean in practice.

Here are some reasons why the wrong choice of coursebook has made life difficult for teachers:

*Local cultural taboos meant that I had to leave out whole units.*

*The book was too difficult. So I had a choice between working through everything very slowly and not finishing the book or skipping bits.*

*The students couldn't imagine themselves taking planes to Britain, booking into hotels, all that stuff. It was just too unreal.*

Sheldon lists a number of other problems:

Grammatical explanations in some EFL textbooks (as opposed to reference grammars) often take too much terminological and linguistic knowledge for granted. Some ancillary workbooks force students to adopt microscopic handwriting, and are not meant to be worked in at all. Many books have a density of text or

diagram which is disconcerting to the hapless learner trying to find his/her way round. (1987b: 3)

Dubin and Olshtain (1986) also highlight problems of 'non-compatibility' – when, for example, either a new coursebook has been introduced which is different in its overall aims or skill focus from the official syllabus or when the opposite is the case, a new syllabus has been introduced but a coursebook to go with this is not yet available. There are even worse scenarios, of course, as when the public examinations are incompatible with both syllabus and coursebook.

Where the teacher is under considerable pressure to teach to a specific (exam-oriented) syllabus using a book specially written for that purpose (and there is apparently perfect compatibility between syllabus and book, therefore) it may seem almost irrelevant to think of evaluating the coursebook. This chapter will suggest that evaluation of the coursebook is a necessary aspect of course planning and lesson planning in any situation, including those in which teachers appear to be tightly constrained. **Section 2** distinguishes between four evaluative processes which are involved in lesson planning based on a coursebook. **Section 3** discusses the first two of these (selection, deletion/replacement). **Sections 4–6** deal with materials adaptation, making a distinction between adaptation as addition (**section 5**) and adaptation as change (**section 6**). This sequence, from selection/rejection to adaptation as change, reflects an increasing set of demands on the teacher's expertise and creativity.

## 2 LESSON PLANNING

### 2.1 Four evaluative processes

If the first step in course planning is to establish aims for the course, then the first step in lesson planning is to determine the objectives of the lesson. When the lesson is to be based on a coursebook, four evaluative processes are subsequently involved:

1. *Selection*: of coursebook material that will be used unchanged.
2. *Deletion*: complete (e.g. omitting a whole activity or even a whole lesson) or partial (e.g. cutting one or more stages within an activity); deletion may be followed by *replacement* (see point 4).
3. *Addition*: in the form of extension or exploitation of the existing material, this can be regarded as *adaptation*; where new materials are introduced, this will be termed *supplementation* (the focus of the next chapter).
4. *Change*: that is, more radical forms of adaptation, such as modifications to procedure or changes in context/content (*replacement*).

Processes 3 and 4 (adaptation) will normally have a creative as well as an evaluative side.

### Task 4.1

1. What difficulties have you experienced in working with coursebooks?
2. What freedom do you have to leave things out, make changes and use additional material?
3. What percentage of the book do you use, roughly?

Although adaptation need not form part of every lesson, the argument underlying the remainder of this chapter, and the next, is that if we are not wholly satisfied with what the coursebook has to offer we have a responsibility to do something about it – and this is the argument for adding to or changing the existing material. The neat categorisation above is not always reflected in planning decisions, of course. For instance, the decision to reject something may necessitate its replacement by something else, and the structure of the subsequent discussion recognises this.

### 2.2 From objectives to lesson structure

Determining the objectives of a particular lesson is perhaps more complex than it might at first seem. Regardless of whether teaching is based on a coursebook, the decision-making process should involve relating (1) the overall aims of the course to (2) students' present level of knowledge. The question that guides the decision should be: 'Taking account of (1) and (2), and the time available, what should be the focus of this lesson?' rather than 'What comes next in the coursebook?'

The lesson-planning process also requires consideration of the stages that will be necessary to reach the desired learning outcomes. In a short but usefully practical article, Hunt et al. describe this second-level planning as 'backwards planning', or 'starting with what we ultimately wish to achieve and identifying all essential stages that will enable this' (1993: 19). In this kind of logically rigorous approach, each stage can be justified in terms of its contribution to the next. As Hunt et al. point out, the problem with an unsuccessful lesson can often be traced back to the fact that an essential stage was left out. This kind of retrospective evaluation will be easier if a lesson plan has been prepared which contains details not only of objectives and stages but also of the aids to be used (including specific reference to coursebook pages if a book is being used), patterns of interaction (teacher–learner(s) and learner–learner) and estimated timings for each stage.

In practice, decisions about lesson structure will normally go hand in hand with reflection on method and materials. Here the questions will be: 'By what means can I help learners to develop in the desired directions, and how, if at all, will these materials assist the learners and me in that task?' From this perspective, materials are seen as a potential resource, a support for teaching and learning, rather than what is to be taught and learned.

### 3 SELECTION, DELETION AND REPLACEMENT

#### 3.1 Relevance

Once we have established what we feel to be appropriate objectives for the lesson, we are in a position to take a closer, more critical look at the materials. At this point we should be able to distinguish between those materials which seem directly relevant and can be used unchanged, and those which are totally irrelevant (e.g. because inappropriate to these objectives or to the learners we are teaching). Examples of the latter would be pronunciation practice on minimal pairs which includes non-problematic contrasts and language functions unlikely to be required by learners outside an English-speaking environment (McDonough et al. 2013).

Some materials may be relevant, but pressure of time makes it impossible to include them in the lesson. In this case, we need to decide what can most usefully be done in class and what can be set for homework. Time-consuming written exercises can, for instance, be started in class to give students a feel for what is required and then finished for homework.

What is likely – and this will depend on the care with which the coursebook was originally selected – is that much of the material falls somewhere between the extremes of totally relevant and totally irrelevant, that is, though it can be used, some adaptation will be necessary.

#### 3.2 Processes and principles

Teachers experienced in making the kinds of decisions discussed so far in this chapter will tend to rely on their instincts in selecting, rejecting, replacing and adapting. Other teachers may find helpful the decision paths suggested by Grant (1987: 17) or Cunningsworth (1984, 1995; see Figure 4.1).

#### Task 4.2

1. When you are planning lessons, what factors have a bearing on your decision to use, delete or replace activities in a coursebook or other core materials?
2. Does the ordered sequence in Figure 4.1 correspond to your own approach to the evaluation of material at the lesson-planning stage? If not, how would you represent (and justify) your approach?

This flowchart in Figure 4.1 suggests a systematic path through the processes of materials evaluation in relation to lesson planning. According to the logic of the diagram, a teacher would first consider the suitability of the **objective** of a specific activity in the materials; then the **method** (procedure) would be considered; and finally the **content** and/or **topic**. A ‘No’ answer at any point would prompt a particular decision: to omit or replace, and so on.

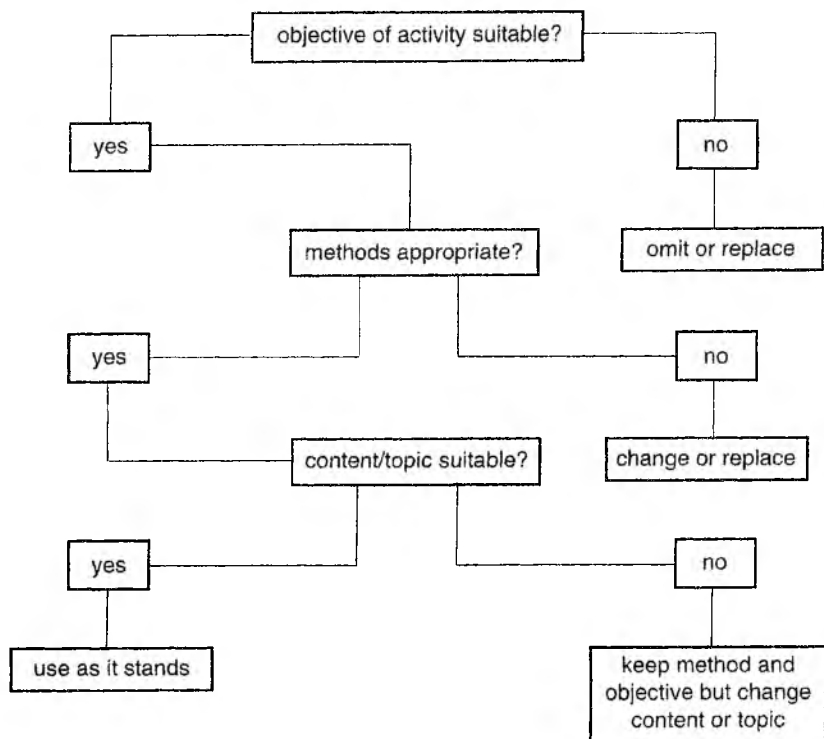


Figure 4.1 Evaluating lesson activities (Cunningsworth 1995: 137)

Haycraft (1978) has suggested that one factor which should influence the extent to which teaching is based on a coursebook is that of learner level: beginners have predictably similar needs, which can be met by a coursebook; however, clear differences start to emerge at intermediate level, he states, differences which cannot adequately be catered for by a single book; and at advanced level even more differentiation is needed. While this constitutes an argument for less dependence on coursebooks at higher levels and seems to strengthen the case for greater selectivity, the frequent rejection of activities or exercises and the omission of whole lessons needs to take learner reaction into account, especially if they have paid for the book themselves – ‘If the book is so bad why was it selected in the first place?’ (Harmer 1998: 111). In those contexts where printed works carry great authority, learners may lose confidence in the teacher. Large-scale cutting, however good one’s intentions, can be a high-risk strategy; it therefore makes sense to minimise the risk of a reaction by explaining to learners why one does not intend to spend class time on these sections of the book, or to involve them in such decisions (Acklam 1994).

There are two further dangers in rejecting lessons or part lessons: one is that



there is a resulting loss of coherence within or across lessons and the other is that subsidiary items of language which are embedded in the materials and potentially relevant are not covered. The teacher who is aware of these potential problems will try to build in coherence or coverage by other means – for instance, by creating links between those parts of the material that are to be used; by suggesting that learners look through the rejected material in their own time; and by incorporating into future activities useful items of language that might otherwise have been neglected.

If the original material really is irrelevant, then – the above problems apart – there can be no justification for using it. There will, however, be times when important learning points are carried by material which is inappropriate for other reasons (e.g. learners' age, interests, cultural background, prior knowledge). A partial solution to these problems – partial because the replacement materials will never fulfil exactly the same purposes as the original – is to replace the material which has been omitted with other materials which are thought to be more appropriate (e.g. Grant 1987; Harmer 1998; Gray 2000; Grammatosi and Harwood 2014).

### Task 4.3

Table 4.1 shows some examples of replacement suggested or described in the professional literature. Add two more specific examples of your own – what you have done or could do – based on the materials you are currently using.

In these and any other examples of replacement, care is needed. In our efforts to find alternative material which captures the interest of our learners, it is only too easy to lose sight of the original learning purpose. We return to this point under section 4.

*Table 4.1* Examples of replacement suggested or described in the professional literature

	<i>Original materials</i>	<i>Replacement</i>
Block (1991)	Coursebook materials for the practice of 'used to': contrasting (earlier/later) facts about a town that students cannot identify with	Use a map of the learners' own town
Tice (1991)	Coursebook materials for teenagers: text on A Day in the Life of a famous British person or a fictional character	A Day in the Life of a local sporting hero
Gray (2000)	Situation based in a pub	Situation based in a school cafeteria
Grammatosi and Harwood (2014)	Coursebook materials on inventors and inventions	More familiar topic: holidays

## 4 ADAPTATION

The importance of adaptation as a process and of teachers' competence in managing that process has been widely recognised (e.g. Madsen and Bowen 1978; Cunningsworth 1984; Islam and Mares 2003; Bell and Gower 2011; McDonough et al. 2013; McGrath 2013). Although they may not always be in a position to select the materials they use, teachers do decide, consciously or instinctively, how much of those materials will be used, and how much of what is used will be modified.

### 4.1 Defining adaptation

Definitions of adaptation can be unhelpfully broad. Madsen and Bowen, for example, claim that 'Every teacher is in a very real sense an adapter of the material he uses' (1978: vii), employing 'one or more of a number of techniques: supplementing, editing, expanding, personalizing, simplifying, modernizing, localizing, or modifying cultural/situational content' (1978: ix); Ellis mentions the processes of 'retaining, rejecting, re-ordering and modification' (1986: 47); and Tomlinson refers to 'reducing, adding, omitting, modifying and supplementing' (1998b: xi). In this chapter, as indicated above, two main categories of adaptation will be discussed: adaptation as addition (in a restricted sense) and adaptation as change.

### 4.2 The purpose of adaptation

The two most frequently cited purposes for adaptation are as follows:

1. To make the material more suitable for the circumstances in which it is being used, moulding it to the needs and interests of learners, the teacher's own capabilities and such constraints as time – or, as McDonough et al. put it: 'to maximize the appropriacy of teaching materials in context, by changing some of the internal characteristics of a coursebook to suit our particular circumstances better' (2013: 67).
2. To compensate for any intrinsic deficiencies in the material, such as linguistic inaccuracies, datedness, lack of authenticity (Madsen and Bowen 1978) or lack of variety (Tice 1991).

We could take McDonough et al.'s definition of purpose a little further. Maximising the appropriateness of teaching materials (by, for example, modifying them in such a way that they seem more relevant to learners' interests and needs) is important because it can stimulate motivation, and increased motivation is in turn likely to lead to a classroom atmosphere more conducive to learning. In point of fact, when we make changes to a coursebook 'to suit our particular purposes better', what we are really trying to do is to improve the effectiveness of the learning experience. In the next sections, we look at specific techniques for achieving this.

## 5 ADAPTATION AS ADDITION: THE THREE 'E'S'

### 5.1 Extemporisation

It is probably important to point out that adaptation need not involve a teacher in a great deal of extra work. In fact, the most natural form of adaptation is *extemporisation*, a spontaneous response on the part of the teacher to a problem or an opportunity (Madsen and Bowen 1978; McDonough et al. 2013). This might take such forms as the substitution in a coursebook example of the familiar (e.g. items of fruit or vegetables) for the unfamiliar; the paraphrase of a coursebook instruction or explanation that has not been understood; or reference to previously taught items (structures, vocabulary, phonemes, functions) when teaching new items. Extemporisation is a common feature of the classrooms of experienced teachers who notice (and can usually predict) when some form of mediation is needed between learners and the material. Here is an example:

When I asked them about the meaning of 'lump' students confused it with 'lamb', it was obvious that they had problems with vowels and the /p/ and /b/ sounds. We discussed the differences in meaning and pronunciation. So we ended up talking about three words instead of one: 'lump', 'lamb' and 'lamp'. (Teacher E6, cited in Menkabu and Harwood 2014: 161–2)

Typically oral, though it might include drawing or writing, extemporisation is closely allied to *exploitation* (see section 5.3); the latter, however, tends to involve planned and more extended activities.

#### Task 4.4K

1. Look at extract A in Appendix 4.1. Imagine you were planning to use this exercise with a class of students some of whom were not familiar with soccer or its rules. What aspects of the picture would you need to clarify for these students? What questions could you ask?
2. Can you think of any recent situations when you felt the need to extemporise?

### 5.2 Extension

One particular form of adaptation which seems to have been largely ignored in the literature (see, however, McDonough et al. 2013: 70), is *extension*. This refers to the provision by the teacher of additional material (e.g. further examples of a rule or further items in an exercise) in order to enhance understanding or learning. The main difference between extension and *supplementation* (see below, and Chapter 5) is that extension means 'more of the same'. If the coursebook contains only one short exercise to practise a point which your students find particularly difficult and you devise more items *of the same type as* the original exercise, this is extension. If you give them a different type of exercise, this is supplementation. The distinction is not just

terminological: when we extend an exercise we can be fairly sure that we are staying true to the design of the original material and will be contributing to the goals that underpin this material; when we supplement, especially when we design our own material, we have to be very vigilant lest we introduce a new learning objective.

### 5.3 Exploitation

Exploitation is the creative use of what is already there (e.g. text, visual, activity) to serve a purpose which is *additional* to that foreseen by the textbook writer. Thus, a text may be accompanied by a photograph and a battery of questions which are intended to develop comprehension skills and linguistic resources, but a teacher might use any of these for additional purposes: the picture, for instance, as well as illustrating the theme, might also be used to predict content or activate vocabulary; the topic and language of the text might provide the basis for discussion of students' own experiences; and the questions might serve as models for student-devised questions on the same text.

The term 'adaptation' is problematic because it is used with both broad and narrower meanings; what makes 'exploitation' problematic is that this concept has also been referred to using different terms. However, McDonough et al. (2013) make two important distinctions between extension and exploitation as defined above. Whereas extension involves *quantitative* change, exploitation represents a *qualitative* change; in exploitation, moreover, the new elements can come before or after the existing material. Thus, the picture referred to in the previous paragraph might also be the focus of a post-reading activity in which students comment on the appropriateness of the picture, and/or suggest other ways in which the theme of the text might be represented, and/or find a picture they prefer and talk or write about it.

#### Task 4.5

1. If you are currently teaching, choose an exercise or activity from your own coursebook that in your view could be usefully extended or exploited. (If you are not teaching at present, think of a group of learners you have taught recently and choose a suitable activity/exercise from Appendix 3.3 or 4.1.)
2. If you have decided to extend an exercise, write down the additional items. If you have decided to exploit an activity, write down what you would do.
3. If possible, exchange ideas with colleagues.

## 6 ADAPTATION AS CHANGE

### 6.1 Foci and forms of change

Two processes are involved in adaptation as change: first, the evaluation of materials against contextual criteria (though pedagogic criteria will probably also be involved);

and subsequently, the tailoring of the materials to suit these criteria. What are the possible foci of this kind of tailoring and what forms might it take?

The foci would include (1) *language* – the language of explanations, examples, texts, exercises and the language students are expected to produce; (2) the *contexts and content* to which the language relates; and (3) *procedures and classroom management* – who does what with whom and how this is organised. Each of these will be illustrated in this section.

In a fourth kind of change, reordering or *restructuring* (McDonough et al. 2013), components are reorganised. This might be motivated by the teacher's prioritisation of learners' needs or it might be an attempt to make the order 'more logical'. One of the teachers studied by Menkabu and Harwood was using a textbook for nurses. She explains:

So for example in the unit we talk about a kidney. And then we go to relative clauses, then talk about the functions of the kidney. It seemed silly to go to grammar and then back to what the kidney does. We'd already started talking about the kidney so we continued with what the kidney does and then afterwards we went back to talk about grammar. (Teacher E3, cited in Menkabu and Harwood 2014: 163)

The same teacher changed the order of a reading comprehension and a pronunciation activity, 'because students looked tired and she felt the reading activity was a bit heavy' (Teacher E3, cited in Menkabu and Harwood 2014: 163).

## 6.2 Principles motivating change

The kinds of changes discussed above are based on a number of principles. These can be summarised as follows:

- *Localisation*: recognising the need for contextual relevance – 'what may work well in Mexico City may not do so in Edinburgh or in Kuala Lumpur' (McDonough et al. 2013: 69).
- *Personalisation*: broadly speaking, 'increasing the relevance of content in relation to learners' interests and their academic, educational or professional needs' (McDonough et al. 2013: 69); more narrowly, drawing on learners' lives and exploiting their knowledge and interests to devise examples and activities which are *about them* (McGrath 2002: 72).
- *Individualisation*: addressing 'the learning styles both of individuals and of the members of a class working closely together' (McDonough et al. 2013: 69).
- *Modernisation*: changing any instances of language usage that seem out of date (Madsen and Bowen 1978); this might equally well apply to changes in the time-bound content of material (e.g. prices of goods).
- *Simplification*: procedures designed to make things easier for or more accessible to the learner: for example, the editing of texts to reduce linguistic or conceptual difficulty, and modifications to tasks. On linguistic simplification, Tomlinson comments:

The usual principles of simplification involve reduction in length of the text, shortening of sentences, omission or replacement of difficult words or structures, omission of qualifying clauses and omission of non-essential detail. It is arguable, however, that such simplification might make the words easier to understand but could make it more difficult for the learners to achieve global understanding of a text which is now dense with important information. It might be more profitable to simplify texts by adding examples, by using repetition and paraphrase and by increasing redundant information. In other words, by lengthening rather than shortening a text. (1998b: xii)

This is a valid point: increased text density could well mean greater processing difficulty. However, one problem with the proposal made here, as with the more traditional approach to simplification, is that it would render authentic text less authentic; a second problem is that it fails to take into account the fact that long texts cause some learners' hearts to sink.

There are occasions, of course, when we might want to *increase* the level of difficulty of a task, or at least to provide different levels of challenge for students with different levels of competence or confidence. We return to differentiation in section 6.4.

### Task 4.6

Look at extracts B and C in Appendix 4.1. What adaptations would you make (delete? replace? add? change?) to exercises or items in exercises if you were using this material? Are there any exercises or items in exercises which you would want to change? Which of the above principles would you draw on in justifying these changes?

## 6.3 A principled approach to adaptation

Cunningsworth (1984) suggests three questions that might be asked when one is considering adaptation:

- What does the exercise actually get the learner to do?
- What do I want the learner to do?
- How can I get the exercise to do what I want it to do for the learner?

(Cunningsworth 1984: 66)

To these we should perhaps add a fourth, and logically prior question:

- What is the objective of the activity?

Working through these questions can reveal that an activity/exercise may not do exactly what it was intended to, but that with some modification it could be made to suit teaching/learning purposes more effectively. In this case, we just need to consider what changes would be desirable

**Task 4.7K**

Imagine that you are using materials which contain the exercise in Figure 4.2.

**Exercise A**

Complete these sentences in the past simple or present perfect with the verb in brackets.

Last week I ..... (go) to Paris.

Yesterday I ..... (meet) my friend Bill.

I ..... (see) Rachel at the party last night.

I ..... (be) to Japan twice before.

I ..... never ..... (play) lacrosse.

I ..... (work) for this company since 1996.

I ..... (join) the company in 1995.

Figure 4.2 Exercise A (Hughes 2006: 9)

1. What is the objective of the activity?
2. How far does it fulfil this objective?
3. What would you want learners to get from such an exercise?
4. Would you need to make any changes for these learning outcomes to be achieved? If so, what would these changes be? Make a note of the changes you propose.
5. In what other ways could the exercise be improved? Again, write down your ideas.

Now look at the commentary on this task in the 'Tasks: Keys and Commentaries' section.

**6.4 Taking account of learner differences**

In what is sometimes characterised as a 'traditional' classroom, teaching is seen as transmission (of facts) and is compared to the filling of empty bottles. What counts as learning proceeds in lockstep (i.e. learners are expected to learn the same thing in the same way at the same time). Knowledge of facts, in the sense of conscious knowledge about the rules of the language, is still an element in classroom language learning in secondary and tertiary education the world over, but in most contexts it is now recognised that such knowledge is a means to a broader end – communicative competence – rather than the primary objective of language learning. Two things have not changed very much, however. In many cases, national examinations continue to emphasise language knowledge – perhaps in part because there are practical

difficulties in the large-scale testing of listening and speaking skills; and lockstep teaching continues.

Our concern here is with the prevalence of lockstep teaching. One of the arguments for differentiation is that learners do not – indeed, cannot – learn the same thing in the same way at the same time. After all, they differ in terms of their readiness (what they already know) and aptitude (the speed with which they can acquire new knowledge and skills), their preferred learning style (auditory, visual, kinaesthetic – sometimes abbreviated to VAK; their preference for learning alone or in a group), and their interests, motivation and attitudes.

### Task 4.8K

Look at this extract from a typical transformation exercise. Work through the same process as in Task 4.5, again making a note of your answers, but think also about how you could build differentiation into a revised version of the exercise.

*Rewrite these sentences using the correct form of the conditional.*

1. If a man with a knife (STOP) me in the street, I (GIVE) him all my money.
2. If a dog (BITE) me, I (HAVE) a rabies injection.
3. If a fly (LAND) on my dinner, I (NOT KILL) it.

(etc.)

One way of adapting the exercise is illustrated and discussed in the 'Tasks: Keys and Commentaries' section. What do you think of this, as compared with your own version?

For teachers working with whole classes towards specified learning outcomes lockstep teaching is the simplest option. When we consider the needs of individual learners, however, it is not the best option. Even if we think only about linguistic readiness and aptitude and prepare a lesson targeted in terms of language input and expected learning outcomes at what we think of as the middle of the class, we can be sure that the needs of those below and above that notional level will not be fully met. We therefore have to devise ways of ensuring that as far as possible all learners experience appropriate levels of support and challenge and the feeling of earned success that enhances self-esteem and stimulates motivation.

Prodromou has commented: 'No one chooses boredom and no one chooses failure' (1990: 28). For me, this brief statement puts the argument for differentiation forcefully and memorably. It removes blame from the learner by implying that there is an external cause for his or her boredom and/or failure. It therefore obliges us to reflect on what those causes might be, and – by extension – how we can reduce the likelihood of boredom and failure. We may also interpret it as a warning about consequences (of boredom and failure). Prodromou's comment appeared in a short article about what he calls 'mixed ability' classes. The starting point for the article was his dissatisfaction with a questionnaire in an elementary coursebook. He



decided to redesign the questionnaire but also to make this just one component of a whole lesson on the theme of healthy eating and fitness.

### Task 4.9K

1. The coursebook questionnaire with which Prodromou was dissatisfied is reproduced in Figure 4.3 (p. 77). Work through the same process as in Task 4.6, again thinking about how differentiation could be built into your adapted version.
2. When you have finished, go to the 'Tasks: Keys and Commentaries' section to look at Prodromou's revised questionnaire and his rationale for this. Were your ideas similar?

The commentary on this task draws attention to a number of other ways in which differentiation can be built into lesson planning. For further discussion of differentiation, see Chapter 7.

## REFLECTION, DISCUSSION, ACTION

- 'John', a teacher cited in Grammatosi and Harwood (2014), admitted: 'I did feel guilty not using the book, like I'm not doing something properly' (2014: 186). How do you feel if you do not use the textbook or other 'core' materials?
- Has this chapter encouraged you to think differently about:
  - your own role as a teacher?
  - ways of adapting materials?
- Look again through your coursebook or at the extracts in Appendix 4.1 and choose one that you can imagine yourself using but would need to adapt. Ask yourself the four questions listed in section 6.3, starting with the objective of the activity. If possible, discuss your ideas with a colleague.

## REVIEW AND PREVIEW

This chapter has built on two linked points made in earlier chapters:

1. Whatever the claims of its publisher, no coursebook will be perfect for a specific teaching–learning situation, and the book should therefore not be regarded as the course.
2. A conscientious teacher whose teaching is by necessity or choice based on a coursebook will want to do something to compensate for the lack of match between such considerations as teaching context, course aims and learner needs on the one hand and what the coursebook assumes and provides on the other. In short, a coursebook should be seen as a resource for teaching and learning, rather than a body of material to be taught. In relation to (1), this implies that a coursebook should be used selectively; and in relation to (?).

	YOU	YOUR PARTNER	SCORE	
			YES	NO
<b><u>CHECK YOUR DIET</u></b>				
Yesterday . . .				
1. Did you have more than two pieces of toast for breakfast?			0	1
2. Did you have sugar in your tea or coffee?			0	1
3. Did you drink half a litre of milk?			1	0
4. Did you eat any fruit?			1	0
5. Did you eat any sweets or chocolates?			0	1
6. Did you eat any biscuits or cake?			0	1
7. Did you drink any alcohol?			0	1
<b><u>CHECK YOUR CONDITION</u></b>				
Yesterday . . .				
8. Did you go for a run?			1	0
9. Did you do any exercises?			1	0
10. Did you walk or cycle to work/school?			1	0
11. Did you smoke at all?			0	1
<b><u>CHECK YOUR DAILY ROUTINE</u></b>				
Yesterday . . .				
12. Did you get up before 8 o'clock?			1	0
13. Did you go to bed before 11 o'clock?			1	0
14. Did you watch TV for more than 2 hours?			0	1
15. Did you sleep with your windows open?			1	0
<b>TOTAL</b>				

Figure 4.3 Questionnaire from Abbs and Freebairn (1984), *Building Strategies*

that teachers will **adapt** the material, by adding to it or changing it in such a way that it better meets the needs of the situation and the individual learners. Various forms of adaptation have been described and exemplified. These have been categorised as adaptation as addition and adaptation as change. A further

possibility is that the teacher will **supplement** the material. This is the focus of the next chapter.

## FURTHER READING

**Course and lesson planning:** Woodward (2001) has sections on analysing the coursebook (2001: 151–2), personalising the book (2001: 153–4) and adapting and exploiting the book (2001: 154–60). See also Johnson (1989b), Graves (1996, 2000), Richards (2001b), Nation and Macalister (2010) and Masuhara (2011).

**Adaptation:** McGrath (2013: chs 3, 4, 6) compares ‘theoretical’ expectations (deriving from the professional literature and teacher educator perspectives) with ‘practice’, as reflected in accounts of what classroom teachers actually do. Menkabu and Harwood (2014) and Grammatosi and Harwood (2014) draw on the general education literature on teachers’ use of textbooks. Macalister and Nation (2015) and McDonough et al. (2013) contain chapters on adaptation. See also earlier discussion and examples in, for example, Madsen and Bowen (1978), Cunningsworth (1984, 1995), Richards (1985: ch. 14, 2001b), Grant (1987), Nunan (1991: 219–23), Hutchinson (1996), Ur (1996: 115–18), Graves (2000), Gray (2000), Prodromou (2002), Islam and Mares (2003), Zheng and Davison (2008).

**Differentiation:** see suggested reading at the end of Chapter 7.

# Supplementation: exercises and worksheets

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**The argument for supplementation – Identifying and filling gaps:** identifying gaps in core materials; forms of supplementation – **Supplementation using commercially published sources:** on copying; copying from the Internet; sharing information – **Developing one's own material:** the arguments for developing one's own material; the process of supplementary materials design: syllabus-driven or concept-driven? – **Designing worksheets:** the function of worksheets; general issues in exercise and worksheet design; computerised worksheets

## 1 THE ARGUMENT FOR SUPPLEMENTATION

To judge by their claims, most modern coursebooks offer everything their target users need (and no publisher would give competitors an advantage by openly admitting to deficiencies!). They provide 'coverage', often using authentic texts, of the 'skills' of listening, speaking, reading and writing – and tasks that offer opportunities to practise integrating these; they include a range of grammatical structures, normally related to notions and functions; 'new' vocabulary is introduced via themes or topics, as well as incidentally; attention may also be given to spelling, aspects of pronunciation, and features of spoken and written discourse, to study skills, critical thinking and cultural awareness. There may also be an incidental focus on the learning of other subjects (science, technology and geography, for instance) through English. In addition to the books for students and teachers, the whole coursebook package may include a workbook, CD-ROM, DVD, links to online materials, and so on. Given this cornucopia of resources, why would anyone want to select or develop supplementary materials?

Previous chapters have suggested that the needs of a specific class of learners can never be perfectly met by a single coursebook, even when the coursebook has been carefully designed to cater for the needs of that category of learner or learners in a particular geographical context. Supplementation, which means no more than 'adding something new', stems primarily from the recognition of a deficit: it is an attempt to bridge the gap between a coursebook and an official syllabus (or statement of aims), or a coursebook and the demands of a public examination, or a coursebook and students' needs, or core materials of other kinds and any of the

above. Many teachers feel impelled to provide additional material because they feel that *their* students need exposure to a greater range of textual material, for example, or more practice of particular kinds. They may also wish to take account of learner differences by providing differentiated materials.

The decision to supplement the coursebook may also be prompted by affective considerations. Experienced teachers know that walking into class and saying, 'Good morning. Open your books at page 37,' is not the best way to capture the attention of a group of learners, and many use 'warm-up' activities for this reason. They also know that there are other points in a lesson (and these are not always predictable) or a certain time in the week when learners just need something a little different. Maley, probably thinking of dreary days in Britain, refers to this as 'the wet Friday afternoon effect' (2011: 381). This is the time when learners are tired or apathetic or having difficulty, a time when learning needs to be made lighter, more fun – through a game, a song, a video clip.

Both types of supplementation – the cognitively motivated and the affectively motivated – need to be *fully integrated into course plans and lesson plans if they are to be maximally effective*. It is the planned nature of supplementation that distinguishes it from extemporisation, which is more of a response to the moment. It is worth bearing in mind that warm-ups, carefully selected or devised, can serve their affective purpose *and* relate to the topic of the lesson; the same is true of planned 'lightening' activities used at other points in a lesson.

This chapter deals with one particular form of supplementation: the provision of individual exercises and worksheets to fill a perceived gap and need. **Sections 2 and 3** discuss the use of material taken from printed publications and the Internet. **Sections 4 and 5** then provide a structured approach to the design of exercises and worksheets. Other types of supplementation are discussed in Chapter 6.

## 2 IDENTIFYING AND FILLING GAPS

### 2.1 Identifying gaps in core materials

In coursebook-based lesson planning, as we have seen, we need to make a number of decisions: which parts of the coursebook materials to use unchanged (**select**), whether we should cut certain activities or exercises or parts of these (**delete**), **replace** them or **adapt** them, and whether we need to provide any additional materials (**supplement**).

If textbook selection processes have been sufficiently rigorous, they will have shown up certain gaps in the material, and these will form the starting point for decisions about supplementation. However, if no such analysis is available, there is value in teachers creating their own checklist to establish what supplementation is likely to be needed. Task 5.1 asks you to work through a series of planning steps which start from a consideration of the need for supplementation.

## Task 5.1

1. If you have carried out an evaluation of the materials (or taught these previously) and you know where the gaps lie, go to step 2. If you are going to look at new material, first make a list of eight to ten features of a coursebook which are most important for you. This will serve as your provisional checklist.
2. Choose a lesson or unit from your coursebook or one of the extracts in Appendix 5.1 relevant to the kinds of student you teach or have taught. Look through the material first, then make an outline plan for one or more lessons (depending on the time you think you will need) and record the decisions you have made using the chart in Table 5.1. Work in a pair if possible.

**Table 5.1** Summary of planning decisions

<i>Lesson</i>	<i>Select</i>	<i>Reject/Replace</i>	<i>Adapt</i>	<i>Supplement</i>
<i>One</i>	Write the number of each exercise/activity you intend to use unchanged, and why it is worth retaining.	Write the number of any exercise/activity you do not intend to use, and briefly indicate why. If replacing, indicate why and with what.	Write the number of any exercise/activity you intend to adapt. Indicate why and how it will be adapted.	List the materials to be used (e.g. picture of X, extra exercise on Y) and your justification.
<i>Two</i>				

3. Explain your decisions to a colleague/classmate/another pair and ask for their comments and suggestions.

Gaps in the materials being used and what learners need may also emerge only after the materials have been used, as a result of progress testing, for example, or because learners ask for more of X or Y or something different. This argues for the continuous (in-use) evaluation of materials, but also for giving learners a voice in relation to materials (see Chapter 9).

## 1.2 Forms of supplementation

We can provide supplementary material in one of two ways:

1. By utilising items, such as exercises, texts or activities, from another published source: a coursebook, a supplementary skills book, a book of practice exercises, a teachers' resource book, the Internet.
2. By devising our own material; this may include the exploitation of authentic visual or textual items (see also Chapter 8, on learner-produced materials).

We begin by considering (1), since this has the obvious advantage of convenience. In the remainder of this chapter, our focus will be on exercise material.

### 3 SUPPLEMENTATION USING COMMERCIALY PUBLISHED SOURCES

#### 3.1 On copying

Most books carry a statement saying firmly that no part of the work may be reproduced without the prior permission of the publisher. And yet the most common form of supplementation is the use of material from another book, most frequently in the form of photocopies. Two measures have been taken to legalise this practice. The first involves payment: institutions can apply for a licence which permits restricted photocopying in return for a fee. The second is the publication of whole books or of books in which some sections are clearly marked 'photocopiable'. Photocopiable books tend to be much more expensive, of course, to counteract the reduced income through sales; the inclusion of photocopiable sections within books is at the same time an important concession and an appeal to the teacher's sense of fair play.

Supplementation through copying is an option when two conditions can be met: (1) *facilities for reproduction are available*; and (2) *appropriate source material is to hand*. It is arguably only necessary when the advantages outweigh the disadvantages. Before the days of photocopiers, overhead projectors and visualisers, teachers wrote on blackboards and asked students to copy what was on the board; and this, or a version of this, still happens in many classrooms. Often a photocopier is a convenience rather than a necessity – and sometimes it can be a double-edged sword. It takes time; it can be frustrating (why is it that machines jam or run out of toner just before a class is about to start?); and the costs of producing multiple copies certainly add up. Moreover, loose pieces of paper are difficult to manage: students lose them or forget to bring them to class; and devising a suitable filing system can also be one task too many for busy teachers.

Financial and logistical considerations will not be an issue in certain kinds of supplementation using commercial materials. For example, a teacher might decide to use an oral activity from another coursebook or a teacher's resource book which can be explained and conducted without learners having recourse to written instructions or stimuli. The same applies to certain types of activity based on audio or video recordings: though the text requires playback facilities, the students' responses can be elicited by the teacher reading aloud (rather than having students read) the original questions or prompts, adapting these as necessary. Copyright and ethical issues would of course arise if written materials were reproduced, even if these had been adapted.

Some well-resourced institutions, while stipulating that a particular coursebook be used as the basic text, recognise the intrinsic limitations of a single textbook and purchase class sets of additional materials that can be used by teachers as and when the need arises. Detailed cross-referencing systems can be drawn up to show which sections of these materials can be used to supplement a particular unit in a particular coursebook. Such guides are best compiled by a group of staff pooling their

experience. Once a system has been established, however, it is not too difficult for a designated individual to keep it up to date by coordinating the suggestions of others on a termly or annual basis. This level of resourcing and institutional support obviously requires commitment on the part of management as well as the teaching staff.

### 3.2 Copying from the Internet

Let us now consider one of the most readily available sources of supplementary exercise material: the Internet.

In recent years, we have seen a huge increase in the number of websites offering materials for English language learners and teachers, and this pool of resources will obviously continue to grow. Such bounty comes at a price, however. There is a cost in the time needed to explore resources. As one of my former students put it, 'We have to separate the gems from the junk.' There may be a financial cost also, in that some sites charge a subscription fee. Moreover, the lack of any overall quality control or industry stamp of approval means that learners may be exposed to materials that are inaccurate or unsuitable in other ways. The next task is intended to serve two purposes: to introduce you to websites that you have not previously looked at and to encourage you to think critically about the sites you draw on or recommend to students.

#### Task 5.2

1. Table 5.2 (see p. 84) contains a list of possible evaluation criteria, roughly grouped into categories. Use this framework to evaluate systematically (a) a language learning website that you know and like; and (b) one of the websites in Appendix 5.2 that you have not looked at previously or a website recommended by a colleague/classmate. Write a brief report on each website that can be circulated to your colleagues/classmates. Refer to the categories/criteria in the table to make it clear whether you wish to recommend the website (and why) and what reservations you have.
2. Did you find this evaluation framework useful? Which categories and criteria did you refer to most when you were preparing your report? Are there any categories or criteria that you would delete or add?

### 3.3 Sharing information

Identifying potentially suitable websites and potentially suitable sections and exercises within these is a lengthy process. It therefore makes sense for individual teachers to pool their knowledge of these as well as print resources. As with any shared resources, it is a good idea to keep a note of who the materials were used with, how learners responded and suggestions for other users. A simple record sheet kept in a shared folder (soft or hard copy) would be useful for this purpose.



Table 5.2 Possible website evaluation criteria

Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• suitable for age</li> <li>• suitable for level</li> <li>• sociocultural suitability (e.g. content, examples, accents)</li> <li>• content relevant to coursebook/course themes</li> <li>• relevant to real world</li> </ul>
User-friendliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• free</li> <li>• rapid access</li> <li>• ease of navigation, including return to home page</li> <li>• clarity (e.g. organisation, explicitness regarding objectives and level, language of instructions and explanations)</li> <li>• feedback on performance (and encouragement)</li> <li>• possibility of tracking (for teacher)</li> <li>• links to other sites (but can be distraction)</li> <li>• resources printable</li> </ul>
Appeal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• visually appealing (e.g. point size, spacing, graphics, animation)</li> <li>• varied</li> <li>• interactive</li> <li>• fun</li> </ul>
Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provides for differentiation by level (and therefore progression)</li> <li>• provides for different learning styles</li> <li>• allows for independent/pair/group learning</li> <li>• suitable for class use</li> <li>• customisable</li> </ul>
Credibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• trustworthy (based on, e.g., producer, date/updating)</li> <li>• accurate (free of language errors)</li> </ul>
Other	?

## 4 DEVELOPING ONE'S OWN MATERIAL

### 4.1 The arguments for developing one's own material

Since it is easier to borrow something, even if some form of minimal adaptation is involved, what are the arguments for devising one's own material? The first and most obvious reason is that suitable supplementary material is not available. The key word here is 'suitable'. Supplementary material has to meet the same criteria as coursebook material, but these need to be more strictly applied. Whereas time and effort spent adapting coursebook material to render it more suitable can be justified, this is less true of supplementary material. If the only potentially suitable published supplementary material that is available would be very time-consuming to adapt, it is worth trying to prepare one's own. Teachers know their own students and will be able to 'tune' the material to suit their level, their aptitude, their interests and their needs – and personalise it so that it seems even more meaningful.

## 4.2 The process of supplementary materials design: syllabus driven or concept driven?

When the principal determining factor behind what you do is a syllabus – an official document or your own teaching plan (scheme of work) based on an analysis of learner needs – this will have an obvious influence on your approach to the creation of supplementary material. You may find yourself saying, ‘I need something (else) to practise X,’ where X is a point in your syllabus that is either not covered in the coursebook or is not dealt with adequately, in your opinion. If you know of something ready-made that will fit the bill, the problem is quickly solved. If not, you will need to design material specially for that purpose. We can call this kind of orientation *syllabus-driven* materials design.

A broad definition of syllabus-driven materials design (one which extends to learner-generated syllabus items) would also allow for the fact that learner questions or requests may also be a stimulus to materials development. The first of two worksheets on hypothetical meaning included in Jolly and Bolitho (2011), for instance, was prompted by students’ request for an explanation of the verb form in ‘It’s time the Prime Minister *listened* more carefully to her critics.’ The approach to the design of these worksheets is described in Chapter 9, and one of the worksheets is reproduced in Appendix 9.1.

Sometimes, of course, since teachers never totally switch off, teaching material just seems to suggest itself. You are flipping through a magazine or browsing the Web and BAM! it hits you: ‘I could use this with Form 3’ or ‘I could use this to practise Y.’ Notice, though, the difference between these two thoughts. In the first instance, you can see that the material is likely to be relevant to the interests or needs of a specific class, but you will need to think about how to exploit it; in the second case, you can already see its linguistic potential, but you have no particular class in mind. What the two have in common is that the ideas that suddenly popped up were not the end of a conscious syllabus-driven search but rather the beginning of what we might call a *concept-driven* (or ideas-driven) process of materials design. In the remainder of this chapter, our focus will be on syllabus-driven materials design, specifically in relation to exercises and worksheets. We will return to concept-driven materials design in Chapter 7.

Let us now consider some of the general principles involved in exercise and worksheet design.

## 5 DESIGNING WORKSHEETS

### 5.1 The function of worksheets

In classroom settings, worksheets are a particular category of handout. Like reusable self-access ‘workcards’, a distinction made by Ur (1996: 192), they are designed to facilitate learning through activity. Downloaded from the Internet, photocopied from a book, cut and pasted from different sources or teacher

creations – whatever their origin, their function tends to be the same: for instance, to raise awareness of how the language works through an activity of some kind and/or to provide additional practice. Teacher-made tests might be seen as a particular type of worksheet.

Although teacher-produced worksheets frequently focus on specific points of grammar (and may therefore differ little from individual pages in the kind of workbook produced to accompany some coursebooks or books of practice exercises), they can be used for a broader range of purposes. These include awareness raising or practice in relation to:

- *handwriting* (for young children or learners whose native language uses a different script); this can include not only practice in forming individual letters but also joining letters and writing on the line
- *spelling* (e.g. the spelling rules governing the pluralisation of nouns ending in 'y' or the doubling of the terminal consonant in verbs)
- *punctuation* (e.g. inserting full stops and capital letters into an unpunctuated text; deciding which words in a text should be capitalised; combining sentences; changing indirect speech into direct speech)
- *pronunciation* (e.g. exercises which require learners to match words containing the same vowel sound, mark stressed syllables or give the normal spelling of words written in phonetic transcription).

### Task 5.3

Appendix 5.3 contains extracts from a variety of published sources.

1. Extracts A–D focus on spelling. How do they differ? Which do you prefer and why? Which aspects of English spelling cause difficulty for your students?
2. Extract E focuses on pronunciation. If you were devising one or more worksheets on pronunciation, which features would you concentrate on?
3. Extracts F–K deal with vocabulary. How do they differ in their specific focus? What other aspects of vocabulary could be appropriate topics for worksheets?

Although worksheets tend to be used in class, they can also be assigned for homework, as one means of helping learners to work on their individual problems. For instance, many language learners have problems expressing themselves not because their grammar is weak but because they have a limited vocabulary. Since we can never teach learners all the words they will need, even if we could predict these, they have to be shown how to extend their word stock systematically through their own efforts. Wallace (1981), writing about vocabulary, points to the need for 'tidying up' exercises. Vocabulary learning is not just about learning more words; it is also concerned with knowing more about the words you already know – how they relate to other words with a similar meaning, for example, or which other words they

are used with. 'Tidying up' exercises are ways of bringing miscellaneous items of knowledge into a systematic relationship with each other. This may involve not only organising existing knowledge but introducing new items to add to a 'word family' or complete a closed set.

Much has been written about what it is to know a word. Lado (1956) makes a well-known and helpful distinction between knowledge of *form*, *meaning* and *distribution*. Knowledge of form includes familiarity with the pronunciation (including stress pattern) and spelling of a word, what part of speech it is, whether it takes affixes (and if so, which) and how it behaves syntactically. Knowing a word's meaning includes knowing not simply its denotation (dictionary meaning) but also whether it has any connotations, whether it forms part of a semantic set and how it relates to other words (e.g. as a synonym, antonym, hyponym). Knowledge of distribution includes awareness of how a word collocates with other words, whether it belongs to a particular register and whether it is stylistically marked (e.g. as formal or slang).

More recently, large-scale computer analysis of language (corpus linguistics) has made possible the identification of high-frequency vocabulary items in both speech and writing. Together with a recognition of the importance of vocabulary in the communication of meaning, this led to the development of coursebooks based on a lexical syllabus (Willis 1990). The patterns of word combination revealed by corpus linguistics also led, more radically, to the contention that 'language consists of lexicalised grammar not grammaticalised lexis' (Lewis 1993: 34) and that language teaching should therefore be based on lexical chunks rather than single vocabulary items (see also Lewis 1997, 2000). This work has implications for the way we analyse published materials; we can also draw on it when developing supplementary materials. Grammar, however, continues to be seen as important by both teachers and learners.

### Task 5.4K

Appendix 5.4 contains two extracts concerned with reported speech. Each consists of several exercises.

1. Look first at extract A. In the original materials these exercises are accompanied by guidance notes and examples which show how to change direct speech into reported speech (with a focus on orders, advice and statements).
  - (a) How do the exercises differ?
  - (b) Do you think the order is appropriate? Why (not)?
  - (c) If you were preparing one or more worksheets on this topic, would you include any of these exercises? If so, would you adapt them in any way?
  - (d) Would you say that the focus of the worksheet is on form and/or meaning and/or use?
  - (e) What do you like about the design and layout of the worksheet? Do you have any suggestions for improvement?
  - (f) In the original book, this is the first of three worksheets. What do you think the second and third dealt with?

2. Now look at extract B. The focus of this worksheet is on reported questions. Like extract A, it is preceded by a facing page containing guidance notes and examples. These include a summary of time-shift and other changes but also notes on reporting verbs and word order. Short texts and a cartoon also provide contextualised examples.
  - (a) How do the exercises differ?
  - (b) Do you think the order is appropriate? Why (not)?
  - (c) If you were preparing one or more worksheets on this topic, would you include any of these exercises? If so, would you adapt them in any way?
  - (d) Would you say that the focus of the worksheet is on form and/or meaning and/or use?
  - (e) What do you like about the design and layout of the worksheet? Do you have any suggestions for improvement?
  - (f) In the original book, this is the second of three worksheets. What do you think the exercises in worksheets 1 and 3 dealt with?
3. Compare the worksheets in extracts A and B. What do you see as their respective strengths and weaknesses?
4. What conclusions can you draw about worksheet design from your work on this task?

## 5.2 General issues in exercise and worksheet design

Whether you are preparing a worksheet that will consist of photocopied exercises or exercises you have devised yourself there are a number of general issues that need to be addressed.

### 5.2.1 *Language focus?*

There is no point in getting learners to work through exercises on points that are unproblematic. Logically, worksheets should focus on known difficulties, and the errors that learners frequently make in their writing are an obvious starting point. For example, common grammatical errors include wrong use of tense or aspect, and common vocabulary errors the use of 'do' for 'make' and vice versa. It would be useful to find out from learners why *they* think they make these and other errors – do they feel the need for another explanation of this language feature or more practice of a particular kind?

The more specific we can be in identifying a problem the better. We may have the impression that a group of learners are struggling with the possessive adjectives 'my', 'your', and so on. However, closer analysis might reveal that their only errors are with 'his', 'her' and 'their'. This is not necessarily a reason for not including single examples of the other possessives in an exercise, but it is a reason for giving more emphasis to the items that are causing difficulty.

## Task 5.5

What difficulties do your students have with reported speech in English? Did the exercises in Appendix 5.4 extract E give sufficient attention to those difficulties? If not, did you focus on them in your ideas for the additional worksheets?

### 5.2.2 Awareness raising or practice?

While worksheet exercises typically provide opportunities for learners to apply what they know (i.e. practise), they can serve other purposes, the most obvious being to raise awareness of systematic features of the language (fixed rules) – or the extent to which rules are variable. This distinction between practice and awareness raising corresponds to that sometimes made in reference to two approaches to grammar teaching. In a *deductive* approach, learners are given a rule and examples and required to apply that rule; in an *inductive* approach, they are given samples of language and expected to discover the rule for themselves. The latter is, in fact, the process by which we acquire many of the rules – morphological, syntactic, phonological, orthographic and discursal – in our first language.

One question we therefore have to ask ourselves is whether we favour a deductive approach, which may seem convenient and efficient, or an inductive approach, which takes more time but – many would argue – is more effective, and therefore ultimately more efficient. Rules in books and teachers' explanations often employ abstract language which learners have difficulty in understanding. If they can work out and correctly formulate a rule for themselves, perhaps with a little help from their teacher, this is evidence that they understand it; moreover, the effort involved in working out the rule may well mean that the rule is better retained. Learners may have their own views, of course. For instance, Fortune's (1992) study of young adults' reactions to different types of self-access grammar exercise indicated a general preference for the more conventional deductive approach.

In educational environments where a deductive approach is the norm and the teacher is expected to be the dispenser of knowledge, it may be necessary to explain to students how they might benefit from a different approach and introduce them to this in easy stages. This implies not only teacher support – comparable to helping someone while they are learning to swim – but also that what the students are required to do is within their capacity. What seems easy to the person who devises an exercise and therefore knows the answers may prove impossibly difficult for students. As with any materials development, trialling and revision are essential steps in the process.

The distinction between awareness raising (often termed 'consciousness raising' when grammar is involved) and application is an important one. With teacher education in mind, Ellis warns against the too ready assumption that making teachers aware 'of the options open to them and the principles by which they can evaluate the alternatives' (1986: 92) will lead to improved practice. 'We do not know,' he

points out, 'to what extent this assumption is justified' (1986: 92). Writing specifically about language learning, Fox is a little less guarded:

Whilst there is no automatic transfer from awareness of a feature to the ability to use that feature, there is certainly a likelihood that increased awareness will lead to increased proficiency – particularly of features which, once pointed out, are encountered frequently in real-life language situations. (1998: 42)

The assumptions here are clear in the words 'frequently' and 'real-life', and although there is now some evidence of a carry-over from awareness raising activities to production, we do well to be cautious, especially if we know that our learners have little opportunity for daily exposure to the target language in 'real-life situations'.

## Task 5.6

1. Where do you stand on deductive vs inductive approaches? Do you know which your students would prefer?
2. Appendix 5.5 contains two more examples from published materials. Are these awareness-raising exercises or practice exercises? How do they differ? Do you think they would both be equally effective? Can you think of any other ways of encouraging learners to notice forms (which may be grammatical forms or lexical chunks or stylistic features)?

### 5.2.3 Accuracy or fluency?

A second issue concerns the relationship between the format of the exercises and the purposes they are intended to serve. If worksheets are intended for individual work and self-checking by students, then formats which require them only to respond to what is given (e.g. sequencing, matching, selecting) or are closed ended (e.g. certain types of gap-filling or transformation exercises involving a change from singular to plural, declarative to negative, active to passive) are obviously more convenient than formats which require them to produce language. Convenience should not be an overriding consideration, however. What is important is that the exercise format should reflect the objective of the exercise. The types of exercise format just listed may be appropriate for developing accuracy, and therefore have value, but other types of activity will be necessary for the development of fluency. Worksheets which do not necessitate language production or which closely control what students produce will have at best an indirect effect on their ability to produce language fluently in less controlled situations. This applies to vocabulary as well as to grammar.

Let us think specifically about grammar, however. Grammar teaching is motivated by two objectives: to transmit knowledge and to facilitate skill development. The diagram in Figure 5.1 is an attempt to capture this distinction.

As the diagram indicates, the grammatical component of efficient communication requires the integration of different forms of knowledge and skill. Take as an

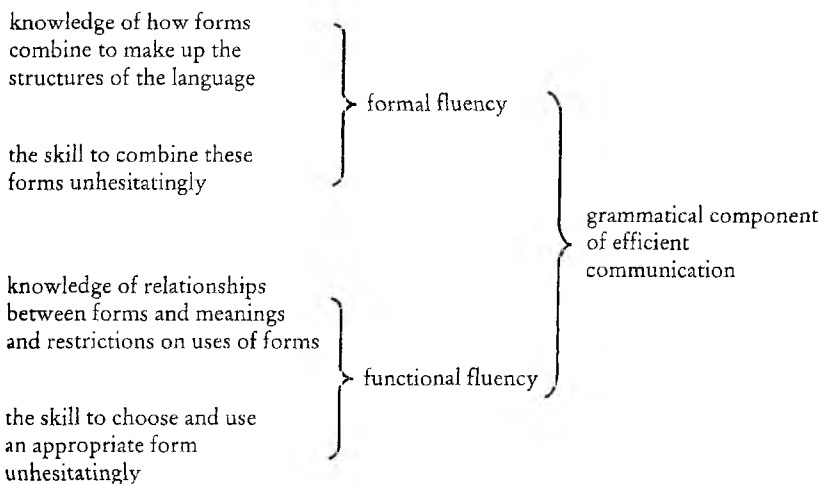


Figure 5.1 Objectives of grammar teaching: formal fluency *with* functional fluency

illustration the acquisition of the so-called 'third conditional': for example, 'If I'd known then what I know now, I wouldn't have agreed to do it.' The basic elements of this can be reduced to:

*If* + past perfect + conditional perfect (*would* + *have* + past participle).

A learner needs (1) to know what the various components of this structure are and how to combine them; and (2) the ability to put the correct components together quickly. But he or she also needs (3) to know what the structure means and when it is appropriate to use it; and (4) the ability to use it spontaneously and appropriately. Note that, in the spoken medium, important aspects of fluency will be the use of weak forms (e.g. /əv/ rather than /hæv/ in 'wouldn't have') and contracted forms such as *I'd* and *wouldn't*.

By distinguishing between what are here referred to as 'formal fluency' and 'functional fluency', the diagram makes the further point that grammar teaching has to relate to real-life language use, and therefore raises the issue of contextualisation. There are a number of implications for the design of exercises and worksheets, as follows.

#### *Form, meaning and use*

Accuracy focused exercises are inherently form focused. What Figure 5.1 shows is that in itself knowledge of forms is insufficient for communication purposes. While it is probably logical to begin explicit study of a grammatical item by looking at its form and how that may change, learners also need to know how form relates to



meaning and how the form can be used. It follows that a worksheet which does no more than practise or test knowledge of form is severely limited in terms of its value to the learner and the teacher, since it reveals little or nothing about learners' ability to use the form appropriately.

### *Knowledge vs skill*

The point was made above that knowledge and skill combine in efficient communication. However, teaching for knowledge is very different from teaching for skill. Knowledge can be 'presented' or 'discovered'; it can also be forgotten. Skill, on the other hand, can only be acquired through practice, and once acquired is relatively easily maintained. The fact is that while we can 'teach' knowledge, we cannot teach skill. Skill has to be learned, and practice is a central element in that learning.

### *Practice or testing*

A test of language form is at the far end of a continuum that starts with copying or highly controlled practice. In practice situations, we provide support, typically in the form of examples; in testing situations, we remove that support. In controlled practice situations, moreover, the focus is narrow, the choices very limited, and learners have an opportunity to consolidate their mastery of the language point through repetition. In discrete-item testing, on the other hand, the intention is to sample the learner's mastery of a range of language items, and each item will therefore tend to focus on a different point. Again, what counts is the objective: we need to be clear that the format suits the pedagogic purpose.

### *Context, language input and output*

If grammar practice – or the first stage in this – is seen as primarily concerned with the development of formal fluency (see the first half of Figure 5.1) then context may not seem particularly important. Indeed, it may be seen as a potential distraction. We can, however, acknowledge this while still insisting that all the samples of language which learners are exposed to and expected to produce should be realistic, that is, potentially usable and useful. Thus, even though the focus may be on the *underlying* form or rule, the surface manifestations of that rule should have potential value in their own right.

The argument for contextualisation is, of course, incontestable in relation to the lower half of the diagram in Figure 5.1. Grammar is a system for expressing certain types of meaning. Used in combination with appropriate lexical choices, it allows us to express meanings about ourselves and our world (real and imaginative) or the world 'out there', that of events and information to which we only have access through books, TV or the Internet. This distinction may be somewhat artificial – Widdowson refers to the knowledge a learner gains as part of his or her general education as 'part of the learner's world' (1979: 78); however, the point is that in thinking of contexts for grammar practice, these two worlds will be the most appropriate reference points. Factors such as the age of the learners, their existing knowledge and the predictable contexts in which they

might use the target language would obviously influence the choice of specific contexts and exercise items.

### Task 5.7K

1. Look at extract B, exercise 3 in Appendix 5.6. What is the purpose of the picture? Do you have any comments on the language of the exercise (input to the learner, learner's expected output)?
2. Look critically at a worksheet you have used recently in the light of the discussion in this subsection (accuracy/fluency, knowledge/skill, practice/testing, form, meaning and use, examples of natural language). Think also about the questions you answered when analysing exercises and activities in Chapter 4 (What is the intended purpose of each exercise? Does the exercise fulfil this purpose? Is this what you want from the exercise? If not, can it be adapted or should it be replaced?). What changes, if any, would you make to the worksheet?

#### 5.2.4 *Differentiation and motivation?*

Since a worksheet will normally be used by learners working individually or in groups with the teacher monitoring and helping as needed, a key question is how to cope with the problem of differences in proficiency level within a class. One answer is to prepare different worksheets for different levels of learner. The alternative is to design a worksheet in which exercises are graded from easy to more difficult, a principle often followed in testing. This has two main advantages over the first suggestion: it is less work, and it avoids the possible negative effects of 'labelling' students; however subtly this is done, students recognise it for what it is. If everyone works with the same worksheet, weaker learners or more careful learners who work more slowly may only complete the first few sections, but if what they have done is correct they will nevertheless feel a sense of achievement, and thereby gain confidence. If later sections of the worksheet are at an appropriate level of challenge for the more proficient learners, they will also feel a sense of achievement. The relationship between age, level, achievement, motivation and confidence is, of course, complex. However, it has been frequently observed that 'success leads to success', and this might be a reason for trying to ensure that younger learners and those in the early stages of language learning experience success.

If graded worksheets are set as groupwork, it is advisable that the members of each group be of roughly the same proficiency level. Although there is an argument for peer teaching in relation to certain types of activity, there is a strong possibility that in this particular case the more proficient students will dominate and complete the worksheet without reference to or discussion with their weaker peers. If plenary feedback is conducted, the groups containing weaker students should be given the opportunity to show that they can answer the easier questions. Differentiation is also discussed in Chapter 11.

### 5.2.5 Number and sequencing of exercises

One of the points made in section 5.2.3 was that teaching (and, by implication, practice and testing) of grammar and vocabulary should pay due attention to meaning and use as well as form. This need not be within a single worksheet, of course. Worksheets should also have a clear developmental progression (grading) from easier to more difficult, which often means from more controlled to less controlled, ideally within exercises as well as from exercise to exercise. Three exercises per worksheet is often a good number. For instance, exercise 1 might serve to raise awareness or remind learners of a rule; exercise 2 might provide practice; and exercise 3 might be a check on learning.

Let us suppose that a class of students (first-year university students at lower-intermediate to intermediate level on a compulsory English course) frequently omit the auxiliary verb in passive sentences. A worksheet focusing on this might contain the following three exercises:

1. *Sentences in which the words have been jumbled.* Asking students to put the words in the correct order (and perhaps underline the passive construction) would help to remind students that an auxiliary verb is necessary in this structure. The sentences could form a coherent description of the life of someone known to the students (and therefore incorporate such commonly used passives as 'was born', 'was brought up', 'was married', as well as some active verb forms). Differentiation: ask early finishers to write two sentences, say about themselves, using the verbs in the exercise.
2. *Sentences in which the infinitive of the verb is supplied* and students have to supply the correct form. An example is included (or two examples if there is a mixture of active and passive sentences in the exercise). A description of a familiar process would provide coherence and add relevance if all the students are following a similar mainstream course. Differentiation: prepare two versions of the process. In the easier version, all the active verbs are supplied; in the more difficult version, there is no indication as to whether the verb should be active or passive.
3. *A picture story in which a series of unfortunate events befalls the central character.* The scene can be set by supplying the first sentence of the story in which the protagonist is clearly established as a (passive) victim. Differentiation: students might be asked to choose between a skeleton story with useful vocabulary supplied or just a list of useful vocabulary; or students can work in mixed-proficiency (or friendship) groups.

### Task 5.8

1. What do you think of the grading in the sequence of exercises suggested above? Do you think the exercises would help these learners to overcome the stated problem (omission of auxiliary verb)? If not, what would you suggest?

2. Look at extract C in Appendix 4.1 or extract B in Appendix 5.6. What kind of development can you see here? Would you have sequenced the exercises in the same way? Why (not)?
3. Look at extract D or K in Appendix 5.3 or extract A in Appendix 5.6. If you were designing a follow-up exercise for one of these, what would it look like?
4. Look at a worksheet you have used recently. Is there a logical progression? Does it cover everything it needs to? Is there provision for differentiation?

### 5.2.6 *Worksheet layout and other general design considerations*

The discussion of exercise (re)design in Chapter 4 drew attention to, for example, the desirability of the following:

- a title
- clear instructions (simple language, short sentences)
- one or more examples, if the purpose is practice
- numbered items
- the need to cater for early finishers.

One more point to bear in mind:

- visual appeal: make sure the worksheet looks appealing rather than off-putting. Allow plenty of white space at the top and bottom of the page, for margins and between exercises; and use a reasonable point size (11 or 12 for teenagers and adults and perhaps 14 for young learners). It is better to spread material over two pages than try to compress too much material into one. Use capital letters and boldening (bold type) sparingly. Italics (or a handwriting typeface such as Comic Sans MS or Chalkduster) can be used to distinguish examples from instructions. Graphics can add interest as well as providing a cue as to what is expected. If learners are to write on the worksheet, leave ample space.

Appendix 5.7 contains a checklist which can be used to evaluate a worksheet that you have designed yourself before you use it. It would be a pity, of course, if – given all the effort that goes into creating materials – we did not also evaluate their effectiveness after trying them out. Chapter 9 contains a number of suggestions for assessing the effectiveness of teacher-prepared materials.

## 5.3 Computerised worksheets

The increasing availability of computers for student use in classrooms and self-access centres has made possible the provision of computerised worksheets. These have a number of advantages over handouts. Materials can often be modified by the learner to permit variation in the degree of difficulty (e.g. by determining the frequency

of deletions in a cloze text). Immediate feedback is available. Self-checking is easy. Mistakes can be easily erased. Computers can give praise, but they do not blame. Moreover, the computer is endlessly patient: it will not push the learner to finish within a specific time; and it will repeat examples, explanations and exercises as often as the learner wishes.

Some coursebook packages also provide customisable tests.

## REFLECTION, DISCUSSION, ACTION

- The focus of this chapter has been on the provision of supplementary exercise material. How do you normally supplement your coursebook or other core materials? By photocopying exercises from print materials? Downloading exercises from the Internet? Creating your own exercises? Has this chapter influenced how you think about supplementation and/or how you will approach supplementation in future?
- Create a list of 'Top tips for worksheet design' based on your learning from this chapter and your own experience. Note: Appendix 5.8 contains three sets of 'top tips for worksheet design'. These were formulated by groups of experienced teachers who had recently gone through a period of training in worksheet design and been asked to obtain feedback from their colleagues and students on the worksheets they had produced. The items in the lists are not ordered in terms of their perceived importance. It is your decision whether to aim for twenty-one or, say, thirty-one tips and whether to look at the lists in Appendix 5.8 before you begin or after you have exhausted your own ideas.
- Appendix 5.7 contains a template for evaluating worksheets. This is intended as a reference point primarily when you are developing your own worksheets, but also when critiquing existing worksheets. Do you wish to modify the template in the light of your 'top tips' (or your list of tips in the light of the template)?
- Prepare a worksheet (ideally, for a class you are teaching) containing three exercises. The worksheet:
  - may focus on any linguistic **system** (i.e. grammar, vocabulary, phonology, spelling – language skills such as reading and writing are dealt with in the next chapter)
  - should focus on a genuine problem for learners
  - may include exercises from published materials
  - must include at least one exercise that you have prepared yourself
  - should take account of the principles discussed in section 6.2 of Chapter 4.

Use the self-evaluation checklist in Appendix 5.7 (or your version of this) to make sure your worksheet is as good as you can make it.

Ask your colleagues/classmates if they can spot the exercise(s) you have designed. Ask them also to comment on what they liked about the worksheet

and make any suggestions for improvement. Then try out your worksheet, collect feedback from the learners who used it and report back on what you discover.

## REVIEW AND PREVIEW

The chapter has examined the process of supplementation through the provision of additional exercises. Such exercises can be 'borrowed' and if necessary adapted from commercially published materials or the Internet or specially written for the target learning group. When there is a choice between these two options, the latter, while more demanding, has the advantage that it should result in materials that are most relevant to the needs of the specific group in question. Teachers who take the decision to prepare worksheets to provide additional practice of this kind need to take account of a number of general considerations. These include the relationship between objectives and format, learner differentiation, organisation and layout, and the need to evaluate the worksheet. Teacher-made worksheets tend to deal with grammatical features, and the chapter has discussed factors that might influence the design of grammar exercises and illustrated a variety of exercise-types. However, the worksheet approach also lends itself well to individualised work on other aspects of the language and this has been exemplified through a secondary focus on vocabulary exercises.

As we have seen in this chapter, materials design needs to be just as firmly based on principles as materials evaluation. The next chapter, which extends the discussion of design principles, deals with the selection and exploitation of authentic texts as both supplementary and stand-alone material.

## FURTHER READING

**Supplementation:** McGrath (2013) briefly discusses the treatment of supplementation in the professional literature but also gives examples of teacher supplementation (2013: ch. 6).

**Warm-ups and other short activities:** Ur and Wright (1992), Emmerson and Hamilton (2005), McKay and Guse (2007) all offer 'five-minute activities', the last two for business English and young learners respectively.

**Teaching grammar:** on deductive and inductive approaches and exercises, see for example Rutherford (1987), Harmer (1991a), Batstone (1994). Sources of exercises include Wright (1994), Bolitho and Tomlinson (1995), Thornbury (1997). Ellis (2010) discusses grammar teaching in the context of second language acquisition research and Stranks (2013) grammar and EFL materials.

**Teaching vocabulary:** Wallace (1981), Cairns and Redman (1986), Schmitt (2000), Nation (2001, 2013). Coxhead's (2000) academic word list has been the basis of a good deal of materials development activity in EAP.

**Evaluating websites:** checklists devised by Karen McLachlan for the evaluation of website content and design in any subject area can be found at [www.cyberbee.com/guides\\_sites.html](http://www.cyberbee.com/guides_sites.html)

**Mixed-levels and differentiation:** see reading suggested at the end of Chapter 7.

# Using the real

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**Conditions for language learning – The nature of authenticity:** authentic texts; ‘the cult of authenticity’; criteria for the selection of authentic texts; text-types; text selection and teaching purpose; principles; exercise-types – **Tasks:** authentic and pedagogic tasks; spoken communication activities – **Authenticity and difficulty:** grading text and task; task difficulty – **A focus on language:** course-book language; concordances – **Exploiting the Internet and mobile technology:** functions of technology and roles of teachers; delivery of course content; facilitating learner access to other language learning materials; facilitating interaction; feedback – **Dissemination, support, training:** materials sharing; professional development

## I CONDITIONS FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING

In the previous chapter, the argument was put forward that teachers should prepare their own supplementary materials in the following circumstances:

- the coursebook does not fully meet the specific needs of the learner group
- no suitable published supplementary materials are available (or these cannot be copied or bought).

That chapter dealt with the preparation of supplementary exercise material.

This chapter is principally about texts, spoken and written. It thus not only has a different focus from the previous chapter, it is also intended to be relevant both to teachers who base their teaching on a coursebook and to those for whom that is either not the preferred option or not an option at all. One of the assumptions underlying this chapter is that teachers who through necessity or choice use a coursebook will sometimes wish to supplement the book in other ways, for instance by providing a greater variety of texts, or by introducing authentic texts or tasks if these are not included in the coursebook; and that teachers who do not use a coursebook will nevertheless need to source texts and think about how best to use them for the benefit of learners.

Also underlying this chapter is the belief that language learning (in the first and additional languages) is facilitated by four interrelated conditions. The first of these



conditions is exposure to suitable samples of the language in sufficient quantity (suitability being a matter of quality as well as appropriateness to the learner). The second is opportunities for relevant practice (receptive as well as productive), that is, engagement with language samples and other language users. The third is motivation, which may exist independently of conditions 1 and 2 but may also be stimulated by these. And the fourth is feedback – not necessarily in the form of error correction, but certainly a response indicating whether or not one has been understood. By providing opportunities for learners to interact with *real* materials, create materials and communicate with others about those materials, and by structuring that experience so that feedback is available, we may be able to do more than just establish a fertile environment for classroom learning. We can also hope that out of these conditions springs the motivation for learners to want to carry on communicating and learning out of class.

Of course, instruction – however this is delivered – is at the heart of institutional learning, and the point was made in Chapter 1 that this is one of the functions of language learning materials, other potential functions suggested by Tomlinson (2001) being elicitive, exploratory and experiential. Coursebooks are designed to instruct and to elicit language from learners, typically in the form of controlled or freer ‘practice’, though whether the practice provided fully meets the specification above (relevant practice, receptive and productive engagement with language samples and other language users) will be a matter of degree. Where coursebooks have tended to fall down most obviously is in relation to the exploratory and experiential functions (Tomlinson et al. 2001; Masuhara et al. 2008): most have not encouraged exploration (inductive/discovery learning) and/or provided enough experience in the form of exposure to extended and genuine samples of the language. There are, however, welcome signs of change. As we saw in Chapter 5, some published materials do include inductive approaches to awareness raising; and publishers have been resourceful in extending the range of materials available to learners through dedicated websites. As far as the provision of authentic texts is concerned, Cengage’s link with National Geographic Learning is of particular interest: this has resulted in the *Pathways* series (Tarver Chase 2013) and the *Life* series (Hughes et al. 2015), both of which make use of National Geographic videos and images, while Cengage’s *21<sup>st</sup> Century Reading* series (Longshaw and Blass 2015) exploits authentic speech in the form of TED talks (see [www.TED.com](http://www.TED.com)).

This chapter suggests a number of ways in which teachers can supplement, improve upon or exploit what is available to them. **Sections 2 and 3** are concerned with the provision of materials that will engage learners in experiencing and interacting with texts that are relevant to their needs and interests. Section 2 considers the concept of authenticity, and offers guidance in the selection of texts, and section 3 deals with the preparation of tasks. **Section 4** discusses authenticity and difficulty. For teachers who design most of their own material these will obviously be *central* concerns. With language exploration in mind, **section 5** focuses more narrowly on the exploitation of concordance data (i.e. samples of language use deriving from computer based language corpora). **Section 6** examines some of the possibilities

afforded by technological advances and the teacher's role in exploiting these and facilitating learner use of online resources. Section 7 emphasises the importance of a supportive institutional structure for teachers as well as learners.

## 2 THE NATURE OF AUTHENTICITY

Useful summaries of the authenticity debate are provided by Clarke (1989b), Newby (2000), Mishan (2005) and Gilmore (2007). Although, as Clarke points out, there has been something of a shift in focus from text to task, belief in the importance of authentic texts runs deep and this therefore provides the starting point for this section.

### 2.1 Authentic texts

Nunan (1988a: 99–102) offers the conventional definition of authentic texts: '“Authentic” materials are usually defined as those which have been produced for purposes other than to teach language' (1988a: 99); for example, print materials such as newspapers or timetables or spoken materials such as public announcements. If we see authentic text materials as not simply samples of the kind of language use that learners may need to cope with outside the language classroom but also as potential models of use, Nunan's definition might be further refined to include the more contentious dimensions of speaker/writer and listener/reader highlighted in the following definition: 'communication *by and for native* speakers, writers or readers in that language' (Breen et al. (1979: 1; emphasis added). This raises another issue, of course, that of what constitutes an appropriate model, a question to which there might be different answers in different contexts. For the purposes of this chapter, therefore, a distinction will be made between (1a) 'a stretch of real language . . . produced for a real audience and designed to convey a real message' (Morrow 1977: 13) and (1b) materials primarily designed to teach language; as well as (2) how teachers and learners perceive and use materials.

Strictly speaking, an authentic listening text would be neither scripted nor edited; in practice, poor quality, length and other pedagogic considerations lead to spoken texts being re-recorded and/or edited for use in classrooms. Written texts may similarly be retyped and edited. While it might be argued that these changes can substantially alter the way the original text was conceived or delivered and affect comprehensibility (Grellet 1981), the pedagogical argument has generally prevailed. The key issue in relation to text authenticity, however, is how far it is reasonable to go in the direction of rendering a text accessible to learners. Modifications to texts would include:

- cutting out a newspaper/magazine article and photocopying it (loss of information on visual context in which it appeared)
- retyping an article (change in visual appearance of text)
- reproducing only part (but a continuous part) of the original text

- editing out sections of the text to simplify the argument or content
- editing out linguistic elements (e.g. sentences, phrases or words) that are not syntactically necessary and would pose difficulty.

As this list indicates, it is obviously easier to modify a written text than a spoken text.

The main concern in relation to these kinds of adaptation is that the more changes are made the less 'authentic' the text becomes. One reason why authenticity is felt to be important is that it gives learners a taste of the real world, an opportunity to 'rehearse' in a sheltered environment, hence the less authentic the materials we use the less well prepared learners will be for that real world. This is also the argument advanced against specially written or simulated authentic texts. Although discourse analysis has helped us to identify the features of authentic speech and writing, and we can deliberately build certain features into specially devised materials so that they resemble the real thing, they can never *be* the real thing, as a comparison between, say, scripted speech and a transcript of real speech immediately reveals. Does this matter? Some, such as Nunan, would say it does: that 'comprehending and manipulating scripted dialogues does not readily transfer to comprehending and using language in real communicative situations' (1988a: 100), that there will be not only phonological differences (e.g. articulation and intonation) but also differences at the level of syntax, discourse patterns and patterns of interaction. However, to recognise these differences is not to argue for the total exclusion from the classroom of scripted material, since this can be used – alongside authentic text – for quite different pedagogic purposes (Nunan 1988a).

## 2.2 'The cult of authenticity'

Referring to prescriptive methods of the first part of the twentieth century, Howatt comments that 'the authority of the approach resided in the materials themselves, not the lessons given by the teacher using them', which led to 'a cult of materials' (1984: 267, cited in Gilmore 2007: 97). Is there a parallel here with authentic materials? Although the arguments for the use of authentic texts appear to have been widely accepted, a few dissenting – or at least questioning – voices have been heard. Day (2003), who cites a number of pro-authenticity authors, uses the term 'the cult of authenticity' (Day and Bamford 1998: 53) to express his own unease. Claiming that authentic materials are too difficult for beginners and intermediate-level language learners and that there is no empirical evidence demonstrating that such materials benefit learners, he argues that appropriateness is more important than authenticity. Peacock (1997), whose focus was on learner motivation rather than improved performance, describes a carefully designed experiment over twenty days with thirty-one South Korean beginner-level learners in a university EFL institute in which authentic materials and what he calls 'artificial' (i.e. coursebook) materials were used on alternate days. The authentic materials consisted of two poems, some TV listings, two short articles, an advice column for a local newspaper, an American pop song and some English language magazine advertisements. His

overall conclusion is that 'learners were more motivated by authentic materials but not because they were more interesting' (1997: 152); he also notes a 'time effect', in that learners' preference for the authentic materials increased as the study progressed. The authenticity vs artificiality debate is for Waters (2009) just one example of an attempt by applied linguists to impose ideological values on the profession, in this case by insisting on authenticity. One conclusion that might be drawn from these papers is that a concern for appropriateness need not rule out the use of authentic materials but might instead be a key consideration in deciding which authentic materials to use, and when to use specially written materials; another, that more research is needed. Text difficulty is discussed in section 4.

### Task 6.1

1. In Hong Kong, teachers are free to select their own teaching materials but official curriculum documents drawn up by the Education and Manpower Bureau encourage teachers to 'supplement [textbooks] with interesting and authentic materials to suit their learners' needs' (Education and Manpower Bureau 2002: 77, cited in Yeung 2011: 6) and to 'make use of a wide selection of authentic listening materials such as advertisements, announcements, telephone conversations, speeches, films, poems, songs and rhymes' (Education and Manpower Bureau 2007: 77, cited in Yeung 2011: 6). Do you think teachers should be 'encouraged' in this kind of way?
2. What would you say to the learner quoted by this teacher?

Evidence of our examination-oriented attitude is that I ask my students to read the newspaper, as it is a source of examination articles. Ironically, a sixth former once asked me which sections of the newspaper were most likely to appear in the examination so that he should read more and which sections were not 'useful' so that he need not read them at all.

3. Do you use authentic texts in your teaching? If so, what most influences your choice of text?

### 2.3 Criteria for the selection of authentic texts

A number of criteria need to be considered in selecting authentic texts for classroom use, the most obvious of which are:

- relevance (to syllabus, to learners' needs)
- intrinsic interest of topic/theme
- cultural appropriateness
- linguistic demands
- cognitive demands
- logistical considerations: for example, length, legibility/audibility
- quality (as a model of use or as a representative token of a text type)
- exploitability

Relevance is a *sine qua non*. However interesting a text may be, if its use cannot be justified on the grounds of relevance (whether of topic, genre or linguistic features) it should not be used at all. The corollary also applies: if a text is patently not going to interest learners, however relevant it is, it should be replaced by one that will. Relevance and interest are relative, of course, and potentially a matter of presentation and exploitation as well as content. With a little ingenuity, it may be possible to use an unpromising text in ways that make it seem relevant or more interesting. For this effort to be worthwhile, the text would also need to be suitable in other respects.

In some contexts, cultural appropriateness is seen as the absence of any features (illustrations or verbal references) that offend against the religious, social or political mores of that culture; more broadly, it might be seen as the framework within which the materials are set, and the extent to which settings, interactions and characters are familiar. With regard to a specific text, therefore, cultural inappropriateness may relate to the topic, the attitude of the writer to the topic or specific allusions. It may be possible to edit out or replace certain allusions; if the text is deemed to be inappropriate in a more general sense, then there is little that can be done. (For a fuller discussion, and an alternative view, see section 3 on materials and culture in Chapter 10.)

The extent to which there is a rough match between the linguistic and cognitive demands of the text and the capacities (language proficiency, cognitive maturity, knowledge) of the learners is an obvious consideration. Cognitive considerations will include the familiarity of the subject matter and key concepts, degree of abstractness and text organisation (including the ordering of information and the salience of discourse markers). On a linguistic level, glossing of key lexical items can help, and some difficulties can be removed through judicious editing. Editing (e.g. of whole paragraphs) can also reduce a long text to something usable within a limited time frame. Too much editing, on the other hand, especially within paragraphs or sentences, can not only result in the loss of some of the features that make a text authentic but also eliminate some of the links that make it a cohesive whole – and thereby render it more difficult to process (see Tomlinson's (1998b) comments on simplification, quoted in Chapter 4). Potential problems relating to the legibility of a written text (e.g. its (small) size or the fact that it is handwritten) or to the audibility of a recorded text may necessitate the production of a more accessible version of the original or, if these logistical difficulties combine with other disadvantages to make the text basically unsuitable, lead to the decision to select an alternative text.

Two final criteria should be mentioned – and here we move away from the text itself to the way in which it is used. Since texts are seen by students (if not always by teachers) not simply as something on which to polish their listening/reading skills but also as something from which they can learn language, it is important that they be suitable as examples (e.g. of a particular text-type such as a letter requesting information, abstract or technical report) and/or contain examples of specific language features. In other words, a text should be an appropriate sample of language use and a model, in some of its features at least, for student production. We should remember, however, that authentic texts were not written to serve as practice grounds or hunting grounds for language learning. They were written to convey information.

transmit ideas, express opinions and feelings, entertain. Good texts tell us something we do not know; they contain interesting content; they provoke a reaction. They are multiply exploitable because they lend themselves readily to tasks which are interesting as well as useful.

## 2.4 Text-types

One reason for teachers to go outside a coursebook for texts is that they wish to expose their students to more examples of a particular text-type, and to illustrate the variations within this, or to provide exposure to a greater range of text-types.

### Task 6.2

- Can you add to the following list of text-types? You might also wish to distinguish between subcategories of some of the items, such as letters:
  - novels, plays, poetry, nursery rhymes
  - song lyrics
  - cartoons
  - letters, postcards, notes, emails
  - newspapers and magazines – and particular sections in these, such as letters to the editor
  - advertisements (any medium)
  - films
  - film reviews (print or online)
  - reports, statistics, diagrams
  - travel brochures, guidebooks, timetables
  - instructions, road signs
  - menus, bills
  - telephone directories, dictionaries.
- Which of the text-types on your (expanded) list have you not used? Are there any of these which it might be useful for your students to work on?

## 2.5 Text selection and teaching purpose

We use texts for a variety of purposes. For example:

- for listening/reading skills practice/development
- as further exposure to examples of language use (reinforcing previous structured input)

- to introduce new linguistic input
- as stimuli for productive language use: for example, a spoken or written response to the topic of a text
- as discourse models
- for their information content.

Potentially, all of these purposes could be fulfilled using specially written texts. The primary purpose for choosing to use an authentic text is that it is authentic. The next task encourages you to consider in a preliminary way possible objectives underlying text use and some of the procedures that might be used to fulfil these objectives.

### Task 6.3

Here are five teachers (A–E) talking about their reasons for using texts in class. Read the extracts, then try the tasks that follow.

- I want students to have a model (for instance, examples of a new structure or a particular kind of letter) so that they'll feel more confident about attempting new things in the language. The principle of listen/read first and then speak/write seems a basic one to me.*
- Students will only learn to understand native speakers of the language if they're exposed to plenty of samples of authentic language, different voices, etc.*
- Sometimes my students have difficulty talking or writing about topics because they lack imagination or inspiration. I find that if I give them a listening or reading text first that often helps to get the ideas flowing.*
- I tend to use texts to develop a specific receptive skill, be it listening or reading. And I normally have particular aspects of the skill in mind – for instance, the ability to distinguish the main points, to get the gist, as it were, or the ability to use contextual clues or existing knowledge to make informed guesses about the meaning of unfamiliar lexical items. Sometimes, I use explicit means (i.e. consciousness raising); at other times, I use what you would probably call implicit means – that is, I get students to carry out particular operations in the hope that these will become instinctive. For example, if I wanted to help students to process written text more quickly, I might either analyse a text with them so that they can see how texts are typically structured in the target language – bearing in mind that there are differences across cultures, or if I were working implicitly, I might simply set them a task which required them to read quickly. Normally, of course, I'd move from the explicit to the implicit, which would then be a way of practising or applying their conscious knowledge. So, using the same example, consciousness-raising analysis of text structure would be followed by practice in skimming.*
- I see texts as linguistic quarries. My main concern in working with texts – real texts, that is, not texts specially written for language learners – is to draw attention to points of language which are either of interest*

*in themselves (specific structures, lexical items, cultural allusions) or provide a starting point for consideration of related language features. A lot of what I do – and my students seem to find this fascinating too – is in the area of synonymy, antonymy, idiomatic expressions, etc. The general idea is to enrich their vocabularies, of course, extend their linguistic repertoires. We dig at the text together; they then decide what they want to take from it. For the kind of students I teach, upper-intermediate and advanced, this seems to work pretty well.*

1. Which of the teachers seem most concerned that texts should be authentic?
2. Each of the extracts makes reference to an end (the objective) of using texts and a means. Go through them again and mark the relevant sections O and M respectively.
3. The objectives listed below are reformulated (and reordered) versions of those expressed by Teachers A–E. Match the two sets of objectives. One has been done for you.

<i>Objectives</i>	
<b>Language skill-oriented</b> develop general comprehension develop specific receptive skills	..... ..D..
<b>Language system-oriented</b> facilitate productive use of specific language items develop general language proficiency	..... .....
<b>Other</b> facilitate production	.....

4. Which of the views expressed is closest to your own?

**Beyond** beginner level, all language teachers in adequately resourced contexts make **use** of texts. However, they differ both in what they do (method or means) and in **what** they hope to achieve (objectives or ends). Clearly, different procedures are likely to produce different results. What we need to ensure is that there is a match between **our** objectives and our means. Here are a few general principles that might be helpful.

## 2.6 Principles

1. Students will find it easier to cope with 'real-life' listening/reading if they are exposed to authentic texts in class.
2. In much of the listening that we do in real life we are involved as interactants. We listen and we speak. We know why we are involved in the interaction and our role and that of others in the interaction. Even if we are not directly involved, as when we are 'eavesdropping', standing in a queue or sitting near someone on public transport, we know what the situation is and we have access to various kinds of contextual information, such as facial expression,



physical closeness and touch, that can usually help us to make sense of the relationship and of what we hear. In other kinds of listening (e.g. telephone conversations, public announcements, radio broadcasts, lectures), where the speaker knows we need additional help to compensate for what we cannot see and/or for the lack of potential for interaction, this will be provided through explanation, repetition, and so on. In the classroom, when audio recordings have been used, compensatory background information has not always been given. Audio recordings are, of course, an important way of providing for classroom listening practice. However, it needs to be recognised that in relation to recorded conversations learner-listeners will be at a severe disadvantage compared with someone present during that conversation because they lack contextual information. Unless one of the specific purposes of the activity is to encourage learners to make guesses about the situation, the topic, the attitude of the speakers to the topic, the relationship between the speakers, and so on, as much of this information as would be known to someone present during the conversation should be made available to the learner. From all this we can derive a very brief principle: put the learner in the picture.

3. If we are to simulate real-life text processing (reading or listening), the *first stage* of an approach to text should involve a *focus on meaning*. In our first language, we listen/read with a purpose. That purpose always involves extraction of meaning (information or opinion), although it may also include supplementary expectations, such as pleasure through humour.
4. *The meanings that we ask students to extract should be related to the meanings the intended reader is expected to derive from the text*, that is, the writer's intention. Students' text-processing proficiency can be judged by their capacity to extract these (and arguably no other) meanings. The nature and extent of the meanings involved will, of course, be partially determined by text-type.
5. Students are more likely to cope successfully with text meanings if they are given help with content and/or language. This can include pre-reading activities or the provision of a glossary.
6. Since students are also language learners, it follows that the *second stage* should involve a *focus on language*. This may be intended to serve various purposes:
  - (a) provision of models: for example, study of the use of a particular tense
  - (b) language enrichment: text items provide a starting point for work on, for example, synonymous or antonymous items or lexical sets
  - (c) input to another activity: a text is used almost as a pre-text or preliminary to an activity in which the focus is on another language skill (e.g. a written text may be used as input to discussion). In this case, the initial text may serve both to stimulate thought on the topic and to feed in relevant ideas and language.

In 'the bad old days', a teacher might have asked learners to read the text aloud or gone through it themselves translating and/or commenting on each sentence

or simply said, 'Read/listen to the text and answer the questions'; these days, the orthodox approach takes the form 'pre-reading/listening – while-reading/listening – post-reading/listening'. The principles above reflect this orthodoxy, 2, 3 and perhaps 5 relating to the pre-reading/listening stage, 4 to the while-reading/listening stage and 6 to the post-reading/listening stage.

## 2.7 Exercise-types

Let us imagine that a good (suitable) listening or reading text is available – in other words, a text which satisfies the text-selection criteria discussed in section 2.3 and which will serve a teacher's teaching objectives. It may be a reading or listening text in a coursebook, accompanied by an inappropriate set of 'comprehension questions', or it may be something the teacher has found him- or herself. In either case, it will be necessary to prepare questions or tasks. The principles above may be helpful at a general level, but it is still necessary to consider how specific objectives can be translated into task types.

Grellet (1981) is one of the most comprehensive sources of ideas for the teacher wishing to develop text-based materials. As Table 6.1 indicates, her approach is to identify specific reading subskills (many of which have an equivalent in listening); she then provides copious illustrations of the types of exercise that can be used to develop each of these skills. See Grellet (1981: 14–25) for a discussion of each of these exercise-types.

Table 6.1 Reading comprehension exercise-types (based on Grellet 1981: 12–13)

<i>Reading techniques</i>		
<b>Sensitivity:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• inference: through context; through word-formation</li> <li>• understanding relations within the sentence</li> <li>• linking sentences and ideas: reference; link words</li> </ul>	Improving reading speed	From skimming to scanning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• predicting</li> <li>• previewing</li> <li>• anticipation</li> <li>• skimming</li> <li>• scanning</li> </ul>
<i>How the aim is conveyed</i>		
<b>Aim and function of a text:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• function of the text</li> <li>• functions within the text</li> </ul>	<b>Organisation of the text – different thematic patterns:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• main ideas and supporting detail</li> <li>• chronological sequence</li> <li>• descriptions</li> <li>• analogy and contrast</li> <li>• classification</li> <li>• argumentation and logical organization</li> </ul>	Thematisation

Table 6.1 (continued)

<i>Understanding meaning</i>		
Non-linguistic response to the text: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ordering a sequence of pictures</li> <li>• comparing texts and pictures</li> <li>• matching</li> <li>• using illustrations</li> <li>• completing a document</li> <li>• mapping it out</li> <li>• using the information in a text</li> <li>• jigsaw reading</li> </ul>	Linguistic response to the text: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reorganising the information: reordering events; reorganising the information using grids</li> <li>• comparing several texts</li> <li>• completing a document</li> <li>• question-types</li> <li>• study skills: summarising; note-taking</li> </ul>	
<i>Assessing the text</i>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fact versus opinion</li> <li>• writer's intention</li> </ul>		

Grellet's concern is with the learner and what the learner needs to be able to do to understand a text fully; and the exercise-types listed are means to that end. By contrast, the questions and tasks that accompany reading texts in coursebooks were the stimulus for Freeman's (2014) research. In order to classify these, she drew on a number of existing taxonomies, but found none of these sufficiently comprehensive. She therefore developed her own composite taxonomy. This consists of two tiers. The first relates to pre-reading activities; the second is reproduced in Table 6.2. The ordering of question-types within the Content and Affect categories is intended to be hierarchical.

Table 6.2 Taxonomy of comprehension questions (Freeman 2014: 83–4)

<i>Categories</i>	<i>Comprehension question types</i>	<i>Description</i>
Content questions	Textually Explicit	In this question type the answer to the question can be found stated directly in the text. There is word-matching between the question and the text. The information required is in sequential sentences.
	Textually Implicit	In this question type the answer to the question is stated directly in the text but is not expressed in the same language as the question (no word-matching). The information is not all in the same order. It is separated by at least one sentence.
	Inferential Comprehension	In this question type the answer to the question is not stated explicitly in the text but rather alluded to. The reader has to combine their background knowledge with the information in the text and make the necessary connections.

Table 6.2 (continued)

Categories	Comprehension question types	Description
Language questions	Reorganization	<p>This question type requires the reader to reorder, rearrange or transfer information in the text.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- putting sequences in chronological order</li> <li>- transferring data into parallel forms (e.g. label pictures/maps, complete a table, translate)</li> </ul>
	Lexical	<p>This question type requires the reader to focus specifically on <i>vocabulary</i>, not information. Included in this category are exercises where the reader</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- guesses the meaning of a word or phrase from the context</li> <li>- matches definition A with word/phrase B</li> <li>- Uses a dictionary</li> </ul> <p>Word attack and text attack strategies are included in this level.</p>
	Form	<p>This question type requires the reader to focus specifically on <i>grammar</i> or <i>form</i>, not information. Examples of form questions include exercises where the reader</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- changes a sentence from the affirmative to the negative</li> <li>- forms the question that goes with a given answer</li> <li>- explains the use of one tense rather than another (e.g. present perfect not past simple)</li> </ul>
Affect questions	Personal Response	<p>This question type requires the reader to offer their personal reaction to the text in terms of likes/dislikes, what they found funny, surprising etc. the reader can be asked to transfer the situation in the text to their own cultural context and comment. Highly subjective, there is no 'right' answer.</p>
	Evaluation	<p>This question type requires the reader to make a judgement or assessment of the text/information according to some understood criteria. This criteria can be</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- formally recognized independent sources</li> <li>- teacher provided</li> <li>- student-set standards</li> </ul> <p>The reader is also expected to provide a rationale or justification for their view.</p>

Application of the taxonomy to four global EFL textbooks revealed a number of differences in question-patterning across the books, and across different editions (reflecting changes in the authors' views over time). On the value of the taxonomy, Freeman comments that it offers 'a framework for the analysis and comparison of reading comprehension activities . . . it raises awareness of different types of questions and tasks . . . and each question-type has its merits' (2014: 105).

### Task 6.4

1. Does Grellet's taxonomy seem to you to be a satisfactory way of describing the skills involved in reading? Look first at the major headings.
2. Does your approach to the teaching of reading cover all of these skills and subskills?
3. Use Freeman's taxonomy to analyse the questions accompanying three reading texts in your coursebook or the reading materials you have prepared yourself or the extracts from published materials in Appendix 6.1. What did you discover? Are there any types of question that you now feel you ought to include when you use texts?

One of the many ideas contained in Maley's (1998, 2011) discussion of current and desirable future developments in materials design is that of a typology of generalised procedures that can be used with raw texts. They are, in essence, ideas that teachers can use in devising student activities. As with any good typology, the number of ideas that can be generated by each option is limited only by the user's imagination.

1. *Expansion*: students add something to the text (e.g. adjectives, sentences, comments, a beginning or ending).
2. *Reduction*: students shorten the text in some way (e.g. by turning it into telegraphese, by combining sentences, by rewriting in a different format – see also points 3 and 8).
3. *Media transfer*: students translate the text into a different medium or format (e.g. drawing, table, poem or recast a letter as a newspaper article).
4. *Matching*: students 'match' the text with something else (e.g. a title, another text, a picture).
5. *Selection/ranking*: students select a text (e.g. for inclusion in a teenage magazine) or part of a text for a particular purpose (e.g. words to act as a title); or rank texts according to a given criterion (e.g. formality).
6. *Comparison/contrast*: students identify points of similarity or difference (e.g. words/phrases, facts, ideas).
7. *Reconstruction*: students reconstruct the original text (which has been, e.g., reordered, gapped or presented in a different medium).
8. *Reformulation*: students express the same meaning in a different form (e.g. retelling a story, rewriting in a different style).
9. *Interpretation*: students engage with the text on a personal level (e.g. in response to prompts about their own experience or the images/associations

thrown up by the text) or think about what questions they might wish to ask the author.

10. *Creating text*: students use the text as a starting point for the creation of their own texts (e.g. parallel text on different theme, reusing words from the original text, using the same title for a new text).
11. *Analysis*: students carry out a linguistic analysis of the text (e.g. frequency with which different tenses are used, listing all the words referring to a particular topic, such as the sea).
12. *Project work*: students make use of the text in a more extended practical activity (e.g. a text in which an issue is presented leads to the design of a questionnaire, which is administered to other students).

(Based on Maley 2011: 395–8)

An illustration is provided (see also Woodward 2001). In each case, Maley suggests, the normal pattern would be for individuals to do the activity first themselves, then to compare what they have done in pairs or threes, and finally for the outcomes to be shared with the whole class.

### Task 6.5

1. Are there any techniques in Maley's list that you had not thought of?
2. Can you add further examples for any of the options?
3. Look at the tasks that accompany extract F in Appendix 3.3 and classify them according to Maley's typology. Which of the task-types suggested by Maley might precede, follow or replace the original tasks?
4. Do the same for the tasks accompanying a text in a randomly chosen lesson in the coursebook you are using or one of those in Appendix 6.1.

One of the points emphasised in Grellet's (1981) introduction to her book is that reading should be linked to other skills. Examples include reading and writing (summarising in a letter what one has read); reading and listening (comparing an article and a news bulletin); reading and speaking (debates, the arguments for which have been researched). This brings us to the issue of task authenticity.

## 3 TASKS

### 3.1 Authentic and pedagogic tasks

The narrow concern with text authenticity that characterised the early years of the communicative movement gave way in the 1980s and 1990s to a concern for the nature of tasks and for learners' attitudes to texts and tasks (e.g. Candlin and Murphy 1987; Nunan 1989; Crookes and Gass 1993a, 1993b; Willis 1996).

Nunan provides a generally accepted definition of authentic tasks which takes real-world behaviour and learner needs into account: 'tasks which replicate or rehearse

the communicative behaviours which will be required *of them* in the real world' (1988b: 4; emphasis added). Authentic tasks can be contrasted with *pedagogic* tasks (e.g. controlled grammar practice activities such as gap-filling or transformation exercises), which focus on the development of accuracy rather than language using.

One point of particular interest in Nunan's definition of authentic tasks, though he does not pursue it, is the specific reference to learners' own realities. This poses a common problem for syllabus planners and materials designers: how to predict the behaviours that will (and will not) be needed. Form-filling, for instance, might seem a potentially relevant activity, but the classroom teacher is probably in the best position to know whether a specific group of learners are likely to need to complete a car hire form, a visa application form, a dating agency form – or none of these. The obvious solution would be to exclude the kinds of task which will most obviously not involve the learners in relevant kinds of communication or, more positively, to concentrate on the likely needs of the majority – but even here there are problems.

One of these has to do with the relationship between text and task. Hall (1995), for instance, makes the point that the authenticity of a text is not in itself sufficient to make the work based on it either interesting or valuable; what counts is the reader's response. If a learner is already familiar with the content of the text he or she is expected to read in the language class, then the 'need' to read will derive merely from the requirement to jump through the hoops (exercises and activities) provided by the teacher. If real-life reading is our yardstick, then we must bear in mind that this is self-motivated: that a reader reads because he or she wishes to. For Hall, therefore, 'An authentic response depends on the existence of *an authentic need*' (1995: 12; emphasis added).

On one level, this can be seen as an argument against teacher-imposed tasks. Senior makes the point that students may engage with materials in ways we have not anticipated:

They may want to comment, or learn more about, something that's caught their eye. They may want to point out the places they've been to on a local map, say that they've already seen a particular movie, or have genuine questions they want to ask about a product in a particular advertisement. (2009: 47)

She adds: 'One advantage of taking whole newspapers to class, rather than articles that we've cut out and photocopied, is that students can choose what they want to read' (2009: 47). While this is a persuasive argument, it ignores the fact that a good deal of reading for study purposes (and probably much of the reading that is done in work contexts) is not motivated by a wish to read but a need to read, which students and those who need to read in the course of their work accept. Moreover, learners may have different expectations of classroom activities and their real-world parallels. Thus, a second problem, if it can really be seen as such, is that learners may take a different perspective from theorists. There has been research into adult learners' preferences which suggests a preference for conventional form-focused activities (i.e. pedagogic tasks) over more communicatively oriented activities (see Nunan 1988 for a summary of some of this research and Spratt 2001 for further research). Taking this into account, Nunan (1988a, 1991) suggests that learners may them-

selves *authenticate* particular activities which, using measures such as those discussed above, would not pass the authenticity test.

Our response to this should not be: 'Good, so it doesn't matter what kinds of task (or text) we use, as long as learners seem happy with them.' If we can predict that learners will need to engage in real-world interactions, whether face-to-face or through the written word, then we owe it to them to devise appropriate rehearsal activities (tasks). But this concentration on the real (authentic tasks) should not blind us to the fact that there may be two routes to success in carrying out such activities. One involves the acquisition, through discrete practice exercises (pedagogic tasks), of the necessary knowledge and skills, with the final task necessitating the integration of these enabling competences. The alternative is to provide a progressively more complex series of tasks, with feedback at each stage. The latter approach has been strongly advocated in the context of task-based learning, where feedback is seen as essential: 'to avoid the risk of learners achieving fluency at the expense of accuracy and to spur on language development, another stage is needed after the task itself (Willis 1996: 55, cited in McDonough et al. 2013: 41).

### Task 6.6

1. Think of the tasks that you typically set on texts. Which of these are authentic and which pedagogic? Do the latter prepare for the former? Should they?
2. What are your students' views about text and task authenticity? If you do not know, how would you find out? (Be as specific as possible.)

### 3.2 Spoken communication activities

The 'information gap' is now well established as a means of stimulating classroom communication. For instance, jigsaw listening and jigsaw reading both require learners to share their piece of the puzzle with other learners in order to solve a problem. Other types of commonly used paired activities which exploit this principle include the following:

- *Describe and draw*: one person describes a picture, the other attempts to reproduce it; the same principle applies to following instructions on how to get from A to B on a map.
- *Describe and arrange*: one person describes a fixed set of items, the other organises movable items accordingly (e.g. cut-outs of furniture in a room or photographs of people) – for this activity, two copies of the same sets of pictures will obviously be needed.
- *Spot the difference*: the kind of observation puzzle sometimes found in newspapers, where two versions of the same picture (hand-drawn or photocopied) differ in a specified number of details. This is more interesting when items are added as well as deleted from both pictures.
- *Making plans*: both students have diaries with certain fixed appointments; the task is to find a time when they can do something together.



The degree of difficulty involved in any of these tasks will depend partly on the nature of the task but more particularly on the lexis required to describe/understand. In one version of 'Describe and arrange', for example, the task might be to arrange photographs of people or food items or landscapes in a particular order, but the photographs themselves might be so similar that very detailed descriptions are required. It is not difficult to cater for quite different proficiency levels within a class in this way.

'Opinion gap' activities also have an obvious real-world origin. We differ in our tastes in clothes, colours, food; we differ in what we think of books, films, music; and we differ in our judgements of people and events. We will also have different preferred ways of dealing with common problems and different views on how we should act in given situations. Unlike information gap activities, activities that exploit an opinion gap are open-ended in the sense that there is no right answer (Clark 1987 calls them 'divergent' as opposed to 'convergent' tasks); and as a result, some students may find them less satisfying. (The instruction to 'try to persuade others to agree with you' may be a way of extending an open discussion meaningfully and bringing it to a positive conclusion.) Activities that would fall into this category would include:

- discussion: for example, based on a question, a visual or auditory stimulus, a social problem, an 'agony aunt' page
- debates
- priorities exercises: for example, ranking a list of occupations according to their social usefulness
- story completion.

Prabhu (1987), whose Bangalore Project used both information gap and opinion gap activities, also refers to 'reasoning gap' activities. These involve processing information in order to solve a given task. An example would be working out from a railway timetable the quickest way to reach a given destination. For school-age learners, such tasks can obviously serve broader educational aims as well as providing for communication practice.

As with any activity, relevance is important. Jolly and Bolitho (2011: 111) cite the following reaction from a young German learner to a tourist–policeman dialogue in an elementary secondary school textbook: 'Schon wieder so ein dummes Übungsgespräch' ('Another stupid practice conversation'). Topics, contexts and, in the case of role plays, roles – all have to be seen as appropriate by the learner.

## 4 AUTHENTICITY AND DIFFICULTY

### 4.1 Grading text and task

In language learning, as Nunan (1988a, 1991) points out, difficulty has traditionally been seen in terms of language items, and careful selection or 'control' of these items has been the principal means by which input to learners has been graded.

The adoption of the principle of authenticity as a central tenet of communicative language teaching has posed a particular problem as far as grading is concerned. If only authentic texts are used and the principle of authenticity is adhered to strictly, then no linguistic editing (or control, in this sense) is possible.

Two ways of resolving this dilemma have emerged.

#### 4.1.1 *'Grade the text'*

In the first approach, where the emphasis is on linguistic appropriateness, texts are selected which are of approximately the right linguistic level for the learners, without worrying overmuch about specific linguistic items. While this may seem relatively unproblematic for an experienced teacher with a feel for the kind of language that a particular group of learners should be able to handle, text difficulty cannot be assessed purely on the basis of linguistic analysis. The difficulty of a spoken text may be attributable to the rate at which a speaker speaks, for instance, to his or her accent (and perhaps the familiarity of the learners with this accent) and articulation, to the fact that there are several speakers whose speech overlaps, or to white noise; and particular difficulties are involved in listening to recordings, when the clues available in face-to-face speech are absent. Both spoken and written texts may prove difficult, as noted earlier, if one is unfamiliar with their content, key concepts or the cultural setting.

#### 4.1.2 *'Grade the task'*

The second approach is to select texts on the basis of their inherent interest and devise tasks which are judged to be within the competence of the learners, to grade the task and not the text (Grellet 1981). Following this principle, even newspapers can be used with beginners.

In practice, the two tactics are frequently combined in a single strategy: that is, a text is selected which is thought likely to interest learners and be of an appropriate level of difficulty, without being 'easy'. The pedagogic justification for not choosing an 'easy' text or one from which all difficulties have been edited out is that in responding to relatively simple tasks, the learner's focus will tend to be on taking only what is needed from the text for a defined and limited purpose (an 'authentic' approach in itself).

## 4.2 Task difficulty

Nunan (1989: ch. 5), whose discussion of task difficulty draws attention to the complex interaction between the various contributory factors which combine to determine task difficulty, refers to input considerations (i.e. the text, and the support this provides for the listener/reader), the nature of the task, and learner factors such as linguistic/cultural knowledge, confidence and previous experience with similar tasks. Prabhu's (1987) experience with the Bangalore Project suggested that

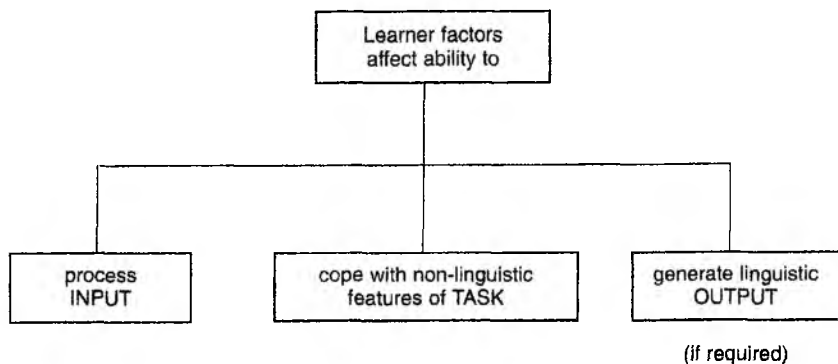


Figure 6.1 An input–output view of task difficulty

key factors affecting task difficulty included the degree of abstractness and the need for precision and reasoning.

Linguistic output considerations (what the learner may be required to say/write) are no doubt implied in this discussion, but by making them explicit, as in Figure 6.1, and distinguishing them from non-linguistic features of the task, we ensure that they are fully taken into account at the task design stage. During the 1970s and 1980s, output tended to be seen in terms of accuracy and fluency. Skehan (1989) suggested that complexity is also involved, and this is now accepted as one of the factors to be considered in task analysis and task design. (For discussion of related research, see Houston and Kuiken 2009, a special issue of *Applied Linguistics*.)

Another advantage of separating linguistic output from the other features of task difficulty is that it encourages a focus on the conditions (e.g. time constraints) under which the task is to be carried out, as well as on the cognitive processes involved. Candlin and Nunan (1987, cited in Nunan 1989: 110) have proposed a system of grading adapted from Bruner, in which there is a four-stage progression from ‘attending and noticing’ to ‘transferring and generalising’.

This kind of analysis is not only relevant to the selection or design of suitable tasks for a specific class of learners; as Nunan (1989) points out, it also makes possible the manipulation of one or more elements to create tasks which pose different levels of challenge.

## 5 A FOCUS ON LANGUAGE

### 5.1 Coursebook language

One of the criticisms that has been made of coursebooks is that they do not present ‘real language’. This applies not simply to texts but also to examples and rules. As we saw in Chapter 5, it can also extend to the language which learners are asked to produce in exercises.

The analysis of the language of coursebooks and the comparison of this with native speaker language use, as reflected in language corpora, has been a popular focus of research for some time now, and surveys can be found in, for example, Gilmore (2007), Harwood (2010b, 2014b) and McGrath (2013). Typically these studies of coursebook language content point to gaps: language items which one might expect to be included on the basis of their frequency in corpus data are absent, or their range of uses only partially represented. Harwood (2014b) also cites a number of studies focusing on pragmatics which illustrate potentially more significant consequences of this gap. For example, Handford (2010) points out that though the expression 'I disagree with you' appeared in the business English textbooks he analysed, this did not feature in his 900,000-word corpus of business meetings. Harwood comments:

It is not that disagreement is absent from the meetings; rather, disagreements are prefaced or hedged in the authentic data. As Handford notes, this mismatch is no trivial matter, as *I disagree with you* and some of the other expressions taught are 'potentially face-threatening in many situations', and 'learners are in danger of acquiring linguistic behaviour that may be highly detrimental to their professional career'. (Handford 2010: 251–2, cited in Harwood 2014b: 8–9; original emphasis)

One of the reasons for making use of carefully chosen authentic texts, of course, is that they can serve as examples of real-world language use. Another way of giving learners access to such examples is in the form of concordance data.

## 5.2 Concordances

### 5.2.1 *The value of concordances*

Descriptions of language in use have benefited greatly from the development in recent years of huge computerised databases (e.g. the British National Corpus at the University of Oxford, the COBUILD corpus at the University of Birmingham and the Nottingham/Cambridge University spoken English corpus at the University of Nottingham). Using such a database to examine a specific language item (e.g. the verb 'do'), it is possible to determine both the range of ways in which the item is used and the relative frequency of these, information which can be a useful input to course planning and materials design. Made available to learners, printouts (or 'concordances') of extracts from such data allow students to explore the language and formulate their own tentative rules. Concordances can also reveal – and help learners notice – patterns of use that might not otherwise be apparent (Willis 1998). For instance, a study of concordance lines focusing on 'break out' would show that the subject of the verb 'break out' is typically something unpleasant – 'wars', 'fights', 'strikes', 'riots' or 'fire' (Fox 1998); or focusing on the verb 'wish' would show that it can be used in a variety of ways with somewhat different meanings, new knowledge which can subsequently be tested (Misham 2013). Moreover, in relation to grammatical features,

\* pstick. She looked so much better than the fat, spreading South London moth  
 \* safe rule is never to get closer than the overall stopping distance shown  
 \* pping at Marks & Spencer is easier than ever, with a Chargecard. When you'r  
 \* peed; you may be going much faster than you think. Do not speed up to get a  
 \* ditions. Your speed will be higher than you think – 50 mph may feel like 30  
 \* on of peace obviously looms larger than ever before in human history. And h  
 \* ng involved an in- crease of less than 5,000 million tons of coal equivalen  
 \* ibute (reckoned in calories) less than four per cent to the world total. In  
 \* drawing a trailer, or a bus longer than 12 metres, must not use the right-h  
 \* after conversion from holding more than 15% of the shares in the successor  
 \* ookshop of their choice from more than 3,000 throughout the UK and Ireland.  
 \* e Board? A W will do much more than that. We will hold meetings with Mem  
 \* ers stay down at any time for more than three minutes without a train arriv  
 \* ervation at intervals of not more than two miles and they apply to all lane  
 \* atch in fascination as more often than not he missed his mouth and the carr  
 \* coming up behind much more quickly than you think. Make sure that the lane  
 \* enticeship – I deduce that, rather than know it – sometime, it must have be  
 \* ith him for most of the day rather than several visitors all at once, which  
 \* heelers are much less easy to see than larger vehicles and that their rider  
 \* offer the customer better service than our competitors. We believe that on  
 \* take the bend a little bit sharper than him; so I took off, was going towar  
 \* n your right is moving more slowly than you are. Never move to a lane on yo  
 \* that, um something which is worse than in other countries, or . . . <Dian  
 \* , especially when you are younger than usual. So I like to think I'm helpi

Figure 6.2 A concordance of 'than' (Tribble and Jones 1990: 41)

concordances can compensate for the limitations of coursebooks. The concordance of 'than' in Figure 6.2, from Tribble and Jones, while short on examples of *more ADJ than*, contains 'plenty of examples of the comparison of adverbs, often neglected in course books, and of *rather than*, as well as the common idiomatic uses . . . *than ever*, . . . *than you think*, and the structure *better to (verb) than to (verb)*' (1990: 41).

Concordances can also be a corrective to the prescriptiveness of coursebooks. Fox suggests:

a selection of appropriate lines can be given to students, who can then see for themselves what is happening. They will find sentences exemplifying what is traditionally taught – and that's good: it gives them some rules they can apply and know they will not go far wrong. But they will also find sentences that deviate from what they have been taught – and discussion should help tease out what is happening: how so much depends on the speakers and their perceptions. (1998: 32)

Carter et al. illustrate this last point with reference to the Nottingham corpus of spoken English, which incorporates a description of the context of use, noting that the choice of 'going to' or 'will' depends as much on 'interpersonal and social-context sensitive factors' as it does on 'strength of prediction' (1998: 68).

### 5.2.2 Using concordance data

A teacher could simply take a printout into class and talk learners through it (Tribble and Jones 1990). Though this might be informative, it might also be overwhelming and it is possible to imagine other uses that are a little more imaginative and potentially more effective. A first step, as Tribble and Jones suggest, would be to add a heading and a set of questions to the printout. The dataset could also be edited by deleting repetitive examples. This latter problem might be reduced by using a sampler, that is, a smaller, representative set from the main database. Tribble (2000) recommends for teaching purposes the British National Corpus sampler (1999), a two million word sample from the much larger database; this is also available as a CD-ROM. Mishan (2004) recommends the Collins COBUILD website at [www.cobuild.collins.co.uk](http://www.cobuild.collins.co.uk) (forty-line 'sample' concordance), the British National Corpus (BNC) website at <http://sara.natcorp.ox.ac.uk> (fifty random 'hits') and the Hong Kong Virtual Language Centre at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University at <http://vlc.polyu.edu.hk/concordance> (subject- and genre-specific corpora).

A number of exploitation techniques are also suggested and exemplified by Tribble and Jones (1990). For instance, if the intention is to draw learners' attention to the range of uses of a particular lexical item, an edited selection of these can be generated with the keyword deleted and learners asked to supply the missing keyword. Matching exercises can be created by reordering the elements that follow the keyword (see the example in Figure 6.3). Group-work activities can be based on groups being given the same task but a different set of data.

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In this concordance something seems to have gone wrong with the printer! The contexts after the word *such* have come out in the wrong order. Can you put them back in order so that the first part of each context matches the second part? Write a number in the brackets at the end of each context to show which ending goes with each beginning. The first one has been done for you.

---

- 1 Burnley; 'but think how she felt, such things as salad, vegetables and bre (12)
  - 2 d not mind. To him the old man was such thing as a ones meal. The recipes th (...)
  - 3 nd this applies to other countries such richness of choice that a Book Toke (...)
  - 4 r on clothes. – Empty containers, such as his nickname or what foods he lik(...)
  - 5 the road to warn drivers at places such a little girl, she was only eleven, (...)
  - 6 ything she should know about him, such as aerosols or tins. A combination (...)
  - 7 gifts animals give us painlessly. such times the boy did not laugh. He was (...)
  - 8 thin a year or two from illnesses such dinners, optimism is restored, and o (...)
  - 9 e remains. Friend- ships bloom at such as skin cancer or pneumonia which the (...)
  - 10 ct under the sun. This is world of such as Aus- tralia, New Zealand and Can (...)
  - 11 dish-Suppers There really is no such an object of fascination that he se (...)
  - 12 red accompaniment to the meat, are such as bends and brows of hills where t (...)
  - 13 d rosewood and mahogany floor. At such as milk and eggs. The proposition (...)
- 

Figure 6.3 A matching exercise using concordance data (Tribble and Jones 1990: 41)

Technical advice is also included on how to produce and manipulate the concordance data.

Willis (1998) suggests that teachers (or their students) can create their own concordance exercises based on texts with which students are already familiar. Willis's paper includes five examples of actual classes in which she used what she calls 'hand concordancing', that is, the creation of a mini-concordance based on available texts (which may be learner-generated texts) by the learners themselves. The focus of each concordance was determined by Willis with reference to a computer-generated frequency list – in this case, a list based on The Bank of English, the University of Birmingham corpus. Participants produced the concordances, on overhead projectors or on the board, and Willis devised the analysis tasks.

One of the examples provided by Willis relates to an analysis of uses of 'in'. The students (described as 'weak remedial beginners') had read three short articles from the *Guinness Book of Records* about the largest, the smallest and the most expensive houses in the world, and were then asked to write out the phrases containing 'in' and classify these as 'place', 'time' and 'other'. In the *Guinness Book* texts, all the phrases were found to relate to place or time. The students were then asked to look through materials they had worked with earlier in the course and find further examples. This led to a number of discoveries: for example, that 'in' can be used to refer to groups of people ('in your family'), languages ('in English') and fixed phrases ('in fact'). It also has an adverbial use: for example, 'Will you join in?' 'Hand your books in.' Willis comments: 'This search for more examples gives a broader picture of the uses of the common word. In other words, it is making full use of the pedagogic corpus so far covered by the learners' (1998: 57).

The possible benefits of the kinds of language analysis activities Willis describes are summarised as follows:

Learners can:

- become aware of the potential different meanings and uses of common words
- identify useful phrases and typical collocations they might use themselves
- gain insights into the structure and nature of both written and spoken discourse
- become aware that certain language features are more typical of some kinds of text than others.

(Willis 1998: 55)

Concordance printouts need to be handled with care, however. Students may find the fragmentary nature of the lines and the disparateness of the samples disorientating. An appropriate first step would therefore be to explain what a concordance is and how working with concordance printouts may help them. (See Thompson 1995 for suggestions for introductory exercises.) They may also feel daunted if they

are presented with too much material. Even though these disadvantages can be overcome by getting students to do the concordancing themselves, they may still be reluctant to spend a great deal of time on a single point of language. We could, of course, ask them to suggest points of language about which they feel unsure and would themselves like to investigate.

### Task 6.7

1. Mishan (2004) suggests that corpora could be helpful in (1) highlighting differences between words which students tend to confuse (e.g. *say*, *speak*, *tell*); (2) clarifying the meanings of phrasal verbs that share the same lexical verb (e.g. *get on*, *get off*, *get by*, *get through*); and (3) raising awareness of collocations which are idiomatic, 'language-specific and culturally-determined' (e.g. colours, parts of the body). Other possible foci would include reporting verbs such as *state*, *claim* and *argue* (especially useful for students of EAP) and 'tricky' verbs such as 'suggest'. What do you think of these ideas?
2. Have you used concordance data with your students? If not, would you?

## 6 EXPLOITING THE INTERNET AND MOBILE TECHNOLOGY

### 6.1 Functions of technology and roles of teachers

In resource-rich classroom teaching environments, fixed and mobile technology – in the hands of teachers and learners – now offers conveniently rapid access to specially designed learning materials as well as to the resources of the Web. Advances in technology have also led to increased possibilities for formal learning outside the classroom through, for example, virtual learning environments (VLEs) such as Blackboard or Moodle. In less advantaged contexts, formal learning is also possible through the personal mobile technology in the learner's bag or pocket.

From the perspective of materials and language learning, new technology in its various forms potentially serves a number of purposes:

1. to deliver instructional content
2. to give independent access to learning materials other than those provided directly by the institution where the learner is studying
3. to facilitate interaction and communication within learning communities and more widely
4. to provide feedback on performance.

A word of caution may be appropriate here. When planning or reviewing face-to-face courses which might make use of new technology, it is important to apply the same test of fitness for purpose that we would apply to books, which are also a form



of technology. This means that our starting point should be our course aims, derived from an analysis of context – which in this case would include the technology available and what we know about learners. We can then consider whether, and if so how, the available technology can be exploited in order to enhance and complement face-to-face classroom learning in the ways outlined above. Or to make the point rather differently: ‘We need to remind ourselves constantly that technology should be a tool in the service of creativity and not a substitute for it’ (Maley 2013: 184).

There is some evidence that learners are already making autonomous use of at least some of these increased opportunities for learning. For instance, Jarvis surveyed the use of English via computers by university students in Thailand and Abu Dhabi. Of the 123 respondents, ‘a tiny 3.3% reported using only their L1’, whereas 8.1 per cent claimed to use only English, 24.4 per cent ‘mainly’ English and 64.2 per cent ‘some’ English (2012: 8). The majority of respondents referred to Google, YouTube and Wikipedia, with some also mentioning specific websites. It follows that one of the key tasks for teachers is to raise learners’ awareness of where they can find useful materials (see point 2, above). More generally, carefully staged directed learning through class activities and homework tasks (see sections 6.2 and 6.3) can prepare the ground for self-motivated self-directed learning, with the Web being seen, in Slaouti’s (2013: 84) words, as ‘an enormous self-access centre’. In formal learning settings, encouragement might not be enough, of course: linking out-of-class activity to assessment may be more persuasive.

## 6.2 Delivery of course content

Ideas for technology-based language-focused classroom activities can be found in resource books such as Dudeney (2007), where activities are organised by level and theme, and Stanley (2013), where the primary organisation is by language area (e.g. pronunciation, writing). Kiddle (2013) has sections on teacher-created and learner-created digital materials.

Out-of-class activity can also serve as preparation for in-class activity. In the ‘flipped classroom’, the teacher typically provides lesson content in an electronic form. The notion of the flipped classroom derives from general education, but has also stimulated interest in EFL classrooms, where the out-of-class activity might take the form of a video or listening comprehension task (a YouTube clip or a TED talk, for example) or a research task involving learners accessing electronic resources. Although this is not new in the sense that teachers have always set homework, what is new is the idea that the instructional dimension of teaching (and in the foreign language class this could include, for example, pronunciation modelling, or advice on giving a presentation) can be taken out of the classroom, and some of the responsibility for sourcing information can be passed to the learner. Project work has been used in language teaching for some time (e.g. Fried-Booth 1986; Phillips et al. 1999; and the *Project* series (Hutchinson 2013) currently in its third edition). The resources now available through the Web have expanded the possibilities enormously. Mishan (2005) contains examples of

tasks which encourage learners to carry out online research relevant to literary works; and another task involves collecting information on cultural events such as festivals. This not only means that class time is freed up for more interactive follow-up activities; it also means that learners have some choice and can work at their own pace, and that different learning styles can also be catered for. From this perspective, flipping represents an attempt to enhance and individualise the learning experience through the creative exploitation of technology, including mobile technology. That is, it breaks down the boundary between the physical and virtual classroom. As a corollary, however, it also obliges us to consider how to make the most effective use of classroom time. (Blended learning courses, in which course activities are distributed across online and physical environments can be seen as an extension of this idea.)

We cannot take it for granted, of course, that all learners will be equally comfortable with all aspects of technology use. For Warschauer, electronic literacy includes:

Computer literacy (i.e., comfort and fluency in keyboarding and using computers), information literacy (i.e., the ability to find and critically evaluate online information), multimedia literacy (i.e., the ability to produce and interpret complex documents comprising texts, images and sounds), and computer-mediated communication literacy (i.e., knowledge of the pragmatics of individual and group online interaction). (Warschauer 2002: 455, cited in Slaouti 2013: 86)

This argues for an approach to tasks which takes into account learners' existing competences. This is the basis of Dudeney et al.'s (2013) *Digital Literacies*, in which activities are ordered hierarchically according to the type of literacy involved (e.g. texting literacy, multimedia literacy). Group tasks also allow for learners to learn from each other, but in secondary- and tertiary-level institutions cross-disciplinary collaboration on course design which promotes the development of digital literacies is desirable.

Teachers also vary in their sense of comfort with technology. Stanley (2013: Appendix A) provides a brief 'Learning technologies guide', which includes both descriptive notes and some suggested websites. Appendix B contains an extensive set of technical notes on the activities which form the bulk of his book; the many websites recommended have value in their own right.

### 6.3 Facilitating learner access to other language learning materials

One of the tasks suggested in Mishan (2005) involves learners in evaluating language learning websites. The stages in the activity are similar to those outlined in Chapter 4 for teacher evaluation of websites. My own comments are in brackets.

1. Evaluation criteria are presented by the teacher (though these could also come from students).
2. (Optional) a list of websites is supplied (again, learners might add their own recommendations).
3. Learners work individually or in pairs to look for and evaluate sites contain-

ing different types of materials – reference materials, such as grammars and dictionaries; interactive learning activities, such as gap-fill exercises or games; cultural information (or learners create their own list of the kinds of site they would find useful and volunteer which to research).

4. Learners comment on each site visited using the evaluation criteria in point 1.
5. Learners discuss their findings (or post them online).
6. Learners try out sites suggested by others (and rate them).
7. (Optional) learners draw up a reference list of recommended sites on a class Web page or group workspace if available.

In my experience, this task has value not only for learners, in giving them experience of potentially useful additional resources, but also for teachers, in drawing their attention to sites that learners themselves find useful and providing some insight into the reasons for learners' preferences. It would also, incidentally, generate a great deal of purposeful language use.

A starter list of websites might include the British Council site at [www.learnenglish.org.uk](http://www.learnenglish.org.uk), the Macmillan site at <http://onestopenish.com>, the BBC site at [www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish](http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish) and Dave Sperling's ESL café at [www.eslcafe.com](http://www.eslcafe.com). See also Appendix 5.2. Dudeney (2007: 165–70) contains categorised lists of websites. Hyland (2013) lists websites useful for the development of writing skills.

#### 6.4 Facilitating interaction

Electronic interaction is now possible through a variety of means, through messaging applications, social media, telephony software, chat rooms, discussion forums and bulletin boards. Warschauer and Kern have made the point that:

*if our goal is to help students enter into new authentic discourse communities, and if those discourse communities are increasingly located online, then it seems appropriate to incorporate online activities for their social utility as well as for their perceived particular pedagogical value. (Warschauer and Kern 2000: 13, cited in Slaouti 2013: 96)*

Although the emphasis here is on the social utility of the discourse community, it also needs to be recognised that pedagogical value is added if teachers participate in the community and respond constructively to student contributions; this may also be an incentive to students to take part. Project work of the kind referred to under section 6.2 or cross-institutional cultural projects would seem to be an ideal way to foster social links as well as fulfilling a pedagogical goal. Technology now offers a means of combining both aims through the creation of wikis, through which content can not only be shared but also collaboratively developed.

Slaouti (2013) is a rich source of practical advice and references. Stanley (2013) has a section on building a learning community. Online projects are discussed by, for example, Mishan (2005), Dudeney (2007), Reindets and White (2010) and Stanley (2013). Mishan (2005) also touches on cultural exchanges

## 6.5 Feedback

It is not difficult to incorporate feedback to learners in activities with right/wrong answers. A wrong answer can even trigger a response which explains why a particular choice is right and the others wrong. We can, however, take a broader view of feedback as any intervention which causes a learner to reflect on his or her previous action. Kiddle cites Hattie's (2009) finding, based on a large-scale meta-analysis of educational studies, that feedback was a crucial variable in terms of its positive influence on student achievement. Hattie writes:

The art of teaching, and its major successes, relate to 'what happens next' – the manner in which the teacher reacts to how the student interprets, accommodates, rejects and reinvents the content and skills, how the student relates and applies the content to other tasks, and how the student reacts in light of success and failure apropos the content and the method that the teacher taught. (Hattie 2009, cited in Kiddle 2013: 194)

Hattie's statement in itself provokes reflection. In the first part of the quotation ("what happens next" – the manner in which the teacher reacts to'), his focus seems to be on the nature of the teacher's response to a range of possible student behaviours (elaborated in the later part of the quotation). However, it is also possible to see these behaviours as a process during which the student demonstrates mastery of the content, with the teacher monitoring continuously and intervening as necessary and in whatever way seems appropriate at each stage. Whichever interpretation we take, I think we can draw two conclusions: that it is important to find ways of providing feedback to learners during their online learning activities (which include course-related interaction activities) and that this feedback needs to be individualised – the use of the singular 'the teacher' and 'the student' here is probably not merely stylistic. There is a place for general feedback to the course group as a whole, of course, either at the end of a particular stage in an activity or when the activity has been completed, and this might begin with an opportunity for self-evaluation.

Stanley (2013: Activity 11.6) describes screen-capture video feedback. Students send their work to the teacher by email and the teacher creates a video of this, with sections highlighted and accompanying audio feedback. The video or the link can then be sent to the student or group. Assessment of digital work, including the use of e-portfolios, is briefly discussed in Dudeney et al. (2013: 342–7).

## 7 DISSEMINATION, SUPPORT, TRAINING

### 7.1 Materials sharing

Broadly speaking, the theme of the chapter thus far has been on support for learners. In this section, we turn our attention to the needs of teachers.

Arguing that the time spent by teachers on materials design can be justified,

Block presents a six-stage process leading to the sharing of material. The example given is the exploitation of a reading text, but this might equally well be a satellite TV news programme, a radio interview or any general-interest material in any medium:

1. The teacher finds an interesting article in a news magazine.
2. The teacher spends over an hour putting together a reading exercise, a language activity derived from the text, and a discussion activity.
3. The teacher uses the text and activities in class, and then makes a few adjustments in the activities.
4. The teacher posts several copies of the text with the activities on a board in the teachers' room.
5. Several teachers use the text and activities in their classes.
6. At some point, the text and activities are either put in a long-term bank (in which case, they are considered to be relatively 'timeless') or thrown away (in which case they are considered 'dated').

(Block 1991: 215–16)

Block makes the point that for this to be 'cost-effective' in terms of preparation time at least six colleagues need to contribute to the bank of material. This obviously necessitates an institutional culture in which colleagues are prepared to cooperate – and give as well as take. This problem apart, there is the practical difficulty of keeping track of the use of a specific piece of material. Where staffrooms operate with this kind of common resource, it can be very frustrating to find that a class in which you are intending to use 'your' material has already used that material (especially if you only discover this in the course of the lesson). On the positive side, it should be recognised that this kind of sharing has the potential additional benefit that the original material is gradually extended and refined as a result of trialling with different classes and by different teachers.

Because authentic texts are inherently rich in their possibilities, it is tempting to base a whole battery of activities on a single text. A word of warning: don't. As Maley wisely points out, 'there is no point wringing the text dry just for the sake of completeness' (1998: 288). You may have lost your learners long before they reach the final activity.

## 7.2 Professional development

Teachers vary in their attitudes to and adoption of technology. Slaouti notes:

How technology is integrated into teachers' practice is very much related to a number of issues . . . Access to specific technologies and how your institution supports their use is clearly important. Personal confidence in using technology is also a factor in teachers' decision-making. Our learners, their specific needs, and their own expectations of technology use are also powerful influences on eventual technology use. (2013: 80)

One aspect of institutional support is the availability of training for teachers based on agreed target competences (McGrath 2007); and competency statements and training have to keep up with changes in technology. What is important, however, is that the training provided meets the individual needs of the teachers concerned and is perceived as relevant to language teaching (Hu and McGrath 2011); for most teachers, what is of real interest is how technology can enhance teaching and learning in their subject area. An institutional infrastructure which provides opportunities for teachers to talk to each other about their concerns and successes tends to be appreciated more than training which is delivered by experts but narrowly technical.

## REFLECTION, DISCUSSION, ACTION

- What did you find most interesting and/or useful in this chapter?
- The following quotations and questionnaire statements are taken from Yeung's (2011) study of the attitudes to authentic materials of teachers in two Hong Kong secondary schools. Which statements do you agree with?
  - (a) *Authentic materials are too difficult for my students.*
  - (b) *Adapting authentic materials is too time-consuming.*
  - (c) *Authentic materials help to build students' confidence in using English.*
  - (d) *Authentic materials are beneficial to the development of students' receptive skills.*
  - (e) *Authentic materials are beneficial to the development of students' productive skills.*
  - (f) *Authentic texts broaden students' knowledge, understanding and experience of the various countries in which English is used.*
  - (g) *Students show greater motivation when you use authentic tasks.*
  - (h) *I firmly believe that English is not merely for exams. It is a medium for students to experience the creative and fun world beyond the classroom and textbooks. Using authentic materials can let students see a bigger world.*
  - (i) . . . (add a statement which expresses your attitudes to or beliefs about authentic materials and ask your classmates/colleagues if they agree).

### • EITHER

Choose an authentic text (print or online) which you feel would be appropriate for a class of learners whom you currently teach or have taught. This may be one of the texts in Appendix 6.1. Create two or more tasks based on the text. Describe the intended context of use to a colleague/classmate, explain your choice of text and tasks, and ask for comments. If possible, try out the text and tasks, collect feedback from learners and report back.

### (OR)

Design a Web-based task (a webquest) which involves learners in obtaining information from at least three sources and reporting on what they find. You may provide one or more website links or provide guidelines to help learners

locate suitable sources. If possible, try out the task, collect feedback from learners and report back.

## REVIEW AND PREVIEW

The focus in this chapter has been on the real: authentic texts, authentic (realistic?) tasks, examples of real language use extracted from computer databases, and in relation to the Internet, real communication and the accessing of yet more authentic texts. The strongest argument for exposing learners to real language (in the form of texts and corpora) and facilitating their engagement in real communication (e.g. through cultural exchanges or other forms of meaningful interaction) is compellingly simple. Motivation. This language is alive. It comes off the page (or screen), surprising, entertaining, puzzling. It comes through the window on the breeze, bringing intriguing sounds and scenes from the world outside. It opens doors into the homes and lives of strangers who may yet become friends. This is the language of real people. To understand and to make them understand, we must know this language.

For teachers, working with the real is also motivating because it represents a challenge to our professional resourcefulness and creativity. Chapter 7 looks at ways of managing this challenge by systematising the process of materials design.

## FURTHER READING

**Using texts:** see sections on skills teaching in collections such as Harwood (2010a), Tomlinson (2011a, 2013b), and in general methodology books, such as Harmer (2015). Articles on this and related topics appear frequently in journals and magazines for teachers (e.g. the *ELT Journal*, *Modern English Teacher*, *English Teaching Professional* and the *RELC Journal*).

**Language learning and teaching through technology:** at the time of writing, Slaouti (2013) and Stanley (2013) provide overviews, useful references and practical ideas, and Dudeney et al. (2013) a theoretical framework for developing digital literacy skills alongside language skills. Keep up to date through special interest groups within teachers' associations and/or journals such as *Language Learning and Technology* or websites such as that of Graham Stanley at [www.languagelearning.technology.com](http://www.languagelearning.technology.com). Nik Peachey's blog at [www.nikpeachey.blogspot.co.uk](http://www.nikpeachey.blogspot.co.uk) or Mark Pegrum's wiki at <http://e-language.wikispaces.com>. The British Council at [www.teachingenglish.org.uk](http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk), The Consultants-E at [www.theconsultants-e.com](http://www.theconsultants-e.com) and Russell Stannard's website at [www.teachertrainingvideos.com](http://www.teachertrainingvideos.com) offer a range of resources for teachers.

# Systematising materials design

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**Reducing the burden of preparation – Systematising text exploitation:** getting more out of texts; a text-driven framework; the Ideas Grid – **Systematising the structure of activities:** ‘standard exercises’ for use with reading and listening texts; oral description based on visual stimuli; role play; reporting on extensive reading – **Systematising differentiation in language skills work:** systematising differentiation – **Materials for self-access centres (SACs):** the past, present and future of the SAC; categories of material; materials selection; materials design – **From lesson materials to course materials:** a last resort?; examples of institutional course design; advice, principles, models; problems

## 1 REDUCING THE BURDEN OF PREPARATION

One of the arguments against teachers producing materials is that it is a very time-consuming process. One answer to this very real problem is that suggested by Block (1991) and referred to in the last chapter: that teachers share the burden and the benefits. Another possibility, and this may be adopted by a group of teachers or an individual, is to make use of existing ‘templates’ or models or develop these. The obvious advantage of a template is that by providing a structured basis for the development of activities, whole lessons, units of work or even courses, it can obviate the need to start from scratch on every occasion. And a third option is for teachers to get learners to produce materials – the topic of the next chapter.

In this chapter, then, our focus is on ways of systematising the materials design process rather than describing integrated approaches to language teaching and learning such as task-based learning, its off-shoot problem-based learning, or CLIL (suggested reading on these approaches can be found at the end of the chapter). **Section 2** presents two realisations of what might be called a text-based approach to materials design. **Section 3** looks at three examples of systematisation in relation to lesson activities: proposals for ‘standard’ exercises to accompany texts, a template for role play and a way of organising reports on extensive reading. **Section 4** returns to the topic of differentiation, but with an emphasis on systematisation. **Section 5** considers the needs of teachers designing for self-access centres. Finally, **section 6**



pulls together design principles, advice and research from a variety of sources which may be helpful to those planning more ambitious materials writing projects.

## 2 SYSTEMATISING TEXT EXPLOITATION

### 2.1 Getting more out of texts

As we saw in the last chapter, we use – or could use – texts for a variety of purposes:

- for listening/reading skills practice/development
- as further exposure to examples of language use (reinforcing previous structured input)
- to introduce new linguistic input
- as stimuli for productive language use: for example, a spoken or written response to the topic of a text
- as discourse models
- for their information content.

But do we get as much as we could out of the texts we use? Two approaches to text exploitation are described in this section: Tomlinson's text-driven framework, which is most fully described and illustrated in Tomlinson (2013b: 100–14) and my own Ideas Grid, first described in McGrath (1992) and more fully discussed and exemplified here.

### 2.2 A text-driven framework

The six recommended stages in Tomlinson's framework are outlined in Table 7.1.

Although not represented in the table, the first and in some ways most important steps in this process are the collection and selection of texts. Although they might come from a range of sources, 'from literature, from songs, from newspapers and magazines, from non-fiction books, from radio and television programmes and from films' (Tomlinson 2013e: 100), they are not any text from such sources. They are what trigger the BAM! (Wow! or Wham!) moments referred to in Chapter 5 as the starting point for concept-driven materials design. What sets them apart for Tomlinson is their potential for engagement:

By engagement, I mean a willing investment of energy and attention in experiencing the text in such a way as to achieve interaction between the text and the senses, feelings, views and intuitions of the reader/listener. Such texts can help the reader/listener to achieve a personal multidimensional representation in which inner speech, sensory images and affective stimuli combine to make the text meaningful. (2013e: 100)

Criteria are suggested to aid the selection process.

*Readiness activities* are pre-listening/reading activities designed to establish a connection between the learners' own lives and the text. They could involve

**Table 7.1** Recommended stages for a text-driven approach (Tomlinson 2013c: 110, adapted from Tomlinson 2013f: 24)

<i>Stages</i>	<i>Learner activities</i>	<i>Principles</i>
<b>1</b> Readiness activities	Thinking about something personal which will help the learners to connect with the content of the core text.	1 Personal connection. 2 Visual imaging. 3 Use of inner speech.
<b>2</b> Experiential activities	Linking the images and thoughts from the readiness activities to the text when first experiencing it.	1 Personal connection. 2 Visual imaging. 3 Use of inner speech. 4 Affective and cognitive engagement. 5 Use of high-level skills 6 Focus on meaning.
<b>3</b> Intake response activities	Developing and then articulating personal responses to the text.	1 Personal connection. 2 Visual imaging. 3 Affective and cognitive engagement. 4 Use of inner speech. 5 Interaction.
<b>4</b> Development activity 1	Developing the text by continuing it, relocating it, changing the writer's views, personalizing it, responding to it etc.	1 Personal connection. 2 Visual imaging. 3 Use of inner speech. 4 Affective and cognitive engagement. 5 Use of high-level skills. 6 Focus on meaning. 7 Interaction. 8 Purposeful communication.
<b>5</b> Input response activity	Focusing on a specific linguistic, pragmatic, discourse, genre or cultural feature of the text in order to make discoveries about its use.	1 Personal connection. 2 Visual imaging. 3 Use of inner speech. 4 Affective and cognitive engagement. 5 Use of high-level skills. 6 Interaction. 7 Noticing.
<b>6</b> Development activity 2	Revising the first draft from 4 above making use of their discoveries in 5 above.	As for 4.

visualisation, drawing and mime as well as oral activities such as recounting experiences and making predictions. Instructions for *Experiential activities* are intended to help the learner to make concrete connections with the text and are given to learners before they listen or read the text. They can also encourage

participation in developing a text through, for example, predicting what will follow, completing an unfinished text or acting out the stages of a story as the teacher reads it aloud. *Intake response activities* focus on getting learners to reflect on what the text means to them, prompted by tasks such as visualisation, drawing, miming, summarising or asking clarification questions. *Development activities* encourage learners to use the text as a stimulus for a productive language task related to their own lives. *Input response activities* of two kinds, interpretation and awareness, are intended to involve learners with the language of the text or the author's purpose on a deeper level. Activities might involve a debate on an issue raised by the text, a critical review of the text, an interview with one of the characters featured – or the (imagined) author, or a research task focusing on the genre of the text or a point of language.

Table 7.1 represents a flexible sequence of categories of activity. It is not essential to include all the stages or to follow this particular sequence.

### 2.3 The Ideas Grid

In McGrath (1992) I outlined an approach to lesson planning based on a simple framework for systematising brainstorming. The starting point is again a text, written or spoken, or a stimulus combining visual and text (such as a magazine advertisement, picture story or YouTube clip).

Here is an example of a spoken text I have used myself with older teenagers/adults of intermediate level and above. The + signs indicate pauses:

the difficulty's also like stereotypes + the secretary's always got that image + of sitting on the boss's knee + and the man is the er breadwinner + of the family that's gotta be + and these all the sort of like prejudices + which come into the family + from the father and the mother +and reach into school life as well + once that sort of feeling + starts to ease off a bit + then obviously girls and boys are like + going to get more opportunities as well. (Transcription of recorded BBC interview)

Thinking of the needs of a particular class and ideally working with one or more colleagues, the technique involves brainstorming ideas for the exploitation of the text, and entering these in the kind of grid shown in Figure 7.1. The intention is to come up with as many ideas as possible!

Following this kind of systematic brainstorming, the ideas likely to be of most relevance to the whole class need to be selected, grouped, and organised in a rough sequence. For instance, as discussed in the previous chapter, after a theme-setting/ orientation activity there might be a focus on the meaning of the text, some language work, and an opportunity for students to use the language more freely. Appendix 7.1 contains an example of a lesson plan developed using the grid shown in Figure 7.1.

As this example illustrates, comprehension questions are not the only way of getting learners to interact with texts. Even very short texts, if systematically exploited, can provide a starting point for a variety of stimulating and useful activities.

<b>Listening</b> Gist: what speaker says about stereotypes	<b>Phonology</b> Stressed syllables: e.g. <i>image, secretary, prejudice</i>
<b>Speaking</b> Personal reactions to speaker's ideas (could be written instead)	<b>Grammar</b> Difference between: <i>the difficulty's and the secretary's?</i>
<b>Reading</b>	<b>Vocabulary</b> Stereotypes (opening activity) Vocab. building (e.g. parts of the body)
<b>Writing</b> Transcribing recording - spelling, punctuation	<b>Discourse</b> Convert spoken text into acceptable written discourse
<b>Other</b> (e.g. culture, differentiation, multiliteracies, etc.) Clues to speaker's age, level of education. Choice of activities? Tips on using recordings for self-study.	

Figure 7.1 Ideas Grid for lesson planning (McGrath 1992: 13)

### Task 7.1K

The following short text is the full version of an item in a newspaper:

#### Still out in the cold

BEIJING: At one end of the chilly underpass, a young girl wailed. Her father, Liu Guojin, limped over to her as quickly as he could with a bowl of sweet roasted potatoes he said he had picked up at a wholesale market's rubbish heap, trying to help her keep warm. (*The Straits Times*, 7 March 2011)

1. Imagine you have decided to use this text with a mixed-proficiency intermediate class (of young learners, teenagers or adults – you decide).
2. Draw and label an Ideas Grid on a sheet of A4 paper using the headings in the grid in Figure 7.1.
3. Give yourself a fixed time (say, ten minutes) and jot down as many ideas as you can for exploiting the text. (If you are working in a group, you may wish to divide up the task horizontally, so that everyone is thinking about both skills and systems. Everyone can also be asked to think about the 'Other' cell.)
4. What did you discover? Did you come up with more ideas than you expected? Was it easier to think of ideas for some cells in the grid than others?
5. Now compare your ideas with those in the 'Tasks: Keys and Commentaries' section.

The brainstorming stage that you have just worked through is only the first step, of course. If you want to use the text with your own students, you will now have to

go through all the usual stages of lesson planning, starting with the formulation of learning outcomes and then going on to adapt the text (if necessary) and sequence activities.

The teachers for whom I have demonstrated this technique and who have subsequently tried it out with their own texts and their own classes have said that they like the simplicity of the Ideas Grid but also recognise the different ways in which it can help them. These can be summarised as follows.

The Ideas Grid:

- enables teachers to explore the learning possibilities in texts in a systematic but open-minded way (but does not, of course, involve a commitment to using all of the ideas)
- obliges teachers to be specific about learning objectives
- results in a lesson which is unified around a single text (and thus deals with the potential problem of 'bittiness' in lesson planning)
- ensures a variety of knowledge/skill foci within a single lesson and, with careful record-keeping, a balanced coverage of language systems and skills across lessons (note that short texts, by their very nature, will be less suitable for language study, but may be just as valuable as longer texts in stimulating productive language use)
- allows teachers to take account of learners' level and needs by selecting (or adapting) the ideas they wish to use; they can also adapt the text, of course (see Key to Task 7.1)
- can be modified to suit the objectives of a course: for example, only certain cells might be used, or the 'other' cell can focus on broader learning outcomes, such as cultural awareness or critical thinking
- stimulates teacher creativity, encourages collaboration and provides a focus for methodological exchange (of particular value to the less experienced).

As noted above, the process does not end with the grid, of course. If a group of teachers have worked to produce a set of ideas each might then select a rather different set of ideas as the basis for their individual lesson plan either because their students' profiles differ or simply because they wish to experiment. Planned experimentation of this kind can be a stimulating form of teacher development, as articles on 'lesson study' testify (e.g. Stilwell et al. 2010b, 2010c).

## Task 7.2

This section has illustrated two approaches to developing a lesson or even a series of lessons based on a single text.

1. What do the text-driven approach as advocated by Tomlinson and the Ideas Grid have in common?
2. How do they differ?
3. What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of each?

4. Could they be combined?
5. Could you use a text-based approach in your context? If so, what would your approach be, and why?

### 3 SYSTEMATISING THE STRUCTURE OF ACTIVITIES

In the next section, the focus is on what we normally think of as components of a lesson; certain types of activity might, however, occupy a whole lesson. The examples chosen are illustrative. Other activities which also form part of a language lesson are discussed in the next section.

#### 3.1 'Standard exercises' for use with reading and listening texts

One of the factors which led to the search for materials design templates was the pressure on teachers of ESP courses to design much of their own material. As Scott et al. (1984) observe, teachers simply do not have the time to create new exercises every time they come across a worthwhile new text. Their answer was to create a 'standard exercise' (Figure 7.2) that would guide their students (tertiary-level learners from a wide range of disciplines) 'towards more efficient and critical reading strategies' (1984: 115). Students were expected to read at least 16 texts per semester using the same exercise each time.

1. Read only the title of your text. Predict and write down at least five vocabulary items – key words – which you expect to see in the text. Use a dictionary if necessary. The key words can be noted down in English or in Portuguese.
2. Skim the text quickly (maximum one minute), looking for key words in the text. Use all typographical indications, your previous knowledge, cognates, and repeated words. Now write down, in no more than fifteen words, the main theme of the text.

Re-read the text as often as necessary to answer the following questions:

3. What seems to be the author's main intention: to *persuade* you or just to *inform* you?
4. Write down any words which look important in the text (key words) which you did not know before reading it. Beside each one, write down your idea of what it probably means.
5. Write down the main idea of each paragraph, using only one sentence for each main idea. If the text consists of more than seven paragraphs, write down the main idea of each main section. Avoid translating and try not to mention insignificant details.

Figure 7.2 Standard reading exercise (Scott et al. 1984: 116, translated from Portuguese by the authors)

6. Divide the text into sections. Is there an introduction? If so, where does it end? Is there a conclusion? If so, where does it start? Explain your answer.
7. Write one sentence reporting something which you learned from the text.
8. Critical reaction: whose interests does this text reflect? Which country, which social class, or which institution? Who would find the publication of this text desirable? Is the information in the text applicable to your own situation?
9. Indicate your interest in this text using a scale of 1 to 5 (5 = very interesting; 1 = very boring).
10. How many times did you need to use a dictionary to answer the questions so far?
11. Write down the number of each paragraph which you feel you couldn't understand properly, or aren't sure you understood.
12. Try to work out why you found the paragraphs you listed in the last question so difficult. What was the main reason?
  - a. lack of previous knowledge of the topic
  - b. a grammatical problem (which one?)
  - c. inefficient reading strategies
  - d. difficulty in separating main points from details
  - e. difficulty in identifying the introduction or conclusion etc.
13. Now estimate your comprehension of the text (e.g. 30 per cent, 80 per cent).

Figure 7.2 (continued)

### Task 7.3K

1. What is the rationale, do you think, for the structure of this exercise and each of the questions?
2. In your experience (as teacher or student), how do you think university students would react to being asked to use an exercise of this kind repeatedly?

A summary of the rationale for the exercise and the response of the Brazilian students with whom the exercise was used can be found in the 'Tasks: Keys and Commentaries' section. Dickinson (1987: Appendix C (III)) contains an adaptation of the exercise for use with listening texts.

Another factor leading to the design of standard exercises was the growth of self-access centres (SACs) (see below) and the need for an economical means of producing materials for self-directed learning. This was the situation of Scott et al. (1984) and also of Walker (1987), whose own standard reading exercise is based on that shown above. Sheerin (1989) provides further examples of a number of different standard task sheets for use in SACs: for example, for book reviews (1989: 66; see also Appendix 7.2), radio/TV programme reviews (1989: 88) and tasks based on recorded discussions (1989: 86-7). Gardner and Miller (1999) make the point that 'generic' self-access worksheets, which provide instructions and suggestions for

working with a range of authentic material, offer the promise of economy, but may be less appealing than 'specific' worksheets to learners who are pressed for time or feel the need for more guidance.

The idea of the standard worksheet for use in self-access centres has been adopted for classroom use. Kissinger (1990), who acknowledges a debt to Lonergan (1984), has produced a framework for use with video recordings (see Appendix 7.3). Axbey (1989) has done the same for audio recordings and written texts.

The underlying structure of Axbey's framework is the now orthodox three-stage *pre-reading/listening, while-reading/listening, post-reading/listening*. The second stage is, however, subdivided and each of the resulting four stages is further specified (Figure 7.3).

Appendix 7.4 contains a worksheet which may help to clarify some of the sub-stages here. Note that not only does the worksheet follow the four-part substructure and the ten-point superstructure presented above, many of the questions have also been framed in such a way that they could be used with other texts of an informational nature.

### Task 7.4

Compare Axbey's framework – let's call it (1) – with (2) that of Scott et al. (Figure 7.2). Which would you find easier to use if you were developing materials of this kind? Are there any features of the other frameworks that you would like to incorporate in the one you have chosen? Bear in mind that the end product should be as generalisable as possible. You may also like to refer back to the discussion of principles underlying an approach to authentic text in Chapter 6.

#### BEFORE READING/LISTENING

1. Draw upon *existing knowledge*.
2. Exploit *areas of interest*.
3. Encourage *prediction* of content, language and function.

#### FIRST READING/LISTENING

4. Confirm and *check predictions*.
5. Understand *global meaning* and shape.

#### SECOND READING/LISTENING

6. Understand *main points*.
7. Deal with *vocabulary*.
8. Be aware of *writer's/speaker's purpose*.

#### AFTER READING/LISTENING

9. Give a personal *response/evaluation*.
10. Encourage *self-awareness* of difficulties.

Figure 7.3 Standard reading/listening exercises (Axbey 1989)



The aim of the standard exercise devised by Scott et al. (1984) was to help students develop reading strategies and skills in a situation where there was no teacher to mediate between student and text; as they acknowledge, it cannot work at the level of specific points of language. The approach suggested by Axbey (1989), while less economical in terms of teacher time because it requires the teacher to produce a 'new' set of questions for each text, nevertheless provides a familiar underlying structure for both teacher and learner; at the surface level of the individual text, moreover, it allows sufficient freedom for teachers to exercise creativity – and learners are therefore unlikely to get bored. Although Scott et al.'s students did not complain about the repetitiveness of the procedure they were expected to follow, we have to allow for the possibility that students will get bored if the materials that make up a course are too systematised. Hutchinson and Waters caution:

Avoid the assembly line approach, which makes each unit look the same, with the same type of text, the same kind of illustrations, the same type and number of exercises. If it doesn't send you to sleep writing them, it will certainly send your learners to sleep using them. A materials model must be clear and systematic, but flexible enough to allow for creativity and variety. (1987: 107)

### 3.2 Oral description based on visual stimuli

As we see from Axbey's framework for listening/reading, there is no reason in principle why elements of a framework designed to support the development of one language skill should not be applied to another. In Singapore, where 'viewing skills' are formally assessed, Barrett's (1976) taxonomy, which provides a scaffolded approach to cognitive and affective dimensions of reading comprehension, has been used to help learners develop strategies for describing and discussing visual stimuli such as photographs (Figure 7.4).

Apart from giving learners tools for examination purposes, the framework

Level		
1	Literal description	(1) recognition: e.g. of details, main ideas, sequence, cause and effect (2) recall: as above
2	Reorganisation	classifying, outlining, synthesising
3	Inference	sequence, cause and effect, character, predicting outcomes
4	Evaluation	judgement: reality/fantasy, fact/opinion, appropriateness, acceptability, desirability
5	Appreciation	emotional response, identification, reaction to language/imagery

Figure 7.4 Guided description of visual stimuli: a hierarchical framework (based on Barrett 1976)

obviously lends itself to the discussion of works of art and the critical analysis of multimedia resources, such as advertisements.

### 3.3 Role play

One simple example of a principled and systematic approach to activity design can be found in the role play cards of the sort suggested by Cunningsworth (1984, 1995). In the approach advocated by Cunningsworth, the conversational turns are specified and assigned. The realism of the resulting interaction thus depends not only on each speaker's ability to take a turn smoothly and produce something appropriate but also on the task designer's predictions of what will be said. In the example supplied by a teacher of Russian in Figure 7.5, roles are allocated and guidance is given as to the purpose and general direction of the conversation but because there is less control at the level of who should say what when, the conversations that the role play generates are likely to be the result of genuine negotiation, sound more spontaneous and therefore constitute a more useful form of practice. Although these materials were originally designed for the purpose of testing how far students could integrate what they had previously practised in more controlled, discrete activities, they could obviously be used as part of a teaching cycle to provide feedback to students on specific features that might need further practice and as a basis for exploring alternative linguistic means of achieving the same communicative function.

Person B's card is exactly the same as Person A's except that he or she is told 'You should assume the role of Person B.' Preparation of the cards is therefore quick and easy once a decision has been made about the topic(s) and general structure of the conversation.

One potential drawback of the example below is that the conversation seems to

#### Conversation 1

#### SHOPPING IN MOSCOW

Person A is Russian and Person B is English.

Person B, a student on his/her first visit to Moscow, is staying with a Russian family. Person A, the host/hostess, asks about his/her likes and dislikes as far as food and drink are concerned in order to decide what to buy for the next few days. They make a list and then go together to buy these things. On the way, Person A asks about the town in which Person B lives in England.

YOU SHOULD ASSUME THE ROLE OF PERSON A.

be controlled by A, who is charged with asking questions about B's likes/dislikes and home town. Though this may well be appropriate for this particular situation, it is desirable in general either to build in explicit opportunities for both speakers to initiate conversation (and not only by asking questions) or to tell students at the briefing stage that this is expected. In the testing context in which this example was used students participated in two role plays, and this allowed for some variation in role.

A much more elaborate framework for lessons built around role play is provided by Richards (1985). This consists of six stages:

1. Learners participate in a preliminary activity in which the topic and situation are introduced.
2. They then work through a model dialogue on a related topic which provides examples of the type of language which will be required.
3. Assisted by role cards, learners perform the role play.
4. Learners listen to recordings of native speakers performing the role play with the same role cards.
5. Follow-up activities exploit the native speaker performance.
6. The entire sequence is then repeated with a second transaction on the same topic.

(Richards 1985: 87–8, cited in Nunan 1988b: 10)

While stage 1 reflects a general principle of communicative methodology (activate learners' existing schema, that is, their experience of similar situations) and stage 2 might be seen as activating or adding to their knowledge of appropriate 'scripts', that is, what is typically said (in this case in English) in this situation, stages 3–6 are of particular interest. Learners first attempt the task themselves; they then have an opportunity to compare their performance with that of native speakers (on the same task), and are led to notice both the differences between the two and specific features of the native speaker performance; and finally they have an opportunity to apply the new insights in a second attempt at a similar task. This movement, represented in Figure 7.6a, can be compared with the more traditional teacher-centred initiation-response-feedback (IRF) model illustrated in Figure 7.6b.

In Richards's template, learners have an opportunity to hear a native speaker version; indeed, this constitutes their 'feedback'. They then decide which elements of that feedback they wish to incorporate in their second attempt. And the second performance is not simply a classroom ritual but a motivated attempt to improve on the first. In other words, the learner determines what use to make of the input. In Figure 7.6b, on the other hand, the teacher clearly controls the output.

### 3.4 Reporting on extensive reading

The jury is still out on whether extensive reading which forms part of a course should be assessed or even followed up (see Fenton-Smith 2010 for a review). There is, however, some evidence that while learners might enjoy the opportunity to talk about the books which they and their classmates have read, they do not like having

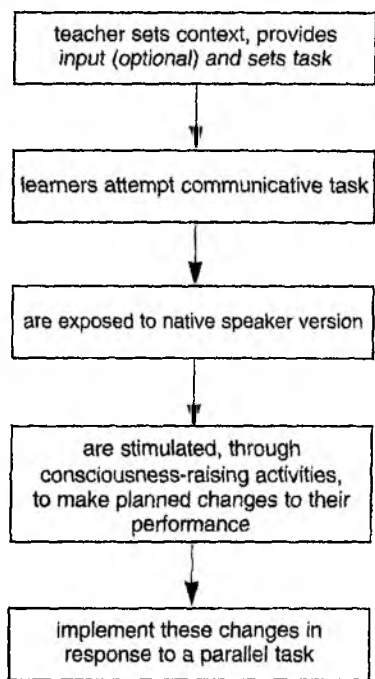


Figure 7.6a Task cycle in a learner-centred approach

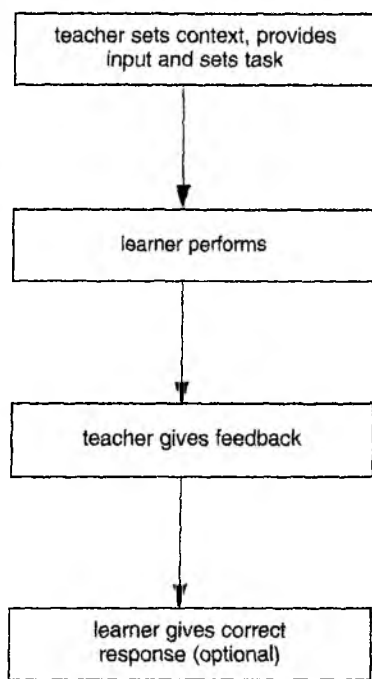


Figure 7.6b The IRF sequence

to write book reports. This can pose a problem for teachers in institutions where every course or course component has to be assessed. Fenton-Smith (2010) describes an approach to book reports at a Japanese university which reflects Hutchinson and Waters's (1987) principles of systematicity with variety and which, judging by students' feedback, seems to have worked well. The system is that students, who come to class having read a book, first spend fifteen minutes working on a book report in class, and then, in a group, discuss their reactions to their books. However, they are able to choose from a wide variety of reporting formats (twenty-six are listed). These include:

- **Movie Poster:** imagine the book is to be made into a film; create a promotional poster that contains the following elements: a new title, a simple picture, names of famous characters cast as actors and two quotations from the press.
- **Your Life, Your Book:** think of something in the book that is somehow similar to something that has happened in your own life; explain both happenings and how they are similar.
- **Quotation:** choose 1–3 sentences from the book that made a strong impression.

for positive or negative reasons; explain the reason(s) for choosing this quotation.

- A Letter: choose one character and compose a letter from him/her to a friend, explaining what she/he has been through.
- Three Objects: select three objects of significance in the book; explain the choices.

(Fenton-Smith 2010: 56)

Responses from students included: 'the way to write a report was different each week. It made me keep my motivation' and 'they're a great opportunity for me to THINK of books again' (Fenton-Smith 2010: 58).

## 4 SYSTEMATISING DIFFERENTIATION IN LANGUAGE SKILLS WORK

### 4.1 Systematising differentiation

One approach to systematisation is standardisation. As the first sentence of the following quotation from a secondary school teacher illustrates, this may be motivated by a concern for equality of opportunity:

For the sake of fairness and uniformity across each form, the same sets of textbooks are adopted by every class, and the same language items will be covered for exam purposes. Very little attention is paid to class and individual differences. It is very often the case that weaker classes find what the teachers teach extremely difficult, and their motivation to learn remains low as a result.

An apparent concern for equality may, of course, be accompanied by other concerns, such as convenience. In educational terms, as the last sentence of the quotation indicates, there can be little justification for treating all learners as if they were the same.

Differentiation is not just about materials, as we saw in Chapter 4. We can differentiate through teaching techniques, such as questioning or grouping, and adjust our expectations to what we know of learners' capacities and personalities (give weaker learners more time or expect less in quantitative terms and be more demanding in our feedback to stronger and more confident learners). We can also show learners that their individual efforts are recognised. For Carol Tomlinson, who links continuous assessment to differentiation, 'personal success is measured, at least in part, on individual growth from the learner's starting point – whatever that might be' (2000: 3). We can perhaps go even further than this, by showing learners that their other-than-linguistic talents are also valued.

In Chapter 4, we looked at a number of ways of building differentiation into the adaptation of exercises and worksheets. In this section, we consider differentiation from a more systematic standpoint and with particular reference to the development of language skills.

**Table 7.2** A systematic approach to differentiation in the language learning class (based on Tomlinson 2000)

Category	Definition	Examples
Content	What is to be learned and how the target knowledge, skills and attitudes are accessed. What learners work with.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learners are working on a project in mixed-level groups. A small number of website resources ranging in difficulty has been recommended. Stronger students are encouraged to find additional resources.</li> <li>Individual learners choose a graded reader.</li> </ul>
Process	Activities. What learners do, how they are organised, the support available.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For a coursebook listening task, learners are given the option of looking at the audio script as they listen.</li> <li>Learners are doing a grammar worksheet. The weakest students are sitting together and the teacher is monitoring their work closely and helping as necessary. Other learners have chosen to work alone or in pairs.</li> </ul>
Product	How learners demonstrate learning. What they are asked to produce and the teacher's response.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learners can choose how to present their work, e.g. oral presentation, written report.</li> <li>Following work on the language of personal description, learners are asked to write a description of one or more family members in fifteen minutes.</li> </ul>

Tomlinson (2000) has proposed a three-category framework for general education which can usefully be applied to language teaching (see Table 7.2). The examples are my own.

If we think that we are already providing for learner differences, classifying what we do in terms of content, process and product may reveal that there are certain forms of differentiation that we are not currently using. In my experience, many teachers are aware of the need to differentiate in relation to process but have given little thought to content or product differentiation.

The next task asks you to think about and share your repertoire of differentiation strategies.

### Task 7.5

Look at this list of ways of providing for learner differences through materials oriented towards language skill development.

- Jigsaw listening or reading*: texts assigned can take account of differences in individual listening/reading skills. Questions can be the same or different.

- *Jumbled reading texts*: simple version of this type of task can be at the level of the word (ordering letters in sets of words known to cause difficulty), or the sentence (perhaps reusing students' own sentences where there were word order errors). If the words/sentences are roughly graded and a time limit set, weaker students should still be able to complete several items correctly. In the case of longer texts, weaker students can be given fewer (because larger) chunks of text to order. If texts given to weaker and stronger students are different, this can serve as a preliminary to a jigsaw reading task.
  - *Gapped texts*: differentiation can be in the form of quantity (fewer or more gaps; one word or a phrase required) or predicted difficulty. Again, following individual work or pairwork on their version of the text, students can get together with others who have worked on another version to compare answers. Can also be used for dictation.
  - *Damaged text*: a variation on the idea of gapped texts. Tear a vertical strip off a text (the narrower the strip, the easier the task) and ask learners to get as close to the original as they can. Checking is easy, but any reasonable completion should be accepted.
  - *Graded questions on texts*: grading can be explicit: for example, questions divided into *easier*, *more difficult*, *very difficult* and learners choose which to attempt; individuals or groups can also be given different sets of questions then work together to compare answers. Students can also create some of these tasks for each other (see Chapter 8).
  - *Role play*: roles assigned by the teacher or chosen by learners; some roles will be predictably less/more demanding.
  - *Communication games*: here judgement is needed as to the likely output demands on the learner. In a 'describe and arrange' task (see Chapter 6), for instance, there will probably be a correlation between similarity and difficulty. Spot the difference tasks can also be differentiated by the number of differences.
  - *Graded (supported) writing tasks*: support for weaker learners can take the form of cues, useful phrases, a skeleton structure or a model text.
  - *'Open' tasks*: learners speak or write about a stimulus: for example, a photograph, painting, piece of music, book, film or a personal possession they have chosen themselves. Open tasks permit learners to perform at their own level, that is, to express their own ideas using their own words.
1. Which of these have you used? With whom? Did you have differentiation in mind? How well did the activity work?
  2. Have you used any other kind of differentiated activity oriented towards skill development?
  3. Look again at Table 7.2. Can you add one more example to each of the categories?

The concern is often expressed in relation to differentiation that weaker learners might feel diminished by being given something easier to do. Suggestions such as those above (and several of those in Table 7.2) deal with this in two ways: learners either get to choose themselves the level at which they wish to start work on a task or have an equal role to play (in comparing answers or checking the answers of students who have done something different).

This section has suggested that we can build differentiation into our planning systematically. If we do not make an effort to do this we risk failing at least some learners. Their failure is in part ours. We need to remember, however, that learners differ in many ways. In foreign/second language classrooms, differentiated instruction must take account of differences in learners' aptitude and current language proficiency (levels) by providing guidance and support as needed and an appropriate level of challenge for all; but it should also extend to differences in, for example, learning style preferences and interests.

### Task 7.6

What is your response to each of these quotations? Think about the kinds of learner that you teach and the context in which you work.

- (a) 'In differentiated classrooms, a teacher's goal is that each child feels challenged most of the time; each child finds his or her work appeals most of the time' (Tomlinson 2000: 4).
- (b) 'School leaders in the weaker schools had focused mainly on students working at the Grade C/D borderline. The better schools also focused on the higher A\*/A grades as they believed that their most able students had the potential to do better' (Ofsted 2013: 25).
- (c) 'Students who had been given imaginative homework projects talked about their increased motivation and engagement. They described how such projects helped to develop their independence and creativity' (Ofsted 2013: 23).
- (d) '... differentiation is more than a strategy or series of strategies – it is a way of thinking about teaching and learning' (Tomlinson 2000: 7).
- (e) 'In differentiated classrooms, teachers study their students and continually involve them in decision making ... As a result, students become more independent as learners' (Tomlinson 2000: 4).

## 5 MATERIALS FOR SELF-ACCESS CENTRES (SACs)

### 5.1 The past, present and future of the SAC

SACs extend opportunities for learning and, by enabling learners to make self-directed choices, cater for individual learner needs. Traditionally, an SAC has occupied a physical space in a corner of a classroom or, on a rather larger scale, been part



of a learning resource centre which combines the facilities and contents of an SAC with a library.

When demand is high, physical spaces have obvious limitations, of course, and Reinders and White (2010) describe an online self-access environment at the University of Auckland, New Zealand, where it was estimated that as many as 10,000 students might need English language support, particularly in relation to their academic skills. The online environment consisted of two elements: (1) electronic materials, commercially published and designed in-house; and (2) tools which would support the learners in working with these materials. The latter included a needs analysis instrument, and learning plans, strategies advice and records of learning. From a pedagogical perspective, the intention was

to offer students *control* and to *empower* them through allowing *nonlinear* access to a wide range of *multimedia* resources that cater to a wide range of learner differences, and to offer *feedback* and support through the *monitoring* of learner behaviour and progress. (Reinders and White 2010: 74, original emphases)

It was also hoped that such an operation would prove cost-effective in terms of learner access to materials and the automated storage and retrieval of learner records. In the event, additional student support proved to be necessary (e.g. workshops, face-to-face meetings with language advisors). In a version of this approach developed for a Thai university, further support systems were included (easy contact with staff, chat rooms, online communication activities).

Jarvis's (2012) research into the use of self-access centres by students in Abu Dhabi and Thailand found that students had some reservations about working independently online. While they might prefer to use materials in their own environment, they recognised that an SAC could fulfil functions not available in their home context (help from a teacher/advisor, interaction with other students, access to paper-based or commercial electronic materials). There were also clear preferences in their use of software. As one student put it: 'we prefer to practice grammar. Focus on Grammar is better than the others' (2012: 10). Jarvis draws the implication that policy-makers would do well to heed the preferences of learners, one of which may be to use paper-based rather than electronic materials, and to take this into account in the design and resourcing of SACs.

## 5.2 Categories of material

### 5.2.1 Published materials

Published materials can, of course, be utilised in a number of ways. At the very minimum, there will be books for extensive reading, and perhaps graded reading schemes. There is likely to be a special 'library' section containing reference materials such as dictionaries, grammars, advice on language learning; there may be test practice materials; in better resourced centres, there may also be listening stations where students can use the audio materials that accompany coursebooks or supplementary skills books focusing on listening; video booths, and computers with

a choice of software and access to the Internet. Some publishers produce materials specifically intended for use by learners working independently; others, as Gardner and Miller (1999) warn, label their materials as if this were the case when they are simply classroom teaching materials with an answer key.

### 5.2.2 *Authentic materials*

Authentic materials also have a place. The following list of categories of materials that may be useful is based on Gardner and Miller (1999: 102–3): newspapers; magazines (related to predictable or known areas of interest); user manuals (for technical equipment); leaflets and brochures (e.g. from government departments, travel agencies, banks, etc.); foreign mission information (embassies, non-government agencies); material from international companies and airlines; letters, faxes and e-mails (with permission); DVDs (films, documentaries); and songs (some centres now have karaoke rooms). Lectures and speeches being given locally can perhaps be recorded; willing native or near-native speakers may also be persuaded to record talks, give interviews or tell stories. And there are the resources of the Web.

Although print materials can be scanned for online access, it is not difficult to understand why the potential quantity and diversity of material available can create logistical problems (e.g. storage space, cataloguing, the need to get rid of outdated material periodically); but there are also additional time and cost implications in relation to packaging some of these raw materials so that language learners can derive real benefit from them. This is, of course, the argument for the kinds of standard exercise discussed above.

## 5.3 Materials selection

Starting from the premise that evaluation criteria for self-access materials should be different from those for classroom materials, Reinders and Lewis (2006) surveyed a number of criteria and checklists before proposing their own. This drew on the ideas of SAC facilitators and a small number of students (twenty) and was then trialled on a number of books and refined.

Reinders and Lewis seem to have been thinking solely about the selection of book resources that could be used independently. SAC managers, language advisors and teachers now need additional criteria which can be used to select or recommend suitable online resources. The criteria suggested in Chapter 5 (Task 5.2) would provide a useful starting point.

## 5.4 Materials design

### 5.4.1 *Adapting and supplementing published materials*

In addition to books and other 'library' materials, a centre is also likely to contain published material that has been adapted or supplemented in some way. Books or

workbooks can be cut up and mounted in a durable form (though the publishers' permission may be needed for this) to offer a set of single-focus activities and permit a much larger number of students to use the material. Such cut-up materials can be combined with teacher-prepared answer keys or, in the case of grammar exercises, for instance, an introductory explanation written by a teacher, perhaps in the learner's mother tongue (Sheerin 1989). Materials of this kind may be self-standing or deliberately designed to supplement the coursebooks in use within the institution and coded to cross-refer to these. More extensive adaptation may involve material originally intended for classroom use so that it can be used by learners working independently. (For a carefully detailed illustration of such an adaptation followed by a supporting rationale, see Dickinson 1987: 70–8).

#### 5.4.2 *Specially prepared materials*

While published and authentic materials can thus form the cornerstones of an SAC, there will always be a need for material that is more precisely tailored to the needs of students working on their own. For anyone contemplating writing materials for a self-access centre, Sheerin (1989) provides a useful practical starting point. As is the case with other volumes in the Oxford Resource Books for Teachers series, this is basically an inventory of examples preceded by an author's introduction. The examples can be used, as Sheerin points out, as they stand, but they are 'intended primarily as "prototypes" for different types of self-access activities in different areas' (1989: 9). The activities are organised into three main categories. The emphasis of the first is on learner training (i.e. helping learners to assess their own needs and develop a study plan). This is followed by activities at different levels focusing on receptive skills and productive skills. Sections within this category are graded and activities are included on handwriting, spelling, punctuation and pronunciation. The final category is entitled 'building blocks' and contains activities on grammar, vocabulary and 'key functional areas' (1989: 9).

As can be seen from the examples in Appendix 7.5, each of the photocopiable activities contains (1) information that helps the learner to decide whether the activity is likely to be suitable; (2) pre-task information or instructions; (3) post-task materials, such as a key, script or commentary; and (4) comments or suggestions directed at the teacher. The examples also indicate that self-access materials can go beyond familiar closed formats (*Yes/No*, *True/False* and multiple-choice questions). Activity-types represented include:

- practice/testing activities, e.g. exercises, dictation, cloze tasks
- learning/awareness-raising activities, e.g. discovery tasks, information guides, study guides
- reflective/creative activities, e.g. reactive listening, book reviewing, story writing
- social/peer matching activities, e.g. communication tasks.

(Sheerin 1989: 10)

### 5.4.3 Design criteria

Criteria for the design of self-access materials have been proposed by Sheerin (1989) and Dickinson (1987). Such materials should, they suggest, have the following characteristics:

1. *Clearly stated objectives*: to facilitate learner selection and indexing.
2. *Clarity of instructions*: in a monolingual situation, the L1 might be used; examples will often be necessary.
3. *Attractive presentation*: illustrations, colour and the use of a reasonable-sized typeface can all help to encourage learners to work with the materials.
4. *Clear layout and pathways*: indicating how different components fit together and how these relate to other materials (see also point 7).
5. *Manageability and feasibility*: the scope of each unit of material should be limited so that it does not require a huge investment of time and effort; similarly, activities involving cooperation between learners should be simple to organise.
6. *Support*: to help learners to make sense of the materials (e.g. illustrations, explanations, glossaries, transcriptions of spoken texts).
7. *Advice*: on how to work with the materials and choice of procedure (offering students different options allows them to choose one that suits their own preferred learning style).
8. *Worthwhile*: 'it should be possible to learn something by doing the activity, and that "something" should be worth learning' (Sheerin 1989: 24).
9. *Feedback*: the form this takes will vary according to the type of activity: keys and transcripts allow learners to check their own answers; for less closed activities, a commentary might be more appropriate. When written tasks lead to 'free production', sample answers can be provided or a way of displaying these can be found; and a forum created for the performance of oral tasks.
10. *Balance and variety*: there should be roughly the same quantity of material for each main focus and at each level and this should be varied in objective and activity-type.

### 5.4.4 Learner involvement

Learners can contribute authentic materials to an SAC; they can also be encouraged to contribute materials that they have prepared themselves (Gardner and Miller 1999). This kind of involvement may bring its own rewards, linguistic and attitudinal; it may also result in their being willing to take on more responsibility for their own learning. Unfortunately, time constraints can mean there is 'initial enthusiasm . . . but weak response' (Gardner and Miller 1999: 107).

One further way in which learners can contribute to the development of self-access materials is through their feedback. Gardner and Miller make the following suggestions:

Feedback can be collected in a number of ways (which are not mutually exclusive). New materials can be trialled with willing self-access learners. In-house materials can contain a request for feedback. Published materials can have a request attached to them (e.g. a sticker on the cover). Generic feedback forms can be made available for use with any materials alongside a drop-off box. A more general suggestions box will collect feedback on materials along with other things. (1999: 113)

They add: 'Another form of materials evaluation is the rate at which take-away materials (e.g. worksheets and information sheets) disappear'; and, wryly: 'This form of evaluation also occurs for materials which are not intended to be taken away' (Gardner and Miller 1999: 113).

### Task 7.7

What support do you provide for learners' out-of-class learning? Could you do more?

## 6 FROM LESSON MATERIALS TO COURSE MATERIALS

### 6.1 A last resort?

The decision to develop a whole set of original materials is typically taken when no suitable textbook(s) can be found. The materials may be for use by the writer(s) and/or other teachers within their institution or be intended for (non-commercial) publication and more general use by a group of similar institutions. Where English is the target language, this is likely to be a course of English for academic or specific purposes *since a huge range of published materials exist for the teaching of general English (GE)*. Bautista, for instance, recalls:

We urgently needed to prepare ESP textbooks for two reasons: our old textbooks were grammar and literature-based and the ESP textbooks on the market, aside from being too expensive, were not 'Filipino' enough and seemed to be pitched too low for our students. (1995: 157)

For Carroll and Head (2003), an in-house coursebook was needed as a means of implementing a new communicative curriculum for 1,500 first-year non-English majors in a Japanese university; and for Al-Busaidi and Tindle, a project to produce a series of writing and language use books for students in the intensive English language programme at the language centre of a university in Oman 'sprang from general dissatisfaction . . . with the approach to writing that was being followed . . . and the results it was producing' (2010: 138).

In these particular examples, the objective was to produce self-standing materials, but this is not always the case. Initially, in-house supplementary materials may be used in conjunction with published materials, gradually replacing these as development proceeds, or course materials may be compilations from miscellaneous published sources. Even when a cautious, gradualist approach is adopted, the time

effort and skills required for materials development should not be underestimated. Hutchinson and Waters advise: 'materials writing is best regarded as a last resort, when all other possibilities of providing materials have been exhausted' (1987: 125). The effort involved is agonisingly well captured by Rozul, again writing about the development of ESP materials in the Philippines:

Once we had done the preparatory work, the actual writing was a slow and painful process that involved thousands of man hours of actual writing, revising and researching. The main bulk of the work was the actual writing. This involved the thinking and re-thinking, the wording and re-wording, the writing and re-writing of drafts and drafts and drafts of seemingly endless exercises, activities and tasks. (1995: 213)

Other accounts (e.g. Tomlinson 2012) suggest that the process need not be quite so slow and painful if a principled framework has been established, key stakeholders are involved, and arrangements are in place for a team of writers to work collaboratively and intensively.

## 6.2 Examples of institutional course design

### 6.2.1 Example 1: a unit framework

St Louis (2010) describes a course for low-proficiency students preparing for entry to a Venezuelan university. Needs analysis had revealed that previous cohorts struggled with reading texts (in English for science and technology) because of their restricted vocabularies and limited grammatical knowledge. Teachers had tried using a commercial textbook combined with a focus on vocabulary-building, but had found the book to be unsatisfactory. The course team therefore decided to develop their own course based on a set of a variety of authentic texts (in effect, a text-driven approach), and eight units of in-house materials were created, each containing the sections listed in Figure 7.7.

1. *What do you think?* Activation of prior knowledge through discussion and sharing of experiences and opinions.
2. *Looking at vocabulary.* Vocabulary activation and development (through the use of images, forging links between words and personal experiences, word association, semantic maps, and so on).
3. *Working with the dictionary.* Developing awareness and dictionary skills (parts of speech, word structure, etc.).
4. *Reading and thinking about it.* Engaging with the text: discussing the topic and sharing experiences. Students are encouraged to notice how ideas are expressed in the text.

**Figure 7.7** Design for a remedial course focusing on grammar and vocabulary (based on St Louis 2010: 125–8)

5. *Grammar review; Work it out; Write the rule.* Focus on grammatical forms in the text. Students also encouraged to find examples of the same pattern in other texts, and infer rules from these examples.
6. *On your own.* Students reflect on their learning, using a format of their own choice.
7. *Self-study supplement.* Largely contrastive treatment of basic grammatical structures, written in Spanish; controlled, self-checking exercises; vocabulary word list; learning style questionnaire and notes on the different styles.

Figure 7.7 (continued)

### 6.2.2 Example 2: concept hierarchy

Hess (2003) describes an eight-week course (ten hours per week) for young adults in an ESL programme in America, which was based on the conceptual framework developed by Grabe and Stoller (1997). As Hess puts it, this approach 'is built around *themes*, rooted in *texts*, illuminated through *topics*, stitched together by *threads*, internalised through *tasks*, and moved along by *transitions*' (2003: 114). The first three concepts are more or less transparent:

- *Themes*: 'broad-based, language-rich subjects of interest': for example, 'family' could give rise to 'topics' such as 'single-parent families', 'extended families' or 'divorce'.
- *Texts*: language-based materials ('or an object that brings about learning').
- *Topics*: see 'themes'.
- *Threads*: 'links that tie themes to other themes' (e.g. from 'family' to 'social norms' or 'belonging').
- *Tasks*: 'strategies through which a teacher introduces, activates, and reinforces knowledge' (e.g. poster project, group report).
- *Transitions*: means through which topics are connected to each other and to a central theme, and themes to each other.

The course was based on literary texts in print together with some film/TV versions of the works.

### 6.2.3 Example 3: stages in a genre-based approach

Tribble (2010) outlines a five-stage cycle for the teaching-learning of writing (with the demands of the Cambridge First Certificate examination in mind). The stages are:

- *Building the context*: establishing a starting point for writing by engaging learners' interest in the topic and using resources to stimulate ideas.
- *Modelling and reconstructing the text*: analysing the moves associated with this genre of text and practice in using these.

- *Joint construction of the text*: students work together to plan and perhaps write texts; the teacher may provide assistance by offering reformulations.
- *Independent construction of the text*.
- *Linking related texts*: texts which have shared or contrasting features are used to raise students' awareness of key features of the genre.

### 6.3 Advice, principles, models

For those undertaking extensive writing projects, advice, principles and models are available in abundance – from publishers, published writers and those writing courses for their own institutions.

Although we are not here concerned with commercial publication, publishers may have useful advice to offer. Anyone writing for other teachers (or for publication) would do well to heed the advice of Methold, whose suggestions are based on years of experience as a publisher in Asia. 'Many materials fail,' he points out, 'not because they are bad in themselves, but because they are bad in the situation the text is used' (1972: 94); in other words, they fail to take local needs or conditions into account.

Experienced writers also have a few words of wisdom, at least, to offer the less experienced. Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 26), for instance, advise:

- use existing materials as sources of ideas
- work with other people, if possible
- don't expect to write materials that are perfect the first time
- don't underestimate the time needed
- pay attention to the appearance of the materials.

Principles are perhaps even more valuable than advice, and Hutchinson and Waters (1987) provide both principles and a model. Their principles are paraphrased below.

Materials should:

- act as a stimulus to learning (e.g. texts are interesting; there are opportunities for learners to use their existing knowledge and skills; both teacher and learners can cope with the content)
- help to organise the teaching–learning process (e.g. there should be a clear and coherent structure which helps the teacher to plan lessons and learners to feel a sense of progress and achievement, but the structure should not be so rigid that monotony results)
- embody a view of the nature of teaching and learning (i.e. reflect the beliefs of the writer)
- reflect the nature of the learning task – in this case, *language learning* (i.e. represent the complexity of language learning but also its manageability)
- provide models of correct and appropriate language use.

Their 'extended' model for designing materials is reproduced as Figure 7.8 (see p. 156).



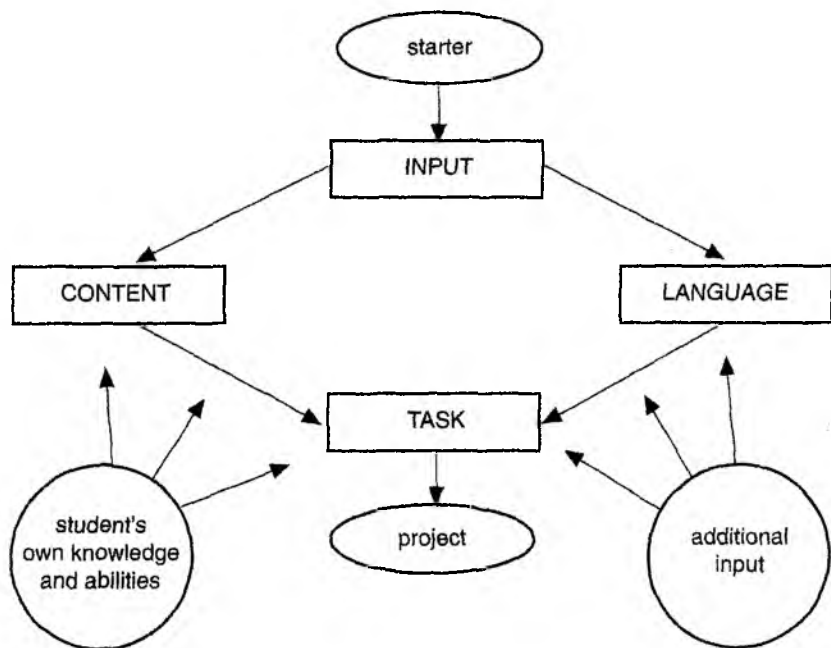


Figure 7.8 Hutchinson and Waters's (1987: 118) materials development model

'The aim of this particular model,' Hutchinson and Waters note, 'is to provide a coherent framework for the integration of the various aspects of learning, while at the same time allowing enough room for creativity and variety to flourish' (1987: 109).

The following summary of the four components that form the nucleus of the model is based on their commentary on pages 108–9:

1. *Input*: this may take the form of a text, dialogue, video recording, diagram, etc. It provides:
  - a stimulus to activities
  - new language items
  - models of language use
  - a topic for communication
  - opportunities for learners to use their information processing skills
  - opportunities for learners to use their existing knowledge, both of the language and of the subject matter.
2. *Content*: texts convey information and feelings; non-linguistic input can also be exploited to generate meaningful communication.
3. *Language*: learners need the language with which to carry out communicative tasks and activities. Good materials allow learners the opportunities to take

the language of a text to pieces, study how it works and then practise putting it together again.

4. *Task*: since the ultimate purpose of language learning is language use, materials should be designed to lead towards a communicative task in which learners use the content and the language knowledge they have acquired in the previous stages.

Since the focus is on enabling learners to carry out the task, the language and content selected from the input are determined by the demands of the task.

The strength of the Hutchinson and Waters model lies in its simplicity and its coherence. One possible limitation includes the lack of any kind of analysis of existing knowledge (content or linguistic), though there is scope (in the extended model) for learners to draw on their own content knowledge and ability to carry out the task, and for a teacher to provide additional input at a later stage if this seems necessary. Moreover, there seems to be an assumption that productive competence is the ultimate aim of language learning. There are a great many learners outside English-speaking countries for whom a reading knowledge is the primary study objective and there is therefore no reason why the task should not be receptive (listening or reading).

For novice writers, principles are probably most valuable when they are illustrated with examples which indicate how the principles can be translated into practice. Hutchinson and Waters provide an extended example showing how their model was used to generate a text-based unit of materials (1987: 120–5), and accounts of other materials development projects based wholly or in part on their model can be found in Flores (1995), Rozul (1995) and Peñaflores (1995).

Tomlinson has written extensively on the topic of principles guiding writing (e.g. Tomlinson 1998c, 2010, 2013b) and reviewed the work of other writers (Tomlinson 2012). Tomlinson (1998c) indicates how a set of principles could be applied, and Nunan (1988b: 1) shows how his principles were realised in a set of materials that he had himself authored.

Examples of Tomlinson's and Nunan's principles are as follows:

- Materials should require and facilitate learner self-investment
- The learners' attention should be drawn to linguistic features of the input
- Materials should maximise learning potential by encouraging intellectual, aesthetic and emotional development which stimulates both left and right brain activity
- Materials should not rely too much on controlled practice
- Materials should provide opportunities for outcome feedback.

(Tomlinson 1998c: 7–21)

Materials should:

- be authentic in terms of text and task
- stimulate interaction

- encourage learners to develop learning skills, and skills in learning. (Nunan 1998b: 1)

It is important to bear in mind that however reasonable such principles might seem, they do not represent an objective truth. Even if they are underpinned by research, that research may not be widely generalisable or it may reflect conditions that have since changed. A set of principles for materials design is therefore best thought of as a personal rationale: a key-point justification for the decisions that are to be taken based on beliefs about learning and how this can best be facilitated. Thus, Nunan's list of principles, which is firmly based on beliefs which have come to be associated with the communicative approach, gives emphasis to authenticity of text and task (see Chapter 6); interaction; the need to strike a balance between a focus on form (accuracy) and opportunities to express meaning (fluency); learner training; and – perhaps as one aspect of this – self-directed learning. Tomlinson's principles, on the other hand, are influenced by the findings of second language acquisition research and his belief in the importance of affective and cognitive engagement. Timmis, however, counsels caution: 'There isn't enough relevant theoretical evidence to justify the unquestioning application of theory to practice' (2014: 257); and Jill Hadfield (2014) acknowledges that principles and frameworks can inform the writing process and provide a useful reference point but echoes Samuda's (2005: 243) view that, rather than being a linear process, materials writing is 'highly recursive and often messy'.

### Task 7.8

1. If you have done any extended materials writing of the kind referred to in this section, list five or six beliefs about language and learning that have had most influence on the materials you have produced, and indicate the source of each of the ideas (your own experience? Your reading of a specific author – and if so, who?).  
If you have little or no experience of this kind, take a look at the sets of principles referred to in this section; then draw up your own list. Try not to make this too long.
2. If you are working in a group, compare your list with those of others in the group, and explain your choices.

## 6.4 Problems

As we saw in Chapter 6, adopting the principle of (text) authenticity is not unproblematic. But a specific set of problems faces the teacher trying to create a set of learning materials based on authentic texts, as implied in the approach proposed by Hutchinson and Waters. The abandonment of a structural syllabus (the linguistic backbone of the audiolingual method) leaves open the question of how materials

should be graded and sequenced; moreover, as Nunan (1991) has pointed out, there is a further problem of how materials can be integrated.

With regard to integration, three 'solutions' have been developed: (1) *theme- or topic-based materials*; (2) a text-driven approach see (section 2); and (c) *the storyline* (Nunan 1991).

Each of these proposals has advantages and limitations. Particular problems relate to tensions between 'horizontal' and 'vertical' integration, and between integration and flexibility. For instance, the lessons or units that make up theme-based materials have an internal (vertical) coherence that derives from their relationship to the common theme; at a more macro (horizontal) level, however, the sequence of themes is likely to be quite arbitrary (Nunan 1991). The text-driven approach, as characterised above, has the same strength and potential weakness, even where texts are grouped under topics or themes. And the storyline, as normally used, despite being a strong cohesive device both horizontally and potentially vertically, suffers from a number of other problems (e.g. learners may not like the story, may have difficulty remembering details, may find that it palls over time, or may read on for themselves – and be resistant to spending class time on the same material later).

When teachers complain that materials are too inflexible what this normally means is that they cannot easily omit sections or deal with lessons or activities in a different order. For the materials designer, this demand for flexibility on the one hand and the requirement to provide a planned series of linked learning events on the other is a real challenge. On the face of it, of the three approaches referred to above, those based on themes and texts would seem to offer the greatest flexibility in terms of teachers being able to replace the original materials with their own, supplement the original materials and perhaps reorder the original elements. However, the problem of the relationship between themes or texts remains. If the materials are to be more than just a collection of resource materials, they need to be ordered in some way beyond the level of the theme or text. There may be, for instance, a progression in the themes themselves, from the very familiar (e.g. talking about oneself; the local environment) via the rather less familiar (e.g. the national level) to the unfamiliar (e.g. contact with people from other countries). There may be a shift from, depending on learner level, past to present to future. There may be a progression in terms of functional repertoire (i.e. certain functions are recycled and new exponents introduced). Task complexity may also increase. What is important is that learners have the feeling that each theme offers them the opportunity to learn something new and integrate this with what they have already learned. In other words, the integration of themes should not be merely at a conceptual level but at the level of the language to which learners are exposed and what they are required to do with this and their existing resources. This represents a real challenge for the course designer-writer, and reinforces Hutchinson and Waters's view that materials development on this scale should be a last resort.

That said, there are rewards for the teacher-writer. While systematising the design process can help to reduce the time and effort involved, 'writing is a creative rather than a mechanical process' and 'the act of writing will remain an art which can

provide satisfaction for the writer' in, for instance, 'watching a class use your material successfully' (Prowse 2011: 172).

## REFLECTION, DISCUSSION, ACTION

- The quotation below contains several opinions. What are they? Do you agree with all of them?

No other single factor contributes to the sense of the wholeness of a lesson as thematic, or topic, consistency. Nevertheless, less experienced teachers, often overly fixated on grammatical objectives, tend to make the grammar the theme, and to marshal a repertoire of thematically unrelated activities to present and practise it. Learners may be hard-pressed to offer any simple answer to the question 'What was the lesson about?', apart from 'We did the present perfect.' . . . I suspect that this may have negative effects since, over time, lessons are remembered less for their grammatical content than for the salience, relevance and inherent interest of the themes, with the best themes of all being volunteered by the students themselves. (Thornbury 1999: 7)

- Which of the ideas discussed in this chapter have most relevance for your teaching context?
- Are you already using any of the ideas suggested? Can you think of other ways of systematising the materials design process?
- Prepare materials based on one of the ideas suggested in this chapter: the text-driven approach or the Ideas Grid (section 2), a standard exercise framework – perhaps for a particular genre of spoken or written text (section 3), or one of the activity/task types discussed in section 4 (differentiation). Ask a colleague to comment on what you have prepared and, if possible, try it out with a class and report back on what you have learned.

## REVIEW AND PREVIEW

This chapter has attempted to build on the last by dealing with that rather large – and, as far as guidance is concerned, rather empty – space between coursebook-based teaching and writing for publication. Commercial materials for specific-purpose language teaching exist but the economics of publishing demand that these are written to appeal to as large a number of people as possible. This tension means that many specific-purpose teachers – as well as those dissatisfied with the general materials that are available – still find themselves spending a good deal of time on materials preparation. The chapter has suggested that while materials-writing will always be a demanding activity, there are ways of systematising the process which offer the promise of economies for the materials designer, security for the learner and stimulation for both. Systematisation does not have to involve mechanical repetition. It can mean the thoughtful, planned deployment and permutation of par

ticular elements (activity-types, language items) within an overall structure. Farmers rotate their crops; the managers of the top international football clubs rotate their players; and teachers can try to maintain interest by providing opportunities for learners to use and recombine what they know in new contexts and to practise what is new through familiar activity-types.

To put this a little less prosaically, what we should be aiming for is a creative interplay between an underlying structure which embodies the beliefs of the teacher and the goals of the teaching and the means through which the beliefs and goals are realised. The structure will be relatively constant, but the means (content and procedures) need to be varied to maintain interest. Most learners also appreciate the opportunity to make choices.

The next chapter elaborates on the benefits of active learner involvement.

## FURTHER READING

**Differentiation:** Tomlinson (2000) was not written specifically with language teaching in mind, but the basic framework recommended (content, process, product) is generalisable and provides a useful basis for thinking systematically about differentiation techniques. For English language teaching, see Prodromou (1992b), Tice (1997), Hess (2001), Prodromou and Clandfield (2007). Harmer (2015: 143–53) also includes a short section on students with special educational needs.

**Self-access:** Sheerin (1989), Gardner and Miller (1999), Cooker (2008).

**Principles guiding materials development:** Tomlinson (2012) reviews his own work and that of others.

**Course design:** early work includes British Council (1980), a collection of reports on projects in materials design; papers in Hidalgo et al. (1995); and the collections of papers by published writers edited by Byrd (1995b). More recent papers include those in Tomlinson (1998a, 2011) and that by Richards (2006).

**Other reading:** on task design, see Nunan (1999, 2004), Ellis (2003), Johnson (2003) and the collections of papers edited by van den Branden and Willis and Willis (2007). On developing materials for CLIL, see Coyle et al. (2010). Bourke (2006) discusses a topic-based syllabus for young learners.

# Learner-produced materials

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**From learner language to learner materials – Utilising learner language:** using learners' errors; using learner transcription – **Learners as researchers – Learners as teachers:** learner-generated texts for use with other learners; learners' questions on published texts; learner-produced exercises, worksheets and tests; drama; learners teaching; learners as teachers of teachers – **Learner-based teaching – Issues and caveats:** age and language proficiency; teacher and learner attitudes; performance; caveats

## 1 FROM LEARNER LANGUAGE TO LEARNER MATERIALS

There is nothing particularly new in the idea that 'materials' produced by learners might be used in language classes. Classroom walls are frequently decorated with learner products, teachers have for many years based activities on lists of learners' errors, and some approaches to teaching and learning have made principled use of learner language. For instance, one of the strikingly original features of Community Language Learning (CLL)/Counseling Learning (Curran 1976) is that teaching-learning is *based on* recorded and transcribed learner-generated 'conversations': in effect, these conversations constitute the materials for each lesson. The analysis of learner products towards the end of a task-based language learning cycle (e.g. Willis and Willis 2007) is a further illustration of the way in which learner language can be explored and exploited for learning purposes within humanistic and learner-centred approaches.

Although these examples demonstrate that, to a lesser or greater extent, teachers do exploit the language that learners produce, this chapter will argue that more can be done and that both learners and teachers will benefit as a result. In this, it builds on pioneering works by Deller (1990) and Campbell and Kryszewska (1992). These publications may not have gone unnoticed but have had less impact than they deserve. Specifically, it will be suggested that:

- the speech and writing that learners produce in the course of class activities or homework can be exploited for the benefit of other learners more extensively and systematically than they normally are

- learners also benefit from being specifically tasked with the creation of materials to be used for teaching–learning in their own and other classes.

So what are the benefits of learner-produced materials?

In a paper aptly entitled ‘Abdication or responsibility’, Allwright (1979) argued that whereas teachers are typically ‘overloaded’, learners are typically ‘underinvolved’ and that a more appropriate balance could be achieved if learners took on a greater share in the management of their own learning. This idea was realised on a practical level by Littlejohn (1983), who describes a one-semester experiment in which students assumed progressively more responsibility, and subsequent papers by Riggenbach (1988) and Clarke (1989a) elaborated on the possibilities of learner-generated materials in both theoretical and practical terms. The vision that ran through these and later publications was that in teaching that is truly learner-centred, learners should not only be involved in *choosing* lesson materials (e.g. Wright 1987; Tudor 1993) but that they might also *adapt* or *produce* materials that can be used as the basis for teaching or testing (e.g. Clarke 1989a; Coombe and Kinney 1999) and even teach these materials themselves (e.g. Littlejohn 1983; Assinder 1991; Stilwell et al. 2010a, 2010b).

In some situations, the decision to involve learners in materials generation may have been prompted initially by necessity (e.g. dissatisfaction with available materials or lack of resources for copying); more positively, it may have also been a response to the humanistic idea that learners bring with them relevant knowledge and experience (Deller 1990; Campbell and Kryszewska 1992; Tudor 2001) or can take on some of the responsibility for their own learning (Allwright 1979). The benefits cited include the following:

- the materials produced are age-appropriate, level-appropriate and free
- learners show increased individual motivation, confidence, self-esteem and capacity for autonomy
- the collaborative nature of many of the activities proposed develops group solidarity
- teacher preparation time is reduced, and teachers are able to devote more class time to monitoring and supporting learning.

(See, for example, Riggenbach 1988; Clarke 1989a; Wiseman 1990; Assinder 1991; Swales 1992; Coombe and Kinney 1999; Tudor 2001; Gill 2008; Tomlinson 2013d; McGrath 2013, 2014.)

Not everyone is persuaded. Saraceni notes that although researchers have called for the active involvement of learners in materials adaptation and development, they have either ‘not proposed a clear way of putting it into practice or they have provided rather superficial and somewhat contradictory ideas’ (2003: 73).

One of the purposes of this chapter, then, is to offer teachers with an open mind a variety of ideas for both making use of student-produced texts and stimulating students to generate their own materials for teaching–learning within a coherent framework. Examples of activities are taken from a variety of print and online resources.



from unpublished studies carried out by teachers on BEd and MA courses, and from my own teaching. In addition to their more general function of illustrating some of the benefits of using learner-produced materials and involving learners in materials generation, these examples are intended to encourage both reflection at a practical level (*How can these ideas be used/adapted/extended? What other forms of material can learners produce?*) and subsequent teacher experimentation. Reference will also be made to recent research which demonstrates that involvement in materials generation can also lead to measurable gains in performance.

**Section 2** describes a range of ways in which teachers can utilise learner language; **section 3** looks at learners as researchers of language; **section 4** considers the possibility that learners might take on roles traditionally associated with teachers; and **section 5** explores the notion of learner-based teaching. This sequence assumes an increasing readiness on the part of the teacher to share responsibility with learners for materials production. Indeed, the section on learner-based teaching sets out a vision – of a classroom in which teaching–learning is based largely or entirely on learner products – that goes well beyond normal notions of learner-centred teaching. Finally, **section 6** discusses a number of issues (learners' age, proficiency, teacher and learner attitudes) and sounds a note of caution.

## 2 UTILISING LEARNER LANGUAGE

There are a number of different ways in which learner language can be utilised as learning–teaching material. In this section, we look at ways of using learners' errors, learners' transcription of their own speech and written products such as compositions. What these examples have in common is that all are based on what learners produce in the normal course of classroom activities. The focus here, however, is on the *exploitation* of these learner-produced materials for the benefit of the individuals concerned or other students.

### 2.1 Using learners' errors

#### 2.1.1 Retrospective error focus

Teachers have for some time exploited learner language in the form of lists of frequent or typical errors, which are normally presented to learners after the activity in which they have occurred (e.g. a piece of writing, a spoken task), and used as a stimulus to self-correction or general awareness raising. The assumption is that this will have an effect on the accuracy of future production. In using this procedure myself, in both monolingual and multilingual classes, I have found it helpful to observe the following principles:

1. Present the errors in written form (written on the board, projected or reproduced so that students have individual copies) – unless the focus is specifically on phonological features.

2. Embed the errors in sufficient context (e.g. for errors of collocation such as 'do a mistake', a phrase may suffice; for errors relating to tense or the use of articles, say, it may be necessary to reproduce a couple of sentences).
3. Mix in a few correct examples (also from learners), so that there is scope for learning from discussion of these as well as from the incorrect examples; this also changes the tone of what might otherwise be perceived as a negative and rather depressing activity.
4. Do not indicate which learner has made a specific error (in adult classes, learners may be quite willing to volunteer self-correction).
5. Try to group instances of similar errors so that there is a degree of reinforcement.
6. Do not make the list too long.

It is a good idea to keep the lists and to label them with a note of the date, the class and the activity from which they were taken. Not only can they be useful as a basis for supplementary exercises, oral quizzes or written tests with the class that generated these errors, they can also prove useful in predicting the errors of future classes on the same or a similar activity (see next section).

Lackman (2010) describes his systematic experimentation with a series of activities based on learner errors. The fourth and final version, which Lackman claims to have used with classes from intermediate to advanced levels, is in two stages. As preparation, the teacher writes the errors on separate slips of paper, at least as many as there are students in the class. In stage 1, teams of two or three take a slip from a container on the teacher's desk, discuss what the error might be, check their corrected version with the teacher and, if this is confirmed, write up their version on the board. If their first answer is not correct, they can try again or take another slip. As a conclusion to this stage, and for the benefit of the whole class, the teacher compares the erroneous versions with the corrected versions. Stage 2 combines a focus on accuracy with fluency practice. Students each take one of the original slips and, working in pairs, must engage in conversation with their partner but slip the error into what they say. Their partner has to spot the error and correct it. When both have done this, they swap slips and find new partners.

### 2.1.2 *Prospective error focus*

Learners in communicative classrooms sometimes complain that they are asked to do tasks for which they feel inadequately prepared. With experience, and especially if one sets the same types of productive task for successive classes, it becomes possible to predict difficulties and the kinds of error that are likely to be made. For such classes, the error-list procedure described above can sometimes be turned on its head, for example by presenting learners in advance of the activity with a gap-filling pre-task which will force them to make the kinds of choice that are likely to be involved in the task to follow. If the required forms are known to the learners, this awareness raising should result in more accurate completion of the subsequent task; where the forms are not known, this provides a suitable opportunity for

pre-teaching. A fun alternative to a gap-fill exercise is a 'sentence auction', in which teams are issued with fake money and 'bid' for sentences offered by the teacher auctioneer. When all the sentences have been auctioned off or no one wishes to buy those that remain, the winning team is the one with the longest correct sentence or ... (you decide!).

### Task 8.1

1. Do you collect students' errors? If so, how do you use them?
2. What do you think of principles 1–6 in section 2.1.1? What advice would you offer to other teachers?

## 2.2 Using learner transcription

As the next set of activities illustrates, the task of noting down students' utterances need not fall only to the teacher. All the activities that follow involve students in transcribing spoken text (their own words or those of others), for which they would therefore require access to some form of recording device (ideally with earphones).

### 2.2.1 *Picture description for exam preparation*

Graham (1994) describes a procedure in which, following pairwork and class practice, upper-intermediate and advanced students preparing for the Cambridge First Certificate and Proficiency exams prepare a one-minute description of a picture or photograph which is recorded and then transcribed. Certain ground rules are established in advance: students are not allowed to write anything down before making the recording, but they can work on the recording repeatedly until they are satisfied; the transcription must be a faithful record of what is said, but they can write in corrections in a different colour. The teacher gives individual feedback, and also prepares whole-class practice on any areas of general difficulty. Graham points out that she conducts a lesson of this kind every week and although it takes up one hour of the seven and a half hours available, it is a popular activity: 'The students find it hard work, but it has proved so popular that other classes have asked for a similar lesson' (1994: 29). One reason may be that it relates very clearly to one of the elements in the oral paper of the examination.

More recent statistically oriented research on the value of transcription activities in English for academic purposes has also yielded broadly positive results (Lynch 2001, 2007; Stilwell et al. 2010a; Stones 2013).

### 2.2.2 *Storytelling*

Learner stories, oral or written, about real events can provide fascinating material for a language class. I have asked adult learners of intermediate level to take turns (one

per lesson) in telling a story (e.g. an interesting/funny/surprising experience while on a visit to the UK/USA/Australia/New Zealand or an encounter with a tourist from one of these countries) to the rest of the class. Such stories not only prompt questions and discussion about lived cultural experiences and misunderstandings/misconceptions; because they offer real insights into people's lives, they can also bring students, and students and teacher, closer together.

The story itself is recorded while it is being told and then used in two ways: (1) the learner who has told the story listens to the recording after the lesson, transcribes it using double spacing, writes in corrections of his or her errors, underlines any sections about which he or she feels unsure, and then gives the recording and transcript to the teacher; and (2) the teacher listens to the recording, checks the corrections and responds to the underlined sections. Comments on phonological features (e.g. specific sounds, stress, intonation) are best handled in an individual interview, if time permits.

Learners sometimes complain about oral practice – ‘We just talked’ – and although as teachers we may feel that practice is in itself valuable, we also have a responsibility to provide feedback. In the first instance, the questions of the other learners will constitute a *form of feedback on general comprehensibility or the content of the story*. The subsequent interaction between the learner and teacher has at least six further benefits:

1. Learners are encouraged to be analytical about their own performance.
2. Since there is an opportunity for self-correction, learners can preserve ‘face’.
3. Teacher feedback is private.
4. Teacher feedback is economical and focused since it deals only with those features which the learner (a) cannot self-correct; and (b) sees as problematic.
5. Teacher feedback is more comprehensive than it would be if the teacher were simply to comment orally immediately after the story.
6. When feedback is written, learners have more time to reflect on and process it.

### 2.2.3 *Transcript comparison*

In this variation on the use of storytelling and transcripts, student storytelling is prompted by any suitable short video recording which shows a series of events. The popular Mr Bean sketches (now available on YouTube) are particularly suitable for students at lower levels because silent (so language does not pose an obstacle) and funny. As preparation for the lesson, I have shown the clip I want to use to a native speaker of English (this need not be a teacher of English) and asked him or her to record a description of the events.

Following class viewing, which can be paused at appropriate moments to enhance suspense and to elicit what is going to happen, the main activity can be organised in three ways: (1) two or three individual students are asked to give descriptions, which are recorded; (2) students are divided into groups and each group records

its description; or (3) students record individual descriptions as homework. A transcript is then prepared of the student recording(s). If the whole-class form of organisation is adopted, this can be a cooperative activity with the recording being played back and individual students other than the speaker writing up sections on the board.

Two stages of transcript comparison follow:

1. Students carry out a comparison of at least two transcripts (if two transcripts have been written on the board or projected, this can again be a whole-class activity). The transcripts are compared on the basis of content as well as form. In relation to language, the emphasis is not so much on accuracy (though any obvious errors can be corrected), but on how different individuals have chosen to express the same idea.
2. In the second stage, the recording is played of the native speaker of English describing the same scene. This is also transcribed and any key differences between this and the other versions discussed.

This procedure is similar in some respects to that described in Richards (1985) and discussed in Chapter 7.

Normally, when students are asked to look closely at native speaker texts, these are intended to guide their own production; in this activity, students start from what they wished to say and how they said it, but go on to consider differences between versions and use the native speaker sample to assess their own choices. In this situation, choices are likely to be better or worse rather than right or wrong. One of the most powerful insights for learners tends to be that native speakers do not necessarily speak in complete sentences; another, that native speaker choices are not always better.

### 3 LEARNERS AS RESEARCHERS

Riggenbach (1988) proposes a framework for learner-produced materials which not only has internal coherence but also casts the learner in the role of both producer and analyst of language data. She suggests three types of student activity that can result in materials: (1) *performance*; (2) *participation*; and (3) *observation*. An example of (1) would be a student's oral presentation, which can be used as the basis for both self-evaluation and peer-evaluation); an example of (2) would be a conversation or interview which, if transcribed, can be used for a variety of purposes; and an example of (3) would be students' notes on or recordings of native speaker use of language, which can serve as the data for study of specific conversational strategies or language functions. In all of these activities, and most obviously in the second and third, the learner becomes an analyst and even researcher of language. The development of learner-generated corpora (e.g. Mishan 2004; Willis 2011) can be seen as a logical extension of type (3) activity. Johns (1991) has coined the term *data-driven learning (DDL)* to describe activities in which learners infer rules from corpus data.

## 4 LEARNERS AS TEACHERS

This section represents a significant shift from the kinds of relatively widespread activities discussed in previous sections to what may be seen as a realignment in terms of teacher–student roles. A number of studies are first described in which learners developed materials to be used for teaching purposes, and in some cases took on teaching roles such as giving feedback. In the studies described in the later part of the section, students were given responsibility for planning and delivering lessons.

### 4.1 Learner-generated texts for use with other learners

Reference was made in section 2 to the recording of learners' stories. Forman and Ellis (1991), who describe their work with students in the English language department of a university in Malaysia, also suggest recording students' stories, but the procedure is very different from that described earlier, and the resulting stories are put to rather different purposes. The recommended steps are as follows:

1. Students are told they are going to write a story based on their own experience.
2. They are given a set of standard prompts to guide planning: *When did it happen? Where were you? Who were you with? What were you doing before it happened? What happened? Who was involved? What did you do after it happened? What happened in the end?*
3. Small groups are formed and each student tells his or her story; other students fill out the details by asking the storytellers about their reactions and feelings.
4. The group decide which is the best story and work together to develop this.
5. Each group's story is told to the rest of the class; the class ask clarification questions and suggest recommendations for improvement.
6. Each group writes up a final version of its story, which can subsequently be recorded.
7. The group devises comprehension questions on the story.

The recordings and the questions are then used as listening materials for students at lower levels within the institution. (The written texts could also be used, of course, though the teacher might wish to provide feedback during the drafting stage to ensure a reasonable level of accuracy.)

Among the benefits of this procedure noted by the authors are the following:

- the stages leading up to the writing phase (1–5) help students to generate ideas and stimulate the writing process
- the drafting and redrafting of the stories replicates real-life writing
- students' questions on their own stories focus on points that they feel to be important.

To these, we might add the fact that learners with different strengths and weaknesses (e.g. in speaking, writing, grammar) can all benefit from an integrated activity of this kind; that the activity is personalised; that student discussion is purposeful; and

that the resulting stories should be of real interest to the other students with whom they are used.

In the activity described above, the individual stories are developed within the small groups. In my own teaching, I have preferred to help the storyteller to develop his or her story through repeated retellings, and to offer suggestions as to the nature of the story – for instance, that it can be real or based on something they have read or heard, a frightening experience ('a scary story'), an accident or something more upbeat, such as receiving some good news, perhaps. The steps in the activity, which is likely to occupy more than one lesson, are as follows:

1. Students form pairs. They have five minutes each to tell their partner a story. The listener should ask questions while the story is in progress if anything is unclear or more information is needed.
2. New pairs are formed, the same stories are told and more questions asked.
3. New pairs are formed and the same stories told, but this time the stories are recorded and no questions are asked.
4. Each student has heard three stories. They now vote for the story which, in their view, was the most interesting. In a class of thirty, this will result in a 'shortlist' of ten stories and stage 5 may be necessary. In a much smaller class, this stage may be skipped.
5. The class is divided into groups. Each group listens to half of the recordings and chooses the one they find most interesting.
6. The recordings of the selected stories are played to the whole class, who choose the two most interesting.
7. The class is told that the stories will be used as **listening** materials for another class. They are divided into two groups (each containing one of the original storytellers) and tasked with creating a set of written comprehension questions on the story, and an answer key.
8. The questions are exchanged, answered in writing, and marked by the group who set the questions. Each group is invited to comment on the other group's questions and suggest reformulations, if appropriate.
9. Following any revisions, both texts and questions are typed up (ideally by students), with the authors duly acknowledged.

OR, at step 7, the teacher works with the class to transcribe the first story on the board, and then asks students, in small groups, to suggest improvements. The original storyteller is invited to accept or reject these ideas. (If linguistic inaccuracies remain, the teacher may also wish to make some suggestions.) The class is told that the stories will be used as **reading** materials for another class. Steps 7–9 above (now steps 8–10) are then followed.

Although this is superficially similar to the procedure described by Forman and Ellis (1991), there are some important differences. Steps 1–3 enable each storyteller not only to develop their story, but also to become *more confident and fluent* in telling it. This has obvious benefits for the shyer students but also for the quality of what is recorded. Moreover, what is recorded is an example of natural, spontaneous

speech, rather than a reading of a written story. Subsequent stages allow for a good deal more focused listening and discussion. The split-class approach to question-setting in the later stages means that the questions can be tested (and more useful practice incorporated) before they are finalised. The next activity focuses more directly on learners creating questions on texts.

## 4.2 Learners' questions on published texts

In the previous section, it was suggested that learners might devise questions based on texts, spoken or written, that their classmates have created. We turn now to published texts selected either by the teacher or learners. Arguments in favour of learner – rather than teacher – questions (Whitaker 1983; Clarke 1989a) include the following:

- questions are better tuned to learners' level
- comprehension of the text is improved
- communicative interaction is stimulated and other language skills and systems involved as students formulate and discuss the questions
- student motivation increases as a result of active engagement and feelings of ownership.

Here is a basic procedure which has worked well for me, together with some possible variations. Be warned: stages 3–5, in particular, can be quite time-consuming:

1. Explain to students that in this activity they will be teachers. They are going to set questions on a text which their classmates will answer. (You might wish to add that the best questions will later form the basis for a worksheet to be used with other classes.) If there are doubts about students' ability to perform the task, it is helpful to take them through preliminary steps 1(a) and/or 1(b).

### Preliminary steps

- 1(a) Display or hand out a text and accompanying questions that students have recently worked on. Ask them to look at the questions. Get them to notice the form of each question (e.g. the inversion of subject and verb or the use of *do/did*) and the purpose of the questions (e.g. to check the reader has understood the main ideas or can infer what is meant). Ask them which questions are the most difficult to answer and why (typically *How* or *Why* questions, which are more open-ended). You might also get them to suggest additional questions.
- 1(b) Display or hand out a shortish text which students will find relatively easy to understand. Ask students to read the text and think of a question. Elicit questions and write them up. You may need to prompt (e.g. a question beginning with 'Where . . .' or 'Did . . .') or ask groups of students to prepare specific question types: for example, a question about use of language or an inferential question. (Refer back to Chapter 6 for possible question types.) Get students to choose the best questions and decide how they should be ordered.



2. The teacher chooses two texts. These need not be the same kind of text, but they should be of similar length and linguistic difficulty.
3. Students work in pairs or groups of three. Their task is to read the text and devise, say, five questions to test understanding of the main points of the text. Dictionaries are supplied. The teacher circulates, monitors and gives help as required.
4. Having decided on their questions, the group prepares an answer key.
5. Each group joins forces with another pair or three who have read the same text and answer each other's questions. They then select the best seven or eight questions and agree on the answers. Discussion during this stage is likely to include consideration of the form of the questions, but may also touch on what is an acceptable answer.
6. An exchange of texts and questions takes place between groups who have worked on the different texts. Each group reads their new text and writes out their answers to the questions, which are then marked by the group who originated the questions.
7. An evaluation stage. The questions prepared by each group on the first text are displayed or written up and other learners invited to comment on them (e.g. in relation to their clarity, appropriateness or linguistic correctness). Similar questions are then grouped together, overlapping questions are eliminated, and the best, say, ten questions are selected and sequenced. The teacher may wish to 'manage' the selection to ensure that at least one question from each group is included. The procedure is repeated for the questions on the second text.
8. The questions are typed up – ideally, by students. They are now ready to be used with another class.

#### Possible variations:

- Students themselves choose a text which they wish to read (e.g. from a selection provided by the teacher or from a(n online) newspaper). If the choice is relatively open, the approximate length should be specified.
- Groups are larger – say, five or six – but each student must supply one or two questions. Question-types (such as *Who*, *What*, *Where*, *When*, *How*, *Why* or *Yes/No*, *True/False*, or factual or inferential) might also be specified. The group leader acts as secretary and coordinates the sequencing of the questions.
- The group that has answered a particular set of questions gives feedback on them (this may happen naturally, of course) – for example, whether they are useful in highlighting key points, too easy, too vague, whether they contain linguistic errors – and suggests improvements.
- If time is limited, the teacher may choose to give feedback to each group separately and make his or her own selection from the questions.

Preliminary steps 1(a) and 1(b) are an attempt to anticipate the most likely difficulty (the need for linguistic support and guidance) in classes where students have limited

language proficiency. Linguistic inaccuracies are also dealt with in the evaluation stage (stage 7). However, other issues may surface which are closely related to the fact that students are being asked to accept the possibility that they can learn from other learners. Exam-oriented learners, in particular, may feel that the texts or questions supplied by their classmates are much easier than those they will encounter in the exam. This is perhaps less likely if the procedure recommended in preliminary step 1(a) is followed using a text and questions from a past exam. Students who are sceptical in advance may also be persuaded of the value of the activity when they have experienced it.

### 4.3 Learner-produced exercises, worksheets and tests

As noted in Chapter 5, many teachers prepare worksheets to provide extra practice, usually on points of grammar, less commonly on vocabulary and even less commonly on other language systems. Such teacher-produced worksheets may be no more than photocopies of exercises taken from books other than the main coursebook or downloaded from the Internet; alternatively, the exercises may have been designed by the teacher. Where the resources are available, copying may seem convenient, but – as we have seen – what is copied will probably still need to be adapted, and adaptation can sometimes be as time-consuming as creating original exercises.

Teachers do not have to take upon themselves all responsibility for producing the exercises and worksheets used by a class. For example, Clarke (1989a) suggests that learners might create a transcoding activity which would require their classmates to render the information from the text in an appropriate form (e.g. graph, table, diagram). Swales (1992) provides examples of student-generated material at three levels. These include the following:

- Student-produced flashcards (hand-drawn or using magazine pictures), for which captions are provided by the teacher or other students under the teacher's guidance. These can be organised into sets such as furniture items, vegetables, etc. (*beginner*).
- Student-prepared narratives describing a recent news event in which all the main verbs are in the form of an infinitive; their partner has to supply the correct form of the verb (*intermediate*).
- Student-designed questionnaires for use with other students (*advanced*).

Swales (1992) suggests the following procedure and principles:

- Exercises should be kept relatively short (e.g. five gap-filling sentences).
- The exercise designer marks the answers of other students and discusses with them any wrong answers.
- The teacher circulates during the exercise writing, answering and feedback stages and helps to settle any disputes.
- Students rewrite their exercises in the light of feedback from other students.

The value of such an activity is summarised as follows: (1) it provides feedback to the teacher on whether students have internalised target structures (or whatever else they have been working on); and (2) there is a high level of student involvement. Swales also claims that 'students . . . have never questioned the validity of the exercise' (1992: 59).

Where there is a source of suitable exercise material, this can provide a starting point and model for learners to produce more of the same. For example, the 'open slot' exercise illustrated in Chapter 4 consisted of the teacher asking 'What would you do if . . .?' questions, to which learners could respond using either of two options provided or reply in their own words. Having worked through a number of given situations in this way, the teacher could, however, initiate a second stage, by asking students to work in small groups to devise further problem scenarios (again, with two optional responses provided, and the open slot a possibility) and put these to other groups. When I have used this exercise in adult classes, I have urged students to come up with amusing or challenging situations (and not just: 'What would you do if you won the lottery?'). Although the linguistic objective – practice of this particular grammatical form – is exactly the same, this second stage involves at least three important shifts: ownership of the activity has passed to the students, who must now devise and ask questions as well as answer them; responsibility is group based; and within groups individuals contribute in their own way and at their own level. What started as just a language practice activity may also become fun, especially if playfulness is encouraged. Some of the scenarios posed by students can, of course, be reused with other classes.

As well as creating their own texts, questions and worksheets, learners can devise tests. Like teachers' questions, teachers' tests reflect their ideas of what is important. When no coursebook progress tests are available, learners might be asked to construct tests for each other, with the teacher providing guidance in the form of 'model' test types (Clarke 1989a). This will not only stimulate them to review what they have been learning, it may also reveal important differences between learner and teacher perceptions of what is significant (Coombe and Kinney 1999) or difficult.

#### 4.4 Drama

'Drama activities' such as role play and, to a lesser extent, simulation are now quite widely used to provide opportunities for students to use language spontaneously and creatively. However, few teachers will have thought of going as far as Wessels (1991), who set up an EFL course (ten hours per week for three months) based entirely on drama techniques. Students (maximum fourteen in the class) were upper-intermediate to advanced level, of mixed nationalities, and were following the course, in a UK college of further education, instead of or in addition to a general EFL programme.

Wessels describes the various activities and stages leading up to the production of a play for other students in the college – not Shakespeare or even a modern classic, but a play which was entirely the result of student imagination and improvisation. One

product of this collaboration was a script; other products being recordings of scenes on audiotape and video, and photographs. These materials were subsequently available for use with students on general EFL programmes, one script even being worked up for publication as a reader (Wessels 1999). The popularity of the course led to the provision of a similar course for students at lower-intermediate to intermediate level.

#### 4.5 Learners teaching

Clarke (1989a) presents five principles (paraphrased below) which underlie his view of learner involvement in materials adaptation and development. All highlight learner roles in the adaptation or production of material:

- *Learner commitment*: creative involvement in the adaptation of materials engages the learner's interest and leads to a greater degree of commitment.
- *Learner as materials writer and collaborator*: working cooperatively with other learners to produce materials means that learners are active collaborators in the learning environment rather than merely 'language receivers'; working on the tasks prepared by others in the class also leads to a higher degree of commitment than might otherwise be the case.
- *Learner as problem solver*: devising a task for other learners is a meaningful activity for the problem-setter; language is both the focus of the task and the means by which it is achieved.
- *Learner as knower*: when constructing tasks based on given materials, learners are in the position of 'knower' rather than 'assimilator'; when required to research a task in order to produce material, they become 'expert'.
- *Learner as evaluator and assessor*: the act of adapting and producing material makes learners better able to make judgements about the relevance and interest of what they have been doing and their own level of achievement; the resulting insights can be used to shape future materials.

(Based on Clarke 1989a: 135)

The ultimate in role shifts occurs when learners do not simply produce teaching materials but also take over the teaching. One of the review activities suggested in Woodward (2001) is that students prepare to teach what they learned in a lesson to a student who was absent. Some examples follow of teachers who put this kind of idea – of learners teaching other learners – into practice.

Faced with teaching twenty-four students at low intermediate level who had failed their preparatory year at the University College of Bahrain and were therefore required to repeat the fourteen-week general English course, Littlejohn (1983) decided to involve the students in the design and delivery of this course. Students were first asked to identify grammatical features they found most difficult. These were then ranked to form a teaching syllabus. Volunteers researched each topic, with support in the form of reference books, textbooks and help from the teacher; they then planned practice activities; and finally taught a lesson. Littlejohn comments: 'Sessions with a "student as teacher" had a characteristically more relaxed atmosphere

than teacher-led sessions, and the students felt much freer to make mistakes, correct each other and ask questions' (1983: 605). Later in the course, two out of the six hours per week were devoted to 'student-directed' lessons. Working in groups of five or six, students were encouraged to think about the activities they had experienced, what they had found useful and enjoyed, and what their needs and wants were. One interesting effect noted by Littlejohn is that 'whereas it had always been difficult to persuade the students to speak in English when the teacher was in full control, it was particularly noticeable that in these lessons English was spoken much more frequently than Arabic' (1983: 605).

Assinder (1991) describes her approach to video-based lessons in the 'Current Affairs' component of a full-time course in Australia for non-English speaking students preparing for higher education. This component occupied six hours (two mornings) each week, and the group in question comprised twelve students of mixed nationalities ranging in level from lower-intermediate to upper-intermediate. Some weeks into the course, Assinder realised that what she was doing in preparing a worksheet to exploit a video could just as well be done by the students themselves and mentioned this idea to the students. They reacted positively. Having discussed what a good video-based lesson might contain and possible question-types, and negotiated a time (two hours) for the preparation of a one-hour lesson and the drafting of a worksheet (to be typed up later by a member of the group) on which the lesson would be based, the class divided into two groups, each with a different video clip (a news item of five to ten minutes) and a video recorder. Assinder's account of what happened next is worth quoting in detail:

Firstly, the groups watched the video items for gist. The students then talked about what they had seen and heard and how they would approach the task, and organized who would do what. One group delegated a video operator, a note-taker, a 'dictionary consultant', a 'question-committee', someone to take down dictation, and a typist.

The students tried to isolate new vocabulary and to check spelling and meaning: they consulted each other; they used dictionaries. They talked about the topics and had lengthy discussions about their perceptions of the situation, negotiating meaning until they were satisfied that they all had a good general understanding. They watched and listened, they talked, they listened again. They summarized, re-phrased, circumlocuted, took notes, took dictation, and took responsibility for themselves and for the group.

The groups argued about which items of vocabulary would be most useful for the other group to learn; which segment would be most representative of the whole programme to transcribe for the cloze exercise, and which words should be gapped. Individuals argued about the appropriacy of different questions for comprehension and/or discussion; they fought over what they had 'heard', meaning, pronunciation, and points of grammar. In most cases a consensus was reached. As a last resort, in cases of unresolvable conflict, I was called upon to act as a consultant or mediator. (1991: 219-20)

The subsequent three-hour session consisted of two one-hour lessons led by the student groups followed by feedback and general evaluation of the experience. 'The response', says Assinder, 'was overwhelmingly positive, and the students asked for more of the same' (1991: 220). Towards the end of the course, instead of teaching each other, the two groups taught other (intermediate, general EFL) classes. 'This too was considered by both parties to be useful and successful' (1991: 223).

Assinder notes that getting the students to prepare and present lessons gave her a much deeper insight into their individual strengths and weaknesses (not only linguistic). The data collected during this monitoring formed the basis for weekly class feedback and remedial work (for some of which she drew on audio and video recordings of the presentations) and for individual counselling sessions.

She lists eight effects of involving the learners in this way:

- increased motivation
- increased participation
- increased 'real' communication
- increased in-depth understanding
- increased responsibility for own learning and commitment to the course
- increased confidence and respect for each other
- increased number of skills and strategies practised and developed
- increased accuracy.

These effects are explained in terms of the interest and relevance of the subject matter; the nature of the task and the fact that it was group based; the responsibility given to the students; the availability of feedback on points of language (in class and in individual tutorials); and the opportunity for students to teach each other.

One of the features of the approach adopted by Littlejohn and Assinder which no doubt contributed to the success of their initiatives was that they modelled what students were expected to do. The same principle was adopted by teachers in a study in a Japanese university designed to help students develop strategies for learning new language from watching films (Stilwell et al. 2010c). In the first stage, the teachers used a short film clip and asked students to take notes on points of language that they had noticed and found interesting; in a later stage, working in small groups, students self-selected thirty-second film clips to show to their classmates and followed a similar procedure, first getting their classmates to comment and then giving their own views. The authors comment that not only did the presenting students excel at this task, written reflections indicated that other students also had 'lasting memories of the lessons taught by their classmates' (2010c: 243). Mennim (2012) describes an experiment in another Japanese university where first-year students were following an 'oral English' course. In the first semester, students researched a topic of their own choice and made presentations to the class. In the second semester, the report stage took the form of a lesson incorporating content questions planned and taught by the students. As preparation for the second semester, the teacher first taught two sample thirty minute lessons, and then prepared lessons for

student groups to teach. In the final stage, groups produced and taught their own lessons. Of the fifty-two students who completed the end-of-course questionnaire, thirty-six (70 per cent) preferred the experience of teaching the lessons, largely on the basis that this was more interactive and more fun. The role involved (teacher/presenter vs audience member) played very little difference in the responses.

Tomlinson (2013d) describes a rather less controlled but reportedly equally popular experiment in an Indonesian high school where the students found coursebook texts dull and unconnected to their lives. The teacher split the class into twelve groups, the number corresponding to the weeks in the semester, and challenged each group in turn to find a text which would capture the interest of their classmates. This was then presented to the class by the teacher and exploited through a number of teacher-devised activities. When the learners showed interest in continuing to find their own texts the following semester, the teacher added a new challenge: each group should develop activities based on the text. Although the text and activities were shown to the teacher, who offered advice, the materials were used by the authoring group to teach the rest of the class.

#### 4.6 Learners as teachers of teachers

As will be apparent from a number of the examples given in this chapter, learner-centred teaching provides endless opportunities for teachers to learn more about their learners (and learning). This reaches its logical conclusion in Prodromou's (1992b) suggestion that in a context where a native English-speaking teacher is teaching a monocultural class, students can also be set the task of preparing in teams questions to ask the teacher about the local culture. (A teacher new to the country may be allowed to use the services of a student informant.) Prodromou comments:

*This kind of activity makes for a more reciprocal relationship between the culture of the teacher and that of the students. It involves a built-in recognition of the value of the learners' culture and the value of their contribution to the learning process. (Prodromou 1992b: 48)*

It also helps the teacher learn more about the culture, and perhaps avoid cultural faux pas as a result. (For further discussion of materials and culture, see section 3 of Chapter 10.)

#### Task 8.2

1. If you have not used any activities of the kind described in section 4, which do you think *might be most and least useful in your teaching context* – and why? What worries, if any, would you have about trying out such ideas?
2. If you have previously used activities similar to those described in section 4, think of just one. What were your expectations? How did you plan for the activity? What was the procedure? What were the results? How did the

students react? What advice would you give to someone thinking of trying the same activity?

## 5 LEARNER-BASED TEACHING

Thus far, we have been assuming that learner-generated materials would have their place alongside more conventional materials. Campbell and Kryszewska's (1992) experience of teaching English in Poland, to learners as diverse as university teachers of different specialisms on the one hand and children on the other, led them in the direction of what they call 'learner-based teaching'. They explain:

All humanistic approaches to teaching accept that some language input can be based on the experience, knowledge and expertise of individual students. What is novel about learner-based teaching is the idea that *all* activities can be based on that wealth of experience, be they grammar exercises, exam preparation, games or translation . . . The learners themselves are responsible for the information input, thereby ensuring its relevance and topicality for each particular group. (1992: 5; original emphasis)

Appendix 8.1 contains three examples of Campbell and Kryszewska's (1992) activities. Example A, which is intended for use with students at elementary level, would clearly be suitable for learners of any age. Example B, intended for students at lower-intermediate level, makes two assumptions: that all learners share the same first language and that the teacher is as competent in that language as the learners are themselves. Example C casts learners in the role of teachers.

Many of the elements of the rationale for learner-based teaching can also be found in the sources discussed earlier in this chapter: for instance, the benefits of groupwork (group solidarity; peer teaching and peer-correction); learner involvement (in the preparation of materials and the comments of other students on these materials); content relevance; and ongoing needs analysis, feeding into remedial work. Campbell and Kryszewska see unpredictability as a further positive element: 'Not only do the learners not know what is coming before the lesson starts, but they are often unable to predict how the lesson will develop' (1992: 9). It is conceivable, of course, that not all learners would feel comfortable in such a situation.

Other possible disadvantages are obvious and are acknowledged by Campbell and Kryszewska. Learners may be resistant to such an approach; there may be limiting factors, such as an externally imposed syllabus or examination; and there are very specific demands on the teacher: for instance, the need to keep careful records of what is done, and to be very clear about intended outcomes and the steps by which these can be achieved. For teachers working within an externally defined course framework, the answer may be to use learner-based activities as a complement to other, textbook-based work; for teachers who are more autonomous, it is probably still desirable to introduce such ideas gradually, a principle that applies to many of the activities included in this chapter.



The preposition in the title of Deller's (1990) book *Lessons from the Learner* makes a clear point. The 'appetiser' (preface) then sets the tone: like many teachers, she says, she used to file away potentially interesting material but never had the time or energy to go through it and select for her classes; now she continues to store away such material but periodically gives it to her students to classify or select from. The introduction outlines the rationale and the approach:

teachers . . . set up activities where the learners generate the material and then use it for other linguistic activities . . . In practice this often means a reversal of the usual process, i.e. starting with the freer activities which are then used for more controlled practice. For example, the learners can create such things as jumbled stories, cloze exercises and transformation exercises for each other, from material they have previously produced themselves. This material has the advantage of being understood by them, feeling close to them, and perhaps most importantly of all, being theirs rather than something imposed on them. As a result they feel more comfortable and involved, and have no problems in identifying with it. (1990: 2)

The movement from text production to exploitation reflected in sections 2.1–2.2 of Deller's book is illustrated in exercise D in Appendix 8.1. For Deller, as for Campbell and Kryszewska (1992), the unpredictable outcomes of activities such as this means that lessons are more interesting for teachers as well as learners: 'if there are times when we can't predict the material, we give ourselves the opportunity to . . . be stimulated by our learners and experience new ideas and situations' (Deller 1990: 1–2).

In that it emphasises the importance of learners doing and not simply being – in other words, offering opportunities for them to control what happens to them in the classroom and make choices – Deller's book has the same starting point as that of Campbell and Kryszewska. One important difference, however, lies in the authors' attitudes to coursebooks. Campbell and Kryszewska note that their students use the coursebook 'mainly at home for self-study' (1992: 7); Deller's view is that classrooms should include *more* learner-based activities rather than being entirely based on them. Activities in her book are grouped into eleven familiar if rather miscellaneous categories: ice-breakers, creative drills, writing, error correcting, and so on. As in the example above, there are brief indications of the level and number of students for which the activity is suitable, and the time and materials required. Section 2 of her book illustrates how the concept of student-generated activities can be applied to a coursebook unit.

An alternative typology of the activities in Deller, and Campbell and Kryszewska is offered by Tudor:

1. activities in which learner knowledge is utilised as a source of input
2. activities in which the learners' L1 is used
3. direct learner involvement in activity development and organisation
4. affectively based activities.

(Based on Tudor 1996: 15–16)

This categorisation not only brings out the learning-centred processes involved, as Tudor notes; it also constitutes a set of design principles for teachers wishing to create their own activities along similar lines.

Type 1 activities, Tudor notes, are 'based on the idea that an activity is likely to produce more relevant language and be more motivating if learners are allowed to invest it with a content which is "their own"' (1996: 15). Example A in Appendix 8.1 falls into this category. Type 2 activities acknowledge the fact that most of the messages learners convey in their daily lives will be in the L1 and brings this communicative agenda into the classroom (see example B in Appendix 8.1). The third type of activity involves learners in the kinds of process that have traditionally fallen to the teacher, such as materials selection, explanation, and diagnosis and evaluation during the checking of other students' work (see example C). This serves as a form of learning, Tudor suggests. The final category of activity (see, for example, exercise D in Appendix 8.1) 'allow[s] learners scope to use their imaginative skills, creativity and sense of fun' (1996: 16).

## 6 ISSUES AND CAVEATS

### 6.1 Age and language proficiency

It might be assumed that young learners will not respond responsibly to being asked to evaluate their own performance or that of other learners, and that they are incapable of producing usable materials because of their level of maturity or limited language proficiency. Evidence is emerging, however, that experimentation with learner-generated materials need not be constrained by age or level.

Arnold (2010) describes the pilot stage in the implementation of an extensive reading scheme in Hong Kong primary schools. The weakest of the nine- to ten-year-old students in the trial classes were judged to be not yet ready to use the published materials on which the scheme was to be based. These students made scrapbooks containing pictures they had chosen themselves, which they then wrote about using the language they already knew. Arnold explains:

The concept was that if students could write some text they could then read it back. The aim of this approach was to motivate the students by allowing them to make their own choices and encourage them to produce text which they could read back and make meaning simultaneously. They were in effect producing their own extensive reading materials at their own developmental level. (2010: 40)

She does not say whether students read each other's scrapbooks, but this would obviously be one way of providing additional reading material at roughly the same level. A recent study in a Singapore primary school suggests that students would enjoy this. In this case, the teacher of a class of eight- to nine-year-olds had read a picture book about a wise owl with the class, who were then asked to create their own alternative versions of the same story using PowerPoint (in which they had had training) and sourcing their own pictures. The teacher comments:

Everybody was able to create a storybook. The keen writers were able to create stories with greater variety and creativity while beginning writers were able to create a story similar to the original story but with variation in the characters in the story and problems. . . . The learning did not stop when they finished the storybook as they proceeded to read their friends' stories. They had their own 'discussion' and 'review' of their friends' stories. Instead of reading just one story, *Is the Wise Owl Wise?*, they ended up reading at least 10 to 15 other versions of similar stories. The writing lesson had evolved into a reading activity with book reviews!

In another Singapore primary school, a similar project resulted in students' books becoming part of the school library, and the students in yet another school have for some years been writing and illustrating storybooks to send to a twinned school in Myanmar. Maley (2008) describes a project in Malaysia which led to the publication of a book of students' stories (Maley and Mukundan 2005).

Older learners with limited language skills have also shown themselves capable of producing their own creative fiction. Tomlinson (2013d) describes a class of adult learners in Vanuatu for whom he judged no published materials were suitable. He therefore told them that each of them was going to write a novel, starting from a familiar environment (their village), an interesting person from the village and what that person did on one particular day:

When they'd recovered from the shock, they set about the task and then spent every English lesson for the term writing their novels, while I made myself available as an informant and supporter. In true Melanesian style, they read each other's work in progress and made helpful suggestions. They quickly gained confidence and self-esteem and soon they were illustrating their books with the beautiful drawings which they all seemed capable of and 'publishing' their books in elaborate and attractive ways. (2013d: 140)

## 6.2 Teacher and learner attitudes

In Singapore, pupils in primary 6 (the final-year primary class) take a school-leaving exam which includes a reading comprehension test, and are only too aware of the importance of this. The teacher of one such class was not expecting much when, as an experiment, she gave the class texts from previous exams and asked them to create their own questions: *in fact, she did not expect the students to take the activity seriously and she did not think the questions would be of an appropriate level of difficulty. She writes:*

I was wrong. I was impressed by the diligent attitude and the pride they took in forming the questions. . . . there was a good mix of different kinds of questions, important points were being questioned and the answers given were detailed and concise. Some pupils even used the dictionary to find out meanings of words so

that they could make questions out of them. . . . Pupils clearly knew the kind of questions . . . expected of them in the PSLE [Primary School Leaving Exam] and were able to formulate questions of a similar standard. More importantly, pupils were very interested in the task.

Any activity involving learner-generated materials requires careful task selection, meticulous preparation and contingency planning, and ongoing monitoring. Studies carried out by other Singaporean teachers of primary age learners aged six to eleven (reported in McGrath 2014) have shown that, with the right kinds of planning and support, pupils were able, for example, to create invitation cards to which others then responded; devise jumbled sentences and jumbled word puzzles; set quizzes; write questions on texts; and write poems. They also proved capable of distinguishing between enjoyment and value in the activities they experienced.

One of the most striking features of these studies, however, was the overwhelmingly positive response of the pupils to their work being selected for use with other pupils or being asked to produce materials that could be used. They were 'excited', 'enthusiastic' and 'proud', and some particularly enjoyed being able to act as teachers (not just in setting tasks for their classmates to do, but also in preparing a marking scheme and marking their classmates' work). Teachers also testified to the value of the process, commenting on the benefits in terms of affect (reflected broadly in increased motivation but also in the fact that some learners were seen to approach materials design tasks with greater care than they would normal classroom activities); the capacity, even in young children, for autonomous behaviour; and, on a linguistic level, the transfer and integration of previous learning. Moreover, with some judicious editing, the materials were generally judged by teachers to be suitable for use with other learners, and as a result teachers felt that this was a valuable way of extending learning resources while reducing their own workload.

The responses of children and adults with limited language in other contexts may well be different, for a variety of reasons. However, what the Singapore studies show is that, regardless of their age, if they are given the opportunity, even learners with limited levels of language can make creative use of what they know; and key benefits are that learners see that what they have produced is valued by others, and feel pride in their accomplishment.

### 6.3 Performance

We have already seen from the transcription studies referred to in section 2.2 that task repetition following discussion with a classmate can be beneficial, but these studies were carried out with older learners and were limited to one type of learner-produced materials. The sceptical might therefore wonder whether, affective considerations apart, there is any more broadly based evidence of *learning* gains.

One response to this might be to argue that affective considerations cannot be discounted, and that motivation and success are linked in a virtuous circle, as

illustrated in research carried out by Abdul Kader (2012), which found a clear relationship between changes in motivation and enhanced performance, even over a very limited timescale. The four-week experimental study was designed to assess the effects of a number of graded activities, all of which involved learners in producing materials, on the reading comprehension scores of forty primary 5 pupils in Singapore. Since lack of motivation (reflected partly in lack of persistence) was seen as a problem contributing to poor levels of performance on reading comprehension tests, the pupils' motivation was also assessed; and a three-point scale and concepts based on Vallerand et al. (1992) and Ryan and Deci (2000) were used for this purpose. The experiment was based on a standard control-experimental group and pre-/post-assessment model, with equal numbers (forty) in each of the control and experimental groups. Four activities were used: (1) *True/False* questions on pictures; (2) gap-fill statements relating to film advertisements supplied by pupils; (3) an information sequencing task based on Mr Bean video clips; and (4) *wh*-questions on texts. These activities were chosen partly because they resembled tasks in the primary 6 school-leaving examination.

Tables 8.1 and 8.2 show the basic findings of the study for the experimental group.

Table 8.1 Motivation levels pre-study and post-study

*n* = 40

	<i>Amotivated</i>	<i>Extrinsically motivated</i>	<i>Intrinsically motivated</i>
Pre-study	22	9	9
Post-study	5	14	21

Table 8.2 Reading comprehension test scores pre-study and post-study

*n* = 40

	<i>Low (1–7 marks)</i>	<i>Mid (8–14 marks)</i>	<i>High (15–20 marks)</i>
Pre-study	36	3	1
Post-study	5	15	20

The transformation visible in both tables is clearly remarkable, especially since the intervention was so limited and of such short duration. The five students whose marks remained low on the post-study comprehension test were those revealed as amotivated in the post-study, and continued to be a cause of concern.

Let us take just one more example of performance gains in young children, this time as a result of peer interaction and feedback. This again comes from a Singaporean primary classroom. The primary 6 pupils have been talking about accidents and have written an account of an accident they have seen or heard about. They are then asked to show their narrative to a partner and comment on each other's stories. The first written narrative of Student A reads as follows:

**Student A: Written narrative, version 1**

It was a fearful moment when I heard about my cousin been through a surgery. He broke into uncontrollable sobs as his piercing pain on his backside. This incident happened at Penang, 2010. He was riding a motorcycle on a road junction when an on-coming motorcyclist came. My cousin flung out of his motorcycle and landed on his butt with a sharp piece of glass on the road. He was cut and when he was sent to the hospital. His wound was severe and the doctor had to use his ankle knee to patch up his butt skin. (Regina Ng Yang Boey 2012)

The teacher recorded and transcribed the conversation between A and his partner, B:

**Transcript**

B I don't understand what you mean by when you say 'He broke into uncontrollable sobs as his piercing pain on his backside'. What does that mean?

A Er . . . So he was crying because of the piercing pain.

B Oh so not as the piercing pain. So this is the happen at Penang. I don't think is should be 'at' should be 'in'. OK then you also say 'My cousin flung out of his motorcycle and landed on his butt with a sharp piece of glass on the road' but where did the sharp piece of glass came from?

A On the road.

B But it was there?

A Yes, it was there the whole time.

B Oh OK. Then you say 'his ankle knee to patch up his butt skin'. What do you mean by that?

A The doctor cut his ankle knee to patch up . . .

B I feel like not very clear. So you mean the doctor use the ankle knee's skin to patch up.

A Ya

The four specific changes that apparently resulted from this interrogation are highlighted in Student A's second written version:

**Student A: Written narrative, version 2**

It was a fearful moment when I heard about my cousin been through a surgery. He broke into uncontrollable sobs *triggered by the* piercing pain on his backside. The incident happened *in* Penang, 2010. He was riding a motorcycle along a road junction when an on-coming motorcyclist came. My cousin was flung out of his motorcycle and landed on his butt *where* a sharp piece of glass was *already* on the ground. He was cut and sent to the hospital. His wound was severe and the doctor had to use *the skin from his knee* to patched up his skin on his butt. (Regina Ng Yang Boey 2012)

What is noticeable is that only one of the changes is grammatical ('in' for 'at' Penang), the others being a response to clarification queries. There are also a number of other self-directed amendments (from 'on a road junction' to 'along a road junction'; from 'flung out of his motorcycle' to 'was flung . . .'; and from 'his

butt skin' to 'his skin on his butt'). Although errors in the original version remain and not all the changes are as effective as they might be, in terms of both communicative clarity and accuracy there is no doubt that version 2 is an *improvement* on version 1. What this little encounter also reveals is that Student A was prepared to listen to and act on the suggestions of his partner. One wonders whether further improvements might have been made if he had been asked to show his second version to another pupil.

#### 6.4 Caveats

This chapter has presented the case for learner involvement in materials selection, design and presentation, and the advantages of such involvement are summarised at the end of the chapter. However, a number of points should be borne in mind:

1. It needs to be recognised that if the materials used are restricted to those produced by learners this will have an effect on their ability to cope with other types of text (Gadd 1998). A combination of teacher-selected and learner-generated texts is therefore likely to be preferable.
2. In some contexts, the attempt to transfer responsibility for classroom decision-making from teacher to learners may be seen as an abdication of responsibility, by learners (Littlejohn 1983; Sengupta 1998) as well as by colleagues or parents. As noted earlier in this chapter, Allwright (1979) has argued the contrary, pointing out that a redistribution of roles is necessary. However, if learner-centred teaching is to work, learners must be willing to share in the decision-making process, and – as with any classroom innovation – patient preparation may be necessary before they are ready for this and willing to accept less familiar types of activity (Breen and Candlin 1980; Bolitho 1990; Breen and Littlejohn 2000b).
3. Even when learners are persuaded of the value of learner-centred teaching, the teacher's responsibility remains undiminished. As Stevick observes:

If we, in our zeal to be 'humanistic', become too 'learner-centered' with regard to 'control', we undermine the learner's most basic need, which is for security. We may find that we have imposed our own half-baked anarchy on the class. Absence of structure, or of focus on the teacher, may be all right in certain kinds of psychological training, but not in our classrooms. In a task-oriented group like a language class, the student's place is at the center of a space which the teacher has structured, with room left for him to grow into. In this kind of relationship, there are two essentials for the teacher: *faith* that the student will in fact grow into that space, and *understanding* of where the student is in that space at any given *moment*. When both these ingredients are present, there is the possibility of true 'humanism' in teaching. (1980: 33; original emphases)

4. One of the arguments advanced for learner generated materials is that they reduce the time needed for teacher preparation. While this is certainly true

once teachers have developed a repertoire of procedures and a bank of materials has been established, it is important to recognise that early attempts to get learners to generate materials require very careful teacher planning and support (scaffolding) during the process, and that some post-editing may also be necessary.

5. The relationship between the kinds of learner-centred teaching discussed in this chapter and the promotion of learner autonomy, despite some of the more obvious points of contact (e.g. learners selecting learning materials; learners determining the focus of feedback) is not as direct as it might seem. Benson and Voller, writing of methods and materials in autonomous learning projects, point to a possible paradox: that these 'might tend to inhibit rather than promote autonomy unless they are able to accommodate more directive roles for their users' (1997: 177). In short, guidance and support are necessary, but teachers must also be willing to let go. There has to be some degree of freedom and choice. If activities really engage learners and stimulate intrinsic motivation, then they will naturally act in self-directed ways (Ryan and Deci 2000; Spratt et al. 2002; McGrath 2014). As Myers points out: 'We must let our students experience authentic responsibility and independence in the language classroom. Only then will they be led to discover for themselves both the personal satisfaction and the linguistic rewards inherent in sharing the power' (1990: 84).

## REFLECTION, DISCUSSION, ACTION

- Do you agree that learner involvement in materials generation (and even teaching) is, in principle, a desirable direction to take? If so, what do you see as the most important *potential* benefits?
- If you have already tried activities similar to some of those described in the chapter with positive results, what ideas has the chapter given you for further experimentation?
- Try out one of the types of activity described in the chapter, collect feedback from learners, and reflect on what you have learned. You may find it useful to look first at the sections on learner feedback in Chapter 9.

## REVIEW AND PREVIEW

The main focus in this chapter has been on learners producing materials for use in class by their classmates or other students. This has been shown to have a number of positive effects as far as learners are concerned, on both an individual and a class level, and there is now evidence that neither age nor limited language proficiency need be seen as constraints. There are also benefits for the teacher. Monitoring learners as they discuss and prepare materials raises the teacher's awareness of individual or general difficulties. Some of the material is potentially reusable with learners in other classes. Teacher preparation time is reduced. And because there is always be



an element of unpredictability, the classroom is a more interesting place for both teacher and learners.

While research and experience indicates that most learners respond positively to the activity-types described here, one type of material – that is, spoken (and recorded) and written texts produced by learners – is likely to be of particular interest and the most relevant from a linguistic perspective. Careful in-class analysis of this type of material, which is as finely tuned to learner level as it could be, is sure to be helpful not only for those involved in producing that text, but for others in the same class.

Learners also occupy a central role in the next chapter, as both the intended beneficiaries of courses of learning and as potential contributors to the evaluation of resources and courses.

## FURTHER READING

**Learner-centred teaching and teacher-learner roles:** Wright (1987), Nunan (1988a), Clarke (1989b), Tudor (1993, 1996, 2001), Breen and Littlejohn (2000a, particularly papers by Breen and Littlejohn 2000b and Serrano-Sampedro 2000), McGrath (2013, 2014). See also Rinvolucri (2002) and Tomlinson (2013d) on 'humanising' language teaching and the Humanising Language Teaching website at [www.hltmag.co.uk](http://www.hltmag.co.uk). Frank and Rinvolucri (2007), Maley (2008) and Maley and Mukundan (2011a, 2011b) focus on encouraging learners to write and George Jacobs's website has a section on learners as writers at <http://GeorgeJacobs.net/extensive.htm>

# Evaluating effects

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**Evaluation revisited – In-use evaluation of published materials:** objectives of in-use evaluation; data collection; learner involvement in in-use evaluation of materials; sharing feedback and collating data – **In-use evaluation of teacher-produced materials:** the value of systematic in-use evaluation; trialling; revision following in-use evaluation; problems in revision – **Post-use evaluation:** from in-use to post-use evaluation; evaluating learning and learner outcomes; post-use feedback from learners; evaluation of materials selection procedures

## 1 EVALUATION REVISITED

In this chapter, we close the circle that started with **pre-use evaluation** (see Figure 9.1, p. 190). In Chapter 1, it was suggested that the evaluation of materials prior to use, however rigorously this is carried out, should be only a first step in the evaluation of those materials. As a number of writers have pointed out, pre-use evaluation can merely indicate *potential* suitability (e.g. Daoud and Celce-Murcia 1979; Nunan 1991; Ellis 1997; Tomlinson 1999; McGrath 2002, 2013; Jolly and Bolitho 2011; McDonough et al. 2013). To establish whether materials really are suitable (and in what ways and to what extent), two further stages of evaluation are necessary. The first, **in-use evaluation**, is conducted throughout the period that the materials are being used. The second, **post-use evaluation**, takes place at some point later.

Although isolated examples of evaluation studies do exist (e.g. Tomlinson and Masuhara 2010; McGrath 2013: ch. 7 for a review), such evidence as there is points to the fact that if teachers do evaluate materials as they use them the process is not usually formalised (Masuhara 2011; McGrath 2013). There is also some evidence, mainly anecdotal, that teachers carry out post-use evaluation merely to determine whether to continue to use the same materials; however, even when this is done in an organised fashion (i.e. in a group) it tends to rely on impressionistic holistic judgements rather than evidence (e.g. Law 1995; Fredriksson and Olsson 2006). Ellis, writing about post-use evaluation of courses, speculates that either teachers know all they need to know about a book after using it day in and day out and therefore do not feel the need for any kind of formal evaluation or they feel 'daunted' by what they see as the enormity of the task (1998: 221–2). Perhaps thorough in-use

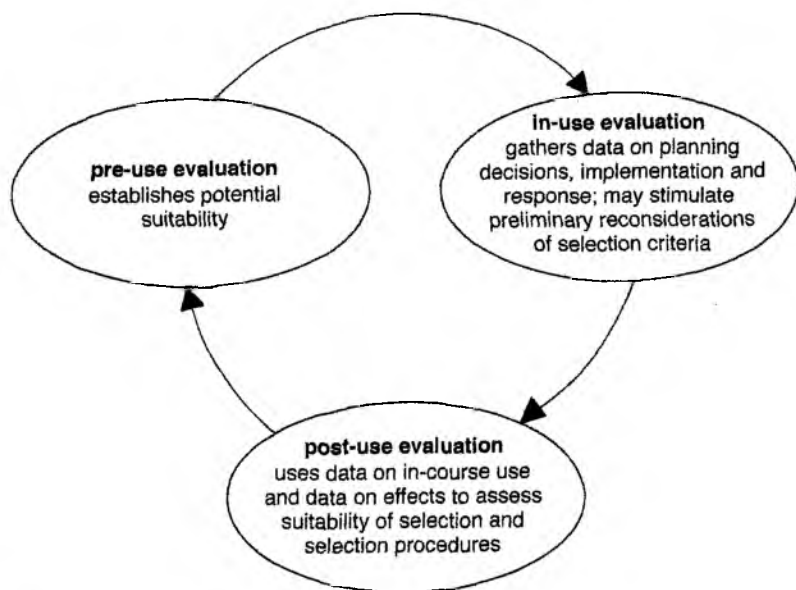


Figure 9.1 Closing the circle

and post-use evaluation simply do not happen because time is not available or has not been allocated for this; or perhaps those who make them happen are too busy making them happen to write about what they do.

One of the purposes of this chapter is to argue that in-use and post-use evaluation of core materials such as coursebooks is necessary and to show that it can be made much more systematic (by, among other things, making planned use of teachers' daily experience) without being daunting in scale. **Sections 2 and 3** suggest approaches to the systematic in-use evaluation of published materials and in-house (teacher-produced) materials respectively, and **section 4** deals with post-use evaluation. Methods of eliciting learner feedback are discussed in sections 2 and 4, and possible concerns about learner feedback in **section 5**.

## 2 IN-USE EVALUATION OF PUBLISHED MATERIALS

### 2.1 Objectives of in-use evaluation

The in-use evaluation of published materials is motivated by two objectives. The first and more obvious, as indicated in Figure 9.1, is to revisit the decision taken at the selection stage. By planning lessons based on the materials, by teaching them and by observing the effects, the teacher is – theoretically, at least – in a position to make almost a moment-by-moment assessment of whether the materials are standing up to the test of use. What normally happens is somewhat

different. The kind of evaluation that we usually carry out, as we teach with materials, tends to be much more fragmentary. In planning a lesson, we will be balancing a number of externally imposed or self-imposed requirements of which we will be more or less consciously aware: to do a little more work on something learners found difficult in the last lesson, for instance; to move a step further towards the fulfilment of the course aims; to ensure a learning experience that is coherent, varied, well balanced. In other words, our attention is on learning outcomes and our interest in the materials is limited to the contribution that they can make to these outcomes. Evaluation of the materials themselves thus tends to be ad hoc rather than planned.

If materials evaluation at this stage is to be more systematic it will have to be capable of answering questions such as the following:

- What proportion of the materials was I able to use unchanged, that is, without needing to 'shape' (adapt) them in any way?
- Did the unchanged materials appear to work well? What evidence do I have for this?
- What spontaneous changes did I make as I taught with the materials? Did these improvisations work well? If not, what do I need to do differently?

Where the original materials have been more substantially adapted or supplemented at the course- or lesson-planning stage these new materials need to be subject to similar evaluation, of course.

In-use evaluation along these lines, which relies heavily on conscientious record-keeping and evidence-based reflection, is concerned not only with the evaluation of the original material, but also with its adaptability to different contexts. The primary evaluator will be the teacher, but the teacher might also draw on learner feedback (see section 2.3).

A second purpose of in-use evaluation is to investigate what teachers do with materials, the obvious inputs being reports by and observations of the teacher. Such observations might form part of a peer observation programme oriented towards teacher development; and 'lesson study' groups (e.g. Stilwell et al. 2010b, 2010c) might form one strand within such a programme. However, when observation is part of a formal teacher appraisal system within an institution, the focus will be on the teacher rather than the materials and the evaluator will, of course, be someone other than the teacher. This will also be the case in quite differently motivated investigations, where the emphasis is on illuminative description rather than formative or summative evaluation. For example, Richards and Mahoney's (1996) study of textbook use by English teachers in Hong Kong, which used questionnaires and observation to discover what teachers believe and do, draws conclusions not about the materials but about teachers' autonomy from the textbook (see also Hutchinson 1996; Richards 1998a; Tsui 2003; Shower et al. 2008; Zheng and Davison 2008; Grammatosi and Harwood 2014; Menkabu and Harwood 2014). Studies such as Sampson (2009) also demonstrate that experienced teachers are not only more critical and therefore selective users of published materials, but also

exploit materials more fully. We return to the topic of materials and research in the final chapter.

## 2.2 Data collection

### 2.2.1 Sources and types of data

Evaluation of the effects of programmes has traditionally taken the form of examining students' end-of-course test scores. While this single, quantitative measure will still speak loudly to all concerned, it is now recognised that test scores are only a partial measure of course effects and that programme evaluation (and within that, materials evaluation) should draw on more sources of information. Such information needs to be gathered, as we have seen, at different stages; it should ideally come from learners as well as teachers; and if it is to answer the questions *Why?*, *How?* and *How well?* (and not simply *What?* or *When?*), it will need to be collected in a variety of ways, one of which will be observation. If we are careful, this data-gathering can be organised in such a way that triangulation (the comparison of different perspectives on the same event) is possible. This will make the conclusions more reliable.

### 2.2.2 Records of use

In situations where in-use evaluation is not organised, it tends to be anecdotal, unfocused and occasional. A first step in the direction of more systematic evaluation is therefore to establish a record-keeping system. Masuhara's (1998, 2011) term 'records of use', helpful though it is, actually covers a range of possibilities. There is a scene in the film *Dead Poets Society* when the dangerously inspirational teacher encourages students to tear out the introduction to the book they are using; this way of 'recording' what has not been used may be a little drastic. At its most basic, a record of use indicates which parts of a book have and have not been used (unchanged). This information can be in the form of ticks and crosses on the book itself or on a specially devised sheet listing all the components of a lesson or unit (the latter is obviously more convenient for record-keeping purposes and comparison with other teachers). Woodward (2001: 200) contains an example of a page from a teacher's book which has been annotated by the teacher as part of the lesson-planning process; additional notes might then need to be added to indicate any additional spontaneous changes made during the lesson. More detailed records might contain (1) brief explanations of *why particular sections had not been used*; (2) notes on *the reasons for* and form of any adaptation; and (3) notes on *the reasons for* and form of any supplementation. Record-keeping of this kind is time-consuming, of course, even if a record sheet is used to simplify the process. It makes most sense in a situation where several teachers are using the same materials and there are opportunities for regular comparison of records (see section 2.5) or as part of a research project, when video recording would be an invaluable complement to such field notes.

### 2.2.3 Observation

Experienced teachers 'observe' without needing to be advised to do this, but such observations tend to be neither recorded (in any sense) nor systematic. One way of making observation more systematic is to include in the kinds of record of use described above a *process* dimension (i.e. notes on what actually happened when the materials were used) (Richards 1993, 1998c). While such a record might include reference to what the teacher did (e.g. in making spontaneous changes of plan), what is particularly important as far as materials evaluation is concerned is an indication of how the learners responded. Again, such records might take a number of forms. Teachers could annotate their lesson plan (if this exists as a detailed document) at points during the lesson when this is possible or, as suggested above, make brief notes on the book itself. Records of these kinds might form the basis for a more considered set of notes, written up after the lesson. Some teachers keep a regular journal in which they reflect on their teaching. While both of these forms of professional reflection on action have their virtues, as ways of evaluating materials they may be somewhat unfocused. A better alternative for this purpose would therefore seem to be 'observation sheets' (Tomlinson 1999) on which the teacher records, for example, the kinds of difficulties that learners appear to be having with the materials – instructions, questions or tasks. Again, video recording can provide a record of what has happened that can be referred to subsequently. It is also a way of fulfilling Allwright's demand that 'the use of the textbook . . . be monitored to permit evaluation of its use and effectiveness' (1981: 5–6).

### 2.2.4 Micro-evaluation

A more developed form of this idea is represented by what Ellis (2011) calls 'micro-evaluation'. If macro-evaluation, as defined by Ellis, is an attempt to evaluate a programme (or project) in its entirety, then micro-evaluation focuses on a single aspect, administrative or curricular, of the programme. Within the area of curriculum, materials and their effectiveness are an obvious focus of interest for teachers. As Ellis puts it, 'attention is . . . on whether specific activities and techniques appear to "work" in the context of a particular lesson' (2011: 216).

While Ellis's (2011) wide-ranging paper provides a concise and clear introduction to evaluation procedures at a general level, his particular concern is to demonstrate how the same analytical framework can be applied at a micro level: for example, that of a communicative task. The approach recommended, which is illustrated with three examples, involves the following steps:

1. Description of the task (input to the learners, the procedures they will have to follow; whether they will be involved in receptive or productive language use; and what the outcomes will be) and its objectives.
2. Planning the evaluation.
3. Collecting information:

- (a) *before* the task is used (information on learners' present state of knowledge/competence – established through a pre-test; and previous experience of this kind of task)
  - (b) *while* the task is being used (what happens, especially in relation to what is anticipated – this will require observation; recording may also be helpful)
  - (c) *on completion* of the task (information on actual outcomes – established through, for instance, examination of learner products and post-test; and feedback on the teacher's and learners' opinions).
4. Analysis of the information.
  5. Conclusions and recommendations.

Micro-evaluation serves as a basis 'for deciding whether specific tasks work, and . . . as a source of teacher self-reflection and development' (Ellis 2011: 217). The obvious drawback, as Ellis acknowledges, is that it is 'time consuming and laborious' (2011: 230). The justification for going to these lengths is stronger, perhaps, if a teacher is experimenting with an activity prototype rather than just a one-off task and/or if more than one teacher stands to benefit from the findings of the evaluation.

The kind of observation suggested by researchers such as Ellis is, of course, a good deal easier when the teacher is not directly involved in the activity; in institutions where peer observation is well established it could prove an interesting alternative to a concentration on the teacher.

The value of recorded observations of materials in use, whatever their form, is that they capture the teacher's or observer's perceptions of what is going on at the time. They also have obvious limitations. Even when the teacher is free to see, he or she sees selectively; and though an observer may see more, there is the same problem. The picture is incomplete without some insight into the learners' views.

## 2.3 Learner involvement in in-use evaluation of materials

### 2.3.1 Learners' evaluation criteria

In Chapters 1–3, it was suggested that learners' reactions to materials might be elicited as part of the selection process. Learners can also contribute to in-use evaluation. Rather than simply asking them to respond to the questions that we feel to be relevant as teachers, it may be helpful first to consider what students say spontaneously about materials. Look at these comments:

- (a) 'we did presentations, presentations . . . We laughed but learned' (Harr 2010: 182).
- (b) 'It was interesting, but I don't think it is useful' (Stilwell et al. 2010b: 264).
- (c) 'very worthwhile . . . but vocabulary was very difficult' (Peacock 1997: 151–2).
- (d) 'less interesting . . . topic is very hard to us' (Peacock 1997: 151–2).

- (e) 'In our English textbook, we only read about film stars and pop stars and famous people. I want to know how the English people live' (Jolly and Bolitho 2011: 111).
- (f) 'A coursebook is a bee hive, which has sweet honey and a lot of painful stings' (McGrath 2006: 177).

Such comments, as experienced teachers will recognise, are fairly typical. What is important for our present discussion, however, is that each of these quotations refers to one or more of just three basic concerns voiced by learners about materials and the texts and activities they contain.

### Task 9.1K

Complete the table below. First look through quotations *a–f* to decide what the other two concerns are and summarise these in the first column. Then in the second column indicate the quotation(s) in which the concerns are expressed. Note that a quotation may reflect more than one concern.

Learners' concerns: the materials are . . .	Quotation
1. difficult	c
2.	
3.	

Rico Troncoso (2010) informally elicited the opinions of Colombian undergraduate students on their textbooks, and summarises these as follows:

- Our textbook seems to be designed for other people.
- I want to know more about some other cultures but I can't learn it from my book.
- I don't like my textbook because I don't see myself there.
- I want to be a journalist but this book has nothing about it.
- The book makes me repeat and repeat. It is too mechanical.
- I want to find more demanding exercises. They do not make me think.
- This book is not dealing with real language.
- I don't see differences between cultures.
- All the activities are designed to learn the target language, what about my mother tongue?
- I am tired of seeing the same pictures which represent the same culture.

(Rico Troncoso 2010: 89)

Rico Troncoso points out that statements 1, 3 and 4 relate to who the material is intended for; statements 2, 7 and 8 to the cultural aspects taught; and 5, 6, 9 and 10 to the method employed and how students feel a language should be learned. This analysis may not use exactly the same terms that you used to complete the table in Task 9.1, but the criteria underlying the Colombian students' opinions are



essentially the same. Statement 5 is a complaint about the lack of **variety** in the drill-type exercises, but also, more broadly, a judgement on the **usefulness** of the materials, whereas statement 6 refers to the **level of difficulty** of the exercises, and the fact that these are felt to be insufficiently demanding (too easy), and perhaps as a result also **uninteresting** or lacking in **value**. The other statements all seem to relate in one way or another to the perceived (ir)**relevance** of the coursebooks: the materials are not seen as something with which students can identify and from which they can learn what they want to learn.

We can draw a number of conclusions from such examples of learner feedback:

1. The gap that is frequently seen between what is provided and what students say they want when asked for feedback argues strongly for involving students in materials evaluation.
2. If we wish to elicit feedback on materials that genuinely takes account of students' criteria for judging materials, then we need to obtain their views on all of the points highlighted above: that is, whether they see the materials as being of the right level of difficulty, interesting and useful.
3. Students themselves often seem to be more concerned with what they perceive to be the relevance of the materials for their own learning needs (which may include preparation for tests and examinations) than with whether the materials are intrinsically interesting. This does not mean that when selecting materials we can disregard their potential interest to learners, simply that learners need to be convinced of their value, a consideration which has important implications for the way in which we introduce them to learners.
4. There appears to be an intriguing relationship between interest and difficulty (see Peacock 1997). This is a relationship that merits further research.

### 2.3.2 *Methods of eliciting feedback from learners*

Direct feedback on materials can be elicited orally or in writing/online (using a questionnaire). Pryor (2010), for instance, in a materials development project with Japanese students, used a questionnaire which focused on the three criteria discussed above, but at two levels (that of the lesson and that of the activity):

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. How easy was the lesson?               | (a) Easy (b) Moderate (c) Difficult                     |
| 2. How easy was the reading task?         | (a) Easy (b) Moderate (c) Difficult                     |
| 3. How easy was the writing task?         | (a) Easy (b) Moderate (c) Difficult                     |
| 4. How enjoyable was the lesson?          | (a) Very enjoyable (b) Enjoyable<br>(c) Not enjoyable   |
| 5. Did the lesson help you learn English? | (a) Yes, a lot (b) To some extent<br>(c) No, not at all |

(Pryor 2010: 215)

## Task 9.2K

1. What do you like about this questionnaire?
2. Would you want to make any changes to the response format?
3. Do you see any weaknesses in the questionnaire?

In addition to the weaknesses noted in the Commentary on this task, the questionnaire stops short of asking for additional feedback that might also be useful. Questions such as: 'What did you like about the materials?' and 'What changes would you suggest?' can elicit responses which are either reassuring or thought-provoking.

As far as oral feedback is concerned, one possibility is to organise periodic focus group discussions. A class of thirty, say, might be divided into five groups each containing six learners, with each group containing students of different levels of proficiency (and a balance of any other factors, such as gender, that might seem relevant). A time is allocated for the discussion – for example, the last ten minutes of a lesson – and while the rest of the class are working on an assigned task, the teacher sits with the focus group and asks them to discuss a series of questions – or provides these as written prompts. If the discussion is recorded, the teacher can concentrate on listening rather than note-taking or simply allow the group to work autonomously. In the next lesson, points made by the group can be discussed with the whole class. A week or two later, another focus group is organised to canvas the views of other students on another topic. One advantage of the mixed-proficiency focus group over whole class discussion, especially in large classes, is that it offers an opportunity for each of the students involved to express their own views and should provide a set of responses which are reasonably representative of the class as a whole.

Direct learner feedback of the kind considered thus far can usefully be complemented by observation of learners as they work on the materials (e.g. engagement, time taken, requests for help) and data on students' performance, which can provide evidence that learning has taken place, or reveal remaining common difficulties or weaknesses in the materials (e.g. instructions that are misunderstood by several students or an exercise item that all students get wrong). In the case of Pryor's students, their performance on the reading and writing tasks would be an obvious additional source of information as to the level of difficulty of the tasks.

Learner diaries can also provide useful insights into individual reactions to materials. However, if these are to be more than just occasional or incidental, explicit prompts may be necessary: for example, 'In your next entry, say something about . . .'. When learners are writing diaries regularly, they might from time to time be asked to share some of their reactions with classmates. One technique which I have used is the 'diary card'. Pieces of card are made available in two different colours (paper would be an alternative), with one colour (red, perhaps) representing a negative feeling, and the other (yellow, say) a positive feeling. Each student chooses one comment from his or her diary, writes on a card of the appropriate colour and pins or sticks it up on the classroom wall, door or window. Students are encouraged to read their classmates' comments during the lesson (the management of this may require some forethought)

or during a break, and respond (agreeing, disagreeing, making different points) using white slips of paper and pinning/sticking these next to the cards to which they refer. The white slips may in turn attract further comments . . .

For further discussion of learner feedback, see section 4.3.

## 2.4 Sharing feedback and collating data

Data collected by an individual teacher has a value for that individual; when confirmed by data on the use of the same materials by other staff, it takes on a very different status.

If what is at stake is the management of learning within a particular section of an institution, the task of collating individual data sets is best handled by a coordinator (e.g. head of department, course director, director of studies). A summary can then be presented for discussion at a meeting of the teachers concerned.

Teachers' meetings can be rather humdrum affairs in which nothing of real substance is discussed. And yet a weekly teacher's meeting would be an ideal forum for the discussion – perhaps in subgroups based on shared materials or classes – of *materials evaluation in progress*.

In institutions with a small language department, where teachers are using different coursebooks, the focus might be on features common to these books, such as the tasks accompanying written texts or the relevance of speaking activities, with each meeting examining a different feature (Rea-Dickens and Germaine 1992). This kind of *shifting focus* would be a way of *ensuring coverage and depth*. As Rea-Dickens and Germaine point out, extracts from instruments designed for pre-use materials evaluation might well be suitable for this purpose, with a little adaptation, perhaps.

Apart from their intended purpose – to monitor the effectiveness of the materials in use – such meetings would have a number of other benefits at both an individual and an institutional level. The opportunity to *share ideas and supplementary materials*, especially within a shared context, is highly valued by teachers, who spend much of their working lives 'alone' in a classroom – an opportunity from which the experienced might gain as much as the inexperienced. Positive outcomes should also contribute to a cooperative and trusting atmosphere in which 'hidden needs and wants' (Masuhara 2011: 258) can be revealed. Teacher development groups (Head and Taylor 1997) have sprung from such beginnings. From the perspective of materials evaluation, however, one further likely effect should be noted. In the course of a detailed discussion of materials that have just been taught it quickly becomes apparent which assumptions about teaching and learning are shared, and this in turn provides a good basis for re-examination of the criteria used to select those materials.

Table 9.1 summarises the evaluation processes and techniques discussed in this section.

All the above techniques can also be used in the evaluation of teacher-produced materials, although – as with published materials – some techniques will only be applicable where two or more teachers are using the same materials.

Table 9.1 Procedures and processes for in-use evaluation of materials

Stage	Evaluator	Procedure
in-use	teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• records of use</li> <li>• observation of learners</li> <li>• micro-evaluation</li> </ul>
	observer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• observation of teacher and learners</li> </ul>
	learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• oral questions</li> <li>• focus group interview(s)</li> <li>• written questionnaire</li> <li>• diaries/diary cards</li> </ul>
	coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• collation of data</li> </ul>
	teachers' meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• exchange of experience and ideas</li> </ul>

### 3 IN-USE EVALUATION OF TEACHER-PRODUCED MATERIALS

#### 3.1 The value of systematic in-use evaluation

Factors such as the scale of the materials and the number of potential users will have a bearing on how systematically in-use evaluation of teacher-produced materials is carried out. When materials are being prepared for internal institution-wide use many of the points made in the previous section will be relevant. Data is needed. This can come from learners and teachers using the material and from observers. A similar response, positive or negative, from multiple users – or from the triangulation of learners, teacher and observer – will provide a sounder basis for judgement than a single-class trial, especially when the teacher in the latter is also the materials designer. It is important, moreover, that all materials are periodically reviewed: after all, materials date and learners' entry levels or other features of their profiles may change.

In many situations, of course, teachers develop materials just for use with their own classes. What they discover about the strengths and weaknesses of the materials through trying them out will usually be incidental rather than planned, and the materials will only be revised if this seems to be essential (for instance, because the same materials are to be used with another class) and time is available. The argument advanced in this section is that in these situations also both learners and teachers stand to gain from more systematically organised in-use evaluation since, ultimately, this should ensure a good fit between materials and learners.

#### 3.2 Trialling

When it comes to trialling (publishers tend to refer to this as 'piloting'), there are at least three important differences between materials intended for publication and materials for internal use. As regards the latter, there is first, the closeness of contact between teacher materials designers and the learners (and perhaps other teachers) for whom

the materials are intended, which can help teachers to tailor materials with a reasonable degree of accuracy. Second, teacher-materials designers potentially have much greater flexibility to make changes to the materials, which means that it is perhaps less important to get them 'right' first time. A further major difference will be the time and resources available. Publication can involve a significant investment for the publisher, and though this will normally result in a product that is superior in look and feel to in-house materials, it also constrains the amount of trialling they are willing to do.

Publisher-led research lies outside the scope of this chapter; however, there are a number of papers that touch on this which are potentially relevant to teachers preparing materials for use within their own institutions (e.g. Singapore Wala 2003; Amrani 2011). One of the implicit recommendations that come through such papers is that it is desirable to prepare a sample of the material (e.g. a prototype unit) and trial this before embarking on the preparation of a complete first draft (see also Rajan 1995; Richards 1995). One of the general questions that concerns publishers is: 'Do they [the materials] work successfully when they are taught by teachers who were not involved in the process of developing them?' (Richards 1995: 109). This question is perhaps particularly important in the case of ESP materials, where students' (self-perceived) needs and teachers' knowledge of the specialist area are important considerations, and where the results of piloting may prompt reconsideration of a preliminary needs analysis or of the use made of subject specialists (Balarbar 1995). For Rajan (1995), who was developing English literacy and oracy materials for adult workers in Singapore, key questions were whether:

- situations and activities were appropriate and interesting to the learner
- the language used was too easy or too difficult or just right
- explanations in the mother tongue in the video, audio and print materials were adequate
- the assumed time-frame for the completion of activities was realistic.

(Rajan 1995: 203)

As will be clear from the above set of questions, specific categories of material or contexts will prompt specific questions at the trialling stage, but core questions should obviously relate to learner response (concerning, for example, clarity, interest, value, level of difficulty, support) and teacher reactions (concerning, for example, perceived appropriateness, ease of use, support, time needed). It is also worth bearing in mind that while learners and teachers have key feedback roles, an observer may be able not only to corroborate the feedback from these sources but also to give a richer, more descriptive account of how the materials were used (e.g. exploited, adapted) and this may in turn suggest possible directions for further development, including suggestions for use in teachers' notes.

### 3.3 Revision following in-use evaluation

For a writer, revision can mean one of three things: the self-directed redrafting familiar to anyone who cares about form, shape and effect; the modifications

prompted by armchair feedback from others, including colleagues, co-authors, publisher's readers and editors; and the (often more radical) rewriting that follows the trialling of the materials. In this section we concentrate on the latter, making a distinction between review (an evaluation process) and revision (a design process). (For insights into the creative process itself, and relations with others, see for example Prowse 2011 and papers in Hidalgo et al. 1995.)

### 3.3.1 *A search for principles*

Lynch (1996) presents a detailed discussion of changes made over a ten-year period to an intensive university pre-session programme in English for academic purposes. The published text which initially formed the core of the programme was first supplemented and then replaced (by another published text); finally, the course team developed their own materials. Preparing to revise these following a period of use, Lynch looked around for help. He observes:

'Revision' does not feature at all in the indexes of any of the most obvious EFL sources (Dubin and Olshain 1986, Hutchinson and Waters 1987, Yalden 1987, Nunan 1989, Rea-Dickens and Germaine 1992). The verb 'revise' does occur in the text of several books, although I notice that Breen and Candlin, for example, preferred to use the verb 'refine'. Where it *is* used, 'revise' appears without any accompanying discussion of the precise process involved. In general, the implication of commentaries on the revision process amounts to this: revision – and other aspects of evaluation – is a matter of judgement. (1996: 27)

Lacking more precise guidance, Lynch used the sources he cites to create his own model of the revision process (see Figure 9.2). He comments on this:

The starting point is Breen's (1989) division of evaluation into three stages: workplan, process and outcome. Outcome data would include such things as test scores and student reports. The process perspective would bring in insights from the 'course-in-action', which Johnson and Johnson (1970) characterise under five headings: clarity, level, action, attitude and time. Of these, 'action' is glossed by Breen and Candlin (1987) in terms of five or six questions – 'Who?', 'What?', 'How?' and so on. So using the two sets of process and outcome data – noting that the term 'data' here covers not just empirical facts but also individual responses and attitudes – the course designer makes decisions about revision. If change is in fact required, then the revision options boil down to adding, deleting, moving or modifying (Nathenson and Henderson 1980). (Lynch 1996: 33)

Working through the revision process brought Lynch to the following conclusion:

I hoped that the literature on materials evaluation and design would provide guidance as to how to make revision decisions more systematic – though not

automatic. The lesson that I draw from reflecting on the evolution of Course 3 is that the revision process does demand what Prabhu called 'the fresh exercise of discretion and decision' (1987: 102); the process can never be completely systematized, in the sense of being reduced to a straightforward flowchart or, looking ahead, to an expert system. There will always be a need for judgement and interpretation, no matter how 'hard' the information we are able to gather. For that reason I have drawn deliberately woolly clouds around the process and outcome data . . . (1996: 34)

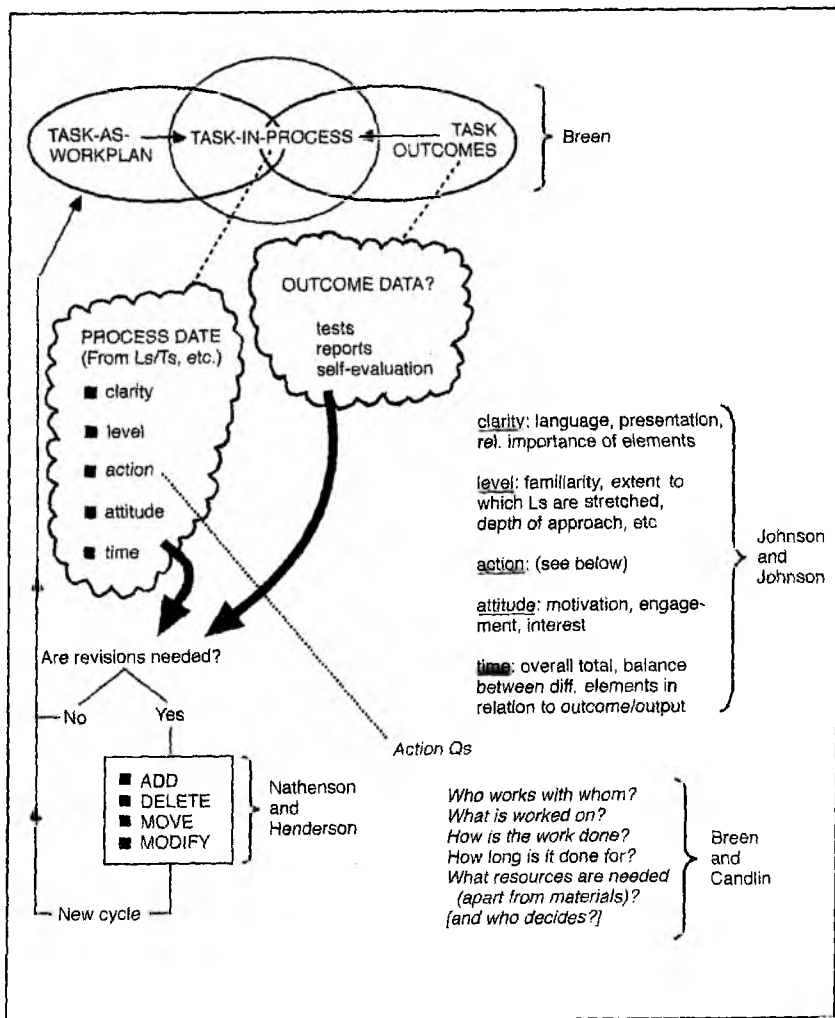


Figure 9.2 Influences on revision (Lynch 1996: 32)

What is helpful about Lynch's model is that, like that of Ellis (2011) discussed earlier in this chapter, it brings together both process and outcome data and specifies the nature (and in the case of process data) the possible foci of this. It thus goes a long way towards answering the question: 'How can I know whether the materials are satisfactory?' Both forms of data will also shed light on specific features that may warrant revision.

### 3.3.2 *The diagnosis of weakness*

Jolly and Bolitho (2011), who are also concerned with revision, relate the diagnosis of weaknesses in teacher-produced material to specific steps in the design process. Jolly and Bolitho's simplified representation of the process leading up to the production of a worksheet is captured in Figure 9.3. This represents in their words a 'simple', and indeed 'simplified', uni-directional set of steps that a materials writer is likely to go through. Pointing out that though this may reflect what occurs when one is writing for publication, they argue that materials writing should actually be a 'dynamic and self-adjusting process'. It is the failure to understand that materials need to be 'tuned', they suggest, that explains why so many materials 'lack that final touch of excellence' (2011: 112).

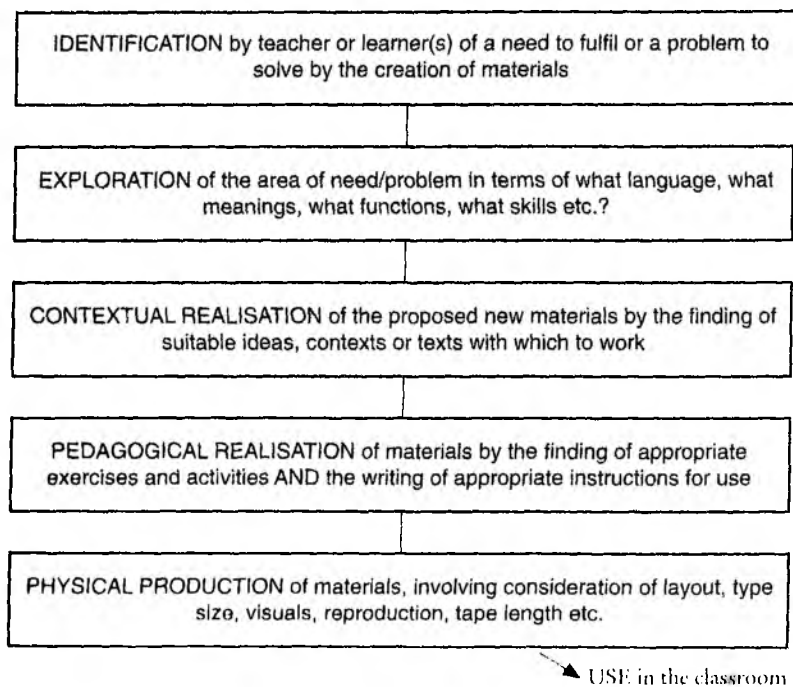


Figure 9.3 Steps in materials design (Jolly and Bolitho 2011: 112)



While the sequence illustrated appears logical as a sequence, it is probably not an accurate reflection of reality. As Jolly and Bolitho point out, this is a simplified version of the process in that (1) a materials writer may not go through all of these steps and may not follow the steps in exactly this order; and (2) it fails to take account of the rewriting (revision) that is likely to follow feedback.

The diagram is also simplified in that it appears to conflate two rather different scenarios: one in which the need to produce materials gradually becomes apparent and one in which this is seen to be unnecessary (Figure 9.4).

At stage 1, the teacher becomes aware of a need that cannot be satisfied on the spot. If that need is for *knowledge* and implies *presentation* of linguistic or cultural information, he or she will then reflect on what he or she knows (stage 2: exploration of language) and perhaps consult one or more authoritative sources. The issue of whether or not to produce materials to deal with the need/problem will almost certainly not have been considered up to this point. If, on the other

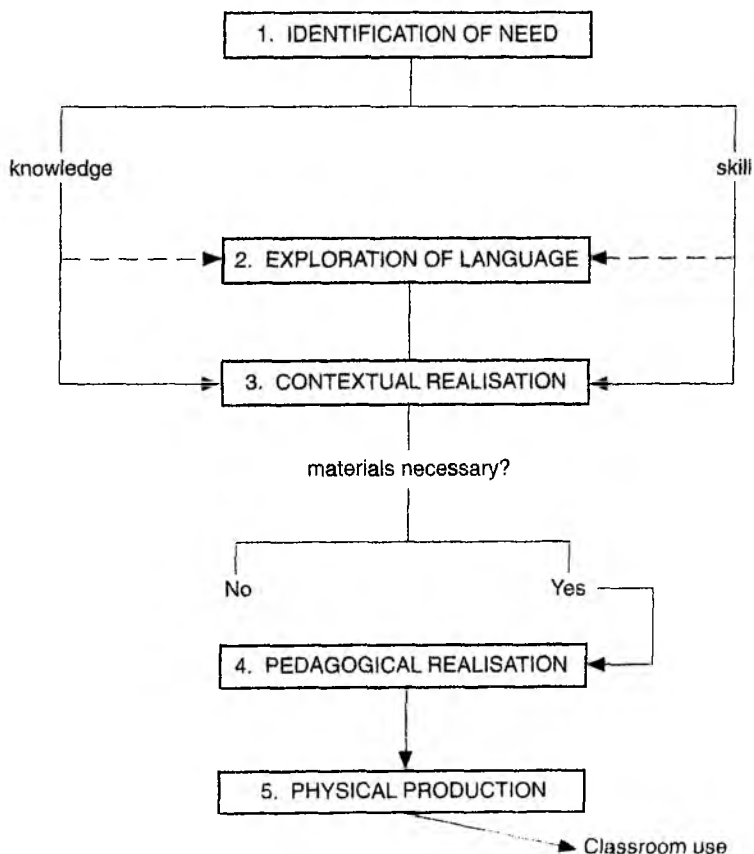
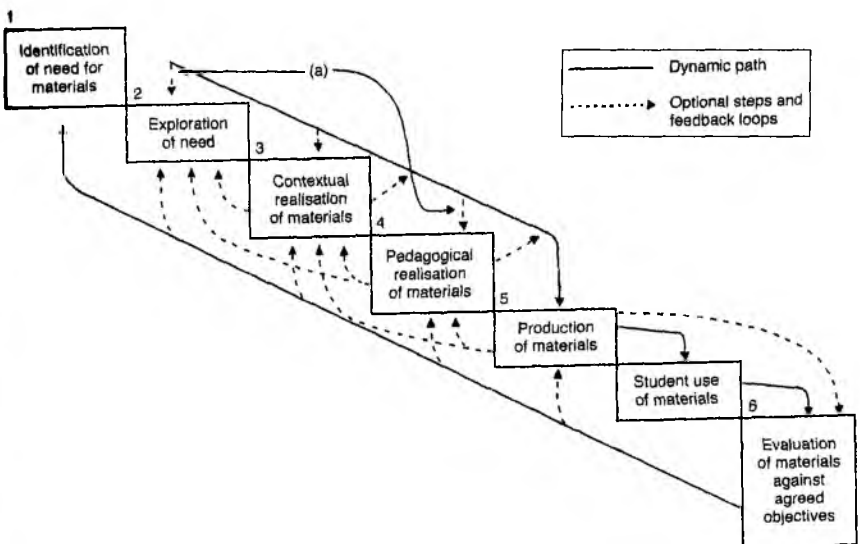


Figure 9.4 To produce materials or not?

hand, the need is for *skill* and (further) *practice*, other than oral practice, will be required, then the teacher will have recognised this at stage 1 and may well skip stage 2. (There will, of course, be situations where both presentation and practice are felt to be necessary.) For the teacher who has presentation in mind the first decision comes at stage 3: will an oral explanation and/or some examples (deductive presentation) be appropriate or would an awareness-raising approach be preferable, and if so, are supplementary materials called for? In either case, one or more appropriate contexts will have to be devised. When materials are deemed to be necessary, the two scenarios come together at stage 4 (pedagogical realisation). Here the focus is on method, how learning can be facilitated or practice managed. In the penultimate stage, decisions are taken about layout etc. and the materials produced. The final stage, in the diagram at least, is classroom use. However, we might wish to allow for input from colleagues at any point in this process.

In Figure 9.5, an elaborated version of Figure 9.4, there is an additional step in the downward sequence that is responsible for keeping the whole system in motion. This trigger is evaluation. On the basis of his or her evaluation or learner feedback, the teacher reconsiders any one of the previous steps and makes adjustments to the materials as they are being used or after the event. And the process is potentially cyclical.

The focus in this diagram on the process by which the materials were conceived provides us with a rather different perspective on revision. One possible implication of the feedback loops in the diagram is that if teacher-produced materials do not



**Figure 9.5** A teacher's path through the production of new or adapted materials (Jolly and Bolitho 2011: 113)

work as well as expected, we can attempt to locate the source of the problem by retracing our steps up the action sequence. Thus, we might first consider what happened at the stage the learners used the materials (Were the materials used as intended? If so, what happened that was unexpected? What, according to the teacher or learners, was the problem?). What the teacher or learners point to may only be a symptom of the real problem, of course.

Answers to such questions at the first stage may indicate that we need to give further thought to earlier steps in the design sequence – the pedagogical realisation, for example, or the initial analysis of need. Something approximating to this approach is exemplified in Jolly and Bolitho's paper, where two sets of materials are evaluated in terms of the various stages in the diagram, though not in sequence. Appendix 9.1 contains a worksheet which formed part of these materials and Jolly and Bolitho's commentary on the development of this worksheet.

### Task 9.3

1. Before reading on, turn to Appendix 9.1 and evaluate the worksheet. Can you predict any problems?
2. How would you tackle these problems?

Now read on . . . Jolly and Bolitho's evaluation is shown in Figure 9.6.

<b>EVALUATION</b>	<p>Student comments on difficulties with worksheet, e.g.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 'In Step one there is a fact and a hypothesis in the sentences. It's confusing.' [This sent the teacher back to 'Pedagogical Realisation' and led to the changed instructions and underlinings in Version 2.]*</li> <li>2. 'Can't the "if" sentences also be positive, do they only express regret?' [This student had noticed an important oversight which took the teacher back to the exploration stage and led to the inclusion of two further examples in Step two of the revised version of the worksheet.]</li> <li>3. Teacher noted problems with 'I wish you would finish . . .' vs. 'I wish you had finished . . .' [Further exploration led the teacher to production of follow-up worksheet on 'possible vs. impossible wishes'.]</li> <li>4. The class liked Step three and enjoyed making up similar sentences about other members of the group.</li> </ol> <p>* Space did not permit the inclusion of Version 2, the revised worksheet.</p>
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Figure 9.6 Evaluation of worksheet in Appendix 9.1 (Jolly and Bolitho 2011: 115)

### 3.4 Problems in revision

One of the problems noted by Lynch (1996) is that the literature provides no explicit principles on which revision can be based. Lynch's own proposal, Jolly and Bolitho's (2011) design and evaluation model, and Ellis's (2011) evaluation framework are helpful in this respect in that each suggests a set of organised, ordered procedures which can be justified theoretically and/or empirically. We might also expect that the triangulation of findings by as many methods and data sources as possible will suggest clear directions for the kinds of change required (e.g. Pryor's 2010 account of materials revision is based on a classroom observation record sheet, a micro-evaluation of one of the tasks used, a student questionnaire, and peer evaluation in the form of a questionnaire for and interviews with teachers who had used the materials).

However, one of the tactics on which this or any evaluation depends – to obtain as much feedback as possible from others – may backfire if this results in conflicting views. How is one to prioritise the feedback? Whose view is the more important? Tickoo (1995), who gives a fascinating account of the trials of piloting textbook series for younger learners in India, notes that some writers in the writing team wanted to disregard views which conflicted with their own – as they saw it, 'responding to the views of untrained teachers and first generation readers would amount to unprincipled and unacceptable compromises' (1995: 36). The textbook team also found themselves in conflict with the press and public opinion over the role of a textbook: the team wished to present Indian society as they saw it; others thought they should depict 'what should be', that is, a more desirable society. In an institutional context, the question might present itself as an opposition between the views of learners and teachers, between subgroups of learners or, as in the Tickoo example, between subgroups of teachers. One particular focus of conflict may be different attitudes towards the emphasis given to grammar and whether the approach to this should be deductive or inductive (e.g. Al-Busaidi and Tindle 2010).

All writers know that it is difficult to make cuts in material that they have painstakingly produced. There may even be a proportional relationship between the pain of production and the reluctance to jettison. We have to be able to separate the two, of course, and we have to be capable of reviewing the evidence objectively. Jolly and Bolitho (2011), who offer advice on the contents of 'a materials writer's kitbag', include the following: 'phials containing small doses of courage and honesty enabling writer to throw away materials that do not work or cease to enchant' (2011: 134).

A key question in all this is: 'When to stop revising?' At what point does one decide to settle for what one has and stop tinkering? A commercial publisher might well want to draw the line after just one round of piloting if this has been reasonably successful (though this begs the question of how one determines a reasonable level of success). In an institutional context, teachers who are asked to trial successive versions of the material may eventually lose patience (and if the materials are still

unsatisfactory, even press for their abandonment); individual teachers trialling their own materials can obviously go on refining for as long as they have interest and time.

Ultimately, there is probably no answer to dilemmas such as these. Lynch (1996), following Prabhu (1987), concludes that revision is basically a matter of judgement. This seems a wholly logical conclusion if we recognise that, as discussed above, revision can be divided into two stages. If the results at stage 1, the evaluation or *review* stage, are positive, no further action is taken; if they are not, the decision may be taken to proceed to stage 2 and make certain changes (i.e. *revise*). Stage 2, it should be noted, involves not only potentially simple decisions such as (following Nathenson and Henderson 1980) deleting or moving but also the more complex operations of adding and modifying – in other words, creating and crafting. Since materials *writing*, which is what is involved at this second stage in the revision process, is a craft (Dubin 1995), it can be guided by principles but it cannot be bound by them.

Principles are, however, necessary in relation to the use within institutions of materials prepared by other teachers. In part, this is a matter of record-keeping, but agreement on what is and is not permissible is also important. In situations where it is common practice for teacher-produced (in-house) materials to be shared (Block 1991), it is likely that individual teachers will want to make small changes even before reusing the material produced by a colleague. In these situations, certain ground rules are desirable. Possibilities include: (1) each version of the material carries the name of its originator, the date when it was produced and the learners with whom it was used; (2) no version of the material is destroyed without the consent of its originator; and (3) a careful record is kept of how the material was used and with what effect. In time, the decision may be taken to replace all earlier versions with a single version with which everyone is content, but this should be by consensus.

## 4 POST-USE EVALUATION

### 4.1 From in-use to post-use evaluation

If in-use evaluation has been carried out seriously, it will provide two enormously valuable inputs to post-use evaluation. First, there is the data that has been generated, which will clearly indicate the extent to which the materials have been used in their original form and how much has been rejected. Second, and probably more important, the process of data-gathering (and discussion, if more than one teacher has been involved) will have had the effect of sharpening and organising the teachers' awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the materials. Doubts which started to surface will have either disappeared or been strengthened to the point that they can now be articulated and supported with evidence. As indicated in the previous section, however, the information that comes out of in-use evaluation will relate to such questions as interest, linguistic level, cognitive level and sufficiency of practice material. What is needed at the point of post-evaluation is information on cumulative effects. After all, the materials were selected or designed in order to aid learners to achieve particular learning outcomes.

## 4.2 Evaluating learning and learner outcomes

Seen in a narrow sense, the evaluation of outcomes is fraught with difficulty during both in- and post-use evaluation. As Tomlinson (1999) notes, students' ability to produce an item that has only just been taught or their failure to produce the same item can be equally misleading. In the first case, they may be retrieving the item from short-term memory; in the second, they may simply need more time to 'digest' what has been taught. Instances of students being able to use a language item correctly in very controlled situations, such as an oral drill or a grammar exercise, yet failing to use the item correctly in free conversation are a common phenomenon. Ellis's (1998) suggestion that one measure of outcomes might be the learner's ability to transfer the knowledge/skill acquired to a parallel situation without continuing support would be one way of building in this kind of check.

We could try to compare the results in tests or examinations of the current cohort of students with those (in a previous year or a parallel class) taught using other materials. Comparisons of this kind are, however, notably unreliable (*pace* Tomlinson 1998d: 263) since so many variables are involved. Classrooms are not laboratories and learners are not mice. They have lives outside classrooms, lives that interact in different ways with what is taught in the classroom, reinforcing that learning (a study group, the help of a parent, sibling, private tutor), supplementing it (interaction with the language outside the classroom) or inhibiting it (e.g. commitments that limit the time available for review – and therefore have a knock-on effect on understanding and long-term retention). In contexts where learners have easy access to English outside the classroom it will be difficult to separate classroom effects from out-of-class exposure. Moreover, learners differ in a great many ways. Teachers and teaching styles also differ (Katz 1996), and even if two classes using different materials were taught by the same teacher, the teacher's own preferences might lean towards one set of materials rather than the other. The very fact that they were, unusually, in the spotlight might well affect the attitudes of learners and teacher (the Hawthorne effect).

Problems such as these notwithstanding, it is possible to chart specific learning gains of individuals and a whole class by comparing spoken (recorded) or written instances of learner production at different points in time. Foci might include: phoneme acquisition; structural accuracy or range; lexical repertoire; length or complexity of sentences; spoken or written fluency (measured quantitatively). Analysis of this kind of data is likely to indicate that, contrary to one's impressionistic judgements, and allowing for normal backsliding, there have been developmental gains. It is also possible to conduct studies which measure the effects of control and experimental groups, where the experimental group has been given materials which the control group have not: for instance, to compensate for an initial disadvantage compared with the control group. For example, St Louis (2010) describes a study of the effects of a remedial course focusing on vocabulary and grammar on Venezuelan students with the lowest scores on a university placement test. The materials themselves have

been briefly described in Chapter 7. On the placement test, the 105 students who used the materials (over a twelve-week, forty-eight-hour course prior to the start of the academic year) had a mean score of 26.19, as compared with the mean of 50.12 of the remaining students. These 105 students and more than 500 'regular' students then did a first reading course. The end-of-course performance of the students who had done the remedial course (the experimental group) was then compared with that of a random group of 105 regular students. Of the experimental group, 85.96 per cent passed the course, an almost identical percentage to that of the regular students (85.93 per cent).

Other kinds of learning may also be assessable, if not measurable. The increasing self-confidence that is one result of the kinds of practice opportunities offered by a coursebook may be a matter of self-report but are also observable in such changes of behaviour as a greater willingness to ask questions or take turns in group discussion, and lessening dependence on notes during oral presentation. Learners may also report an increased interest in language learning, and this may manifest itself in a change of attitude in class (and less frequent absence, perhaps); changes in cultural attitudes may also be visible (Mason 2010). 'Softer' measures such as these, where the teacher's own enthusiasm for the materials may have as much an effect as the materials themselves, are clearly not in themselves evidence for or against the superiority of one coursebook (or set of teacher-produced materials) over another. Taken cumulatively, however, they represent a strong argument for the greater suitability – in a specific context – of one particular set of materials.

Hann (2010) concludes a paper on materials for UK immigrants by comparing the SMART targets (Specific-Objective-Achievable-Relevant-Time limited) that ESOL teachers are expected to set for their learners with the acronym CASUAL suggested in an e-discussion list. The alternative acronym takes account of the fact that language learning is Complex and cyclical (items and skills need constant review); Asymmetrical (many learners have 'spiky' profiles: e.g. a good grasp of grammar, but weak listening skills); Social (language learning involves social interaction); Unpredictable (progress is affected by a range of variables); Affective (emotions and identities are involved); Local ('language learning is highly context-bound, both in terms of what is learnt and how it is learnt') (Hann 2010: 186). This highlights the importance of taking a broad view of learning gains and not imposing a unitary measure of assessment on a whole class.

### 4.3 Post-use feedback from learners

As has been indicated at several points in this book and particularly in this chapter, learners' views on the materials they have been using need to be taken seriously. As teachers, we cannot help but be touched by such positive remarks from individual students as "Oh, you work hard" (Block 1991: 214) and "You're very creative" or "You really like what you do because you have such beautiful materials" (Ramírez Salas 2004: 6). However, as I have noted elsewhere:

While such [individual] comments are certainly gratifying, teachers have to resist the temptation to bask in the warm glow of students' appreciation and make the effort to find out how learners in general feel about the materials, and in particular whether they are interesting/fun, and useful – feedback which can be used to inform materials and activity selection and revision. (McGrath 2013: 150)

#### 4.3.1 *More methods of eliciting learner feedback*

A number of suggestions for how feedback might be elicited from learners were made in section 2.3. What other approaches are there to the elicitation of learner feedback that would not only reveal learners' views of the specific materials they have been using but would also inform the selection of future materials by giving some insight into their priorities?

Though a questionnaire or plenary discussion would be obvious elicitation techniques, activities which combine individual commitment (i.e. personal evaluation) with the possibility of group interaction might be preferable. Having an opportunity to hear others' views has the dual advantage that it is a possible corrective to the adoption of over-hasty and therefore unthinking positions; the requirement to justify one's views in the face of a challenge can also lead to a better thought-through rationale for the position one has adopted.

One possibility, suggested earlier in this chapter, is to organise focus group discussions. If there is any concern that learners might wish to comment on the way materials have been used, as well as on the materials themselves, these could be administered by another teacher or a non-teaching member of staff.

Another technique, which involves all students simultaneously, is the pyramid activity. This starts as an individual activity; individuals then form pairs for the first discussion; pairs then become groups of four for the second discussion, and so on. The final stage is whole class. If the instructions at the first stage were, for example:

- List up to 3 things that *you liked* about the book.
- List up to 3 things that *you didn't like* about the book.
- List up to 3 reasons why you thought the book was *useful*.

*and these instructions remained unchanged throughout the subsequent pair and group stages* so that the ideas brought to each stage had to be whittled down to just three responses to each prompt, this could lead to extremely valuable insights not just into learners' views of the particular materials they have been using but also into the criteria by which they make judgements *and how they prioritise these criteria*. This would be yet another potential measure of the appropriateness of the criteria used to select the materials.

In the Delphi technique (as described by Weir and Roberts 1994), there are also a number of stages. (1) Individuals first write down their views in response to a specific prompt (which in this case might be, for instance, 'What do you want from a textbook? List the things that are important to you.'). (2) The lists are collected, summarised and recirculated. (3) Each individual then ranks each of the items on the cumulative list according to his or her own priorities. (4) The lists are collected again.



and the rankings collated to provide a prioritised collective view. (5) Individuals are given a copy, together with a record of their own rankings, and asked if they wish to modify these. Explanations are encouraged in the event of anyone wishing to maintain a divergent stance. As Weir and Roberts note, the technique is intended to establish consensus within a group, and since the written format permits this consensus to be reached even without the members of the group being present in the same room it could be used in an online course. In a classroom context, it would of course be possible for the whole procedure to be conducted orally (perhaps after the first stage, to ensure individual commitment as far as possible) and to use the board to record the responses. If, as in this case, the objective is merely to elicit views and the extent to which these are representative of the class as a whole, the final stage of asking learners to reconsider their rankings can also be skipped.

Further examples of questionnaires for eliciting learner feedback can be found in Breen and Candlin (1987), Wright (1987) and Ellis (1998). Davis et al. (1998) contains a number of interesting ideas for productive activities which can also yield useful feedback.

Table 9.2 summarises the procedures suggested in this section for post-use materials evaluation, and incorporates processes and procedures discussed in relation to in-use evaluation that would also be applicable to this stage.

*Table 9.2 Procedures and processes for post-use evaluation of materials*

Stage	Evaluator	Procedure
post-use	teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assessment of measurable learning gains</li> <li>• use of 'softer' measures, such as gains in confidence, interest or independence</li> </ul>
	learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• plenary discussion (including pyramid activities and Delphi technique)</li> <li>• focus group interview(s)</li> <li>• questionnaire</li> <li>• diaries</li> </ul>
	coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• collation of data</li> </ul>
	teachers' meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• discussion of collated data on in-course use and effects</li> <li>• re-examination of procedures and criteria for textbook selection</li> </ul>

### Task 9.4K

1. Have you ever collected feedback from learners on materials? If so, what problems did you anticipate and how did you go about it? Did you find the feedback useful?
2. If you have never attempted to collect learner feedback on materials, which of the following best express your concerns? (Føel frøe to choose more than one and add your own.)

- (a) It would take too much time.
- (b) Students would see me as inexperienced.
- (c) Students wouldn't give honest feedback.
- (d) A request for feedback wouldn't be taken seriously. The feedback would be very limited.
- (e) Students don't have enough English to express themselves.
- (f) Learners are too young to give me any useful feedback.

#### 4.4 Evaluation of materials selection procedures

From the perspective taken here, the central questions to which in-use and post-use evaluation can provide answers are the following:

- How suitable are the materials for this context?
- How good were the selection procedures?

The two questions are separable in that, though the materials may have turned out to be generally suitable, the nature of that suitability and/or certain key deficiencies were not identified during the selection process.

Key elements in the selection process, though not the only ones, are the criteria used and the format adopted. One simple way of evaluating the instrument used for selection would be to use it again, perhaps in an adapted form, to check whether the same results are obtained from teachers following their experience of using the material. Figure 9.7a (see p. 214) contains *edited* sections from a published checklist; Figure 9.7b shows the kinds of simple adaptations needed to make this suitable as part of a post-use evaluation instrument. A parallel version might be prepared for learners.

Other aspects of the process that merit consideration include the number of people involved in the selection, their roles and the steps taken to ensure that the criteria were applied consistently. One of the key tasks following post-use evaluation is therefore to re-examine the selection procedures to consider whether any modifications are necessary. If not, or when these modifications have been made, the circle is closed – temporarily; for when there is a change in one or more of the key features of the teaching–learning environment, re-evaluation will be needed.

End-of-course evaluation (of learners or of a course itself) tends to be seen as the end of the affair. The attention of teachers and administrators then turns to holidays or, only too often, preparations for the next course without any pause for reflection. And yet in some ways the period immediately after post-course (or in this case, post-use) evaluation is the key stage. This is the point at which action needs to be taken to make the kinds of changes which, on the basis of the evidence, appear to be desirable – or at least concrete plans which can be acted on later. Elsewhere in this book reference has been made to the importance of institutional support. This applies particularly to the facilitation of in-use and post-use evaluation, both of which require the allocation of time for planning, implementation and follow up.

<p><b>Aims and approaches</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Is the coursebook suited to the learning/teaching situation?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> How comprehensive is the coursebook? Does it cover most or all of what is needed? Is it a good resource for students and teachers?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Is the coursebook flexible? Does it allow different teaching and learning styles?</p> <p><b>Design and organisation</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Is the grading and progression suitable for the learners? Does it allow them to complete the work needed to meet any external syllabus requirements?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Is there adequate recycling and revision?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Is it easy to find your way around the textbook?</p> <p>(a) Is the layout clear?</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Was the coursebook suited to the learning/teaching situation?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> How comprehensive was the coursebook? Did it cover most or all of what is needed? Was it a good resource for students and teachers?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Was the coursebook flexible? Did it allow different teaching and learning styles?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Was the grading and progression suitable for the learners? Did it allow them to complete the work needed to meet any external syllabus requirements?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Was there adequate recycling and revision?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Was it easy to find your way around the textbook?</p> <p>(b) Was the layout clear?</p>
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Figure 9.7a,b From pre-use to post-use evaluation. (a) Edited version and (b) adapted version from Cunningsworth (1995: 3)

## REFLECTION, DISCUSSION, ACTION

- What approaches to in-use and post-use evaluation of materials are used within your own institution?
- Based on your reading of this chapter, what changes, if any, would you recommend?
- Do you think you should/could make any changes in the way that you evaluate the materials that you use with your own students?

## REVIEW AND PREVIEW

This chapter has reiterated the need to see the evaluation of published materials as a process that continues beyond the stage of initial selection. In use evaluation requires systematic record-keeping, and if more than one teacher is using the same material

the regular sharing of experiences. Post-use evaluation necessitates the consideration of effects, which should shed light on not only the suitability of the materials but also the suitability of the criteria used in their selection. Teacher exchange concerning how materials were used, adapted and supplemented can also be a valued contribution to professional development and encourage further experimentation. All of these points are equally applicable to the evaluation of teacher-produced materials.

One of the recurring foci of the chapter has been the value of involving learners in the evaluation process. We need to get away from thinking of learners as the objects of teaching. Even at a young age, they can tell us whether they find the materials we are using interesting, useful and of the right level of difficulty. They can also comment on the way we work with the materials. Without such a learner perspective, any evaluation of materials and their use simply perpetuates a teacher-centred approach to teaching–learning.

In many contexts, teachers are not free to abandon materials if they seem unsuitable in certain respects. What the teacher needs to know, therefore, is whether there is a need to adapt or supplement them and whether his or her way of mediating between the materials and the learners is seen as effective. Any additional insights into how and to what extent learners use the materials out of class (see Appendix 3.4) can also be helpful in indicating whether the teacher needs to provide more or clearer guidance. As we have seen in Chapters 4–7, there are a number of ways in which this information can then be used.

The main focus in Chapters 1–9 has been on the teacher's responsibilities as materials evaluator and materials designer and how to meet the challenges involved. Chapter 10 now offers a number of other perspectives on materials.

## FURTHER READING

**In-use and post-use evaluation:** Tomlinson and Masuhara (2010) contains interesting examples of institution-based evaluation studies and McGrath (2013: ch. 5) examples of post-use evaluation of published materials conducted by researchers. **Barnard and Randall (1995)** compare approaches to the piloting of commercial ELT textbooks in Oman at two different points in time; the conclusions they draw concerning the most effective methods have some relevance for institutional materials trialling. **McGrath (2013: ch. 7)** reviews studies of learner responses to materials.

# Materials and . . .

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This chapter is rather different from those that have preceded it. It is concerned with the relationship between materials and . . .

1. learning
2. ideology
3. culture
4. syllabus
5. method
6. research
7. teacher education.

The intention is to provide an opportunity for consideration of a number of special topics that could not easily be incorporated within the framework adopted for the previous chapters but also, and this is much more important, to illustrate the absolute centrality of materials in language education. In formal (e.g. state school) systems, materials, mediated by teachers, are a key link in the externally determined design chain which potentially runs from curriculum to syllabus and leads to public examinations. In any language learning setting, materials – published, teacher-produced or learner-produced – provide much of the content of the teaching–learning encounter. They are an in-class resource for learners and teachers – what learners learn with; and an out-of-class resource for learners – what they learn from. Published textbooks also link teachers and learners to the outside world. They are a means to access not only the target language and possibly its culture(s) but also the accumulated knowledge and experience – of language, learning, learners, teaching and teachers – of those involved in making the books, all of whom have striven to produce materials that are perceived as relevant, interesting and useful. It is this centrality which argues strongly for the inclusion of a ‘materials’ component in pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes. The same centrality makes the study of language learning, teaching materials, and their development, classroom use and evaluation, not only a legitimate but also a hugely important focus of research for teachers and teacher educators.

## 1 MATERIALS AND LEARNING

Learners can learn more than language from the materials used in language learning classes. What is learnt – or there to be learnt – is most obviously embodied in the materials as content, but certain other types of learning may also result. Some of these outcomes will be intended and positive; others may be negative. A particularly useful introductory reading on this topic is Littlejohn and Windeatt (1989).

### 1.1 Learning from content

In the global 'structural' (audiolingual) textbooks of the late 1960s and early 1970s, lessons typically began with specially written dialogues and stories about fictional people. While these texts were sometimes interesting and occasionally amusing, for the most part they were content-less. They were no more than *language* teaching texts. In some countries, however, there were, and still are, locally produced textbooks containing texts – such as literary extracts and historic speeches, familiar tales, and stories about local heroes – which have clearly been selected for their content. The specific reasons for the inclusion of particular texts or text-types may be as varied as the texts themselves: for instance, 'great literature' and speeches may be justified on cultural or inspirational grounds while local content can offer some security in a sea of unfamiliar language. Textbooks are also a way of reinforcing a sense of national or cultural identity (e.g. Lund and Zoughby 2007). Nowadays, of course, when there is so much emphasis on the use of authentic texts, one of the key criteria for the choice of one text rather than another is its intrinsic interest, and one of the features that makes a text potentially interesting is its content.

Cook (1983, cited in Littlejohn and Windeatt 1989: 157) lists six forms of 'real content' in materials: (1) content from another academic (school) subject; (2) student-contributed content (see Chapter 8) – which would presumably include students talking about themselves; (3) the language itself, that is, as an object of analysis; (4) literature; (5) culture; and (6) 'interesting facts'. Littlejohn and Windeatt suggest two further forms of 'carrier content': (7) learning to learn (see below); and (8) specialist (i.e. ESP) material in a student's own discipline. One of the chapters in Halliwell (1992) deals with integrating language work with other subjects in the primary school, and coursebooks, especially for primary-age learners, have begun to introduce what they present as a CLIL focus, often in the form of a number of linked activities relating to topics in science, geography or technology, for instance. This might be seen as (1) in Cook's typology.

### 1.2 Learning from process

Not only do learners learn from what they read (or hear), they also learn from interaction with others and from the process of carrying out tasks. This learning goes beyond the merely linguistic (e.g. negotiating meaning; arguing a point of view). One of the arguments for group tasks is that they encourage socialisation and

teamwork; they also make possible learning by observation of others. Moreover, specific types of task can provide practice in such 'transferrable skills' as, for example, collecting and classifying information, reasoning, critical thinking, creativity and problem-solving, all of which can be linked to the development of digital literacy.

Littlejohn and Windeatt's (1989) incisive discussion of the 'hidden curriculum' in language learning materials draws attention to a number of other less benign possible results of the classroom procedures embedded in materials. One of these has to do with power relations in the classroom, as reflected in a choral substitution drill:

pupils will hear the 'model sentence' and each substitution somewhere between 15 to 20 times, depending on the way the class is grouped . . . For the pupils, the experience of simply repeating sentences after the teacher's prompts would appear to demonstrate clearly that their role in the classroom is largely a powerless one in which they mechanically follow instructions. The fact that this is done in chorus adds the sense of anonymity and being 'one of the mass' upon which much social control – inside and outside the classroom – seems to rest. (Littlejohn and Windeatt 1989: 167)

Now while this could be dismissed as a rather jaundiced view of a single procedure which has certain (limited) linguistic and psychological justifications, other examples are more convincing. For instance, their analysis of one set of materials leads to the following conclusions:

At its simplest level, the picture that may be presented by the above sequence of sections is that learning English involves reading texts in detail, attending to items of vocabulary, rules of grammar and punctuation, and writing isolated sentences. At a deeper level, however, it can be seen that each time the learners are required to do something, the activity involves closely following a model or referring back to a text. One can say, therefore, that an underlying message being transmitted to the learners is that to learn English one must complete a series of short, controlled exercises that require reproduction of already presented linguistic facts with little in the way of personal creativity, expression or interpretation. (Littlejohn and Windeatt 1989: 163)

Commenting on a functionally oriented set of materials, they suggest that the absence of any explicit reference to grammar, vocabulary and punctuation may give learners the impression that:

learning English essentially involves learning fixed phrases into which one can slot different items . . . The material may distinguish itself from the first course book by its emphasis on pairwork throughout, but underlying the series of exercises we have a similar view of language learning. (Littlejohn and Windeatt 1989: 16.3)

They conclude:

Depending on the prior experience of the individual learner, the view of language learning projected by material can be of central importance since it may shape

learners' perceptions of their own abilities and of the steps they need to take to progress further. (Littlejohn and Windeatt 1989: 164)

### 1.3 Learning to learn

Many coursebooks these days include specific sections designed to raise learners' awareness of what they can do to become more effective learners. Such sections may take the form of suggestions on how to organise one's learning (e.g. how to store new vocabulary); they may encourage self-assessment (e.g. of progress, learning difficulties or learning preferences) or reflection on attitudes. Alternatively, they may be much less explicit and be woven into tasks. One assumption behind skimming and scanning activities, for instance, is that learners who are accustomed to reading word by word and sentence by sentence will eventually learn to adjust their reading strategy to their reading purpose. Other activities, such as working out meaning from linguistic clues and context, may combine explicit instruction with practice.

### 1.4 Attitudes and values

Littlejohn and Windeatt's examples of how attitudes and values can be represented in materials include the following:

1. A coursebook contains hundreds of photographs of people in different roles. Only two of these photographs are of black people. One is a muscular athlete and the other a manual worker.
2. In the first twenty-five pages of another coursebook there are more than thirty references to smoking and drinking.

What we have here are not a couple of isolated instances but undeniable *patterns*, reinforcing a stereotype in the first example and apparently endorsing certain behaviours in the second. As evidence that this might have an effect, Littlejohn and Windeatt refer to a survey of studies on sexism in materials by Porreca (1984). One study:

found a direct correlation between the length of time spent using *Alpha One Reading Program* (which apparently portrayed girls as 'stupid, dependent, whining and tearful' and boys as 'active and aggressive') and the degree to which pupils' attitudes matched those in the materials. (Littlejohn and Windeatt 1989: 172)

To judge only from the few details provided of the study, learners' age might have been one factor in their susceptibility.

Drawing on the educational literature on outcomes, Littlejohn and Windeatt (1989) make a distinction between referential learning (i.e. learning from content) and experiential learning (learning through doing), suggesting that of the two experiential learning may exert a more powerful influence. If this is the case, concerns about content in materials may be a little exaggerated. Littlejohn and Windeatt's own conclusion is as follows:



In order to begin to argue that such features of materials may bring about particular kinds of learning outcomes . . . one needs to show that specific values or attitudes are *pervasive* throughout the text (Gordon, 1984) . . . Without this evidence, one may simply object to the inclusion of certain items on the grounds that they offend our moral sensibilities. (1989: 173; original emphasis)

Harwood's (2014b: 4–7) review of a number of cultural content analyses draws attention to the fact that social values can change over time. This is not simply a matter of recognising the spread of consumerism or the cult of the celebrity, but also understanding that cultural values and attitudes are not necessarily universally shared, and creating opportunities to discuss these rather than taking their acceptance for granted. Gray's (2013) collection, for example, considers such issues as identity, ideology and commercialisation in relation to materials in use in English, French, Spanish, German and CLIL classrooms.

### **Task 10.1**

1. Do you think it is important that materials should offer opportunities for learning more than language? Can you think of any other forms of positive non-linguistic learning that might result from working with published materials? Select a lesson in the coursebook you are using or any other coursebook that is available. Is there any evidence that the author intended to provide for the learning of more than just language? If not, and if you are in favour of material serving more than one learning purpose, how could you adapt the lesson so that it can fulfil one or more purposes?
2. Do you agree with the view that experiential learning is likely to have a more powerful effect than referential learning, and that referential learning would only have any effect if it pervaded the materials? Do you have any evidence to support your view?

## **2 MATERIALS AND IDEOLOGY**

Ideology, like culture, can be built into materials by design, as when a country wishes to promote a particular set of national values. It may also be less conscious, but no less manifest, in the nature of the reality depicted visually and verbally in materials, in the relationships and roles envisaged for teacher and learner, and perhaps most subtly in the language selected for inclusion.

Dendrin's (1992) book on *The EFL Textbook and Ideology* draws attention to the extent that ideological positions, conscious or unconscious, underlie every aspect of textbook writing and design. The following quotations indicate some of Dendrin's concerns:

the EFL textbook . . . will contain material whose purpose will be the linguistic acculturation of learners and therefore their subjugation to social conventions. (1992: 152)

Themes, topics and titles of units, and how these are articulated, are in themselves revealing in relation to the social reality to be constructed for textbook users. (1992: 175)

pictures, illustrations, photographs, etc. are social constructs and they ideologically position their addressees towards realities . . . (1992: 165)

the selection of language functions to be transmitted and acquired is arbitrarily and ideologically loaded . . . (1992: 165)

[and this selection will] contribute to the development of different conceptions of social reality and determine how the pupil as a social and institutional subject will interact with that reality. (1992: 170)

Littlejohn and Windeatt's discussion of values and attitudes has been referred to in section 1 on materials and learning. In a later paper, Littlejohn (1997) turns his attention to 'ideological encodings' in self-access tasks. Taking as a reference point Lum and Brown's (1994) list of twenty exercise- or activity-types, he analyses these with respect to the role that they imply for the learner, using three questions for this purpose:

1. What role in the discourse is proposed for the learner: initiate, respond or none?
2. What mental operation is to be engaged?
3. Where does the content for the task come from? From within the task itself, from the teacher or from the students?

(Littlejohn 1997: 186)

His conclusions are: (1) with one or two exceptions, the exercises offer very little scope for learners to initiate, that is, to use their own words; (2) only a fairly narrow range of mainly low-level mental processes is involved; and (3) in most cases, there is no opportunity for learners to be creative, that is, to express their own ideas. This leads Littlejohn to the paradox that 'in ideological terms, there is, thus, a clear tension apparent here in the ostensible aim in the provision of self-access facilities and its realization in practice' (1997: 188).

So how might a teacher respond to the concerns expressed above?

In relation to the problem of self-access tasks, Littlejohn suggests a number of changes in the way self-access is organised which would give the learner more freedom. These include a shift in activity-types towards activities which encourage learner initiation and creativity; the use of 'example' answers rather than keys; the possibility of peer feedback; and involving learners in the preparation of exercises (as suggested in Chapter 7). (For further suggestions and examples of alternative exercise-types, see Tomlinson 1998c.)

As for the values and attitudes represented in materials, Littlejohn and Windeatt offer the interesting idea that materials might themselves be made an object of 'critical focus' (1989: 175). Learners might, for instance, be encouraged to comment on the attitudes or values that seem to lie behind the selection of texts, topics or visuals

or, more broadly, on the way in which the materials influence both what they do in the classroom and their views about language, language learning and their own role. Language-practice activities included in Davis et al. (1998) ask learners to analyse and evaluate their coursebooks and ‘interview’ the imagined author sitting in the hot seat in front of them.

For Dendrinios, the questions are linguistic and the answers lie in linguistic research:

Questions . . . which could serve as a point of departure for the investigation of one or more textbooks are questions such as: what categories of verbs (mental, action, feeling, process verbs) are selected to define and delimit the behaviours, attitudes, feelings, relationships of the people presented in the textbook? What nouns and adjectives are selected to describe people as institutional subjects (as men and women, parents and children, employers and employees, teachers and pupils, etc?). What type of comparative/contrastive statements are made in relation to what, and which are the entities being compared and ultimately favoured? (1992: 181–2)

Questions such as these, Dendrinios hopes, will ‘serve as stimuli for those responsible for the evaluation of textbooks to assess them not only as teaching aids but also as media for pupil pedagogization’ (1992: 182).

While accepting that critical language awareness of the sort advocated by Dendrinios can expose ideologically based attitudes, Waters (2009, 2010) maintains that it should be seen as a complement to existing pedagogical traditions. He further argues that ‘teaching ideas such as “the learner-centred approach”, “learner autonomy”, “authenticity”, and so on’ are also ideologically based, as is the ‘hostility towards textbooks, the “direct” teaching of grammar, [and] “structure” in language teaching’ (Waters 2010). Seen from the perspective of ‘critical pedagogy’, these ideas and attitudes are a response to and an attempt to redress perceived power imbalances between, say, textbook and teacher or teacher and learner. However, for Waters, their unquestioning acceptance, without reference to their suitability in context, is also problematic.

### Task 10.2

1. Do you feel that Dendrinios’s concerns are justified? Choose a textbook, one that you use normally or whatever is available. Examine it for evidence to support or counter her comments.
2. What do you think of the suggestion that materials might be made an object of critical focus? Look through a textbook for one or more features on which you would like learners to reflect critically. Discuss these – and ways of encouraging reflection – with your classmates or colleagues.

## 3 MATERIALS AND CULTURE

It has been suggested that knowing a language is inseparable from understanding the culture in which the language is spoken, that is, that without cultural knowledge

of fairly specific kinds, one cannot fully understand what is said or written (Brown 1990). This view raises a variety of issues in relation to the selection and development of materials. For example:

- what one means by 'culture' and 'cultural knowledge'
- the extent to which it is possible to generalise about the culture of, say, a number of countries in which the target language is spoken
- what cultural knowledge is likely to be needed by a particular category of students in a particular context
- the accuracy (representativeness, topicality) with which social realities are portrayed
- what students are expected to take from or do with the knowledge that is presented.

Faced with the challenge of designing an English course for Moroccan secondary schools, where English is a second foreign language and studied only in the final three years, Adaskou et al. (1990: 3–4) were obliged to confront all these issues. They distinguish between four senses of culture:

1. The aesthetic: 'Culture with a capital C: the media, the cinema, music (whether serious or popular) and, above all, literature.'
2. The sociological: 'Culture with a small c: the organisation and nature of family, of home life, of interpersonal relations, material conditions, work and leisure, customs and institutions.'
3. The semantic: 'The conceptual system embodied in the language . . . Many semantic areas (e.g. food, clothes, institutions) are culturally distinctive because they relate to a particular way of life.'
4. The pragmatic (or sociolinguistic): 'The background knowledge, social skills, and paralinguistic skills that, in addition to mastery of the language code, make possible successful communication.'

Adaskou et al. could see the need for a cultural component in senses 3 and 4, but were dubious about the relevance of 1 and 2, given the likely needs of the learners and the lack of any explicit reference in the official syllabus to this kind of cultural knowledge. However, they saw it as important to consult teachers, teacher trainers and inspectors. From the resulting discussions with groups of teachers, and questionnaires to and structured interviews with all three groups, a clear consensus emerged. Most English teachers felt that the use in coursebooks of foreign milieux would invite cultural comparisons and lead to discontent with students' own material culture; and that the patterns of behaviour normal in an English-speaking social context would not be desirable models for young Moroccans. The informants also felt that the learners would be no less motivated to learn English if the language were not presented in the context of an English-speaking country. Field trials and subsequent feedback not only confirmed this view but indicated that learners were more motivated to learn English when the language was presented in contexts with which they could identify. Adaskou et al.'s conclusion suggests, however, that teacher attitudes may be even

more important than learner attitudes: 'Students use a particular course only once, but teachers will use it many times. And it is cultural content, more than any other single aspect, that in our opinion influences teachers' attitudes' (1990: 10).

In other situations, where learners are more likely to travel to Britain or another English-speaking country or where the syllabus has a defined cultural component, it is conceivable that a different view might prevail. After all, words conjure up concepts or images. 'Breakfast' represents a meal that may vary in both its content and the time at which it is taken. 'Home', 'school', 'polite' and 'big' may all be translatable, but still be understood in distinctively different ways by speaker and hearer. Anyone who knows another language well will be able to supply examples of words for which there is no exact translation equivalent. We can therefore say that in this sense materials embody cultural content, and that knowledge of this content is essential if one is to understand the language. Language learning materials, as has been suggested in a previous section, can also be made to carry cultural content. This may be about some culturally neutral aspect of real life (insofar as anything can be culturally neutral), some exotic culture, or about specific cultural features present in the world of the learner or that of the speech communities in which the target language is the mother tongue. Cultural content of the latter kind is no longer exclusively to be found in coursebooks. For instance, Helbling's *World Around* is 'an intercultural journey through the English-speaking world' (Cleary 2008: 4) which includes the West Indies and India as well as the more obvious destinations. In contrast, Oxford University Press's *New English File Culture Link* (Fitzgerald and Harraway 2011), which has been conceived as an extension to the pre-intermediate and intermediate levels of the main coursebook, focuses mainly on the UK and USA, youth culture and CLIL topics. The subtitle of Garnet's *Past Simple* (Ronder and Thompson 2012) reflects its even narrower focus, on 'learning English through history', in this case British history presented chronologically and thematically through integrated language activities.

How speech communities are represented is, of course, a matter of concern:

EFL books whose aim is to present reality in today's Britain over-represent the white middle-class population with their concerns about holidays abroad and leisure time, home decoration and dining out, their preoccupation with success, achievement and material wealth. Absent, or nearly absent, are the great variety of minorities, people of African, Indian, Pakistani descent who make up a considerable part of the population; and the problems of the homeless and the unemployed, of the socially underprivileged, of the illiterate masses are rarely or never mentioned . . . Generally, an idealized version of the dominant English culture is drawn, frequently leading populations of other societies to arrive at distorted conclusions based on the comparison between a false reality and their own lived experience in their culture. (Dendrinos 1992: 153)

Similar points about the exclusion of minorities can be made about textbooks produced in and for specific contexts (see, for example, McGrath 2004 on textbooks in Hong Kong). On 'taboos' more generally, see Gray (2002) and Thornbury (2010).

For Gray and Block, there are both political and ideological dimensions to representation: 'what is selected for inclusion is determined by parties with vested interests (such as publishers, authors, Ministries of Education, educational institutions, commercial language schools, etc)' and 'the forms the representations take tend to reproduce existing power relations, particularly with regard to class, race, gender and sexual orientation (Azimova and Johnston, 2012)' (2014: 46). As the ordering of the power relations in the final part of this quotation might suggest, Gray and Block's preoccupation in their paper is with social class, and the conclusion of their analysis of eight UK textbooks published in the four decades from 1970 until 2009 is that there has been a shift away from the depiction of working-class characters. Gray and Block see this as the 'writing out of the working class from language learning materials' which amounts to 'a failure to educate students (by providing them with a very skewed picture of the world) and a simultaneous betrayal of working class language learners, who are denied recognition' (2014: 45–6). Although the concerns that gave rise to the study are serious and the methodology adopted combined quantitative and qualitative analyses, the sample of textbooks is small and itself skewed (both books chosen to represent the 1970s were by the same author, Robert O'Neill, and three of the remaining six books are different editions of the *Headway* series). The possibility exists, therefore, that the results of the study, which for the last three decades are neither as marked nor as clear-cut as the authors appear to suggest, are a product of the textbook sample. Replication studies which would permit a more broadly based conclusion would be helpful.

One argument against a bicultural approach is that, taken to an extreme, it may be seen as a form of cultural imperialism (Alptekin and Alptekin 1984; Phillipson 1992; Pennycook 1994; Gray 2010), as a result of which one culture is overwhelmed by the flow of potentially misleading information from the other. Alternatively, when learners see no possibility of travelling to an English-speaking country or even interacting directly with native speakers of English, it may be perceived as an irrelevance (Altan 1995). In a world in which English has assumed a global importance, it has been argued, a multicultural approach would be more appropriate (Prodromou 1992a). Altan's (1995) suggestion is that what might be thought of as international culture (human rights, interactive media, Japanese business practice, the ecu being his examples) or general knowledge be used as the content for practice in the receptive skills of listening and speaking but that practice in the productive skills should relate to the learner's own sociocultural context. Underlying this distinction between 'input' culture and 'output' culture is the belief that language learning is complexified by the introduction of a cultural component and that in any form other than the kind of general knowledge an educated person might be expected to have about the world he or she lives in, this is unnecessary.

Pulverness and Tomlinson argue that one of the problems with the treatment of culture in most coursebooks is that the selection of what to focus on has been 'arbitrary', but also 'that learners are not required to respond to it in terms of their own experience or integrate it into new structures of thought and feeling' (2013: 444). They suggest that rather than dealing with culture on the level of information,

materials should be designed to raise *intercultural* awareness by highlighting areas of language which have ‘cultural significance’ (2013: 444) and equipping learners with the skills to research and analyse these.

The need to relate all these arguments to specific contexts is underlined by Prodromou’s (1992a) survey of the interests of 300 Greek students of English, mostly young adults. This revealed that alongside a very strong linguistic orientation (84 per cent said they wanted lessons to be ‘about the English language’), there was an interest in ‘facts about science and society’ and, among intermediate and advanced-level students, social problems. British life and institutions was preferred to the American equivalent (60 per cent and 26 per cent respectively), a finding explicable, Prodromou suggests, by the high standing of the Cambridge examinations and the ‘bad press’ accorded to the USA in the post-war period. What is also of interest is the generally low value given to ‘local’ topics. Prodromou speculates that this can be explained by ‘the highly charged nature of Greek political life . . . Discussions of political or semi-political topics (such as Greek newspapers) can be unexpectedly divisive’ (1992a: 46).

For Nunan (1991: 211), ‘Learners have an infinite capacity to surprise, and there is a danger that the claim of cultural inappropriacy may be used as an excuse for refraining from action. It may also block classroom initiatives which the learners themselves might welcome.’ Rather than making assumptions about learners’ views, further context-specific research is obviously needed. This applies not simply to experimentation with materials which – contrary to teachers’ expectations – learners might find interesting but also to materials which it might be assumed they would perceive as highly relevant. One of the ESL learners in Wu and Coady’s (2010) study of immigrants to the USA protested that the reading programme he was using was ‘trying to force him to assimilate into the “American” way of life’ (Wu and Coady 2010: 159, cited in Harwood 2014b: 18).

### Task 10.3

1. Writing in 1995, Altan claimed: “‘Globally” designed coursebooks have continued to be stubbornly Anglo-centric’ (1995: 59). Is this true of the materials you use? If so, do you see it as a problem?
2. Altan goes on:

There is no such thing as culturally-neutral language teaching. EFL coursebooks convey cultural biases and implicitly communicate attitudes concerning the culture of the target language and indirectly the learners’ native culture. Passages and units with foreign cultural themes and topics not only cause difficulties in comprehension, but actually seem to increase misunderstanding and confusion about the non-native culture, leading to a lack of production and of success. When both the materials we use and the way we use them are culturally adverse, then inevitably learners switch off and retreat into their inner world to defend their own integrity. (1995: 59)

Do you think that Altan's comments on the effects on learners of materials containing foreign cultural themes and topics have relevance for the learners you teach?

3. Do you think textbooks should reflect reality? If so, which reality? Whose reality?

## 4 MATERIALS AND SYLLABUS

There are two basic ways of representing the relationship between materials and syllabus. In the first and still more common, the syllabus determines if not the selection of materials, at least the way in which they will be exploited for teaching purposes. This was referred to as a syllabus-driven approach in Chapter 5. In the second, materials are selected first, for their intrinsic interest and general linguistic appropriateness, and a specific linguistic syllabus is then derived from them. We called this a concept-driven approach in Chapter 5, but in a more restricted sense it has also been termed a text-driven approach (see Chapter 7). In creating materials for the occasional lesson the individual teacher may start from either of these positions, but for the teacher who is devising a whole course and for the professional materials writer this is an issue that requires serious thought. The first part of this section assumes a syllabus-driven approach. In the second part, we consider some of the pros and cons of a concept-driven approach.

### 4.1 Syllabuses and teachers

Teachers and materials writers require an organisational framework for their work. A 'planned' syllabus (as opposed to an 'implemented' syllabus) fulfils this function. At its narrowest, it is no more than an inventory of items to be taught; in broader conceptions, these items will be logically derived from a statement of aims and objectives, related to a time frame, and sequenced. In the broadest (most prescriptive?) form of syllabus specification, teaching procedures and perhaps aids will also be indicated. (For an early discussion of syllabus content, see the various contributions to Brumfit 1984; for further discussion of syllabus types, see Nunan 1988c, White 1988 and, more recently, Richards 2013.)

This syllabus-first view is economically described by Nunan: 'the syllabus defines the goals and objectives, the linguistic and experiential content' (1991: 208). When there exists an official syllabus which teachers are expected to follow, this will be an important factor in materials selection. In some contexts, teachers are only permitted to use 'authorised' textbooks (i.e. those which have passed official scrutiny); in other cases, it falls to the teacher to check the coverage of a textbook against the syllabus. If no official syllabus exists to prescribe or to guide, textbooks are sometimes allowed to take over this function: the textbook syllabus becomes the course syllabus by default, as it were. The reason why this should not be allowed to happen is that decisions concerning the syllabus need to be taken before a textbook is selected (see the discussion in Chapter 4). As Cunningsworth



has remarked, 'coursebooks are good servants but poor masters' (1984: 1). In other words, coursebooks should not dictate what is done but be selected for what they can do to help. Logically, therefore, the selection of a textbook would take place only after some preliminary assessment of needs in the broad sense. As noted previously, while there may be a rough match between a coursebook syllabus and the needs of a particular group of learners the match will not be a perfect one (this applies to any kind of external syllabus). It follows that even when there is an official teaching syllabus (or an end-of-course public examination which may serve a similar purpose) a teacher still has a responsibility to establish aims and objectives for the course which also take other contextual factors and known learner needs into account. Where no syllabus exists, teachers need to give thought (again, before selecting a textbook) to what kind of syllabus(es) would be appropriate and how the syllabus(es) might be specified.

It is one thing to specify what is to be taught; it is quite another to design an instructional plan. The following quotation from Rossner (1988) indicates some of the problems:

For the modern language teacher, the task seems endlessly complex: How does one reconcile the need to get the elements of the new language sorted out with the need to get used to hearing and understanding, speaking, reading, and writing it? And on top of that, how does one gradually plan for learners to become adept at matching form to function? And having done that, how does one plan for learners to accommodate the language in use to situational constraints imposed by channels of communication, location, surrounding events, and the participants? (1988: 141)

This is one reason why teachers tend to base their teaching on textbooks, of course.

#### 4.2 Materials writers and syllabuses

As noted in Chapter 7, Tomlinson (1998e and elsewhere) has been an advocate for a text-driven approach:

one of the things we know about language acquisition is that most learners only learn what they need or want to learn. Providing opportunities to learn the language needed to participate in an interesting activity is much more likely to be profitable than teaching something because it is the next teaching point in the syllabus. And deriving learning points from an engaging text or activity is much easier and more valuable than finding or constructing a text which illustrates a pre-determined teaching point . . . If the written and spoken texts are selected for their richness and diversity of language as well as for their potential to achieve engagement then a wide syllabus will evolve which will achieve natural and sufficient coverage. (1998b: 147)

One of several assertions in the above quotation is that a text-driven approach 'will achieve natural and sufficient coverage'. However, a potential limitation of

a text-driven approach is precisely that it does not yield a syllabus with sufficient coverage. As if recognising this, Tomlinson cites Prowse's (1998) suggestion that this problem can be overcome if a checklist is used to monitor coverage. The point should be made here that while the reference to a checklist is a tacit admission that some form of external syllabus or self-generated list of learning items can be helpful, it is not an abandonment of the principle of a text-driven approach. Whether or not a checklist is used there is value in materials designers preparing a grid which shows when specific items are introduced and recycled and the attention paid at different points to skill development. Since a grid of this kind should reveal gaps and imbalances in relation to students' needs and wants, it can function as a monitoring device even without reference to items in an external syllabus.

### 4.3 Beyond the linguistic syllabus

The modern coursebook typically includes a complex table showing how the multiple linguistic syllabuses have been woven together to provide coverage of what a language learner is judged to need at a particular level. This may take account of the 'type' of English a learner is predicted to need (e.g. British or American) or, in the case of locally produced or 'regional' editions, the learner's first language. There may even be explicit recognition of the fact that – within Europe, for instance – a learner can be expected to be plurilingual and pluricultural, that is, function with different languages and within different cultures (see, for example, the activities and worksheets in Macmillan's *New Inspiration* series by Judy Garton-Sprenger and Philip Prowse (2011–)).

As we have seen earlier in this chapter and in previous chapters, however, there is now widespread acceptance that learners' needs are not narrowly linguistic. We might thus have a 'learning to learn' thread (or syllabus) running through the book (or a teacher's own scheme of work). There may be a content syllabus (e.g. cultural, EAP, ESP, CLIL). There may also be a cross-disciplinary focus within an institution on the development of digital literacy and therefore a concern to ensure the integration and practice of digital literacy skills within each subject area. While this reaffirms the view expressed throughout this book that a coursebook will never be able to meet all the needs of learners in a specific context, it can also be argued that – to the extent that coursebooks offer a coherent treatment of at least some of the predictable needs of learners – they can take some of the burden of materials selection and design off teachers.

#### Task 10.4

1. 'Materials design exists at the interface of syllabus design and methodology' (Nunan 1991: 214). What does this mean? Is it true?
2. Most teachers are familiar with language form syllabuses, whether they relate to grammatical structures, functions or phonological features, and can make judgements about the adequacy and appropriateness of these for their own teaching context. However, most modern textbooks will also

include skill syllabuses and these can only be developed if the teacher has a clear understanding of what constitutes skilled behaviour and how this can be developed. This task consists of two steps:

- (a) Think of a specific group of learners and a single skill (e.g. speaking) that is important for all the members of the group. Now try to write down in as much detail as possible the various things they need to be able to do in that skill area. You may also be able to identify enabling knowledge and skills that feed into the main skills that you have noted.
- (b) Analyse your coursebook (or any other relevant book that is available) to see how this skill is dealt with in the book. Is there evidence that the writer has adopted a systematic approach to skill development (i.e. that the materials have been based on what can reasonably be called a skill syllabus)?

## 5 MATERIALS AND METHOD

In a carefully designed approach to language teaching (e.g. Stern 1983; Richards and Rodgers 1986) we might expect a high degree of consistency between aims, objectives, syllabus, materials and method. Thus, materials will embody syllabus content, and the method that is used to facilitate the learning of that content will be congruent with overall aims and objectives and with the beliefs about language and language learning that lie behind these.

Method, normally understood as a coherent set of procedures, can be said to exist at three levels: (1) the theoretical level – or what is supposed to happen; (2) the level of materials, insofar as these prescribe what teachers/learners are to do; and (3) the classroom level. Levels (2) and (3) represent successive stages in interpretation or approximation.

This section focuses on the relationship between levels (1) and (2), and (2) and (3). It first raises a number of questions concerning the realism (and, indeed, the desirability) of the interlocking framework described above. It then turns to the relationship between materials and teacher and the teacher's role in realising the intentions of the materials designer.

### 5.1 Materials as the realisation of principles

Materials represent the first stage in which principles are turned into practice. Here we consider the extent to which materials really do (and in the case of communicative materials, can) reflect the beliefs that supposedly lie behind them.

Rossner's (1988) random survey of materials published between 1981 and 1987 found that:

few authors have yet found ways to make available to teachers and learners resources which can provide a basis for tasks and activities in the FL

classroom that truly reflect the ideals of communicative approaches as articulated by applied linguists ... Probably truly 'communicative' tasks and activities can only be evolved by teachers who know their learners' needs and wants well, and who are used to working within the constraints surrounding particular teaching and learning situations ... it goes without saying that successful classroom language development depends on the ability of teachers to put together coherent sequences of activities which may be based on published or other materials, but which have been adapted, reformulated and supplemented to respond to the particular needs of those students in that situation. (1988: 161)

Clarke, writing just one year later and with a similar purpose, comments on the 'considerable dichotomy between what is theoretically recommended as desirable and what in fact gets published and used on a wide scale' (1989b: 73). His helpfully detailed survey of the literature on communicative principles, and in particular authenticity, can be summarised as follows:

1. There are two schools of thought on text authenticity, with one group insisting on the real and another arguing that the primary criterion for decisions concerning the selection of materials should be appropriateness for the learners. One argument put forward by the latter group is that real materials which are inappropriate in terms of level or perceived relevance to learners can be just as alienating as meaningless form-focused activities.
2. There is agreement that authentic texts should be processed in relation to the writer's communicative purpose (i.e. that tasks should be focused on the writer's meaning and a response to that meaning).
3. There is concern about context both in relation to the wider context from which an authentic text has been taken and the sequence of activities within a lesson.
4. There is an acceptance of information gap activities and role play and simulation as communication tasks.

In a survey of materials published between the mid-1970s and the late 1980s, he finds that:

1. The principle of authenticity in relation to texts has been widely adopted (he dubs this 'the "realia" explosion' (1989b: 79)), but photographs and even texts appear in some cases to have been included for largely cosmetic reasons. 'Simulated realia' or 'pseudo authenticity' takes the form of simulated newspaper headlines and graphic devices such as notepads and handwriting. Listening texts are frequently at least semi-scripted. Original materials are adapted, sometimes without this being made explicit.
2. Despite widespread acceptance of the principle of authentic response, there is a continuing reliance on comprehension questions, which in some cases focus on points of detail. Authentic materials are sometimes used only to make a linguistic point. Form (whether in the sense of grammatical structure or

function) thus still maintains ascendancy over meaning, a situation which is only partly concealed by the creation of an aura of authenticity' (1989b: 82).

3. A concern for context is evident in materials with a thematic or topic-based structure; in other materials text selection seems 'random' or the contexts linked only by the linguistic feature that binds them together.
4. Although there is little evidence of the use of the information gap principle in coursebooks, there are attempts to create a purpose for communication by inviting the learner to make a personal response to, for example, a questionnaire, a topic, a poem. Role play is also used. Whether these materials, and indeed many of the texts included, will seem relevant to learners is questionable.

In short, 'modern materials tend not to exemplify the communicative principles they purport to embody' (1989b: 84).

## 5.2 Method in books and classrooms

The potential gap between principles and materials is even wider when it comes to the classroom use of materials, since teachers may or may not use the materials in ways that correspond to the intentions of the materials designer.

In an attempt to ensure this consistency, materials designers have sometimes produced materials in which procedures are laid down in great detail. The intention is to ensure that the materials are 'teacher proof', that is, that the materials are used as intended. There are certain situations, as when a new approach is being introduced or when the teachers who will use the materials have little teaching experience, when explicit and detailed instructions on what to do will be appreciated as support. But there comes a time when the unfamiliar becomes familiar and the inexperienced more experienced. If the instructions are written into student materials in such a way that the teacher has virtually no freedom to deviate from them, it is at this point that frustration may start to set in.

After all, most teachers like variety as much as learners do. This is why they prefer materials that can be exploited in different ways (Nunan 1988a) – and why they will from time to time voluntarily cease to use a textbook that has served them reasonably well in favour of something novel. Teachers also understand that one of their roles is that of mediator, between materials and learners (interpreter) and between learners and materials/syllabus (adapter, supplementer), and when they recognise that there is a gap between learners and materials (in either direction), they will want to do something to bridge that gap. Making what appears to be a rather different point, Jolly and Bolitho (1998: 112) have commented on the fact that teaching 'against the grain' (i.e. using materials with which one feels uncomfortable) 'leads to dissatisfaction, loss of confidence and learning failure'. Because teachers have preferred ways of teaching (styles that reflect their classroom personalities) they will want to make adjustments to materials – as one might with clothes – until they feel comfortable with them. One result is that

even when teachers are ostensibly following the same method (i.e. organised set of procedures), that method will be realised in potentially very different ways (see, for example, Katz's 1996 analysis of three teachers using the same set of writing materials).

There is another side to this. The designer of the materials with which the teacher is making merry might feel distinctly uneasy at any radical deviations from his or her well-laid plans. The basic question when there is a difference between the procedures laid down in materials and a teacher's view of how learning is best facilitated is whether the teacher should adapt the materials or adapt to the materials. The obvious answer – and many materials designers would also concede this – is that teachers should follow their instincts and adapt the materials, but this raises much larger issues, such as how learners will react, whether the teacher is competent to take such a decision, and whether the change will have any longer-term consequences in terms of learner outcomes. Nunan (1988a) provides extracts from two lessons to demonstrate that though teachers may be using materials based on communicative principles, interactions between teacher and learners may be 'non communicative'. In the teacher-fronted sections of both lessons, 'the teacher nominates the topics as well as who is to speak, and the questions are almost exclusively of the display type (questions to which the questioner already knows the answer)' (1988a: 139). Though Nunan is careful not to make a judgement of the teachers, the implication is that the approach adopted by the teachers perhaps unwittingly subverted the intention of the materials designer and presumably resulted in learning outcomes different from what was intended.

Nunan (1988a, 1991: 211–12) also reports on a study to determine whether experienced and inexperienced teachers used materials in different ways. Twenty-six teachers, differentiated according to length of experience, were given an authentic listening text and a set of worksheets, and asked to plan and teach a unit of work based on the materials. No procedures were prescribed. One of the most striking findings of the study was that the more experienced teachers (more than eight years' experience) spent considerably more time teaching the materials than the less experienced (less than four years' experience); however, the less experienced group used a greater variety of learner configurations than their more experienced counterparts. Possible reasons for the latter finding, Nunan suggests, may be that because the materials were novel the experienced teachers judged that they 'needed more teacher mediation, explanation and support' or that the less experienced teachers had been influenced by an emphasis in their teacher education programmes on groupwork and pairwork. No details are given of learner response or learning outcomes.

## 6 MATERIALS AND RESEARCH

In relation to language learning teaching materials, we can pose three rather different questions about research. Questions 1 and 2 both refer to a specific set of materials, but might lead on to more general considerations.

### 6.1 What is the research or theoretical basis for these materials?

If teachers are the mediators between materials and learners, then materials writers, according to one perception, are the mediators between ‘the output of scholars/researchers (“theorists”) and teachers/learners’ (Dubin 1995: 14). They are, in other words, applied linguists bringing their knowledge and experience to bear on a particular set of problems. Although Dubin’s characterisation of the classroom teacher (‘Just give us engaging classroom scripts that will hold the interest of our learners’), verges on caricature, and ignores the growing number of teacher-researchers, she does draw attention to a potential difference between those who take on the responsibility for providing others with teaching materials and those who make use of those materials: ‘The writer must have a thorough grasp of developments in the field, but also must have the ability to embody abstract theory in concrete practice’ (1995: 14). She adds: ‘One important element of craft knowledge is the utilization of relevant research that bears on materials writing’ (1995: 14). Similarly, Byrd, who sees materials as a testing-ground for theory, states: ‘At our most professional, materials writers are attempting to give classroom realization to ideas about language learning and language teaching that derive from varying theoretical sources’ (1995b: 6); note the careful prefatory phrase. For Tomlinson (e.g. 2010), a key source would be the findings of second language acquisition research.

This is not to imply that the materials writer is simply an uncritical interpreter of the ideas of others. As Dubin and Olshtain (1986: 123) recognise, the writer whose materials deal with sociocultural awareness, for instance, must be familiar with the output of sociolinguistic research but must also be able to make judgements about the relevance of this research for a particular group of learners, its appropriateness to the topics being treated, and so on. They make the further point that in cases where writers have used research findings as the primary input, the resulting materials were ‘too narrow for the needs of most programs’ (1986: 123).

If we accept the view that materials should rest on a research base of some kind this raises questions in relation to a particular set of materials such as ‘What kinds of research/theories appear to underpin the materials?’ and ‘To what extent did the writer make conscious research-based decisions, and in relation to what features of the work?’ In order to determine the research/theoretical basis for materials we would obviously need to interrogate the materials themselves (e.g. the tasks – as Littlejohn (2011) and Ellis (1997, 1998) suggest, the introduction, the teacher’s book) and, if we can get personal access to them, the writer(s), publisher’s editor and the designer. In order to make judgements such as whether the underpinning research base is sound or the theories current, we would also need to be well informed ourselves. McDonough et al. (2013) provide useful summaries of research in each of the main skill areas, and integrated skills, and look at how this research is reflected in teaching materials.

A particular theory or body of research could, of course, inform very different sets of materials. The comparison of materials within the same category – for example, supplementary skills materials focusing on listening – might not only

prompt questions to do with what theoretical assumptions the materials have in common but also the nature of their surface variation – and the effects that this has on users. This line of questioning raises the issue in relation to successful/less successful materials of the relative importance of specific theoretical underpinnings on the one hand and the skill and experience of the materials writer on the other.

## 6.2 What research processes were involved in the writing of the materials?

Question 1, above, is concerned with one kind of input to materials design: previous research into language, learning and teaching and the way in which this is used. Question 2 asks about the research specifically conducted in relation to the particular set of materials under consideration. It would be most relevant in the context of materials evaluation. What kinds of research by author and/or publisher preceded the writing? What was the nature and extent of any piloting and/or other forms of feedback on the materials? Guidance on piloting procedures can be found in, for example, Barnard and Randall (1995), Richards (1995), Donovan (1998) and McGrath (2013). See also individual papers in Tomlinson and Masuhara (2010), Tomlinson (2011, 2013b) and Harwood (2014a).

## 6.3 What research has there been into materials selection and use and what remains to be done?

This is clearly a more general question. Byrd (1995b: 6) acknowledges that the body of knowledge on which practitioners within a profession typically base their work remains ill-defined. Her list of 'fundamental questions' requiring study is as follows:

- How can study of written text in textbook format result in language learning?
- How do students use text and/or textbooks in their study?
- Do students from different cultures use text and/or textbooks in different ways?
- How do language teachers use text and/or textbooks?
- Are there better and worse ways of using text and/or textbooks?
- How is learning content from text and/or textbooks different from learning communication in language through study of text and/or textbooks?

(Byrd 1995b: 6)

Research has been taking place in the years since Byrd posed these questions. Collections edited by Tomlinson and Masuhara (2010), for example, and Harwood (2014a) contain papers with a research dimension and Tomlinson (2012) includes an overview of research which includes a number of published reports on funded projects. At the time of writing, the most detailed survey can be found in Harwood (2014b), which includes reference to research in mainstream education. Harwood's review is particularly helpful in categorising textbook-related research as oriented towards *content* (focusing on language, culture and pragmatics, but also teachers'



guides), *consumption* (the use by teachers of textbooks and teachers' guides, and of textbooks by learners) or *production* (accounts by writers and publishers which help to explain 'why textbooks are the way they are' (2014b: 18). Tomlinson (2003a, 2011, 2012) and McGrath (2013: 199–202) have also suggested updated research agendas. There is agreement that a wider range of answers is needed to some questions, and that, while acknowledging the logistical difficulties involved, questions concerned with effects can only be satisfactorily answered by longitudinal research.

### Task 10.5

1. Look back at question 1, above (section 6.1). Choose a language skill that is important for the kinds of student you teach. Summarise the conclusions of the research that you are familiar with in relation to this skill. Decide what the pedagogic implications of these are and the relevance for the learners you have in mind. Design an instrument which will allow you to analyse the treatment of this skill in a set of published materials. Choose either a supplementary skills book or a coursebook that appears to give reasonable prominence to the skill. Analyse the materials to determine how far they appear to be based on linguistic research.
2. Choose a possible area of research that you would be interested in exploring and would be feasible in your situation. This might be one of the topics suggested under question 3, above (section 6.3) or in one of the research agendas listed at the end of the section. Carry out a literature review to find out what has already been done in this area. Then design a research plan which includes hypotheses or research questions and an indication of method. Talk through your plan with classmates or colleagues.

## 7 MATERIALS AND TEACHER EDUCATION

The need for courses in materials evaluation and design for both pre-service and in-service teachers was argued in the introduction to this book as a whole and in the introduction to this chapter. This section is, in effect, simply a short postscript.

When I teach courses on materials I always spend part of the first session eliciting from the participants what their previous experiences have been, what they feel their needs are, and what they hope to get from the course. We then look at the course outline to consider how their needs can be accommodated. Halfway through the course, I ask whether they want more of X or Y, where X or Y may be input or practice relating to a particular topic or a particular type of activity, and whether they would like to make any changes to the content proposed for the remainder of the course. The second edition of this book is in effect a response to the expressed needs of the teachers that I have taught with different levels of experience and in different contexts as well as a personal judgement based on observation and assessment of teachers over many years. Selected from and supplemented as appropriate. I am confident that it can provide a coherent core syllabus and much of the content of a systematically structured course in materials evaluation and design for English

language teachers, with some degree of further specialisation offered through the suggested further reading or through a specific focus on teaching learners of a particular age or with specific needs. The tasks interspersed throughout the chapters and particularly those in the 'Reflection, Discussion, Action' sections at the end of each chapter encourage processing of the content on both a group and an individual level.

For experienced teacher educators, this will be sufficient to fashion a course which meets the needs of their teacher-learners. Those with less experience of teacher education – or of designing and running courses on this particular topic – will find concrete suggestions in my book *Teaching Materials and the Roles of EFL/ESL Teachers: Practice and Theory* (2013). This compares 'Theory' (as seen in the perspectives of publishers, coursebook writers and teacher educators, and the professional literature) with 'Practice' (reflected in what teachers do, and what learners think) and draws implications for all those involved, including teacher educators. The final chapter, which is intended specifically for teacher educators, sets out a framework for course design based on content 'blocks' (such as coursebook selection or materials adaptation), and recurrent 'threads' (elicitation, sharing, structured experimentation and research, and reflection); a wide variety of activities is suggested within the blocks and threads. References to the language teacher education literature, and particularly those works concerned with method, are intended to cater for experienced as well as less experienced teacher educators.

A few years ago, at a conference in Cambodia, I met an American teacher educator who told me that reading the first edition of this book had changed the way he thought about teaching materials and his role as a teacher. I hope that this second edition has had the same effect on you.

## REFLECTION, DISCUSSION, ACTION

- Which of the sections in this chapter have you found most interesting? Why?
- Which of the chapters in the book have you found most useful? Why?
- If you are currently teaching, which topics in the book do you think would be of most interest to your colleagues? Choose one, and plan one or more linked workshops to be delivered to your colleagues. Include a short preparatory or follow-up reading (this can be an extract of just one or two pages or a number of quotations that summarise what for you are key points).

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## APPENDIX 1.1

### Teachers on course planning

A. It is always best that teachers can design syllabuses according to the needs of the students. This, however, is not feasible in my school and also in many other schools due to two reasons. First, teachers are already very heavily loaded with work so they can never afford the time to design syllabuses. Second, not all teachers are equipped with the necessary knowledge and skill in syllabus design so the quality of the work is by no means guaranteed. That is why so many secondary schools, including the school where I am working, have been relying quite heavily on textbooks written by experts in the field, based upon which we write up our 'Scheme of Work' for individual forms. Therefore, the most crucial 'task' for teachers in syllabus 'design' appears to be selection of the right sets of textbooks, and the prime functions of the Scheme of Work are to put together the different textbooks and to inform teachers of their coverage and also their deadlines.

B. Without the burden of public examinations, we have more freedom to set the syllabus for junior forms and hence it is more student-centred . . . As we have some band four and five [lower-level] students, we found that no single textbook on the market can suit their level and interest . . . English teachers of the whole form [therefore] discuss and make our own textbooks. However, we do not invent the teaching exercises or activities ourselves. We usually pick out materials which we think our students are interested in, from different textbooks on the market and modify them to suit our students. After we have made our textbooks, we make our syllabus according to the content of them.

## APPENDIX 2.1

### Extract from textbook analysis

Title: *Primary Colours Pupil's Book 5* Author: Littlejohn and Hicks  
Publisher: Cambridge University Press Year: 2008

#### A. COURSE PACKAGE AS A WHOLE

1. Type: 'general', 'main course' class use for upper elementary

2. Intended audience:

age-range: 9-12 school: primary schools location: worldwide

3. Extent:

a. Components: durable 'Pupil's Book' (PB), consumable 'Activity Book' (AB), class CDs, Teacher's Book (TB), Teacher Training DVD

b. Total estimated time: one school year

4. Design and layout:

four-colour PB, two-colour AB, two-colour TB

5. Distribution:

a. Material

	teacher	learners
audio	[x]	[ ]
audio script	[x]	[ ]
answer keys	[x]	[ ]
guidance on use of the material	[x]	[ ]
methodology guidance	[x]	[ ]
extra practice	[x]	[ ]
tests	[x]	[ ]

b. Access

syllabus overview	[x]	[x]
wordlists	[x]	[ ]

6. Route through the material:

specified	[x]
user-determined	[ ]

7. Subdivision:

Six 'units', each consisting of four subsections (A/B/C/D), with some standardised elements:

*Section A* contains the first part of an episode of a continuing story, with comprehension exercises and language practice. Section concludes with a song.

*Section B* named 'Language Time' contains practice on language items.

*Section C* contains the second part of the story episode, with language practice exercises.

*Section D* named 'Know it all!' contains cross-curricular content related to the location of the story episode (Grand Canyon, Great Wall, Venice, Brasília, etc.) followed by ideas for a project.

#### B. OVERVIEW OF AN EXTRACT FROM THE PUPIL'S BOOK

1. Length: one unit out of six, 16.5% of the Pupil's Book.

2. Sequence of activity:

5A 1. read and listen to a story episode, 2. comprehension check, 3. discussion of safety in the mountains, 4. song

5B 1. listen and make sentences, 2. language practice, 3. play a game

5C 1. read and listen to a story episode, 2. comprehension check, 3. discussion and listening

5D 1. read texts and match, share ideas, 2 share ideas (on dinosaurs), 3 research at home, project writing

## APPENDIX 2.2

### Extracts from published evaluation checklists

Title \_\_\_\_\_ Author \_\_\_\_\_ Evaluated by \_\_\_\_\_

VS	CRITERIA	MS	VMP
	PRONUNCIATION CRITERIA		
5	1. Completeness of presentation	1.5	7.5
5	2. Appropriateness of presentation	1.5	7.5
4.	3. Adequacy of practice	2	8
	GRAMMAR CRITERIA		
5	4. Adequacy of pattern inventory	3	15
4	5. Appropriate sequencing	2.5	10
4	6. Adequacy of drill model & pattern display	3	12
4	7. Adequacy of practice	3	12
	CONTENT CRITERIA		
4	8. Functional load	3	12
4	9. Rate & manner of entry & re-entry	2.5	10
4	10. Appropriate of contexts & situations	2	8
	GENERAL CRITERIA		
5	11. Authenticity of language	2	10
3	12. Availability of supplementary materials	4	12
3	13. Adequate guidance for non-native teachers	1	3
3	14. Competence of the author	2	6
2	15. Appropriate level for integration	3	6
1	16. Durability	2.5	2.5
1	17. Quality of editing & publishing	3.5	3.5
1	18. Price & value	3.5	3.5

VS: Value Scale Range 0-5 MS: Merit Scale Range 0-4 VMP--Value Merit Product

**A**

Source: Tucker (1975: 360-1)

Weight	GENERAL	Rating
		4 3 2 1 0
—	takes into account currently accepted methods of ESL/EFL teaching	— — — — —
—	gives guidance in the presentation of language items	— — — — —
—	caters for individual differences in home language background	— — — — —
—	relates content to the learners' culture and environment	— — — — —
	<b>SPEECH</b>	
—	is based on a contrastive analysis of English and L1 sound systems	— — — — —
—	suggests ways of demonstrating and practising speech items	— — — — —
—	includes speech situations relevant to the pupils' background	— — — — —
—	allows for variation in the accents of non-native speakers of English	— — — — —
	<b>GRAMMAR</b>	
—	stresses communicative competence in teaching structural items	— — — — —
—	provides adequate models featuring the structures to be taught	— — — — —
—	shows clearly the kinds of responses required in drills (e.g. substitution)	— — — — —
	(etc)	

**B**

Source: Williams (1983: 255)

## C - Activities

- 1 Do the materials provide a balance of activities that is appropriate for your students? (See 4.4, 12.1 and 12.4(a).)

Yes  No  Comment \_\_\_\_\_

(You may also want to refer to Exercise 1 on page 275.)

- 2 Is there a sufficient amount of communicative output in the materials under consideration? (See 4.3 and 5.3 for a description of what this means, and Chapter 8 for a large number of examples of this type of activity, both speaking and writing.)

Yes  No  Comment \_\_\_\_\_

- 3 Do the materials provide enough roughly-tuned input for your students? (See 4.3.)

Yes  No  Comment \_\_\_\_\_



## Language content

- Does the coursebook cover the main grammar items appropriate to each level, taking learners' needs into account?
- Is material for vocabulary teaching adequate in terms of quantity and range of vocabulary, emphasis placed on vocabulary development, strategies for individual learning?
- Does the coursebook include material for pronunciation work? If so what is covered: individual sounds, word stress, sentence stress, intonation?
- Does the coursebook deal with the structuring and conventions of language use above sentence level, eg how to take part in conversations, how to structure a piece of extended writing, how to identify the main points in a reading passage? (More relevant at intermediate and advanced levels.)
- Are style and appropriacy dealt with? If so, is language style matched to social situation?

## Skills

- Are all four skills adequately covered, bearing in mind your course aims and syllabus requirements?
- Is there material for integrated skills work?
- Are reading passages and associated activities suitable for your students' levels, interests, etc? Is there sufficient reading material?
- Is listening material well recorded, as authentic as possible, accompanied by background information, questions and activities which help comprehension?
- Is material for spoken English (dialogues, roleplays, etc) well designed to equip learners for real-life interactions?
- Are writing activities suitable in terms of amount of guidance/control, degree of accuracy, organization of longer pieces of writing (eg paragraphing) and use of appropriate styles?

## Topic

- Is there sufficient material of genuine interest to learners?
- Is there enough variety and range of topic?
- Will the topics help expand students' awareness and enrich their experience?
- Are the topics sophisticated enough in content, yet within the learners' language level?
- Will your students be able to relate to the social and cultural contexts presented in the coursebook?
- Are women portrayed and represented equally with men?
- Are other groups represented, with reference to ethnic origin, occupation, disability, etc?

## Methodology

- What approach/approaches to language learning are taken by the coursebook? Is this appropriate to the learning/teaching situation?
- What level of active learner involvement can be expected? Does this match your students' learning styles and expectations?
- What techniques are used for presenting/practising new language items? Are they suitable for the learners?
- How are the different skills taught?
- How are communicative abilities developed?
- Does the material include any advice/help to students on study skills and learning strategies?
- Are students expected to take a degree of responsibility for their own learning (eg by setting their own individual targets)?

D

Source: Cunningsworth (1995: 3-4)

*A. Program and Course*

	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>
Does the textbook support the goals and curriculum of the project?	_____	_____
Is the textbook part of a series, and if so, would using the entire series be appropriate?	_____	_____
Are a sufficient number of the course objectives addressed by the textbook?	_____	_____
Was this textbook written for learners of this age group and background?	_____	_____
Does the textbook reflect learners' preferences in terms of layout, design and organization?	_____	_____
Is the textbook sensitive to the cultural background and interests of the students?	_____	_____

*B. Skills*

Are the skills presented in the textbook appropriate to the course?	_____	_____
Does the textbook provide learners with adequate guidance as they are acquiring these skills?	_____	_____
Do the skills that are presented in the textbook include a wide range of cognitive skills that will be challenging to learners?	_____	_____

*C. Exercises and Activities*

Do the exercises and activities in the textbook promote learners' language development?	_____	_____
Is there a balance between controlled and free practice?	_____	_____
Do the exercises and activities reinforce what students have already learned and represent a progression from simple to more complex?	_____	_____
Are the exercises and activities varied in format so that they will continually motivate and challenge learners?	_____	_____

*D. Practical concerns*

Is the textbook available?	_____	_____
Can the textbook be obtained in a timely manner?	_____	_____
Is the textbook cost-effective?	_____	_____

**E** Source: Garinger (2002)

## APPENDIX 3.1

### Extracts from an evaluation checklist

#### Choosing a textbook

##### *Does the book suit your students?*

- |  |     |        |    |
|--|-----|--------|----|
| 1. Is it attractive? Given the average age of your students, would they enjoy using it?  | YES | PARTLY | NO |
| 2. Is it culturally acceptable?  | YES | PARTLY | NO |
| 5. Is it about the right length?   | YES | PARTLY | NO |
| 9. Does it achieve an acceptable balance between the relevant language skills, and integrate them so that work in one skill area helps the others? | YES | PARTLY | NO |

##### *Does the book suit the teacher?*

- |   |     |        |    |
|---|-----|--------|----|
| 2. Is there a good, clear teacher's guide with answers and help on additional activities?                           | YES | PARTLY | NO |
| 4. Are the recommended methods and approaches suitable for you, your students and your classroom?                   | YES | PARTLY | NO |
| 5. Are the approaches easily adaptable if necessary?  | YES | PARTLY | NO |
| 9. Does the book use a 'spiral' approach, so that items are regularly revised and used again in different contexts? | YES | PARTLY | NO |

##### *Does the book suit the syllabus and the examination?*

- |  |     |        |    |
|--|-----|--------|----|
| 1. Has the book been recommended or approved by the authorities?                             | YES | PARTLY | NO |
| 4. If it does more than the syllabus requires, is the result an improvement?                 | YES | PARTLY | NO |
| 8. Is there a good balance between what the examination requires and what the students need? | YES | PARTLY | NO |

*Score: 2 points for every YES answer, 1 point for every PARTLY answer, 0 for every NO answer.*

## APPENDIX 3.2

### More checklists

<b>Aims and approaches</b>	Correspondence between coursebook and course aims Text adaptability Design and organisation Inclusion of structural and functional elements Recycling User-friendliness
<b>Language content</b>	Authenticity Coverage of grammar and vocabulary Attention to pronunciation Attention to language above sentence level (social norms, etc.) Language styles Moods
<b>Skills</b>	Coverage of the four skills Skills integration Balance of skills Suitability of activities
<b>Topic</b>	Suitability for age Suitability for culture Social issues Adaptability and sophistication of topic Humour
<b>Methodology</b>	Appropriateness of approach Degree of student-centredness Suitability for presentation/practice Attention to study skills/learner autonomy

**A** Source: based on Shave (2010)

Skills	Coverage of all skills Skills emphasis Skills emphasis appropriate to context Skills integrated or treated discretely
Grading and sequencing	Grading, if any
Treatment of reading/'discourse' skills	Opportunity to apply skills to extended reading passages
Treatment of listening skills	Authenticity of recordings
Speaking materials	Based on research into real interaction
Tests and exercises	Related to learner needs and content of materials
Suitability for different learning styles	Appropriateness for self-study
Motivational appeal	Appeal to learners and teachers Potential influence on teacher-learner interaction and teacher-learner relationship

**B** Source: based on McDonough et al. (2013: 59–60: 'The internal evaluation')

Price and availability	Cost of materials for students (and parents, if appropriate) Availability of all components
Layout, design and ease of use	Look of coursebook Ease of navigation Ease of use of any additional materials Ease of navigation of any online materials (e.g. associated website) Online materials work
Instructions	Clear for both students and teachers
Methodology	Matches teacher's beliefs Sufficient variety of procedures and activities
Syllabus	Matches any external syllabus Matches teacher's perception of learners' needs
Skills	Appropriate balance of skills
Topics and content	Likely appeal to learners Cultural appropriateness Methodology feasible and culturally appropriate in context

**C** Source: based on Harmer (2011)

## APPENDIX 3.3

### Extracts from published materials

The man in the picture is applying for a loan. Turn the man's questions into indirect ones using the words in brackets.



- 1 Can I apply for a loan? (COULD)  
Could you tell me *if/whether* I can apply for a loan?
- 2 How long will it take? (COULD)
- 3 Will my application be successful? (IDEA)
- 4 How much will I need to pay each month? (KNOW)
- 5 Can I pay more if I want to? (KNOW)
- 6 When will I know if I've got the money? (COULD)

Source: Evans and Dooley (2010: 110)

In pairs, use the information below to ask and answer questions.

- where/located • what/made of
- where/built • who/designed
- when/completed • why/built



**Name:** Statue of Liberty  
**Location:** Liberty Island, New York  
**Made of:** iron and copper  
**Where built:** Paris, France  
**Designer:** Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi  
**Completed:** 1886  
**Reason built:** as a gift of friendship from the people of France to America

A Where is the Statue of Liberty located?

B How is the Statue of Liberty built in New York?

Source: Evans and Dooley (2015: 101)

In the text below, change four of the verbs in bold which should be in the present perfect simple.

For many years, campaigners in America **have been trying** to get rattlesnake round ups banned. They say that round ups **have been becoming** commercial events that promote cruelly to animals. A number of pressure groups **have been working** together to organize demonstrations. They **have also been speaking** to local politicians and companies that sponsor the shows. They **have been scoring** an important victory in Pennsylvania where the state **has been banning** the killing of snakes during competitions. Campaigners say that this proves that they **have been getting** their message across, but people in Texas **have been being** less responsive.

C Source: Kerr and Jones (2012: 42)

Write six sentences about yourself (four true and two false) using the present perfect continuous. If necessary, use the verbs in the box to help you.

hope   feel   live   look for   plan  
study   try   wear   work

Read your sentences to a partner. Your partner must guess which of your sentences are false.

D Source: Kerr and Jones (2012: 42)

**Must or mustn't? Complete the rules for this English school.**



- 1 You ..... wear a school uniform.
- 2 You ..... do your homework every day.
- 3 You ..... bring your mobile phone to school.
- 4 You ..... listen to the teacher.
- 5 You ..... listen to your MP3 player.
- 6 You ..... eat in the classroom.
- 7 You ..... run in the corridors.
- 8 You ..... ask for permission to go to the bathroom.

**What are the rules in YOUR school? Complete the sentences.**

**Clothes**

- 1 We must .....
- 2 We mustn't .....

**Homework**

- 3 We must .....
- 4 We mustn't .....

**Behaviour in class**

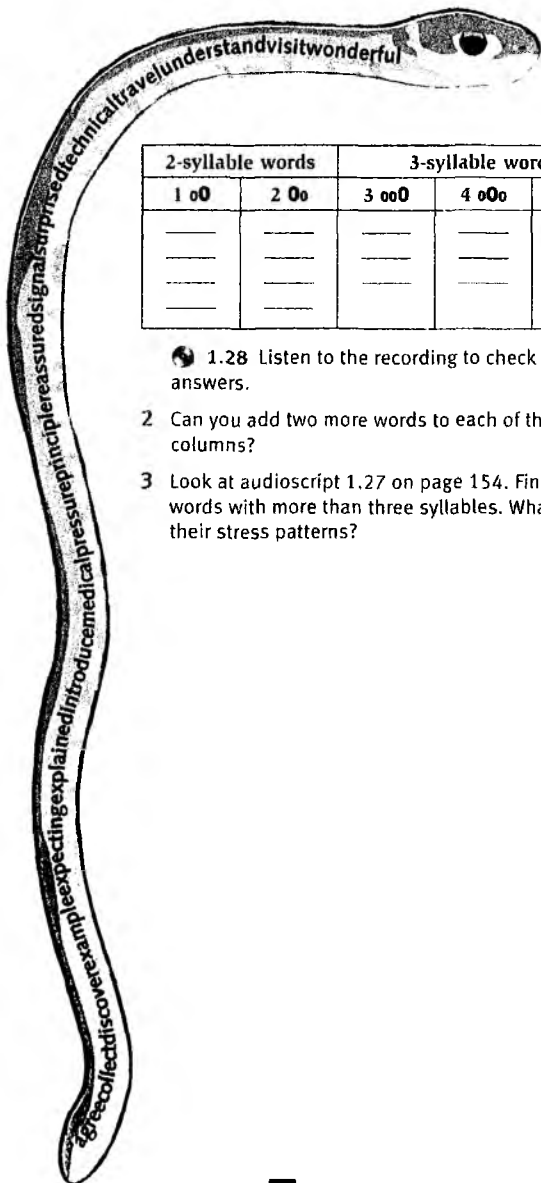
- 5 We must .....
- 6 We mustn't .....

**Phone and gadgets**

- 7 We must .....
- 8 We mustn't .....

**PRONUNCIATION: word stress**

- 1 Find eighteen words in the wordsnake and put them in the correct column below according to their stress pattern.



2-syllable words		3-syllable words		
1 o0	2 0o	3 oo0	4 o0o	5 0oo
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

- 1.28 Listen to the recording to check your answers.
- 2 Can you add two more words to each of the columns?
- 3 Look at audioscript 1.27 on page 154. Find five words with more than three syllables. What are their stress patterns?



## APPENDIX 3.4

### Interview prompts (interviews with learners/teachers)

#### Eliciting teachers' views on coursebooks

1. Do you think coursebooks are important?
2. What are your criteria for choosing a coursebook?
3. Which part(s) of the coursebook do you frequently use and which part(s) do you seldom use?
4. When, why and how do you supplement the coursebook?
5. What kind of help would you like to have from the coursebook in teaching grammar or any other aspects of the language?

#### Eliciting learners' views on coursebooks

1. How often do you use your coursebook?
2. Which part(s) of it do you use most frequently and which part(s) do you seldom use?
3. Which part of the book do you like best and which part do you like least?
4. Is the coursebook important to you?
5. What kind of coursebook would you like to have?
6. Do you like the coursebook you have now?

## APPENDIX 3.5A

### Materials analysis: phase one

#### I What do the materials aim to do and what do they contain?

1. When they finish their course, what should your learners know *of* and *about* the target language?
2. What should they be able to do *in* and *with* the language?
3. What knowledge about language and what guidance for using language appropriately for different purposes in various situations is offered in the materials?
4. What do the materials offer which your learners will need to *know*?
5. What do the materials offer which your learners will be able to *do*?
6. What is *missing* from the materials?

#### II What do the materials make your learners do while they are learning?

7. How do you think you *best* learn a language? What is most useful for learners to *do* to help them to learn?
8. What procedure or sequence of work does the learner have to follow in order to be successful at the task?
9. Which types of task seem to be most conducive to *learning*?
10. Which helpful ways of learning seem to be *missing* from the tasks provided in the materials?

#### III How do the materials expect you to teach your learners in the classroom?

11. What can I do as a teacher which can best help my learners to learn a new language?
12. What are you expected to do to help your learners work successfully through the materials?
13. Do [the] materials give you enough freedom to adopt those roles which for you are the most *helpful* to learners discovering a new language?
14. Are you asked to take on roles you do not regard as appropriate?
15. Do the materials *limit* what you want to do as a teacher in using them with your learners?

## APPENDIX 3.5B

### Materials analysis: phase two

#### I Are the materials appropriate to your learners' needs and interests?

19. How and to what extent do the materials fit your learners' long-term goals in learning the language and/or following your course?
20. How far do the materials directly call on what your learners already know of and about the language, and extend what they can already do with and in the language?
21. How far do the materials meet the immediate language learning needs of your learners as you perceive them?
22. What subject-matter (topics, themes, ideas) in the materials is likely to be interesting and relevant to your learners?
23. In what ways do the materials involve your learners' values, attitudes and feelings?
24. Which skills do the materials highlight and what kinds of opportunity are provided to develop them?
25. How much time and space, proportionately, is devoted to each skill?
26. How is your learner expected to make use of his/her skills?
27. How are the learners required to communicate when working with the materials?
28. How much time and space, proportionately, is devoted to your learners *interpreting* meaning?
29. How much time and space, proportionately, is devoted to your learners *expressing* meaning?
30. How and how far can your materials meet the desire of individual learners to focus at certain moments on the development of a particular skill or ability use?

#### II Are the materials appropriate to your learners' own approaches to language learning?

31. On what basis is the content of the material *sequenced*?
32. On what basis are the different parts of the materials *divided* into 'units' or 'lessons', and into different sub-parts of units/lessons?
33. On what basis do the materials offer *continuity*? How are relationships made between earlier and later parts?
34. To what extent and in what ways can your learners impose *their own* sequencing, dividing up and continuity on the materials as they work with them?

## APPENDIX 4.1

### Extracts from published materials

**B** Look at the picture and then decide if the sentences are **True** or **False**.



- 1 The red team have already scored four goals. True
- 2 The first half hasn't finished yet. ....
- 3 The blue team haven't scored a goal yet. ....
- 4 The red number four has just got a red card. ....
- 5 The second half has already started. ....
- 6 The blue number ten hasn't taken the penalty yet. ....
- 7 It hasn't started raining yet. ....
- 8 A fan has just run onto the pitch. ....

**A** Source: Puchta et al. (2012: 65)

**Rewrite the direct questions below as indirect questions, as in the examples.**

- 1 Where is the City Library?  
Do you know where the City Library is?
- 2 Why did he laugh? I wonder why he laughed.
- 3 Why don't we come here more often?  
I wonder .....
- 4 Where is the nearest bus stop?  
Do you know ..... ?
- 5 When did he arrive?  
Could you tell me ..... ?
- 6 Has he ever been to Paris?  
I wonder .....
- 7 Why is she always so moody?  
Do you know ..... ?
- 8 How can I get to the bank?  
Could you tell me ..... ?
- 9 Would you like to have dinner with me?  
I wonder .....
- 10 Has he got any brothers or sisters?  
Do you know ..... ?

**B** Source: Evans and Dooley (2010: 10)

**4** Choose the correct item.

- 1 A: Did the sofa always use to be here?  
B: No, it **was moved/moved** to make more space.
- 2 A: Who is going to the new office?  
B: That **hasn't decided/hasn't been decided** yet.
- 3 A: The Louvre in Paris is a very popular tourist attraction.  
B: Yes, it **visits/is visited** by millions of people.
- 4 A: I thought your heating was broken.  
B: It was, but it **had been fixed/had fixed** before I got home.
- 5 A: This factory is very loud.  
B: Yes, ear protectors have to **wear/be worn** at all times.

**5** Rewrite the sentences in the passive.

- 1 A professional chef is teaching the class.  
*The class is being taught by a professional chef.*
- 2 Road signs will inform drivers about the new one-way system.  
.....
- 3 When do they serve dinner?  
.....
- 4 You can return the product if it is faulty.  
.....
- 5 They cancelled the match because of the rain.  
.....

**6** Turn the following sentences into the passive.

- 1 Maria teaches Italian to Evan.  
*Evan is taught Italian by Maria.*  
*Italian is taught to Evan by Maria.*
- 2 Mr Benson offered Ryan a job.  
Ryan .....  
A job .....
- 3 Sally has shown me the lab notes.  
I .....  
The lab notes .....
- 4 Alex will give a box of sweets to Pat.  
Pat .....  
A box of sweets .....

**7** Put the newspaper headlines into the passive.

- 1 **Flooding leaves hundreds homeless!**
- 2 **New sports centre to open next week!**
- 3 **Police catch bank robbers yesterday!**
- 4 **New animal discovered in forest last week!**
- 5 **Council to announce new taxes next month!**

- 1 *Hundreds have been left homeless by flooding.*
- 2 .....
- 3 .....
- 4 .....
- 5 .....

**8** Write questions and answers in the passive, as in the example.

- |   |  |                         |
|---|--|-------------------------|
| 1 | who/telephone/<br>invent                 | a in New Zealand        |
| 2 | where/2012 Summer Olympic Games/hold     | b in 1928               |
| 3 | who/Oliver Twist/<br>write               | c in 2014               |
| 4 | when/penicillin/<br>discover             | d in London             |
| 5 | where/The Lord of the Rings trilogy/film | e Alexander Graham Bell |
| 6 | when/Taylor Swift's Blank Space/release  | f Charles Dickens       |

- 1 *Who was the telephone invented by?*  
*The telephone was invented by Alexander Graham Bell.*
- 2 .....
- 3 .....
- 4 .....
- 5 .....
- 6 .....

### More extracts from published materials

# 20 ONLINE REVIEWS



#### Getting started


- 1 Do you check hotel restaurant and reviews online?
- 2 If you have a good experience at a restaurant or hotel, would you write a review?
- 3 Would you complain online if you had a bad experience?

#### Looking closely

1 Read the reviews then answer the questions.

- 1 What kind of restaurant is Benny's Diner?
- 2 What is a 'rating'? Is 4/5 a good rating? Is 0/5 a good rating?
- 3 What does Gerard mean when he says 'the service is absolutely terrible'?

**Benny's Diner** 30 Dalberg Road ✓ Your Review Post Review


 **Erin Lindqvist** reviewed 3 weeks ago  
**Rating:** 4/5 Report Abuse

I took my niece and nephew to Benny's for dinner last week. The food was really good, although my fries were quite cold. The kids enjoyed their burgers and milkshakes.

Our waiter was really friendly but the service was quite slow. We had to wait nearly half an hour for our food.

Overall, I would recommend Benny's Diner. The menu is good and not too expensive.

**Downton Youth Hostel** 567 City Road ✓ Your Review Post Review

 **Gerard Garcia Martinez** reviewed 3 weeks ago  
**Rating:** 0/5 Report Abuse

I stayed at the Downton Youth Hostel for two nights. This hostel is the worst place I have ever stayed! The service is absolutely terrible -- there is no one to clean the rooms, and the manager is really rude. The price for two nights was \$50, which is expensive for a hostel in this city. The only good thing about this hostel is that it is quite quiet -- probably because no one wants to stay there!

Unfortunately, I would have to give this hostel 0/5!

- 2 Complete the table with good points and bad points from each review.

	Good points	Bad points
Benny's Diner	food really good, kids enjoyed burgers and milkshakes	
Downton Youth Hostel		

### Clear usage: adverb + adjective

When you review something, you can use adjectives to describe it.

*The hotel was nice.*

*The food was bad.*

*The service was terrible.*

You can modify (change) the meaning of the adjective by putting an adverb in front of it.

*The hotel was quite nice. (It was OK)*

*The food was really bad. (really = very)*

*The service was absolutely terrible. (absolutely = completely)*

### Language focus

- 1 Read the reviews again. Underline the adverb + adjective combinations.

- 2 Unjumble these sentences.

- 1 food restaurant terrible. was The in the absolutely
- 2 quite restaurant at the food The nice. was
- 3 Youth The great. was really Hostel
- 4 very service good. at local is my café The
- 5 clean. is hotel That quite
- 6 like I restaurant. Thai really that

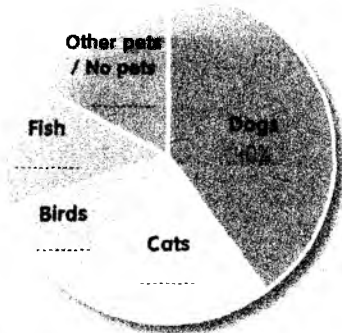
- 3 Use an adverb + adjective combination to write some sentences for reviews.

- 1 Write a sentence about your favourite local café or restaurant.
- 2 Write a sentence about a hotel or hostel that you think is 'OK' (but not great).
- 3 Write a sentence about a restaurant where you had great food or service.
- 4 Write a sentence about a restaurant where you had bad food or service.

# Lesson 7

1 Look, read, and write.

People in Lou's class who have owned pets



This graph is a pie chart. It looks like a pie cut into slices! You use pie charts to compare different things and show information in a simple, clear way. There are 30 people in Lou's class. 12 of them have owned dogs. Do you know what percentage of the total number of students that is? Here's how you figure it out:

$$12/30 \times 100 = 40 \text{ So it's } 40\%$$

I also found out: six have owned cats, three have owned birds, four have owned fish, and five have owned other pets or no pet. Figure out the percentages and write them on the pie chart.

cats  $6/30 \times 100 = \dots\dots\dots$

birds  $3/30 \times \dots\dots\dots$

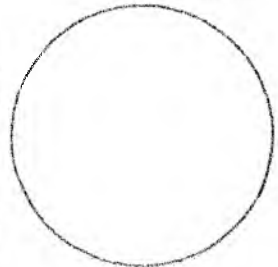
fish  $4/30 \dots\dots\dots$

other /no  $5/ \dots\dots\dots$

2 Use your Student Book research. Do a class survey and draw a pie chart.



Have you ever owned ... ?	Tally	Percentage



Chapter 9  
76



What topic would you choose to research and make a pie chart about? Share your ideas.

B Source: Clarke and Heald (2015: 76)



# 8e How R U? 😊 tks

## Speaking and reading

1 Read the text and discuss the questions.

- 1 How are emoticons different in the Eastern and Western Hemispheres?
- 2 Do you use emoticons in your texts and online messages?
- 3 Which emoticons from the article do you use? Do you use others?

## Writing texts and online messages

2 Read these messages between two people. How does each person feel in items 2-4?

- 1 How R U?
- 2 Gr8 :-) Shopping 4 clothes. u wan 2 come?
- 3 Sry. Got English exam. :(
- 4 :0 Didn't know it's 2day. Call me after?
- 5 Thx C U l8r

### 3 Writing skill textspeak

a The messages in Exercise 2 use "textspeak." Compare them to the full version in normal English below.

- A: How are you?  
 B: I'm great. I'm shopping for clothes. Do you want to come?  
 A: Sorry, but I've got an English exam today.  
 B: I didn't know it's today. Can you call me afterwards?  
 A: Thanks. See you later.

## CULTURE

EASTERN HEMISPHERE		WESTERN HEMISPHERE
(^_^)	happy	:)
(; ;)	sad	:(
(*O*)	surprised	:O
(^_~)	winking	;-)
(^O^)	laughing	:D

The whole world uses emoticons in their texts and online messages. But emoticons around the world are not the same. In Eastern Hemisphere countries, the eyes are very important in emoticons. But with Western emoticons, the mouth is more important, and you turn your head to the left to read them.

b Textspeak makes English shorter. Find examples in Exercise 2 of the following:

- 1 The writer uses numbers with the same sound as a word.
- 2 The writer uses a letter with the same sound as a word.
- 3 The writer leaves out words: pronouns, auxiliary verbs, etc.
- 4 The writer leaves out letters when the word is obvious.
- 5 The writer uses imperatives, not polite forms.

c Write this textspeak conversation using full sentences.

- A: R U in town? \_\_\_\_\_  
 B: Am l8ter 2day. \_\_\_\_\_  
 A: Wan2 meet? \_\_\_\_\_  
 B: OK. @3? \_\_\_\_\_

d Write these full sentences using textspeak.

- 1 Thanks for the message.
  - 2 Please meet me at the station.
  - 3 Sorry I'm late.
  - 4 See you on Monday at six.
- 4 Work in pairs. Arrange to meet this week. Write a text message to your partner. Swap your messages and write a reply. Continue until you agree on the day, the time, and the place.

## APPENDIX 5.2

### Websites recommended by teachers

<http://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en>

<http://www.onestopenglish.com>

<http://usingenglish.com>

<http://breakingnewsenglish.com>

<http://www.englishonline.at>

<http://eslcafe.com>

<http://www.stuff.co.uk/wicked.htm>

<http://www.esldiscussions.com>

<http://www.esl.lab.com>

<http://www.ello.org>

<http://film-english.com>

<http://www.ielts-simon.com>

<http://www.teach-this.com>

<http://busyteacher.org>

<http://www.worksheetworks.com>

<http://www.mes-english.com>

<http://quizlet.com>

<http://www.tlsbooks.com/englishworksheets.htm>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise>

<http://www.breakingenglish.com>

<http://www.atozteacherstuff.com>

<http://www.starfall.com>

<http://www.tolearnenglish.com>

<http://english-zone.com>

<http://www.goodenglish.org/sp/site>

<http://www.esl-kids.com>

<http://www.eslgold.com>

<http://www.esl-galaxy.com/index.htm>

<http://teachers.teach-nology.com/index.html>

<http://www.brainpop.com>

<http://funenglishgames.com>

<http://www.enchantedlearning.com/Home.html>

<http://www.vocabulary.co.il>

<http://www.spellingcity.com>

<http://www.netrover.com/~kingskid/108.html>

<http://www.essaypunch.com>

<http://www.mightybook.com>

<http://www.raz-kids.com>

<http://www.findingdulcinea.com/guides/Education/Elementary-School-English.html>

<http://www.storyit.com>

<http://www.magickeys.com/books>

<http://www.ego4u.com/en/cram-up/grammar>

<http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar>

<http://www.topmarks.co.uk/interactive.aspx?cat=40>

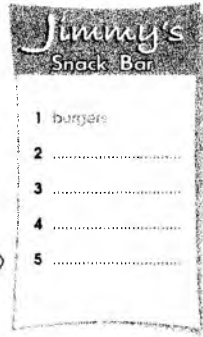
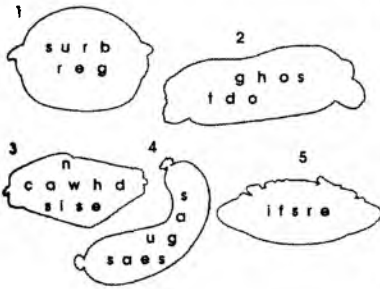
<http://pbskids.org/lions>

<http://www.acs.ucalgary.ca/~dkbrown>

## APPENDIX 5.3

### Extracts from published materials

Look and write.



**A** Source: Dooley and Evans (2011: 44)

★ Look, read, and match.



- |                 |       |                   |       |
|-----------------|-------|-------------------|-------|
| 1 get up        | f     | 5 do homework     | ..... |
| 2 take a shower | ..... | 6 watch TV        | ..... |
| 3 go to work    | ..... | 7 listen to music | ..... |
| 4 go jogging    | ..... | 8 go to bed       | ..... |

★ Write the missing letters.

I g\_e\_t \_p \_t s\_v\_n \_i\_d\_ck \_n th\_ m\_m\_n\_g.

I \_ \_ \_ sh\_w\_r \_nd th\_n I \_ \_t m\_ br\_kfst.

t \_gh\_t \_i\_d\_ck I g\_ t\_ sch\_ \_l \_ \_b\_l\_s.

**B** Source: Dooley and Evans (2011: 52)

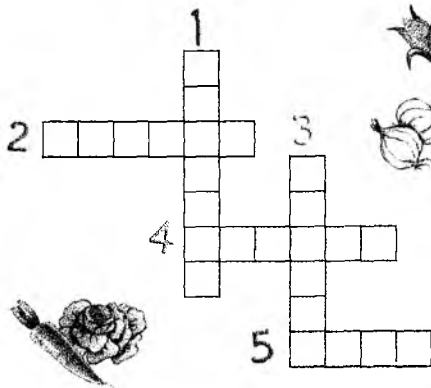
Fairyland  
CLUB

Go Green!



Lesson 4

6 Read and complete.



A green vegetable.  
It's nice in sandwiches!

2 This fruit is always in  
pizza!

3 This vegetable makes  
your food tasty!

4 Rabbits love this  
vegetable!

5 This vegetable is sweet!

Source: Dooley and Evans (2011: 63)

**A Complete the words with the missing vowels.**

1. b \_ e \_ a \_ ch
2. \_ \_ t t r \_ \_ c t \_ \_ \_ n
3. \_ \_ c c \_ \_ m m \_ \_ d \_ \_ t \_ \_ \_ n
4. d \_ \_ s t \_ \_ n \_ \_ t \_ \_ \_ n
5. \_ \_ c \_ \_ n \_ \_ m y
6. f l \_ \_ g h t
7. p \_ \_ p \_ \_ l \_ \_ r
8. s \_ \_ c t \_ \_ r
9. t \_ \_ \_ r \_ \_ s t
10. v \_ \_ s \_ \_ t \_ \_ r

**B Complete the sentences with the words from Exercise A. Make any necessary changes.**

1. Many people like to spend their summer holiday on a beach.
2. Package holidays usually include flights and \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Paris is a very popular tourist \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The Eiffel Tower is an important \_\_\_\_\_ in Paris.
5. Tourism has many different \_\_\_\_\_, such as medical tourism and ecotourism.
6. Tourism is very important for the \_\_\_\_\_ of many countries.



**Study the sentences.**

1. Underline the /f/ sounds. (Circle) the /tʃ/ sounds.
2. **22** Listen and check.
3. Practise saying the sentences.
  - a. There is a Russian group and a Czech group in the show tonight.
  - b. Which city in China is her destination?
  - c. There's good choice of cheap fresh fish on the street stalls.
  - d. A traditional British dish is fish and chips.
  - e. That shop sells watches and shoes.

**E** Source: Phillips and Phillips (2014: 22)

**Write: sneeze, yawn, blush, hiccup, snore or cough next to each sentence.**

- 1 You may do this if you need to lose weight. ....
- 2 It might help you stay awake. ....
- 3 It happens when you think about what others think of you. ....
- 4 You might do this if you are worried about something. ....
- 5 It happens extremely fast. ....
- 6 You may sound like a dog when you do this. ....

**F** Source: Evans and Dooley (2013: 44)

**Fill in the correct word derived from the word in parentheses.**

**Word Formation – forming negative adjectives**

We use **non-** (*existent – non-existent*), **un-** (*happy – unhappy*),

**dis-** (*satisfied – dissatisfied*), **in-** (*accurate – inaccurate*),

**il-** (before l) (*legal – illegal*), **im-** (before b, m, p) (*polite – impolite*)

and **ir-** (before r) (*regular – irregular*).

- 1 The sales assistant was very ..... so I didn't buy anything. (**HELPFUL**)
- 2 Steve never considers the results of his actions. He can be very ..... (**RESPONSIBLE**)
- 3 I find it ..... to sleep if someone snores! (**POSSIBLE**)
- 4 It's ..... to keep the money if a sales assistant gives you too much change. (**HONEST**)
- 5 It was a(n) ..... dinner party so we didn't need to dress up. (**FORMAL**)
- 6 Tony's arguments were ..... They just didn't make sense. (**LOGICAL**)

**G** Source: Evans and Dooley (2013: 45)

**3** The adjectives below can all be used to describe people in a company. Change each adjective into its opposite by adding *un-*, *in-*, *im-*, *ir-* or *dis-*.

- |                         |                         |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>a</b> ___reliable    | <b>k</b> ___articulate  |
| <b>b</b> ___flexible    | <b>l</b> ___honest      |
| <b>c</b> ___organized   | <b>m</b> ___rational    |
| <b>d</b> ___patient     | <b>n</b> ___decisive    |
| <b>e</b> ___responsible | <b>o</b> ___supportive  |
| <b>f</b> ___creative    | <b>p</b> ___competent   |
| <b>g</b> ___consistent  | <b>q</b> ___assertive   |
| <b>h</b> ___inspiring   | <b>r</b> ___sociable    |
| <b>i</b> ___committed   | <b>s</b> ___considerate |
| <b>j</b> ___practical   | <b>t</b> ___competitive |

**4** Complete the following staff appraisals using an appropriate positive or negative adjective from 3.

- a** Laura's a real ideas person. She's exceptionally \_\_\_\_\_
- b** Brian can only do things his way. He's a bit \_\_\_\_\_
- c** Max is always there to give people a hand when they need it. He's really very \_\_\_\_\_
- d** With Olaf, it's just one mistake after another. He's completely \_\_\_\_\_
- e** Greta tends to take no notice of other people's needs. She's rather \_\_\_\_\_
- f** Richard's office looks like a bomb hit it – papers everywhere! He's totally \_\_\_\_\_
- g** With Miyumi, the job always comes first. She's totally \_\_\_\_\_
- h** Sam can never make up his mind about anything. He's extremely \_\_\_\_\_
- i** Callum really knows how to motivate his staff. He's incredibly \_\_\_\_\_
- j** You can never depend on Leo to do what he's supposed to do. He's totally \_\_\_\_\_
- k** Elena meets all her targets month after month. She's incredibly \_\_\_\_\_
- l** Jeanette too often allows her personal life to interfere with her work. She's rather \_\_\_\_\_
- m** Eric always has to be the best at everything. He's extremely \_\_\_\_\_
- n** Gareth tends to keep himself to himself. He's a bit \_\_\_\_\_



## Choose the correct particle(s).

- take after:** look/act like a relative  
**take off:** 1) remove (clothes)  
 2) leave the ground (planes)  
**take up:** start (a hobby)  
**turn down:** 1) reject  
 2) reduce volume ( $\neq$  turn up)  
**turn off:** switch off ( $\neq$  turn on)  
**turn over:** move to a new page  
**turn up:** arrive/appear unexpectedly

- John took **off/up** his sweater because he was too hot.
- Can you turn **up/down** your music please, Sam? I can't hear the TV.
- Now turn **down/over** the page and look at Exercise 3, everyone.
- Fran turned **down/up** at the party at about 9 pm.
- Matt turned **off/down** the job because he found a better one.
- I take **after/over** my grandfather. We are both tall with green eyes.

**1** Source: Evans and Dooley (2013: 45)

Complete each conversation with one of the five words in the box.

Then match the phrasal verbs in the conversation to the verbs similar in meaning.

down off on out up

<b>a The project meeting</b>	
A: Okay, that's great news. Let's move.	to begin three new projects.
B: Now, just hold.	a minute, Sylvia.
A: Kim, I'm counting.	you to get us the Zurich contract.
B: But this is not the time to be taking	more work.
continue = _____ accept = _____	rely = _____ wait = _____
<b>b The troubleshooting meeting</b>	
A: Right. Have you managed to sort	the problem with our computers?
B: To be honest, we haven't really found	exactly what the problem is yet.
A: Well, can I just point	that it's now affecting everyone on the first floor?
B: Yes, I know. We're carrying	tests on the system now. Give us a couple of hours.
say = _____ discover = _____ do = _____	solve = _____
<b>c The union negotiation</b>	
A: The question is, will you agree to call	the strike?
B: Not if you're still planning to lay	a quarter of the workforce, no.
A: I'm afraid that's a decision we can't put	any longer.
B: Then, I'm sorry, we shall have to break	these negotiations.
lie = _____ end = _____ cancel = _____	postpone = _____
<b>d The marketing meeting</b>	
A: We really must fix	a meeting to discuss our pricing strategy
B: Our prices are fine. We're trying to build	market share. Otto Potts can wait
A: Yes, but our overheads have gone	nearly 20% over the last 18 months.
B: I know, but that's no reason to put	prices. We'll just lose customers.
use = _____ raise = _____ arrange = _____	develop = _____
<b>e The budget meeting</b>	
A: I'm afraid they've turned	our application for a large budget in-
B: That's because group members' gross	gress. So where are we supposed to make cuts?
A: We could start by cutting	the amount of time we wish in these meetings?
B: No, no, no.	cut back. We need to be prepared
reduce = _____ relax = _____	spect = _____ discuss = _____

**1** Source: Powell (2014: 24)

## TOPIC

## Leaving a company

## 6.3

There are many different reasons why employees leave a company. On the one hand, they may decide to leave themselves because they want to move to another job or retire. On the other hand, they may be forced to leave their job by the company.

## unfair dismissal

## N-UNCOUNT

If an employee claims **unfair dismissal**, they begin legal action against their employer in which they claim that they were dismissed from their job unfairly.

*They are claiming unfair dismissal at a tribunal.*

## fire

(fires, firing, fired)

## VERB

If your employers **fire** you, they tell you that you can no longer work for them.

*He has fired staff and cut costs, restoring profits.*

## give someone notice

## PHRASE

If an employer **gives** an employee **notice**, the employer tells the employee that he or she must leave his or her job within a fixed period of time.

*They were given 28 days' notice to leave their jobs.*

## hand in your notice

## PHRASE

If you **hand in your notice**, you tell your employer that you intend to leave your job soon within a fixed period of time.

*Two of the company's executives have handed in their notice.*

to hand in your notice  
to **give in your notice**

## dismissal

## N-UNCOUNT

## COLLOCATIONS

wrongful  
unfair  
instant  
constructive  
controversial

dismissal

## get the sack

## PHRASE

If someone **gets the sack**, they are told that they can no longer work for their employer. [BRIT]

*After four months I got the sack.*

## severance

## N-UNCOUNT

**Severance** is a sum of money that a company gives to its employees when it has to stop employing them.

*Workers will be given 50 days' notice and paid severance based on length of service.*

severance pay

severance pay is also called **severance pay**, **redundancy** or **redundancy pay**

## dismiss

(dismisses, dismissing, dismissed)

## VERB

When an employer **dismisses** an employee, the employer tells the employee that they are no longer needed to do the job they have been doing.

*If you think you have been unfairly dismissed, you can complain to an industrial tribunal.*

## sack

(sacks, sacking, sacked)

## VERB

If your employers **sack** you, they tell you that you can no longer work for them. [BRIT]

*Nine more staff were sacked this week.*

## give someone the sack

## PHRASE

If someone **is given the sack**, they are told that they can no longer work for their employer. [BRIT]

*The workers were given the sack last week.*

## redundant

## ADJ

If you are made **redundant**, your employer tells you to leave because your job is no longer necessary or because your employer cannot afford to keep paying you.

*The software giant is to make 270 staff redundant in the UK.*

**TASKS****Exercise 1**

Read the text and answer the questions that follow.

If an employer dismisses an employee, they make them leave their job. This is most likely because the employee has done something wrong. In many countries employers have to go through a set of legal procedures before firing someone: for example first warning, second warning, final warning, and then dismissal. On the other hand, if an employee is made redundant, their employer makes them leave their job because that role is no longer necessary or because the employer cannot afford to keep paying the employee. Redundancy terms are the conditions of redundancy, for example, the payment of a lump sum of money or keeping a pension.

1. If an employer dismisses someone, what do they make that person do?
2. Give two words from the opposite page that have the same meaning as 'dismiss'.
3. Why do employers make employees redundant?
4. What might be included in a company's redundancy terms?

**Exercise 2**

Which of the actions below are carried out by an employer and which by an employee? Complete the table.

	Employee	Employer
1. giving somebody notice to leave	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. handing in your notice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. giving in your notice	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. making someone redundant	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. receiving severance pay	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. getting the sack	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. giving someone the sack	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. claiming unfair dismissal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. firing someone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**K** Source: Capel et al. (2012: 62–3)

## APPENDIX 5.4

### Extracts from published materials

Lexis: Outdoor activities

See Word Bank pages 136-137

**1 Match the two parts of the sentences.**

> 1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 .....

- |                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| 1 The local guide ordered  | a the patient to do sport regularly.                 |
| 2 The science teacher told | b the children not to go out in the rain.            |
| 3 The doctor advised       | c drivers not to drive up the mountain in the snow.  |
| 4 The teacher warned       | d the hikers to keep to the path.                    |
| 5 The policemen warned     | e the visitors not to feed the animals.              |
| 6 The park ranger reminded | f the students to find out information about nature. |

**2 Report the following orders using the verbs in brackets.**

- >> 1 'Don't go out in the cold, John,' said mother. (tell)  
*Mother told John not to go out in the cold.*
- 2 'It's dangerous for you not to use sun cream in this heat,' said Mike. (warn)  
.....
- 3 'Leave your camera behind if you go into that area, Dave' said Lucy. (advise)  
.....
- 4 'Stop making so much noise, kids. You'll scare the animals!' said the ranger. (tell)  
.....
- 5 'Pass me the compass. I want to see where east is,' said John (ask)  
.....
- 6 'Remember to put your raincoat on before you go out,' said my grandfather. (remind)  
.....
- 7 'Don't pick those mushrooms. They're poisonous,' said Colin. (warn)  
.....

**3 Complete the sentences in reported speech making changes where needed.**

- >> 1 Mary often says to him: 'I don't like you spending your time on the sofa.'  
Mary often says to him that she *doesn't like him spending his time* ..... on the sofa.
- 2 I sometimes say to her: 'You look prettier when you get a suntan.'  
I sometimes say to her that .....
- 3 The professor said: 'Elephants are herbivores, just like cows.'  
The professor said that elephants .....
- 4 The scientist remarked: 'These data can't be correct!'  
The scientist remarked that ..... be correct.
- 5 Susan told Tim: 'I want to change the way we live and be more active.'  
Susan told Tim that ..... to change the way .....

**4 Complete the sentences with the correct form of the verbs in the box.**

- >> add remark claim recommend state
- 1 Jane told me the news and *added* ..... that she was happy about the new national park.
- 2 Micky ..... that it was very difficult to reach the top of the hill.
- 3 The Mayor ..... that the Council couldn't fund a new green area in the town centre.
- 4 The doctor ..... that I stopped eating fats and started jogging.
- 5 The boys ..... that they hadn't jumped over the fence surrounding the zoo.

## Exercises

## 1 Report the telephone conversation.

Nick is in Australia and Alan is in Britain.

Nick: What are you and Celia doing this winter? Are you taking a skiing holiday again?

Alan: No, we're staying at home this year. Where are you and Suzie going for your holiday? Are you going to visit us again?

They're telling their wives about the conversation.

Nick to Suzie: Alan is asking where <sup>1</sup> \_\_\_\_\_

He wants to know

2 \_\_\_\_\_

Alan to Celia: Nick is asking what <sup>3</sup> \_\_\_\_\_

He wants to know

4 \_\_\_\_\_

## 2 Write the Yes/No questions in reported speech.

You met your old school friend, Jim, last year.

Examples: ■ **Jim: Are you still at college?**

■ *Jim asked me whether I was still at college.*

■ **You: Do you remember Joe?**

■ *I asked him if he remembered Joe.*

1 Jim: Have you sold your terrible old car?

2 Jim: Do you still live with your parents?

3 Jim: Are you going to visit London soon?

4 You: Is there room for me to stay with you?

5 You: Can I have your phone number?

6 You: Did you meet your wife at college?

## 3 Write the WH- questions in reported speech.

Some British college students are talking to Jean-Pierre, a new French student.

Example: **'What subjects are you going to do?'**

*They asked him what subjects he was going to do.*

1 'What part of France do you come from?'

2 'How long have you been in Britain?'

3 'Why did you decide to come to college here?'

4 'How long are you going to stay?'

5 'Where are you living at the moment?'

## 4 Write the questions in reported speech.

A teacher at a language school in London is reporting some of the questions students asked him today.

Example: **A German student: 'How can I renew my passport?'**

*A German student asked me how to renew his passport.*

1 Two Swedish students: 'Do you know the way to the station?'

2 Some Turkish students: 'Can you help us find a flat?'

3 A Lebanese student: 'What's the best way to send a parcel home?'

4 Two Italian students: 'How long will it take us to travel to Edinburgh?'

**B** Source: Macfarlane (2013: 127)

## APPENDIX 5.5

### Extracts from published materials

6 Match the tenses in bold to the correct description.

- 1 George **has passed** his driving test.
- 2 I **sent** you a postcard on Saturday morning.
- 3 Jim **has caught** five fish this morning.
- 4 Shakespeare **wrote** some wonderful plays.
- 5 He always **went** to work by train.
- 6 Lisa is delighted because she **has just received** a bonus from her boss.
- 7 Ted **has only tried** Mexican food once.
- 8 Kate **stayed** in that hotel for two weeks.
- 9 Lisa **opened** her suitcase, **took out** her jacket and **put it on**.
- 10 I **have known** Alan since we were in playschool together.

- a an action which started in the past and continues up to the present
- b an action which started and finished in the past
- c an action which has recently finished and whose results are visible in the present
- d describing the actions of people who are dead
- e past actions which happened one immediately after the other
- f an action that happened at an unstated time in the past
- g an action that a person used to do in the past but does not do anymore
- h an action that was completed during a period of time that is not finished
- i an action that happened at a stated time in the past
- j a personal experience

A Source: Evans and Dooley (2015: 52)



Big Ben is the huge bell which is located in the clock tower of the Palace of Westminster in London. Construction of the tower started in 1843 after most of the Palace was destroyed in a fire in 1834. It was renamed the Elizabeth Tower in 2012 as a tribute to Queen Elizabeth II. The tower is photographed by millions of tourists every year and tours must be booked months in advance. It will always be considered a symbol of the United Kingdom.

Look at the picture and underline the *passive* forms. a) How do we form the *passive voice*?  
b) When do we use it? c) How do we introduce the agent in a *passive* sentence?

B Source: Evans and Dooley (2015: 98–9)

## APPENDIX 5.6

### Extracts from published materials

#### B Study the beginning of each polite question.

1. Match the beginnings with the endings.
2. ● 41 Listen and check.
3. Practise saying the questions.

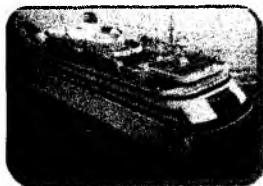
1. Can I		ask you something?
2. Could I		got a moment?
3. Could you		help me?
4. Have you	I	help you?
5. Shall I		like a drink?
6. Would you		like to drink?
7. What would you		make some coffee?

#### C Find a suitable reply to each question in Exercise

##### B. You can use some replies more than once.

Yes, please.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Coffee, please, with milk but no sugar.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Oh, I'd love some.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Yes, sure.	<input type="checkbox"/>
No, thanks. I'm not thirsty.	<input type="checkbox"/>

- 3 Use the prompts to ask and answer questions as in the example. You can use your own ideas.



- 1 have a week off? /go on a cruise  
 A: What would you do if you had a week off?  
 B: If I had a week off, I'd go on a cruise.  
 2 want to lose weight?/join a gym  
 3 find a purse in the street?/report to the police  
 4 miss your bus?/take a taxi  
 5 be rich?/travel all over the world  
 6 meet favourite actor?/ask for an autograph  
 7 see someone stealing your neighbour's car?/try to stop them

- 4 Put the verbs in brackets into the correct tense.

- 1 A: I'd like a cup of tea.  
 B: Well, if you ..... (wait) a moment, I ..... (make) one for you.  
 2 A: Where ..... (you/go) if you ..... (have) a week off?  
 B: Well, probably to Paris.  
 3 A: I need some help in the kitchen.  
 B: If you ..... (boil) the pasta, I ..... (make) the salad.  
 4 A: Should I wear the red dress or the blue one?  
 B: If I ..... (be) you, I ..... (wear) the red one.

- 5 A: Could you lend me some money?  
 B: If I ..... (have) my purse, I ..... (lend) you some but I left it at home.  
 6 A: He is going to watch a late show on TV.  
 B: If he ..... (go) to bed late, he ..... (not/be able) to get up in the morning.  
 7 A: Could you drive me to the supermarket?  
 B: I ..... (drive) you if (the car ..... (not/be) in the garage.  
 8 A: Will you come jogging with us?  
 B: I hurt my leg yesterday. If I ..... (go) jogging now, it ..... (not) get better.  
 9 A: If I ..... (have) a computer, I ..... (do) my homework faster.  
 B: You think so? I think that you ..... (spend) all your time playing games.  
 10 A: Is Jenny here yet?  
 B: No she isn't. If she ..... (not/come) soon, we ..... (leave) without her.

- 5 Find and correct the mistake in each sentence.

- 1 If I were you, I will try to work harder.  
 2 It she isn't too tired, she would read me a story.  
 3 If it rains tomorrow, we wouldn't go camping.  
 4 If I have golf clubs, I would play golf.  
 5 If computers didn't cost so much, we can get one.  
 6 If John had a car, he will give us a lift.  
 7 If Tony saves enough money, he would go on holiday.  
 8 If I were you, I will go to the doctor.

- 6 Complete the sentences about yourself.

- 1 If I could travel anywhere in the world, ...  
 2 If I could be someone else for one day, ...  
 3 If I met my favourite actor/actress, ...  
 4 If I saw someone in danger, ...  
 5 If I could live anywhere in the world, ...  
 6 If I could change one thing about the world, ...  
 7 If I could play the violin, ...  
 8 If I became an astronaut, ...  
 9 If I got lost in the woods, ...  
 10 If I was the headmaster, ...

**B** Source: Evans and Dooley (2010: 30–1)



## APPENDIX 5.7

### Evaluating (your) worksheets

<b>Visual appeal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the worksheet look attractive (e.g. sufficient space, appropriate visuals)?</li> </ul>
<b>Clarity</b> <i>Layout</i>  <i>Instructions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the layout clear (e.g., are examples separated from exercises, exercises numbered)?</li> <li>• If students are expected to write on the worksheet, is there sufficient space for their answers?</li> <li>• If the format is unfamiliar, will it be clear to students what they have to do?</li> </ul>
<b>Purpose</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does the worksheet focus on a genuine problem for students?</li> <li>• If the purpose is to provide practice, are there examples, an appropriate progression from controlled to less controlled exercises, and enough items?</li> <li>• If the purpose is testing, is sampling appropriate?</li> </ul>
<b>Organisation</b> <i>Examples</i>  <i>Sequencing</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If there are examples, do these adequately illustrate what is required?</li> <li>• Is the worksheet appropriately graded in terms of linguistic focus?</li> <li>• Is it graded in terms of demands on students, that is, does it allow for learners of different levels to achieve a measure of success?</li> </ul>
<b>Language and context</b> <i>Instructions</i>  <i>Language of examples</i>  <i>Student output</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are instructions economically expressed?</li> <li>• Is the language correct?</li> <li>• Is the language correct?</li> <li>• Is the language natural? Are contexts likely to be meaningful for students?</li> <li>• Do the exercises lead students to produce language which is correct?</li> <li>• Do the exercises lead students to produce language which is natural and likely to be meaningful for them?</li> </ul>
<b>Overall value</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How will completing the worksheet benefit students?</li> </ul>

## APPENDIX 5.8

### Lists of 'top tips'

#### GROUP A

1. Coherence.
2. Numbering.
3. Progressive tasks.
4. Application of skills.
5. Reasonable point size.
6. Purpose of worksheet.
7. Cater to early finishers.
8. Provide title for exercise.
9. Ensure exercises are linked.
10. Authentic and relevant tasks.
11. Give examples to provide scaffolding.
12. Allow differentiation within a worksheet.
13. Give clear instructions, i.e. short and simple sentences.
14. Ensure accuracy in grammatical terms and structure used.
15. Clear objectives, i.e. avoid testing too many skills at a go.
16. Design each exercise that shows progression from simple to difficult.
17. Provide white space for writing and drawing to make worksheet more appealing.
18. Use typographical devices to attract attention or separate exercise from example.
19. Clear organisation, i.e. order of exercises should be from simple to complex (e.g. open-ended).
20. Provide clear examples to illustrate what is expected (only to find the purpose of worksheets – whether test or practice).
21. Ensure that worksheet is meaningful for pupils and teachers.

#### GROUP B

1. Use typographic devices to attract attention or separate examples from exercise.
2. Use typographic devices (point size, italics or bold) to provide visual appeal and be appropriate to age of learners.
3. Provide title for the exercise to state the learning objective.
4. Design each exercise that shows progression from simple to difficult.
5. Ensure that exercises progress from familiar to unfamiliar – so that pupils can apply present schema to the unknown.
6. Ensure that the exercises are progressive. First, give exercises to create

- awareness; second, give fairly controlled exercises; and finally, give open-ended exercises for pupils to use language in context and creatively.
7. Give examples to provide scaffolding.
  8. Provide examples when the exercises are unfamiliar.
  9. Provide examples so that the pupils have a clear idea of what is expected of them.
  10. Number both exercises and items for ease of reference, checking and for clarity.
  11. Give instructions in short and succinct sentences.
  12. Be clear about lesson objectives to avoid testing of too many skills at a go.
  13. Ensure accuracy in grammatical terms used.
  14. Provide white space for writing and drawing.
  15. Provide enough space if substantial written response is expected.
  16. Make the worksheet more appealing by using appropriate graphics.
  17. Align pictures to the side for easy referencing.
  18. Ensure coherence: there must be a common connection, e.g. the same theme for the exercises given.
  19. Provide authentic assignments.
  20. Do not stick to 'I'; use other forms of pronouns.
  21. Contextualise the exercises: the context has to be familiar with the pupils.
  22. Allow for differentiation within a worksheet so that every pupil can have a sense of achievement.
  23. Allow for focus on form as well as function, i.e. it should alert pupils to the underlying forms and provide opportunities for regulated practice in addition to independent and creative expression.

## GROUP C

1. Relevance – as perceived by learners.
2. Alignment – relate to specific language outcomes.
3. Purpose of worksheet – practice or testing.
4. Example is necessary for unfamiliar format.
5. Provide a title so that the learning objective is made known to the learner.
6. Number the items for easy reference.
7. Progressive (both within the exercises and within the worksheets).
8. Clear instructions – instructions must be short using simple language.
9. Extension exercise for those who are able to complete the task assigned before the end of the stipulated time.
10. Variety of different forms.
11. The context must be authentic and relevant.
12. Localised – use local names.
13. Ensure the point size is relevant to the age of the learner.
14. Avoid testing too many skills within the same worksheet.

15. Use typographical devices to attract attention or to separate different exercises.
16. Provide reference notes.
17. To provide white space for writing and drawing and to make the worksheet look more appealing to students.
18. Do-able within given time.
19. Coherence.
20. Differentiated format.
21. Align pictures/graphics to the left for easy reference.
22. Visually appealing/attractive; more graphics for younger learners.
23. Allow for collaborative learning.
24. Acceptable level of challenge.
25. Error free.

## APPENDIX 6.1

### Extracts from published materials

# 17 NEWSPAPERS



#### Getting started

- 1 Why do people read newspapers?
- 2 How often do you read a newspaper?
- 3 What's your favourite newspaper?

A

#### Reading headlines



Read the headlines and choose what each article is about.

### US President to visit China

- a The US President visited China today.
- b The US President will visit China.

### Roadside bomb kills 14

- a 14 people were killed by a bomb.
- b 14 bombs exploded today, killing some people.

### E-reader revolution for Africa

- a There's been a big change in politics in Africa.
- b There's been a big change in education in Africa.

#### Language note: headlines

The grammar used in headlines is different from standard written English:

- Articles are not always used.
- A string of nouns may be used so you have to work out what the verb might be.
- The infinitive is used to refer to the future.

**B** Reading newspaper articles

One of the headlines from exercise A1 fits the article below. Read it very *quickly* then add the headline.

## Schools in developing countries try digital books

By Geoffrey A. Fowler & Nicholas Bariyo

It is time for a vocabulary lesson in Bernard Opio's sixth-form class at the Humble Primary School in Mukono, Uganda. One new word the students have already learned this year is 'e-reader'. Mr. Opio tells them to get out their e-readers. Within seconds, most of the students have a digital dictionary open on their screens.

<sup>10</sup> 'It took the kids just a few days to learn how to use **them**,' says Mr. Opio. 'Instead of just having 1,000 books, they have 10 times or 100 times **that**,' says David Risher, from the non-profit organization Worldreader that is trying out e-readers in some schools in Uganda and two other African countries.

<sup>19</sup> Mr Risher, 46, has raised about \$1.5 million for his two-year-old program, which has given 1,100 e-readers and 180,000 e-books to kids and teachers in Ghana, Kenya, and Uganda. Early results are good, says Mr Risher – in Worldreader's first test, they found that primary-school students who got e-readers improved **their** reading on tests from about 13% to 16%.

<sup>29</sup> E-readers have some advantages. They are light and hard-wearing, and can last weeks on a single charge. With built-in Internet connections, **they** are like big

mobile phones. And it is easy to publish the work of local authors digitally on e-readers. Before, Humble School's library had books sent from America. 'The first books we got were about the US, with kids playing in ice, which our children would not understand,' says Ester Nabwire, the school's head teacher. 'With the e-readers, there are African authors, African names which are exciting the kids.'

<sup>44</sup> E-readers are still quite expensive. Getting an e-book into the hands of one of Worldreader's kids costs about \$5 per title. **That** includes the \$100 price of the e-reader, a case, and other costs. Worldreader gets e-books that are available for free or given by publishers, or by digitally publishing work by local authors.

<sup>53</sup> For kids who start to love reading, there is another advantage: a very large library. 'I can get every book I want to read very quickly,' says Eperence Uwera, a 13-year-old Rwandan refugee at the Humble School. 'I would love to go [home] with the e-reader during the holidays.'

Article adapted from *The Wall Street Journal*

**A** Source: Osborn (2013: 72–3)

- 1 In 2011, Kylie Dunn, a writer from Australia, decided to shake up her life. Every month for a year, she decided to try two new activities. In February 2012, for example, one of her **goals** was to eat less meat for 30 days. Later, she wrote a letter to a friend or relative every day for a month. In just 12 months, she changed her life in more than 20 different ways.



### A YEAR OF CHANGE

- 2 Dunn was **inspired** to try her **project** after watching a TED Talk by Matt Cutts. To get ideas for activities, she watched hundreds of other TED Talks. Her first activity, in November 2011, was inspired by Jessi Arrington's talk "Wear Nothing New." Dunn tried each activity for 30 days, and then wrote about her **experiences** in a blog called "My Year of TED."
- 3 Finally, when her project was over, Dunn talked about her experiences at a TEDx conference in Hobart, Australia. Dunn's talk in January 2014

inspired other people to change their **attitudes** and their lives. Before her project, Dunn says, she didn't think she had the courage to change her life. The project showed her she had more strength than she thought.

### A MILLION STORIES

- 4 "People who watch TED Talks . . . end up shifting their view of the future," says Chris Anderson, the curator of TED. He says that TED's goal isn't to make a single big change. TED's **impact** is the millions of stories of small changes. **Individual** changes like Kylie Dunn's are happening every day. Together, these changes have the power to change the future in a **positive** way. As Anderson explains, "Instead of thinking of [the future] as an unstoppable force . . . [people can] play a part in shaping it."

**courage:** *n.* a willingness to do something that is difficult or dangerous

**shifting:** *v.* moving, changing

**view:** *n.* an opinion or way of thinking about something

**curator:** *n.* a person who selects and manages a collection of art, videos, etc.

## What is TED?

TED has a simple goal: to spread great ideas. Every year, hundreds of presenters share ideas at TED events around the world. Millions of people watch TED Talks online. The talks inspire many people to change their attitudes and their lives.

### SPREADING IDEAS WORLDWIDE



Over **10,000** TEDx events in **167** countries



Over **1,800** TEDTALKS recorded



TEDTALKS translated into **105** languages



Over **1,000,000,000** views of TEDTALKS at TED.com

**GETTING MEANING FROM CONTEXT****CRITICAL THINKING**

A. After watching a TED Talk, Kylie Dunn says she was inspired to “shake up her life.” What did she mean by this? Choose the best answer.

- She decided to move to a different country.
- She decided to make changes in her life.
- She decided to write a book about life changes.

B. Can you think of another person who decided to “shake up their life”? Who or what inspired that person?

---



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---



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1. Interpreting. Chris Anderson says that many people think the future is “an unstoppable force.” What do you think he means? Choose the best answer.

- People believe the future is too far away.
- People think they can’t change the future.
- People feel excited about the future.

2. Reflecting. Who or what has inspired you to make a change in your life? What change(s) did you make?

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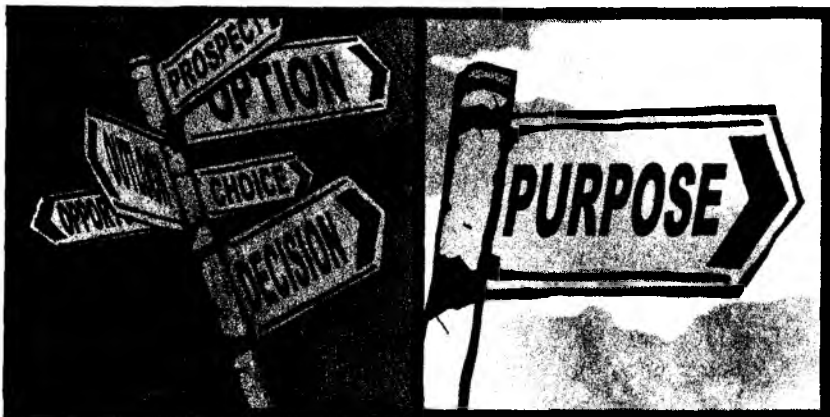
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**EXPLORE MORE**

Read Kylie Dunn’s “My Year of TED” blog at [blog.TED.com](http://blog.TED.com). What other changes did she make? Share what you learned with the class.



Artwork by Kylie Dunn’s brother, Matthew Dunn, to accompany one of her challenges. Dunn spent 30 days trying to figure out what she wanted to do with her life.

**B** Source: Longshaw and Blass (2015: 12, 15)



The next three texts are not taken from coursebooks. If you find them interesting, you may wish to devise accompanying exercises/activities. Some of the vocabulary, in C and D particularly, may be unfamiliar to students. You could (1) provide a gloss alongside the line of the text; (2) ask multiple choice questions designed to aid rather than test (e.g. 'What do you think X could mean here? (a) . . . (b) . . . (c) . . .'); or (3) assign specific words to groups and ask students to select an appropriate meaning in a monolingual dictionary and then explain the words to the rest of the class.

I was introduced to this poem by a teacher in Singapore. The topic lends itself to discussion of TV-watching or, by extension, playing video games. The rhyming can be used as the basis for a gap-filling task.

### **The sad story of Percy, the TV addict**

J. G. Goodacre

Young Percy's parents could not get  
 Their son to leave the TV set.  
 In fact, it was a common sight  
 From five o'clock till late at night  
 To see young Percival McQueen  
 Before the television screen.

He watched the sports, the plays, the news,  
 The Westerns and the interviews.  
 The programmes might be good or bad,  
 They might be comical or sad;  
 He watched them all the evening through.  
 (They say he watched the test card too.)

At half-past five the little chap  
 Would eat his supper on his lap;  
 But what he ate he did not know –  
 His eyes were on the children's show!  
 All table manners he forgot –  
 It didn't worry him a jot.

And then one night, I'm sad to tell,  
 Young Percival was heard to yell:  
 'I cannot watch it any more,  
 My eyes are feeling strange and sore!  
 And when he got up from his chair,  
 His eyes were green and red . . . and square!

Poor Percy had to pay the price  
 For disregarding good advice.

For fear that you might share his fate,  
 You must learn to discriminate.  
 Don't be like Percival McQueen –  
 An addict of the TV screen.

© Source: Buys and Scheffler (1994)

This has always been one of my favourite poems. I recently observed a class in which a teacher introduced it via a coloured reproduction of Vincent van Gogh's painting *The Starry Night*, which seemed to me an inspired juxtaposition. The poem has been set to music by a number of artists, and Van Gogh's painting and genius are the subject of Don McLean's song 'Vincent (Starry, Starry Night)'.

### **Aedh wishes for the cloths of heaven**

W. B. Yeats (1865–1939)

Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths,  
 Enwrought with golden and silver light,  
 The blue and the dim and the dark cloths  
 Of night and light and the half light,  
 I would spread the cloths under your feet:  
 But I, being poor, have only my dreams;  
 I have spread my dreams under your feet;  
 Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

© Source: Yeats (1899)

This poem by a Canadian poet, was included in a workshop conducted in 2011 by Peter Hamilton of the British Council in Singapore. We did not have time to discuss it, but I would have liked to. One analysis of the poem can be found at <[http://resource2.rockyview.ab.ca/ssela101/related\\_reads/warren\\_pryor.pdf](http://resource2.rockyview.ab.ca/ssela101/related_reads/warren_pryor.pdf)>

### **Warren Pryor**

Alden Nowlan (1933–83)

When every pencil meant a sacrifice  
 his parents boarded him at school in town,  
 slaving to free him from the stony fields,  
 the meagre acreage that bore them down.

They blushed with pride when, at his graduation,  
 they watched him picking up the slender scroll,

his passport from the years of brutal toil  
and lonely patience in a barren hole.

When he went in the Bank their cups ran over.  
They marvelled how he wore a milk-white shirt  
work days and jeans on Sundays. He was saved  
from their thistle-strewn farm and its red dirt.

And he said nothing. Hard and serious  
like a young bear inside his teller's cage,  
his axe-hewn hands upon the paper bills  
aching with empty strength and throttled rage.

**E** Source: Nowlan (1961)

## APPENDIX 7.1

### Text-based lesson plan

#### The planning stages

1. Choose your text: a text or picture in a coursebook or any other material you feel will interest your students.
2. Draw and label a nine-cell 'Ideas Grid' like the one illustrated. Give yourself plenty of space – an A4 sheet rather than the back of an envelope.
3. Brainstorm ways in which the material could be used to develop your students' competence in as many of the cell areas as possible, and write the ideas in the appropriate cell. Be specific, but don't spend time thinking about details. The idea is to generate as many ideas as possible in a short time – including different ideas for the same cell.

Listening gist: what speaker says about stereotypes	Phonology stressed syllables: e.g. image, secretary, prejudice
Speaking personal reactions to speaker's ideas (could be written instead)	Grammar ? the difficulty's = ? the secretary's = ?
Reading	Vocabulary stereotypes (opener) vocabulary building (e.g. parts of the body)
Writing transcribing tape spelling, punct. sentence formation	Discourse Spoken utterances → written discourse
Other (e.g. culture, study skills, etc.) Clues to the speaker's age, level of education, etc. Using recordings for self-study	

4. Select the ideas that you feel will be most relevant for the specific group of learners you have in mind. Don't discard the others. They may come in useful later (see Step 9, below).
5. Order the ideas you have selected in a rough sequence, and use this as the basis for a lesson plan.

### Example of a plan based on the text and using ideas generated by the grid

1. Put key word on board: STEREOTYPES. Elicit associations, anecdotes, etc.
2. Set listening task (listening for gist): 'What does the speaker say about stereotypes?'
3. Play tape once and elicit answers. Use these to build up on board as much of the text as possible.
4. Ask students to work individually to transcribe extract, then play it once more, stopping at natural pauses.
5. Get individuals to come up to the board and write up information chunks of 5-8 words each. Other students check and offer suggestions for improvement. Replay tape to check final version.
6. Ask students to mark on their own (revised) transcriptions the stressed syllables in the following items without listening to the tape again:

*difficulty, stereotypes, secretary, image, breadwinner, prejudice, obviously, opportunities*

7. Comparison of answers (students read aloud). Encourage checking of any disputed answers by playing recording again.
8. Elicit conclusions concerning speaker: e.g. sex, age, educational background. Draw attention to vague fillers ('like', 'sort of') and regional pronunciation features if these are not mentioned.

Note: these eight steps do not constitute eight separate activities. Up to this stage, the plan really consists of five activities. Steps 2/3, 4/5 and 6/7 are all two-stage activities, each of which corresponds to only one of the cells in the grid (listening, writing - in the form of 'dictation' and therefore practising only spelling, and phonology). Step 1 practises speaking and Step 8 falls within the 'other' cell.

At this point in the lesson sequence, one possibility would be plenary discussion of the speaker's ideas. On the grounds that the practice would be more intensive (and therefore probably more useful) if done in pairs or small groups, this is offered as one of a number of 'free-choice activities' at Step 9.

9. Encourage the formation of pairs/small groups for work on one of the following tasks:
- Split the text into information chunks. Produce a correct written sentence for each. Add conjunctions as necessary. [rewriting/grammar/discourse]
  - Respond to the views expressed by the speaker. Make notes on what you would say. Then find a partner to practise with. [speaking]
  - Choose one of the categories below and write down as many English words in that category as you can:

OCCUPATIONS	PARTS OF THE BODY	FAMILY ROLES
secretary	knee	breadwinner ( <i>earns</i> money)

Can you think of any more words in these categories in your own language? Find out the English equivalents. [vocabulary/study skills]

For social as well as pedagogic reasons, the final stage in the lesson was planned as a whole-class activity.

10. Ask: 'If you had a suitable recording, which of the things that we've done today could you do on your own?'

Source: McGrath (1992)

## APPENDIX 7.2

### Book review

#### 3.6 Book review

CLASSIFICATION	R.RE/1 = Reading. Review writing/1
LEVEL	Intermediate
AGE	Young adult/adult
ACTIVITY TYPE	Reading and review writing
AIM	To encourage reflection on what has been read and to provide a record of reading achieved. To practise evaluative writing.
PREPARATION	Read a novel or short story that interests you.
INSTRUCTIONS	Use the review sheet below as a guide to writing a review of what you have read. For each novel or short story you read, complete one of these review sheets so that you build up a record of what you have read in English.

#### REVIEW SHEET

Title: .....

Author: .....

Publisher: .....

Category: \*Tick one)

Romance  Historical

Horror  Science fiction

Crime  Other (describe)

Spy

The most important characters: .....

.....

Summary of the story: .....

.....

.....

What I liked: .....

.....

.....

What I disliked: .....

.....

.....

I do/do not recommend this book: .....

.....

.....

#### FOLLOW-UP

File your review alphabetically by the title of the book in the 'review file' so that other students can read it. Look at other reviews in the file. You may find a review of a book you would like to read.

Photocopiable © Oxford University Press

## APPENDIX 7.3

### Standard exercise

#### BEFORE VIEWING

What do you think will be in the news today?

#### WHILE VIEWING

1. How many headlines are there today?
2. Number the topics covered by the news items.

- |                          |                      |
|--------------------------|----------------------|
| — Politics: home         | — The Arts           |
| — Politics: abroad       | — Sport and Leisure  |
| — Crime                  | — Gossip             |
| — Disaster/accidents     | — Public information |
| — Natural world          | — Human interest     |
| — Science and technology | — Weather            |

3. Write in the appropriate keywords from the news items.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Who						
What						
Where						
When						

4. With your partner discuss the programme. Tell about the news item you found most interesting. Does your partner agree with you? What do you think will happen?

#### EXTENSION

Your group is now going to prepare a news programme. Choose a producer to coordinate the programme and also to introduce each item.

The rest of the group will form pairs and together prepare an item. One of you is the reporter and the other the person in the news.

You must be ready for the start of the programme, so work quickly!



## APPENDIX 7.4

### Standard exercise example

The worksheet below is based on a text about education in the UK (the text itself is not reproduced).

#### BEFORE YOU READ

1. What do you think the title will tell you?  
Look at the title, introduction, captions and headings.  
How is the text organised? Does it have several sections?  
Where does the text come from? Do you know or can you guess?
2. What do you already know about this subject? Make a list.
3. What would you like to know? Write your questions.

#### READ THE TEXT QUICKLY

##### DO NOT STOP AT WORDS OR SENTENCES YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND

4. Can you find the answers to any of your questions?
5. What is the text about?  
Which of these topics are mentioned? Add others not listed below.

state education	learning problems
private education	teaching methods
primary school	curriculum
secondary school	discipline
college/university	particular people
examinations	particular issues
.....	.....

#### READ THE TEXT AGAIN

6. Do you understand the main points?  
For each of the topics you have ticked, write two or three words to remind you of the main points.
7. Are there many words you don't understand?  
Write down up to six new words which you think are important.  
Can you guess their meanings? Can you ask someone?  
Do you want to look them up in a dictionary now or later?
8. What is the writer's purpose? Who is he/she writing for?  
Does the writer give an opinion as well as giving information?  
If so, where in the text?  
What kind of people might read this text?

#### AFTER READING

9. What is your opinion?  
What did you learn that you did not know before?  
What did you find most interesting?  
What happens in your country? What do you think about this?
10. Did you find any parts of the text difficult?  
What made it difficult for you?  
lack of knowledge about people, places or ideas mentioned  
vocabulary - too many new words  
grammar - sentences too long or complicated  
organisation - too long, confusing

## APPENDIX 7.5

### Self-access tasks

#### 3.4 Superman versus smoking

<u>CLASSIFICATION</u>	R.IT/1 = Reading, Information transfer/1
<u>LEVEL</u>	Intermediate
<u>AGE</u>	Adolescent/young adult
<u>ACTIVITY TYPE</u>	Information transfer
<u>AIM</u>	To extract and recognize relevant information from a reading text.
<u>PREPARATION</u>	Think about the problem of children smoking. How can they be persuaded not to start? Do you think the problem is a serious one? Make a list of three ways in which children could be prevented from trying cigarettes.
<u>INSTRUCTIONS</u>	Read the following text and use the information to complete the questionnaire below. Write the information on a separate piece of paper. Do not write on this card.

#### TASK SHEET



Over 100,000 primary school children wrote supporting Superman in his fight against smoking during the first four weeks of the Health Education Council's recent £500,000 campaign.

The campaign, which began just after Christmas, uses the Superman character to persuade 7- to 11-year-olds that they should 'crush the evil Nick O'Teen' and never say yes to a cigarette.

Most of the budget has been spent on producing and showing a cartoon television commercial, which features Superman in conflict with the arch-enemy Nick O'Teen.

The campaign, which is seen as a long-term project, is based on careful research. This showed that one in three adult smokers started before they were nine and that 80 per cent of children who smoke regularly grow up to be smokers. For boys, the average age for starting to smoke was found to be 9.7 years while for girls, it was 11.2 years.

*continued overleaf*

## QUESTIONNAIRE

Country: <u>Britain</u>	Intended public (age, sex . . .)
Budget: -----	Media used -- television <input type="checkbox"/>
Opening date: -----	-- radio <input type="checkbox"/>
Closing date: -----	-- posters <input type="checkbox"/>
	-- magazines/comics/ newspapers <input type="checkbox"/>
	-- other <input type="checkbox"/>
Estimated success -- high <input type="checkbox"/>	Slogans -----
-- average <input type="checkbox"/>	
-- low <input type="checkbox"/>	

## KEY

Country <u>Britain</u>	Intended public (age, sex . . .) <sup>boys + girls</sup> <u>aged 7-11</u>
Budget: <u>£500,000</u>	Media used -- television <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Opening date: <u>December</u>	-- radio <input type="checkbox"/>
Closing date: <u>? (long term)</u>	-- posters <input type="checkbox"/>
	-- magazines/comics/ newspapers <input type="checkbox"/>
	-- other <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Estimated success -- high <input type="checkbox"/>	Slogans <u>'Crush the evil NICK O' TEEN'</u>
-- average <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<u>'Never say YES to a cigarette'</u>
-- low <input type="checkbox"/>	<u>(over 100,000 children wrote)</u>

## Comments to the teacher

1 Almost any informative text and some fictional ones can be reorganized in this way. Look carefully at the information contained in the text and sort the information into categories which can then be represented in schematic, tabular form.

2 As a variation, students can use the information contained in a text to draw or complete a diagram, a chart, a map, a plan, etc.

## 4.10 Wartime agriculture

<u>CLASSIFICATION</u>	W.S.C/1 = Writing. Sentence combining/1
<u>LEVEL</u>	Upper intermediate to Advanced
<u>AGE</u>	Adult
<u>ACTIVITY TYPE</u>	Sentence combining
<u>AIM</u>	To practise text organization by combining individual sentences in such a way that they form a logical connected text.
<u>PREPARATION</u>	Find a short text and read it carefully. Find as many different ways as you can by which connecting words link the sentences together to form a piece of continuous writing. Words which act as connectors in this way are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— All words which would not give you any information if they stood by themselves without the text, e.g. pronouns such as <i>he, they</i>; relative pronouns such as <i>who, which, that</i>; demonstrative pronouns such as <i>this, that</i>; words which point to a time or place such as <i>now, here, there</i>, etc.</li> <li>— Words which show the logical relationship between one part of the text and another such as <i>and, however, in spite of that</i>, etc.</li> </ul>

INSTRUCTIONS Using appropriate connecting words, link the sentences below together to make a connected text. Although there is a model text in the key, there is not just one right answer and you should combine the sentences in the best way you can. You may choose to combine two or more sentences together. The first two sentences have been linked in one possible way as an example.

- TASK SHEET
- 1 Farming is the oldest industry of all.
  - 2 Farming enjoyed a brief period of prosperity during the First World War.
  - 3 There were submarine boat attacks on merchant shipping.
  - 4 Britain imported about two-thirds of its food.
  - 5 It was essential to increase home food production.
  - 6 The Government encouraged the ploughing-up of grasslands.
  - 7 The reason for the ploughing-up of grasslands was to grow more cereals.
  - 8 The Government gained the co-operation of farmers in 1917.
  - 9 The farmers co-operated because the Government gave them guaranteed prices in 1917.
  - 10 In 1917 agricultural workers were given a reasonable minimum wage.
  - 11 The wheat harvest was increased by sixty per cent.
  - 12 There was a large rise in the production of potatoes, barley, and oats.

EXAMPLE Farming, the oldest industry of all, enjoyed a brief period of prosperity during the First World War. (Sentences 1 & 2)

KEY **Original text**  
 Farming, the oldest industry of all, enjoyed a brief period of prosperity during the First World War. Submarine boat attacks on merchant shipping, at a time when Britain imported about two-thirds of its food, made it essential to increase home food production. The Government encouraged the ploughing-up of grassland in order to grow more cereals, and gained the co-operation of farmers by giving them guaranteed prices in 1917. In the same year, agricultural workers were given a reasonable minimum wage. The wheat harvest was increased by sixty per cent, and there was a large rise in the production of potatoes, barley, and oats.

Adapted from *Britain since 1700* by R J Cootes & I. E Snellgrove.

## APPENDIX 8.1

### Towards learner-based teaching

#### 1.5 Character building

Elementary

20–30 minutes

Simple present

- 1 Draw a circle on the board.
- 2 Tell the learners they are going to build this into a character.
- 3 Ask them first of all whether it's a man or a woman.
- 4 Continue to ask questions to build up the physical representation on the board. For example, *Does he have a moustache? Is he fat? Does she have a big nose?*

5 Continue to ask questions (but without adding to the drawing) about where the person lives, their job, interests, family, and so on, and point out any apparent contradictions, for example, *Well, if he's so interested in sport, how come he's fat? She's only 28 and she's got ten children?*

Reverse the roles. Now learners ask you questions enabling you to build up a character. Ask a student to do the drawing on the blackboard so you have an opportunity to introduce or revise comparisons, for example, *No, he's not that tall, or Her hair's longer than that.*

The drawing on the board helps to suggest a character and serves as the basis for the subsequent work. As learners come up with suggestions, the pace increases and the learners themselves point out contradictions and suggest alternatives.

### 5.3 My story?

- LEVEL Lower-intermediate and above
- TIME 45-60 minutes
- LANGUAGE Giving the gist
- PROCEDURE
- 1 Learners recall something really exciting that has happened to them or somebody in their family, or a particularly happy moment in their lives.
  - 2 They describe this event in writing, in their own language, in a specified number of words. The stories should be written in a dramatic and gripping way.
  - 3 Redistribute the texts and give each student five minutes to read the story and memorize it.
  - 4 Collect the texts and ask each student to write in English the story they have just read, trying to preserve the character and drama of the original. You can make the original versions available on request for a short time, but the learners should not have them in front of them all the time.
  - 5 Display all the stories. Learners mill around, read the stories, and look for their own.
  - 6 Give out the native-language versions at random and ask learners to pair the originals with the translations.
  - 7 Translators take the original version and their own translation and underline, in the original, phrases or words which they did not know, or would not know, how to translate. Discuss these with the whole class.

#### SAMPLE PRODUCT

Mark is a doctor and works in the hospital. A few days ago, he was involved in  
~~installing~~ <sup>instructed the installation of</sup> a special kind of telephone in his hospital. It was connected with George  
 Bush's visit to Gdańsk. Using this telephone it was possible to get <sup>the</sup> connection to  
 Washington in 3 seconds by satellite. This telephone was <sup>installed</sup> by a 16-year-old boy,  
 who had a few technical problems, because of differences between Polish and  
 American standards.

**B**

Source: Campbell and Kryszewska (1992)

## 1.10 My grammar problem

<u>LEVEL</u>	Lower-intermediate and above
<u>TIME</u>	45-60 minutes
<u>LANGUAGE</u>	Learners' problems
<u>PROCEDURE</u>	<p>1 Ask each student to identify a grammar problem they have or think they have. To make the task easier tell the learners they may browse through their exercise books and recent homework.</p> <p>2 Check that every student has got at least one problem.</p> <p>3 Ask learners to mill around to see if they can find anyone with a similar problem or problems. The idea is that they should form pairs with related grammar problems. For example, various conditionals and mixed conditionals could pair up, or reported statements and questions, or passive and 'have something done' constructions.</p> <p>4 Ask each pair to write down their problem on a piece of paper, for example 'conditionals'. They should write the grammatical term and also one example sentence. The problems are then displayed.</p> <p>5 Each pair then chooses from this selection a problem they think they understand—a different problem for each pair.</p> <p>6 Using reference books, grammar books, and the teacher, they prepare an explanation or mini-lecture on the problem. The teacher can answer specific questions but should not offer a complete explanation of the problem.</p> <p>7 Each pair presents their lecture to the whole class. Others may challenge or ask for clarification. If the students cannot agree, or if the explanations are inaccurate or incomplete, add to or amend what they have said.</p>
<u>VARIATION 1</u>	If it is a large class, instead of forming pairs at stage 3, form groups of three or four, so that there will be fewer presentations in the last stage.
<u>VARIATION 2</u>	For stage 7 split the pairs and ask the learners to form two big circles. Working clockwise, learners present their lecture to their neighbour, who passes it on. The activity ends when the explanations come full circle and the originator sees if the lecture has been simplified too much or misunderstood. If so, they may have to explain their reservations to their circle.
<u>VARIATION 3</u>	After stage 3 ask each pair or group to write a sentence containing the problem. They write the sentence in the middle of a sheet of paper. Redistribute the sheets. Another pair then has to write a short story, the central part of which is the problem sentence. Remove the problem sentence by cutting it out or erasing it. The stories circulate and each pair has to try to reconstruct the missing sentence. The stories, the original problem sentence, and the suggested sentences are displayed. Discuss the outcome with the class.
<u>VARIATION 4</u>	If students cannot find partners in stage 3, they should form pairs with any other student and try to incorporate both the problems in one sentence.

C

Source: Campbell and Kryszewska (1992).

## 3.3

## LEVEL

Lower  
intermediate --

## TIME

60 minutes

## MATERIALS

One piece of paper,  
about A4 size, per  
student

## NUMBERS

At least 2 groups of  
about 6 per group

## GROUP CHAIN STORIES

## Procedure

- 1 Put groups round a table, each student with a piece of A4 paper and a pen.
- 2 Each group decides on the first line of a story. Encourage them to make this as open as possible, as in Stage 2 of the previous activity.
- 3 Everybody in the group writes this first line at the top of their piece of paper. Then individually they add the next sentence. The papers are then passed round to the person on the left. Each person then writes the sentence to follow the previous one on their new paper. This continues until the pages get back to where they began so that the first and last sentences of the stories are written by the same person.
- 4 Everybody checks their story for mistakes or improvements. If they want to change or correct anything they must consult the student who wrote it before doing so. If necessary they can ask you to arbitrate or advise. Check as many as possible yourself.
- 5 In their groups they each read out their final versions and vote on the one they want to present to the other group(s). I always check at least this one myself.
- 6 They rehearse their presentations. I use the word 'present' the story to the rest of the class in my instructions as it is open to a wide interpretation. Different groups will choose different formats, e.g. each person reads the line they wrote: one person narrates while the others mime: the group act out the story (with or without a narrator). I always suggest that as many of them should be involved as possible. In practice, I have usually found that they all take part, but that is their choice.

## FOLLOW-ONS

The same as for Mutual Dictation Stories, Activity 3.2

## NOTES

- a Some of the best role plays I have seen have resulted from this activity. Even the more inhibited students seem happy and relaxed performing materials that they have been partially, but not wholly, responsible for. On one notable occasion the sketches that evolved were later performed in an end-of-course revue, totally unprompted by me.
- b Another bonus of a group chain story is that in Stage 5 everybody listens to every story enthusiastically. We all have an egocentric streak which motivates us to listen to find out what happened to our contributions.

## VARIATIONS

- 1 The technique could be used to generate dialogues.
- 2 Business or ESP application Students could focus on their particular area of interest, e.g. the opening line could be 'There are a number of stages involved in launching a new product'.
- 3 Teacher training application Teachers could focus on a particular teaching point, e.g. they could choose to write about different ways of using stories in the classroom.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I first saw Stages 1-3 of this activity done by Roger Woodham on a training workshop in Poland.



Source: Deller (1990)



## APPENDIX 9.1

### Worksheet (Jolly and Bolitho)

Version 1

#### HYPOTHETICAL MEANING: WORKSHEET

##### STEP ONE

a) Fact or hypothesis? Tick the right box for each statement

- 1 I'm pleased that you've finished the work
- 2 I wish you would finish the work
- 3 It's time you finished the work
- 4 I wish you had finished the work
- 5 If only you had finished the work
- 6 I see that you've finished the work
- 7 If you had more time you would soon finish the work
- 8 I'm surprised that you've finished the work

FACT	HYPOTHESIS

b) Now underline the verb forms of 'finish' in each sentence. What do the facts have in common? What do the hypotheses have in common? What is the paradox about some of these verb forms?

Here are some more examples, from the press, to help you with the answers to these questions.

- 1 It's time the Americans substituted action for words.
- 2 If I were the Prime Minister I'd think hard before trying to impose Conservative policies in Scotland.
- 3 Many Alliance politicians wish the parties had gone into the election united under one leader.
- 4 Economic experts are puzzled to see that the pound has not risen on world markets.
- 5 If only England had a player of Maradona's calibre.

##### STEP TWO

There is an idea 'behind' many of these sentences with hypothetical meaning. Look at these examples:

It's *time* you had your hair cut. (It's too long)  
I wish my brother were here with me. (But he isn't)  
If only I had worked harder. (But I didn't)

a) Now provide the ideas behind each of these statements.

- 1 I wish you didn't smoke so heavily. ( )
- 2 It's time we went home. ( )
- 3 Just suppose you had dropped the bottle. ( )
- 4 If only you had listened to your mother. ( )
- 5 I'd have bought the car if it hadn't been yellow. ( )
- 6 It's high time you got rid of that old jacket. ( )
- 7 If I were you I'd catch the early train. ( )
- 8 He looked as though he'd seen a ghost. ( )

Which of the above examples expresses (a) regret?  
(b) advice?  
(c) strong suggestion?  
(d) a wish?  
(e) reproach?

# Tasks: Keys and Commentaries

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## Chapter 2

### Task 2.4

The rationale for the criteria included in the checklist is given below. Additional criteria that you may have discussed and which may be important in particular contexts are italicised.

#### Practical considerations

In the sample checklist, only three items are included under this heading. Two of these are linked by the notion of availability. Although the guaranteed continuing availability of books may pose problems only in some countries, in relation to new publications the availability of specific components (teacher's book or audio material, for example) is of concern to everyone, and the smooth progression of students from one level to another is often dependent on the existence of further books within the same series. *Publisher reliability* may therefore be an issue. Where there is a problem with only one level within a series, it is relevant to ask whether the new choice can be *easily integrated* with other books in use. Where courses consist of multiple components, *cost* is an important consideration, and *durability* (especially where books form part of an institution's store or are handed on from student to student) can also be a factor.

#### Support for teaching and learning

The minimum requirement in terms of published materials is a student's book. This may or may not contain progress tests. From a teacher's point of view, life is easier if it does and some textbook packages now contain 'customisable' tests. Similarly, the provision of a teacher's book, recordings, and a student's workbook or photocopiable worksheets containing additional exercises all reduce pressure on the teacher. Learners should also be able to use the material for self-directed study, and reference sections containing, for instance, grammar explanations and examples, verb

lists, word lists showing pronunciation (and in the case of single-language editions, bilingual glossaries), online practice material and advice on how to learn can all support students' out-of-class learning. Additional categories under this heading might include (1) *format of teacher's book* (there is convenience in a teacher's book which combines learner materials – interleaved or in reduced format – and teacher's notes); (2) *print size* (young learners find it easier to deal with a larger print size); and – in well-resourced contexts – such add-ons as (3) *video* or *CD-ROM*. Teachers in some contexts might also welcome materials that convey (4) *information about life and institutions in the English-speaking world*.

Some evaluators may feel that criteria listed under this heading are desirable rather than essential. My own view is that while teachers can cope if they have to operate with just a student's book, especially if they see this as a resource rather than the course, and while learners do learn from materials that are less than comprehensive in the support they offer, there is every reason to reject such materials if something better is available; and normally something better will be available.

### Context relevance

From a pedagogic perspective, this is the most important of the priority areas. There needs to be a reasonably good fit between the material, the learners (age, level, cultural background – including sophistication) and the external requirements (official syllabus, public examinations) and constraints under which teaching takes place (number and length of lessons per week/length of course, course aims, classroom facilities). If not, the teacher will face a good deal of extra work (selecting what is appropriate, cutting out or adapting what is not, and supplementing as necessary). There may also be pressure, from learners and others, to justify the choice of the original material – and the decision not to use certain sections. We can all do without these kinds of pressure. Some evaluators might therefore wish to ascertain whether *the authors* have first-hand professional knowledge of the context (country, institutional type, teaching environment, learner type) for which the materials are being considered.

For some years now there has been a tendency for coursebooks produced in Europe and North America to contain integrated recorded materials (e.g. recordings with listening tasks in the student's book). This makes certain assumptions: that the recordings will be available, that the teacher has access to the necessary hardware, that the acoustics in the classroom will be satisfactory, and that there is a reliable electricity supply. If the recordings are fully integrated but any of the above conditions cannot be met, it may be wise to look for other materials.

As suggested in Chapter 1, it is also worth trying to discover whether the materials have been piloted or previously used in circumstances similar to those for which they are being assessed and, if so, with what effect. This will give a clue to whether the material can be easily used by the teachers concerned. The publisher's representative or local bookshop should be able to supply information on piloting and institutions where the materials have been used.

## Likely appeal to learners

The relationship between motivation and learning hardly needs stating. It is logical, therefore, that we consider the likely appeal to students of the appearance of the materials (clarity of layout, visuals) and their content (choice of topics). Since materials once selected may be used for several years, it is important that they do not date too quickly. This can be a problem with, for instance, news items, texts about celebrities, and photographs showing people's clothes and hairstyles. The *date of publication* is one indication of topicality. As far as likely appeal is concerned, the most reliable way of ensuring that this priority is taken seriously is to ask learners (either those for whom the material is needed or a comparable group) for their views on the various sets of materials from which the choice is to be made. (But beware: like teachers, learners may be attracted/distracted by the cover of a book, its title or its convenient size.)

## Chapter 3

### Task 3.2

While Grant's (1987) rationale for his three-part (three-category) checklist is clear from the quotation, it is less clear why there should be ten questions in each category (what is magic about the number 10?) or, indeed, why there should be the same number of questions in each category. This fixed formula may lead to either the exclusion of important questions or the 'sideways movement' of these to another category. The question 'Is it about the right length?', for example, might be appropriately included in the third category, in relation to the teaching time available. Or trivial questions might be included, just to make up the number. Giving equal weighting to the three categories in this way may look neat; it can also be argued that the evaluator is able to reach a balanced judgement. However, the approach is based on two false premises: that the individual items within each category are equal in importance, and that the importance of a category is reflected in the number of items. There is, in fact, no logical reason why a checklist should have any specific number of questions or, if it consists of sections, why these should be of equal size.

We could make a similar criticism of the regular *Yes/Partly/No* response format. This also looks neat, but it is difficult to conceive of a situation in which 'Partly' would be an appropriate response to a question about 'the right length', or indeed to many of the other questions. Moreover, certain questions have two or more foci. One might wish to answer 'Yes' to 'Does it achieve an acceptable balance between the relevant language skills?', for example, and 'No' to the second part of this question, which focuses on opportunities for integrated skills practice. Responding will also be a problem if a question seems inapplicable. For example, if the real answer to the penultimate question regarding the relationship between the book and the syllabus ('If it does more than the syllabus requires, is the result an improvement?') happened to be 'Actually, it doesn't do more', the answer can hardly be 'No' because this would be an invalid criticism. We could, of course, include 'not applicable' as

a response option and then ignore questions that are not applicable when it comes to scoring.

## Chapter 4

### TASK 4.4

#### Question 1

Learners unfamiliar with soccer or its rules might not be aware of the following:

- A normal match consists of two 'halves', each lasting 45 minutes, plus any 'extra time' (time added on for hold-ups).
- A team 'scores' 'a goal' by getting the ball across the line between the goalposts. 'The score' – the number of goals a team scores – is shown on a scoreboard.
- The two teams are dressed in different colours. Each player has a different number on the back of his or her shirt.
- The referee and the two linesmen are usually dressed in black to distinguish them from the two teams.
- A player can be sent off the pitch for the rest of the match if he or she breaks certain rules. In this case, the referee will show him or her a red card, and a 'penalty' may be awarded.
- If a penalty is awarded, the ball is placed on a spot in front of the goal and no one can move until the penalty-taker kicks the ball. The person taking the penalty can be any player on a team.

### Task 4.7

Exercise B, below, is an adapted version of Exercise A. Both are taken from a very practical short article by Hughes (2006).

As you can see, a number of changes have been made:

- A title has been inserted to clarify the focus of the exercise.
- The instructions have been broken down into two sentences.
- Items have been numbered.
- An example has been given.
- Pronouns are varied. In sentences requiring the present perfect, students now have to choose between *has* and *have*.
- Items 3 and 5 are now in the form of questions rather than statements.
- Item 7 requires students to construct a negative statement.
- 'lacrosse' has been replaced by 'tennis'.
- A written pairwork activity has been added involving two more open questions.

Did you include all these in your list of desirable changes? Do you agree that they are all improvements?

### Exercise B

#### Past simple and present perfect

Complete these sentences in the past simple or present perfect. Use the verb in brackets.

- 1 Last week I ..... *went* ..... (go) to Paris.
- 2 Yesterday she ..... (meet) my friend Bill.
- 3 Did you ..... (see) Rachel at the party last night?
- 4 He ..... (be) to Japan twice before.
- 5 ..... they ever ..... (play) tennis?
- 6 We ..... (work) for this company since 1996.
- 7 We ..... (not/join) the company in 1995.

Now write questions to ask your partner:

- Did you ..... ?
- Have you ..... ?

Figure 1 Exercise B (Hughes 2006: 9)


The last change (the two open questions) is interesting. As Hughes points out, these give students who finish the first part of the exercise something to do, but their openness also represents an extra level of challenge. There is thus an element of grading within the exercise. We might add that unlike several of the earlier items which refer to 'Bill' and 'Rachel', 'Paris', 'Japan' and 'the company', the open questions allow the learner to use language in a way that is personally meaningful.

You might still feel that the exercise does not really do what you would want it to. Hughes suggests a number of further possible changes: 'add pictures . . .; turn the sentences into an extended text or article (for greater authenticity); add a roleplay at the end where students will have to create more questions; include a language reference or summary of the rule(s)' (Hughes 2006: 8).

One of the points that Hughes does not make (and you probably reached this conclusion when you thought about the objective of the original exercise) is that the primary purpose of Exercise A is to test students' knowledge of form and use – when to use the past simple and when the present perfect would be more appropriate. Given that purpose, one of its weaknesses is that it does not contain enough instances of interrogative and negative forms or the third person singular of the present perfect (*has* + past participle) to sample adequately. To a lesser extent, the same criticism can be made of Exercise B.

### Task 4.8

In the adapted version below (from McGrath 1994) this standard exercise format has been adapted in two ways: by creating mini-scenarios to which the student has to give a personal response, and by incorporating an 'open slot' to allow students freedom to respond with their own ideas and in their own words.



What would you do in these situations?  
Choose one of these possibilities or  
make up your own answer.

*Example*

What would you do if you saw a child fall into a river?  
I'd jump in.

What would you do if . . .

1. a man with a knife stopped you in the street?
  - a. scream.
  - b. give him all my money
  - c. ....
2. a dog bit you?
  - a. scream.
  - b. have a rabies vaccination.
  - c. ....
3. a fly landed on your dinner?
  - a. scream.
  - b. eat the fly too.
  - c. ....

Figure 2 Adapted version of a standard exercise format (McGrath 1994: 19)

The adapted version is intended for oral practice, with the teacher leading the questioning. Because the students' answers are unpredictable, when I have used this myself, I have asked the same question a number of times, and commented on responses or asked follow-up questions. Less confident students may prefer to use the (a) or (b) options provided, whereas more confident students (who are not always the most proficient) may like to express their own ideas in their own words. Bruton is critical of the fact that coursebook exercises, such as transformation, blank-filling, *Yes/No*, *True/False* and multiple choice, typically require minimal responses from students, and offer little scope for 'personal experience, humour, opinion, attitude, values, choice and initiative' (1997: 280). He argues that 'variation in response should be built into the tasks', one effect of which is that 'students attend and react to other students' contributions if they are real' (1997: 280). Incorporating an 'open slot' into exercises which are otherwise quite tightly controlled in structural terms is one simple way of providing for the kind of creativity that Bruton has in mind.

In this particular exercise, the example and the prompt are obviously meant to guide students to use the 'would' conditional ('I'd') in their response, but some students may nevertheless use 'will'. This is an ideal opportunity to check their under-

standing of the form–meaning relationship via a concept question such as: ‘Suppose you’re in [city/part of city]. Do you think this is a real possibility?’ As far as the man with the knife is concerned, they will probably know which areas are dangerous! With a class for whom this is a revision exercise, the instructions might be adapted to allow an explicit choice between first and second conditionals.

#### Task 4.9

Prodromou’s article goes into some detail concerning the way in which his redesigned questionnaire evolved out of the lesson, and how it was prepared for and followed up. The lesson as a whole is a very good example of careful staging, materials exploitation and differentiation, as the commentary below demonstrates. If you cannot wait to compare your analysis of the weaknesses of the original questionnaire with his, skip to his skeleton questionnaire and rationale towards the end of this commentary. If you are prepared to be patient, read on.

In the preliminary stages of the lesson, elicitation was used to activate and pool existing linguistic knowledge and personalise the practice stage that would follow. From the perspective of differentiation, the advantage of such a procedure is that all students can contribute something but sharing also establishes common ground. A key question was: ‘We want to find out who is fit and healthy; what questions can we ask?’ Phrased in this way, the question asked students to contribute ideas and their linguistic proficiency was not an issue. Their answers were incorporated into a substitution table for practice of the past simple (Figure 3).

Prodromou comments: ‘The answers to the *wh-* questions require more than a parroted “yes” or “no”, and they thus avoid the practice becoming meaningless. Moreover, I wanted the task which follows this presentation to sound less mechanical than the 15 unvaried *yes/no* questions provided by the textbook’ (1990: 29).

During the subsequent controlled-practice stage using the substitution table, he elicited possible answers to the questions, wrote them up on the board, and then asked students to practise asking and answering the questions. At this point, students had a choice similar to that in the ‘open slot’ exercise (Task 4.8): they were free to simply repeat the answer on the board or to give their own answer. After some practice of this kind, Prodromou started to rub out words from the substitution

	Question	Yesterday	Answer
1.	Did	you have sugar in your coffee?	
2.	Did	you drink milk?	
3.	Did	you eat (any) fruit?	
4. What	did	you have for breakfast?	
5. What time	did	you get up?	
6. What time	did	you go to bed?	

Figure 3 Substitution table for practice of the past simple (Prodromou 1990: 29)



table and practice continued with students reconstituting the original questions. Here too the procedure provided for differentiation. He notes: 'Initial practice is done with weaker students, while better students work from an increasingly blank board' (2009: 29).

The questionnaire itself was used during the next (communication) stage of the lesson (Figure 4).

Following a little plenary practice to check that students could use the prompts to generate questions, they were asked first to give their own answers to items 1–10, then to interview other students. Prodromou (1990: 29) comments:

My questionnaire differs from the one in the textbook in the following ways:

- the complete *yes/no* questions of the textbook are replaced by cues which allow students to choose either an easy *yes/no* question or a more challenging *wh-* question.
- I left two questions blank, to allow the early finishers the option of adding their own questions to the questionnaire.
- The format of the questionnaire in the textbook does not allow for students who have completed the pairwork to go on to work with a third or fourth student. By re-designing the questionnaire on the board I was able to extend the activity into trios and quartets.
- The original activity ends with students adding up their own scores. My own ending involves the students in using language to compare results, propose candidates for the 'healthiest person' competition, to argue their case before the class and finally to decide on the 'winner' by asking more questions using the target structure of the lesson.

Question	You	S1	S2	S3 etc.
1. breakfast				
2. sugar				
3. milk				
4. fruit				
5. go to bed				
6. cake				
7. run				
8. exercise				
9. cycle				
10. get up				
11. ?				
12. ?				

Figure 4 Prodromou's questionnaire (Prodromou 1990: 29)

(Text by L. Prodromou, first published in *Practical English Teaching*, 1990.  
© Mary Glasgow Magazines/Scholastic)

After the interviewing stage, the class formed groups and the results of the questionnaire were exploited in a follow-up activity – see point (d), above. Possible candidates for the title of ‘Healthiest student in the class’ were discussed, first in groups, each of which nominated a candidate, and finally by the whole class. During both group and plenary stages, students were encouraged to ask each other further questions. These discussion stages again provided for differentiation in that students were free to contribute at their own level.

## Chapter 5

### TASK 5.4

In the book from which extract A is taken the exercises are preceded by a set of notes, with examples, on how to handle certain aspects of this point of grammar. The notes, which are numbered A–D, have almost certainly influenced the order of the exercises.

Your responses to some of the questions in this task will be dependent on your teaching context and/or your own views. However, you may like to compare your answers with the partial Key/Commentary below.

#### Question 1(a)

Exercise 1 (one example plus five more items) is a matching exercise based on meaning. Each sentence is an example of reported speech and all involve infinitive constructions after verbs expressing orders, advice or bans. Both positive and negative constructions are included. The exercise is receptive in the sense that it does not require students to produce language, but it is nevertheless intended to draw their attention to the infinitive forms. In exercise 2 (one example plus six more items), students have to turn direct speech (orders/advice) into reported speech. The reporting verbs are provided but students need to think about the form of the second verb and the other changes needed.

Did you describe the first two exercises in this kind of detail? What about the other two exercises?

#### Question 1(b)

From the perspective of difficulty, exercise 4 seems to me easier than 2 and 3. In fact, you might feel that it is easier than exercise 1. Although the instruction gives the impression that the form of the verb might vary, all are regular past simple, so the task is really to make a choice based on meaning. Since there are only four options, this is perhaps easier than exercise 1, where the choice is wider.

At the level of the individual exercises, I find item 2 in exercise 2 tricky, odd even. Other items likely to pose difficulty in the same exercise are those where the direct speech consists of two sentences (particularly 4, 5) or where the pronoun is not obvious (2, 5, 7). Exercise 3 involves thought concerning the form of the verb as well as pronouns, but overall seems easier than 2.

### Question 1(d)

In general, the focus is on form. Although it could be argued that in order to complete exercises 1 and 4 correctly the student needs to be able to distinguish between the verbs on the level of their meaning, in 1 there are other clues that can help and in 4 the answers are fairly obvious because there are so few options. What the exercises clearly do not do is to get learners to reflect on use, that is, when it is appropriate to use reported speech rather than direct speech.

### Question 1(f)

The second worksheet is preceded by detailed guidance on tense-shift when reporting statements in the past, and corresponding changes to personal pronouns, possessive adjectives and pronouns, and adverbs and expressions of time. There are three exercises in the worksheet. All involve changing direct speech into reported speech, with a gradually increasing focus on a greater number of the points covered in the notes. The third worksheet deals with reporting questions

### Question 2(f)

Worksheet 1 focuses on reported statements. Worksheet 3 is a little more miscellaneous than the previous two worksheets. It covers reported orders, promises, suggestions, etc., as well as 'special' reporting verbs such as *warn*, *accuse*, *complain* and *recommend*.

In devising your own worksheets on complex topics such as reported speech, it is important to bear in mind the kind of progression (based on your understanding of students' likely difficulties) reflected in these examples.

### Task 5.7

The picture of the cruise liner provides visual context for the first item in the exercise, but serves no other purpose. It can therefore be said to have no more than a cosmetic function.

In the example given in question 1 of exercise 3, B gives a full-sentence answer. Although this provides practice in using the target structure (and the contracted form 'I'd'), a more natural answer would be: '(I'd) go on a cruise.' Incidentally, the suggested response to question 3 is a little odd – why not 'take it to the police'?

## Chapter 7

### Task 7.1

The reference to Beijing and the name of the father leave the reader in no doubt that the context is China, but the situation described in the text seemed to me generalisable to the poor or displaced who are suffering from hunger or cold in any part of the world. Since I wanted the learners with whom I was using the text to reflect on its relevance in their country, my first step was to delete 'Beijing' and the father's name. As a second step, I also deleted the title, intending to exploit its literal and metaphorical meaning (and the writer's purpose) after establishing the basic elements of the story. I then used the Ideas Grid to come up with the following ideas for activities.

### Listening

1. The teacher reads the text aloud (as we sometimes do when we come across an interesting item in a newspaper) and asks students to summarise the key facts. A *Who? What? Where?* framework (there is no *When?* here, but the question could still be asked!) could be used for this purpose. Individual students may well be able to supply different details, which can be combined to form a version of the original story. The text can then be read again to allow for checking.
2. Alternatively, the text can be dictated. Extra interest is added if what I call 'predictive' dictation is used, that is, the teacher dictates the text in small chunks and students suggest how it might continue at each point. Their suggestions are written up (but not discussed at this point), and then the teacher continues with the original text (thus confirming or disconfirming the students' suggestions). At the end of the dictation, you can discuss the linguistic appropriateness or otherwise of the students' ideas.

This idea can be combined with text adaptation. If the original text is too long to be suitable for dictation, only a short paragraph might be used. Or if the text is felt to be a little too difficult for some students in a class, the text can be simplified for the dictation stage. In order to make this particular text more suitable for lower-intermediate students, I produced the following version (diagonal lines indicate the points at which students were asked to make predictions):

*At one end of / the underpass, a young girl / waited. Her father / came over to her quickly with / some food / he had picked up / at a market / trying to keep her warm.*

At this point – at least in the way I have used the text, the listening activity is over. One can then present students with the original text and discuss the differences (see 'Vocabulary', below) or get them to recreate the original text through guided questions ('Have you ever been in an underpass? How would you describe it?', 'How do you think the girl felt? What verb can we use to describe the sound she might

have made?'), mime (limping), appeal to logic ('Do you think he bought the food? So where did he get it from?') and, when necessary, by supplying words (such as 'wholesale').

## Speaking

### *Questions for discussion*

1. How old do you think the girl was? What did she look like? How was she dressed?
2. And her father?
3. What do you think the girl did when she saw the food? How did she eat it?
4. Where do you think the girl and her father slept that night? Where is the girl's mother?  
(What might be the purpose of asking questions like these?)
5. Which country do you think the girl and her father were in?
6. In the original story, the location is given: Beijing. Is the location important?
7. The name of the girl's father was given: Liu Guojin. The girl's name wasn't. Why the one and not the other?
8. The original story also had a title: 'Still out in the cold'. Why 'still'? What do you think 'out in the cold' means? What is the text about?

### *Dialogue creation*

1. What do you think the girl and her father said to each other before he went to look for food? What would you have said in this situation? And when he came back?
2. What do you think the reporter asked her father? How did the father answer?

### *Hotseat*

What questions would you want to ask the girl or her father?

## Reading

Here are examples of different types of question. You can no doubt come up with further examples.

- *Basic facts*: Where was the girl? What was she doing? Did her father walk quickly? Why (not)? What was he carrying? Where did he get them?
- *Linguistic knowledge*: What is an 'underpass'? What does 'wailed' mean? What is a 'wholesale' market?
- *Knowledge of the world*: Why was the girl standing at one *end* of the underpass?
- *Inference*: Was she a big girl? Why was she wailing, how did she feel? Why

does the text say 'he said he had' and not just 'he had' . . .? Why didn't her father get the food from the market itself? Was it a warm day?

### *From reading to writing and/or speaking*

Some questions relating to the meaning of the text have already been suggested above, and other questions on the language of the text can be found under 'Vocabulary' and 'Grammar', below. However, a text such as this also lends itself to further reading: for example, Web-based research (individual/pair/group) into the homeless or refugees (causes, categories, working solutions), which may be followed by an oral presentation (group/individual), debate or written report. You might also wish to identify suitable websites/articles or suggest people whom students can interview.

### **Writing**

1. EITHER tell the story of the lives of the girl or her father up to this point and/or what happened next) OR change the central characters into, for example, an old lady and her middle-aged son, and tell their stories.
2. Create a storyboard with dialogue.
3. Imagine you have been commissioned by your newspaper to write an article on the situation of the homeless. Include in your article a modified version of the original newspaper item.

### **Phonology (pronunciation, stress, intonation, linking)**

1. The *-ed* ending on past simple verbs can be pronounced in three different ways. Find one example of each of these in the text. Can you think of three more examples of a way of pronouncing the *-ed* ending?
2. Where would you place the stress in the following words: *underpass*, *potatoes*, *wholesale*?
3. If you were reading the text aloud, which words would you run together? Where would you pause?

### **Vocabulary**

1. *Vocabulary choice* (questions focusing on the writer's choice of words and the use of detail to make a description vivid): for example, What does the word 'chilly' add to our understanding of the situation? Why did the writer use 'wailed' – rather than 'waited', for example? 'limped'? 'as quickly as he could'? 'a bowl of roasted sweet potatoes' – and not just 'some food'? '*roasted* sweet potatoes' and not just 'sweet potatoes'? 'a bowl of' and not just 'some'? '*trying* to help her keep warm'?
2. *Vocabulary extension* (focusing on words with related meaning): for example, *chilly* – what other adjectives can you think of expressing cold or cold and wet?

*wailed* – other verbs expressing sadness or pain? *limped* – other verbs for walking?  
*roasted* – other adjectives describing food processes?

3. *All change*: make this into a happy story by changing vocabulary and details.

## Grammar

### *Reported speech*

1. The text says: 'he said he had picked up at a wholesale market's rubbish heap'. In reported speech, both 'have picked up' and 'picked up' will become '*had* picked up'. What do you think the father actually said?
2. Write up the interview between the father and reporter suggested under 'Speaking', above, using a mixture of reported speech and direct speech.

### *Other possibilities*

Is there anything unusual about the order of clauses in the first sentence? Why do you think the writer has chosen to construct the sentence in this way?

The second sentence contains several elements without any punctuation. What changes would you make, if any?

## Discourse

1. Why has the writer included the details he or she has? Used the words he or she has? Organised the text in this way? (There is some overlap here with the earlier suggestions for Speaking, Vocabulary and Grammar.) This could lead into:
2. Comparison and analysis of newspaper articles – with a focus on the techniques used to achieve specific purposes.

## Other

1. *ICT*: opportunities for learners to demonstrate their ICT skills through, say, a PowerPoint presentation of their research or a storyboard.
2. *Digital literacy*: a possible task would be 'Draw (or find) a picture to go with the story. Explain why you have drawn (or chosen) *this* picture.' Alternatively, students could examine and compare newspaper stories (picture, title, typeface, font, content, style) in order to identify stereotyping, for example, or bias or manipulation. Although it might be simpler for the teacher to provide a range of source texts, students could be left to decide the texts they wished to work on.
3. *Differentiation*: incorporated in, for example, simplification (and then complexification) of the original text; opportunity for learners to contribute ideas for 'enriching' the text; choice of oral and written products. The ICT and digital literacy tasks suggested are 'open' in the sense that they allow students to express

their ideas in their own words (they can, of course, be supported in this); they also enable students to demonstrate skills not directly related to language.

### Task 7.3

This task asked two questions. Here are 'the answers', with which you can compare your own.

1. Scott et al. (1984) offer the following description of and rationale for their 'standard exercise':

**Question 1:** prediction

**Question 2:** skimming for general overview

**Question 3:** identification of text purpose (factual exposition vs persuasion/argument)

**Question 4:** identification of key words (designed to encourage students to consider relative importance of different vocabulary items, disregard those felt to be insignificant, and try to work out meaning from context before using a dictionary)

**Question 5:** comprehension of main points ('the ability to distinguish a main point from a minor detail is vital') (p. 117)

**Question 6:** relating structure of text to main points

**Question 7ff:** eliciting personal reactions ('reading without some kind of personal involvement is likely to be useless' (ibid.)).

**Question 10–13:** eliciting students' reactions to their difficulties and progress (students' answers to Q.13 indicate whether they think they have understood all the details; Question 5 provides evidence on whether they have understood the main points).

In relation to their focus on skimming and main points, they point out that skimming is often adequate in determining what not to read or whether to read more carefully and a grasp of the main points of a text may also be sufficient in many situations.

2. Scott et al.'s colleagues in other universities had predicted that the students would find it boring to use the same exercise repeatedly. The students themselves did not say this; they did, however, complain about the length of the exercise and the time it took to do. They also found questions 3, 5 and 6 'quite tricky'.

Explanations and examples were, of course, necessary, but the writers profess themselves satisfied with the exercise. Students' responses to a questionnaire in which they were asked to rate their ability to read authentic texts at the beginning and end of a semester in which they used the standard exercise at least twenty times (sixteen times on self-selected texts and four times for tests) indicated a self-perception of a clear improvement.



## Chapter 9

### Task 9.1

<i>Learners' concerns: the materials are . . .</i>	<i>Quotation</i>
1. difficult (or too easy)	c, d, f
2. interesting, enjoyable, entertaining, varied	a, d, e
3. useful, relevant	a, b, c, e, f

### Task 9.2

Closed-format responses are a common feature of questionnaires, and descriptive terms such as the ones used in the questionnaire ('Easy', 'Enjoyable', etc.) or, for younger learners, emoticons or 'smileys', can easily be converted into a numerical scale. If we then calculate the arithmetic means of the responses we can get a pretty good idea of how good students think the materials are and therefore whether there is any need to revise them. A mean below 3.5 on a 5-point scale probably means that some rethinking is desirable either of the material itself or the way in which it was handled. (In small classes, means can, of course, be distorted in either direction by one or two individuals awarding very high or low ratings, and I would suggest discounting the single highest and lowest scores to arrive at a more representative score.)

Closed questions such as those in the example may be convenient, but they have a serious limitation in that they do not give us any information on *why* students think as they do. This is obviously particularly important in the case of negative responses.

From the perspective of materials development, asking for feedback on specific parts of a lesson, such as a task, is likely to be more effective than asking for feedback on the whole lesson. Even here, however, we need to be careful. Suppose most students said that they found the reading task 'Difficult'. What was it that they found difficult, the text or the task?

### Task 9.4

(a) *'It would take too much time.'*

Teachers with tight schedules worry that feedback collected in class takes up valuable class time. Analysis of the feedback after class then takes up teacher time, and this is true even if the feedback is collected online after class. But if you do not get direct feedback from learners, you do not know what they think about materials; and if you are trying out new materials or an activity unfamiliar to a particular class, some insight into whether they thought the materials too easy/difficult, useful/useless or interesting/boring can inform future decision-making.

Eliciting feedback from students need not be very time-consuming if all that is required is a response to a very limited set of closed-format options, such as those

Please answer these questions. There is no need to write your name.

- How easily could you do this task?
 

VERY EASILY	QUITE EASILY	ONLY WITH DIFFICULTY
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- How enjoyable did you find this task?
 

VERY ENJOYABLE	QUITE ENJOYABLE	NOT ENJOYABLE
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- How much did this task help you to learn English?
 

VERY MUCH	SOME	NOT VERY MUCH
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- Can you write one thing you liked about the task?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Can you write one thing you did not like about the task?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Figure 5 Rating slip (McGrath 1997, reproduced in McGrath 2002)

in Figure 5, and tabulating the responses, similarly, takes very little time. The rating slip above, which can be used to obtain feedback on any element of a lesson – for example, a listening task, an online research task, a communication game – can be handed out immediately after an activity and collected two or three minutes later. A column for difficulty can easily be added if required.

(b) *'Students would see me as inexperienced.'*

In some contexts, for teachers to seek feedback from their students on the materials they have developed may be perceived as an admission of professional uncertainty (weakness). It is not. Rather, it is a reflection of the kind of concern for learners (and in this case, their learning) that one has a right to expect in any professional relationship.

(c) *'Students wouldn't give honest feedback.'*

Students may be concerned that negative feedback will affect their grade. They have to believe, which means you have to make them believe, that you are serious about wanting honest feedback and will act on it. One way to build this trust, once the analysis of the data is complete, is to summarise what the group as a whole felt. In the case of a relatively unsuccessful activity, students might also be

interested to know what changes you intend to make as a result of the negative feedback, and be prepared to offer suggestions of their own. Such suggestions can be especially useful during the trialling of teacher-produced materials. Other obvious ways of increasing the likelihood of honest written feedback is to allow students to remain anonymous and, in the case of a focus group, to have a student act as secretary.

(d) *'Students wouldn't take it seriously. The feedback would be very limited.'*

It is important to explain to learners why you want to know their views and how the information will be used. If they believe that they are the intended beneficiaries and that you will act on what you are told they are more likely to be cooperative.

(e) *'Students don't have enough English to express themselves.'*

Where learners have very limited language proficiency but share the same L1, they can of course be asked to give their feedback in the L1. Older learners might be asked first to complete a simple closed-item questionnaire such as that in Figure 5 above, and then be asked to give any other comments orally. For younger learners with limited writing skills in both English and their mother tongue, whole-class oral feedback seems the best option.

(f) *'Learners are too young to give me any useful feedback.'*

We perhaps assume too readily that young learners are incapable – because too immature – to contribute to decision-making about their own learning. Here are comments from three experienced Singaporean primary school teachers following their first attempts to obtain feedback from their very young pupils on worksheets that they had designed:

I was amazed . . . I had only predicted 'Yes/No' answers from them, [yet] they were able to elaborate and support their ideas. (Teacher of primary 2 class, i.e. seven-year-olds)

The quality and honesty of pupils' feedback surprised me. They could clearly tell me why they could not do certain parts. (Teacher of primary 2 class)

Honestly, when we were asked to gather feedback . . . I was very sceptical towards the depth and breadth of feedback that I could elicit from my Primary 1 students. Since they are so young, I assumed that they would only give comments such as 'easy' or 'difficult'. (Teacher of primary 1 class, i.e. six-year-olds)

This teacher asked her pupils for their comments on a worksheet practising adverbs of manner. The pupils not only told the teacher what they liked and found useful, they also offered a number of concrete ideas on how the worksheet might be improved. These included:

- more practice converting adjectives ending -y into adverbs of manner
- more space for answers (with pupils with larger handwriting in mind)

- more amusing pictures
- provision of guiding words to accompany some pictures (where picture may not be clear, but also as an aid for pupils whose spelling is weak).

In the final exercise in the worksheet, pupils were given picture prompts and sentence starters and asked to use adverbs of manner to complete the sentences. Their capacity for independence (and reasoning) is illustrated in the following extract from the teacher's reflections:

When asked if they needed a list of adverbs . . . , they said no. They cited 2 reasons. Firstly, they can refer to the previous exercises should they need ideas on which adverbs to use . . . Secondly, they do not want to be constrained by a list of adverbs. They stated that they would like to try out using other adverbs on their own, not those found in previous exercises or from a given list.

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