Part II

Teaching Language Skills

6
Reading Skills

In Part I of this book, we examined in detail the issues involved in principles of materials design. In this second part of the book, we devote a chapter to each language skill in turn with a final chapter that examines the concept of integrating language skills in the classroom.

According to Alderson (2000: 110), 'The notion of skills and subskills . . . is enormously pervasive and influential, despite the lack of clear empirical justification'. As for the definition of skills, there are many different versions in the research literature and teaching materials. Richards and Schmidt (2010: 532) provide a definition that seems to us to reflect current thinking in that a skill is 'an acquired ability to perform an activity well, usually one that is made up of a number of co-ordinated processes'.

In language teaching, skills are often discussed in terms of four different modes – that is, reading, listening, speaking and writing. The division of each language skill into separate chapters in this book is intentional and is not intended to reinforce the notion of the skills being taught in isolation, but rather is a way of devoting sufficient space to each one to further our original intention throughout the whole book – that of linking key principles to instances of classroom practice. Cross-referencing (both explicit and implicit) occurs often within this part of the book.

6.1 Introduction

We shall begin this chapter by thinking about the different types of material that we read and how these are linked to the purpose that we have in reading.

After this, we attempt to show how advances in our conceptual knowledge about the reading process have changed some of our approaches to designing and using materials for the teaching of reading. We then look at different ways of providing feedback to learners on their reading. The final part of the chapter is devoted to vocabulary and vocabulary teaching.

As a skill, reading is clearly one of the most important; in fact, in many instances around the world, we may argue that reading is the most important language skill, particularly in cases where students have to read English material for their own specialist subject but may never have to speak the language. English has also been the main driving language of the Internet. Though multimedia-based interaction over the Internet is becoming common nowadays in a resource-rich environment (as described in Chapter 5 of this book), basic Internet communication continues to assume reading skills as the primary mode of communication. Furthermore, from a language acquisition point of view, reading can be a major source of comprehensible input (Krashen, 2004) especially in countries where English is rarely used outside the classroom.

Even though we are looking at each language skill independently in these chapters, there is clearly an overlap between reading and writing, in that a 'text' has to be written down before we can read it. In many societies, literature is still seen as the prime example of writing and therefore, one of the first things a student is asked to do is to read. In classroom terms, one of the reasons for this is partly practical: it is often thought to be easier to supply a written text to be read than a spoken one to be understood.

6.2   Reasons for Reading

Much of the current thinking tends to focus primarily on the purpose of reading because our reading processes will vary according to our purpose. Let us consider how this may be so.

> Think of some materials you have read during the last week, both in English and in your own L1. Make a list of them.

The list that you have drawn up may include newspapers, letters (personal and formal), leaflets, labels on jars, tins and packets, advertisements, magazines, books and so on. Some people may add emails, text messages and all kinds of texts from the Internet (e.g. news, online shopping, poems and stories). Do you read these different kinds of texts in the same way?

Williams (1984) usefully classifies reading into (1) getting general information from a text, (2) getting specific information from a text, and (3) for pleasure or for interest. Which of the texts you listed in your reflection task would require the kinds of reading identified in Williams' categories? How similar or different do you think the reading processes are from one category to another?

Think about how many of these different types of reading materials you will find in your teaching textbook.

What kinds of reading do your students have to do in their L1? How about in the L2?

Do the textbooks satisfy the needs and wants of your students' lives? The EFL learners in your country may not have many opportunities to read any kind of texts in English. If so, what kinds of reading texts and reading experience should materials offer?

Some global ELT materials include reading texts such as newspaper and magazine articles, advertisements, web materials (for examples, see a review of eight global coursebooks published in the United Kingdom in Masuhara et al., 2008). Tomlinson (2008) provides a useful collection of critical evaluations of coursebooks used around the world. Some other textbooks may contain more of what we might call more 'traditional' types of texts, especially longer stretches of narrative and descriptions. We shall look at the implications of this later in the chapter.

6.3   Changes in the Concept of Reading Skills

We have looked at some of the purposes and reasons for reading which we may wish to develop with our learners. Let us now look at how the concept of reading as a skill has evolved in recent years and how this in turn has come to be reflected in the types of ELT materials available.

The traditional way of organizing materials in a unit is generally to begin with a piece of specially written material, which is then 'read' by the student. Such an arrangement essentially focuses on items of grammar and vocabulary that are then to be developed during the unit. This is inadequate if we are

attempting to teach reading skills, as students are not being exposed to the variety of styles we would expect with a variety of texts – a scientific report is not written in the same way as a personal letter or instructions on a medicine bottle.

Hence, in reading classes we sometimes have a confusion of aims: often the students are not being taught reading and how to develop reading abilities per se, but rather a written text is being used as a vehicle for the introduction of new vocabulary and/or structures. It is fairly common for such texts to begin along the following lines:

It is eight o'clock in the morning. Mr Smith is in the dining room of their house. Mr Smith is sitting at the table reading his newspaper. He is waiting for his breakfast. Mrs Smith is in the kitchen cooking breakfast for Mr Smith, her husband, and their two children. John and Mary. . . .
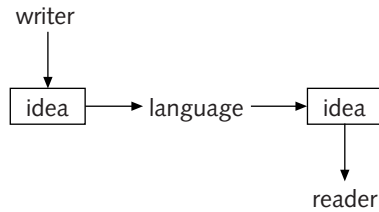
The text would then continue in a similar way.

As reading material it seems artificial because the intention is to draw learners' attention to items of structural usage rather than to the authentic features characteristic of 'real' text, or what makes texts 'hang together'. Many teachers, however, still work with this type of material. In this particular passage the sentences are strung together in isolation with little attempt at coherence. The same structures are repeated several times in a rather contrived way, making the whole text feel awkward and inauthentic. Another problem associated with these specially prepared texts, when it comes to the choice of topic, is that the learners are either presented with overfamiliar material that does not focus on what they can bring to the text, or the content is inconsequential for them. No real interaction takes place between writer and reader as the artificiality of the text means that no real message is being communicated. As we shall see later in relation to the overfamiliarity issue, comprehension questions on a text can sometimes be answered without having to look at the text at all! The essential purpose of all reading generally is to get new information and/or for pleasure, not to go over what is known already or what is inconsequential to the reader in the first place.
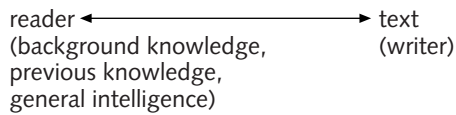
A good many of the so-called traditional reading materials do not provide learners with useful texts or effective strategies to improve their reading abilities; and if we are to improve the teaching of reading skills, then research into the reading process may well be of some use. However, research tends to show that we know more about what skilled readers can do, rather than how they do it with any real degree of certainty.

Traditionally, and this is borne out in many of the materials, the reader was seen as the 'recipient' of information or as an 'empty vessel' who brought nothing to the text. This notion of 'text as object' (figure 6.1) is now frequently discredited in reading circles as readers are not entirely passive.

This 'text as object' viewpoint regards the reader as having nothing to contribute to the reading process as such; the writer provides information for

writer

idea → language → idea

reader

Figure 6.1   The text as object viewpoint.

reader ←————————→ text
(background knowledge,   (writer)
previous knowledge,
general intelligence)

Figure 6.2   The text as process viewpoint.

the reader who is seen as an 'empty vessel' that merely receives information. We may liken this to a one-way traffic system in which everything flows in one direction only (see also Nuttall, 2005 for a similar argument).

In recent years, however, an increasing number of ELT materials that profess to develop reading skills have moved from the 'text as object' viewpoint shown above, to that of the 'text as process', by encouraging close interaction between the reader and the text (figure 6.2).

6.4   Types of Reading Skills

Ur (1996) suggests various criteria that distinguish efficient from inefficient readers: efficient readers can access content more easily by changing reading speed according to text, they can select significant features of a text and skim the rest, they can guess or infer meaning from context, they think ahead by predicting outcomes, they use background knowledge to help them understand the meaning, they are motivated to read the text as they see it as a challenge and the text has a purpose, they can switch reading strategy according to the type of text they are reading and so on.

Eskey (2005: 571), on the other hand, acknowledges the idiosyncratic and unpredictable nature of individual reading preferences and styles, '. . . readers differ in what they read, how much they read, how well they read, and how much they depend on or care about reading'. He then

emphasizes the importance of being engaged in extensive reading experiences for the learners to become skillful readers (see also Krashen, 2004 for empirical evidence). He rightly points out that readers are most likely to be engaged if the texts are interesting to them as individuals and relevant to their particular needs and wants.

Classroom teachers often complain that students view reading as tedious and therefore low priority simply because they do not feel challenged or involved in the text. This may be overcome if the text is (and also perceived as) relevant to them. The learners can also be encouraged to 'dialogue' with the writer by expecting questions to be answered, reflecting on expectations at every stage, anticipating what the writer will say next and so on.

It is generally recognized now that the efficient reader versed in ways of interacting with various types of texts is flexible, and chooses appropriate reading strategies depending on the particular text in question. 'Strategy' is another term which is renowned for terminological inconsistency but we go with the definition by Richards and Schmidt (2010: 559–60) that strategies mean 'procedures used in learning . . . which serve as a way of reaching a goal'. McNamara (2007) reports how research confirms the importance of strategy use in L1 reading and how successful readers know when and how to use appropriate strategies. We also need to help our learners become aware that they should match reading strategies to reading purpose. We do not, for example, read seventeenth-century poetry in the same way as we read the television page in our newspaper. Skilled readers scan to locate specific information in a text and skim to extract general information from it. These strategies are quite widely practised in many contemporary ELT reading courses (see the example from a textbook on pp. 115–6).

Literature in mind

7 Read

Life of Pi

After the tragic sinking of a cargo ship which was carrying an entire zoo, one lifeboat remains on the wild, blue Pacific. The only survivors from the wreck are a sixteen-year-old boy named Pi, a hyena, a zebra (with a broken leg), a female orang-utan… and a 450-pound Royal Bengal tiger. The tiger eats the other animals – and then there's only it and the boy.

In this extract, the boy Pi has seen a petrol tanker coming towards the lifeboat that he is on, and believes at first that he and the tiger are going to be saved.

THE NUMBER ONE BESTSELLER
YANN MARTEL
Life of Pi

winner of
THE Man BOOKER PRIZE 2002
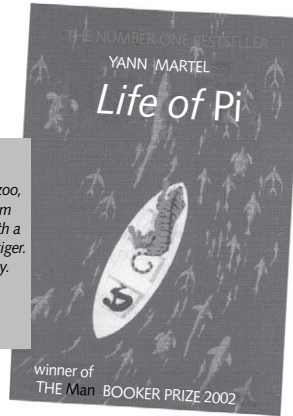
a Read the extract quickly to find the answer to these questions.

1 Who is Richard Parker?
2 Does the tanker hit the lifeboat or not?

I realised with horror that the tanker was not simply coming our way – it was in fact bearing down on us. The bow was a vast wall of metal that was getting wider every second. A huge wave girdling it was advancing towards us relentlessly. Richard Parker finally sensed the looming juggernaut. He turned and went 'Woof! Woof!' but not doglike – it was tigerlike: powerful, scary and utterly suited to the situation.

'Richard Parker, it's going to run us over! What are we going to do? Quick, quick, a flare! No! Must row. Oar in oarlock … there! HUMPF! HUMPF! HUMPF! HUMPF! HUMPF! HUM–'

The bow wave pushed us up. Richard Parker crouched, and the hairs on him stood up. The lifeboat slid off the bow wave and missed the tanker by less than two feet.

The ship slid by for what seemed like a mile, a mile of high, black canyon wall, a mile of castle fortification with not a single sentinel to notice us languishing in the moat. I fired off a rocket flare, but I aimed it poorly. Instead of surging over the bulwarks and exploding in the captain's face, it ricocheted off the ship's side and went straight into the Pacific, where it died with a hiss. I blew my whistle with all my might. I shouted at the top of my lungs. All to no avail.

Its engines rumbling loudly and its propellers chopping explosively underwater, the ship churned past us and left us bouncing and bobbing in its frothy wake. After so many weeks of natural sounds, these mechanical noises were strange and awesome and stunned me into silence.

In less than twenty minutes a ship of three hundred thousand tons became a speck on the horizon. When I turned away, Richard Parker was still looking in its direction. After a few seconds he turned away too and our gazes briefly met. My eyes expressed longing, hurt, anguish, loneliness. All he was aware of was that somthing stressful and momentous had happened, something beyond the outer limits of his understanding. He did not see that it was salvation barely missed. He only saw that the alpha here, this odd, unpredictable tiger, had been very excited. He settled down to another nap. His sole comment on the event was a cranky miaow.

'I love you!' The words burst out pure and unfettered, infinite. The feeling flooded my chest. 'Truly I do. I love you, Richard Parker. If I didn't have you now, I don't know what I would do. I don't think I would make it. No, I wouldn't. I would die of hopelessness. Don't give up, Richard Parker, don't give up. I'll get you to land, I promise, I promise!'

b Read the extract again. Put the statements in the order in which they occur in the extract.

a Pi starts to row the lifeboat. ☐

b Pi realises that he has positive feelings about the tiger. ☐

c Pi fires a flare but it isn't seen. ☐

d Pi realises that the tanker might be going to hit the lifeboat. `1`

e Pi blows a whistle and shouts but no one hears him ☐

f The tanker disappers out of sight. ☐

g Pi thinks that Richard Parker sees him as a kind of tiger. ☐

h The noise of the tanker is strange to Pi after weeks at sea. ☐

i The tiger goes to sleep. ☐

j The wave of the tanker lifts the lifeboat up. ☐

(c) Replace the words in italics with a word or phrase from the box. Use the text to check the meanings of the words in the box.

> to no avail   relentlessly   speck   looming   anguish   crouched
> with all his might   languishing

1   I trudged on *in an extreme way* through the heavy rain to get back to our warm camp.

2   The *large and frightening* shape of the oncoming ship was clearly visible to us all.

3   We *bent our knees and lowered our body* behind a tree and kept quiet hoping not to be found.

4   The sick man had been *existing in an unpleasant situation* in a tent in the desert for almost a month.

5   Joseph tried *as hard as he could* to move the fallen tree from the road.

6   We advised Paula and George not to travel when they felt so ill, but it was *with no success at all.*

7   Helen's house is so clean; there isn't a *tiny spot* of dirt anywhere!

8   In Josie's *extreme unhappiness*, she forgot her suitcase when she left for the airport.

(d) Answer the questions.

1   Why do you think the tiger has not eaten the boy?

2   Why do you think the tanker didn't stop and help them?

3   Why do you think Pi says 'I love you, Richard Parker'?

All that we have mentioned thus far tends to confirm the now generally accepted view that efficient readers are not passive and do not operate in a vacuum: they react with the text by having expectations (even though these might in fact have nothing to do with the content of the text) and ideas about the purpose of the text, as well as ideas about possible outcomes.

Efficient readers also interrogate materials of all types by looking for 'clues' in titles, subtitles and within the passage itself. Pre-reading questions can be useful because they focus learners' attention on the types of information that they are about to read.

Getting the learner to interact with different types of text as outlined above does not necessarily mean that learners will have to understand the whole text immediately. They may, for example, be able to understand and to extract specific information from the text as in the example on p. 118.

Global English

Sports English
by David Crystal

Sports commentary is very familiar these days but it only arrived with the start of radio and television broadcasting. The term *sports announcer* was first used in 1923, soon followed by *sporting commentator* in the UK and *sportscaster* in the US. The modern British term, *sports commentator*, dates from the 1930s.

5 Sports commentating sounds easy, but it's difficult to do well, especially on radio, where a long silence can mean disaster. Detailed knowledge of the sport, keen observational skills, the ability to **think on your feet**, and above-average linguistic skills are essential. To make the job easier, commentators can use 'tricks of the trade' such

10 as formulaic expressions. In horse racing there are certain things commentators always say at particular moments such as *They're off!*, *in the lead*, and *into the straight they come*. This means there is less for them to remember and it helps with fluency.

Each sport has its own style, reflecting the atmosphere and

15 momentum, from the wild excitement of football (*It's a GO-O-O-AL*) to the quiet tones of snooker. There's distinctive grammar and vocabulary too. Commentaries are the perfect place to find the English present tense, both simple and continuous (*he's looking for a chance ... he scores ...*), and incomplete sentences (*Beckham to Kaka ... back to Beckham ...*).

20 But if you're looking for new vocabulary, you'll find more in the keep-fit disciplines, such as yoga (with its hundreds of words taken from Sanskrit), Pilates (with its unusual pronunciation taken from the name of its founder, Joseph Pilates, 'puh-lah-teez'), and the combination of yoga and Pilates *yogalates*. And that's just **the tip of the iceberg** of new linguistic blends. If

25 you're into *exertainment* (exercise + entertainment) you'll know about the many kinds of *exergaming* (exercise + gaming). The neologisms keep your tongue linguistically fit too.

Glossary
above-average (*adjective*) – good, better than normal
discipline (*noun*) – a subject or sport
formulaic expression (*noun*) – an expression that has been used lots of times before
keen (*adjective*) – very strong
linguistic blend (*noun*) – a mixture of two or more words
neologism (*noun*) – a new word or expression, or an existing word with a new meaning
sports commentator (*noun*) – a person whose job is to give a description of a sporting event on television or radio as it happens.

Warm up

Read the definition of *sports commentator*. Are there any well-known sports commentators in your country? What are they famous for?

Reading

1 Read the text *Sports English*. Tick (✔) the topics that are mentioned. There are two topics you do not need.
a different words for sport
b sports commentary
c style of speaking
d winners and losers
e English grammar
f new vocabulary

2 Read the text again and find examples of ...
a something you need to be a good sports commentator.
b a 'formulaic expression' that helps commentators sound more fluent.
c an examples of an incomplete sentence used in sports.
d a 'keep-fit' sport.
e a neologism.

Language focus

1 Look at the expressions in **bold** in the text. Answer the questions below.
1 If you *think on your feet*, you ...
  a are a very quick runner.
  b have good ideas and make decisions quickly.
  c get nervous in a difficult situation.
2 If we say something is *the tip of the iceberg*, it means ...
  a there is a lot more of it that you can't see.
  b there is only a little bit of it.
  c it is a very dangerous thing.

2 Put each of the expressions into an example of your own. Tell a partner.

Speaking

1 Work in pairs and ask each other the questions.
• Do you enjoy listening to commentators?
• What sports do you like to watch?
• Do you do any *exergaming*?

Global English Unit 9

Source: L. Clanfield and A. Jeffries, p. 111, *Global Pre-Intermediate Student Book*. Oxford: Macmillan Education. Text © David Crystal, Instruction © Lindsay Clanfield and Amanda Jeffries 2010. Design & Illustration © Macmillan Publishers Limited 2010. Reprinted with permission of Macmillan Publishers Ltd. All rights reserved.

6.5   Schema Theory

Another major contribution to our knowledge of reading, with many implications for the classroom, is provided by Schema theory. Bartlett (1932) first used this particular term to explain how the knowledge that we have about the world is organized into interrelated patterns based on our previous knowledge and experience. According to the proponents of Schema theory, these 'schemata' also allow us to predict what may happen. Taking the idea of the interactive reading process a stage further, efficient readers are able to relate 'texts' to their background knowledge of the world. Brown and Yule (1983b), McCarthy and Carter (1994), Cook (1997) and Nunan (1999) all provide accounts of how this background knowledge can influence the comprehension process. Clearly it can sometimes be based on previous knowledge of similar texts. In this sense 'Formal Schema' seems useful as well as 'Content Schema' (Carrell et al., 1988). For example, if we are reading a newspaper, we know from previous experience about the typeface, the layout, the order in which the information is presented and so on. We share cultural background material with others. As Nunan (1999: 256) writes, 'We interpret what we read in terms of what we already know, and we integrate what we already know with the content of what we are reading'. The word 'wedding' in a British context could engender a complete schematic framework to accompany it; that is, 'last Saturday', 'Registry Office', 'Best Man' and so on. This is why reading something written by someone in a language with different cultural assumptions from ours can be difficult. Overseas teachers and students sometimes complain that reading literature in an L2 is problematic not just because of the language, but also because shared assumptions or different schemata do not always match up. Grabe (2002: 282) warns that 'schema theory is hardly a theory, and there is very little research which actually explores what a schema is and how it would work for reading comprehension'. He does, however, value schema as 'a useful simplifying metaphor for the more general notion of prior knowledge'.

In many cases an efficient reader appears to use what are called 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' strategies. This means that the reader will not just try to decipher the meaning of individual lexical items but will also have clear ideas about the overall rhetorical organization of the text. With the influence of Schema theory, 'top' has come to mean not only linguistic elements such as discourse but also conceptual elements such as associated background knowledge in our memory. The essential features of the bottom-up approach are that the reader tries to decode each individual letter encountered by matching it to the minimal units of meaning in the sound system (the phoneme) to arrive at a meaning of the text, whereas with the top-down approach, the interaction process between the reader and the text involves the reader in activating knowledge of the world, plus past experiences, expectations and
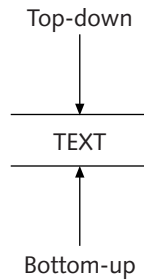
Top-down

↓

TEXT

↑

Bottom-up

Figure 6.3   Top-down and bottom-up processing of a text.

intuitions, to arrive at a meaning of the text. In other words, the top-down process interacts with the bottom-up process in order to aid comprehension (figure 6.3).

We might further illustrate this by looking at a speaking/listening analogy first of all. If someone asks us, 'Have you got a light?' and we get stuck at the level of the bottom-up process by working out each individual word, then clearly we are missing the top-down request, that the speaker is in fact asking for a match.

Let us look at a newspaper extract about education in Britain in order to see how some of these principles may operate in reality.

> From the title, can you predict what the passage will be about? As you are reading the text, think about how you are reading it.

Paying to Learn: Is It Snobbery?

The British social system is probably the most snobbish in the world but that does not necessarily mean – since it is perfectly natural for parents to wish to give their children the same or a better education than they themselves received – that those who choose to educate their children privately are all snobs. Thus, many upper class families who were forced to send their children to boarding schools at the height of the British Empire because they were often out of the country for years, naturally wish to continue the tradition, although nowadays it involves great financial sacrifices. Even today many pupils in boarding schools are still opting out of what may be the best state education system in the world. Some of these are obviously doing this for snobbish reasons – believing that to have been educated privately is to be socially 'one-up' and that children thus educated, whatever their ability, will have an advantage over their state-educated contemporaries. The less said about this type of parent the better. Fortunately, most parents who choose private education have very good reasons for doing so.

A good start to a child's education is vital and, since the war, classes in many primary schools have been very large so that nervous children or those of

average or below average ability could easily get lost in the crowd and miss out on education altogether. This explains the popularity of the small private preparatory school in which a child has more individual attention and help with particular difficulties. Some children of very good ability certainly do not need to be educated privately: my own children have all been educated in the state system and have all gone on to higher education.

However, this is a free country and parents who wish to pay for education are perfectly entitled to do so – they could spend their money much less wisely. There are, nonetheless, two great dangers in having a private system running alongside the state system. One is the development of a privileged class, with the result that people get the top jobs not on the basis of ability but of who they are and where they went to school. If this country is to survive, we must educate our best brains to the highest possible standard – irrespective of their social and financial standing. The other is that we shall need a highly skilled and adaptable workforce capable of dealing with the advanced technology of the future, and this will require an efficient state system of education possessing all the necessary advanced equipment.

> Where did you look on the line? Did you skim/scan? Did you go backwards/forwards? Did you stop to look at every word? Did you stop to think at all?

As teachers we may want to offer our learners one effective reading strategy, which might be to approach this text by noting the title first of all. This clearly points ahead to what the writer will be saying and how the argument develops at various stages in the text itself, when the author is giving approval and disapproval to various types of parent. The reader may also put 'schematic' knowledge into operation: in other words, an understanding of the background to the British education system, the state-versus-private-education debate, the British Empire, the class system. This 'top-down' processing would interact with the text as would the 'bottom-up' processing at the lexical level. The reader may also get through the passage by means of what are sometimes referred to as the discourse signposts in the text: expressions such as 'however', 'fortunately', and 'there are, nonetheless', which are meant as a useful guide for the reader.

6.6   Implications

Teachers should provide students with a purpose for reading by supplying materials that stimulate interest and do not have an overfamiliar content. Of all the language skills, reading is the most private, and there is a problem in

getting feedback on a private process. The notion of privacy in reading can sometimes be related to learner needs: a learner may need material of a different level and topic to other learners in the group, which may involve the teacher in the provision of some individualized reading in the programme. Reading practised with reading laboratories and/or self-access centres may well be more pertinent to some learners' needs. (For a full discussion of individualization and self-access systems, see Chapter 12.) We also have to be able to assess the difficulty of the materials for our own learners and to grade them according to familiarity of topic, length and complexity of structure and possible number of unfamiliar words/expressions, as overloading learners with too much may involve them in decoding vocabulary at the expense of reading for meaning. We can also develop and foster appropriate skills according to reading purpose, for example by encouraging students to read quickly when it is appropriate to do so. Timed activities or 'speed reading' can be related to the private nature of the reading process that we mentioned earlier. In other words, reading quickly with good overall comprehension does not necessarily have to be made competitive with other students as the individual student and/or the teacher can keep a record of how long it takes to extract information from a given source. Consequently, the transferability of principled flexible skills to different types of reading materials is one of the most effective things to develop in the reading skills class.

6.7   Classroom Practice and Procedure

On a worldwide level, the format of teaching reading skills may vary according to local circumstances. Many teachers consider dividing reading into intensive, classroom-based work with an adjunctive extensive reading programme to give further out-of-class practice. Some classes will be called 'reading' and will therefore focus primarily on the development of reading skills. Sometimes teachers include reading skills as part of another class either for reasons of expediency – because there is only one timetabled period for English – or for reasons of principle – because they believe that reading is best integrated with the other skills such as writing. The following suggestions for classroom practice and procedure will be of interest to teachers of reading skills.

   After reviewing all the recent developments in reading pedagogy, Eskey (2005: 574) argues that 'People learn to read, and to read better, by reading'. He wisely points out that 'The reading teacher's job is . . . not so much to teach a specific skill or content as to get students reading and to keep them reading – that is, to find a way to motivate them to read, and to facilitate their reading. . .'.

   R. V. White (1981) makes some suggestions that are still applicable today about the stages and procedure of a reading lesson that may help us (1) to

put the skill into a classroom context, and (2) to see some of its possible relationships with the other language skills:

Stage 1   Arouse the students' interest and motivation by linking the topic of the text to their own experience or existing knowledge. Give some pre-reading/focusing questions to help them to do this.

Stage 2   Give them points to search for in the reading text, or ask the students to suggest the points.

Stage 3   After reading, encourage a discussion of answers.

Stage 4   Develop into writing by using the information gained for another purpose.

Tomlinson (2003b: 113–21) offers a detailed account of his flexible text-driven framework, which facilitates the development and teaching of materials based on engaging texts. He then provides an actual example of a text and how it can be exploited using his framework. The teaching procedure involves five stages (see the original article for a complete version for materials development):

Stage 1   Readiness Activities – Help the learners achieve readiness for experiencing the text prior to reading by raising curiosity and motivation through activating their existing knowledge or experience.

Stage 2   Experiential Activities – Help the learners to process the text in an experiential way through while-reading activities.

Stage 3   Intake Response Activities – Help the learners to articulate and develop their mental representation of the text through articulating which facilitates the development and teaching of materials based on their impressions or reactions to the text.

Stage 4   Development Activities – Help the learners to use their representation of the text as a basis for creative language production activities.

Stage 5   Input Response Activities – Help the learners to go back to the text and to discover patterns and regularities of language use in the text.

After exploring the texts in Stage 5, Tomlinson encourages revisiting and improving the work produced in Stage 4. What emerges from his description and example is an overall sequence of starting from the learners' minds to text exploration and back to the learners' minds, thus encouraging the integration of new with existing knowledge and experience.

Look at the reading passage 'Paying to Learn' on pp 120–1. How could you develop it within the framework outlined above?

Davies (1995) argues the case for providing reading classes and texts that allow students to interact and question the text and to ask about what they do not know, in the belief that this will foster critical readers. Janks (2009) further explores critical awareness elements in literacy and links theory and practice in relation to how language is used by different users for different purposes in diverse social contexts.

Finally, there are teachers who may want or need to design their own reading course within a particular institution. In some cases, L2 readers may require more fundamental literacy education prior to skills/strategy or extensive reading programmes. Reading experts have come to realize that phonological competence is a prerequisite for fluent reading through the neurobiological studies of poor L1 readers (Shaywitz and Shaywitz, 2008). Masuhara (2007), based on her comparative review of L1 and L2 reading acquisition and development, points out that in L1, children spend about five years in aural-oral language acquisition prior to learning how to read whereas in the L2, the learning of language and reading takes place at the same time. She points out the remarkable resemblance in study results of reading difficulties of L1 poor readers and L2 readers and makes some recommendations that incorporate recent insights into reading programmes (see also Masuhara, 2003 and 2005 for examples). Tomlinson (2001) proposes ways of making a smooth transition from an aural/oral phase to effective reading.

Nunan (1999) considers five essential steps involved in designing reading courses:

1   Decide the overall purpose of the reading course within a wider pedagogical framework.
2   Identify the types of texts and tasks that the course requires.
3   Identify the linguistic elements to be covered (consider what is going to be important: grammatical items/lexis/discourse/specific purpose etc.).
4   Integrate texts and tasks into class-based work units.
5   Link reading to other language skills where pertinent (reading as a mono-skill is only taught in some very narrow-angle library language situations. Hence, it is useful to think how reading can usefully be integrated with the other language skills. (See Chapter 10 for further discussion.)

Now let us look at a range of ways for developing reading skills in the classroom and the principles behind each of them:

1   Practising specific strategies such as skimming/scanning with a particular text. The idea behind this is to enable the learner to read and select specific information at the expense of other (redundant) information.

2   One effective way of developing reading skills, which gives the learner a reason for reading, is to use the information gap principle often associated with communicative language teaching. In the materials that use information gap principle, the information required for the completion of a target task is distributed among two or more sources. Each subgroup only has part of the information required to complete the task. The subgroups consequently have to exchange their information so that the information gap is filled and the target task completed. This activity links reading with other forms of communication, for example, speaking/discussion or listening/writing, and can thus provide a reading-driven integration of the language skills.

3   Several of the more recent materials for reading contain what are sometimes referred to as 'text scrambling' activities. The principle behind this type of material is that students can be taught to have an awareness of the discourse or cohesive features of reading materials. If a passage is clearly written, then it can be 'scrambled' and reassembled in the correct order if the learner can recognize the discourse patterns and markers in the text.

4   Some reading materials are constructed along the lines that the learners bring not only background knowledge to reading but emotional (affective) responses as well, and will want to talk about their reactions to various texts.

5   In some instances, depending on the learners and their proficiency, it is feasible to ask the learners themselves to provide reading texts or to research their own material for analysis and discussion in class, particularly in an EAP (English for Academic Purposes) context. Learners often need to read through a lot of material before they select an appropriate piece of material or article. With the advent of the World Wide Web, teachers working in institutions with computers may wish to encourage this. (See Chapters 5 and 12 for more discussion of Web-based teaching and learning.)

6   Teachers need to think about choosing reading passages that provide learners with a way of questioning and interacting with the text (Davies, 1995) to ascertain for example what the writer thinks, not necessarily explicitly, about an issue or topic.

1   Examine your own materials for reading. To what extent do they incorporate these principles? Which are different?
2   Decide which types of reading skills you could develop with the following materials. Start with the nature of the text and then look at what kinds of skills could come from it.

9 Tall stories

Here are four 'tall stories' – stories which are probably not true, but people enjoy telling them. Sometimes they are called urban myths. Read them and decide whether you think they really happened or not.

Safety first!

Did you hear about the plane which crashed somewhere in South America as it was coming in to land?

Apparently, it was fitted with a device which warns the pilot that he is approaching the ground – a Ground Warning Alarm (GWA) system. Some pilots find this warning irritating so they switch it off.

When the black box was examined, the crash was blamed on pilot error. The decision had been easy to reach. When the plane had been coming in to land, the GWA had gone off, telling the pilot he was too close to the ground. On the tape the pilot can be heard saying, "Shut up, you stupid machine!" Then you hear the sound of the crash.

True story or myth?

What a rat!

Then there was the story of the couple who were in Thailand on holiday. The morning after they arrived, they found a thin little cat sitting on their balcony. They immediately fell in love with it. They cleaned it and fed it. By the time they were ready to leave, they couldn't bear to be parted from it.

They arranged for the cat to come home with them. Waiting at home was their pet poodle. The poodle and the cat seemed to get on together very well, so the couple decided to go out for dinner. When they got back, they found their sitting room covered in poodle hair and the dog halfway down the cat's throat!

It turned out the cat was not a cat, but an enormous Thai water rat!

True story or myth?

Drowned in a drain

A man from Wakefield in Yorkshire went out one night for a few drinks at his local pub. He left his car in the street near the pub. When he decided to go home, he went out to his car, took out the keys, and then accidentally dropped them down a drain in the road.

He could see the keys down the drain on top of some leaves. So, he managed to lift the drain cover, but the key was too far down for him to reach. He lay down in order to reach them. Suddenly, he fell into the drain head first. Just as he did that it started to rain heavily. Nobody heard his cries for help. The next morning he was found drowned, his head down the drain, his legs sticking up in the air.

True story or myth?

Sunk by flying cow

A few years ago, the crew of a Japanese fishing boat were rescued from the wreckage of their boat in the Sea of Japan. They said that their boat had been sunk by a cow falling out of the sky. Nobody believed them.

A few weeks later the Russian Air Force admitted that the crew of one of their planes had stolen a cow in Siberia and put it into the plane's cargo hold.

At 30,000 feet the cow started to run around the plane out of control. The crew decided there was only one thing they could do. So, they opened the cargo door and the cow jumped out, landing on top of the Japanese fishing boat.

True story or myth?

Read one of these stories again at home. You will be asked to tell it to the class at the next lesson. If you like this kind of story, they are all on the Web. Find them under 'urban myths'. Bring one in to class!

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Task 3 (Pairs)

Work in pairs, A and B.

Student A: Read Text 1. Note briefly in your section of the table the 'orthodox' view on the three aspects of work listed in the text.

Student B: Read Text 2. Note briefly in your section of the table the author's view on the three aspects of work listed in the text.

	Text 1	*Text 2*
NATURE OF WORK		
EFFECT OF WORKING CONDITIONS		
MOTIVATION FOR WORK		

Text 1 'Orthodox' view

THE orthodox view of work which has been accepted by most managers and industrial psychologists is a simple one, and fifty years of industrial psychology and more than a century of managerial practice have been founded upon it. Regarding the *nature* of work, the orthodox view accepts the Old Testament 5 belief that physical labour is a curse imposed on man as a punishment for his sins and that the sensible man labours solely in order to keep himself and his family alive, or, if he is fortunate, in order to make a sufficient surplus to enable him to do the things he really likes.* Regarding the *conditions* of work, it is 10 assumed that improving the conditions of the job will cause the worker's natural dislike of it to be somewhat mitigated, and, in addition, will keep him physically healthy and therefore more efficient in the mechanistic sense. Finally, regarding the *motiva-tion* of work, the carrot and stick hypothesis asserts that the main 15 positive incentive is money, the main negative one fear of un-employment.

Brown, J.A.C. (1954) *The Social Psychology of Industry*, p. 186 (London: Penguin).

Text 2 Author's view

(1) Work is an essential part of a man's life since it is that aspect of his life which gives him status and binds him to society. Ordinarily men and women like their work, and at most periods of history always have done so. When they do not like it, the fault lies in the psy- 5 chological and social conditions of the job rather than in the worker. Furthermore, work is a *social* activity.

(2) The morale of the worker (i.e. whether or not he works willingly) has no *direct* relationship whatsoever to the material conditions of the job. Investigations into 10 temperature, lighting, time and motion study, noise, and humidity have not the slightest bearing on morale, although they may have a bearing on physical health and comfort.

(3) There are many incentives, of which, under normal 15 conditions, money is one of the least important. Unemployment is a powerful negative incentive, precisely because (1) is true. That is to say, unemployment is feared because it cuts man off from his society.

Brown, J.A.C. op cit., p. 187.

Task 4 (Pairs)

Find out from your partner the views expressed in his or her text. Note them in the appropriate section of the table in Task 3.

Now read each other's text to check if anything has been missed out.

Task 5 (Groups)

Work in groups. Discuss your own views and those expressed in the texts. Do you agree with either text? Have your views changed through reading the texts?

Source: E. Glendinning and B. Holmstrom, *Study Reading, A Course in Reading Skills for Academic Purpose*, excercise from pp. 104–5. Copyright © Cambridge University Press, 1992. Reprinted with permission of Cambridge University Press.
Source: J. A. C. Brown, *The Social Psychology of Industry*, p. 186. London: Penguin, 1954. Reprinted with permission of Penguin Books, UK.

6.8   Feedback to Learners

Earlier in the chapter we mentioned that reading is essentially a private activity. However, it remains a fact that as we 'teach' reading skills in the classroom, this often requires us to have some sort of observable (testable) outcome. In its most extreme form, this may be embodied in the materials themselves, which sometimes do little more than test the students rather than helping them to develop different, relevant reading skills.

Questions to learners can be in either written or spoken form and it is generally thought that a balance of the two is appropriate for most learning situations.

One way of thinking about reading comprehension questions is to consider the form of the question; for example, yes/no, true/false, multiple choice, non-verbal matrix to be completed, open-ended question and the type of question, what the question is trying to get out of the reader.

Nuttall (2005) identifies five basic question types commonly used for reading. The first of these is literal comprehension. By this she means that if readers do not understand the literal meaning of a particular text, then they are probably not going to get very much else out of that text. The second is reorganizing or putting the information in the text into a different order. Then come questions of inferring or 'reading between the lines'. Writers do not always state explicitly what they mean. An efficient reader can infer meaning not explicitly stated in the passage. This may be seen as an intellectual skill as opposed to a reading skill by some, although there is clearly a measure of overlap. Question types requiring a measure of personal response are often to be found in literary passages where the reader has to argue for a particular personal response supported by reference to the text. The last type of question is quite sophisticated and not all students would need it. Questions of evaluation would require the reader to assess how effectively the writer has conveyed her intention. If the writing is intended to convince or to persuade, how convincing or persuasive is it?

When evaluating questions for use with particular learners, there may not be enough of the right type or form to match their purpose or what the teacher knows about their personal background. A variety of different question forms and types that enable learners to use their different reading skills in appropriate ways is of most use.

Look at the following question, which accompanies the passage 'Paying to Learn' on pp 120–21. What form and type of question is it, according to Nuttall's classification outlined above?

'Complete the following chart with reasons why parents send their children to private schools and state whether the author considers each reason valid or not'.

Reason	Valid? Yes/No
a.	
b.	
c.	
d.	

Asking questions of the learner is not the only way to check comprehension. It is increasingly common to find materials that require the learner to extract meaning from them and then to use that information in order to do something else – such as jigsaw reading or tasks such as assembling an object from a set of instructions. Successful reading thus enables a certain task to be completed. In many respects, this is more akin to what most people do in their L1 or in the 'real' world; it is rare for people to have to answer questions on what they have read (see Van den Branden, 2006 for a general introduction to task-based approaches and also for actual examples of materials for different kinds of learners).

6.9   Vocabulary and Vocabulary Teaching: Recent Developments

A knowledge and understanding of vocabulary is often considered to be an integral part of a reader's overall competence in a foreign or second language, and the explicit teaching of vocabulary (sometimes linked to a reading class) has enjoyed something of a revival in recent years. Some teachers prefer to include vocabulary as part of their reading class as the following material helps to illustrate. Other teachers prefer to think of vocabulary as an area that merits its own syllabus and materials.

2 Before reading

After you have matched these words with their meanings, look them up in your dictionary to check that you fully understand them.

1. suspend
2. container
3. controversial
4. motive
5. consent
6. protester
7. pickled
8. formaldehyde

a. permission
b. very likely to cause an argument or protest
c. hang
d. reason for doing something (often criminal)
e. a bottle, can, jar or similar thing
f. a liquid used to preserve things
g. a person who disagrees in a public way
h. preserved (often in vinegar)

ART ATTACK

A man almost destroyed a work of art, worth £25,000, in a London art gallery yesterday. The work of art consisted of a glass container with a dead sheep suspended in formaldehyde.

The protester poured black ink into the case while it was on display at the Serpentine Gallery. Gallery staff were shocked as they saw the protester run away after first changing the name of the work to 'Black Sheep'.

The controversial work was originally called 'Away from the Flock'. It was the latest in a long line of animals pickled by famous British artist Damien Hirst. Neither the police nor gallery staff could think of a motive for the attack, other than the fact that it might be a protest about its controversial nature.

Hirst spent last night emptying the case and cleaning the animal in the hope that it might be repaired. Hirst said recently of the sculpture "I don't think it's shocking. It gets people interested in art. The worst thing is if someone just walks through a gallery without seeing anything." However, he went on to say, "People can't come in and mess about with exhibits without the artist's consent. But it could have been worse. Someone could have come in with a hammer."

Hirst has stated that he intends to pickle his grandmother in formaldehyde when she dies, but only if she gives her consent!

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Since the 1990s, language teachers have been able to benefit from the growth in computer-generated corpora, which has provided information about word frequency and how these words can be used in a range of spoken and written situations. The COBUILD Bank of English Corpus, the British National Corpus and the Cambridge International Corpus have already been referred to in Chapter 2. Major dictionaries nowadays are based on the new understanding of language which results from surveying corpus data. In the Longman Dictionary, for example, the 3000 most frequent words in writing

and speech are given special attention. (Refer to Chapter 2 again for a full discussion of the lexical approach.)

Research into vocabulary and vocabulary acquisition shows that we have not explicitly been taught the majority of words that we know in a language (Carter, 2001). This raises some interesting questions for the teaching of vocabulary. Beyond a certain point of proficiency in learning a foreign or second language, the acquiring of any new vocabulary is probably going to be implicit rather than explicit. Many practitioners believe that vocabulary development is essentially what is known as an explicit–implicit continuum, where learners may benefit from explicit or implicit learning depending on the stage of their language learning career.

6.10   Vocabulary: What to Teach?

> What is your overall approach to vocabulary and vocabulary teaching? Do you teach vocabulary in your reading classes or devote separate lessons to it? Why is this?

Teaching vocabulary in its narrowest sense is teaching the individual words of the language that we expect learners to acquire. However, we know from our knowledge of language that an understanding and production of any sort of 'text' normally involves more language than using a simple word in isolation. Hence, learners may need to progress beyond the basic grammar of regular and irregular verbs and nouns, for example, and be taught more complex multi-word verbs and idioms in context such as 'put someone through on the phone' or someone who 'puts in for a promotion' or 'decides to call it a day'. Lewis (1993) argues that prepositions, modal verbs and delexical verbs (take a swim, have a rest) need to be taught as part of vocabulary development. Lewis (2000) contains chapters which suggest some classroom activities that will help learners to become aware of collocation, to learn general strategies and to use collocation dictionaries. Ur (1996: 60–3) advocates a type of 'mini-syllabus' of vocabulary items that ideally need to be taught to the majority of foreign language learners. These items would typically include collocations such as to 'throw a ball' but to 'toss a coin'. Learners could work with dictionaries to see how collocations are listed and treated. O'Keeffe et al. (2007) provide a comprehensive account of how corpus data can inform the teaching of vocabulary.

Definitions, connotations and appropriateness

Many learners will need to define various concepts as part of their course. If we define a dog as a common, domestic carnivorous animal to some people, the connotation will be friendly and loyal, whereas to others it will mean perhaps dirty and inferior. Taboo words and slang expressions may have their place in some vocabulary classrooms. Stylistic appropriateness is another aspect of vocabulary work that can be stressed: when to use a formal or informal version of a word, for example.

Other areas to look at may include words of the same or similar meaning (synonyms) and those that mean the opposite (antonyms). Superordinates or words used to denote general concepts to cover specific items can also be useful (see Thornbury, 2002 for practical suggestions).

Teachers might also need to teach the component parts of words and multi-words, particularly prefixes and suffixes, so that learners can readily interpret words in context such as 'disrespectful', 'ungrateful', 'mismatch'.

6.11   Vocabulary: Other Possibilities

Depending on the types of learners we are dealing with, there is also the possibility of looking at lexical fields in a subject area such as economics or science where associated vocabulary items are linked to a wider picture. New inventions lead to the introduction of neologisms or new words and expressions in the language, which can be a rich source of vocabulary development work. In recent years, we have seen the introduction of new subjects and expressions such as 'ecommerce'; 'email virus'; 'surfing the Net'; 'wading through a ton of emails' and so on. Given the nature of English as a global or international language, some teachers may wish to concentrate on aspects of vocabulary that differ in, say, British and American English.

New innovations in learning technologies over the past decade or so have also opened up possibilities for teachers to link vocabulary work to computers and the Internet. The corpus-based dictionaries allow further permutations for teachers organizing classroom work, as learners can work individually or in pairs with online versions of these dictionaries (for useful classroom activities, see Fox, 1998; Reppen, 2011 and Willis, J 2011 in Tomlinson, 2003a). These online versions often have task sheets or worksheets incorporated so that learners can approach vocabulary from a wide variety of perspectives. Learners may also wish to keep a learning diary of their progress and feelings about their vocabulary development. This idea is explored further in Chapter 12.

6.12 Conclusion

We began this chapter by examining some of the reasons why we read, as well as the types of material we might typically read in our daily lives. We then considered how our understanding of the reading process and how changes in the concept of reading skills have affected approaches to the design of materials for the teaching of reading, particularly the insights offered by Schema theory. We then looked at these implications for classroom practice and procedure and discussed a range of approaches and materials that feature in reading classrooms. Next we looked at some of the different ways available to teachers for providing feedback to learners on their reading. Finally, we considered some of the different approaches involved in teaching and learning vocabulary.

> In what ways might your approaches to the teaching of reading be modified as a result of this chapter?

6.13 Further Reading

The following books provide a useful insight into the area:

1 Alderson, J. C. (2000): *Assessing Reading Summarises Various Ways of Assessing Reading Skills*.
2 Birch, B. M. (2006): *English L2 Reading: Getting to the Bottom Looks onto the Influence of L1 in Linguistics Processing During Reading*.
3 Grave, W. (2009): *Reading in a Second Language: Moving from Theory to Practice*. This gives a theoretical and pedagogical overview.
4 Nuttall, C. (2005): *Teaching Reading Skills in a Foreign Language*, 3rd edition.

7

Listening Skills

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has pointed us in the direction of several themes, both of principle and practice, that will be relevant for the consideration of listening skills to which we now turn. Most obviously, we are dealing with the other key skill under the heading of 'comprehension', and it is simple common sense to assume that reading and listening will share a number of underlying characteristics. The language teaching world turned its attention to listening rather later than it did to reading comprehension (see Rost, 2001 for a brief but useful background of how teaching listening evolved; see also Field, 2008 for a more extensive account). This was due in part to the relevance of quite a large body of research on reading: more importantly, the 'library language' perspective was significant in English language classrooms long before a shrinking world and increased international interdependence led to a greater focus on face-to-face language skills. Even now, however, many learners do not have much opportunity to interact with native speakers, let alone travel to English-speaking countries, so this time lag in the attention given to the different skills is readily understandable. This lack of opportunities, however, should not result in neglect of this fundamental source of language acquisition. As Rost (2005: 503) confirms, 'In L2 development, listening constitutes not only a skill area in performance, but also a primary means of acquiring a second language (see also Masuhara, 2007 for a review of studies that investigate how listening skills are a prerequisite in acquiring reading skills). Recent listening skills publications (Flowerdew and Miller, 2005; Field, 2008;

Wilson, 2008) reflect the awareness in the field of English language teaching of the important role that listening plays in language acquisition.

This chapter will first briefly consider the similarities between reading and listening comprehension, and the ways in which they differ. We shall then examine the nature of listening as a skill and the features of the spoken language to which the skill is applied. Implications for the classroom will be looked at in detail, together with an exploration of how teaching materials reflect the current state of knowledge. As with reading, we shall concentrate somewhat artificially on listening as an individual, discrete skill (although it should be evident that the chapter both looks back to reading and ahead to speaking skills). It is important to be able to pick out the key characteristics of a particular skill, and the integration of skills is to be given explicit treatment in the final chapter in Part II of the book.

7.2   Reasons for Listening

Pause for a moment and jot down the kinds of things you have listened to in the last few days, both in English and in your own L1.

Do you listen in the same way? If not, why not? Try to think what makes the difference.

The authors' own list is set out here in the order in which the items came to mind:

- Listening to the radio: news, a play, Parliament, a comedy programme (sometimes on a car radio).
- Conversations with neighbours, colleagues, friends.
- Answering the telephone at home and at work.
- Overhearing other people talking to each other: on a bus, in the office.
- Attending a lecture.
- Listening to arrival and departure announcements at the railway station.
- Watching TV.
- Listening to a list of names being read out at a prize-giving.
- While working in the library, trying not to listen to other people talking.

There are several points that we might notice here and that will recur in the course of this chapter. Firstly, there is great range and variety in the type of 'input' – in length or topic, for example. Secondly, in some situations we

are listeners only, in others our listening skills form just a part of a whole interaction, and an ability to respond appropriately is equally important. Listening, in other words, may or may not be participatory and reciprocal. Thirdly, there are different purposes involved (to get information, to socialize, to be entertained and so on), so the degree of attention given and possibly the strategies used will differ. A related point is whether we are listening in a face-to-face situation, or through another medium such as the radio or a station intercom system: in some cases, interference or background noise may affect our ability to process what is being said. A fifth factor is to consider the people involved in the listening context – how many of them, their roles, and our relationship with them. Finally, we should note that in many situations, a visual element gives important clues beyond the words used.

7.3   The Relationship between Listening and Reading

It is useful now to highlight some of the ways in which reading and listening comprehension are both related and different. This short section will therefore act as a bridge, linking our earlier consideration of reading with a framework for thinking about listening skills.

What do reading and listening have in common?

We have seen that the traditional labelling of reading as a 'passive' skill is both misleading and incorrect: this is now well recognized as being equally so for listening. Like the reader, the listener is involved, for instance, in guessing, anticipating, checking, interpreting, interacting and organizing. It is worth quoting Vandergrift (1999: 168) in full to reinforce this point:

> Listening comprehension is anything but a passive activity. It is a complex, active process in which the listener must discriminate between sounds, understand vocabulary and structures, interpret stress and intonation, retain what was gathered in all of the above, and interpret it within the immediate as well as the larger sociocultural context of the utterance. Co-ordinating all this involves a great deal of mental activity on the part of the learner. Listening is hard work. . . .

Rost writes that 'Listening consists of three basic processing phases that are simultaneous and parallel: decoding, comprehension and interpretation'. He provides a brief summary of each phase:

> *Decoding* involves attention, speech perception, word recognition, and grammatical parsing; *comprehension* includes activation of prior knowledge, representing *propositions* in short term memory, and logical inference; *interpretation* encompasses comparison of meanings with prior expectations, activating *participation frames*, and evaluation of discourse meanings. Each of

these phases contributes to the larger goal of finding what is relevant to the listener in the input, and what kind of response may be required. (2005: 504, italics in the source)

In addition to this psycholinguistic account of the listening process, Flowerdew and Miller's (2005) listening model pays attention to more individualistic and variable dimensions such as the learners themselves, social contexts and cross-cultural interactions.

Rost (1990) even sees the listener in certain circumstances as 'co-authoring' the discourse, not just waiting to be talked to and to respond, but by his responses actually helping to construct it. There are of course times when we choose to 'switch off' and pay no attention to what is being said to us, in which case we have decided not to engage our capacity. In other words, we can make the following distinctions, with their reading skill parallels:

Attention	Recognition
Listening	Hearing
Reading	Seeing

So just as we might see an object but either not recognize it or regard it as significant, so we can distinguish 'Can you hear that man?' from 'Listen to what he's saying.'

What human beings seem to have, then, is a general processing capacity that enables them to deal with written and spoken input. (See Rost, 2005 for further discussion of this point.) The nature of the processing mechanism for listening comprehension, and how it interacts with what is being listened to, will be discussed a little later. We shall also examine some of the potential difficulties for learners of English: just because a general capacity can be identified does not necessarily mean that the two skills can be activated and 'learnt' equally easily. First of all, we shall look at the most obvious differences between reading and listening.

How do they differ?

The clearest way of distinguishing between listening and reading is to think of the medium itself, and the nature of the language used. The next chapter will be concerned in detail with features of the spoken language, but we can introduce some of them here because they affect the listener's – and especially the learner's – ability to understand:

- The medium is sound, and not print. This self-evident statement has a number of implications. We are dealing, for example, with a transient and 'ephemeral' phenomenon that cannot be recaptured once it has passed (unless it is recorded, or we ask for repetition).

- A listening context often contains visual clues, such as gesture, which generally support the spoken words. More negatively, there can also be extraneous noise, such as traffic, or other people talking, which interferes with message reception.
- Information presented in speech tends to be less densely packed than it is on the page, and it may also be more repetitive.
- There is evidence to show that the spoken language is often less complex in its grammatical and discourse structure. At the same time, however, much speech shows unique features of spoken discourse, with new starts in mid-sentence, changes of direction or topic, hesitation and half-finished statements. This is more often observed in informal than in formal speech. Carter and McCarthy (2006) and O'Keeffe et al. (2007) contain a full discussion of the features of spoken English, and will be referred to at greater length in Chapter 8.

These are significant distinctions, which were often blurred in traditional language teaching materials that took the written medium to be necessarily dominant. More recent materials claim to be sensitive both to the skill itself and to the spoken medium. Here are some typical instructions for types of activities and exercises taken from recent coursebooks.

Predicting What People Will Say
Listening for Specific Information
Example:
With a partner, discuss what you think the people in the pictures do for a living….
Listen and see if you were right. (*Innovations Intermediate*, 2004, p. 36)

Fill In the Gaps with the Missing Words
Example:
Now listen again and complete the gaps in these sentences. (*Innovations Intermediate*, p. 36)
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Listening for Gist
Example:
Listen to Michael and Irina. Mark the things in the box they mention, I for Irina and M for Michael. (*New Cutting Edge Intermediate*, p. 30)

economic problems	street names
tourists	language(s) spoken
how clean/dirty the city is	pace of life
new shops and buildings	traffic and driving
standard of living, prices etc.	

Source: S. Cunningham and P. Moor, Extract from p. 30, *New Cutting Edge Intermediate Students' Book*. Pearson Longman, 2005. Reprinted with permission of Pearson Education Ltd.

Listen and Write the Information in the Chart
Example:
Listen to the two journalists talking after the first treatment and write the information in the chart. Listen again to check. (*New English File Intermediate*, 2006. p. 74)
Source: C. Oxenden and C. Latham-Koenig, Unit 5, p. 74, from *New English File Intermediate*, 2006. Copyright © Oxford University Press.

	Stephen		Joanna	
	Marks out of 10	reasons	Marks out of 10	reasons
1 The body polish				
2 The facial				
3 The foot treatment				

Notice in particular that many of the tasks are based on what people do when they listen – on the processing of meaning that we commented on earlier in relation to both reading and listening comprehension. This may be listening to get the general idea, listening to catch something specific, or anticipating what comes next. Again, although content is clearly important, several of the tasks use tables and other ways of recording information, rather than just requiring a (written) full-sentence answer. Nevertheless, as G. White (1998) reminds us, listening to taped material still tends to treat students as passive 'overhearers', even if task types themselves have become increasingly realistic.

We shall now turn to a more detailed consideration of the skill of listening, and to its pedagogic implications.

7.4   The Nature of Listening Comprehension

Product and process

Implicit in what has been said so far is the distinction, already made in Chapter 6, between the twin concepts of 'product' and 'process'. This distinction has become an important one for all language skills, particularly those labelled 'receptive', and it signals an increasing recognition that language as

a fixed system, a 'finished product', is just one part of the picture. It was a major characteristic of language teaching methodology in the 1980s, and more so in the 1990s onwards, that much more attention was paid to human beings as language processors than was previously the case, when 'texts' (whether written or spoken) were presented as objects to be understood. It is arguably with the skill of listening that a 'processing' focus is most crucial, given the transient nature of the language material compared with the relative stability of written texts. Later in this chapter we shall look at how process considerations might come together in different ways for different kinds of learners. For the moment, let us review the nature of the product, and then ask ourselves what proficient listeners actually do.

We have already noted some of the features of authentic spoken language. It varies, for example, in degrees of formality, in length, in the speed of delivery, in the accent of the speaker, in the role of the listener, and according to whether it is face to face or mediated in some way. A number of writers (for instance Brown and Yule, 1983a) make a basic distinction between 'transactional' speech, with one-way information flow from one speaker to another, as in a lecture or a news broadcast, and two-way 'interactional' speech. Rost (1990, 1994) makes an important point in relation to the latter: he refers to it as 'collaborative' and argues that, in such a setting, where we are both listener and speaker, the 'product' cannot be entirely fixed, because we have a part to play in shaping and controlling the direction in which it moves. Carter and McCarthy (2006) and O'Keeffe et al. (2007) provide considerable evidence from corpus data for this collaborative nature of human communication even in formal business communication.

1 If you overheard the following while you were out shopping, how would you interpret it, and what else would you want to hear in order to be able to interpret these words?
   'Really? I didn't know that. How long has she been there?'
   And what would be happening if the shop assistant said to you, 'Five?'
2 Look back at the list you made earlier of the kinds of things you have listened to recently. Take any one of them, and ask yourself how you came to understand what was being said. For example, what aspects do you think you concentrated on? It might have been on the vocabulary, or the speaker's intonation, or some visual element, for instance. Did you understand everything and, if not, what interfered with 'perfect' comprehension?
3 How do you think your own learners would have managed listening to the same thing in English?

Listening skills

As a proficient listener, you will obviously not have achieved understanding in any of these illustrative situations by simply 'hearing' the sound: you will have been processing this stream of noise on a number of levels, which, taken together, make up the concept of 'comprehension'. Let us now look at each of these levels in turn. The first two see the listener as a processor of language, and require a consideration of the micro-skills – the various components of this processing mechanism.

Processing sound   Full understanding, we have noted, cannot come from the sound source alone, but equally obviously, it cannot take place without some processing of what one student of our acquaintance has called a 'word soup'. At its most basic, a language completely unknown to us will sound to our ears like a stream of sound.

  Assuming, however, that listeners can identify which language is being spoken, then they must have the capacity to do at least the following (see Field, 2008 for more detailed discussion):

- Segment the stream of sound and recognize word boundaries. This is complicated in English because of the phenomenon whereby, in connected speech, one sound runs into the next. For example, 'I like it' sounds like/ ai'laikit/ ('I li kit'), 'my name's Ann' like/maineimzæn/ ('My name zan') and so on.
- Recognize contracted forms. 'I'd have gone to London if I'd known about it' sounds very different from its 'full' printed form in many grammar book examples.
- Recognize the vocabulary being used.
- Recognize sentence and clause boundaries in speech.
- Recognize stress patterns and speech rhythm. English sentence stress is fairly regular, and tends to fall on the main information-carrying items (nouns, main verbs, adjectives and adverbs) rather than on articles, pronouns, conjunctions, auxiliaries and so on. Thus, 'I went to the town and had lunch with a friend' gives a standard mix of 'strong' forms (marked with stress) and 'weak' forms (and, a) where the sound is often reduced to /e/. We shall comment later on the language learning difficulties this can cause. Stress patterns can also be systematically varied, to accommodate a particular, intended meaning by the speaker. For example, 'I wás there' (no weak form) carries a tone of insistence; 'Whát did he say?' perhaps suggests surprise or disbelief.
- Recognize stress on longer words, and the effect on the rest of the word. Think of the sound of 'comfortable' or 'interesting', for instance.
- Recognize the significance of language-related ('paralinguistic') features, most obviously intonation. Falling intonation, for example, may indicate

the end of a statement; a rise, that an utterance has not yet been completed and the speaker intends to carry on.

- Recognize changes in pitch, tone and speed of delivery.

None of the micro-skills of listening is used in isolation, of course, and those listed so far merge into the second major processing category, the processing of meaning.

Processing meaning   If you think back to something you listened to earlier today, perhaps a news item that you found particularly interesting, it is extremely unlikely that you will be able to remember any of the sentence patterns, or much more than the vocabulary generally associated with the subject matter. You will, however, be able to recall in some sense what it was 'about'. (We are not referring here to a stretch of language learnt 'by heart', such as a poem.) Research on listening has shown that syntax is lost to memory within a very short time, even a few seconds, whereas meaning is retained for much longer. Richards (1985: 191) comments that 'memory works with propositions, not with sentences', and Underwood (1989) draws a familiar distinction between 'echoic' memory (about one second), 'short-term' memory (a few seconds) and 'long-term' memory. What seems to emerge is that the linguistic codes are processed to create some kind of mental representation in our minds as we construct meaning. White (1998: 55) quotes Kaltenbrook (1994): 'The organisation of a text into message units has an immediate impact on intelligibility. . . . Students need to be shown that spoken language consists of *chunks* rather than isolated lexical items and complete sentences' (italics added).

What listeners appear to be able to do here is

- Organize the incoming speech into meaningful sections. This involves the ability to use linguistic clues to identify discourse boundaries. For example, a person giving a talk may signal a new point by explicit markers such as 'Next' or 'My third point' or 'However'; alternatively, a change in direction or topic may be indicated by intonation, or pauses. Related to this is the use of 'co-text' which means the wider linguistic environment. For example, cohesive clues can be used to establish links between different parts of a spoken 'text'.
- Identify redundant material. Speakers often repeat what they say, either directly or by making the same point in different words. Efficient listeners know how to turn this into a strategy to gain extra processing time to help organize what they hear.

(*Continued*)

- Think ahead, and use language data to anticipate what a speaker may be going on to say. For instance, a lecturer who says, 'So much for the advantages', is obviously going on to talk about disadvantages; a change in intonation may mark a functional shift in a conversation, perhaps from an explanation to an enquiry.
- Store information in the memory and know how to retrieve it later, by organizing meaning as efficiently as possible and avoiding too much attention to immediate detail.

Finally, processing skills are often discussed under two related headings, which are tabulated below (the equivalences are not exact, but they capture the points made in this section):

Processing sound	Processing meaning
Phonological	Semantic
Lower-order/automatic skills	Higher-order skills of organizing and interpreting
Recognition of sounds, words	Comprehension
Localized: the immediate text	Global: the meaning of the whole
Decoding what was said	Reconstruction after processing meaning
Perception	Cognition

We can now summarize the discussion so far. The strategies used for processing meaning are not themselves merely skills of recognition. Although they depend on an ability to recognize key aspects of the sound system, they require the listener to combine, interpret and make sense of the incoming language data. In other words, as we saw in relation to the teaching of reading, we are dealing with the interaction of both 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' processing skills.

In the spirit of the introductory remarks in this chapter and the previous one, the two sets of micro-skills just discussed certainly view the listener as 'active'. However, taken alone, they might imply that listening is an internal processing mechanism, a cognitive device disembodied from everyday life. This is clearly not the case, and as social beings we are equipped with other kinds of capacities, which can be thought of as (1) sensitivity to context, and (2) knowledge. Both are to do with the way in which expectations are set up by the non-linguistic environment. For convenience, we shall take them together.

Context and knowledge   Most statements, taken out of context, are open to a number of interpretations (and incidentally offer a rich source of humour). A simple 'I spoke to him yesterday' may indicate a justification, doubt, a proof that the other person was where he was supposed to be, straightforward information, a statement on which further action will be based and so on. Its meaning will usually be clear from the context in which it was said. 'Context' here is taken to cover physical setting (home, office, school etc.), the number of listeners/speakers, their roles and their relationship to each other. Rost refers to this as 'pragmatic context', distinguishing it from syntactic and semantic. He is critical of the information-processing model of comprehension where the listener is seen as 'a language processor who performs actions in a fixed order, independently of contextual constraints' (Rost, 1990: 7). He pushes the significance of the social context further in an interesting discussion of 'collaborative' or 'interactional' speech (see also Chapter 8 of this book). His point, essentially, is that the listener interprets what is being said, constructs a meaning and responds on the basis of that interpretation. The listener is therefore a key figure in the shaping of the whole interaction: in this view, the listening context is open-ended, likely to change direction and not fixed in advance.

Finally, we turn to the knowledge that listeners bring to a listening experience. This may be knowledge of a topic or a set of facts. A student following a course in (say) computing, will gradually accumulate a body of information and technical vocabulary to which he can 'refer' in each new class or lecture; if my neighbour has a new grandchild and comes to tell me about it, then I have some idea of the direction the conversation will take. Previous knowledge is not necessarily as detailed as in these examples. Schema theory, as we saw in Chapter 6, highlighted the fact that we are equipped with pre-organized knowledge of many kinds. It may be that we simply have a set of general expectations when entering a listening situation. If we switch on the TV news, we can probably anticipate both its format and the kind of topic that will occur; if we go to a children's tea party, we expect certain behaviour patterns, and are unlikely to hear a discussion on nuclear physics. These frames of reference are also social and cultural. As members of a particular culture, we have learned the rules of conversational behaviour, and specific topics 'trigger' specific ideas and images.

Listening comprehension, then, is not only a function of the interplay between language on the one hand and what the brain does with it on the other: it also requires the activation of contextual information and previous knowledge. White (1998: 8–9) lists under the following headings all the subskills that go to make up the overall skill of listening,

• perception skills
• language skills
• knowledge of the world

- dealing with information
- interacting with a speaker

and comments that 'good listeners need to be able to use a combination of sub-skills simultaneously when processing spoken language: the skill they will need at any particular moment will depend on the kind of text they are listening to, and their reasons for listening to it'.

At this point you might like to think back to the tasks early in this section, and look at your comments in the light of the present discussion. There is no 'right answer', except to tell you that when the shop assistant said 'Five?' she knew that I always bought a certain kind of bread roll and a certain number. Her one-word query was enough to trigger the frame of reference for both of us, and a simple 'Yes please' was all that was required.

Many of these points are explicitly acknowledged in materials for the teaching of listening. In the *Introduction to Intermediate Listening* (Brewster, 1991: 2), for example, the writer makes the following points:

- We sometimes have an idea of what we are going to hear.
- We listen for a variety of reasons.
- Important information-carrying words are normally pronounced with more stress.
- In face-to-face interaction, gestures and expression are important, as well as the actual words used.
- Natural speech is characterized by hesitation, repetition, rephrasing and self-correction.

These observations still stand in the light of current thinking.

7.5   Listening Comprehension: Teaching and Learning

> Before reading on, consider your own situation. To what extent do any of the materials you use to teach listening take into account the components we have been discussing? How might the various components of listening comprehension help your learners to listen more effectively?

In a competent listener, the micro-skills we have been surveying are engaged automatically. Language learners, however articulate in their L1, are confronted with a rich and complex medium, a daunting array of skills and a foreign language. We shall first comment briefly on the kinds of difficulties

that learners typically experience in relation to what proficient listeners appear to do. We shall then raise some issues about the application of the discussion so far to the classroom environment. Finally, in this section, we shall explore the ways in which teaching materials have developed in line with an increased understanding of the nature of the skill.

Learners

There is, of course, no such person as the 'typical learner'. Learners are at various stages of proficiency, and they differ across a range of characteristics – age, interests, learning styles, aptitude, motivation and so on. The only claim that can be made is that learners, by definition, are not fully competent listeners in the target language. We can suggest, in other words, that they will be operating somewhere on a scale of approximation to full proficiency. With this in mind, several general observations can be made, which at the same time are not true of all learners everywhere.

Firstly, it seems that there is a tendency to focus on features of sound at the expense of 'co-text' – the surrounding linguistic environment. For example, in 'The East German government has resigned. Leaders are meeting to discuss the growing unrest in the country' the learner heard 'rest' and did not notice the prefix, despite the clear implication of national instability coming from the passage. A second, related point is that previous knowledge and/or context may be largely ignored in the interests of a mishearing. One student, rather improbably, claimed to have heard 'fish and chips' in a talk on telecommunications. Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000: 103) give a similar example of a student hearing 'communist' when the lecturer had said 'commonest'. This kind of listening error can be difficult to separate, thirdly, from mishearings caused by using an inappropriate frame of reference: another student, possibly thinking of a sadly familiar problem in her own country, heard 'plastic bullets' for 'postal ballots' in a text that was explicitly about electoral procedure. Fourthly, there is sometimes a reluctance to engage other levels of the listening skill to compensate for not understanding a particular stretch of language. For example, a learner may be unwilling to take risks by guessing, or anticipating, or establishing a framework for understanding without worrying about details, perhaps by using, in Rost's terms, 'points of transition relevance' (Rost, 1990: 100). The most frequently quoted example here is that of a teacher beginning a lesson by saying, 'First of all . . .'. If this is not processed phonologically, learners often do not understand at all, or sometimes suppose that a holiday is being announced, having heard 'festival'. Either way, the lesson cannot proceed until the misunderstanding is cleared up.

Underwood (1989) looks at the same points from another angle, and suggests that potential problems arise for seven main reasons:

1   The learner–listener cannot control speed of delivery.
2   He/she cannot always get things repeated.
3   He/she has a limited vocabulary.
4   He/she may fail to recognize 'signals'.
5   He/she may lack contextual knowledge.
6   It can be difficult to concentrate in a foreign language.
7   The learner may have established certain learning habits, such as a wish to understand every word.

What all this amounts to is that learners sometimes 'hear' rather than 'listen'. They appear to suspend their own mother tongue skills, which would allow them to approach a listening task as a multilevel process. Instead there is a marked tendency to depend too much on the lower-order skills, leading to attempts at phonological decoding rather than attention to the wider message. It is interesting, however, to note a recent counter argument. Field (2008), based on his review of research, argues that what distinguishes expert listeners from unskilled ones is their ability to decode with ease. The expert listeners seem to seek contextual clues when there is a problem in decoding (e.g. noise in the environment). Consistent heavy reliance on contextual clues may be a characteristic of unskilled listeners, compensating for their under-developed decoding skills. It seems that learners need to be able to do both bottom-up and top-down processing.

Classroom applications: some issues

How, then, can the points that have been made in this chapter be reflected, directly or indirectly, in the classroom? Every classroom has its own set of objectives and its own 'climate' and patterns of relationships, all within a specific educational environment. It is therefore not surprising if the principles of language and language processing are taken only variably into account. Imagine the classroom as a filter for some of the following issues, which are set out as questions to consider for your own situation rather than as a 'recipe book' of ready answers. The section on materials will refer to these points again.

- Research into listening comprehension has shown that we are dealing with a complex skill. At the same time, our job is to teach language. What is a suitable balance for the classroom between 'tasks' (the skill) and 'text' (the language material)?
- How closely should the classroom attempt to replicate authentic language and authentic listening tasks? As we have seen, a real-life listening experience is highly complex and is unlikely to transfer easily to the classroom, except perhaps with advanced learners. Mishan (2005) argues that the results of current research appear to favour the use of authentic texts for

language learning in comparison to using simplified texts. She then suggests various ways of designing authenticity into language learning materials using various texts such as newspapers, songs, films and ICT (i.e. Information and Communication Technologies), principally the Internet and email.

- To what extent should spoken material be modified for presentation in the classroom?
- Is it more appropriate to grade tasks (using the micro-skills of listening as a starting point) from 'lower' to 'higher order', or is it preferable to make sure that global understanding has been achieved before focusing on detail? In other words, should we first make sure that learners can listen 'for gist'?
- What resources do we need to teach listening comprehension effectively? Is audio equipment sufficient, or does it leave out the non-linguistic information that video or TV might capture? Is it possible that sometimes the teacher may be more effective in creating a listening environment than the availability of a piece of electronic equipment?
- We can think of the listener's role on a scale of decreasing involvement from participant to addressee to overhearer (adapted from Rost, 1990). Is it possible that the classroom stresses the last of these at the expense of the others? We typically expect our students to listen to (perhaps taped) conversations between other people. We mentioned White's (1998) criticism of this earlier in the chapter. She goes on to propose some extensive possibilities for developing an alternative approach, where students can become participants and even develop their own tasks and materials.

7.6 Materials for Teaching Listening Comprehension

What materials, if any, do you have available for teaching listening? Do you have special supplementary materials, or is listening practice incorporated into a main coursebook? Is it necessary to devise your own listening exercises?

Traditionally, much classroom practice consisted of the teacher reading aloud a written text, one or more times, slowly and clearly, and then asking a number of comprehension questions about it. The skill itself was not given much attention, nor were the characteristics of natural spoken English. The objective was to provide an alternative way of presenting language and testing that it had been understood.

There is nothing wrong with this approach in itself, but it could not claim to be teaching listening comprehension. Many current materials, on the other hand, manipulate both language and tasks, and take into account a range of micro-skills, listener roles, topics and text types. There is space here only to illustrate the main trends. Many more examples will be found in the further reading listed at the end of the chapter (see particularly White, 1998 and Field, 2008).

The first thing to say is that the components of listening – processing sound, organizing meaning, and using knowledge and context – provide a convenient way of laying out the issues, but they are not there to be transferred directly to a teaching sequence. The way they are used depends on the objectives and levels of particular courses, although certain kinds of tasks draw more heavily on some micro-skills than on others.

It is now conventional – and helpful – to divide activities into pre-, while- and post-listening. Wilson (2008) provides a lot of hands-on examples for each stage.

Pre-listening activities

The principal function of these activities, which are now common in teaching materials, is to establish a framework for listening so that learners do not approach the listening practice with no points of reference. This perspective is clearly in line with the use of 'knowledge schema' and the establishing of a context. Activities include the following:

A short reading passage on a similar topic
Predicting content from the title
Commenting on a picture or photograph
Reading through comprehension questions in advance
Working out your own opinion on a topic

Any such activity is bound to generate language. However, in some cases, more explicit attention is given to language practice, particularly to the acti-vation and learning of topic-related vocabulary. Clearly a reading activity can serve both functions of framework-setting and language practice quite well, provided that it does not become too important a focus in its own right.

Listening activities

By this we mean tasks carried out during or after listening that directly require comprehension of the spoken material. We find here a basic and quite stand-ard distinction between 'extensive' and 'intensive' listening.

Extensive listening, or whatever term is used, is mainly concerned to promote overall global comprehension and encourages learners not to worry

if they do not grasp every word. Renandya and Farrell (2011) argue for the value of extensive listening to facilitate language acquisition even at lower level by providing experience of listening to meaningful, enjoyable and comprehensible spoken text. They list various online sources that teachers can access. The range of possible activities for extensive listening is enormous, and which ones are selected will depend largely on proficiency. In the early stages, learners may well need support in a non-verbal form:

Putting pictures in a correct sequence
Following directions on a map
Checking off items in a photograph
Completing a grid, timetable or chart of information

As proficiency develops, tasks can gradually become more language based, eventually requiring students to construct a framework of meaning for themselves, and to make inferences and interpret attitudes as well as understand explicitly stated facts. (Rost, 1990 offers a scale from 'closed' to 'open' tasks.) For example:

Answering true/false or multiple-choice questions
Predicting what comes next (preceded by a pause)
Constructing a coherent set of notes
Inferring opinions across a whole text

Intensive listening, as the name implies, deals with specific items of language, sound or factual detail within the meaning framework already established:

Filling gaps with missing words
Identifying numbers and letters
Picking out particular facts
Recognizing exactly what someone said

Note that sequencing and grading can be carried out using both linguistic and psychological criteria: in other words, grading only according to some notion of syntactic complexity is no longer regarded as satisfactory. Further possibilities for grading include (1) task complexity, whether global → specific or vice versa, or indeed global → specific → global (this last technique is evident in the second sample Unit printed at the end of this chapter); (2) varying the amount of language to be processed, for example, from shorter stretches to longer ones; and (3) using a range of authentic and specially written material.

Language material

Two of our earlier observations are relevant here. Firstly, we distinguished 'interactional' and 'transactional' listening. Secondly, we saw that listeners can have a number of roles, on a scale from participant to addressee to over-hearer. Both these elements are represented in listening materials. The most straightforward case is where the learner is an addressee or overhearer in a transactional context, such as:

Attending a lecture
Following instructions or directions
Listening to an interview, or a story or to people describing their jobs

At the same time, it is clearly important that learners are exposed to the interactional nature of everyday conversation (quite distinct from fixed 'dialogues' to be read aloud). This is rather more difficult to construct in the classroom environment, except artificially. In a way it is a paradox that students may overhear on tape what others say when it would be more 'natural' for them to participate. (This is not always negative, however: learners have the opportunity to listen to the spoken language in an unthreatening situation.)

Post-listening activities

We shall only comment briefly here on these activities, because they are usually not listening exercises as such. The category is open-ended, and looks ahead to our discussion on the integration of skills at the end of this part of the book. Essentially, the post-listening stage is an opportunity for many kinds of follow-up work – thematic, lexical, grammatical, skills developmental and so on. Here are just a few examples:

Using notes made while listening to write a summary
Reading a related text
Doing a role play
Writing on the same theme
Studying new grammatical structures
Practising pronunciation

Field (2008) suggests a diagnostic approach in which far more weight is given to the post-listening stage where learners are encouraged to reflect where they had problems to find solutions in their subsequent learning.

7.7   Conclusion

Listening comprehension has a number of roles to play within a language course, and its importance clearly depends on the aims of the programme as a whole. It may only be a minor feature, just to give learners exposure to what English sounds like: alternatively, it may have a major function for someone planning to study in an English-speaking country or to interact extensively in the language. Whatever its purpose, we have tried to show in this chapter how views on the learning and teaching of listening have developed from a growing understanding both of the nature of the skill itself, and of the variety and range of language on which it can be practised.

1   A unit from a popular coursebook is printed on the following pages. How closely do you feel that the listening process is mirrored in these materials (at least in so far as you can judge without having the tapes available)? How suitable would they be for your own class?
2   If you had no recorded material available, how could you convert a reading text into a listening exercise? Choose a text originally intended to be read and try to make some practical suggestions.

Listening: storyteller

12 Look at this picture. Where do you Think this woman is from? What do you think she does?

Listen to Track 74. Were you right?

13 Listen to Track 74 again. In your own words, say what Jan thinks stories are for. Do you agree?

unit fourteen 147

14 **Read through the following questions and then say what you think Jan will say in Track 75.**

a What did Jan do at the age of 19?
b Why did she go to a group called *Common Law*?
c What three things did she have to do for her audition?
d What story did she tell?
e Where did she get the song and game from?
f How did she learn it?
g What happened when she told it?

Listen to Track 75. Were you right? Answer the questions.

15 **Listen to Track 76 and answer these questions.**

Who or what:
a … is The *Spitz*?
b … has a reputation for being late?
c … plays the drums?
d … said he was tired and had to lie down?
e … explained the stories five minutes before the show?
f … was on the edge of creativity?
g … weren't very enthusiastic at first?
h … spoke to the audience to encourage them?
i … had a fantastic experience?

Tell the story of Jan and Crispin's evening in your own words.

Language in chunks

16 **Look at the Audioscript for Tracks 74–76 and find's phrases (a–i). What do the phrases in italics mean? What was she talking about in each case?**

a *a tried and tested theory*
b *Does that make sense?*
c something …*I can't put my finger on*
d the opportunity to *delve deep* into your own consciousness
e I couldn't learn the whole story *word for word*
f from that moment *I haven't looked back*
g I kind of *went through the sequence of events*
h we were *on the edge of* our creativity
i I'm slightly *off kilter*

17 **Translate the phrases into your language so that they mean the same as they do in the context that Jan used them.**

18 **Noticing language Look at these phrases from Tracks 74–76 which contain direct and indirect speech. Find examples of things people actually said (direct speech) and of people reporting what other people said (indirect speech).**

a I said oh oh where can you earn some decent money then and she said oh as a storyteller so I said what's that and she said oh I'm a storyteller I think you'd be really good, I think you should come along to *Common Law* and you should audition.
b … and he was like Oh God my brain and the traffic's awful and just let me lie here for five minutes, and I said we're on in five minutes and he said er yeah just give me five minutes …
c I asked the audience to join in and sing it and they weren't giving us themselves and I said to them look you know, he was late, he was late…

148 unit fourteen

19 **Storytelling When Jan told the story of *Why cat and dog are no longer friends*, she 'read that and read it and read it and read it and read it', before she told her story. Choose one of the following topics and then make notes about it. Think of ways to make it as exciting or funny as possible. Then write out a version as correctly as you can. Read it and read it and read it.**

Without looking back at what you have written, tell your story to a neighbour. Now tell it to another neighbour, practise it and then tell it to the whole class.

Topics:
• my most embarrassing moment
• my favourite story from a book, TV or the movies
• my most memorable injury
• why I was late
• any other story from your life

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7.8   Further Reading

Both these books offer a wide range of examples of listening comprehension tasks and exercises in the context of a clear discussion of the principles of the listening skill.

1   Field, J. (2008): *Listening in the Language Classroom*.
2   Wilson, J. J. (2008): *How to Teach Listening*.

Source: Substitute: J. Harmer and C. Letherby, Unit 14 pp. 147–8, *Just Right Upper-Intermediate*. Marshall Cavendish.

8

Speaking Skills

8.1 Introduction

As a language skill, speaking has sometimes been undervalued or, in some circles, taken for granted. There is a popular impression that writing, particularly literature, is meant to be read and as such is prestigious, whereas speaking is often thought of as 'colloquial', which helps to account for its lower priority in some teaching contexts.

However, as we shall see in this chapter, speaking is not the oral production of written language, but involves learners in the mastery of a wide range of subskills, which, added together, constitute an overall competence in the spoken language.

With the growth of English as an international language of communication (Graddol, 2006, 2010), there is clearly a need for many learners to speak and interact in a multiplicity of situations through the language, be it for foreign travel, business or other professional reasons. In many contexts, speaking is often the skill upon which a person is judged 'at face value'. In other words, people may often form judgements about our language competence from our speaking rather than from any of the other language skills.

In this chapter we shall look at some of the reasons that we might have for speaking in a variety of contexts. Then we shall examine how our concept of speaking has evolved over the last two decades. Next, we investigate the characteristics of spoken language, including pronunciation and conversation analysis, in order to see what their implications might be for language classrooms, and, finally, we consider various types of activity that we can use to promote speaking skills in the classroom.

What are your learners' speaking needs? Do you feel that your materials fulfil them?

8.2   Reasons for Speaking

As a skill that enables us to produce utterances, when genuinely communicative, speaking is desire- and purpose-driven; in other words, we genuinely want to communicate something to achieve a particular end. This may involve expressing ideas and opinions; expressing a wish or a desire to do something; negotiating and/or solving a particular problem; or establishing and maintaining social relationships and friendships. To achieve these speaking purposes, we need to activate a range of appropriate expressions.

List the different kinds of things you have talked about in the last few days both in English and in your own L1.

Our own list came out as follows, not in any particular order of priority:

Asking for assistance and advice in a shop
Asking for directions in a different town
Making an appointment by telephone
Discussing and negotiating arrangements
Talking socially to a variety of people
Sorting out arrangements for a car to be serviced

These are just a few of the reasons why people may wish to speak in any language. If we are hoping to make our learners communicatively competent in English as a foreign or second language, then it seems fair to assume that speaking skills will play a large part in this overall competence.

Speaking is a process difficult in many ways to dissociate from listening. Speaking and listening skills often enjoy a dependency in that speaking is only very rarely carried out in isolation; it is generally an interactive skill unless an uninterrupted oral presentation is being given. This notion of interaction is one of the key features in spoken corpora (O'Keeffe et al., 2007; McCarten and McCarthy, 2010). What is said is dependent on an understanding of what has been said in the interaction. Speakers listen, interpret what has been said, and adapt how and what to say according to the other

speakers/listeners, and it is this reciprocal exchange pattern which becomes important for learners to be exposed to and to practise at various stages of their foreign language career.

There is clearly an overlap in the interaction that takes place between the speaker/listener and the writer/reader, for the listener has to interpret the speaker just as the reader has to interpret the writer. The essential difference, though, is that speaker–listener interaction takes place in real time, thereby allowing very little time for the speaker to respond to the listener if the flow of a conversation is to be maintained. In the writer–reader relationship, however, the reader usually has the opportunity of rereading what has been written, time and time again if necessary.

Spoken corpus studies show how speakers place prime importance on establishing interpersonal relationships during listening and speaking. McCarten and McCarthy (2010: 17), for example, explain, '. . . speakers might adapt or construct their talk in relation to a specific listener or listeners and this includes the obvious areas of politeness strategies and levels of formality'. They provide examples from actual corpora data showing not only how speakers organize their talk according to the listeners' responses but also how they use strategies such as showing good listenership by vocalizing acknowledgement (e.g. huh, uh-huh) or by giving affective responses such as 'exactly', 'wonderful' and 'that would be nice' (McCarten and McCarthy 2010: 19).

All these points obviously have important classroom implications which will be explored later. Let us now turn our attention to how advances in our understanding of speaking have evolved over the last two decades.

8.3   Speaking Skills and Communicative Language Theory

In their analysis of the theoretical base of communicative language teaching, Richards and Rodgers (2001: 161) offer the following four characteristics of a communicative view of language:

1   Language is a system for the expression of meaning.
2   The primary function of language is for interaction and communication.
3   The structure of language reflects its functional and communicative uses.
4   The primary units of language are not merely its grammatical and structural features, but categories of functional and communicative meaning as exemplified in discourse.

When we ask our students to use the spoken language in the classroom, we require them to take part in a process that not only involves a knowledge of target forms and functions, but also a general knowledge of the interaction

between the speaker and listener in order that meanings and negotiation of meanings are made clear. For example, listeners may give the speaker feedback as to whether or not the listener has understood what the speaker has just said. The speaker will then need to reformulate what was just said in order to get the meaning across in a different way.

We shall shortly see how some recent materials that have been produced for speaking skills often try to encapsulate these views by trying to promote the expression of meaning, interaction and general communicative use on the part of the speaker.

8.4   Characteristics of Spoken Language

It is useful for the teacher of speaking skills in the classroom to look at the characteristics of the spoken language. The binary distinction of speaking skills made by Bygate (1987: 5–6) still seems helpful in shaping our discussion. He calls the first category 'motor-receptive' speaking skills which involves linguistic elements such as pronunciation, vocabulary and chunks (several words customarily used together in a fixed expression) and structures. The other kind refers to social and interactional skills that relate to what and how to say things effectively in specific communicative situations. In the classroom, the former would involve the learner, for example, in activities that require pronunciation development work or the frequent use of target expressions in meaningful and varied contexts. On the other hand, our understanding of real-life spoken discourse will help us guide our learners to learn how to manage a conversation appropriately and to achieve purposes of conversation effectively. In this part of the chapter we shall firstly examine some of the issues involved in teaching pronunciation and then move on to consider how the development of conversation analysis and of spoken corpora has affected our approach to the teaching of speaking skills. Although the motor-receptive elements of speaking skills are obviously important, the area of communicative interaction in particular has nourished an approach to the teaching of speaking skills in a communicative way.

8.5   Teaching Pronunciation

The teaching of pronunciation is carried out in many different ways, and for different reasons. Sometimes whole lessons may be devoted to it; sometimes teachers deal with it simply as it arises. Some teachers may like to 'drill' correct pronunciation habits, others are more concerned that their students develop comprehensibility within fluency. Behind such different approaches to teaching pronunciation lie different beliefs and attitudes towards the kind

of English that is the target of learning. Traditionally, 'a native speaker model' (itself a complex notion for a language like English with so many varieties) seems to have been regarded as ideal by many EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teachers and learners. Many tests and examinations seem to be based on such beliefs. English nowadays, however, has come to be used globally as a contact language (i.e. English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)) for communication by speakers of different languages (Jenkins et al., 2011). In ELF, native-speaker norms become less relevant. Imagine an international convention held in China where medical experts from various continents gather. Would it matter at all if an NNSE's (non-native speaker of English) pronunciation does not simulate a particular variety of NSE (native speakers of English)? Will these medical experts be considered as failed NSEs when they are eloquently and effectively speaking in one of their world Englishes? Jenkins et al. (2011: 284) point out that non-native speakers can be in fact '– more often – highly skilled communicators who make use of their multi-lingual resources in ways not available to monolingual NSEs, and who are found to prioritize successful communication over narrow notions of "correctness" ' (see also Seidlhofer, 2010). If we are to embrace this new notion of fluid and dynamic varieties of English used by NNSEs as a Lingua Franca (ELF), many assumptions of English language teaching will have to be recon-sidered. Jenkins et al. (2011: 297) reflect thus: 'The challenge for ELF researchers and, even more, for English teaching professionals then is to find ways of dealing with this variability so that it can be incorporated into teach-ing in ways that are digestible for learners'.

Challenged by such new insights and situations, no one approach can be said to be universally applicable. As Dalton and Seidlhofer (1994: 6) write: 'the task of pronunciation teaching . . . is to establish models for guidance, not norms for imitation'. Certainly a native speaker model is unrealistic for the great majority of learners, and 'perfection' is an unattainable goal.

There are, nevertheless, a number of key aspects of pronunciation and the English sound system that a teacher can in principle attend to. Some of them are 'bottom-up', dealing with both forming and hearing sounds as 'intelligi-bly' as possible; others are 'top-down', where a learner's pronunciation is part of a broader communicative approach. This is a balance, in other words, between 'accuracy' on the one hand and 'intelligibility' on the other.

Common advice on how to increase intelligibility includes the following:

- Individual sounds, including areas of difficulty for speakers of particular languages (e.g. l/r for Japanese, p/b for Arabic speakers), minimal pairs (bit/bat, hit/hate etc.). This may also be accompanied by ear training, and sometimes by teaching students to read the phonemic alphabet – useful of course for dictionary work.
- Word stress, which exhibits a number of key patterns in English.

- Sentence stress and rhythm. In a stress-timed language like English, this is of particular importance, because both 'regular' and 'marked' stress patterns essentially carry the message of a stretch of speech: Harmer (2001b: 193) gives the example of 'I lent my sister 10 pounds for a train ticket last week' as spoken with regular stress patterns, and then with varying the stress to emphasize different words. Again, it is useful to link this to listening practice as well.
- Intonation, significant in conveying messages about mood and intention. We might consider the different meanings in varying the intonation in such a simple sentence as 'that's interesting': we can sound bored, ironic, surprised or, indeed, interested.
- Sound and spelling, which in English are in a complex relationship.

Jenkins (2007) and Deterding (2010), based on their research on successful users of ELF, identify features of pronunciation that contribute to intelligibility in various world Englishes:

> It has been shown that, although there are substantial differences between the Englishes . . . , some features seem to be shared, particularly the avoidance of the dental fricatives, . . . the use of full vowels in function words and the unstressed syllables of polysyllabic words, and syllable-based rhythm. We might note that all these features fit in perfectly with the Lingua Franca Core (LFC), the set of pronunciation features which Jenkins (2007) suggests as essential for successful international communication. (Deterding, 2010: 396)

If we place intelligibility as the target, then some of the common advice on pronunciation seems to lose its full force. For example, should or should not a teacher emphasize the importance of sentence stress and rhythm (i.e. stress-timed rhythm) when recent research seems to show that syllable-based rhythm is sufficient for successful communication? Jenkins et al. (2011) warn against the prescriptive use of research findings:

> ELF research, then, is not about determining what should or should not be taught in the language classroom. Rather, ELF researchers feel their responsibility is to make current research findings accessible in a way that enables teachers to reconsider their beliefs and practices and make informed decisions about the significance of ELF for their own individual teaching contexts. (Jenkins et al., 2011: 306)

More detailed discussion on the teaching of pronunciation is to be found in Kelly (2000) and Burns and Seidlhofer (2010). Kelly (2000) has a chapter on spelling and pronunciation. Coursebooks include Hancock and Donna (2012) and Hewings (2004). Those who would like to read further on ELF should see Seidlhofer (2011). Kirkpatrick (2010) tackles very similar issues from the perspectives of World Englishes.

8.6   Conversation Analysis

Carter et al. (2011: 78) point out that 'Descriptions of the English Language, and of English grammar in particular, have been largely based on written sources and on written examples'. One consequence of such a tradition, they explain, is that the norms of written language and its grammar have been regarded as a benchmark for spoken language. As a result, 'many perfectly normal and regularly occurring utterances made by standard English speakers (of whatever variety – not just standard British English) have, by omission, come to be classified as 'ungrammatical' (Carter et al. 2011: 78). They show how coursebook dialogue resembles written discourse rather than spoken discourse.

Angouri (2010) compared data taken from a sample of meetings in seven multinational companies in Europe with transcripts of business meetings in best-selling Business English textbooks.

Compare the extract from a Business English coursebook and a transcript of a real-life interaction. Note down the differences in the table below:

	Excerpt X	Excerpt Y
Context	The first part of an authentic brainstorming meeting between three employees. No information is given regarding their relationships or details of the meeting such as objectives.	Three senior managers have just conducted internal job interviews. They are discussing whom to promote as Project Leader based on the performances at the interviews. Manager L is chairing the meeting.
Characteristics of their conversation		

Excerpts

2.3 (P = Paul, S = Stephanie, C = Courtney)

P - OK, thanks for coming along this morning. As I said in my e-mail, the purpose of the meeting this morning is for us to brainstorm ideas, promotional activities that we are going to carry out to make sure that the launch of the Business Solutions website is a success from the start. I'm going to open up to you to come up with the ideas that you've formulated over the past couple of weeks. Anything goes, we've got no budget at the moment but you know, fire away.

S - Oh great, no budget constraints.

C - That's great. Television and radio.

S - Well, it's starting big.

P - Excellent.

C - Well, we haven't got a budget, err, well, I think we could reach a wide audience, something like that, and err, we could focus on some of the big sort of business financial network television if we want to reach a global market, if that's what we're working to do and extending to all areas I think.

S - Yeah, that's been quite successful for some of the banks and stuff.

P - That's right, but definitely focused advertising.

C - Focused on specific networks that would reach, that you know … businessmen are watching network television.

S - Well, I've been working more on cheaper solutions than that just in case there are budget problems. I thought we could do some effective online promotion, which is actually very cheap, and I think we should aim to do anyway. Direct mailing but also register the site effectively with search engines so anybody who goes onto the Internet and is looking for business solutions would come up with our website.

C - Yeah, we should definitely do some of that.

P - Absolutely, yes.

C - What about press advertising, traditional newspapers, business magazines, journals?

P - Yes.

S - Yes, great, I mean we've done that very effectively in the past.

P - Yes, we've had some very good response rates to for the ads we've placed before.

S - Yes, and that could be something we could do, not just once but a kind of campaign over a period of time.

C - Yes, build it up.

P - Yes, use a campaign, OK.

Excerpt 16.1: Transcript from *Market Leader* (Cotton er al. 2001: 157).
© Pearson Education Limited 2001.

382 *Jo Angouri*

88 L - --- =yeah I mean it could
89   be in an trading center of somet[hing   ]
90 N - --[hmh [ye]ah   ]
91 S - ---[hmh yea]h I mean
92   exactly why was she avoiding the question
93   lik [e that   ]
94 L - --- [I mean i]t's fine her work b[ut   ]
95 N – ---[y[eah] of] c[ourse   ]
96 S - --- [hmh   ]
97 L – ---[is she re]ady
98   to face problems [like this   ]
99 S - ----------------------[and to comm]it to these pr[oblems]
100 N - --- [hmh yea]h yeah
101   that's true I agree w[ith you   ]
102 L - ----------------------[hmh yeah [ri]ght   ]
103 N - ------------------------------------[and I mea]n I thought as you
104   did that she was arrog[ant   ]
105 S - ------------------------- [hmh] (.) h[mh   ]

Excerpt 16.2: Transcript from a Cassiopeia meeting

Angouri (2010: 382) observes in Excerpt X that 'the meeting is rather smooth flowing and collaborative, as there is explicit agreement and all inter-actants work together. Interestingly, however, the participants do not share the floor and the turn-taking patterns follow a rather linear procedure . . .'. She adds that the audio recording features a small amount of overlapped talk though the transcript does not include any. In comparison, Excerpt Y shows many instances of

- overlapping for the purposes of completing or extending other's utterances
- explicit agreement

- positive reinforcements of the previous speaker's utterances
- continuous back channelling (e.g. hmh yeah, hmh).

McCarten and McCarthy (2010: 23) propose general principles that can be applied to reflect the features of real conversation:

- Keep turns generally short, except for narratives. Where one speaker 'holds the floor', build in listener back-channelling (e.g. hmh yeah, hmh) and non-minimal responses (i.e. True, Exactly, Lovely, Absolutely).
- Allow speakers to react to the previous speaker.
- Do not overload speech with densely packed information; ensure a balance of transactional and relational language and an appropriate lexical density.
- Include some repetition, rephrasing, fragmented sentences and other features of speech, but maintain transparency.
- Keep speakers 'polite' . . . and not confrontational or face-threatening.

Based on extensive studies of English from British, American and other varieties, O'Keeffe et al. (2007) describe the spoken corpora in different contexts including everyday, academic and business situations. Burns (2012) also provides a useful summary of typical features of speech.

In sum, spoken interactions often show the following features:

- ellipsis (i.e. incomplete utterances)
- use of conjunction (e.g. and, so) to add information and achieve continuity; very little subordination (subordinate clauses etc.)
- very few passives
- not many explicit logical connectors (moreover, however)
- use of topic head and/or tail (e.g. 'that restaurant yeah the food was great that restaurant'); the syntax of the written language would probably have a subject–verb–predicate structure
- replacing/refining expressions (e.g. 'this fellow/this chap I was supposed to meet')
- the use of vague language (e.g. thing, nice stuff, whatsit)
- repetition of the same syntactic form
- the use of pauses, 'fillers' and lexical phrases (e.g. 'erm', 'well', 'uhuh', 'if you see what I mean') in order to not only help oneself organize what to say but also to strengthen interpersonal relationships.

If your L1 is not English, what similarities and differences would there be to the forms outlined above?

As we have seen so far, spoken language shows regularities and patterns that help speakers organize their turn and maintain social relationships with their listeners. Being aware of possible grammatical choices in relation to spoken grammar will help L2 learners sound fluent, appropriate and effective. Carter et al. (2011) add

> Learners need to be helped to understand the idea of variable patterns. Classroom activities should therefore encourage greater language awareness and grammatical consciousness-raising on the part of the learner and try to stimulate an investigative approach so that learners learn how to observe tendencies and probabilities for themselves. (Carter et al. 2011: 98)

Next, within the 'framework' of the conversation, 'turns' have to take place if the conversation is not to be totally one-sided. Certain strategies have to be put into operation by the speaker. In practice, this may mean trying to 'hold the floor' for a while in the interaction, which will also involve knowledge of how 'long' or 'short' the turn can be; interrupting the other speaker(s); anticipating and inferring what is about to happen next; changing the 'topic' if necessary; and providing appropriate pauses and 'fillers' while processing the language.

The essential thing to note from the foreign language teaching perspective is that what may appear to be casual and unplanned in a conversation may nonetheless follow a deeper, organized pattern the learner has to be made aware of.

Do you think it is useful to apply native speaker strategies directly to classroom use?

8.7   Classroom Implications

If what we have seen above shows native speaker behaviour in conversations, research indicates that the non-native speaker is often reluctant to use some of these strategies when speaking. One such area is the use of pauses and fillers, which, as we have seen, enable the speaker to hold the floor by filling in the silence at that particular moment.

This can often be a cultural phenomenon: some otherwise proficient L2 speakers find this 'switch' a difficult one to accomplish if they come from an L1 culture where silences in conversations are more acceptable. Another area that some non-native speakers tend to neglect is that of making encouraging noises to the speaker such as 'yeah', 'I see', 'aha', 'that sounds fun' during the conversation, which enables the other speaker(s) to see that the conversation is being followed and processed.

One implication of such routines is that there is a need for speaking skills classes to place more emphasis on the 'frames' of oral interactions. We know that conversations have to be started, maintained and finished. The phrases that we use to accomplish this are called 'gambits'. An example of an opening gambit could be 'Excuse me. Do you happen to know if . . .'. Within the framework of the conversation the speakers also take 'turns' and, where pertinent, change the topic under discussion. This is not always an easy task to accomplish successfully. However, if sensitivity to how these conversation 'frames' work can be encouraged from the early stages of language learning by exposing near beginners to samples of natural speech to develop their awareness of conversational features and strategies, then learners will find themselves much more able to cope later on when they need or want to take part in real conversations outside the classroom.

> Look at the extract on the next page from materials designed to provide a frame of conversation. How effective might it be for your own learners?

6A Work in pairs and role-play the situation.

Student A   Student B

> You are a guest at a hotel. Twenty minutes ago you called reception, asking for some soap to be sent to your room. Room service brought you some tomato soup. You want them to take the soup back and bring some soap. Call reception to make your complaint.

> You are a receptionist at a hotel. A guest calls to make a complaint. Start the conversation by saying *'Reception. How can I help you?'*

> *Hello. Yes, I'm afraid I have a problem ...* Explain the problem.

> Apologise for the misunderstanding and say you will send someone with soap.

> Check details and thank the receptionist for their help.

> Confirm details, apologise again and end the call.

B Change roles and turn to page 162.

C Work in pairs and take turns. Student A: ring reception and make a complaint. Student B: apologise and offer a solution. Use the flow charts to help and role-play the situations.

39

Source: A. Clare and J. Wilson, Speaking 6A from p. 39, *Speakout Intermediate Students Book*. Pearson Education, 2001. Reprinted with permission of Pearson Education Ltd.

What has happened in materials and classrooms in recent years has clearly been influenced by a number of the findings we have outlined above. In what might rather loosely be termed 'pre-communicative' language teaching, dialogues were often used in class, but the purpose was not to teach the rules of communication, appropriateness and use: the focus was nearly always a structural one, and learners were rarely given an information gap task that would have enabled them to engage in some real communication. No account was offered as to how a sentence takes on meaning from its relation to surrounding utterances and to non-linguistic factors. It was also rare for attention to be drawn to who was actually speaking to whom.

In the light of what we have mentioned above, look at the following examples. How would you characterize each as spoken language? How do they differ?

Example 1:

GARY: And how's work?
RITA: Yeah, (it's) fine.
GARY: And your mum? (Is) She any better?
RITA: (She's) Much better, thanks.
GARY: Did you go and see her last week?
RITA: No, I meant to. (I'm) Going (on) Wednesday though. (I) just couldn't get any time off work last week. I tried to, but we were too busy.
GARY: Right.
RITA: So what have been up to this week?
GARY: Oh, er, (I) went to see the Degas exhibition at Tate Modern. (Have) You seen it?

(Taken from the Recording Scripts by C. Redston and G. Cunningham, 2007: face2face Upper Intermediate. Copyright © Cambridge University Press.)

Example 2:

JOHN: Hello, how are you?
TOM: I'm fine thank you. How are you?
JOHN: I'm also fine thank you.
TOM: How's your wife?
JOHN: She's very well thank you. How is your wife?
TOM: She's also very well thank you.

The first example shows two people who have a desire to communicate; they have a purpose; there is an information gap to fill in because both speakers need to listen to find out what the other person will say. They are also selecting appropriate language for their relationship and their informal chat. The second example is rather artificial as conversation and sounds more like a script than a piece of spontaneous language.

So how can we make optimal use of our understanding of real spoken interactions in classroom practice? Nunan (1999) suggests that teachers need

to be aware that motivation is a consideration in determining whether or not learners are willing to communicate. Clearly, the more meaningful the materials and tasks are for the learners involved, the better the outcome will be. Ur (1996) develops this further by suggesting that good speaking skills classrooms are ones where learners talk a lot, participation is even, motivation is high and the language is at an acceptable level. Thornbury (2005) advocates three key elements of teaching speaking: 'awareness' in which learners are encouraged to notice features of the spoken language and interactions; 'appropriation', where learners try out their heightened awareness and integrate the new with existing knowledge 'autonomy', in which learners move towards independence and achieve automaticity in their use of skills or strategies.

Tomlinson and Dat (2004) report a longitudinal research project which investigated adult Vietnamese students' apparent reticence in speaking in English in class. The data provided evidence for the students' performance anxiety, low self-esteem, linguistic limitations, negative conceptions of the learning process and so on. The observation data of speaking classes showed the teacher-centred style and rare instances of spontaneous discourse or of oral interactions that involved the students' individual thoughts or elaborated responses. The surprising findings included evidence which revealed that the students actually welcomed opportunities for interactions that led to deepen social relationships in the classroom and that the teachers tended to underestimate learner competence and willingness. Tomlinson and Dat (2004: 215) suggest ways of counteracting various difficulties learners face in speaking and point out that '. . . students will only reveal their real ability to speak in English if their teachers encourage and value oral participation, foster a positive and supportive atmosphere, provide constructive feedback, encourage peer interaction and give thinking and rehearsal time'.

The implication for teachers, therefore, seems to be to devise meaningful activities that will motivate students to speak within a supportive environment.

> Consider your own speaking skills classes with respect to the information above. Does this tell you anything about your approach to teaching speaking skills or the approach favoured by the materials?

8.8   Types of Activity to Promote Speaking Skills

In this section of the chapter we examine some activities used in the classroom to promote the development of speaking skills in our learners. For focusing

purposes, we shall begin by looking at an example of some 'pre-communicative' materials and then move on to consider what might broadly be termed 'communicative' activities or games. After this, we shall examine some oral problem-solving activities, role play and simulation materials for decision-making, and materials requiring personal responses from the learners. We finish this section by discussing materials designed to raise awareness of regularities and patterns of conversation.

In recent teaching materials, a lot of attention has been paid to designing activities that focus on tasks mediated through language or that involve the negotiation and sharing of information by the participants. The idea behind this thinking is that learners should be provided with the opportunity to use the language they know in meaningful activities they feel motivated to talk about.

Many of the pre-communicative materials used guided dialogues as a way of trying to develop oral practice with learners. Conversations were frequently structurally graded. Let us look at an imagined example designed to practise the 'not enough' structure:

A: Can John paint the ceiling?
B: No. He can't reach. He isn't tall enough.
A: What about if he uses a ladder? Will he be able to do it then?
B: I should think so.

The pattern practice that learners have to follow, which can then be applied to other conversations, is as follows:

A: Can X do Y?
B: No. He/she isn't tall enough.
A: What about if he/she uses a Z? Will he/she be able to do it then?
B: I should think/imagine so.

In contrast to this, we now turn our attention to materials for the teaching of speaking skills that form part of the communicative approach, beginning with communication games.

Communication games

Speaking activities based on games are often a useful way of giving students valuable opportunities to use English, especially, although by no means exclusively, where younger learners are involved. Game-based activities can involve practice of oral strategies such as describing, predicting, simplifying, asking for feedback, through activities such as filling in questionnaires and guessing unknown information. Even though these activities are called games, thereby implying fun, they are also communication-based and require the learners to use the information they find out in a collaborative way for successful completion of a particular task.

One such activity can be found in the Teaching English web site developed by the British Council and BBC (http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/try/activities/getting-whole-class-talking (accessed 10 September 2011)). The game is called, 'Something in Common or "Give Me Five"'. The objective of this game is to discover as many things as possible the learners have in common with fellow students and the one who finds the most common things is the winner. If the teacher limits the common things to five, then the first person to shout out 'Five' is the winner.

A slightly more systematic game may involve using a questionnaire with a potentially engaging topic (e.g. how to give a good first impression, how to prepare for an exam). The class is divided into groups of four. The teacher gives some possible topics as stimuli for the students to come up with their own ideas. The groups then come up with questions, compile lists of answers and prepare a presentation. The students can vote for the best presentation. If possible, the presentations can be recorded for later discussion and suggestions for improvements. Successful completion of this type of activity clearly depends on the effective communicative use of the language and of the sharing of information among the participants.

The 'describe and draw' principle is based on a series of plans and diagrams one student has to describe to another so that the latter can complete the task. The idea behind this 'describe and draw' communication activity is to give learners practice in handling, by means of oral description and drawing in pairs, a core of material of non-verbal data, that is, maps, plans, shapes, graphs. The activities are motivated by the fact that many EFL learners have difficulty when trying to handle these sorts of data in the spoken form. This activity is also a useful way of conversational negotiation in that the 'listener/drawer' can ask for further clarification if something has not been understood. A typical example would be as follows:

> Learner A has a plan of a town centre containing the High Street, churches, school, library, shops, houses or the floor plan of a building such as a school or a company. Learner B then has to draw the plan as accurately as possible from the description given by learner A.

Ur (1996: 124) has some variations on the picture idea, but in this instance learners are issued with pictures everyone can see. They then have to describe the pictures by saying as many sentences about them as possible. A 'secretary' then marks down the number of utterances. After this, a second picture is provided and learners have to try to beat their first number of sentences produced.

Problem solving

Many speaking skills materials start from the premise that a communicative purpose can be established in the classroom by means of setting up a problem.

An example of a problem-solving principle can be seen at work in materials described by Mishan (2010). Her materials involve reading a mystery story about a man who was found wandering on a seafront road in the South East of England. He was drenched in the cold rain in his formal black suit. He could not speak or would not speak a word and all the labels on his clothes had been cut off. When provided with a grand piano, he amazed everyone with his two-hour virtuoso classical music performance. Mishan uses a maze format in which students develop this story by choosing a plausible option for solving this mystery. The problem-solving principle is used all the way until the final task:

> The main problem/task that the students are given . . . is to decide on an ending, then make a film based on the story. This 'problem' can range, depending on the time available, from drafting the screen-play, choosing a director, actors, etc., to a full-blown project, with students making the film themselves the final stage. (Mishan, 2010: 360)

The students have to share with their peers the stories their group has developed in order to build up a complete picture of that particular situation.

Mishan (2010) gives two further examples of materials using problem-solving principles. One of them involves the 'Whodunit?' genre, where the students have to solve a mystery that led to the death of a person. She makes use of a novel, an audiobook and a film in giving clues as necessary. The main objective is to create motivations and opportunities for communication while working out the likely plot based on the character profiles. The other example involves the students in developing a web site (e.g. Wiki, Blog) to help future Erasmus European Exchange Programme students to understand the host country and people in order to reduce the impact of having culture shock.

> Think of how you might set up speaking skills activities using problem-solving principles in your own classroom.

Simulation/Role-play materials

One way of getting students to speak in different social contexts and to assume varied social roles is to use role-play activities in the classroom. Materials are generally aimed at the more proficient EFL learner, although this is not always the case, as they can be set up in a highly structured way with a lot of teacher control. At the other end of the spectrum, however, a

considerable amount of choice may be exercised by allowing the students more freedom in what they will say. Role-play activities are also a pertinent way of integrating skills in the language classroom, and therefore we examine them from this perspective in more detail in Chapter 10.

Role plays require a situation, a profile of the people and an outcome for the interaction. It may be a simple one of which the main objective is to practise English expressions. The role cards may be for a shop assistant and for a customer. The card would have what kind of shop it is and it may include useful expressions for the participants. The participants can negotiate the process of buying or not buying.

Role-play materials are often written specifically to get learners to express opinions, to present and defend points of view, and to evaluate arguments for which there is no one objective way of demonstrating the outcome as right or wrong. For example, learners may be asked to consider the planning of a new motorway that would have to go through farmland, some countryside of outstanding beauty, as well as through the outskirts of a large town. The learners' role cards would be written from the various points of view of all the parties concerned in the planning project, and each learner (or pair or group, depending on the number of people in the class) would be asked to prepare notes to speak from in a meeting. This role play makes use of a problem-solving principle and comes from a controversial topic you may come across in real life. There is not one answer to this type of negotiated activity, and in this sense, the outcome of the discussion is very much up to the learners themselves. Viney's (1997) role play uses a critical incident and offers opportunities for the whole class to consider how to negotiate in a reasonable manner without being aggressive or offensive. The role play takes place at a Lost Property Office of a bus company between a day tripper who wants to retrieve a lost bag on the same day and a customer service employee who wants the customer to come back the next day for personal reasons. The rest of the class are given an evaluation sheet for observation of effectiveness of the interactions. The role plays can be recorded for further discussions not only of the expressions but also of the effectiveness of the social interaction.

Materials requiring personal responses

Some speaking materials have been designed for learners to talk about more meaningful things in order to increase the probability of language acquisition. Though this chapter has paid attention to implications of recent corpus studies, as McCarten and McCarthy (2010: 20) explain,

> '. . . very often real conversations pose problems for materials writers for several reasons'. Conversation in the corpus is not meant for appreciation by third parties. The language may not be appropriate. Above all, 'most conversa-

tions are not particularly interesting in themselves (except perhaps to those involved in them originally) and teaching materials needs more than anything to capture students' interest in some way. . .'.

From the point of view of ELF, we might question the legitimacy and appropriateness if we are to set native speaker usage norms as the models of language education. There are ideological issues here.

A logical extension of this would then be to get outside the materials themselves and to use the learners' own backgrounds and personalities in speaking classes so as to give them more genuine reasons for wanting to communicate with each other. One example of such materials is by Rea et al. (2011):

a Have you ever regretted something that you've said or done? Think of three or four stories about
Things you've said to: a friend, a colleague, a stranger, a teacher
Things You've done: buying things, education, work, friends and family
1 What did or didn't you do?
2 Why was it a mistake?
3 What should or shouldn't you have done?
4 What could you have done differently?
b Talk together. What do you think your partner should or could have done?
(Rea et al., 2011: 103)

Tomlinson (2011b) stresses the importance of materials being underpinned by learning theories and proposes a flexible text-driven framework in which engaging spoken or written texts drive the sequence of materials (Tomlinson, 2003b). The learning principles Tomlinson (2011b) identifies include

• Provide extensive, rich and varied exposure to language in use
• Ensure affective and cognitive engagement to maximize the likelihood of intake
• Facilitate hypothesis forming, trialing and revising
• Provide opportunities to use the language for outcome-orientated output.

Look at the following speaking materials that aim to achieve personal engagement to create the needs, wants and readiness for language acquisition. The materials try to satisfy Tomlinson's learning principles summarized above and reflect the sequence advocated by Tomlinson (2003b).

1 Do you find the texts and activities engaging?
2 Consider what kinds of learning principles may lie behind each activity.

The Bully Asleep

Level: Lower-Intermediate
Class profile: Young adult – adult from mixed culture
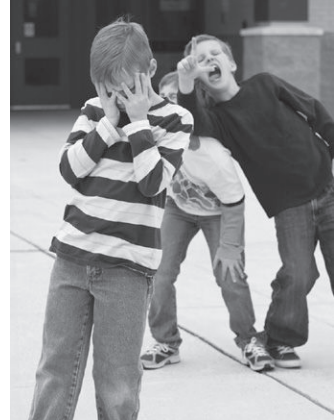
1. Look at the photograph.

2. Form groups of three and discuss what you think is happening in the picture.
3. In groups, guess why do you think the conflict occurred? Write a few plausible reasons.
4. You are the boy in the middle in this picture. In groups, decide what to do.
5. What do you think could help to prevent such situations? In groups, list some ideas.
6. Listen to your teacher read the poem 'The Bully Asleep' by John Walsh. Try to see what is happening in the poem.
7. Was there anyone in the poem you sympathised with?
8. Listen again. After listening, form groups of three and try to draw an illustration of the poem. Include the following characters:
   • Miss Andrews
   • Bill Craddock
   • Jimmy Adair
   • Roger
   • Jane
9. Read the poem. In groups, add some more details to your drawing in 7 above.

The Bully Asleep

One afternoon, when grassy
Scents through the classroom crept,
Bill Craddock laid his head
Down on his desk, and slept.

The children came round him:
Jimmy, Roger, and Jane;
They lifted his head timidly
And let it sink again.

'Look, he's gone sound asleep, Miss,'
said Jimmy Adair;
'He stays up all the night, you see;
His mother doesn't care.'

'Stand away from him, children.'
Miss Andrews stooped to see
'Yes, he's asleep; go on
with your writing, and let him be.'

'Now's a good chance!' whispered Jimmy;
And he snatched Bill's pen and hid it.
'Kick him under the desk hard;
He won't know who did it.'

'Fill all his pockets with rubbish
paper, apple-cores, chalk.'
So they plotted, while Jane
Sat wide-eyed at their talk.

Not caring, not hearing,
Bill Craddock he slept on;
Lips parted, eyes, closed –
Their cruelty gone.

'Stick him with pins!' muttered Roger.
'Ink down his neck!' said Jim.
But Jane, tearful and foolish,
Wanted to comfort him.

John Walsh (from *The Roundabout BY the Sea*)

10. Find a partner, do one of the following:
    a) You are Bill. Draw a picture of a typical scene at your home.
    b) Write a short diary of Jimmy Adair, who is normally bullied by Bill. He wrote
       the page of his diary on the day before Billy fell asleep during Miss Andrews'
       class.
    c) You are Jane who is sympathizing with Bill, the bully. Write a letter to Miss
       Andrews, explaining to her what you know about Billy and asking her to be
       kind to him.

11. Miss Andrews asked Bill Craddock to remain after school.
    Choose one of the roles below and prepare for your meeting:
    a) You are Bill. Think of how to explain to her why you bully other pupils.
    b) You are Miss Andrews. You are having a meeting with Bill after school.
    You know that he finds it difficult to explain the reasons why he bullies
    other students. Write down some questions that could help him.
    Find a partner who has chosen the other role. Form a pair and start the meeting.
12. Form groups of four. Find out from members in your groups if:
    a) bullying happens in their cultures
    b) how people deal with the problems in their cultures
13. Individually, in pairs or in groups, try to write a poem about bullying in your
    culture.
14. In groups, prepare a short presentation for the class on one of the following topics:
    • What causes bullying
    • Solutions
    • Bullying – case studies
    • Advice on what to do when bullied

Source: J. Walsh, 'The Bully Asleep', from *The Roundabout By the Sea* by John
Walsh. Published by OUP, 1960. Photograph © iStockphoto.com/1MoreCreative.

Materials illustrating tendencies/patterns of conversation

As discussed earlier, we know a lot more about features of spoken English,
thanks to corpus-based studies since the mid-1990s. Do teaching materials
reflect what we have come to understand about spoken interactions? Cullen
and Kuo (2007) report the results of their extensive survey that investigated
how spoken corpus research may have influenced 24 general EFL course-
books published in the United Kingdom since 2000. Their survey reveals that
the influence can be observed (e.g. wider use of lexical chunks such as 'you
see', 'I mean'), but the range is somewhat restricted. As for the methodology,
McCarthy and Carter (1995) advocate i-i-i (illustration – induction – interac-
tion) approaches to teaching spoken grammar in contrast to widely used
P-P-P (presentation – practice – production) (see also Carter
et al., 2011). Cullen and Kuo (2007) note some similarity in the teaching
approaches among the materials they analysed: learners are firstly exposed
to listening text that shows some typical features of spoken English with a
focus on its overall meaning. Secondly, the learners are encouraged to find
the tendencies and patterns of spoken grammar. The learners are then given
opportunities to use such features of spoken English in some production
activities.

   Timmis (2012) makes a further useful evaluation of two coursebooks that
pay close attention to spoken English: *Touchstone* (McCarthy et al., 2005)
and *Innovations* (Dellar and Walkley, 2004). Timmis describes *Touchstone*
as corpus-informed whereas *Innovations* is intuition-informed. The overrid-

ing principle behind both coursebooks is to try to make learners sound more natural when participating in conversations and discussions. People who never use strategies or well-accepted spoken expressions may be interpreted by the other participant/s as being abrupt, direct or even rude in some cases. For example, we do not generally go into a shop and ask, 'How much is this?' but would probably say, 'Could you tell me how much this is please?' Similarly, we may want to introduce a piece of surprising news with 'You may not believe this, but . . .'. If we are in a shop and wish to leave without purchasing something we may say 'I'm afraid I can't make up my mind at the moment', or 'I'll have to give it some thought'. The two coursebooks mentioned above contain advice and exercises that allow learners to experiment with common features of spoken English.

Materials to enhance academic speaking skills

The materials we have examined thus far have been largely within the general language teaching framework. However, some learners need to speak in an academic community, especially if they are studying their specialist subject in an English-speaking country. *Study Speaking* (Anderson et al., 2004) is widely used in this pedagogical context and provides speaking tasks on topic areas such as types of courses, accommodation, teaching and research and health issues. Bell (2008) introduces language and skills necessary for oral presentations by going through each stage of the process. Schmitt and Schmitt (2005) and McCarthy and O'Dell (2008) explain and offer practice for useful academic vocabulary and expressions.

8.9   Feedback to Learners

In all of the activities outlined above, teachers may wonder how to correct errors produced by learners during the oral skills class. Generally we tend to correct oral mistakes through speech, but the 'how' and 'when' obviously requires a great deal of sensitivity on the part of the teacher. If we are trying to encourage our learners to become fluent in the spoken language, correcting regularly during oral work will tend to inhibit further those learners who may already be rather taciturn in class. Most teachers feel that correcting a student in mid-sentence is generally unhelpful unless the student is floundering and is giving the teacher signals that she wants some help. Some teachers prefer to 'log' oral mistakes in writing and hand these to a student at the end of a class in the belief that learners may 'learn something from their mistakes'. Learners are individuals, and it may be helpful for teachers to work out the kinds of corrections students find most useful, perhaps even linking these to tutorials and diary work (see Chapter 12). Tomlinson (2007b) discusses the

value of 'recasting' by the caretakers (e.g. parents in L1, teachers in L2) in facilitating language acquisition with reference to studies in both L1 and L2 language acquisition. Just as a parent interprets the child's intended meaning and then echoes by providing more effective and richer models, teachers' affirmative and supportive rephrasing in response may be beneficial and also welcomed by the learners.

8.10   Conclusion

We began this chapter by examining the needs that learners may have to speak in a foreign language in the first place. Then we discussed some of the background to speaking skills by emphasizing speaking as an active skill. Subsequently we looked at the ways in which speaking and listening interact and how research into communicative language theory and the characteristics of spoken language has had important classroom implications over the last two decades. Finally, we offered a brief overview of the design principles underlying some of the speaking skills materials that have been produced over the last 20 years.

8.11   Further Reading

1   O'Keeffe, A., M. McCarthy and R. A. Carter. (2007): *A comprehensive coverage of corpus studies with some pedagogical considerations*.
2   Thornbury, S. (2005): *How to Teach Speaking*. This book is primarily written for practicing teachers, but it discusses theories behind the practice and provides example worksheets.

9
Writing Skills

9.1 Introduction

Along with the other three skills, writing has developed and accumulated many insights into the nature of language and learning. However, as well as having much in common with other skills, we shall see that writing differs in some significant ways to do with the purpose of writing in class and in everyday life, and the relationship between these two settings.

This chapter will first survey the reasons for writing and the different types of writing associated with them. The central section will focus on a number of approaches to teaching writing, particularly as expressed in teaching materials, and will try to show how perspectives have gradually changed. We shall then move on to the classroom environment itself, including some possibilities for writing-related activities, the issue of error correction and the role of the teacher.

9.2 Reasons for Writing

1 At this point it would be helpful to note down your reasons for needing – or wishing – to write in the course of a typical week, and the form that your writing takes. Try to think of all possible contexts. Can the kinds of writing you do be grouped together in any way?

2 How do you think your own list might compare with that of other people you know: perhaps a friend who is not a teacher, or your students?

Our own list included the following, not in any particular order:

Shopping list	Notes from a book	Official forms
This chapter	Parts of a prospectus	Letter requesting tourist information
Telephone messages	'Reminder' lists	An essay
Letter to a friend	A meeting agenda	Business letters
Comments on student work	Invitations	Diary (narrative and appointments)
Birthday card	Office memoranda	Map showing how to get to our house
E mails	Text messages	Word and phrase searches on the Internet

We can now make a few initial observations arising directly or indirectly from thinking about the kinds of writing we do. The implications of these points for the teaching of writing are taken up below.

1   A typical 'writing profile' covers a great range of styles. We may just write a list of nouns, or a number, or even simply a visual representation (a list, taking a phone message, drawing a map). Alternatively, taking notes from a book or a verbal message will require some facility with reducing language structure into note form in the interests of speed and efficiency. Discursive writing has many different functions (narrative, persuasion, setting out an argument etc.) and makes considerable demands on our ability to structure an extended piece of writing carefully. Email writing is more often conversational, even when done for professional purposes, and is more immediately interactive.

Moreover, in some cases, we ourselves initiate the need to write – different kinds of letters, a shopping list, or a short story, perhaps – whereas in other cases, the writing is a response to someone else's initiation, as when we respond to an invitation or a letter. The final point to make here is that our writing has different addressees: family, colleagues, friends, ourselves, officials, students and many more.

Reasons for writing, then, differ along several dimensions, especially those of language, topic and audience.

2   In straightforward terms of frequency, the great majority of people write very much less than they talk and listen, although the amount of writing may be increasing as people have more access to computers and to email communication. It is, for example, not unusual to find emails taking over

from telephone calls. Nevertheless, it is still the case that many adults do not need to write much in their everyday lives: and if there are few 'real-world' reasons for writing in our L1, there are even fewer for doing so in a foreign language. Writing for most of us only happens to any significant extent as part of formal education. This dominance of oral/aural over literacy skills holds even for those of us for whom writing is an integral part of our professional lives.

Types of writing

Personal writing	Public writing	Creative writing	
diaries	letters of	poems	
journals	—enquiry	stories	
shopping lists	—complaint	rhymes	
reminders for oneself	—request	drama	
packing lists	form filling	songs	
recipes	applications (for memberships)	autobiography	
Social writing	**Study writing**	**Institutional writing**	
letters	making notes while reading	agendas	posters
invitations	taking notes from lectures	minutes	instructions
notes	making a card index	memoranda	speeches
—of condolence	summaries	reports	applications
—of thanks	synopses	reviews	curriculum vitae
—of congratulations	reviews	contracts	specifications
emails	reports of	business letters	note-making
telephone messages	—experiments	public notices	(doctors
instructions	—workshops	advertisements	and other
—to friends	—visits	emails	professionals)
—to family	essays		
	bibliographies		

Source: T. Hedge (2005), *Writing*, 2nd edition, p. 87. Oxford University Press.

3   Some ways of classifying types of writing can be suggested. Hedge (2005: 87) offers a more detailed breakdown under the six headings of personal, public, creative, social, study and institutional. Her checklist is self-explanatory, and is reproduced above in full. We shall refer back to it when discussing the 'products' of writing appropriate to the language classroom. In the meantime, you will certainly recognize some elements of your own list here. You might like to see whether your writing fits into the categories that Hedge uses.

9.3   Writing Materials in the Language Class

It is now time to ask what part writing can and does play in the language class, given its more limited role for most people outside an educational

setting. We have seen in previous chapters that some attention to 'real-world' language and behaviour is regarded as increasingly important in the current English language teaching climate. It would be difficult to argue the case that writing in the language class should only mirror the educational function (writing essays and examination answers, taking notes from textbooks etc.) except perhaps in certain 'specific-purpose' programmes such as English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (e.g. nursing, business) or English for Academic Purposes (EAP). At the same time, it is not immediately obvious how the notion of 'authenticity' and the opportunities for transfer from real world to classroom can be maintained to the extent that this can be done for speaking and listening skills.

These two issues – the possibilities for reflecting communicative criteria, and the treatment of the skill of writing resulting from its general educational role – have been significant in the development of materials and methods. We shall now go on to look at how writing has been handled in English language teaching, attempting as we do so to pick out the major trends.

> The titles, with dates, of several popular writing courses are listed below. Pause for a moment to look through the list. Then, as you read the rest of the chapter, ask yourself what significance the titles might have. For example, can you discern a shift in the approaches to the teaching of writing? Do the dates of publication approximately parallel what you know of changing perspectives on language and language learning?

These are speculative questions, and we certainly do not wish to suggest that there is a rigid relationship between a title, a date and a 'movement' in language teaching. We shall make a few comments in the conclusion to this chapter.

Guided Composition Exercises (1967)
Frames for Written English (1966/1974)
Guided Course in English Composition (1969)
Guided Paragraph Writing (1972)
From Paragraph to Essay (1975)
Think and Link (1979)
Communicate in Writing (1981)
Writing Skills (1983)
Pen to Paper (1983)
Freestyle (1986)
Word for Word (1989)

Outlines (1989)
Process Writing (1991)
Feedback (1994)
Better Business Writing: An Interactive Course (1996)
Reasons to Write: Strategies for Successful Academic Writing (2001)
Skills in English Writing (2004)
Writing for the Real World (2005)

'Traditional' writing activities

There are a number of types of writing task that most of us will be familiar with, both as teachers and from our own language learning experience. Simplifying for the moment, they can be listed under three broad headings.

Controlled sentence construction If the focus of a language programme is on accuracy, then schemes for controlling learners' writing output will obviously predominate. The range of activity types is considerable, and typical approaches include

* providing a model sentence and asking students to construct a parallel sentence with different lexical items
* inserting a missing grammatical form
* composing sentences from tabular information, with a model provided
* joining sentences to make a short paragraph, inserting supplied conjunctions (but, and, however, because, although . . .).

Free composition Apparently at the other end of the spectrum, a 'free writing' task requires learners to 'create' an essay on a given topic, often as part of a language examination. Sometimes students are simply invited to write on a personal topic – their hobbies, what they did on holiday, interesting experiences and the like. Other materials provide a reading passage as a stimulus for a piece of writing on a parallel topic, usually with comprehension questions interspersed between the two activities.

   Although 'controlled' and 'free' writing appear to represent very different approaches, they are not in fact mutually exclusive, and many writing schemes lead learners through several stages from one to the other. A typical example is provided in Jupp and Milne's (1969) *Guided Course in English Composition*: each 'composition' begins with structure practice, continues with a sample composition, and then uses this material as a basis for students' own compositions.

The 'homework' function Particularly in general coursebooks (as distinct from materials devoted specifically to the skill of writing), it is quite common to find writing tasks 'bunched' at the end of a unit, either as supplementary

work in class or set for homework and returned to the teacher for later correction.

This brief and generalized summary indicates several trends in the 'traditional' teaching of writing from which current views have both developed and moved away:

- There is an emphasis on accuracy.
- The focus of attention is the finished product, whether a sentence or a whole composition.
- The teacher's role is to be judge of the finished work.
- Writing often has a consolidating function.

In her summary of the historical development of writing pedagogy, Reid states that

> In the 1970's many English L2 language programme writing classes were, in reality, grammar courses. Students copied sentences or short pieces of discourse, making discrete changes in person or tense. The teaching philosophy grew directly out of the audiolingual method: students were taught incrementally, error was prevented and accuracy was expected to arise out of practice with structures. (Reid 2001: 28)

Tribble (1996) makes a distinction between 'learning to write' and 'writing to learn'. A concise account of the differences can be found in Tribble:

> . . . In the former, an apprentice writer is learning how to extend his or her textual knowledge, cognitive capacities, and rhetorical skills in order to take on (usually prestigious) social roles, which require the production of certain kinds of text. In the latter, language learners are using the writing system to practice new language knowledge or are using writing to demonstrate their knowledge in the context of assessment.
>   One of the problems facing the writing instructor of EFL is the fact that all too often, learners' main experience of EFL writing has been in *writing to learn* and that they have had few opportunities to extend their literacy in the target language. . . . (Tribble, 2010: 161)

Note that in many earlier materials, the 'product' did not on the whole reflect the kind of real-world writing discussed earlier, and the 'process' was not given much explicit attention.

9.4   The Written Product

We commented earlier that traditional writing classes were product-oriented. When teachers look at students' written work, they usually pay special atten-

tion to sentence structure, spelling, word choice and possibly paragraph construction. Notions of 'correctness', however, have broadened since the 1980s. As one such change, we will examine levels of writing in the next section.

Note that current literature on teaching writing (e.g. Hyland, 2003; Hedgecock, 2005; Hyland and Hyland, 2006; Tribble, 2010) also considers elements that go beyond linguistic domains, such as genre, purpose and socio-cultural factors, in describing L2 writer's texts.

We now look at some selected examples of activities in materials for the teaching of writing. Many more examples will be found in the books listed under 'Further Reading' at the end of the chapter. We shall focus on (1) levels of writing and (2) audience.
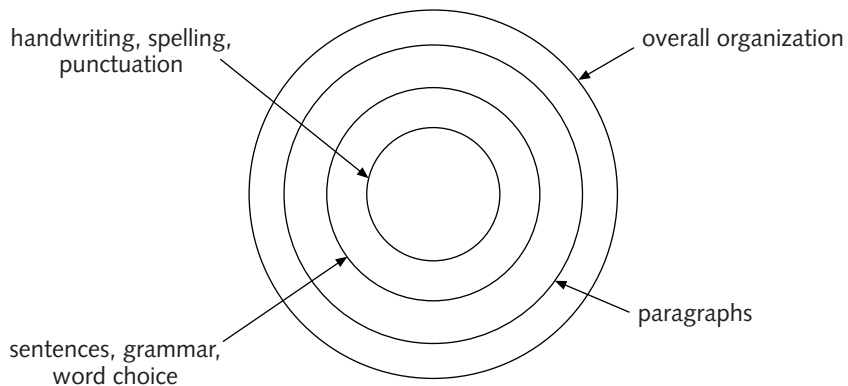
Levels of writing

Look back again at your personal list of writing activities. Most teachers, for example, write comments on student work as a regular part of their jobs. You may well recognize this style:

> This is quite a good summary, but it would have been a good idea to include more of your own opinions. Think more carefully about tenses. Your handwriting is also sometimes difficult to read.

From a different sphere, in a letter home from holiday you will probably include something about what you have been doing, details of people and places, and perhaps some information about travel arrangements. As you write, you will certainly have been operating on a number of different and interacting levels, not necessarily consciously, of course, and moving between 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' strategies discussed in Chapter 6.

We saw in Chapter 2 how the advent of the 'communicative approach' had far-reaching implications, including an extension of the size of language stretches that can be dealt with from sentence to discourse level. The two outer layers on figure 9.1 will certainly require consideration of both 'cohesion' – linking devices – and 'discourse coherence' – the ways in which a text forms a thematic whole. Such criteria are now well-established in the teaching of writing. Typical organizational principles for materials include paragraph structuring, particularly related to functional categories, and the use of a range of linking devices. Sentence-level and grammar practice is not omitted but, as the diagram suggests, is set in the context of a longer and purposeful stretch of language. Writing, then, is seen as primarily message-oriented, so a communicative view of language is a necessary foundation.

Some of the trends in the teaching of discourse-level writing, and the techniques used, are readily discernible from a glance at many of the published materials of the 1980s.

Figure 9.1   Levels of writing.

Functional categories include:

sequencing; chronological order
comparison and contrast
classification
cause and effect
description of objects and of processes
definitions
writing instructions
predicting and speculating
expressing opinion
expressing reasons
discursive essays
   writing narratives, for example, of events
   Nunan (1999: ch. 10) makes a number of proposals for developing what
he terms 'discourse writing'.
   Linking devices covered include the various connectives associated with
these functional categories, and the notions of lexical cohesion, referencing
using pronouns and the article system, ellipsis and substitution.
   The techniques used are many, and you will notice that they usually require
learners to understand the overall purpose of a piece of writing, not just the
immediate sentence-bound grammatical context. Here is a small selection of
some of the possibilities:

• Providing a text to read as a model for a particular function.
• Answering questions on a text, then using the answers as the basis for a
   piece of writing.

- Using non-verbal information in many forms. This may be a simple visual, such as a picture or a drawing; or a table, a graph, a diagram. Alternatively, the overall structure of a text may be represented visually, as an 'information-structure' diagram. The last of these is particularly common with classifications.
- Selecting appropriate connectives in a paragraph.
- (Re)constructing a paragraph from sentences given in the wrong order, or a whole text from a set of jumbled paragraphs. This technique is usually referred to as 'unscrambling'.
- Paragraph or story completion, which can be done by adding not only an ending, but also a beginning or a middle section.
- Parallel writing.
- Choosing an appropriate title for a piece of writing, such as a newspaper article.
- Working on identifying and creating 'topic sentences' as the basis for developing paragraphs.

Many other techniques are developed from pre-writing tasks carried out in the classroom: we shall look at these a little later in this chapter.

Audience

It is now widely accepted that writing is a process of encoding (putting your message into words) carried out with a reader in mind. Certainly the outermost layer of figure 9.1 – the overall organization – is best considered in relation to audience and purpose. The degree of 'crafting' that needs to be done, and at what level, will also be determined to some extent by the addressee. Stylistic choices, in other words, depend on why and for whom we are writing.

It is likely that, in the great majority of situations, our students still write primarily for their teachers, or perhaps for an examiner, both acting in the role of evaluator. Hedge (2005) makes the very useful point that, although transferring real-life writing directly to the classroom is problematic, what we should be aiming at is at least the creation of 'plausible contexts'.

Would you say that your students do most of their writing for their teacher, or are there other 'plausible contexts' that you have introduced into your classroom? When you have read through the following suggestions for extending the range of possible recipients for your students' writing, consider to what extent your own materials or classes could be adapted to accommodate them.

As we have noted several times, the classroom has its own purpose and structure, and is not simply a reflection of the outside world. In this sense, we can think of writing activities both from the 'instrumental' perspective of what is useful for external purposes, and also in terms of their educational function and the reality of the classroom itself. The following audience suggestions reflect this dual aspect. We have listed addressees along with a few suggested topics, but of course the possibilities are considerably greater than this. Our students, then, can write

- to other students: invitations, instructions, directions
- for the whole class: a magazine, poster information, a cookbook with recipes from different countries
- for new students: information on the school and its locality
- to the teacher (not only for the teacher) about themselves and the teacher can reply or indeed initiate (Hedge, 2005, for example, suggests an exchange of letters with a new class to get to know them)
- for themselves: lists, notes, diaries (for a fuller discussion of diary writing see Chapter 12)
- to penfriends
- to other people in the school: asking about interests and hobbies, conducting a survey
- to people and organizations outside the school: writing for information, answering advertisements
- If the school has access to a network of computers, many of these activities can be carried out electronically as well.

So far we have looked at the 'what' of writing, particularly at the nature of text and the importance of writing with a readership in mind. Writing continues to serve as a vehicle for language practice, and necessarily so, but this function should be integrated into a broader and more diversified perspective. As Hyland puts it:

> While every act of writing is in a sense both personal and individual, it is also interactional and social, expressing a culturally recognized purpose, reflecting a particular kind of relationship, and acknowledging an engagement in a given community. This means that writing cannot be distilled down to a set of cognitive or technical abilities or a system of rules, and learning to write in second language is not simply a matter of opportunities to write or revise. (Hyland, 2003: 27).

We now turn to the 'how'.

9.5   The Writing Process

One of the aims of this book is to trace the changes of focus in materials and methods for English language teaching, and to show how different

approaches have gained prominence at different times. A characteristic of the 1980s–1990s was a growing interest in what a language skill entails. Initially, attention was focused on the receptive skills, especially reading: more recently, research into writing – much of it concerned with writing in the mother tongue – has become more accessible to second-language teachers, and is beginning to have a significant impact on the design of materials and on attitudes to teaching writing. Stylistic factors, whether grammatical, discoursal or lexical, are now set alongside a concern for how writers go about the socio-cultural performance of the task itself. A detailed discussion of the research base is outside the scope of this chapter but readers interested in pursuing the L1/L2 parallels further are referred to a brief but useful overview in Reid (2001) or a slightly more detailed one in Hedgecock (2005). Hyland (2010) discusses the current applications of research in terms of courses, materials, teaching practices and software. Silva and Matsuda (2010) provide a good overview of a number of L2 writing theories as well as the aspects of L2 writing that are currently attracting the interest of researchers.

   We shall now look at the writing process from the two related points of view of the writer and the classroom.

The writer's perspective

> Try to note down the various stages that you think you go through when producing a piece of continuous text, such as a letter, a report, an essay, a story and the like.

Except perhaps with something as straightforward as a shopping list, it is unlikely that your text will appear directly on the page in its final form without any intervening stages. Even with a shopping list you may decide to reorder it, and categorize items in terms of different types of shop or different sections of the supermarket. Writers, it seems, do a great number of things before they end up with the final version – the 'finished product'. For instance, they jot down ideas, put them in order, make a plan, reject it and start again, add more ideas as they go along, change words, rephrase bits, move sections around, review parts of what they have written, cross things out, check through the final version, write tidy notes, write on odd pieces of paper as thoughts occur to them, write directly into a typewriter or a word processor if they are lucky enough to have one, look at the blank page for a long time, change pens, refer back to something they have read – and many more things, some of them quite idiosyncratic.

Tribble reminds us of the fact that not all L1 users write extensively.

> . . . as teachers of writing, we need to be aware of what exactly we are asking of our students. We may be (a) asking learners to take on roles that they do not normally have access to in their first language . . . ; or (b) asking learners to engage with literacy practices that they consider to be superfluous to their primary need to engage with the target language as a medium for spoken interaction. (Tribble, 2010: 160)

The demand must be particularly severe if students are expected to turn in a perfectly polished piece of work. Even if accuracy is an important and legitimate requirement, it is only achieved after a rather untidy and stumbling set of procedures, and the nature of the process itself needs to be acknowledged. We shall return to this point from a different angle when looking at attitudes to the correction of written work.

Hedgecock explains how developments in related disciplines have led to promoting 'process-orientated writing instruction' in recent years:

> . . . process-oriented pedagogies are marked by the following features, among others:
> - Discovery and articulation of writers' authorial voices.
> - Free writing, journaling, and private writing activities designed to enhance writer's fluency, creativity, and exploration of source texts.
> - Localization of writing process and texts in authentic contexts to develop the writer's sense of audience and reader expectations.
> - Constructing purposeful tasks that engage writers and promote their investment in creating meaningful texts.
> - Modelling and monitoring of invention, prewriting, and revision strategies.
> - Recursive practices such as multidrafting, which demonstrate that writing for an authentic audience is often a nonlinear, multi-dimensional process.
> - Formative feedback from real readers in peer response workshops, student-teacher conferences, collaborative writing projects, and so on.
> - Provision of meaningful content for writing tasks, with a corresponding emphasis on representing ideas, rather than solely on producing grammatically accurate prose. (Hedgecock, 2005: 604–5).

Materials for teaching writing are increasingly beginning to incorporate these process-based insights in various ways.

Hedge (2005) provides a comprehensive range of process-oriented classroom procedures teachers can make use of. Her book on teaching writing consists of four sections: Communicating, Composing, Crafting and Improving. *Communicating* represents the first stage of the writing process. The activities suggested in this section are designed to help learners become used to writing as self-discovery and as a means of communication. Examples of activities include producing a class magazine, exchanging letters with teachers

and peers and writing a newscast, all of which require the learners to write within a specific genre and context to a specific real-life audience.

Composing is the second stage in which the learners experience the mental processes of gathering and organizing ideas before actually starting to write. Activities in this stage include making mind maps, using a diagram of ideas, brainstorming and cubing (i.e. considering a topic from six different points of views, such as description, comparison and application).

Crafting is the third stage, in which learners are guided to produce well-structured written work. Activities involve writing a book review, a description of a person, a biography and an essay with contrast and comparison. In these activities the learners are provided with opportunities to raise their awareness of how written language (e.g. paragraph, discourse) is organized in different kinds of texts.

The final stage is *Improving*, when the teacher and the class collaborate to improve the quality of writing through awareness activities such as conferencing on plans and drafts, peer editing, reformulation and checking accuracy.

Before leaving this section, it is worth noting that some practitioners involved in EAP or ESP may argue that their approaches to writing should differ from those for General English. For example, EAP classes aim to facilitate the more specific academic literacy skills necessary for undergraduate and graduate study in English-medium institutions, and both EAP and ESP are likely to be more obviously goal-oriented.

Writing in the classroom

Writing, like reading, is in many ways an individual, solitary activity: the writing triangle of 'communicating', 'composing' and 'crafting' is usually carried out for an absent readership. However, we must remember that our students are language learners rather than writers, and it would not be particularly helpful to have them spend all their time writing alone. Although process research points to a need to give learner-writers space and time to operate their own preferred individual strategies, the classroom can be structured in such a way as to provide positive intervention and support in the development of writing skills. We shall comment only very briefly here on possible classroom activities – they look directly ahead to the next chapter on the integration of language skills, and to the management of classrooms that will be the focus of the third part of this book: Aspects of Classroom Methods.

The classroom can provide an environment for writing at each of the three main stages of (1) gathering ideas: pre-writing and planning, (2) working on drafts, and (3) preparing the final version. The primary means by which this can be done – leaving aside for the moment the teacher's role of marking and

commenting – is by establishing a collaborative, interactive framework where learners work together on their writing in a 'workshop' atmosphere. A few typical examples, all involving oral skills, must suffice:

- 'Brainstorming' a topic by talking with other students to collect ideas.
- Co-operating at the planning stage, sometimes in pairs/groups, before agreeing a plan for the class to work from.
- 'Jigsaw' writing, for example, using a picture stimulus for different sections of the class to create a different part of the story (Hedge, 2005: 40–2).
- Editing another student's draft.
- Preparing interview questions, perhaps for a collaborative project.

The 'Computers and writing' section of Chapter 5 in this book provides an overview of the literature on using computers for writing and discusses process-oriented approaches to writing using computers. Kervin and Derewianka (2011) list various computer-based writing activities including discussion forums (e.g. WebCT and blogs), interactive texts (e.g. hypertexts) and collaborative writing using Internet resources (e.g. wikis and web quests). They also discuss feedback, revision and assessment using computers.

In the multidimensional view of writing explored in this chapter, there are clearly a number of different possibilities available for the sequencing of materials and activities. We can reduce these to three:

1   Varying/increasing the size of the linguistic 'building blocks', from single lexical items → sentences and sentence joining → the construction of paragraphs and finally → whole texts. This requires attention to all levels of language, from sentence and text structure to a sense of the coherence of a completed piece of writing. This is related, of course, to the more traditional progression through a writing scheme from 'controlled' to 'guided' to 'free', though we now have a much wider range of descriptive tools available for the language material.

2   Paralleling the stages in the process of putting a whole piece of writing together. Although writing processes have little in themselves to do with proficiency – an elementary learner can in principle plan, draft and redraft, and edit as well as an advanced one can – the degree to which the process can be put to use obviously does have.

3   Task complexity. It can be argued – although it is a point that needs further exploration – that personal (expressive) writing is in some sense 'easier' than its institutional or professional counterpart. A letter to a friend, or a short story, while they obviously have their own structure, nevertheless are not as constrained by rules as, say, a business letter or a report or an essay.

9.6 Correcting Written Work

1 What is your usual and preferred method for correcting student work?
2 What do you see as your main role in relation to the writing your learners produce?

Obviously, teachers' attitudes and methods are determined to a certain extent by their approach to language teaching (whether chosen or imposed), and by the whole educational climate in which they work. We commented earlier that the most common role for the teacher in traditional writing classes is to be a judge, a critical evaluator of the finished product. Work is returned to students with mistakes indicated or corrected: the legendary red pen has always been a tool of the teacher's trade. Error feedback or correction assumes that teachers' marks and corrections are understood and learned by the students. Whether this assumption holds true or not has been an ongoing debate in second language acquisition (SLA) and in writing research. Truscott (1996) examines such a belief based on his critical review of L2 error treatment research and argues that there is no evidence that error feedback in L2 writing instruction is effective. He asserts that 'correction is harmful rather than simply ineffective' and that 'error correction should be abandoned' when there are no convincing reasons for doing so (Truscott 1996: 360). Ferris (1999: 1) describes the shortcomings of Truscott's reviews and says they are based on 'limited, dated, incomplete, and inconclusive evidence' and criticizes his conclusion as 'premature and overly strong'.

The controversies continue. Hedgecock (2005: 606) reports that '. . . studies have shown that expert feedback may not convert to intake or long term uptake. Furthermore, expert feedback may not necessarily improve text quality or develop a writer's autonomous revision skill' (F. Hyland, 2000).

Ferris (2006), after summarizing the studies that support the effectiveness of teacher feedback, reports the results of her own carefully controlled study. She points out that teacher intervention in terms of expressiveness and accuracy seems to have some effect: a more evident short-term effect but a less convincing long-term effect. She observes that the influential factors on feedback effectiveness include

- Learners' proficiency
- Manner of feedback (e.g. direct correction, indirect indication of problems for the learners to solve)

- Kinds of errors (e.g. treatable ones that the learners can overcome, untreatable errors)
- Timing of feedback (i.e. formative feedback during the writing process, post-feedback on errors).

The approaches to writing that we have looked at, from the perspective of both 'product' and 'process', inevitably lead to a much more varied view both of the role of the teacher and the classroom environment, and of the criteria for marking and assessing students' written work.

Process considerations suggest the usefulness of intervention at all stages of writing, not just at the end. It is unlikely that a draft will need to receive a grade, so the teacher, by commenting and making suggestions, becomes a reader as well as a critic. Harmer (2001b: 261–2) regards the teacher as 'motivator' and 'feedback provider'. The feedback given to students is in this view both 'formative' – concerned with a developmental process – as well as 'summative' – the evaluation of the end-product. Secondly, this feedback, whether summative or formative, takes place at a number of different levels of writing, and sentence grammar is not the only subject of attention. We need to take into account the appropriateness of the writing to its purpose and intended audience as well as topic and content criteria. Several marking schemes along these lines are now used by individual teachers, in materials, and by some examination boards. These schemes typically involve

Communicative quality
Logical organization
Layout and presentation
Grammar
Vocabulary
Handwriting, punctuation and spelling

You might like to 'weight' these in terms of their importance in your evaluation of your own students' writing.

After a close evaluation of error correction and feedback research, Ferris (2003: 118), emphasizes the importance of principled feedback. For example, she proposes feedback guidelines that remind teachers to

- Prioritize
- Treat students as individuals
- Be encouraging
- Be clear and helpful
- Avoid imposing their own ideas on student writers, leaving the final decisions in the hands of the writer.

The red pen method is inherently negative, but there is no reason why feedback should not be positive as well: for example, 'communicates effectively', 'excellent control of appropriate vocabulary' and the like. The issue here is what we see to be the overall function of correction. A distinction should be made between 'mistakes', when learners are not using correctly the language they already know, and errors, which, as we have seen, are largely the outcome of a learner's developing competence. Mistakes may require direct feedback and remedial treatment, and largely relate to language points already covered; errors may be more appropriately used for the planning of future work.

Ferris (2003: 122) provides an example of process-orientated feedback procedures:

1st draft – in class peer response
2nd draft – expert feedback
3rd draft – focused editing workshop
Final draft – careful editing and proof-reading
Grade and final comments.

There is an interesting further dimension to the notion of 'correctness' that derives from research into the notion of 'Intercultural rhetoric' (Connor, 2004). This refers to the idea that, at least to some extent, thought patterns are culturally determined, and that these will be expressed in styles of writing. Hyland comments:

> . . . L2 writers are unique because of their bilingual, and biliterate experiences, and these can facilitate or impede writing in various ways. . . .
>   L2 learners' cultural schemata can impact on the ways they write and the writing they produce.
>   Effective L2 writing instruction can make schemata differences explicit to students, encouraging consideration of audience and providing patterns of unfamiliar rhetorical forms. (Hyland, 2003: 50)

Whether such sets of cultural schemata exist is controversial. It is more widely accepted that writing is socially situated: each situation requires special consideration of audience, purposes and level of perfection. L2 writers need to understand expectations and norms of discourse communities or communities of practice of the target communities as well as their own.

Finally, there are implications for the role of people other than the teacher in the feedback process. Using other class members as addressees, and the classroom as a co-operative working environment, automatically means that students are involved in the production of each other's written work. There is then a natural extension to peer editing and revision, as well as the more established procedure of peer 'correction'. Clearly all these aspects will only

be effective with guidance and focus, but potentially they can help students to develop a critical stance towards their own work as well. Several other procedures might be developed to involve learners in what is presumably the ultimate aim of self-monitoring and self-correction. These include marking schemes that indicate mistake type, leaving the learner to identify the specific problem; the establishment of personal checklists, which of course change as proficiency grows; and the technique of 'reformulation', in which the teacher suggests another wording for what the student is trying to express. It is important to recall that self-evaluation too will require different criteria at different stages in the writing process: there is little point in too great a concern for accuracy when gathering ideas, formulating a plan and establishing readership, whereas correctness has a vital role as the final draft takes shape. Hedge (2005) prefers to think of 'correction' under the more general heading of 'improving', a cover term that stresses the interacting of marking procedures with processing categories.

9.7   Conclusion

Earlier in this chapter we asked you to consider the titles of some published teaching materials to see if any trends were discernible. Although it is much too simplistic to suggest that the date of publication can be directly linked to a particular approach, it is probably true to say that there is a gradual shift from guiding learners through grammatical patterns against the background of 'composition' requirements, to a concern with paragraph and text structure from a communicative perspective, to titles that reflect ways in which we think about the activity of writing – 'outlining', 'putting pen to paper' and so on – to those that refer explicitly to strategies and to the role of the teacher, and awareness of real-life practices outside the classroom. Materials for the teaching of writing, then, do not neglect the basic skills, but are increasingly likely to see writing in terms of purpose, audience, and the development and organization of thinking, for real world, for learning and for educational purposes.

1   If you are a regular user of email, make a list of the main ways in which email differs stylistically from more conventional writing. If you use (or plan to use) email writing in your own teaching, in what ways might your attitude to 'correctness' change?

2   Consider the unit provided here from as many angles as possible, for example, subject matter; 'authenticity'; level; types of writing task; sequencing of activities; suitability for your own students. If it is not suitable, what would you wish to change?

Writing Portfolio

Getting ideas

In this unit, you are to write an explanation, but with a choice of three very different approaches.

Organising your explanation

A   Write an analysis of an advertisement of your choice. Describe the advertisement, explain who you think it is aimed at and how it works on the customer — both the visuals and the text.

B   You are a journalist writing an article about advertising. You can describe some of your favourite advertisements and brands and explain how they affect you and your friends. Come to a judgement by the end on whether you think advertising is harmful or beneficial to you and to others. Use the internet as a resource for ideas and examples.

C   Write about the thought and discussion processes which led you to design your own group advertisement. Explain why you chose the product and why you decided to advertise it in a particular way. Explain how the visuals and words contribute to the overall effect, who your target audience is and how your advertisement tries to get their attention.

Choose the appropriate template from Unit 1 in workbook 3A to plan your writing. Refer to Unit 1 of this Textbook to refresh your memory of the structure, function and features of the text type you have chose. After you have jotted down some initial thoughts and ideas, use the Pre-writing Checklist provided in 'The Write Track' on page 106 to ensure that you are on the right track.

Revising and editing

Use the appropriate Writing Checklist from 'The Write Track' on pages 107 –112 to revise your first draft and produce an improved final draft.

Writing your final draft

Use the Checklist for Final Draft in 'The Write Track' on pages 113 to revise your final draft and make any last corrections before submission.

Remember to file all your drafts in your Writing portfolio.

9.8 Further Reading

1 Hedge, T. (2005): *Writing*. A rich source of ideas for the teaching and learning of writing skills, using a framework that includes both 'process' and 'product' considerations.
2 Hyland, K. (2009): *Teaching and Researching Writing 2nd edn*. Covers the teaching of writing from the perspective of both theory and practice.

10

Integrated Skills

10.1   Introduction

So far in this section of the book we have been devoting a chapter to each
of the four language skills in order to give each one some in-depth treatment.
In this final chapter of Part II, we consider some of the different ways in
which these language skills may be taught in an integrated way in the class-
room. Some of the natural overlap of the language skills has already been
examined in Chapters 6–9, particularly with regard to speaking and listening
and to reading and writing, although there are situations where either three
or all four language skills can be integrated effectively, and in this chapter
we intend to examine some of these. We start by examining situations that
require an integration of skills in order for them to be completed successfully.
After this, we consider some different approaches to the integration of lan-
guage skills in materials. Finally, we look at skills integration in the classroom
by discussing a broad range of different materials from the teaching of
General English (GE) to the teaching of English for Academic Purposes (EAP).
We also consider project work and role play/simulation in relation to the
concept of integrated skills.

   Let us begin by trying to clarify the concept of integrated skills by looking
at the definition provided by the Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics.
According to Richards and Schmidt (2010: 288), an integrated approach
means 'the teaching of the language skills of reading, writing, listening and

speaking in conjunction with each other as when a lesson involves activities that relate listening and speaking to reading and writing'. This definition is widely accepted and used, especially in relation to various varieties of communicative language teaching. Note that, nowadays, 'integrated skills' may also be used to include some other kinds of skills as well as the four language skills in different contexts. For example, in the context of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), integrated skills may include cognitive skills such as doing research and problem solving. By the same token, when discussing Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), we may refer to integration of some skills deriving from Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) within language curricula, such as multi-modal literacy and navigation skills.

If we look around us in our daily lives, we can see that we rarely use language skills in isolation but in conjunction, as the definition of integrated skills suggests. Even though the classroom is clearly not the same as 'real' life, it could be argued that part of its function is to recreate it. If one of the jobs of the teacher is to make the students 'communicatively competent' in the L2, then this will involve more than being able to perform in each of the four skills separately. By giving learners tasks that expose them to these skills in conjunction, it is possible that they will gain a deeper understanding of how communication works in the foreign language as well as becoming more motivated when they see the value of performing meaningful tasks and activities in the classroom. These are points made by Oxford (2001: 5) when she describes the advantages of the integrated skills approach:

> The integrated-skills approach, as contrasted with the purely segregated approach, exposes English language learners to authentic language and challenges them to interact naturally in the language. Learners rapidly gain a true picture of the richness and complexity of the English language as employed for communication. Moreover, this approach stresses that English is not just an object of academic interest nor merely a key to passing an examination; instead, English becomes a real means of interaction and sharing among people. This approach allows teachers to track students' progress in multiple skills at the same time. Integrating the language skills also promotes the learning of real content, not just the dissection of language forms.

1   Reflect on your current teaching approach and evaluate the extent to which the skills are integrated.
2   Select one of your instructional materials or textbooks and evaluate how the four skills are taught.

Integration of the four skills can be achieved through various approaches. In fact, even if a given course is labelled as one skill, it is possible to integrate the other language skills through appropriate activities. Teachers are encouraged to familiarize themselves with different options to enrich their repertoire. For instance, Oxford (2001) in the quote above refers to content-based language teaching (CBLT), task-based language instruction or some hybrid form. Coyle et al. (2010) explain how cross-curricular approaches to subject and language teaching in CLIL – CBLT in the European context – can provide an effective platform for learning integrated skills. We will be showing some examples of task-based materials in Section 10.3. Tomlinson (2003b) introduces a flexible framework for developing materials using what he calls the Text-Driven Approach. The framework is designed to help teachers develop integrated skills materials in a principled way in accordance with current learning theories. The Text-Driven framework helps teachers to develop materials in a short time even from a single engaging text (e.g. a poem, extract from a newspaper, video, teacher's anecdote), which could be used even in a resource-poor environment. If you are interested in CALL, Chapter 5 of this book and also Kervin and Derewianka (2011) provide examples and theoretical explanation for how integrated skills teaching could take place.

10.2 Situations Requiring Skills Integration

Let us now examine some situations that require an integration of at least two language skills in order for the task to be completed successfully.

> As you are reading, note down the different language skills involved at each stage.

From the skills integration point of view the situations may be quite simple – such as speaking on the telephone and taking down a message or taking part in a conversation – or, alternatively, they may be much longer and involve more skills integration, as we can see in the following examples:

1 We may read about a film or a concert in a newspaper or magazine:

We ask a friend if they would like to go.
We search the Internet if we have easy access to it.
We phone the box office to reserve tickets.
We drive to the cinema/concert hall with the friend.

We ask the clerk for the tickets.
We watch the film/concert.
We discuss the film/performance with the friend on the way home.
Some of us may write about our experience in a blog, by Twitter, on Facebook and so on to communicate with a larger number of people.

2   We may need to read lecture notes/articles/a paper in order to write a composition or an essay:

We discuss it with other learners/the teacher.
Some of us may do an additional search by using library facilities or by going on the Internet.
We compose a draft.
Some of us may show the draft to other learners or to the teacher for advice.
We rewrite it until we have a final version.
We read the teacher's feedback.
We speak to other learners/the teacher about the feedback.

The two situations we have illustrated above show how, in our daily lives, we are constantly performing tasks that involve a natural integration of language skills. They also show that none of these stages is completely pre-dictable. For example, in the first situation described above, all the seats may have been sold for that particular performance or our friend may reply that she cannot go to the film or the performance on that evening for what-ever reason. However, at each stage, there is a reason for using that particular skill.

Exposure to this type of 'natural' skills integration will hopefully show learners that the skills are rarely used in isolation outside the classroom and that they are not distinct as such, but that there is considerable overlap and similarity between some of the subskills involved (e.g. in previous chap-ters we saw how the subskills of reading and listening involved purpose and anticipation).

The notion of 'appropriacy' will, we hope, be developed in learners if they can see how the four skills can be used effectively in appropriate contexts. As we said earlier in the chapter, overall competence in the foreign language is going to involve more than performing in the four skills separately: it will also involve them in effective, combined use of the skills, which will depend on the nature of the interaction taking place. We might also argue that as integrated skills materials are more likely to involve learners in authentic and realistic tasks, their motivation level will increase as they perceive a clear rationale behind what they are being asked to do.

Let us consider one more example of the integration of skills in a real-life situation: we may see an advertisement for a product that interests us in a newspaper or in a magazine; then we may wish to talk to a friend about it to see if she thinks it would be a good buy. If after some discussion she thinks

not, we might decide to leave it there, or we might decide to search the Internet to compare prices. We might phone the company offering the product to get further details. Next, we might write an email or a letter (enclosing a cheque) that will be read by somebody at the company who will despatch the product, possibly with a covering letter enclosed.

We can break this down into the different language skills that it would generate: reading, speaking/listening, writing, reading and writing. Again, one important point to note is that none of the events in this particular scenario is entirely predictable, but will depend very much on individual circumstances as to how and when the outcome will be reached.

Another variation on this theme is provided by Harmer (2007b) who introduces a seven-stage activity for integrating skills, which involves the following sequence:

1   Learners read an advertisement for a public relations job with a major airline.
2   Learners write an application.
3   The teacher divides the class into small groups and distributes letters from the other learners.
4   Each member of the group reads each letter and scores each one from 0 to 5 depending on the quality of the letter.
5   The scores are added up and the winner chosen.
6   The group writes a letter to the winner and another letter to the unsuccessful applicants.
7   The letters are read out to the class and feedback and comments are obtained.

The overall aim and rationale of the activity is to provide solid integration of skills plus the notion that learners are writing for a purpose.

If you teach integrated skills in your own situation, pause for a moment and think about how you do it. In what ways are your integrated skills activities similar to/different from the ones outlined above?

In their survey review of eight recently published global adult EFL (English as a Foreign Language) courses submitted by eight different publishers, Masuhara et al. (2008) point out that they noticed a general tendency towards 'the scarcity of real tasks which have an intended outcome other than just the practice of language forms'. Rather than the four skills being introduced and established naturally, or as naturally as is possible within a classroom context,

integration as found in these coursebooks typically involves linking the language skills in such a way that what has been learned and practised is reinforced/extended through further language activities. In some cases, this would involve a focus on listening and speaking first, followed by reading and writing, as this would provide a convenient class-plus-homework pattern. However, this kind of integration would not expose learners to contexts where the four skills are established naturally and could deny them the opportunity to use the four skills with a measure of communicative effectiveness. Let us look at how this might occur in an example from a typical EFL textbook where a writing activity is rather artificially 'grafted on' to the rest of the unit as an extension activity rather than being designed to fit in with the rest of the unit as a whole as illustrated below (Abbs and Freebairn, 1977):

MAN: What do you do Miss Jones?
SALLY: I'm a secretary.
MAN: Oh, a secretary.
SALLY: That's correct.
MAN: Where?
SALLY: At Midtown Council.
MAN: I see.
SALLY: I'm looking for a small one-bedroom flat near my office.
MAN: Now let's see. Ah yes, here's one. It's in Billington Road, and it's a one-bedroom flat.
SALLY: Billington Road? Where is Billington Road exactly?
MAN: Here, look at the map. Billington Road is just here, next to the Town Hall.
SALLY: Oh, that's wonderful.
MAN: Yes. Well here's the address and the telephone number. 23, Billington Road, London, NW7. 234-8181
SALLY: Thank you very much. Goodbye.
MAN: Goodbye.
MAN: (phones) Hello, hello! 234-8181, Mrs Johns? A young woman called Sally Jones is coming to view the flat this afternoon. She's a secretary at Midtown Council. Thank you Mrs Johns. Goodbye.

And the extension:

Sally's mother, Mrs Jones, is in London. She wants to see Sally for lunch. Sally invites her for lunch. Sally writes her a message:

Mum,
Please meet me outside the Shakespeare pub at 1pm. You can't miss it. It's next to the Odeon cinema.

Love, Sally.

This example also adds evidence to another tendency observed by Masuhara et al. (2008: 310) in their survey of adult global courses when they comment on 'the neglect of the value of extensive writing as a means of self-expression, creativity, and life skills. Writing could give purpose to reading and language discovery. Feedback and revision provides individual development opportunities'.

Let us now look at another example of integrated skills material on p. 208. This unit of material is based on a Text-Driven Approach to CLIL lessons at secondary high school level in Malaysia.

1 Analyse which skills each activity is likely to require in the material.
2 Consider if this unit achieves authentic skills integration by evaluating the materials according to the following criteria. To what extent does this material
    i.   provide opportunities to expose learners to language in real life use?
    ii.   provide opportunities to use language in a meaningful way for the learners?
    iii. make use of the four skills as we are likely to do in real communication to achieve communication outcomes?
    iv.   help the learners to use English effectively outside the classroom?

Water Conservation

1 • Think of an idea to conserve water.
 • Tell a partner of your idea.
 • Form a group of four and share your ideas for conserving water.

2 • Read the passage on *Water conservation* from Wikipedia. As you read it
  decide which you think is the best idea for conserving water at home, for
  commercial conservation of water and for agricultural conservation of water.
  Don't worry about any ideas which you don't completely understand.

3 • In your group share your decisions about the best ideas.
 • In your group help each other to understand any ideas which were not
  completely clear. You can also ask your teacher to help you.

4 • Use the Web references in the Wikipedia passage to help you to read more
  about water conservation.
 • Tell the other members of your group anything interesting which you've found
  out from your reading.

5 • In your group write a one-page leaflet advising people in Malaysia how to
  conserve water. Make the advice clear, useful and memorable.
 • Put your group name on your leaflet and then stick your leaflet on the wall.
 • Walk around and look at the other groups' leaflets. Use the evaluation sheet from
  your teacher to evaluate each leaflet.

6 • In your group invent a device for conserving water.

7 • Write a letter to an international company in Malaysia telling them about your
  invention and asking them for an opportunity to demonstrate your invention.

8 • Prepare a 10-minute presentation on your invention to give to the company
  you wrote to. Aim to make it clear and persuasive.
 • Practise answering questions on your presentation.
 • Give your presentation.

Source: 'Water Conservation' activity written by Brian Tomlinson. Unpublished.
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10.3   Integrated Skills in the Classroom

Ellis (2010: 52) explores applications of second language acquisition (SLA)
research to language teaching materials through specific examples of task-
based materials. He summarizes the implications as follows:

> I began this chapter by noting the reservations SLA researchers have voiced
> about the applicability of their theories and research to language pedagogy. I
> noted also that, despite the reservations, applications are needed and desirable.

> The question is what form the applications should take. The approach that I favor is of viewing SLA as a source of ideas for fine-tuning materials options that have originated from elsewhere (tasks being a good example) and, also as a source of new ideas for teaching grammar (e.g., interpretation activities and consciousness-raising tasks).

Ellis (2010: 52) adds that 'The proposals that emanate from SLA are research- and theory-based, . . .' but that 'it does not obviate the need for teachers to test them out in their own classrooms and reach a decision about their suitability and effectiveness'.

Tomlinson (2011b: 7) argues for a compilation of learning principles and procedures which most teachers agree contribute to successful learning. After warning that 'Such a list should aim to be informative rather than prescriptive and should not give the impression that its recommendations are supported by conclusive evidence and by all teachers and researchers' (Tomlinson 2011b: 7), he summarizes his own six basic principles as a guide for materials development:

1   A prerequisite for language acquisition is that the learners are exposed to a rich, meaningful and comprehensible input of language in use.
2   In order for the learners to maximise their exposure to language in use, they need to be engaged both affectively and cognitively in the language experience.
3   Language learners who achieve positive affect are much more likely to achieve communicative competence than those who do not.
4   L2 language learners can benefit from using those mental resources which they typically utilise when acquiring and using their L1.
5   Language learners can benefit from noticing salient features of the input and from discovering how they are used.
6   Learners need opportunities to use language to try to achieve communicative purposes.

As teachers we have a variety of ways of integrating the language skills in the classroom, and in this section of the chapter, we shall be examining some of the possibilities for different types of EFL classroom. We shall begin by looking at examples of general EFL materials; then we shall look at an example of skill integration from some EAP materials. Then we shall proceed to look at some task-based materials, oral presentations, project work, and role play and simulation.

General materials

Masuhara and Tomlinson (2008) report the results of their survey among teachers and learners who use GE coursebooks in the United Kingdom and

some overseas countries. They also show the results of their criterion-referenced evaluation of seven randomly selected GE coursebooks published between 2001 and 2006. Their 14 criteria are based on a selection of learning principles as discussed above. They find that in general, GE coursebooks provide a variety of authentic contemporary topics, texts and genres for exposure to language in use (e.g. stories, news, magazine and book extracts, emails, blogs, SMS messages). They note, however, a lack of extensive texts even at upper-intermediate level, which results in the learners and teachers in the survey commenting that there are 'too many activities to go through' due to a snappy succession of unconnected short texts and activities. One of the major problems that EFL teachers face at all levels is a gap between their learners' intelligence and language level. The most common solution offered by GE coursebooks, according to Masuhara and Tomlinson (2008), seems to be to resort to simple and short texts.

The example of the text-driven integrated unit we have just looked at in Section 10.2, however, tackles this problem of imbalance between cognitive and linguistic levels among learners in a different way. It starts with what Tomlinson (2003b) calls readiness activities in Activity 1 in which the learners come up with their own ideas to conserve water firstly as individuals and then as groups. These readiness activities are thinking and speaking activities that are meant to prepare the learners for the next reading stage in Activity 2 in a non-threatening, personal and thought-provoking way. The sequence of Activities 1–4 involves reading, discussing and re-reading for different purposes, and it takes a problem-solving approach. The best way to conserve water is the 'problem' and the learners are to find the solution through collaboration. The problem of water conservation is a real-life issue, and the solution will come from the learners with the support of reading materials on Wikipedia. The gradual sequencing of Activities 1–4 and the collaboration are intended to help the learners to manage the amount of input and speed of processing to a little bit beyond their own level (cf. i+1 in Krashen, 1982; Krashen and Terrell, 1983).

Using a variety of affectively and cognitively engaging input is one factor to consider, but how the texts are exploited may be even more vital to language acquisition and development. The evaluation of seven GE coursebooks by Masuhara and Tomlinson (2008) further reveals that the input in most cases seems to be presented as opportunities to experience teaching points using the PPP approach (present, practise and produce) together with stock examination-type exercises (e.g. true/false, multiple choice, matching, gap filling, sentence completion). They suspect that 'the authors may be focusing on providing predetermined input rather than facilitating intake, language acquisition and development' (Masuhara and Tomlinson, 2008: 31). Note that a similar tendency was confirmed in Masuhara et al. (2008) with four evaluators from different countries with a larger set of criteria (i.e. 104) in evaluating eight

global coursebooks, which did not include the seven in Masuhara and Tomlinson (2008).

In the example of integrated skills material on water conservation in Section 10.2 above, Activity 5 uses a task-based approach in the sense that the learners are asked to write a one-page leaflet in groups advising people in Malaysia how to conserve water. Activity 6 is another related but further development activity of designing a device for water conservation in groups. This task involves a group drawing of the device and should generate focused, spontaneous and purposeful speaking and listening as is likely to happen in real-life communication. What follows next is another writing task in Activity 7: writing a letter to an international company in Malaysia, describing the invented water conservation device and requesting an opportunity to demonstrate their inventions. Finally Activity 8 is an oral presentation of the device in a simulated situation in the company using a role-play format with the inventors making a presentation to company executives. In all the output activities, there is a clearly defined audience and target, and there are outcomes for the communication activities which reflect authentic situations in real life. The skills are integrated, and this material tries to offer opportunities for the personalization and for the approximation important for language acquisition.

You are encouraged to evaluate available GE materials to see how integrated skills are taught and to decide for yourselves how the materials may help your learners in using English effectively in an appropriate manner. The latest GE books at Intermediate level (CEF B1+) include:

English Unlimited (Rea et al., 2011)
Just Right 2nd edition (Harmer, 2012)
Outcomes (Dellar and Walkley, 2010)
Speakout (Clare and Wilson, 2011)

EAP materials

Materials practising integrated skills can be very useful in a number of academic and educational contexts, particularly for EAP students who will be going on to study their specialist subject through the medium of English.

Mol and Tan (2010) evaluated three widely used EAP materials in university foundation courses in New Zealand and Australia. They firstly summarized the required EAP skills recognized in many institutions. They were:

Listening/Reading

- Understanding academic texts
- Taking notes
- Identifying relevant information

- Interpreting information
- Recognizing point of view and bias.

Speaking

- Negotiating
- Paraphrasing and using evidence
- Participating in formal and informal discussion
- Arguing a point
- Expressing ideas.

Writing

- Structuring academic essays and presentations
- Using academic style (writing and speaking)
- Arguing a point
- Expressing ideas.

Other

- Thinking clearly and critically
- Extending learners' awareness of cross-cultural differences and of how to use language appropriately to negotiate these differences
- Developing strategies appropriate for independent and collaborative learning in a university. (Mol and Tan, 2010: 75–6)

They also add that 'some EAP courses stress the importance of specific tools for university study: writing bibliographies and referencing, computing skills for study purposes, library research skills and using study resources' (Mol and Tan, 2010: 76).

> 1   List the kinds of activities you would like to see in EAP materials.
> 2   Read the suggestions by Mol and Tan (2010) below in relation to what EAP materials should provide. Compare their list with what you have written in 1 above.

Mol and Tan (2010: 90), having evaluated the three most popular EAP materials, list the kinds of activities necessary in Australia and New Zealand. Their list includes the following:

- Developing students' awareness of different academic cultures and practices.
- Giving them plenty of opportunities for making discoveries about academic English and academic practices.

- Giving students an opportunity to make discoveries about the host country's academic culture and about their subject-specific academic practices.
- Giving students an opportunity to link the academic English and practices they learn in the EAP coursebooks or courses with the real academic context outside the class. For example, projects can be designed, encouraging students to make discoveries about the academic practice and English used in the subject discipline they will be studying.

Here are a few examples of current EAP materials for you to consider issues we have discussed:

Access EAP: Foundations Course Book (Argent and Alexander, 2010)
Communicative Activities for EAP (Guse, 2010)
EAP Now! (Cox and Hill, 2011)

Task-based materials

As was discussed in Chapter 2, tasks provide an excellent platform for meaning-focused language learning opportunities involving integrated skills activities with a possible language awareness embedded in the sequence. After looking at various definitions of task, Van den Branden (2006: 4) defines a task as 'an activity in which a person engages in order to attain an objective, and which necessitates the use of language'. In the example of Water Conservation in Section 10.2, the students were given a task of writing a one-page leaflet advising people in Malaysia how to conserve water. They were given another task of designing a water conservation device followed by further related tasks of writing to an international company about their device and of preparing a 10-minute presentation. The students have to read, listen, speak and write with clear task objectives, target audience and outcomes in mind. Van den Branden (2006: 1) is a unique addition to the accumulating literature on Task-Based Language Teaching in that all the chapters are based on empirical studies 'where tasks have been used as the basic units for the organization of educational activities in intact language classrooms'. It also contains reports from infant, primary, secondary, science and vocational training, and ICT areas. The book looks at needs analysis, syllabus design, assessment and teacher training. A few examples of kinds of materials are introduced in the following pages.

62   *Goedele Duran and Griet Ramaut*

Show an example of the pen case to the pupils and make clear that they can use it to put in their pens and pencils. When they have made their own pen case, they can put it on their desk.

Give each pupil a page with the visual instructions (see below) and carry out the instructions one by one together with the pupils. Meanwhile provide language input by describing what you are doing:
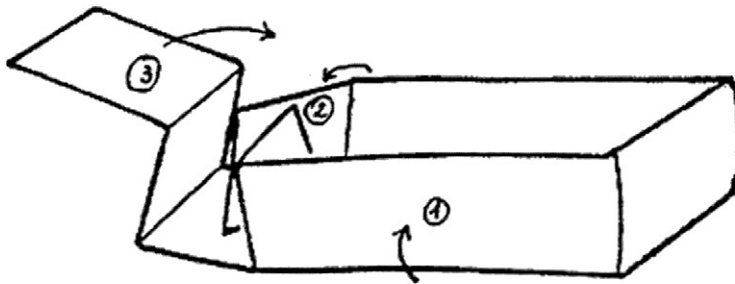
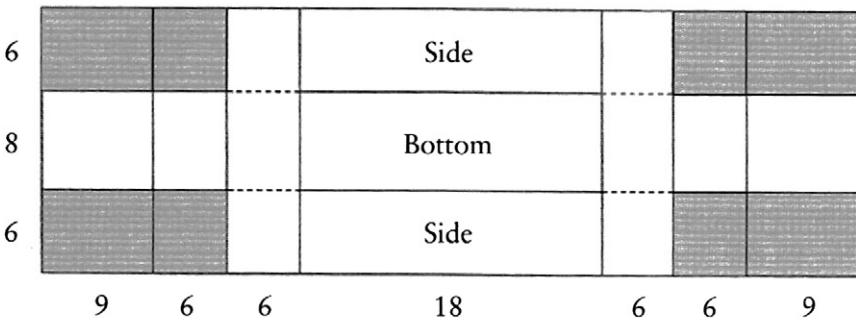*Draw the plan of the pen case on a sheet of paper.*
Cut off the grey parts.
Cut the parts indicated by a dotted line.
Fold the sides upwards, fold the cut pieces and the back and front inwards as indicated on the instructions.
Cut out a double bottom and put it in the box.
Let the pupils further decorate their own box.

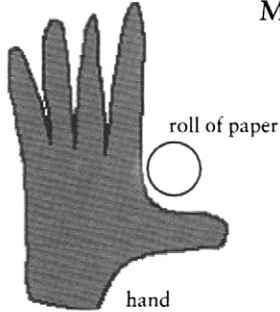| 6			Side			
8			Bottom			
6			Side			

| | 9 | 6 | 6 | 18 | 6 | 6 | 9 |

Example 2   Make your own pen case (task taken from the teacher manual of a task-based syllabus for newcomers in Flemish education: *Klaar? Af!* Centre for Language and Education, Leuven)

Can you see through your hand?

Maybe this experiment will help you . . .

roll of paper

Take a thin magazine and roll it up into a cylinder with a diameter of about 2.5 centimetres. Raise your left hand about 10 centimetres from your face. At the same time, hold the roll of paper in your right hand, and put it between your index finger and the thumb of your left hand, as shown in the picture.

hand

Next, briefly look through the roll with your right eye and look at your left hand with your left eye. Close both your eyes and then open them again. What do you see when you look at your left hand?

Figure 2 A hole in your hand. A task taken from a task-based syllabus for Dutch language education at the level of secondary education. (From: *KLIMOP+TATAMI*, Centre for Language and Education, Leuven)

Source: G. Duran and G. Ramaut, Scanned image of p. 62 from 'Tasks for absolute beginners and beyond: developing and sequencing tasks at basic proficiency levels'. In K. van den Branden (ed), *Task-Based Language Education, From Theory to Practice*. Reprinted with permission of Cambridge University Press.

A Gruesome Performance

The teacher introduces and reads the following story:

Just before sunset, a fakir calls the passers-by to come and watch his performance. Seated in a circle with torches, the audience watches the fakir take a length of rope from a wicker basket and throw it into the air. He repeats this action a couple of times to demonstrate that it is an ordinary rope. But then, as he throws the rope into the air again, it suddenly coils up in the darkness, until the top is no longer visible and then miraculously stays there. The fakir's assistant, a slim young boy climbs the rope and is seen to vanish into thin air. He ignores his master's calls to come back down. Impatiently, the fakir draws a sharp knife, clenches it between his teeth, and clambers up after the boy – and also vanishes from sight. Then there is a series of blood-curdling yells, and various dismembered limbs of the young boy fall to the ground, followed by his head. The fakir then slides down the rope, which falls down behind him. He joins his other assistants, who are standing in tears around the remains of the young boy. They put the parts of the body into a basket. When the fakir claps his hands, the young boy emerges from the basket, smiling, miraculously reassembled and with no apparent damage.

Task: How does this work? How do you think this 'miracle' can be explained?

Here are a number of possible explanations. Which one do you think is the correct one?

- *The fakir has magic powers: he defies the laws of gravity and has the power to resuscitate the dead.*
- *The fakir is in fact an extraordinary hypnotist: through mass hypnosis he makes the audience believe that certain things happen which in reality do not happen at all.*
- *The fakir uses a trick.*

After ticking the answer of your choice, ask your neighbour whether s/he has chosen the same answer or another one.

Who is right and who is wrong? Find out by reading the text opposite.

Text

The trick – for a trick it is – is performed at twilight, before a background of nearby hills or trees. The fakir relies on a thin but strong black cord slung between two high points about fifteen meters above ground level. The rope, which has a small but heavy black ball at the end and which is strong enough to support the weight of the slim boy, is thrown up over the cord. The boy climbs up the rope. The public is blinded by the light of the torches and cannot see boy high up on the rope in the dark sky. Once the boy reaches the top, he attaches the rope to the horizontal black cord, which can then take the weight of the magician.

And the boy's dismembered body parts? When the fakir climbs up, hidden under his wide robe there are shaven monkey limbs, dressed in clothes similar to the boy's, and with a bit of red sauce splattered around. The boy's head is a wooden model fitted with a turban. When the fakir reaches the top, the boy climbs into his robe and throws down the limbs. When the fakir descends and goes to the basket, the boy disappears into it. The limbs then go into the basket, the lid is put on, the fakir claps his hands, and – presto! – the boy pops out.

Figure 3 A gruesome performance. A task taken from a task-based syllabus for Dutch language teaching at the level of secondary school. (Form: *KLIMOP+TATAMI*, Centre for Language and Education, Leuven)

Source: Figure and activity 'A gruesome performance taken from a task-based syllabus for Dutch Language education at the level of secondary education', from *KLIMOP+TATAMI*, Centre for Language and Education, Leuven. Reprinted with permission.

Willis and Willis (2007) is written as an introductory book with teachers new to Task-based Teaching in mind. There is useful discussion of procedures and of examples of tasks submitted by teachers.

Oral presentations

Preparing learners to give short oral presentations in class to the rest of the group is another useful way of achieving skills integration in the classroom. One way to begin this activity is to take cuttings from newspapers, magazines and topics included in existing teaching materials. In some cases, reading material can be used as an initial stimulus, and the activity can be graded to give lower proficiency learners an opportunity to work with less exacting materials. The learners can then take notes and try to pinpoint aspects of what they have read that will be worth discussing. They are then given time to prepare a short talk in front of the class and are encouraged to use maps, diagrams, charts and visual equipment if these can help to make the talk clearer to the group. During the presentation, the other learners are required to take notes so that they can ask questions and/or raise pertinent points during a plenary discussion after the talk has finished.

As teachers, we can sometimes experiment with student assessment at this stage by asking the students to assess each other's work (peer assessment). It is possible to devise a fairly rudimentary evaluation sheet where small groups of students are asked to answer questions that might cover the following: what they thought of the presentation; was it well organized and were they able to follow the main points; could they summarize the talk for someone who was not present; did the speaker make effective use of visual support material; what advice would they give to the speaker for future presentations. This activity can thus interrelate the reading, writing, speaking and listening skills in a motivating way. For further reading, see Bradbury (2010).

Project work

Projects with integrated 'themes' that entail integrated skills can provide a pertinent way of giving learners an effective forum in which to develop these skills. Let us consider an example that takes the overall theme of 'Civilization' as its starting point and examines how it may be seen from opposing points of view. Viewpoint A is concerned with becoming better acquainted with it; viewpoint B is concerned with escaping from it, as shown in figure 10.1.

One suggestion for reading materials for viewpoint A would be magazine articles or books and booklets on the 'Grand Tour', a popular phenomenon in the eighteenth century, when certain young men visited classical areas and cities in Europe. For viewpoint B, materials from magazines and newspapers on 'getting away from it all' and 'living on a desert island' could be provided. The reading component could be designed so that a 'jigsaw' pattern is established (see Chapter 6), which would enable learners to piece together information from both parts to get a complete picture of the theme.

Civilization

Viewpoint A

materials relating to
becoming acquainted
with it

Viewpoint B

materials relating to
escaping from it
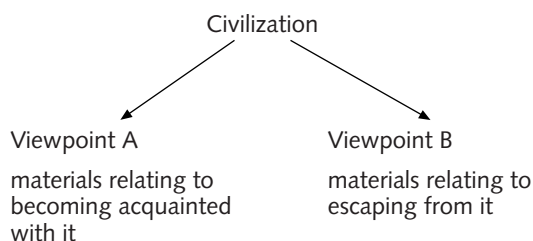
Figure 10.1   Different interpretations of civilization for materials selection.

Possible listening activities might include interviews with a man on his reactions to the Grand Tour and a woman/group on living a communal experience on a desert island. Speaking could involve discussion prompts such as 'what problems do you think people would have on a Grand Tour/desert island?' (e.g. reference might be made to health, money and safety); and 'is living on a desert island escaping responsibility?' The level of difficulty and amount of guidance offered could be varied according to the level of the learners.

For a more advanced group, Gairns and Redman (1998) suggest producing a magazine of short stories as a class project with learners having to decide in pairs or small groups the topics to be included. They also comment that learners might wish to divide tasks into some to be carried out in class and others to be accomplished at home. The final outcome of the project might be a wall display or in booklet form or indeed a combination of both.

> Think of some ways of integrating writing skills into the project work outlined above.

The scheme outlined above is relatively teacher-led. In some cases it may be possible to allow learners to work on projects by collecting data themselves and, where they have access to native speakers, to devise questionnaires and interviews they can then feed back into the group. Skills integration should develop naturally from the tasks that the learners are asked to complete.

Materials to Products (2011) is part of the Oxford Read and Discover series and is a non-fiction graded reader aimed at age eight and older. It provides educational texts and an Audio CD with activities and project work. The topic areas include: the World of Science and Technology, the Natural World, the World of Arts and Social Studies. Teachers involved in CLIL may find the series useful.

Some teachers may not be too familiar with procedures associated with Project work. *Searching* (2010), a successful secondary school coursebook in Norway, provides a useful example of instructions to the students in conducting projects with suggestions for possible topics and outcomes.

Focus on Writing
Project Work

At school – and later at work – you will often be asked to do projects. Very often that means that you work in groups, but you can also do a project on your own. Here we will be dealing with group work at school.

Planning the project

- Plan your project carefully. Freedom to do your own project is not the same as freedom to do nothing.
- Very often you have a general topic, for example "The 1960s". The first thing you have to do, is to decide what you want to do a project on (for example music, fashion, hippies, the Vietnam War, etc.).
- All proposals from the group members are important and should be discussed.
- Time is important. How many lessons or weeks have you got?
- Where are you going to work? Do you have to stay at school or can you work at home, take a trip to a library, etc.?
- What are you going to do at school, and what are you going to do at home?
- How are you going to present your project? See below.
- What material or resources do you need, and where do you find them?
- How will you keep track of your progress? Writing a diary?
- If it has not been said, ask your teacher about how the project will be evaluated.

Doing a project

- You must agree in the group about who will be responsible for what.
- Make a timetable for how you are going to work. How many lessons should be used to get materials, for individual tasks, etc.? When are you going to get together the next time? Etc.
- Remember that your teacher has a supporting function. Ask him or her for help if necessary.

Presenting a project

You will normally have many possibilities when it comes to presentation. Which is the best way to present the outcome of your work? Here are some ideas:

Some ideas for presenting your work:

- posters for the classroom
- a Power Point presentation
- a dramatic performance
- a fashion show
- a mini musical
- a talk
- an interview
- a song contest
- a (music) magazine

Here are some topics for project work from this chapter:

- Famous People in the Sixties
- Space Exploration
- The Vietnam War
- Fashion in the Sixties and/or Today
- Pop Music in the Sixties and/or Today
- The Hippies

Some other writing tasks

L7

Write a text about fashion. Choose one of the following tasks or decide for yourself what you want to write about.

A Do you follow fashion? Why/why not? Describe someone who is a "slave of fashion".

B Have you ever been to a fashion show? Describe it.

L8

Write a text about music. Choose one of the following tasks or decide for yourself what you want to write about.

A Write about what music you enjoy listening to and what music you really dislike. Give examples.

B Write about how important music is in your life and how much time you spend listening to music.

Questions to ask yourself:

1 What new things have I learnt about the Sixties?
2 What do I know about space exploration?
3 What is a musical?
4 Which version of the text *Growing Up in the 1960s* did I read? Why?
5 Do I know how to use relative pronouns?
6 What have I learnt about project work?

Source: A.-B. Fenner and G. Nordal-Pedersen. 'Focus on Writing: Project work', from pp. 148–9, *Searching 9, Learner's Book.* Copyright © Gyldendal Norsk Forlag AS 2008. Printed by permission.

Role play/simulation

Role play and simulation activities are often thought to be one of the most effective ways of integrating language skills in the language classroom. Though the terms 'role play' and 'simulation' have been interpreted in many different ways by both teachers and textbook writers, both activities offer a flexible yet principled way of tailoring integrated skills to learner needs.

It is generally the case that role-play activities involve the learner in 'role assumption'; in other words, the learner takes on a different role (and perhaps identity) from his or her normal one by 'playing the part' of a different person. Role play is used more frequently in the general EFL classroom, that is, in the teaching of English for General Purposes (EGP), where the ultimate goals for learning the language are not necessarily specified in advance, if at all. It may be desirable, however, to give learners more practice in language 'use', even though it may be argued that the communication which ensues is not entirely natural, as the learners may not really empathize with the character whose role they have been asked to assume.

Simulation work, on the other hand, usually requires the learners to take part in communication that involves personal experience and emotions. Because of this, simulation is often seen as being central to English for Specific Purposes (ESP) situations where the task/s to be worked upon can be related directly to the learner's actual or intended occupation. As a consequence, the learners will not only learn more about the communicative use of language in the L2, but will learn more about the setting/scenario relevant to their occupational field. For example, as well as building up competence in the use of the foreign language, a business person taking part in a meeting may well learn more about negotiation strategies in an international context.

Both types of activity clearly have their place in the classroom – be it for general purposes or for learners with more specific goals in learning the language – as they offer a flexible approach to integrating the skills, and involve learners at all stages by stimulating their creativity and responding to their needs and interests.

> What are the advantages to learners and to the teacher of using role play/simulation activities in the classroom? Are there any potential problems to using them?

According to Jacobs (1988–1999) these types of group activity encourage positive student attitudes towards the target language, their peers, and the teacher, since 'the mutual dependence that co-operative structured activities require would lead to more communication among students because they need

to exchange information and advice in order to succeed in achieving their goals'. They can also release the teacher from the centre stage position for a lot of the time, thereby allowing the possibility of more individual help if necessary. If we manage the activity effectively, we can possibly overcome problems of introversion and lack of fluency in learners by designing tasks that all learners can participate in. A model for structuring simulation (and role-play) activities in the classroom is offered by Herbert and Sturtridge (1979). They explain how tasks can be graded, the role of the teacher during the activity and the type of material to be used. They suggest a three-phase sequence for staging a role play/simulation in the classroom. In the first phase, learners are given the informational input. In the second phase, the learners work on the activity by discussing the task or the problem set. The simulation may involve role play, debate or discussion. In the third phase, the teacher gives learners feedback on the activity just performed, possibly discussing effective strategies and language use and suggesting follow-up work if appropriate.

In the first phase, for example, the informational input can either be in the form of a memorandum to read or perhaps it could be listening based. The linguistic input can be graded so that preliminary work can be done on the material in class before the role-play/simulation activity proper or, if the teacher thinks that the learners have had enough training, they can be presented with a 'deep-end strategy' in which they are given informational input but then move straight into the second phase, the language work being dealt with as an 'outcome' in the third and final phase.

As an illustration of this, let us consider a role play/simulation in which learners have to discuss some cost-cutting measures in their firm, company or school – a fairly typical situation. A task for the first phase of the simulation may involve the reading of a memorandum regarding an imminent meeting for the heads or representatives of different divisions/departments/sections in the company or school. The participants can be divided into small groups for each division or section (or run separate simulations), and are given a memorandum to read and think about, plus some notes that summarize the present situation in their own division.

However, all participants could be given different information about their respective divisions and a 'jigsaw' is thus established, which will be pieced together when this information becomes disclosed during the second (main) phase. For example, what might be an effective measure to implement in one section of the school or company could prove disastrous for another section. Ensuing interaction is therefore going to focus heavily on negotiating suitable outcomes for as many parties involved in the discussions as possible.

The information that the other learners have will be similar with respect to some of the measures above, and very different in other cases. Hence, much of the meeting will focus on the negotiation and management of potential conflict. In the first phase it may be an idea to 'tease out' some of the language that the participants will need in the second phase. In this second phase the

simulation itself takes place, and the main focus is one of fluency. The teacher may wish also to take notes, operate audio/video equipment or intervene in the simulation if so required. At the conclusion of the meeting, one of the managers can be asked to write a report to head office summarizing the decisions that were agreed upon in the meeting. This type of simulation is thus a highly effective way of integrating reading, listening, speaking and writing skills.

The third phase, that of 'feedback', has to be handled carefully so as not to become a negative account of what went wrong. For error analysis, it might be possible to give a report on general types of mistakes made in the group, or where and how communication broke down, as well as giving individualized feedback to learners. The simulation should also provide many ideas to the teacher for future language work. Other types of role-play/simulation work might include setting up a committee to consider the applications of several candidates for a grant or scholarship, which only one of the candidates can obtain. In another type of activity, students could enact roles in an imaginary courtroom by trying to solve a particular crime. Other useful references and materials include

Role Play (Porter-Ladousse, 1987)
Language-Learning Simulations: A Practical Guide (Hyland, 1993)

> If your textbook does not provide any material for role-play/simulation work, would you be able to incorporate some of the above suggestions into your lessons?

10.4   Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to unify some of the issues raised in previous chapters by considering different permutations of integrating language skills in the classroom. First of all, we attempted to define integrated skills and the advantages to the learner of working with integrated skills materials. We saw that some activities and materials only develop the skills in an 'additive' way and are somewhat removed from the ways in which we might use the skills in the 'real world'.

Finally, we considered some class activities which offer different permutations of the skills: GE; EAP; task-based; oral presentations and role-play/simulation activities. This chapter concludes the second part of the book. In Part III we shall examine different ways of organizing the resources and management of the classroom.

   In Chapters 6–9 we looked at each language skill in turn. Review these chapters and see what implications there are for the integration of skills across the chapters.

10.5   Further Reading

Nowadays, integrated skills are discussed in terms of different teaching contexts: CLIL, task-based, EAP, projects and so on. We have given recommended further reading in each section above.

1   Oxford, R. (2001): *ERIC Digest*. It compares single skill teaching and explains the strengths of integrated skills teaching.