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Educational technology and other learning resources

A The technology pyramid

If you walk into some classrooms around the world, you will see fixed data projectors, interactive whiteboards (IWBs), built-in speakers for audio material that is delivered directly from a computer hard disk (rather than from a tape recorder), and computers with round-the-clock Internet access. Whenever teachers want their students to find anything out, they can get them to use a search engine like Google and the results can be shown to the whole class on the IWB.

In other classes, even in many successful private language schools around the world, there is a whiteboard in the classroom, an overhead projector (OHP) and a tape recorder. Other schools only have a whiteboard – or perhaps a blackboard – often not in very good condition. In such schools there may well not be a photocopier, though hopefully the students will have exercise books.

Finally, there are some classroom situations where neither teacher nor students have anything at all in terms of educational technology or other learning aids. Jill and Charles Hadfield represent these differing realities in a ‘reversed pyramid’ of resources (see Figure 1). In a world in which the pace of technological change is breathtakingly fast (so that between the writing and publishing of this book new technology will have been produced that most of us are as yet unaware of), it seems that being at the bottom of the pyramid is likely to be a bar to language learning.

However, Jill and Charles Hadfield argue passionately, this is not the case (Hadfield and Hadfield 2003a and b). There is a lot you can do with minimal or even no resources. For example, in one situation they taught in, there was a board and the children had exercise books, but apart from that there were no other educational aids, not even coursebooks. However, with the help of a washing line and clothes pegs they were able to hang up pictures

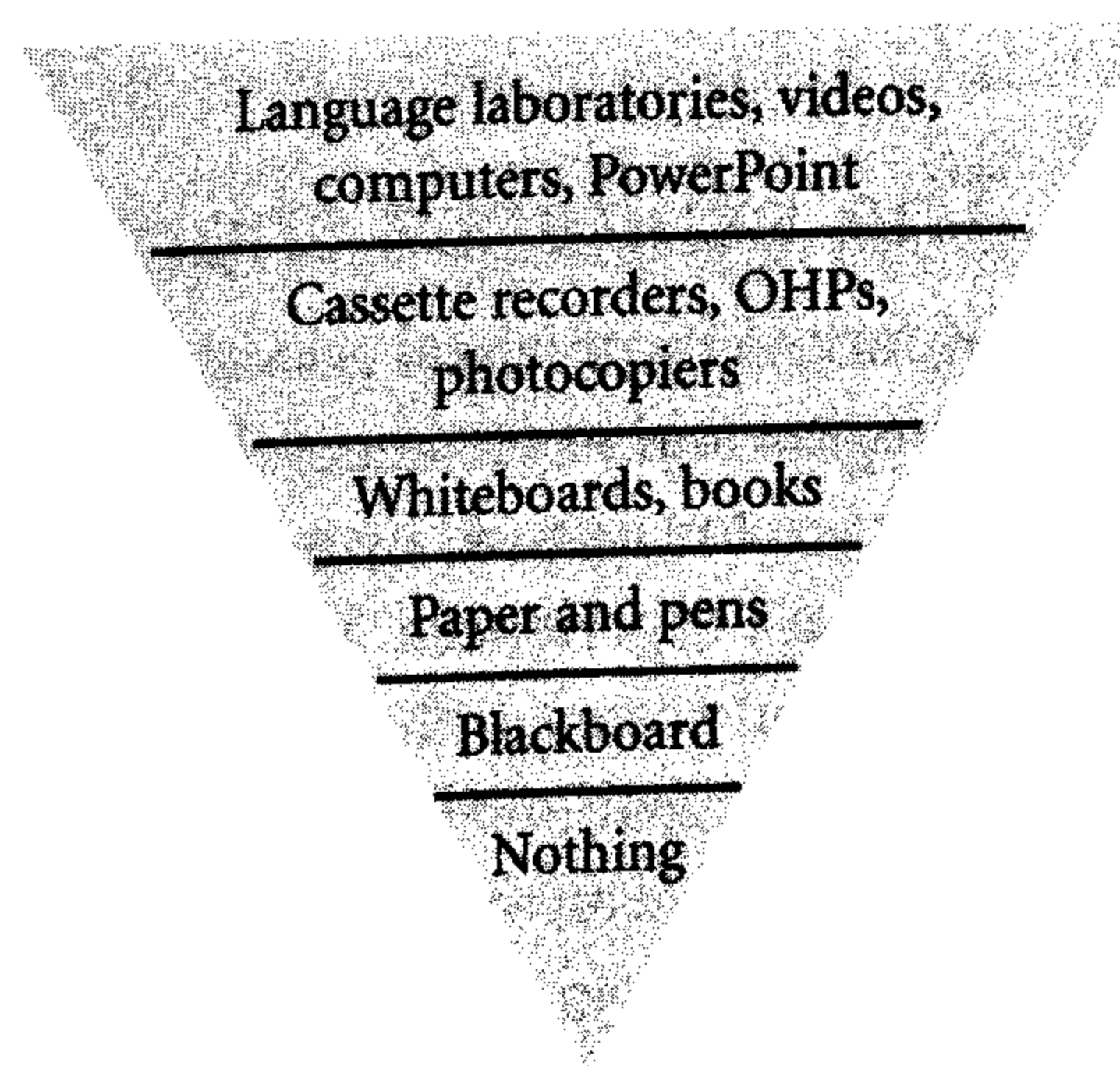


FIGURE 1: Reversed resources pyramid

for students to work with. Simple objects like a selection of pebbles became the focus for activities such as telling the story of the pebbles' existence; different words from sentences were written on pieces of paper or card and then put on students' backs – and the rest of the class had to make them stand in order to make a sentence from the word; paper bags with faces drawn on them became puppets; the classroom desks were rearranged to become a street plan so students could practise giving (and responding to) directions. Finally, and most importantly, the students themselves were used as source material, whether as participants in quizzes about the real world, as informants in discussions about families or as imaginers of river scenes based on teacher description. The internal world of the student is 'the richest, deepest seam of gold that you have' (Hadfield and Hadfield 2003b: 34). Indeed, (see Figure 2) Jill and Charles Hadfield propose turning the pyramid the other way up.

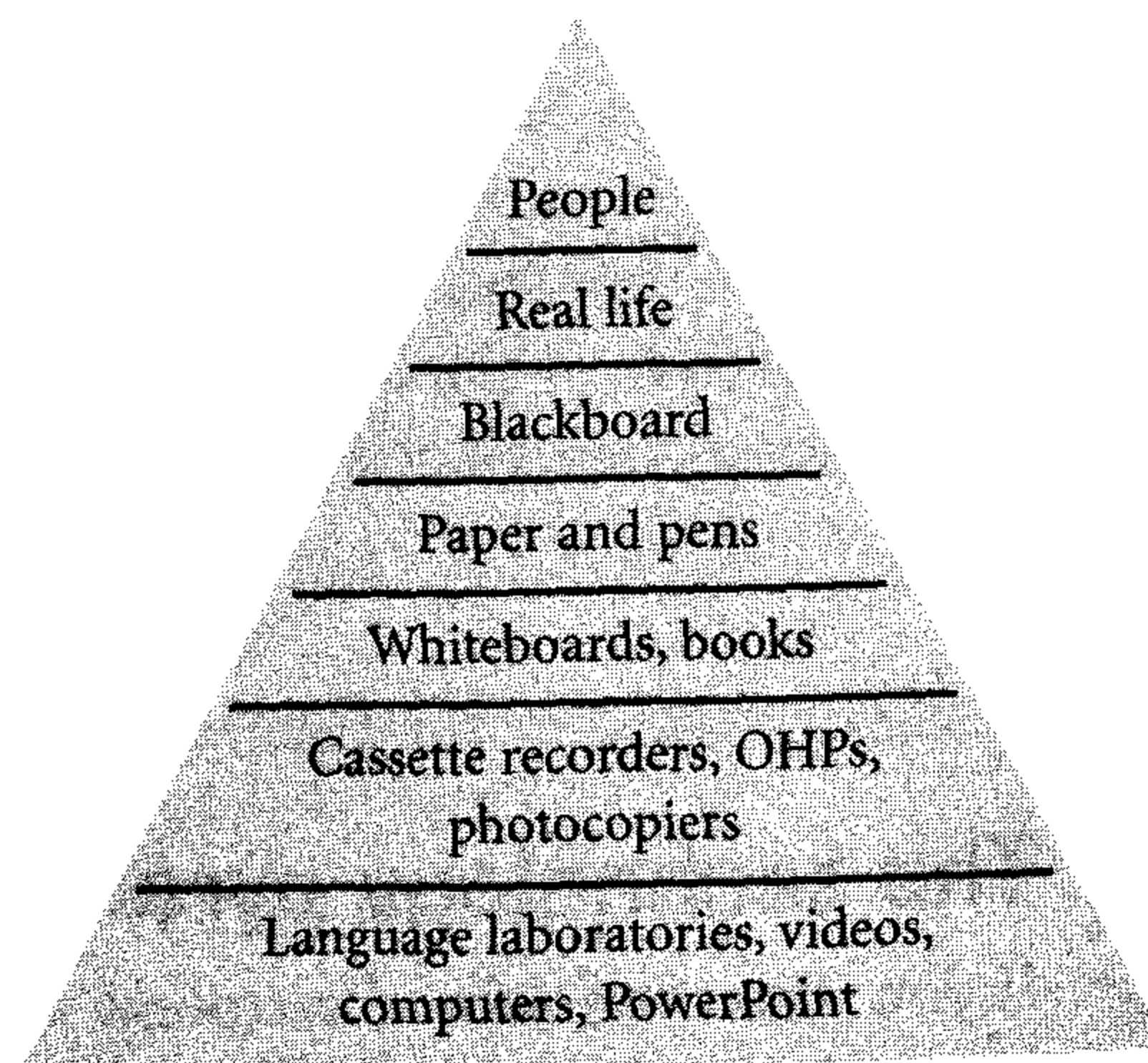


FIGURE 2: 'Other way up' resources pyramid

The resources that are currently available are truly amazing. As we shall see, they offer an amazing variety of routes for learning and discovery. Yet we should not see them as methodologies for learning, but rather as tools to help us in whatever approaches and techniques we have chosen to use. And we need to remind ourselves constantly of the fact that many classrooms both in the 'developing' and 'developed' world do not have access to very modern technology. Yet this does not prevent students – and has never prevented them – from learning English successfully. In this chapter, therefore, we will look at a range of classroom resources (both hi- and low-tech) before considering the questions we need to ask when trying to decide whether to adopt the latest technological innovation.

B The students themselves

By far the most useful resources in the classroom are the students themselves. Through their thoughts and experiences they bring the outside world into the room, and this is a powerful resource for us to draw on. We can get them to write or talk about things they like or things they have experienced. We can ask them what they would do in certain situations or get them to act out scenes from their lives. In multilingual classes (see page 132), we can get them to share information about their different countries.

Students can also be very good resources for explaining and practising meaning. For example, in young learner classes we can get them to be 'living clocks'. They have to demonstrate the time with their arms (using a pointing finger for the minute hand and a fist for the hour hand) and the other students have to say what the time is. We can also get them to stand in line in the order of their birthdays (so they have to ask each other *When is your birthday?*) or in the order of the distance they live from the school. They can be made to stand in the alphabetical order of their middle names (so they have to ask), or in the order of the name of another member of their family, etc.

Students can elect one of their number to be a 'class robot'. The others tell him or her what to do. Students can mime and act out words and phrases (e.g. *Hurry up! Watch out!*) for the rest of the class to guess. They can perform dialogues taking on the personality of some of the characters the other students know (e.g. for 10- and 11-year-old beginners, Clever Carol, Horrible Harvey, etc.), and the rest of the class have to guess who they are. Most students, especially younger learners, enjoy acting out.

C Objects, pictures and things

A range of objects, pictures, cards and other things, such as Cuisenaire rods, can be used for presenting and manipulating language, and for involving students in activities of all kinds. We will look at four of them.

C1 Realia

We mentioned above how a simple pebble can be used as a stimulus for a creative activity. However, this is only one possible use for real objects: realia. With beginners, and particularly children, using realia is helpful for teaching the meanings of words or for stimulating student activity; teachers sometimes come to class with plastic fruit, cardboard clock faces, or two telephones to help simulate phone conversations.

Objects that are intrinsically interesting can provide a good starting-point for a variety of language work and communication activities. Jill and Charles Hadfield suggest bringing in a bag of 'evocative objects' that have a 'story to tell' (Hadfield and Hadfield 2003b: 32). These might be a hair ribbon, a coin, a button, a ring, a paperclip, an elastic band, an old photo frame, a key and a padlock. Students are put into groups. Each group picks an object from the bag (without looking in first). Each student in the group then writes one sentence about the object's history as if they were that object. Members of the group share their sentences to make the object's autobiography. They then read their autobiographies to the rest of the class.

We can find an object with an obscure use and ask students to speculate about what it is for (*it might/could/probably is*) and/or design various explanations to account for it (*it is used for -ing*). The class could vote on the best idea. If we bring in more than one object, especially when they are not obviously connected, students can speculate on what they have in common or they can invent stories and scenarios using the various objects. They can choose which three from a collection of objects they will put in a time capsule, or which would be most useful on a desert island, etc.

Some teachers use a soft ball to make learning more enjoyable. When they want a student to say something, ask a question or give an answer, they throw a ball to the student, who then has to respond. The student can then throw the ball to a classmate who, in turn, produces the required response before throwing the ball to someone else. Not all students find this appealing, however, and there is a limit to how often the ball can be thrown before people get fed up with it.

The only limitations on the things which we bring to class are the size and quantity of the objects themselves and the students' tolerance, especially with adults who may think they are being treated childishly. As with so many other things, this is something we will have to assess on the basis of our students' reactions.

C2 Pictures

Teachers have always used pictures or graphics – whether drawn, taken from books, newspapers and magazines, or photographed – to facilitate learning. Pictures can be in the form of flashcards (smallish cards which we can hold up for our students to see), large wall pictures (big enough for everyone to see details), cue cards (small cards which students use in pair- or groupwork), photographs or illustrations (typically in a textbook). Some teachers also use projected slides, images from an overhead projector (see E2 below), or projected computer images (see E4 below). Teachers also draw pictures on the board to help with explanation and language work (see E1 below).

Pictures of all kinds can be used in a multiplicity of ways, as the following examples show:

- **Drills:** with lower-level students, an appropriate use for pictures – especially flashcards – is in cue–response drills (see Chapter 12, B2). We hold up a flashcard (the cue) before nominating a student and getting a response. Then we hold up another one, nominate a different student, and so on. Flashcards are particularly useful for drilling grammar items, for cueing different sentences and practising vocabulary.

Sometimes teachers use larger wall pictures, where pointing to a detail of a picture will elicit a response, such as *There's some milk in the fridge* or *He's just been swimming*, etc. We can show large street maps to practise shop vocabulary or to get students giving and understanding directions.

- **(Communication) games:** pictures are extremely useful for a variety of communication activities, especially where these have a game-like feel, such as 'describe and draw' activities, where one student describes a picture (which we have given them) and a partner has to draw the same picture without looking at the original. We can also divide a class into four groups (A, B, C, D) and give each group a different picture that shows a separate stage in a story. Once the members of the group have studied their picture, we take it away. New groups are formed with four members each – one from group A, one from group B, one from group C and one from group D. By sharing the information they saw in their pictures, they have to work out what story the pictures together are telling.

Teachers sometimes use pictures for creative writing. They might tell students to invent a story using at least three of the images in front of them. They can tell them to have a conversation about a specified topic, and, at various stages during the conversation, to pick a card and bring whatever that card shows into the conversation.

- **Understanding:** one of the most appropriate uses for pictures is for the presenting and checking of meaning. An easy way of explaining the meaning of the word *aeroplane*, for example, is to have a picture of one. In the same way, it is easy to check students' understanding of a piece of writing or listening by asking them to select the picture (out of, say, four) which best corresponds to the reading text or the listening passage.
- **Ornamentation:** pictures of various kinds are often used to make work more appealing. In many modern coursebooks, for example, a reading text will be adorned by a photograph which is not strictly necessary, in the same way as happens in newspaper and magazine articles. The rationale for this is clearly that pictures enhance the text, giving readers (or students) an extra visual dimension to what they are reading.

Some teachers and materials designers object to this use of illustrations because they consider it gratuitous. But it should be remembered that if the pictures are interesting, they will appeal strongly to at least some members of the class. They have the power (at least for the more visually oriented) to engage students.

- **Prediction:** pictures are useful for getting students to predict what is coming next in a lesson. Thus students might look at a picture and try to guess what it shows. (Are the people in it brother and sister, husband or wife, and what are they arguing about – or are they arguing? etc.) They then listen to an audio track or read a text to see if it matches what they predicted on the basis of the picture. This use of pictures is very powerful and has the advantage of engaging students in the task to follow.
- **Discussion:** pictures can stimulate questions such as: *What is it showing? How does it make you feel? What was the artist's/photographer's purpose in designing it in that way? Would you like to have this picture in your house? Why? Why not? How much would you pay for the picture? Is the picture a work of art?*

One idea is to get students to become judges of a photographic competition. After being given the category of photographs they are going to judge (e.g. men in action, reportage, abstract pictures), the students decide on four or five characteristics their winning photograph should have. They then apply these characteristics to the finalists that we provide for them, before explaining why they made their choice.

Pictures can also be used for creative language use, whether they are in a book or on cue cards, flashcards or wall pictures. We might ask students to write a description of a picture, to invent the conversation taking place between two people in a picture or, in one particular role-play activity, ask them to answer questions as if they were the characters in a famous painting.

We can make wall pictures, flashcards and cue cards in a number of ways. We can take pictures from magazines and stick them on card. We can draw them. We can buy reproductions, photographs and posters from shops or we can photocopy them from a variety of sources (though we should check copyright law before doing this). It is possible to find pictures of almost anything on the Internet and print them off.

The choice and use of pictures is very much a matter of personal taste, but we should bear in mind three qualities that pictures need to possess if they are to engage students and be linguistically useful. In the first place, they need to be appropriate not only for the purpose in hand but also for the classes they are being used for. If they are too childish, students may not like them, and if they are culturally inappropriate, they can offend people.

Ultimately, the most important thing is that pictures should be visible. They have to be big enough so that all our students – taking into account where they will be sitting – can see the necessary detail.

Lastly, we will not want to spend hours collecting pictures only to have them destroyed the first time they are used! Thought should be given to how to make them durable. Perhaps they can be stuck to cards and protected with transparent coverings.

C3 Cards

Apart from flashcards with pictures on them, cards of all shapes and sizes can be used in a variety of ways. Cards, in this sense, can range from carefully prepared pieces of thick paper which have been laminated to make them into a reusable resource to small strips of paper which the teacher brings in for one lesson only.

Of the many uses for cards, three are especially worth mentioning:

- **Matching and ordering:** cards are especially good for matching questions and answers or two halves of a sentence. Students can either match them on the desk in front of them (perhaps in pairs or groups), or they can move around the classroom looking for their pairs. This matching can be on the basis of topic, lexis or grammatical construction.

We can also use cards to order words into sentences or to put the lines of a poem in order.

Using cards in this way is especially good for kinaesthetic learners, of course (see page 89). But it is good for everyone else, too, especially if we can get students walking around the classroom for at least a brief period.

- **Selecting:** cards work really well if we want students to speak on the spot or use particular words or phrases in a conversation or in sentences. We can write words on separate cards and then, after shuffling them, place them in a pile face down. When a student picks up the next card in the pack, he or she has to use the word in a sentence. Alternatively, students can choose three or four cards and then have to incorporate what is on the cards into a story. Students can also pick up a card and try to describe what the word on it feels, tastes or smells like so that the other students can guess it.

- **Card games:** there are as many card game possibilities in language learning as there are in real life. We can turn the card selection into a game by introducing a competitive element – having students in pairs play against each other or against other pairs.

A simple vocabulary game can be played in which students have cards with pictures on one side and words on the other. If they pick the picture side, they have to produce the word. If they pick the word side, they have to draw it and then compare it with the original picture. The old game of *Snap* can be adapted so that two players have a set of cards, with the same objects, etc., but whereas one player has only pictures, the other has only words. The cards are shuffled and then the players put down the cards one at a time. If a picture and word card match, the player who shouts *Snap!* first wins all the cards on the table. The object of the game is for one player to end up with all the cards.

C4 Cuisenaire rods

Originally invented by the Belgian educator Caleb Gattegno (see the Silent Way on page 68), these small blocks of wood or plastic of different lengths (see Figure 3) were originally designed for maths teaching. Each length is a different colour. The rods are featureless, and are only differentiated by their length and colour. Simple they may be, but they are useful for a wide range of activities. For example, we can say that a particular rod is a pen or a telephone, a dog or a key so that by holding them up or putting them together a story can be told. All it takes is a little imagination.

The rods can be used to demonstrate word stress, too: if one is bigger than the others (in a sequence representing syllables in a word or words in a sentence), it shows where the stress should be (see Chapter 2, F5 and Chapter 15, B2).

We can also assign a word or phrase to each of, say, five rods and the students then have to put them in the right order (e.g. *I usually get up at six o'clock*). By moving the *usually* rod around and showing where it can and cannot occur in the sentence, the students get a clear visual display of something they are attempting to fix in their minds.

Rods can be used to teach prepositions. Teachers can model with the rods sentences like *The red one is on top of/beside/under/over/behind (etc.) the green one*. They can show rods in different relative positions and ask students to describe them. Students can then position the rods for other students to describe (in ever more complex arrangements!).

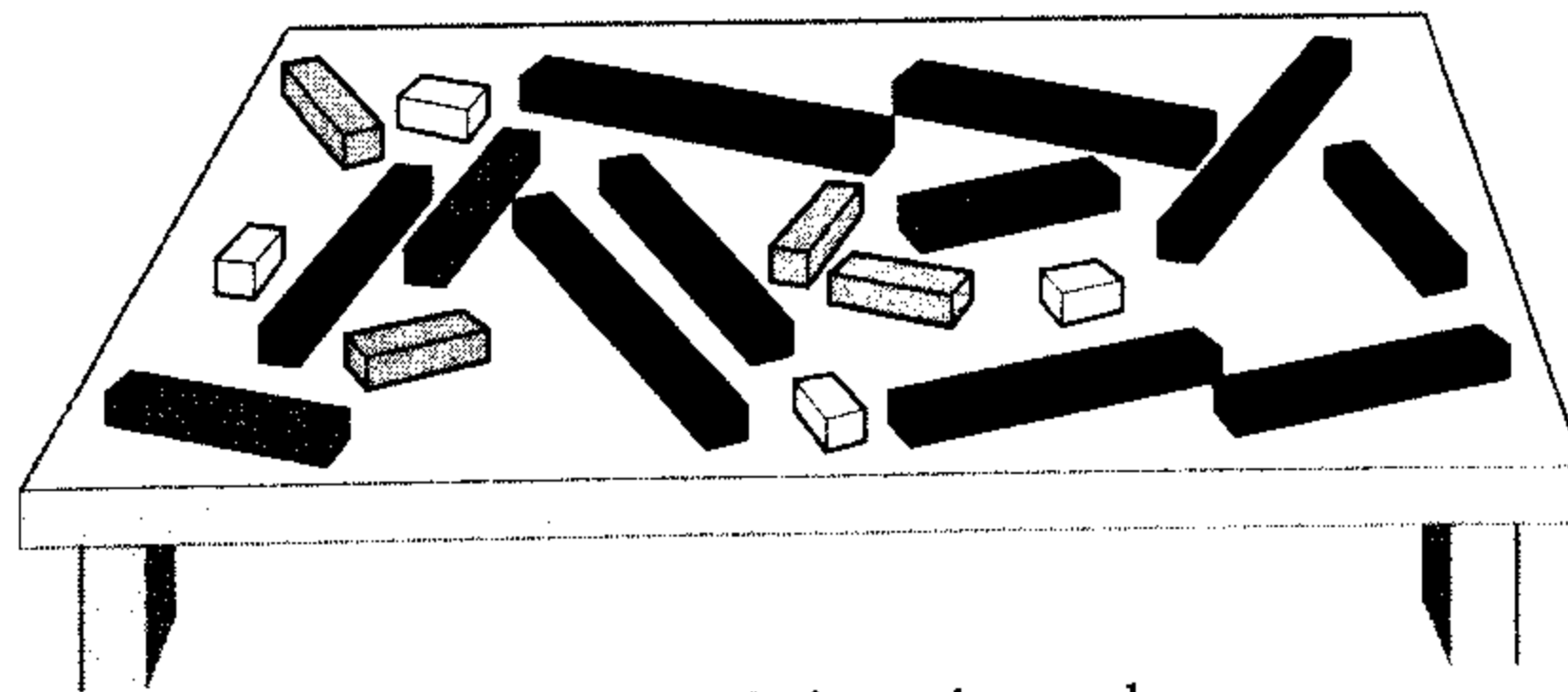


FIGURE 3: Cuisenaire rods

Cuisenaire rods are also useful for demonstrating colours (of course), comparatives, superlatives, and a whole range of other semantic and syntactic areas, particularly with people who respond well to visual or kinaesthetic activities.

D The coursebook

For years, methodologists have been arguing about the usefulness of coursebooks, questioning their role (Allwright 1981), defending their use (O'Neill 1982), worrying that they act as methodological straitjackets (Tice 1991), promoting their value as agents of methodological change (Hutchinson and Torres 1994), or arguing yet again about their relative merits (Harmer 2001, Thornbury and Meddings 2001).

D1 Coursebook or no coursebook?

The benefits and restrictions of coursebook use can be easily summarised:

- **Benefits:** good coursebooks are carefully prepared to offer a coherent syllabus, satisfactory language control, motivating texts, audio cassettes/CDs and other accessories such as video/DVD material, CD-ROMs and extra resource material. They are often attractively presented. They provide teachers under pressure with the reassurance that, even when they are forced to plan at the last moment, they will be using material which they can have confidence in. They come with detailed teacher's guides, which not only provide procedures for the lesson in the student's book, but also offer suggestions and alternatives, extra activities and resources. The adoption of a new coursebook provides a powerful stimulus for methodological development (see Hutchinson and Torres 1994).

Students like coursebooks, too, since they foster the perception of progress as units and then books are completed. Coursebooks also provide material which students can look back at for revision and, at their best, their visual and topic appeal can have a powerfully engaging effect.

- **Restrictions:** coursebooks, used inappropriately, impose learning styles and content on classes and teachers alike, appearing to be "fait accompli" over which they can have little

control' (Littlejohn 1998: 205). Many of them rely on Presentation, Practice and Production as their main methodological procedure (see Chapter 4, A2), despite recent enthusiasm for other teaching sequences. Units and lessons often follow an unrelenting format so that students and teachers eventually become demotivated by the sameness of it all. And in their choice of topics, coursebooks can sometimes be bland or culturally inappropriate.

One solution to the perceived disadvantages of coursebooks is to do without them altogether, to use a 'do-it-yourself' approach (Block 1991, Maley 1998, Thornbury and Meddings 2001). Such an approach is extremely attractive. It can offer students a dynamic and varied programme. If they can see its relevance to their own needs, it will greatly enhance their motivation and their trust in what they are being asked to do. It allows teachers to respond on a lesson-by-lesson basis to what is happening in the class. Finally, for the teacher, it means an exciting and creative involvement with texts and tasks.

In order for the DIY approach to be successful, teachers need access to (and knowledge of) a wide range of materials, from coursebooks and videos to magazines, novels, encyclopedias, publicity brochures and the Internet. They will have to make (and make use of) a variety of home-grown materials (see below). They will also need the confidence to know when and what to choose, becoming, in effect, syllabus designers in their own right. This not only makes preparing lessons a very time-consuming business, but also runs the risk that students will end up with incoherent collections of bits and pieces of material. However, where there is time for the proper planning and organisation of DIY teaching, students may well get exceptional programmes of study, which are responsive to their needs and varied in a way that does not abandon coherence. Such an approach also ties in with a dialogic, 'Dogme'-style of teaching (see page 75).

D2 Using coursebooks

Around the world, however, the vast majority of teachers reject a coursebook-free approach and instead use them to help their learners and, what's more, to give structure and direction to their own teaching.

The most important aspect of coursebook use is for teachers to try to engage students with the content they are going to be dealing with. This means arousing the students' interest in a topic, and making sure that they know exactly what we want them to do before we get them to open their books and disappear, heads-down in the pages, while we are still trying to talk to them.

Many teachers want to use their coursebooks as a kind of springboard for their lessons, rather than as a manual to be slavishly followed. In other words, while they base much of their teaching on the contents of the coursebook, they reserve the right to decide when and how to use its constituent parts. There are two main ways they can do this:

- **Omit and replace:** the first decision we have to make is whether to use a particular coursebook lesson or not. If the answer is 'no', there are two possible courses of action. The first is just to omit the lesson altogether. In this case, we suppose that the students will not miss it because it does not teach anything fundamentally necessary and it is not especially interesting. When, however, we think the language or topic area in question is important, we will have to replace the coursebook lesson with our own preferred alternative.

Although there is nothing wrong with omitting or replacing coursebook material, it

becomes irksome for many students if it happens too often, especially when they have had to buy the book themselves. It may also deny them the chance to revise (a major advantage of coursebooks), and their course may lose overall coherence.

- **To change or not to change?** when we decide to use a coursebook lesson, we can, of course, do so without making any substantial changes to the way it is presented. However, we might decide to use the lesson but to change it to make it more appropriate for our students. If the material is not very substantial, we might add something to it – a role-play after a reading text, perhaps, or extra situations for language practice. We might re-write an exercise we do not especially like or replace one activity or text with something else, such as a download from the Internet or any other home-grown items. We could re-order the activities within a lesson, or even re-order lessons (within reason). Finally, we may wish to reduce a lesson by cutting out an exercise or an activity. In all our decisions, however, it is important to remember that students need to be able to see a coherent pattern to what we are doing and understand our reasons for changes.

Using coursebooks appropriately is an art which becomes clearer with experience. If the teacher approaches lesson planning in the right frame of mind (see Chapter 21), it happens almost as a matter of course. The options we have discussed for coursebook use are summarised in Figure 4.

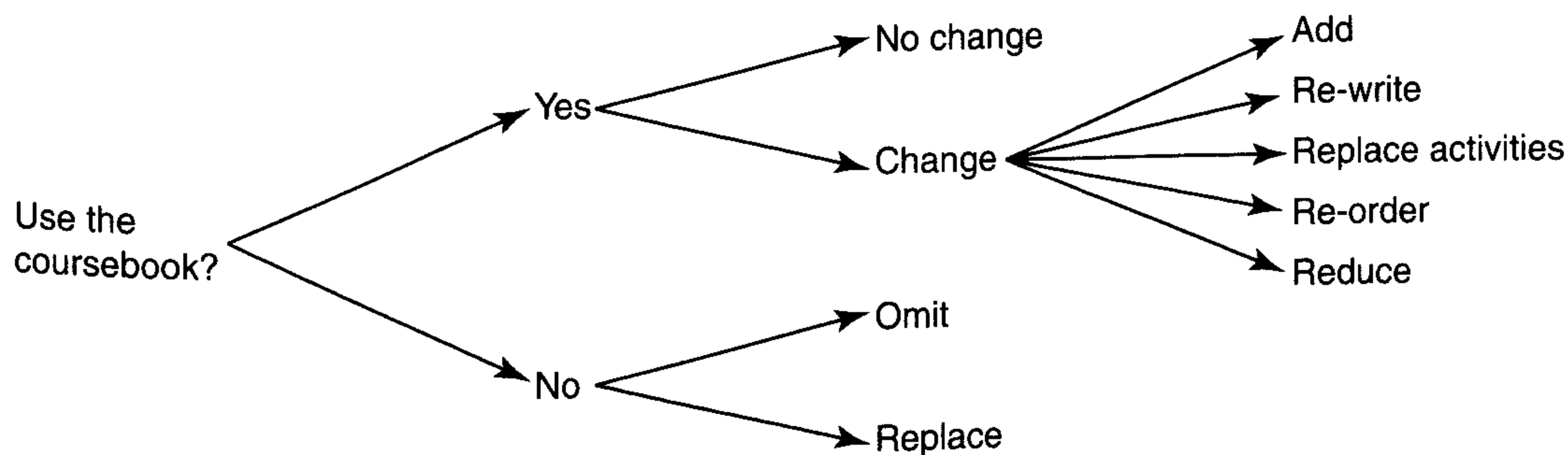


FIGURE 4: Options for coursebook use

E Ways of showing

Over the years, technology has changed the way that teachers and students are able to show each other things (one of the most important functions of classroom equipment). We will look at four major presentation aids.

E1 The board

The most versatile piece of classroom teaching equipment is the board – whether this is of the more traditional chalk-dust variety, a whiteboard written on with marker pens, or an IWB (see page 187). Boards provide a motivating focal point during whole-class grouping.

We can use boards for a variety of different purposes, including:

- **Note-pad:** teachers frequently write things up on the board as these come up during the lesson. They might be words that they want students to remember, phrases which students

have not understood or seen before, or topics and phrases which they have elicited from students when trying to build up a composition plan, for example.

When we write up a word on a board, we can show how that word is stressed so that students can see and 'hear' the word at the same time (see Figure 5). We can sketch in intonation tunes or underline features of spelling, too. We can group words according to their meaning or grammatical function. Some teachers use different colours for different aspects of language.

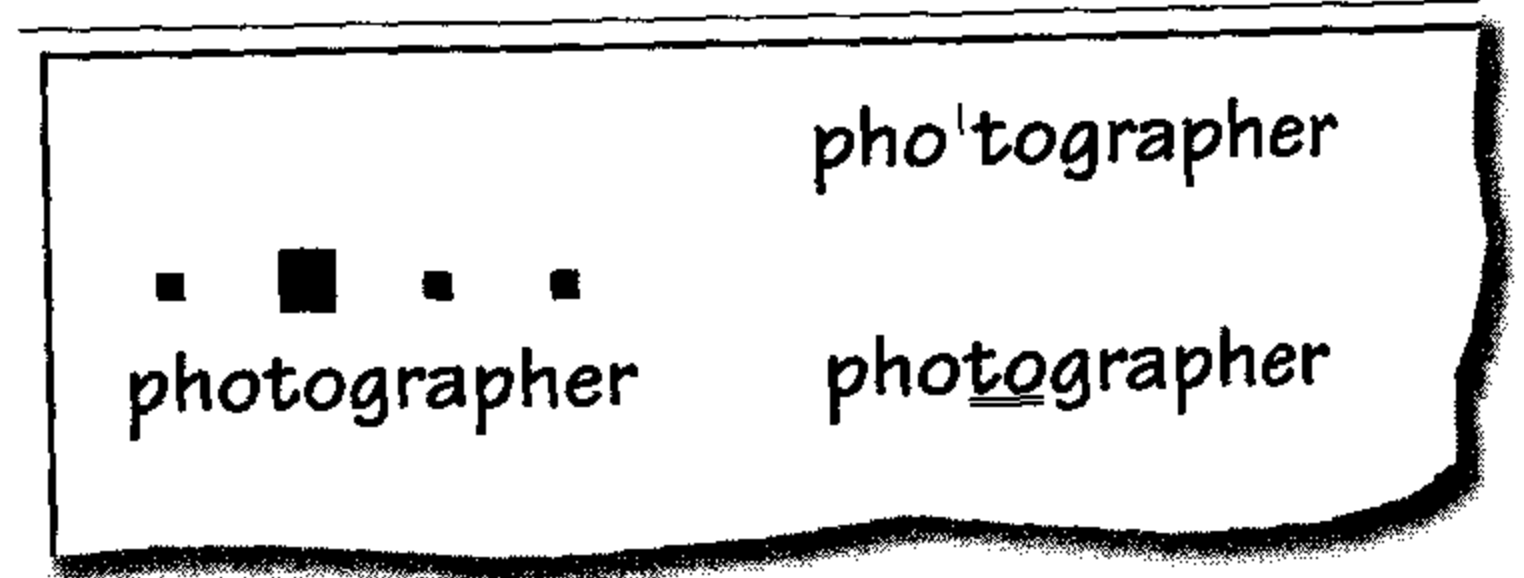


FIGURE 5: Different ways of recording word stress

- **Explanation aid:** boards can be used for explanation, too. For example, we can show the relationship between an affirmative sentence and a question by drawing connecting arrows (see Figure 6). We can show where words go in a sentence by indicating the best positions diagrammatically, or we can write up phonemic symbols (or draw diagrams of the mouth) to show how a word or sound is pronounced. The board is ideal for such uses.

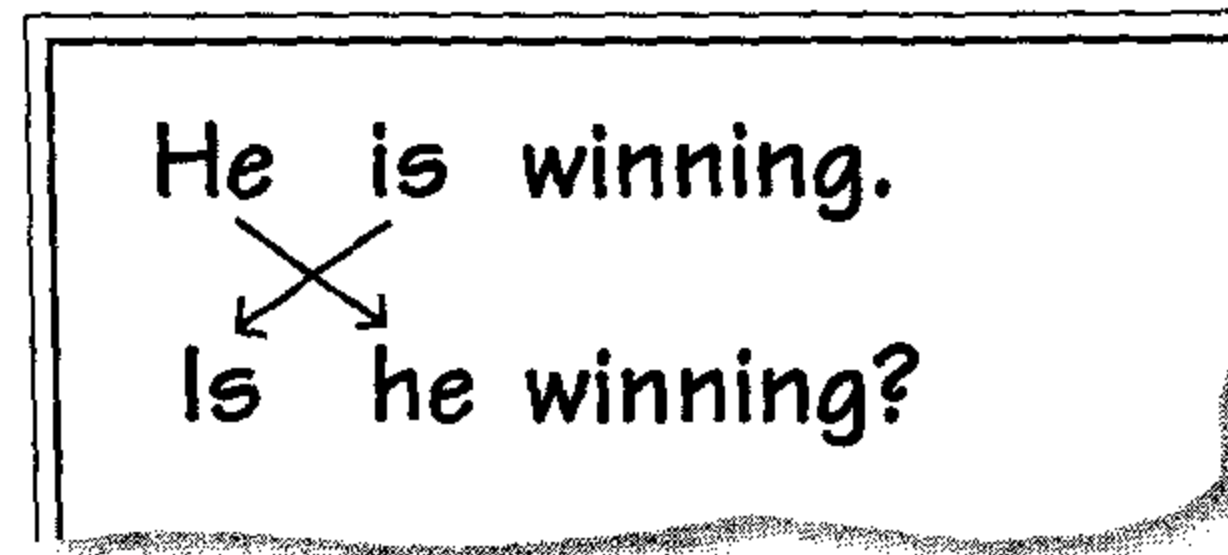


FIGURE 6: Using the board to show sentence/question relationships (elementary)

- **Picture frame:** boards can be used for drawing pictures, of course, the only limitation being our artistic ability. But even those who are not artistically gifted can usually draw a sad face and a happy face. They can produce stick men sitting down and running, or make an attempt at a bus or a car. What's more, this can be done whenever it is required because the board is always there, helping students to understand concepts and words.
- **Public workbook:** a typical procedure is to write up fill-in sentences or sentence transformation items, for example, and have individual students come up to the board and write a fill-in item, or a transformed sentence. That way the whole class becomes involved in seeing what the correct version is.

Teachers sometimes write mistakes they have observed in a creative language activity on the board. They can ask class members who think they know how to correct them to come up and have a go.

Such activities are very useful because they focus everyone's attention in one place.

- **Game board:** there are a number of games that can be played using the board. With noughts and crosses (also called Tic-tac-toe), for example, teachers can draw nine box frames and write different words or categories in each box (see Figure 7). Teams have to make sentences or questions with the words and if they get them right, they can put their symbol (O or X) on the square to draw their winning straight line.

A popular spelling game involves two teams who start off with the same word. Each team has half the board. They have to fill up their side with as many words as possible,

but each new word has to start with the last letter of the word before. At the end of a given period of time, the team with the largest number of correct words is the winner.

can't	won't	like
must	enjoy	want
dislike	hate	has to

FIGURE 7: Noughts and crosses (Tic-tac-toe)

- **Noticeboard:** teachers and students can display things on boards – pictures, posters, announcements, charts, etc. It is especially useful if the boards are metallic so that magnets can be used.

Handwriting on the board should be clear and easy to decipher; we should organise our material in some way, too, so that the board does not just get covered in scrawls in a random and distracting fashion. We could, for example, draw a column on one side of the board and reserve that for new words. We could then put the day's or the lesson's programme in a left-hand column and use the middle of the board for grammar explanations or games.

It is probably not a good idea to turn our back to the class while we write on the board, especially if this goes on for some time. This tends to be demotivating and may cause the class to become restless. Indeed, it is better to involve the students with boardwork as much as possible, either getting them to tell us what to write, or asking them to do the writing themselves.

E2 The overhead projector (OHP)

Despite modern computer-based presentation equipment and programs, the OHP (and the transparencies we use with it) still retains a unique versatility (see Figure 8), and, except for problems with electricity or a bulb, is much more likely to be problem-free than other more sophisticated pieces of equipment.

Just about anything can go on overhead transparencies (OHTs): we can show whole texts or grammar exercises, pictures, diagrams or students' writing. Because transparencies can be put through a photocopier or printed from any computer, they can be of very high quality. Especially where teachers have handwriting that tends to be unclear, the overhead transparency offers the possibility of attractive well-printed script.

One of the major advantages of the overhead projector is that we don't have to show everything on an OHT all at once. By covering some of the transparency with a piece of card or paper, we can blank out what we don't want the students to see. So, for example, we might show the first two lines of a story and ask students what is going to happen next, before revealing the next two lines and then the next, gradually moving the paper or card downwards. We might have questions on one side of the transparency and answers on the other. We start the teaching sequence with the answers covered, and use the same gradual revelation technique to maintain interest.

Because transparencies are, as their name suggests, transparent, they can be put on top of each other so that we gradually build up a complex picture, diagram or text. A diagram can start with one simple feature and have extra elements added to it. We can put up a gapped text

and have students say what they think goes in the blanks before putting a new transparency with some or all of the filled-in items on top of the gapped one.

Sometimes we can put a text with blanks on the OHP and then lay a blank transparency on top of it so that students, using OHP pens, can come up and write in what they think should go there. Alternatively, students working in groups can list the points they want to make after they have discussed a topic (e.g. whether or not children under twelve should have a curfew from ten o'clock every evening) and show their transparency to the class while they make their presentation.

Overhead projectors are extremely versatile, but they can pose some problems, too. They need electricity, of course, and bulbs do fail from time to time. Some models are quite bulky, too. They are not that powerful either, especially when they are up against natural light coming in from windows and doors. When images are projected onto shiny surfaces, such as boards, they can be uncomfortable to look at, and when they are projected onto some other surfaces, it can be very difficult to make out details.

A lot depends on how big or small the projector 'square' is on the wall or screen and whether the image is in focus. A mistake that some users make is to put too much on the transparency so that when they ask *Can people see this at the back?* the answer they get is a frustrated shaking of the head. However, if all these potential problems are taken into account and resolved, the OHP is an extremely useful resource.

E3 The flip chart

Flip charts are very useful for making notes, recording the main points in a group discussion, amending and changing points, and for the fact that individual sheets of paper can be torn off and kept for future reference. Many of these qualities (and more) are, of course, shared by computer-based technology, but flip charts are portable, relatively cheap and demand no technical expertise.

Flip charts work best in two particular situations. In the first, a teacher, group leader or group scribe stands at the flip chart and records the points that are being made. The participants – because they can see what is being written up – can then ask for changes to be made.

When possible, it is ideal if groups can each have flip charts of their own. When an activity is finished, students can walk round the room seeing what the different groups have written (or what points they have noted down). Flip charts can also be posted at different points in the room, each flip chart standing for a topic or a point of view. Students can walk around, adding to what is on each of the flip charts, writing up their opinions, disagreeing or merely getting an idea of what the other students are thinking, based on what is already written there.



FIGURE 8: Overhead projector

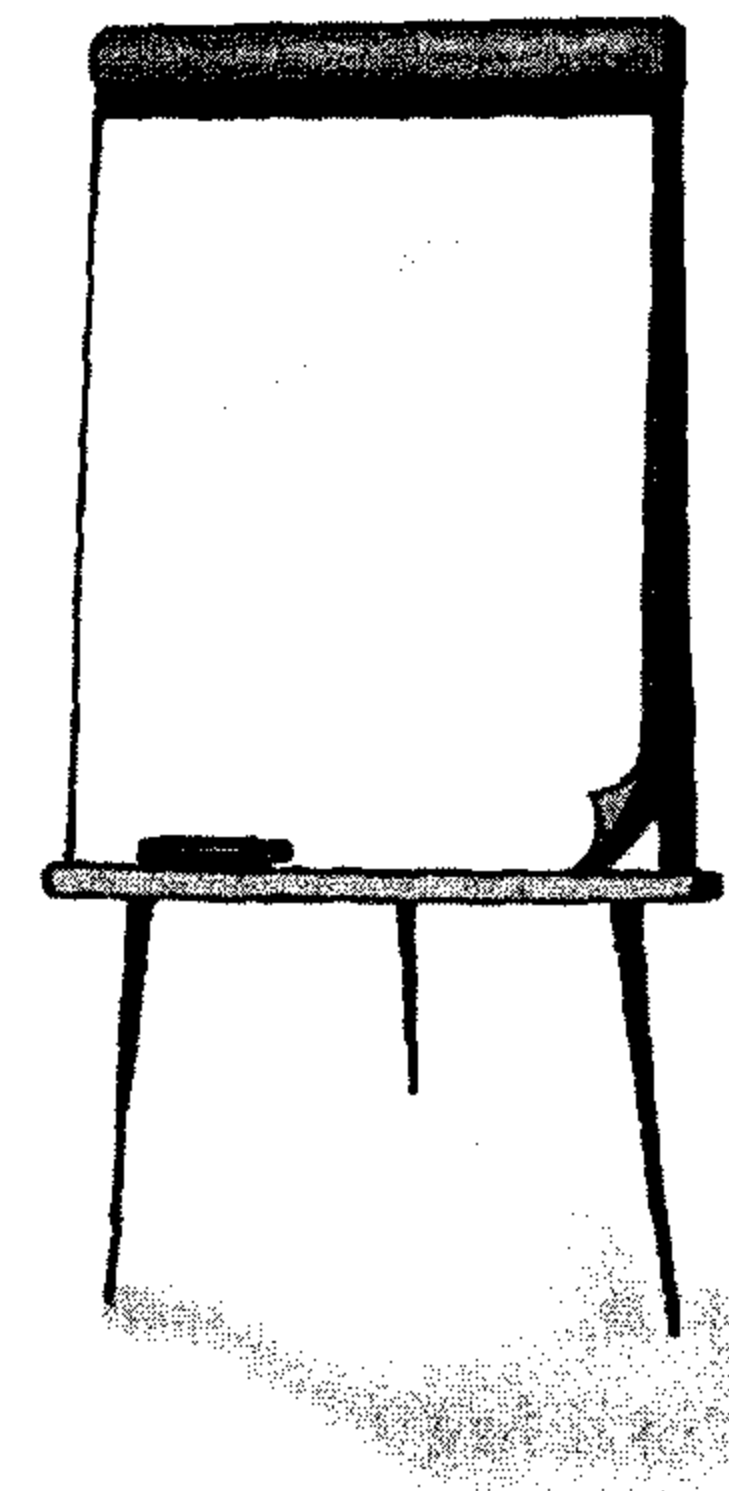


FIGURE 9: Flip chart

E4 Computer-based presentation technology

Computers have changed the world of classroom presentation forever – that is for those fortunate enough to have the money and resources for both hardware and software.

The two crucial pieces of hardware are a computer and a data projector. Anything that is on our computer screen can be shown to the whole class using a data projector to put up an enlarged version of it on a screen or a white wall. This means that all the class can see a word-processed task at the same time, or we can project a picture, diagram or map, for example.

Presentation software, such as PowerPoint, increases our capacity to present visual material (words, graphics and pictures) in a dynamic and interesting way. However, the most commonly used PowerPoint template (a heading with bullet points) has suffered from overuse and may not be the most effective use of the medium. In fact, the software offers a more interesting option where we can mix text and visuals with audio/video tracks so that pictures can dissolve or fly onto and off the screen, and music, speech and film can be integrated into the presentation. Some people, of course, may find this kind of animated presentation irksome in its own way, but there is no doubt that it allows teachers to mix different kinds of display much more effectively than before such software came along.

One of the major technological developments in the last few years has been the interactive whiteboard, the IWB. This has the same properties as a computer hooked up to a data projector (i.e. you can present visual material, Internet pages, etc. in a magnified way for everyone to see), but it has three major extra advantages, too. In the first place, teachers and students can write on the board which the images are being projected onto, and they can manipulate images on the board with the use of special pens or even with nothing but their fingers. The pen or finger thus acts as a kind of computer mouse. Secondly, what appears on the board (just like the screen of a computer) can be saved or printed so that anything written up or being shown there can be looked at again.

Enthusiasts for IWBs point to this extraordinary versatility and to other tricks (such as the ability to mask parts of the board and gradually reveal information). They say that the ability to move text and graphics around the board with pen or finger is extremely attractive, especially for younger learners. They emphasise the fact that text, graphics, Internet capability, video and audio material can all be controlled from the board.

Critics of IWBs worry about the amount of money they cost. There is some concern, too, about the fact that currently most IWBs are at the front of the classroom and thus tend to promote teacher (and learner)-fronted behaviours, and are less favourable for groupwork. There are also worries about projector beams (especially in ceiling-mounted projectors) affecting the eyes of teachers who frequently find themselves looking directly at them.

F Ways of listening

Students get exposure to spoken language from a variety of sources. Much of it comes from the teacher, whose voice represents the single most important source of language input. Students also get language input from listening to each other and from any visiting teachers, lecturers or classroom guests.

It is still extremely common for teachers and students to listen to recorded audio material on cassette recorders. Tape recorders are versatile, cheap and convenient and, when they have

efficient rewind and fast forward buttons and tape counters, they are extremely easy to use. Many teachers also use CD players, which have some of the same advantages as tape recorders, though they are often bulkier and have counter systems that are sometimes more difficult to use efficiently than those of older tape recorder models.

However, recorded material is now available (as is video material) in digital formats such as WAV and MP3. What this means in practical terms is that we can play material directly from computers and MP3 players. This has revolutionised access to listening, especially for individual listeners. The availability of podcasts (that is, downloadable files which the user can load onto their own personal MP3 players such as iPods – or, increasingly, mobile phones), means that students (and teachers) can listen to a range of material whenever they want to on devices that are so small that they are not difficult to carry around. Teachers and students can go, for example, to Podcast.net and search the site for ESL material. A search engine like Google will also enable us to find a huge variety of ESL and general podcast material.

G Ways of finding out

It has never been as easy to find things out as it is in the twenty-first century. The wide range of reference material both online and offline (in the form of CDs) is almost infinite. This is especially useful for language learners.

G1 Dictionaries

Students can access dictionaries in book form, on CD-ROMS, using small electronic handsets and on the web. We will look at these in turn.

- **Paper dictionaries:** dictionaries printed in book form have changed dramatically in the last few years. Whereas in the past, they were monochrome, with forbidding-looking entries which used various codes to denote different aspects of meaning, now they are colourful and laid out in a way that makes issues such as frequency, collocation, different meanings, pronunciation, etc. extremely clear.

Dictionaries can be either bilingual or monolingual. In the past, teachers tended to be dismissive of the former since they frequently failed to give users sufficient information about what words meant and how they were used. Modern learners' bilingual dictionaries, however, are considerably more sophisticated, as can be seen in Figure 10.

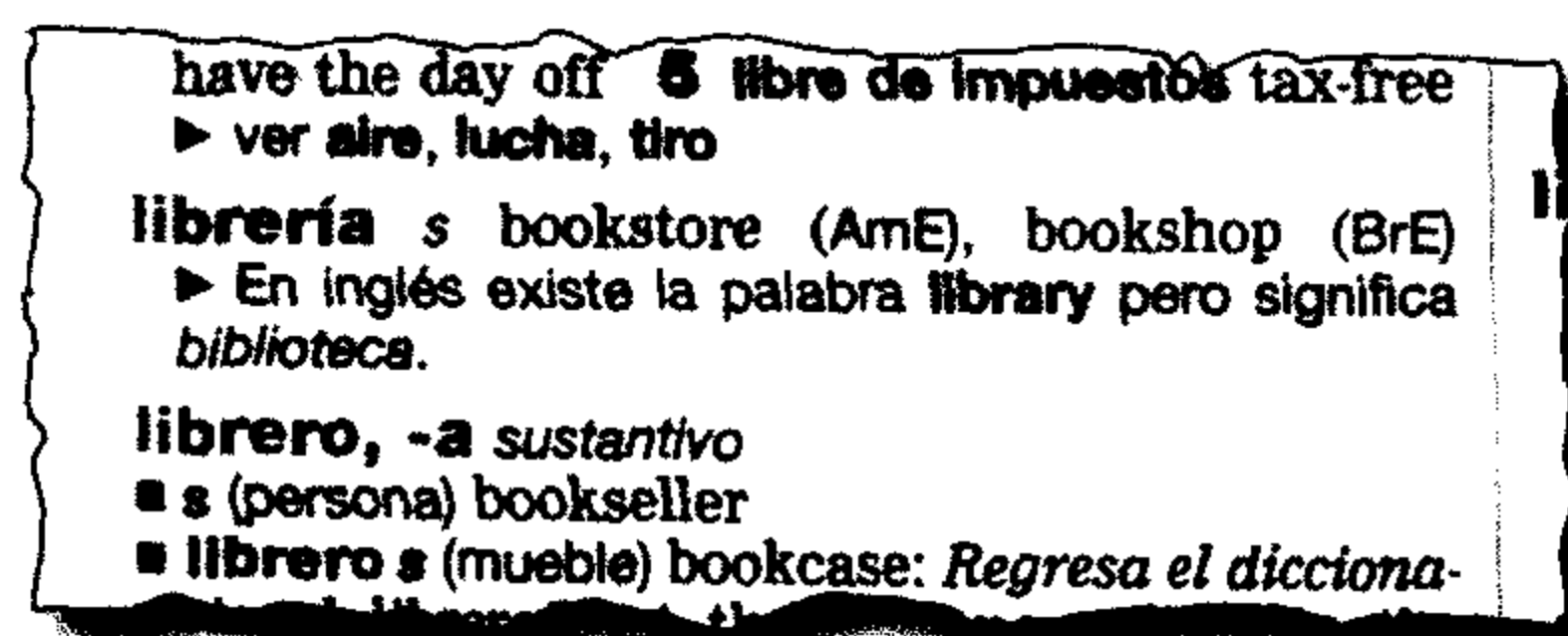


FIGURE 10: Entry for *librería* from *Diccionario Pocket* (Pearson Education) for Latin American Spanish-speaking students of English

Here the users are given both British and American equivalents of the Spanish word *librería*, and they are also told about the fact that the English word *library* (which sounds like *librería* of course) actually translates into Spanish as *biblioteca*.

Monolingual learners' dictionaries (MLDs), which are designed for students who can generally manage without bilingual dictionaries, use a special defining vocabulary (i.e. for the words used in the definitions) which explains meanings in clear and simple terms. They also give a wealth of information, as in the first part of the entry for *hospital* in Figure 11. *Hospital* is in red in the dictionary, which means it is one of the 3,000 most frequent words in English (S1 means it is one of 1,000 most common words in spoken English, W1 means that it is one of the 1,000 most common words in written English – therefore it is as common in writing as in speech). Users are given British and American pronunciation. There is a definition and then, most dramatically, a blue box full of the most common collocations and lexical phrases that *hospital* occurs in. As a result, students are made instantly aware of how the word *hospital* behaves in English and they understand where they are likely to meet it and how to use it.

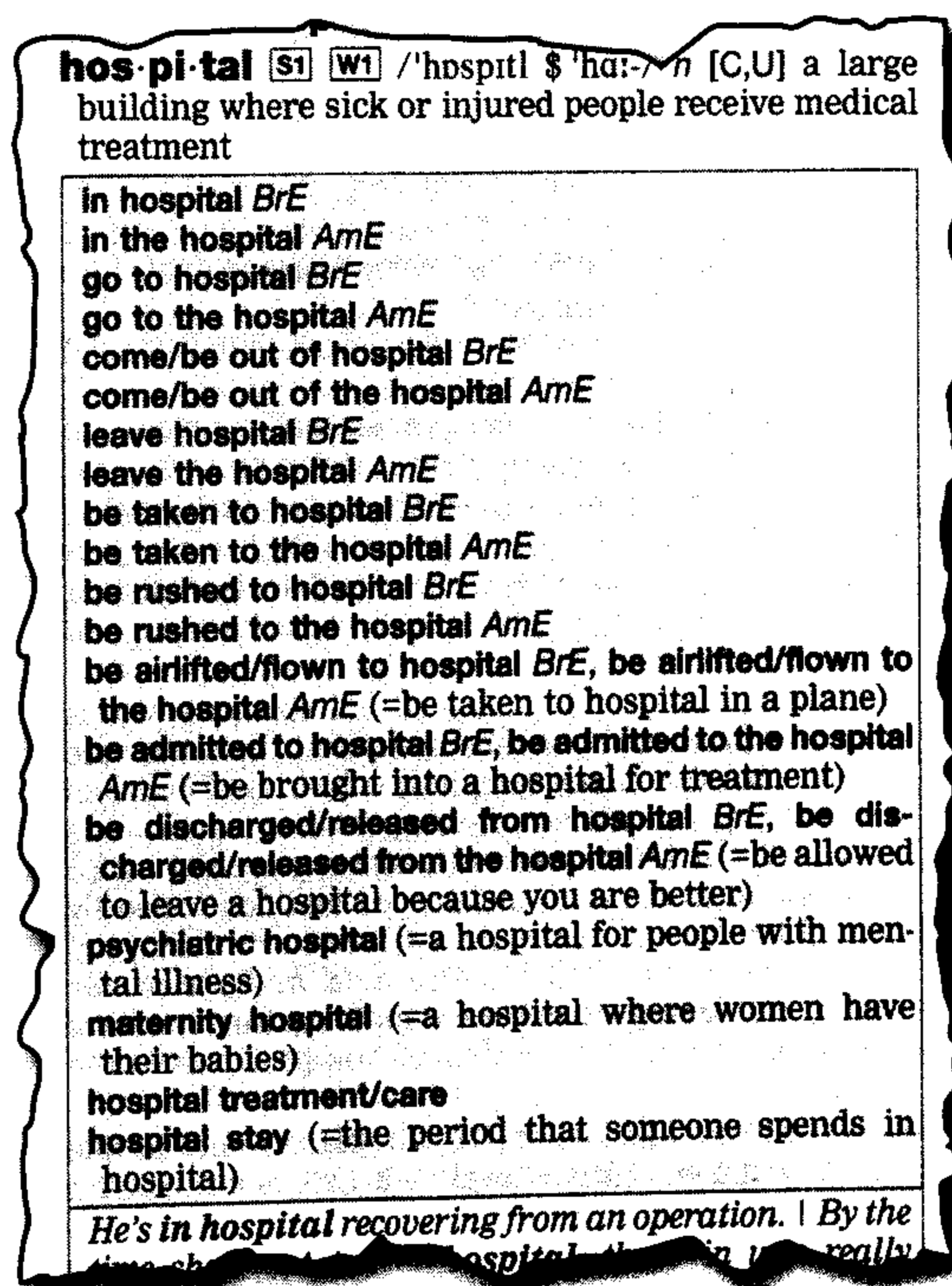


FIGURE 11: Entry for *hospital* from the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (Pearson Education Ltd)

- **CD-ROMs:** paper dictionaries are limited by the size of book that users are prepared to carry around with them. The same is not true of CD-ROMs, which can include a significantly greater amount of information (including audio material). Not only that, but CD-ROMs have one huge advantage, which is that users no longer have to search alphabetically (a skill that some people find difficult in both L1 and L2!). They can type in a word or phrase and it will appear on the screen, together with features such as collocation information, more corpus examples, a phrase-store, and even thesaurus-type word stores. Students can also hear the words being spoken and, perhaps, record themselves to compare with the spoken original. There is an example of an activity using a CD-ROM dictionary on pages 243–245.
- **Electronic pocket dictionaries:** many students like to carry around small electronic dictionaries which fit snugly into their pockets. Teachers sometimes find these problematic since students tend to refer to them frequently in lessons at times when we would prefer them not to be accessing such little machines. However, a more problematical issue has, in the past, been the size of the display screen and the information that is included in the dictionaries. Small screens mean that users are never going to get any of the incidental or insightful (and frequently unexpected) detail that we get when we look at a dictionary page or a computer screen. Furthermore, students have to scroll up and down continuously to find what they are looking for.

Recently, however, electronic dictionaries have improved somewhat. In the first place, the screens are bigger, and in the second place, more than one dictionary is often included.

Users can hear the words being spoken, too, and there are often extras such as spellcheckers, currency converters, etc.

Many teachers would still prefer students to use paper or computer-based dictionaries. But the lure of the small electronic models is powerful. We must hope that they continue to improve if students continue to buy them.

- **Online dictionaries:** finally, many dictionaries are now freely available online (although users may have to go through a complex registration process to be granted access).

Many online dictionaries have clear definitions and useful information as in the example in Figure 12.

The screenshot shows the Macmillan English Dictionary Online interface. At the top, the title 'MACMILLAN English Dictionary Online' is displayed. Below the title is a search bar with a 'Go' button and a dropdown menu. To the left of the search bar are two radio buttons for 'British English' and 'American English'. Below the search bar is a navigation menu with links: 'Today's word', 'Top 40', 'Suggestion', 'Resource site', 'New words', 'Easy access', 'Tell a friend', and 'Write to us'. The main content area shows the entry for 'hospital' with its phonetic transcription, part of speech, and frequency stars. The entry text includes a definition, several example sentences, and a sub-entry for 'hospital' as an adjective.

hospital / Br ˈhɒspɪl / Am ˈhɒspɪl / noun [count] ★★★
 a place where people stay when they are ill or injured and need a lot of care from doctors and nurses
in hospital He spent a week in hospital with food poisoning.
go to/into hospital He went into hospital last week for a heart operation.
be admitted to hospital She became ill on Friday and was admitted to hospital the next day.
be rushed to hospital Victims were immediately rushed to hospital.
 a. [only before noun] belonging to or connected with a hospital
 hospital beds/staff/doctors/managers

FIGURE 12: Entry for *hospital* from the *Macmillan English Dictionary Online*

Users are once again given frequency information (the entry is in red on the site), the three red stars indicating that *hospital* is one of the most frequent words in the language. By clicking on the loudspeaker symbol, users can hear the words being spoken.

G2 Concordancers

As we saw on page 34, concordancers search large corpora of language for a word or word-string that we want to know about. There are many powerful concordancing packages, but first-time users may want to try a free site at www.lex Tutor.ca. Users can type in a request to see 50 lines which include the search word by completing various boxes. By checking the correct boxes we can ask for the lines to be sorted alphabetically, based on the word that comes immediately before the search word. This is sometimes called left-sorting (because the words listed alphabetically are to the left of the search word). When we then click on 'get concordance' we get a concordance such as those on page 34 of this book.

Concordances are especially useful for students and teachers who want to do word research. We can also use them to design material. For example, we could print off a concordance but blank out the search word; the students have to guess what the word is. We could ask students to predict the most common words that come before and after the search word and then get them to look at the concordance lines to see if they were right.

G3 Searching the Internet

The greatest source of information not in book form is, of course, the Internet. However, its sheer size and range make it potentially awkward for users, who often find it difficult to locate the exact information they are looking for. This is partly because searching is a skill in itself which students and teachers need to acquire. For example, suppose students were doing a project on the theatre where Shakespeare's plays were first performed and they wanted to

know its location, it would be unwise of them just to type the word *Shakespeare* into the popular search engine Google, because they would be offered more than 51 million sites and the vast majority of them would be irrelevant. However, if they typed in what they were really looking for in more detail (e.g. *Shakespeare Elizabethan theatre location*), they would only be offered around 420,000 sites (at the time of writing), and the first few would be of immediate relevance. Many of the others would include the words *theatre* and *location*, but would have nothing to do with Shakespeare. A way of searching precisely, however, is to type what we are looking for between inverted commas, e.g. '*Shakespeare in Love*' (the name of a fictional film about Shakespeare's life). We will then get references to that film, whereas if we type in the phrase without the inverted commas, we will get many hits about Shakespeare, and many unconnected hits on the subject of love. It is important if we want student searches to be successful, therefore, that the students know how to search effectively.

Both teachers and students can, as we have said, find almost anything they want on the Internet. They can go to online newspapers or broadcasting associations such as the BBC or CNN; they can find song lyrics or access history sites; they can find film guides and jokes sites. Two particular kinds of site are worth talking about in more detail, however.



- **Using encyclopedias:** there are a number of encyclopedia sites (and other information sites, such as biography.com) on the Internet. In their book about using technology in language teaching, Gavin Dudeney and Nicky Hockly suggest giving students charts to fill in about, say, a country, as part of a longer project (Dudeney and Hockly 2007: 46–51). They can be asked to locate the capital city, population, main languages, main cities, economy, geography, sea ports, political system, etc. Students in groups of three can look for this information on three different sites: encyclopedia.com, britannica.com and wikipedia.com (Wikipedia is an encyclopedia where any user can add to or change the information available). They can then share their information and see if the three sites agree on the information they looked for.
- **Webquests:** a particular type of information is provided by a kind of (Internet-based) extended project called a webquest. This employs Internet resources for students to use for researching, but rather than have students search on the Internet for themselves, in a webquest the teacher has prepared an introduction and then given students 'clickable' sites to visit.

In the following webquest, designed by Philip Benz with help from Frédéric Chauthard and Michele Maurice, students have to write a report about living conditions in the tenements built for immigrants to New York in the 1820s and 1830s.

In the *Introduction* phase, students are told about the construction of tenement houses and how people were crammed into them as tightly as possible. They are told: *You are a member of the Council of Hygiene of the Citizen's Association of New York. Your job is to investigate the living conditions in tenements and make recommendations to city officials concerning changes that need to be made.*

In the *Task* phase, students are told that they must investigate the living conditions and write a report summarising the situation and offering solutions. They are told to use worksheets provided for them and follow the report template they are given. They are advised that they can always consult the additional resources sections on the website.

In the *Process* stage, (see Figure 13), students are given investigation stages, and, crucially, links to click on which will take them to websites that the teacher has selected so that they can complete their task.





Viv@
Science
The Press
Fiction
Teachers

The Process

Follow these steps in your investigation:

- 1) **What is a tenement building? Before visiting the websites, look at the pictures on this page and write down three ideas (alone or with your partner) to describe tenements.**



BOHEMIAN CIGARMAKERS AT WORK IN THEIR TENEMENT.

- 2) **Go to this summary of "Living conditions in the tenements" and write down three more ideas about tenements to complete your description.**

"Living conditions in the tenements" can be found at:
<http://www.geocities.com/rfegles1/tenementliving.html>

- 3) **Now you are ready to visit a tenement. Go to the Virtual Tenement Museum at 97 Orchard Street and use the "Tenement Family Worksheet" provided by your teacher (or printed here). Answer the questions as completely as possible. Use the vocabulary help below before, during or after your visit.**

"Tenement Museum - Virtual Log Cabin" can be found at:
<http://www.thirteen.org/tenement/logcabin.html>

- 4) **Vocabulary help: several exercises have been provided to help you understand the situation at 97 Orchard Street. Use them before during or after your visit to the tenement building.**

FIGURE 13: The Process (from 'Life in the Tenements' at www.ardecol.ac-grenoble.fr/english/tenement/tenementquest.htm)

Finally, in the *Evaluation* phase, students are shown how (and according to what criteria) their work will be assessed.

The point about webquests is that the Internet research is a stage towards some other goal (in this case a report). And, thanks to the wealth of material available on the Internet, students can do significant research (including text, film and audio clips) at a computer screen rather than having to go to a library (see page 280 for a fuller description of a different webquest).

H Practising language on the Internet and on CD-ROM

There are many websites on the Internet for students to practise language. Some of them are based round a school or an organisation (and need the user to register for the site), whilst others are free. Practice material is also available on CD-ROM. Some of the material is related to a particular coursebook, while other material is free-standing (i.e. it is not associated with any particular program).

1 Ways of composing

Computers and the Internet offer many opportunities for students and teachers to compose material in ways other than using pencils, pens and paper. We will examine some of the increasingly common methods of creating material both by and for students and teachers.

11 Word processing, word editing

In our everyday lives computers are used for writing letters, putting books together, composing reports, completing homework assignments and making lists. Of course, this can all be done by using a pen and paper. In a classroom situation when groups of writers are involved in a joint composition, we can group the students around a flip chart and have them work together with one student acting as scribe (see page 186). However, when students working in groups are using word processing software, anyone can offer and execute changes without causing unattractive crossing out, or forcing the scribe to throw a page (or sheet of paper) away and start again.

Word processed work allows teachers to give feedback in a different way, too. We can use dedicated software sub menus such as Track Changes in Microsoft Word to show where things have gone wrong or simply give comments and corrections in a different font colour from the student's original text.

12 Mousepals, chat and blogging

Before computers, teachers were keen for their students to correspond with penpals in different countries. This was to give students both meaningful and memorable experiences of using English, and also to help them to an appreciation of different cultures around the world.

Penpals have now morphed into mousepals and keypals; students can send each other emails instead of letters, and where such contact is well supervised and actively promoted by teachers, the benefits are soon evident. However, students will need constant attention to help them to sustain their motivation for the task.

Students can also be involved in chatting online. Indeed, many of them already do it both in their first language and in English. Teachers can organise real-time chatting events using programs such as Googletalk or MSN Messenger. It is also easy to set up groups where people exchange messages with each other, such as Yahoo Groups where people who share the same interest can post messages and reply to them.

All of this connectivity allows people to talk, whether or not they are geographically near each other. Indeed one of the great glories of the Internet is precisely this breaking down of physical barriers so that we can be in contact with each other, wherever we are and whatever the time is!

One of the most potent ways of telling people what we are thinking (and for sharing facts and events in our lives) is the weblog or blog. This is, in a sense, a public diary which anyone can read. Teachers sometimes write a blog to tell students how they are doing and what they should do next. Students or groups of students can write a diary – an instant autobiography – to tell others what they are doing and to provide feedback on how their learning is going.

Blogging is not difficult and there are many sites, such as blogger.com, which tell users how to make use of this particular resource. There is an example of a student blog on page 338.

I3 Authoring

Of considerable interest to teachers are the many sites that allow us to download software to enable us to design our own web-based material. (This enables us to provide practice material for our students that is especially appropriate to them.) The aim of such sites is to allow teachers to key in or import their own text and then, by using the software provided, create a variety of different exercises. Perhaps the most popular of these is the Hot Potatoes site at <http://hotpot.uvic.ca>. We can choose whether we want students to be given multiple-choice exercises, short answer exercises, jumbled sentences, crosswords, etc. and the authoring software provides us with the type of exercise we have requested.

I4 Designing websites

Many teachers design their own websites and even get students to make their own class websites, too. When these are put on the worldwide web (thanks to *Tripod* and *Geocities* – services of *Lycos* and *Yahoo!* respectively), anyone is allowed to visit them.

Web design is not nearly as complex as it might seem. While professional software such as Macromedia Dreamweaver and Adobe GoLive might seem a bit daunting to the beginner, Microsoft FrontPage, for example, is relatively straightforward.

Students will enjoy making their own website. Teachers can put anything they want on the web, and for private teachers (see ‘Teaching one-to-one’ on pages 122–125), a website is an excellent way to advertise their presence.

J Virtual learning: from emails to simulated environments

The easiest way of organising teaching, swapping material and giving feedback to students using IT is via email. Teachers can set assignments, have ‘conversations’ with students and give feedback on student work. However, there are Internet-based software programs designed specifically to offer teaching and training environments online.

There are a number of online courses for both students and teachers of English. These range from the downright shoddy (i.e. not worth the time that users spend on them) to serious attempts to facilitate successful learning even when groups of students are not physically present in the same space.

It is now possible to train for almost anything online, and training for English teachers is no exception. However, there is a significant difference between teacher training courses that can, apparently, be completed on websites in just a few hours, and well-designed virtual learner environments (VLEs). The idea of a VLE is that course content (including written text, audio and video lecture clips) can be stored on a website which only course participants can access. Some VLEs also contain blogs (see above) and have chat sites both in pre-arranged real time and on message boards where users can post their comments and read what others have to say. There are various platforms for VLEs (or learner management systems as they are sometimes called), including the increasingly popular *Moodle* (which is free), and *Blackboard* and *First Class* (which are not). Most VLE sites also allow for real-time tutoring so that wherever participants are situated geographically, they can participate in tutorials and even virtual classes.

A more profound learning experience takes place when we enter a new virtual world where we can move around in different buildings and different environments. *EduNation* is such a place, where people can 'go to' an island and walk around it, taking part in training activities in different buildings (see Figure 14).

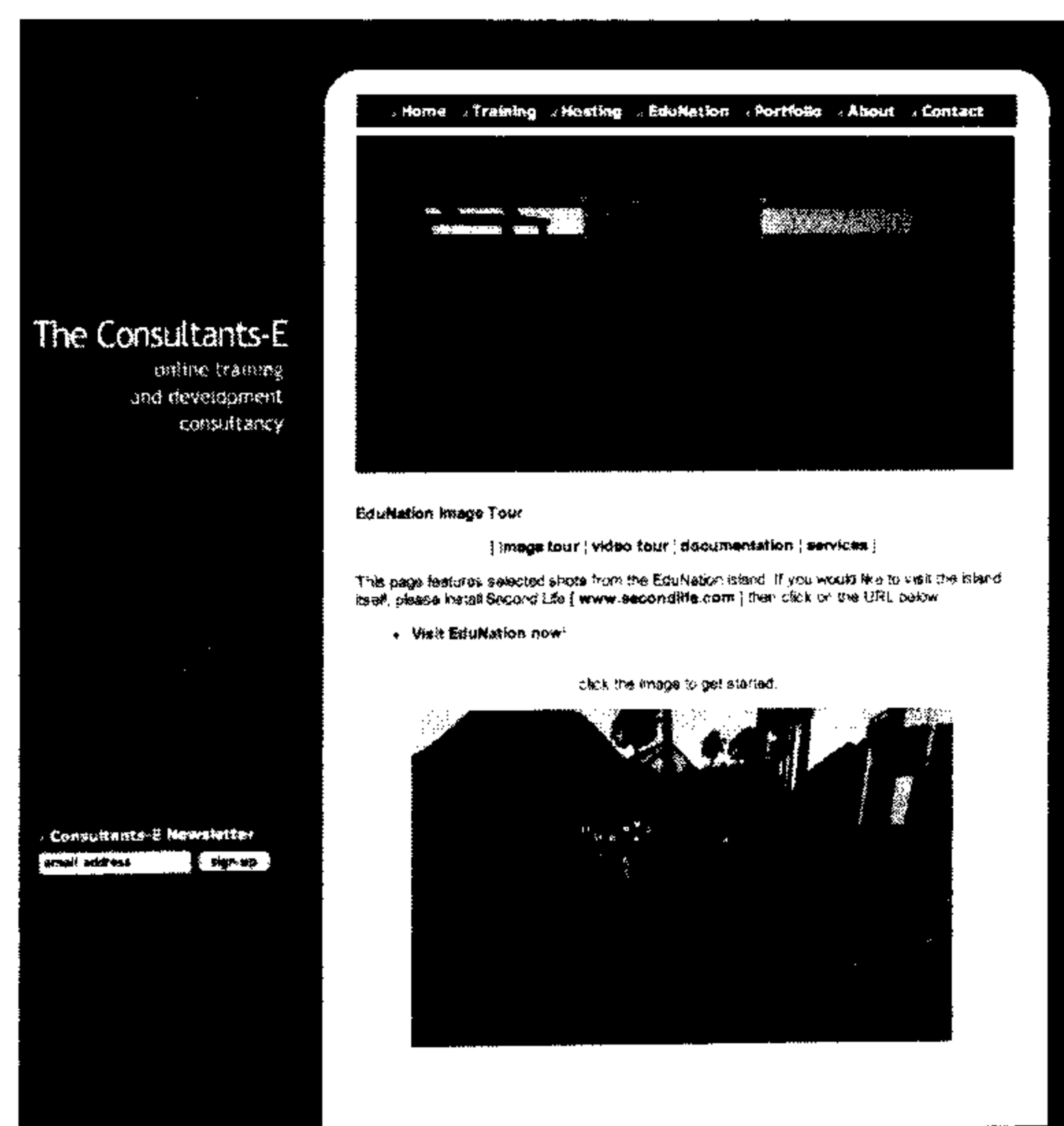


FIGURE 14: *EduNation* demonstration pictures

K Six questions

With so much technology and so many new software options available, it is sometimes difficult for teachers, directors of study and curriculum planners to know how to make choices. Almost everything sounds wonderful, and there is a temptation, sometimes, to think that all teaching and learning problems can be resolved with the purchase of a new piece of hardware or a change over to some new software-powered procedures.

The issue for decision-makers (or anyone trying to decide what to choose for their own teaching or learning) is that many of the new 'technology solutions' which are offered and updated on an almost daily basis are, indeed, very attractive. However, to adopt any one of them would require (sometimes significant) investment and, at the very least, time to learn how to make best use of it. In order, therefore, to try to think rationally and constructively about new classroom equipment of any kind, the following six questions highlight some of the considerations that should be taken into account. These questions apply not just to new technology, but also to any new methodology, procedures, coursebook or program that is offered to teachers.

Question 1: What is the pedigree?

We need to know where a new idea or piece of equipment comes from. Do its originators have a good track record in the field? A good rule of thumb is always to be suspicious, for example, of websites where you cannot find out who is responsible for them.

We are not suggesting that all new ideas have to come from tried and trusted designers or publishers. On the contrary, new people can offer new and exciting possibilities. But we still need to know who makes this thing, and what their motives are. This is partly because of question 2.

Question 2: Who gains?

If we adopt this new methodological procedure or buy this new computer or IWB, who will be the beneficiary of our purchase? If we can be sure that students will benefit, then it may be

worth investing time and money in the project. The same would be true if we could say with certainty that teachers would really benefit by having their workload reduced, for example, or because their professional quality of life would somehow be enhanced.

The owner of the new technology or the proselytiser of the new method will also gain if we take on what they are offering, and there is no reason why this should not be so. However, in asking the question *Who gains?* we need to be sure that we or our students get at least as much out of what is being proposed as they do.

Question 3: Why is this the best way to do this?

With the provision of cheap sound-editing software, it is now possible to record our voices, and, what is more, have a visual graphic of the soundwaves (Figure 15 shows the soundwave of the author saying the word *multicultural*). It certainly looks more fun than having a teacher write the word *multicultural* on the board and marking it with a board marker to show the main stress on the third syllable (see page 184 for ways of doing this). Yet most students (and teachers) are unfamiliar with soundwaves and, furthermore, do not have enough time to record and print out graphics of them. It turns out that writing words up on the board and marking them for stress actually works better (and is more cost-effective in terms of time and money) than the more high-tech option. Using soundwaves, therefore, while apparently attractive may not be the best way of showing stress. However, there are ways of using computer graphics to support pronunciation work, as we shall see on pages 261–262.



FIGURE 15: Soundwave for *multicultural*

Question 4: Does it pass the TEA test?

If teachers are expected to adopt a new procedure or use a new piece of technology, it needs to pass the 'TEA' test. *T* stands for training. Unless teachers and students are helped to understand the new thing, and then given training opportunities to try it out, it will usually fail. *E* stands for the whole area of equipment. We need to be sure that the new procedure or hardware, for example, is properly supported technically. This may sound like an obvious point, but with major government-selected systems in various areas of life (health, education) sometimes failing even after huge financial investment, we should not underestimate the absolute need for teachers to be sure that the equipment is appropriate, is in place, and is properly supported by qualified professionals.

Finally, *A* stands for access. If the new technology, set of flashcards or collection of supplementary books is locked away in a cupboard for safety, it becomes inaccessible. If we have to take students down a long corridor to a computer room that has to be booked three weeks in advance, then the whole idea becomes significantly less attractive.

Question 5: What future possibilities does it open up?

When we adopt a new methodological procedure or piece of classroom equipment (or software), it is important for us to believe that it has a future. As we saw in Chapter 4, B2, many people are uneasy about one-size-fits-all methodologies, partly because they are closed to innovation and infiltration from the outside (this is especially so with procedures such as the Silent Way – see page 68). In the same way, we need to be confident that what we are investing time and money in is not a closed system – and that it has potential for expansion and future growth.

Question 6: How can I make it work?

After reading questions 1–5 above, it may seem as if we are suggesting that teachers should be extremely sceptical about new ideas and technologies, and that, in general, we should reject the new in favour of the old. However, this is far from the truth and instant rejection is just as deadening as instant acceptance can be careless.

Before rejecting any new idea or equipment, we should ask ourselves how we can make it work for us and for our students. We need to look at the ‘best-case scenario’ and use that to evaluate what we are being offered, not only in a cynical, but also in a positive light. That way we have a chance of judging its real worth.

Chapter notes and further reading

It is difficult to provide contemporary lists of websites that will not date. However, at the present time, readers are advised to consult the webliography at www.longman.com/methodology.

A BBC site called ‘Learning English’ has a wide range of ideas and activities. Dave’s ESL Café (eslcafe.com) also has a lot of material for students. In the end, however, the best thing is to google areas of interest.

- **Teaching in the age of information technology**

At the time of writing, by far the best guide to information technology and how to use it in and outside the classroom for the benefit of language teachers and students is G Dudeney and N Hockly (2007). See also D Gordon Smith and E Baber (2005).

S Alessi and S Trollip (2001) have written a major work on multimedia for learning. R Kern (2006) has written a ‘start-of-the-art’ article about technology in learning and teaching.

- **‘Low-tech’ teaching**

P Ahrens (1993b) designed her own rod system especially for information-gap activities which used clothes pegs and loops of string to hang pictures.

J and C Hadfield have written a number of ‘simple’ activities in the Oxford Basic series (e.g. Hadfield 2001, Hadfield and Hadfield 2000).

- **Pictures**

See K Lane (2002) on using posters, M Lewthwaite (2002) on a ‘brush with art’ and J Wade (2002) on ‘fun with flashcards’.

- **Cuisenaire rods**
See C Newton (2001) and J Scrivener (2005: 311–317).
- **Coursebooks**
For more debate on the usefulness or otherwise of coursebooks, see I Freebairn (2000) and L Prodromou (2002a). J Gray (2000) looks at what teachers do with coursebooks. I McGrath (2006) investigates how teachers and students feel about coursebooks. M Rinvoluceri (2002) shows how coursebooks can be ‘humanised’ and N McBeath (2006) advises on how to write ‘really rotten materials’!
- **PowerPoint**
A somewhat tongue-in-cheek preference for particular uses of PowerPoint as presentation software is expressed by J Harmer (2006b).
- **Interactive whiteboards (IWBs)**
See M Hamilton (2005) and N Harris (2005). L Polkowski (2006) gives advice on ‘first steps’ with an IWB.
- **Dictionaries**
See S Thornbury (2001a: 151–155). On CD-ROM dictionaries, see E Walter (2002). On electronic dictionaries, see J Stirling (2005). A Viswamohan (2005) finds that online dictionaries help her to ‘keep up with the snollygosters’.
Most major publishers have dictionaries in both book form and on CD-ROM, and many of them have online versions.
www.dictionary.com is a website which links to many other dictionaries. There are also dictionaries of collocations and idioms, and, increasingly, highly effective bilingual dictionaries for ESL students. The best thing is to go to the individual publishers’ websites and see what is on offer.
- **Concordancers**
See G Dudeney and N Hockly (2007: Chapter 8). A Wichmann *et al* (1997) provide an important collection of applied linguistics articles about corpora in language teaching. L Dinis and K Moran (2005) and J-J Weber (2001) look at using language corpora for writing. L Gavioli and G Aston (2001) and A Frankenberg-Garcia (2005) discuss pedagogical uses of corpora. See also S Thornbury (2001a: 69–73).
- **Practising language on the Internet and on CD-ROM**
See G Dudeney and N Hockly (2007: Chapter 9).
- **Webquests**
The person who came up with the concept of webquests is Bernie Dodge and his website is at www.webquest.org. On webquests in general, see G Dudeney and N Hockly (2007: Chapter 4) and P Brabbs (2002).
- **Weblogs**
J Askari Arani (2005) discusses using weblogs to teach reading and writing. See also E Catera and R Emigh (2005) who call blogs ‘the ultimate soapbox’. See also G Dudeney and N Hockly (2007: Chapter 7).

- **Mousepals, chat and blogging**

On key/mousepals see H Hennigan (1999) and D Linder (2000). G Dudeney and N Hockly (2007: Chapter 5) have a wealth of materials on how to use emailing.

- **Authoring**

See G Dudeney and N Hockly (2007: Chapter 10) and D Gordon Smith and E Baber (2005: Chapter 9).

- **Designing websites**

See D Gordon Smith and E Baber (2005: Chapter 8).

- **Virtual learning: from emails to simulated environments**

See G Dudeney and N Hockly (2007: Chapter 11). See G Woodman (2005) for an account of developing online materials in a specific setting.

- **Using soundwaves**

D Coniam (2003a) argues strongly that using soundwave software *is* useful in helping students to 'better appreciate English stress timing'.

12

Teaching language construction

When students study the construction of a specific feature of the language, they do so either because it is new to them and they want to understand and use it or because they want to revise it in order to improve their ability to use it without making errors. The immediate goal of this kind of language study is to increase knowledge of the language system so that the longer term aim of improving productive and receptive skills can be achieved. As we shall see in the next three chapters, students do not only study language in classrooms under the direction of a teacher, but can also be involved in researching language on their own. We may also have as one of our goals the training of autonomous learners (see Chapter 23A). However, the vast majority of students of English benefit from a teacher-mediated focus on specific language forms.

A Studying structure and use

The language study which is discussed in this chapter comprises a focus on the structure and use of language forms, particularly in the following areas:

- the morphology of forms (e.g. the fact that *is* and *am* are forms of *be*, but **amn't* is not)
- the syntax of phrases, clauses and sentences (e.g. the rules of question formation or the construction of *if*-sentences)
- vocabulary, including the meanings of words, their lexical grammar (e.g. the fact that *enjoy* can be followed by an *-ing* form but not by an infinitive), and collocation rules (e.g. we say *even-handed* but not *even-footed*)
- the meanings and functions that phrases and sentences can convey
- pronunciation
- spelling

Text and paragraph construction – including the study of genre in spoken and written text – will be discussed in Chapter 19, B2.

A1 Language study in lesson sequences

The status of language study depends on why and when it occurs. It may, for example, form the main focus of a lesson: we might say, for instance, that a chief part of today's lesson will be the teaching of relative clauses, the future continuous or ways of suggesting, and design the lesson around this central purpose.

Language study may not be the main focus of a lesson sequence, however, but may be only one element in a grander design, in which case a decision will have to be taken about where the study activity should be placed in the sequence. Should the focus on any necessary

language forms take place before, during or after the performance of a communicative task or a receptive skills activity? Or should students focus on language prior to using it in a task?

One approach (often taken by materials writers) is for students to study language in a variety of ways, explore a topic and then use what they have learnt to perform a task (see, for example, the *Cutting Edge* series by Sarah Cunningham and Peter Moor, published by Pearson Education, and Nunan 2004). Alternatively, the study of language forms may happen during a task-based sequence. We might focus on one or two past tense forms in the middle of an extended narrative-writing task; we might have our students study or research vocabulary to describe the weather in the middle of a sequence on holiday planning.

A third option is to study forms after the students have performed the task. This usually happens as a form of language repair when the task has shown up language problems – or when students might have found the task easier if they had been able to produce certain language forms which they did not use at all. As we saw in Chapter 4, studying language after the task has been completed is a feature of a different approach to Task-based learning from the one in the paragraph above. In other words, these three options suggest that rather than always using Straight arrows sequences, we will often find that Boomerang or Patchwork lessons are more suitable.

However, even where we have not planned when and how to include language study in a particular lesson sequence, we sometimes find opportunities presenting themselves which it is impossible to ignore. As a result, we get students to focus on language items which we had not anticipated including. Such opportunistic study may happen because a student wants to know how some element of language is constructed or why it is constructed as it is. It might take place because completely unforeseen problems present themselves; we might suddenly become aware of the chance to offer students some language which up till now they haven't been able to use but which – if they are now exposed to it – will significantly raise the level at which they are performing the task.

Opportunistic teaching – studying language which suddenly 'comes up' – exposes the tension between planning lessons in advance and responding to what actually happens (see Chapter 21). When used appropriately, the relevance and immediacy of opportunistic language study may make it the most memorable and effective kind of language study there is.

Many study activities (especially in coursebooks) have tended to follow the PPP model (see Chapter 4, A2 and A3), and there are often good reasons for this. But at other times (and with more advanced students, for example) such 'explain and practise' sequences may be entirely inappropriate. Instead, we may want to encourage students to discover or notice language before we ask them to use it. At other times, we may ask students to research language as part of an ongoing lesson sequence. We may also wish to preface a study exercise with activities which show us how much of the language in question is already known, or we may interleave the study with other elements.

A2 Choosing study activities

We will frequently decide how and when to have students study language form and use on the basis of the syllabus and/or the coursebook since it may offer an explanation and an exercise that we are happy to use almost unchanged. However, some of these sequences may not suit the particular styles and progress of our learners, and may thus need adjusting or replacing in some way. We may want to try out new activities, or may wish to avoid using the same kind of activity day after day. How then do we make such decisions?

- **Following planning principles:** when deciding how to have students study language form, we need to bear general planning principles in mind (see Chapter 21B). This means that we have to think about activities which the students do before and after this study session so that we do not simply repeat the same kind of activity again and again. We need to offer a varied diet of exercises when studying language construction both because all our students have different learning styles (see Chapter 5, B3 and B4), and also because we want help them sustain their motivation.
- **Assessing a language study activity for use in class:** when assessing an activity designed for the study of language form, we need to decide how effective it will be when we take it into class. It should justify the time we will need to spend on it both before and during the lesson. We need to believe that the activity demonstrates meaning and use clearly and that it allows opportunities for a focus on (and practice of) the construction of the language form. We have to be confident that it will engage our learners successfully.

One way of assessing study activities is to judge their efficiency and their appropriacy. In terms of efficiency, we might want to assess the economy, ease and efficacy of the activity. Economy means that the time we spend setting up the activity is in a satisfactory ratio to the payoff the activity provides. In other words, if an activity takes three minutes to explain but only yields 45 seconds of practice, it is uneconomical. An easy activity is one that is simple for the teacher to use and organise. An efficacious activity is one that works (i.e. the students get out of it what they are supposed to get out of it). If the activity says it will teach students how the second conditional is used, it is efficacious if it does this, but it is not if it fails to explain the second conditional properly. In terms of appropriacy, we need to judge whether the activity is suitable for the time of day, the classroom conditions and for a particular group of students, taking into account their level, their educational background and their cultural sensibilities (Thornbury 1999b: 25–27).

We often take activities and exercises into class that we have used before with other groups. We will have, therefore, a good idea of how effective they will be. Nevertheless, we need to remember that all groups are different, and that what was appropriate for one class may not work as well with other students.

- **Evaluating a study activity after use in class:** once a lesson is over, we need to evaluate the success of the activity or activities which focused on language form, whether we do this formally or informally. This is one reason why we should keep records of our classes and why we should conduct our own action research (see Chapter 24, B1).

Evaluation of an activity answers questions such as whether or not the exercise helped students to learn the new language (efficacy), whether it was clear, whether it took more or less time than anticipated (economy), whether students were engaged by it (appropriacy) and whether or not we want to use it again. Part of this evaluation involves us in thinking about how we might modify the activity the next time we use it.

A3 Known or unknown language?

Unless we are teaching real beginners, each individual student has some degree of linguistic knowledge and ability in English. In addition to this, as we saw in Chapter 5, individual students learn at different speeds and in different ways. These two facts, taken together, explain why so

many classes can rightly be described as 'mixed ability' (see page 127) – though the difference in level between students is more extreme in some cases than in others.

The fact of mixed ability throws up a problem for the study of new language forms since it will frequently be impossible to know whether such forms really are new or not for individual students in a class. And even if most of our students have come across the language before, it is not necessarily the case that they can all use it.

If – for the reasons stated above – we are not sure whether or not our students know the language we are about to ask them to study, we will need to find this information out. If we do not, we risk teaching students things they already know or assuming knowledge they do not have.

One way of avoiding teaching already-known language is to have students perform tasks and see how well they use the language forms in question before deciding whether we need to introduce those forms as if they were new. A less elaborate technique is to attempt to *elicit* the new language forms we wish them to study. If we find that students can produce them satisfactorily, we will not want to demonstrate or explain them all over again, and getting students to reproduce the new language accurately through the use of repetition and drills will be a waste of time. If elicitation is unsuccessful, however, we have good grounds for treating the language forms as new and proceeding accordingly.

B Explain and practise

Commentators have described an 'explain and practise' approach to teaching language construction as a *deductive* approach, even though this term seems somewhat unhelpful. In a deductive approach, students are given explanations or grammar rules and then, based on these explanations or rules, they make phrases and sentences using the new language. Explain and practise sequences are usually PPP-like, or what we have called 'Straight arrows' (see page 67).

In the following example for teaching the present continuous, the sequence starts when the teacher engages the students by showing them pictures of people doing various actions (painting a house, fixing the roof, cutting the grass, etc.). Following this lead-in (getting the students' interest, introducing the situation, etc.), the teacher tries to elicit the sentences he or she is thinking of teaching (in case the students know the language already, in which case explaining it all over again may not be a good idea). So the teacher might hold up a picture of someone painting a house and ask *Can anyone tell me what she's doing? Anyone? She's ...? Does anyone know?* If the students can produce the sentence, the teacher might indicate other pictures and elicit the language for them, too. If the students also perform well on this, the teacher can go straight to an activate (or 'immediate creativity') stage where the students try to make their own present continuous sentences, perhaps about what members of their family or their friends are doing right now.

If, however, as expected, the students don't manage to produce the sentences, the teacher will explain the new language. Perhaps he or she will say *OK ... look and listen ... she's fixing the roof ... listen ... fixing ... fixing ... she's fixing the roof ... everybody*, and the students repeat the sentence in chorus. The teacher will then have students make sentences about the other activities, sometimes explaining again and correcting where necessary. The students will then be involved in some repetition and cue-response drilling (see B2 below) and may do some practice in pairs. All of this stage of the lesson (repetition, drilling and controlled practice) is designed to foster accurate reproduction of what the teacher is introducing.

Finally, the teacher may ask for immediate creativity, where students use the new language (in this case the present continuous) to talk about their own lives or the actions of people they know (see above). If during this stage the students perform badly, the teacher may return either to the explanation stage or to the accurate reproduction stage to reinforce what was previously introduced.

The sequence is summarised in Figure 1.

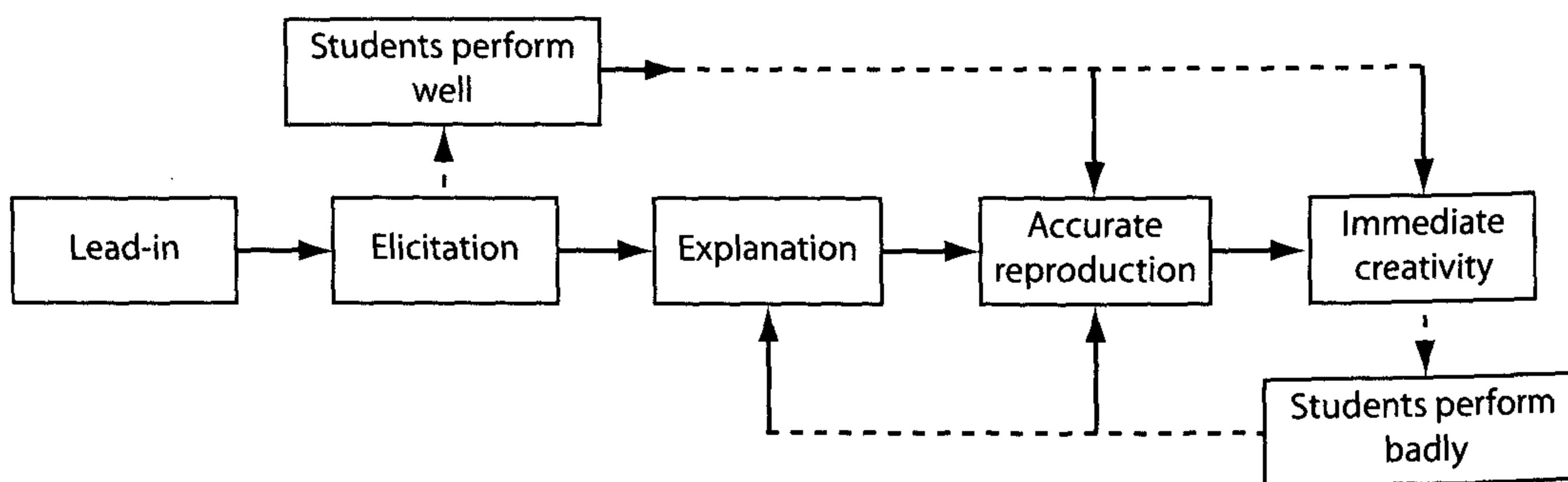


FIGURE 1: A typical explain and practise sequence

B1 Explaining things

During the explanation stage we will need to demonstrate both meaning and language construction. There are many ways to do this.

- **Explaining meaning:** one of the clearest ways of explaining the meaning of something is to show it. If we hold up a book, point to it and say *book ... book*, the meaning will be instantly clear. For actions, we can use mime: if we are teaching *He is running*, we can mime someone running. At other times we can use gesture. We can demonstrate superlative adjectives by using hand and arm movements to show *big ... bigger ... biggest*, and many teachers have standard gestures to explain such things as the past (a hand pointing backwards over the shoulder), or the future (a hand pointing forwards). We can also use facial expressions to explain the meaning of *sad, happy, frightened*, etc.

We can use pictures to explain situations and concepts (for example, a picture of someone coming away from a swimming pool with dripping wet hair to show *She's just been swimming*). We can use diagrams, too. Many teachers use time lines to explain time, simple versus continuous verb forms and aspect (e.g. perfect tenses). For example, if we want to explain the present perfect continuous tense, we can use a time line to explain *I've been living here since 2005*.



If we can't show something in one of the ways mentioned above, we can describe the meaning of the word. For example a *generous* person is someone who shares their time and their money/possessions with you. *Nasty* is the opposite of *nice*. A *radish* is a kind of vegetable.

If describing meaning isn't appropriate, we can list vocabulary items to explain concepts. For example, if we want students to understand the idea of *the caring professions* (perhaps because the phrase came up in a text), we can list a number of jobs such as *doctor, nurse, social worker* and *counsellor* to explain the phrase. We can also use check questions to make sure students have understood correctly. If they are learning how to

make third conditional sentences and one of the examples is *If she'd missed the train, she would have been late for the meeting*, we can ask the students questions such as *Did she miss the train?* and *Was she late for the meeting?*

A way of making meaning absolutely clear, of course, is to translate words and phrases. Sometimes this is easy; all languages have a word for *book*. Sometimes, however, it is more complex; many languages do not have an absolute equivalent for the English phrase *devil-may-care attitude* and translating idioms such as *to pull the wool over someone's eyes* means having to find an L1 equivalent, even though it may be constructed completely differently. Nevertheless, as we saw in Chapter 7, D1, translation may have an important part to play in foreign language learning.

The trick of explaining meaning effectively is to choose the best method to fit the meaning that needs to be explained. In actual fact, most teachers use a mixture of some or all of these techniques. However, check questions are especially important since they allow us to determine if our explanations have been effective.

- **Explaining language construction:** one of the most common ways of explaining language construction is through modelling sentences and phrases. For example, if we want to model *He's fixing the roof*, we may say *Listen ... he's fixing the roof ... listen ... fixing ... fixing ... he's ... he is ... he is ... he's ... he's fixing the roof*. What we have done is to say the model normally (*He's fixing the roof*) before isolating certain parts of the model (*fixing ... fixing ... he's*). We distort one of the isolated fragments (*he's*) by lengthening it (to explain its contracted form, i.e. *he is ... he is ...*) before returning to the isolated element and finally saying the whole model clearly so that students can repeat it. This procedure is represented in Figure 2:

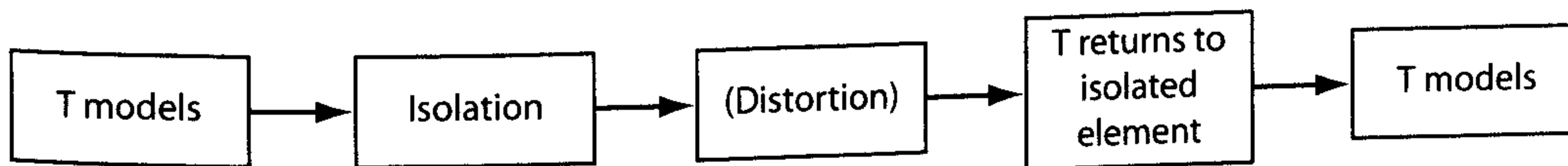


FIGURE 2: Modelling language construction

Many teachers use fingers or hands, too, to show how *he is* turns into *he's* (see Figure 3) or how *fast* and *er* are joined together to make a comparative adjective. We can also demonstrate word and sentence stress by beating time with our arms. We can show intonation patterns by 'drawing' the tune in the air.

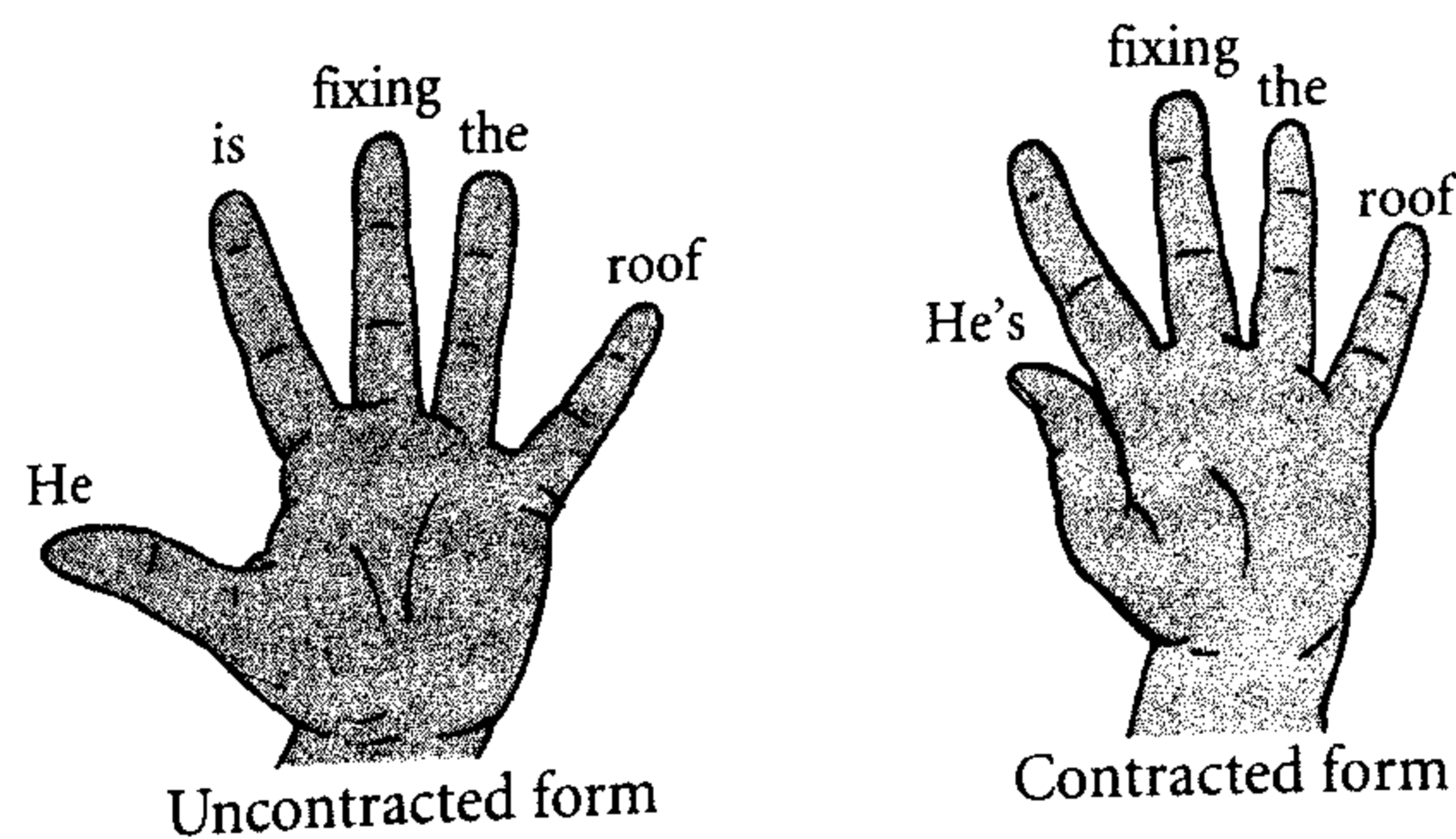


FIGURE 3: Using fingers to show how *he is* becomes *he's*

Some students will find such graphic gestures sufficient, but others like to see written explanations, diagrams on boards or overhead projectors (see page 185). For example, if we want to show how words are stressed we can use one of the markings from Figure 4.



FIGURE 4: Different ways of marking word stress

One way of demonstrating grammatical sequence is to write words on individual cards (see page 180) which can then be moved around (to show the difference between affirmative sentence order and the syntax of questions, for example). We can also manipulate a set of Cuisenaire rods (see page 180). They can be used to show parts of speech, stress patterns and sentence construction.

It is sometimes more appropriate to explain language construction with words. For example, if we want students to understand the rule about the third person singular of the present simple, we can say *Listen ... we say I play, you play, we play, they play, but with he, she and it we add an s. Listen, I play, she plays ... you play, he plays ... we play, it plays.*

However, we will need to be careful that (a) explaining the construction of the language is fairly easy to do, and (b) that we can do it in language which the students we are teaching will find easy to understand.

B2 Practice (accurate reproduction)

During the practice – or accurate reproduction – phase of an explain and practise sequence we will first get students repeating the new language before then moving on to practise it.

- **Repetition:** repetition can be either choral or individual. When we use choral repetition, we get all the students to say the new word or phrase together.

For choral repetition to be effective, it is important to start the chorus clearly (so that everyone gets going at once) and to help the students with the rhythm by ‘conducting’ the chorus, using arms and hands to show where stress occurs, etc. Choral repetition can be invigorating, and it gives all the students a chance to speak together rather than being (possibly) shown up individually.

Sometimes teachers divide the class in half (when working with a two-person dialogue, for example) and give each of the dialogue roles to one or other half. The conversation is then spoken in semi-chorus, with the two halves each taking their turn to speak.

When we think students have been given sufficient repetition time in chorus (or if we don’t see the need for choral repetition), we may ask for individual repetition. We do this by nominating students and asking them to give us the sentence, e.g.

TEACHER: *OK. Sam?*
 STUDENT 1 (SAM): *They’re painting the house.*
 TEACHER: *Good. Kim?*
 STUDENT 2 (KIM): *They’re painting the house.*
 TEACHER: *Good.*
 ETC.

It is worth remembering not to nominate students in an obvious order (e.g. by going from one end of a row to the other) since this will make the activity predictable and, as a result, will not keep students on their toes.

A form of individual practice which some teachers and students find useful is for students to say the word or phrase quietly to themselves, murmuring it a few times as they get used to saying it. It may sound strange to hear everyone speaking the phrase quietly to themselves at the same time, but it gives them all a chance for individual repetition, a chance once again to see how it feels to say the new language.

- **Drills:** if we feel that students have done enough repetition of a phrase or phrases (or if we don't think such repetition is necessary), we may organise a quick cue–response session to encourage controlled practice of the new language. Suppose, for example, that we have taught a group of beginner students a series of phrases such as *They're painting the house*, *He's fixing the roof*, *She's mowing the grass*, etc., and that we have pictures of these actions on cards. We can use these cards as a cue, which we hope will then elicit the appropriate response, e.g.

TEACHER (HOLDS UP PICTURE OF TWO PEOPLE PAINTING THE OUTSIDE OF A HOUSE): *Sam?*

STUDENT 1 (SAM): *They're painting the house.*

TEACHER: *Good. (holds up picture of a someone fixing the roof) Kim?*

STUDENT 2 (KIM): *He's fixing the roof.*

TEACHER: *Good.*

Cues can also be verbal (e.g. *Question ... film* to get the response *What time does the film start?*) or non-verbal (e.g. the teacher shrugs their shoulders to elicit *I don't know*).

Cue–response drills are an efficient way of getting the students to say the new language in a way that can be invigorating and challenging. If we think students need more controlled practice of this type, we can put them in pairs and ask them to continue saying the new words and phrases to each other. Perhaps they can take turns miming one of the actions or showing/drawing pictures of painting, fixing and mowing, etc. so that they are, in effect, conducting cue–response drills of their own.

C Discover (and practise)

In a so-called inductive approach, things are organised somewhat differently from the explain and practise sequences we have looked at above. Instead of having meaning and construction explained to them, students see examples of language and try to work out how it is put together. Thus, for example, after students have read a text, we can ask them to find examples of different past tenses and say how and why they are used. This Boomerang-type lesson (like 'PPP upside down' in Jane Willis's description – see page 71) is especially appropriate where language study arises out of skills work on reading and listening texts.

If we want students to understand how speakers in informal conversation use certain phrases as delaying tactics (or to buy 'thinking' time), we might – after letting them listen and respond to someone speaking spontaneously – get them to listen again, but this time reading a transcript of what is being said. The task we give them is to find language used for buying time – hoping that they will identify phrases like *you know*, *I mean*, *yeah*, *mmm*, etc.

If we want students at an intermediate or upper intermediate level to work on narrative tenses, we might show them the following text, and ask them to underline all the verbs which refer to the past:

Sarah told me an amazing story about her boyfriend, Peter. It appears that he was on holiday with a friend of his, a guy named Gordon. They had gone out for dinner in the resort they were holidaying in and had stayed out quite late. As a result they missed the last bus and had to walk home.

Peter was knocked down by a car as he crossed the road near their hotel. Perhaps he hadn't looked carefully enough before crossing the street. But a car was coming

down the street, and he ended up underneath it. He was in real danger. Somehow they had to get the car off him. But there was only the female driver of the car and Gordon. That's when Gordon did this amazing thing. Despite the fact that he is not very strong (and they had, after all, just eaten a big dinner), he somehow managed to lift the car off Peter just long enough for them to get him out.

Peter stayed in hospital for some time, but he made a complete recovery. He says that he might have died if Gordon hadn't been so heroic. Gordon still can't understand how he did it, but he has quite enjoyed being a hero!

Students will underline simple past verbs (*told, was, was knocked down, ended up, had to*, etc.), past continuous verbs (*were holidaying, was coming*), past perfect verbs (*had gone out, had stayed out, hadn't looked*) and hypothetical past perfect (*would have died*). They can then discuss why each is used before going on to a practice stage and immediate creativity of their own.

As we saw on page 57, discovery activities like this suit some students very well; they enjoy working things out. Many people think that the language they understand in this way is more powerfully learnt (because they had to make some cognitive effort as they uncovered its patterns) than it would have been if they were told the grammar rules first and didn't have to make such an effort. However, not all students feel comfortable with this approach and would still prefer to be 'spoon-fed'. A lot will depend on their level. It is generally easier for more advanced students to analyse language using discovery procedures than it is for complete beginners. The Boomerang sequence is often more appropriate with students who already have a certain amount of language available to them for the first activation stage than it is with students who can say very little. Discovery activities are especially useful when students are looking at the construction of specific language for the second or third time. When we ask them to look at the use of different past tenses in a story and to work out how they are used and why, we assume that they know the individual tenses. The detective work they are doing now is intended to expand their knowledge and revise things they are already familiar with.

When students have discovered the language construction features they have been looking for, we may get them to use them either as accurate reproduction or immediate creativity. If this is a second or third visit to a particular area of language, however, accurate reproduction may be unnecessary (and inappropriate). Instead, we will encourage students to try to use the language for themselves. Of course, if they can't do this – or if they have failed to discover what they were looking for – we may have to explain things all over again, and then we will find ourselves back in the procedure we outlined in Figure 1. But this is less likely to happen in discovery activities than in explain and practise sequences.

D Research (and practise)

An alternative to explain and practise and discovery activities (but which is nevertheless a combination of the two) is to have students do language research on their own. For example, if students are working on how we use our bodies to express meaning (e.g. *waving, clenching, shrugging, wagging*), we could give them a number of collocations (e.g. *wave my arm, clench my teeth, shrug my shoulders, wag my finger*) and tell them to use them in sentences, or perhaps ask them to talk about what the actions mean. However, it might be far more memorable for them (and include the kind of agency we talked about in Chapter 5, D3) if we asked them to do

the work themselves. Thus we could ask them to consult a dictionary, looking up both the verb and the various parts of the body to see if they appear to collocate. We could get them to access a concordance of various words such as *arm*, *teeth*, *shoulders*, etc. to see what collocations turn up. Or we could encourage them to use a search engine, such as Google, to see if collocations work. For example, if students want to know if *wave* and *arm* go together they can type *waved his arm* between quotation marks, and they will get something like the results in Figure 5.

The screenshot shows the Google search interface. At the top, there are navigation links for Web, Images, Groups, News, Froogle, and more. The search bar contains the text "waved his arm" and a "Search" button. Below the search bar, there are radio buttons for "the web" (selected) and "pages from the UK". The search results are displayed under the heading "Web" and show "Results 1 - 100 of about 36,000 for 'waved his arm'. (0.10 seconds)". The first result is "BoRee - Sign Language, Websites, Books and More" with a snippet: "The Bear waved his arm and said, 'Follow me, I know where there's food'. So the Bear and the Lion walked and walked and walked to the river. ...". The second result is "The Pied Putter" with a snippet: "He waved his arm through the air and said, 'It was I who rid the British ... Once again he waved his arm and the existing images were overlaid with new ...". The third result is "E2K: a journal for the new literary paradigm" with a snippet: "Santa waved, his arm creaking like the branch of a tree. 'It's not a case of being pretty,' Marvin replied. 'I'm warning you, Stan, it ain't fittin' ...". The fourth result is "When the Sleeper Wakes, by H. G. [Herbert George] Wells: The ..." with a snippet: "He waved his arm again and pointed to the archway, shouting 'Onward!' They were no longer marking time, they were marching; tramp, tramp, tramp, tramp. ...". The fifth result is "When the Sleeper Wakes - CHAPTER V".

FIGURE 5: First page of Google search on *waved his arm*

When students research language, they are far more likely to remember what they find out than if they sit passively and are given words. The more we can encourage them to do this, the better – although, as we discussed in Chapter 4B, imposing such behaviour on students, whoever they are and whatever they want or need, may be inappropriate. Language research is more likely to be effective at higher levels, though much will depend on the personality of the students.

As with discovery activities, when students have researched language, we may ask them to use the language they have discovered. However, if they find this impossible to do, we may have to return to explanations and accurate reproduction. Indeed, as with everything we have discussed, the degree to which teachers use repetition and drilling depends to a large extent on their judgement of when it is appropriate and when it is not. Over-drilling, especially as students move to higher levels, can have a very demotivating effect, but as we have seen (and as all classroom learners know), in its place it can be very effective and even enjoyable. The trick is to stop it as soon as possible.

Chapter notes and further reading

On teaching language construction in general, see T Hedge (2000: Part 2).

- **Drills and drilling**

On chorus drilling, see N McIver (2000). On drills in general, see S Mumford (2003, 2006).

13

Teaching grammar

Grammar teaching sometimes happens as a result of other work the students are doing – for example, when they study language in a text they have been reading or listening to, or when a grammar problem presents itself unexpectedly in the middle of a lesson and we feel we have to deal with it on the spot (see page 366). Grammar teaching may grow directly from the tasks students are performing or have just performed as part of a focus-on-form approach (see pages 53–54).

At other times, however, we rely on the coursebooks we are using to help us teach grammar, or we plan in advance what grammar we wish our students to be studying. Most teachers have their own favourite grammar presentation and practice activities and will often use these when they want students to study a particular piece of grammar.

Grammar can be introduced in a number of ways, or we can show students grammar evidence and ask them to work out for themselves how the language is constructed (see Chapter 3C). We will also want to provide opportunities for students to practise different grammar points, and we may want to use games to make such practice more engaging.

In Chapter 12, A2 we discussed the need for effective activities to be both efficient and appropriate. The range of activities which we will look at in this chapter all satisfy these two requirements in different ways. We will also discuss grammar books and their uses.

A Introducing grammar

The following activities represent a range of possibilities (some simple, some more elaborate) for introducing new grammar.

Example 1: The postman

Language: present simple

Age: any

Level: beginner/elementary

In this grammar presentation (which follows a PPP or Straight arrows sequence in terms of ESA – see page 67), students learn how to make sentences using the present simple in the third person singular. They have already learnt how to say affirmative and negative sentences in the first and second person (e.g. *I like coffee, you don't like bananas*).

The teacher holds up a number of flashcards (see Figure 1) and elicits the words *dogs, get up, doorbell, car, uniform, a lot of money*. The students say them chorally (see page 206) and individually before doing a quick cue–response drill using the different pictures as prompts. If the pictures are not on flashcards, they may be on OHTs or shown through a data projector – or even drawn on the board.

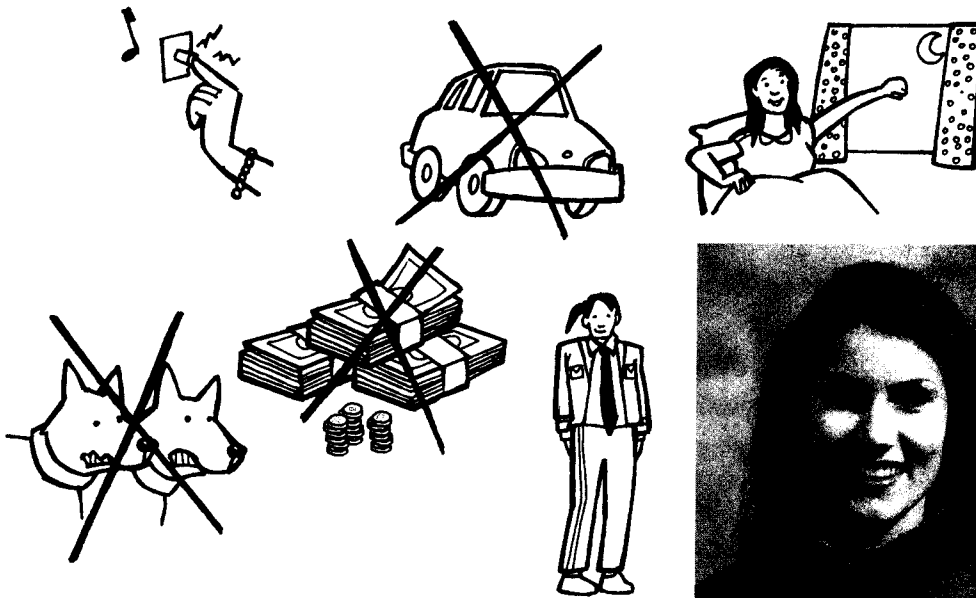


FIGURE 1: Sarah's pictures



FIGURE 2: Sarah

Students now see the picture of Sarah (Figure 2). The teacher asks the students what they think Sarah's job is, but does not confirm or deny their suggestions.

The teacher explains that she is going to tell them what Sarah does every day. She says the following sentences and the students have to choose which flashcard or picture is being talked about.

- She doesn't like dogs.*
- She gets up early.*
- She doesn't drive a car.*
- She rings doorbells.*
- She doesn't earn a lot of money.*
- She wears a uniform.*

When the students have guessed (confirmed their guesses) that Sarah is a postwoman, the teacher holds up the cards individually and tries to elicit the sentences about each one. She models the sentences and probably gets choral and individual repetition before moving on, in the accurate reproduction stage (see page 206), to conduct a cue-response drill by holding up, say, card C so that the students have to say *She rings doorbells*.

Once students are reasonably confident with these sentences, the teacher asks them to think of a real person (or invent their own) and what their job is. They are asked to come up with three affirmative and three negative sentences about what that person does or doesn't do every day. While they are doing this, the teacher goes round monitoring their work (offering help or correcting where necessary).

The pairs now read out their sentences and the rest of the class have to guess what profession is being described.

Example 2: Girls' night out

Language: past simple irregular verbs
 Age: young adult plus
 Level: elementary

In this example, the language to be studied is presented to the students in a text.

The sequence starts when the teacher asks the students whether girls in their country often go out together and where, if they do, they go. Students can discuss this in pairs or small groups before reporting back to the class.

The students now look at two texts (see Figure 3) and try to decide if they are about a night out in Rio de Janeiro, Beijing or Moscow. When they have done this, the teacher checks they all have the same answer.



C. Kong Qingyan, Frederico Mendes, Nikolai Ignatiev/Marie Claire/IPC Syndication

The magazine **Marie Claire** asked its women journalists in **Rio**, **Beijing**, and **Moscow** to go out for the evening and then write a report.

SABINA lives in [redacted]. She went out with her friends Lali and Anna on a Friday night.

- 1 I wore a black sweater and trousers and a lot of make-up. Girls here like wearing sexy clothes!
- 2 We went to Piramida. It's a bar and restaurant that's open 24 hours a day, and it's the 'in' place at the moment. There's a DJ and we saw a lot of interesting people.
- 3 We had coffee and apple cake and then wine.
- 4 We talked about Lali's problems with her boyfriend. She was a bit sad. Then some men at the next table started talking to us and they bought us a drink. This is a very macho country and men always pay for women's drinks.
- 5 We got a taxi. It can be quite dangerous here at night and the metro closes at about 12.30.
- 6 We left Piramida at about 1.30, and I got home at 2.00.
- 7 Fantastic. 10 points. We had a great time and Lali was happy again.

SHARON lives in [redacted]. She went out with her friends Nicole and Hujia on a Saturday night.

- I wore a long dress. People are quite traditional here but young people want to wear new fashions and have new hair colours.
- First I drove to Bar Street, a street with about 50 bars. We met in the Pink Loft, a Thai restaurant. After dinner we went to a tea house because it's a good place to talk.
- We had typical Thai food, like green curry. Then we had tea. Women here don't drink a lot of alcohol.
- We talked about our love lives, especially Hujia's. She has a problem with her partner. We talked about men, fashion, and literature.
- We went home by car. I didn't drink any alcohol so I could drive.
- We left at 12.00 and I got home at about 12.30.
- It was a very good night. 8 points.

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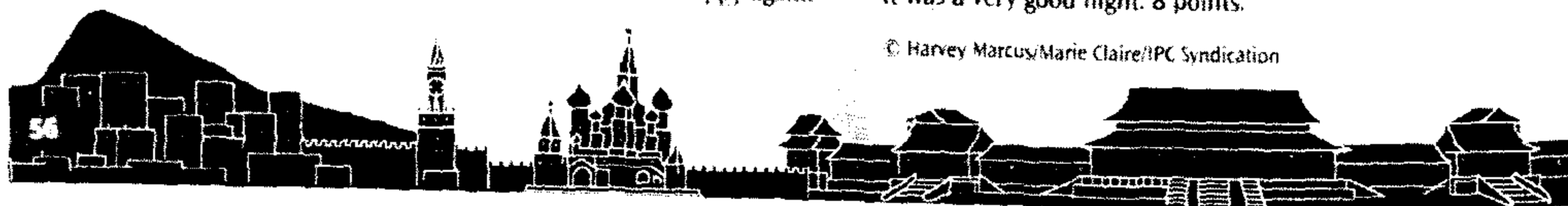


FIGURE 3: Girls' night out from *New English File Elementary* by C Oxenden, C Latham-Koenig and P Seligson (Oxford University Press)

The students now match questions, such as *Did you have a good time? How did you go home? What did you do? What did you have to eat and drink? and What did you wear?* with the women's answers, marked 1–7 in the texts. Then they fill in a chart with ticks for Sabina or Sharon, depending on whether they wore a dress, went to a bar, talked about men, went home by taxi, etc.

Their attention is drawn to the irregular verbs by an exercise which asks them to find the past tense forms of certain verbs (see Figure 4).

3 GRAMMAR past simple irregular verbs

a Look at the reports again and find the past tense of these irregular verbs.

wear	_____	/wɔ:/
go	_____	/went/
see	_____	/sɔ:/
have	_____	/hæd/
buy	_____	/bɔ:t/
get	_____	/gɒt/
leave	_____	/left/
drive	_____	/drəʊv/
meet	_____	/met/
can	_____	/kʌd/

FIGURE 4: Textsearch

The phonemic forms of these past tense verb forms are given as a back-up for those students who are comfortable reading at least some phonemic symbols.

When students have identified the past tense verb forms, the teacher gets them to say them just to check that they are pronouncing them correctly. They now look at a grammar chart (see Figure 5) before doing exercises where they fill in a short text with the correct form of the verbs *be*, *buy*, *go*, *wear*, *look*, *have*, *see*, etc.

5C past simple irregular verbs

Infinitive	Past +	Past -
go	went	didn't go
have	had	didn't have
get	got	didn't get
buy	bought	didn't buy
leave	left	didn't leave
drive	drove	didn't drive
meet	met	didn't meet
see	saw	didn't see
wear	wore	didn't wear
do	did	didn't do

- Use the irregular past form only in sentences.
I saw a film last night.
- Use the infinitive after *did / didn't*.
Did you see a film last night? NOT Did you saw...?
- Remember word order = ASI (auxiliary, subject, infinitive) or QUASI (question word, auxiliary, subject, infinitive).
Did you go out last night?
Where did you go?

▲ Past of *can* = *could*.
 = *couldn't* NOT *didn't can*
 = *Could you...?* NOT *Did you can...?*

FIGURE 5: Grammar chart

Students now listen to the third girl (Silvia) talking about her night out. They can then ask and tell each other about their own experiences of going out with friends, using the verbs they have been learning.

Example 3: Disappointment

Language: reported speech
 Age: teenage plus
 Level: intermediate

This sequence teaches students the differences between reporting speech as it happens and how this changes when we report things that were said in the past.

We show students a picture of two young men walking down the street. One of them has

a mobile phone clamped to his ear and looks really happy. The other is listening to him with a look of resignation on his face. If we can't get hold of a picture, we simply draw two faces on the board (see Figure 6) and mime what follows.

We give the young man on the phone a name (Jack). We ask the students who Jack is talking to and we elicit the fact that he's talking to a young woman he met in the school canteen. That's why he's looking so happy. We ask the students what the young woman is saying to Jack and elicit sentences like *You're really nice, I'll see you this evening, I like your jacket, Your friend gave me your number, I've got two tickets to a concert, you can come with me.*

We now ask the students what Jack tells his friend as the conversation goes on (we point to the picture which shows him covering the mouthpiece of the phone), and we elicit and model sentences like *She says I'm really nice, She says she'll see me this evening, She says she likes my jacket, etc.* We make sure the students understand that Jack uses the present (*says*) because he's reporting the conversation as it happens. We make sure they understand how *you* changes to *I*.

We can get some students to suggest more of the girl's sentences and have their classmates pretend to be Jack and report the conversation.

We now tell the students that it is a few hours later. Jack is back at his house looking really glum (see Figure 7). We explain that he went to the concert to meet the girl but she never turned up. His mother asks him, *What did she say again?* We now elicit and model sentences such as *She said I was really nice, She said she would see me this evening, She said she liked my jacket, etc.* We ask the students why the verb *say* is in the past (because Jack is talking about a past conversation) and what effect that has (*is* becomes *was*, *will* becomes *would*, *like* becomes *liked*, etc.). We can write this up on the board to help students (see Figure 8).

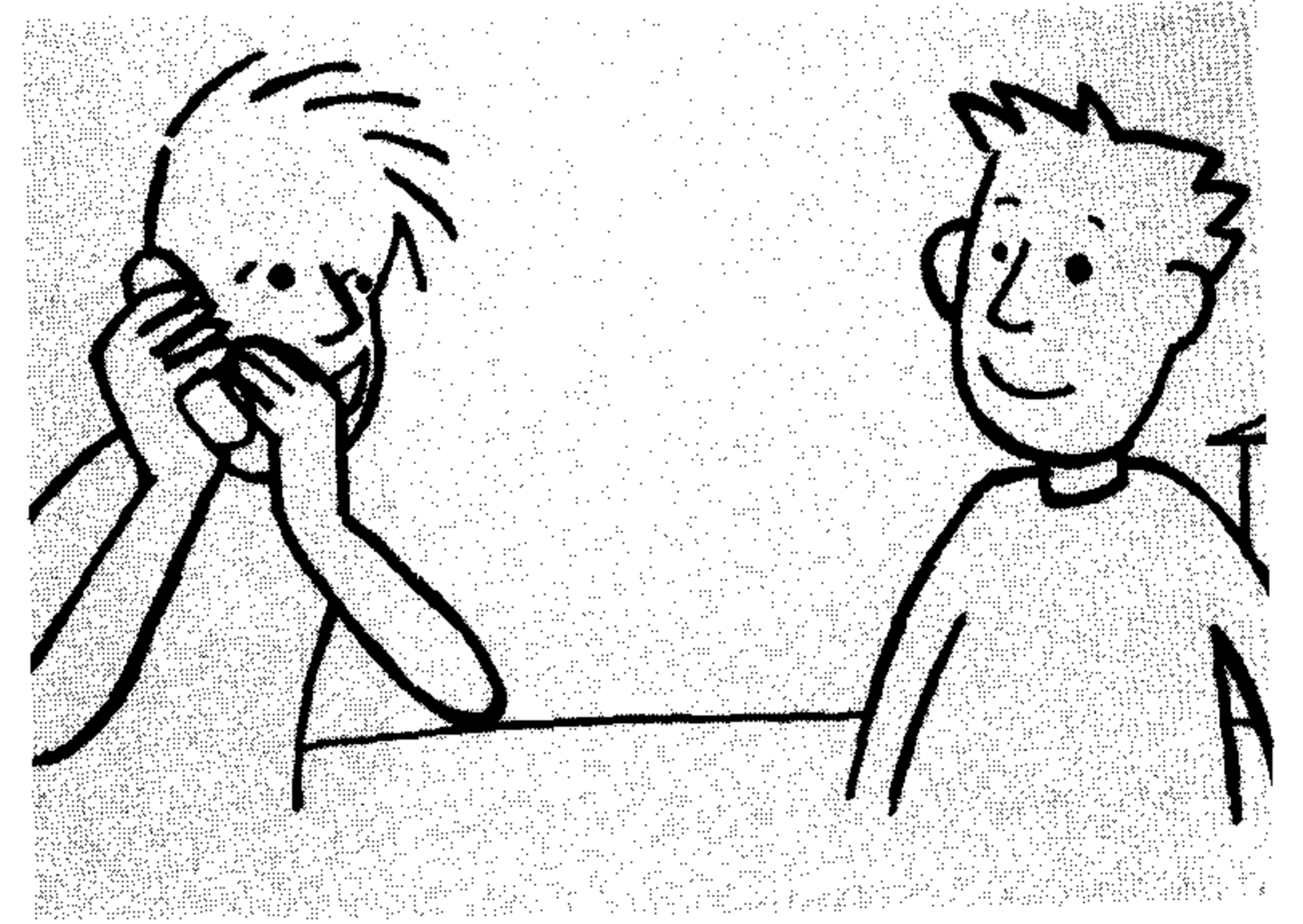


FIGURE 6: Disappointment: Board drawing 1

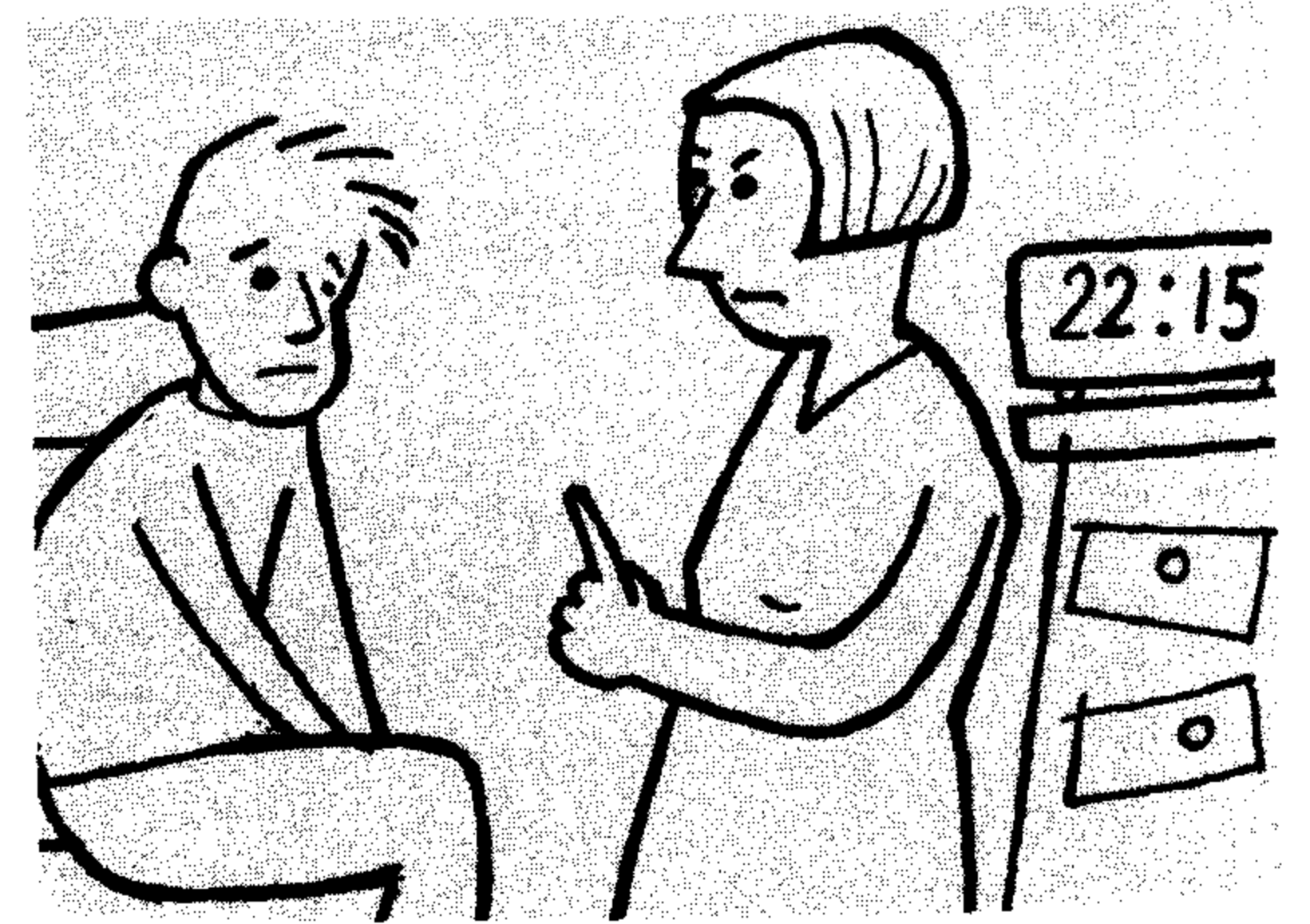


FIGURE 7: Disappointment: Board drawing 2

is	→	was	you	→	I
will	→	would	your	→	my
like	→	liked			

FIGURE 8: Board explanation

Students can now pretend to be having conversations with other people and report what they say in the same way, and then later they can report the conversation in the past.

Example 4: Light in space

Language: *should/shouldn't have done*
 Age: any
 Level: intermediate/upper intermediate

In Example 2 above, the language which the students were going to study (past tense forms) was embedded in the texts which they read. This next sequence, however, uses the story of the text as a situation to provoke a number of statements using the target structure.

The sequence starts when the students are asked if they ever read science fiction, making sure that they understand what genre of fiction we are talking about. This might develop into a quick discussion of what they read and why. The point is to get them engaged and interested in what is coming. Students can be prompted to say what they would expect to find in a science fiction text.

We now ask the students to read the text in Figure 9. While they do this, they must find out information such as how many people are in the space station at the beginning and end of the text, whether they are men or women, and how long they've been there.

They had been up here for five years. Five years for five people, cut off from Earth since World War IV. True the Moonshuttle came every six months with a supply of food, but it was pilotless. They had not been able to make contact with Moonbase for two years. Cathy said it was weird.

'You say that three times a day,' Rosie answered.

'Well, it's true. It's weird and I don't think I can stand it much longer.'

'Oh for Jupiter's sake, shut up! Go and play eight-dimensional death-chess and leave me alone. You drive me crazy!'

'Thanks,' Cathy said quietly, 'I can see I'm not wanted.' She left the cabin. The door hissed behind her.

When she got to the exit chamber, she didn't look at the record book where Mitch had written 'nine - motor malfunction. Do not use'. She got into suit number nine and pressed the exit key. The outside door hissed open and she sailed out into space. She hadn't told the others where she was going (spacestation rule 345/2/Z3). It gave her a good sense of freedom.

Back in the station Rosie saw the red warning light above the exit control but she ignored it. They'd had trouble with the lights recently. Nothing serious. Captain Clarke saw it, though. She got on her personal people communicator and called Tim Hotzenfop, the station engineer.

'I think we've got a problem. You'd better come up quick.' But Tim was deep in conversation with Leila so he said 'Sure. I'll be up,' and then switched off the radio. Leila was nicer to listen to than old Clarke.

Mitch was in the repair shop next to the exit chamber when the audio-alarm went off. But he was wearing his spacewalk-man. He didn't hear a thing.

200 metres away from the station, Cathy suddenly realised that she had forgotten to close the station exit door. She must go back. She pressed the motor control on the front of her suit. There was no response. She pressed it again. Nothing. At that moment, looking back, she saw the space station she had just left roll over and she thought she heard a scream echoing out into the darkness. Her eyes widened in horror. And then she saw the light.

FIGURE 9: Light in space

When the students have read the text and shown that they have understood it by answering comprehension questions, we can then ask them to say what they think happens next. What is the light? What has happened to the space station and why? The object is to get them to be creative with language and with their response to the text.

We now ask the students to list things that people did that were 'bad' or 'not sensible' and write them on the board (see Figure 10).

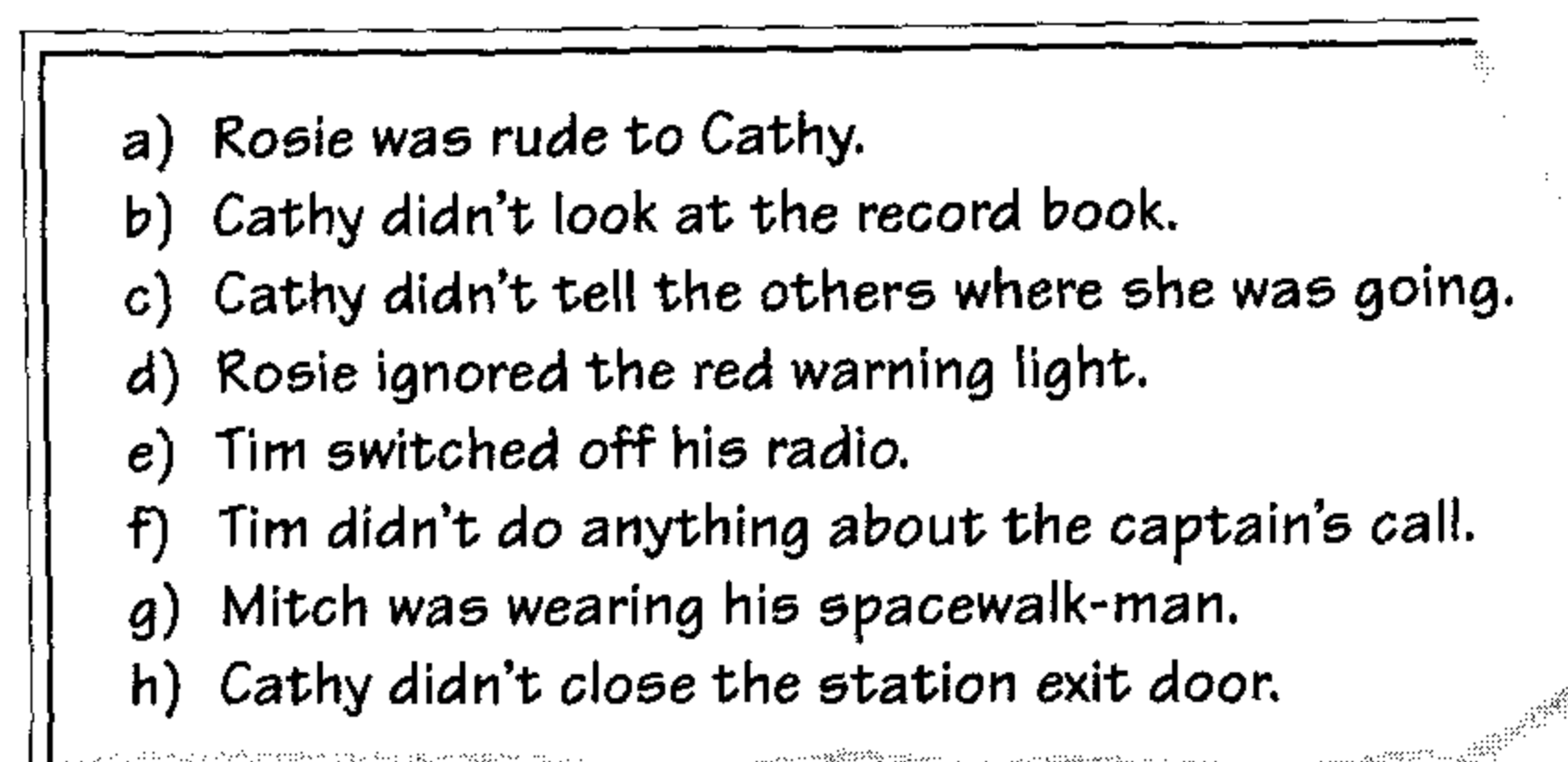
- 
- a) Rosie was rude to Cathy.
 - b) Cathy didn't look at the record book.
 - c) Cathy didn't tell the others where she was going.
 - d) Rosie ignored the red warning light.
 - e) Tim switched off his radio.
 - f) Tim didn't do anything about the captain's call.
 - g) Mitch was wearing his spacewalk-man.
 - h) Cathy didn't close the station exit door.

FIGURE 10: Space sentences

We then ask the students if they can make a sentence about event a) using *should not* to elicit the sentence *Rosie shouldn't have been rude to Cathy*. We may write *should (not) have DONE* on the board. We then encourage students to make sentences about the other 'silly' actions, using the same construction. We may get students to come up to the board and write the sentences so that the board ends up looking like Figure 11.

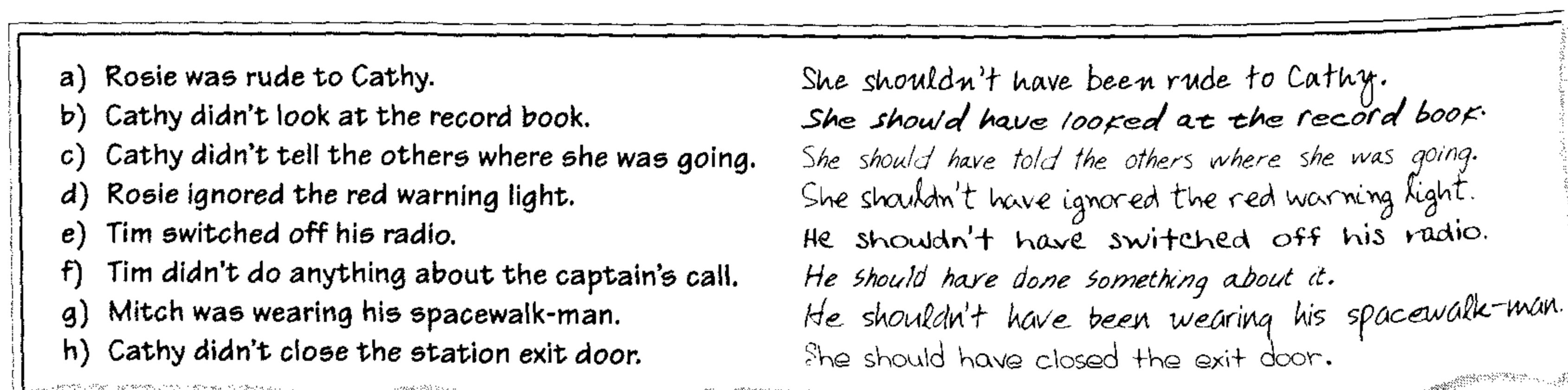
- 
- | | |
|--|---|
| a) Rosie was rude to Cathy. | <i>She shouldn't have been rude to Cathy.</i> |
| b) Cathy didn't look at the record book. | <i>She should have looked at the record book.</i> |
| c) Cathy didn't tell the others where she was going. | <i>She should have told the others where she was going.</i> |
| d) Rosie ignored the red warning light. | <i>She shouldn't have ignored the red warning light.</i> |
| e) Tim switched off his radio. | <i>He shouldn't have switched off his radio.</i> |
| f) Tim didn't do anything about the captain's call. | <i>He should have done something about it.</i> |
| g) Mitch was wearing his spacewalk-man. | <i>He shouldn't have been wearing his spacewalk-man.</i> |
| h) Cathy didn't close the station exit door. | <i>She should have closed the exit door.</i> |

FIGURE 11: Students' responses

If students are having trouble pronouncing any of the parts of the sentences, we may model those parts and possibly have students repeat them either chorally or individually. For example we may focus on /'ʃʊdəv/ and /'ʃʊdntəv/, showing how the phrases are stressed and contracted.

Students are now in a position to tell stories of things in the past which they should/shouldn't have done (*I should have done my homework on time/I shouldn't have left the car unlocked*), perhaps after you have told personal stories to demonstrate what is expected.

B Discovering grammar

In the following examples, students are encouraged to work out for themselves how language forms are constructed and used. They then go on to do exercises using the language they have uncovered. It is highly possible that they have seen the language before, of course, but this may be the first time they have studied it properly.

Example 5: Comparative adjectives	Language:	word formation; comparative adjectives
	Age:	any
	Level:	elementary/pre-intermediate

In this example, students have listened to a dialogue in which people have been comparing things. Before moving on to make their own sentences, the teacher wants to draw their attention to the way that we make adjectives comparative. She could have done this by giving rules, or perhaps just by ignoring such technical information and hoping that students would 'notice' the various possibilities. Instead, she chooses to put them in pairs and give them the exercise in Figure 12.

Look at this!

old → older
new → newer
light → lighter
big → bigger
thin → thinner
noisy → noisier
silly → sillier
expensive → more expensive
beautiful → more beautiful

Now work these out!

- How do we make one-syllable adjectives into comparative adjectives?
- Why are *big* and *thin* different?
- What has to change when we make words like *noisy* and *silly* into comparative adjectives?
- What is different about *expensive* and *beautiful*? Why?

FIGURE 12: Work it out

When they have finished, she checks through the answers, making sure they understand that one-syllable words which end with a vowel and a consonant double the last letter, that *-y* becomes *-i* and that longer words are preceded by *more* but otherwise stay the same.

She now moves on to a practice exercise. For example, she can put a group of words (see Figure 13) on the board. One student draws an arrow between any two of the words and the other students have to come up with sentences, such as *An elephant is bigger than a spider*, *A cat is cleverer than a dog*.

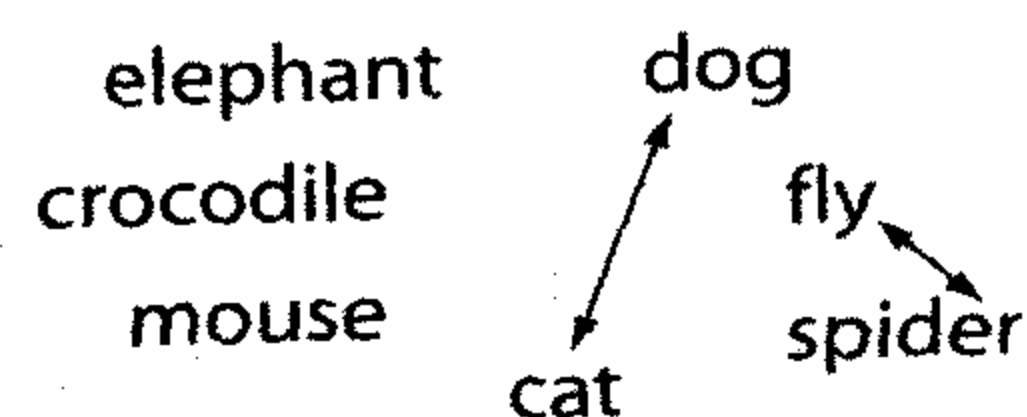


FIGURE 13: Animal comparison

There are two potential problems with the way the start of this sequence asked students to discover facts about comparative adjective forms. Firstly, it is not always easy to give a complete grammatical picture. The exercise above, for example, does not give all the necessary

information about comparative forms. There are no irregular ones here (like *good – better*), nor are there examples of words that are made comparative by either taking *-er* or being preceded by *more* (e.g. *clever* in many spoken varieties of the language). Secondly, it is not necessarily the case that all students enjoy this kind of detective work. But as a way of encouraging them to think about how language works, such exercises are extremely useful, especially when, as here, the language rules they are investigating are fairly easy to discern.

Example 6: Rules and freedom	Language:	functions – expressing obligation (<i>can't/have to/must/allowed</i>)
	Age:	adult
	Level:	intermediate

In this example from an intermediate coursebook, the students are going to look at obligation language, some of which they may have already come across separately.

The teaching sequence starts when students discuss what rules they would expect to find in places such as airports, bars and pubs, beaches, hospitals, libraries, etc. They then look at a number of different signs (see Figures 14 and 15) and say where they would expect to see them and what they mean.



FIGURE 14: Signs (a) from *New Cutting Edge Intermediate* by S Cunningham and P Moor (Pearson Education Ltd)



FIGURE 15: Signs (b) from *New Cutting Edge Intermediate* by S Cunningham and P Moor (Pearson Education Ltd)

Now that students are properly warmed up and engaged with the topic, they are asked to look again at Figure 15. They have to say which signs sentences a–e (see Figure 16) apply to – and cross out those that are not true.

Finally, as a result of all the preparation work they have done, they have to put the underlined words from Exercise 3 (Figure 16) in the correct category (see Figure 17).

Once the teacher has checked that the students have been able to complete the analysis chart, she can get them to do a fill-in exercise where they have to discriminate between *have to*, *don't have to*, *should*, *shouldn't* and *are/aren't allowed*. They then make their own sentences about what the rules are in places from the first exercise (airport, bars and pubs, etc.) and read them out to their colleagues who have to guess where they are talking about.

3 Which signs on page 112 do the following relate to? Cross out the sentence(s) that are not true about each sign.

- a You can use your credit card here.
You must use your credit card here.
You've got to use your credit card here.
- b You mustn't smoke in the smoking area.
You're allowed to smoke in the smoking area.
You can smoke in the smoking area if you want.
- c You mustn't leave your mobile on.
You can't use your mobile.
You shouldn't leave your mobile on.
- d Dogs are allowed.
Dogs are not allowed.
- e You have to be careful of the wet paint.
You don't have to be careful of the wet paint.
You ought to be careful of the wet paint.

FIGURE 16

Analysis

Put the underlined verbs from exercise 3 in the correct category.

- 1 It is necessary have (got) to
- 2 It is not necessary
- 3 It is OK/permitted can
- 4 It is not OK/permitted
- 5 It is a good idea / the correct thing
- 6 It is not a good idea / not the correct thing

FIGURE 17

C Practising grammar

Example 7: Where am I?

Language:	present continuous (past simple)
Age:	younger learners
Level:	elementary

This activity is designed to get students making sentences using the present continuous. (It can also be used to practise the past simple.) It has a slight game element because the other students have to guess what the speaker is talking about.

We tell students to think of a place they'd really like to be (e.g. a beach, a night club, on the sports field). They should keep their choice to themselves. Now we tell them to imagine they are in this place and we ask them to look around them and write down three things that they can see using the present continuous (e.g. at a football game: *A lot of people are shouting. A man is blowing a whistle. Someone is kicking a ball.*). While they are doing this, we can go round the class monitoring their progress and suggesting alternatives or prompting students who can't think what to write.

One student now comes to the front of the class, reads out his or her sentences and then says *Where am I?* The other students try to guess.

One of the advantages of the activity done in this way is that students are given time to think up their present continuous sentences rather than having to produce them spontaneously. But of course, we could do it as a quick-fire game, too, if this is appropriate.

We don't have to use the present continuous. Students could talk about a place they went to (either in reality or an imagined place) and make sentences in the past simple about what they saw there.

Example 8: Simon's adventure	Language:	past tenses
	Age:	young adults plus
	Level:	intermediate plus

The following activity is designed to get students to look again at various past tense forms, before using them for language practice.

Students are asked to read the story about Simon in Figure 18. When they have done this, they have to underline all the past tenses in the story, and then separate them into three different types (i.e. the past simple – *was, went down looked, took, etc.*, the past continuous – *was rising, were breaking, were running, were just coming back*, and the past perfect – *had woken up, hadn't been able, had left, had looked for, had become*).

One day when he was on holiday with a group of friends, Simon went down to the beach at six thirty because he had woken up very early and he hadn't been able to get back to sleep.

It was a beautiful morning. The sun was rising in the sky and the waves were breaking on the shore. A few joggers were running up and down the beach and some fishermen were just coming back from a night's fishing. It looked absolutely beautiful.

Simon took a surfboard and paddled out into the bay and then he just lay on his surfboard for a bit thinking about life. He fell asleep. When he woke up and looked around, he got quite a shock because he had drifted a long way from the beach and he couldn't get back.

He decided to use his mobile phone to get help and then he realised that he had left it back in his room. And that was when he started to feel quite frightened.

They found him in the afternoon. His friends had looked for him all morning and at about lunchtime they had become very anxious. They called the air sea rescue service and a helicopter pilot saw him about two hours later.

And the moral of the story? Always tell your friends where you are going and don't fall asleep on surfboards!

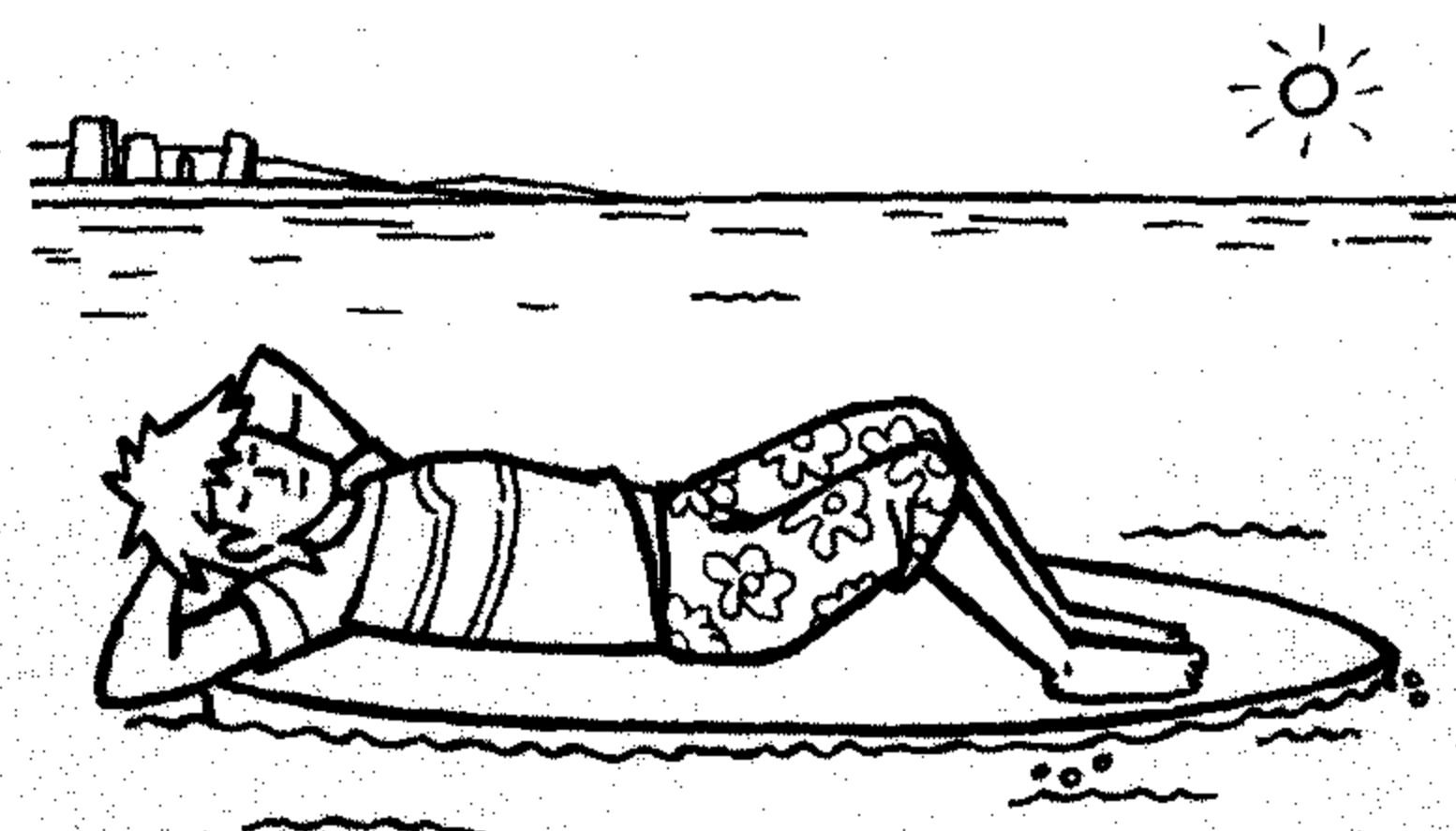


FIGURE 18: Simon's surfboard story

Students check that they have underlined the same verbs (and categorised them in the right way) with their partners before the teacher goes through the answers with the class.

Students now close their books and tell each other the story of Simon and the surfboard. When they have done this, they can look at the story in the book again before, once again, telling Simon's story. Each time they do this, their fluency with the story and how to tell it increases. Repetition of this kind is extremely helpful (see page 56).

Finally, the teacher can ask the students if they know any similar stories of lucky escapes. They can talk about this in small groups and then tell the rest of the class what the most interesting story in their group was.

Example 9: Matching sentence halves	Language:	third conditional
	Age:	adult
	Level:	upper intermediate

One of the best ways of making students think of sentence construction and sentence meaning is to get them to match sentence halves. We can do this by giving them two lists that they have to match up (see Figure 19). This can be done in pairs or by students working on their own.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>a If Andrew hadn't got stuck in a traffic jam</p> <p>b If Beatrice had written down the name of his company</p> <p>c If Jed hadn't lost his mobile phone</p> <p>d If Mrs Wickstead hadn't overslept</p> <p>e If Peter and Clare hadn't missed the bus</p> <p>f If Ruth hadn't been feeling extremely happy</p> | <p>i he would have been able to answer her call.</p> <p>ii they wouldn't have been late.</p> <p>iii he wouldn't have missed his flight.</p> <p>iv she would have been able to call him at work.</p> <p>v she wouldn't have agreed to marry him.</p> <p>vi she wouldn't have been there when the postman came.</p> |
|---|---|

FIGURE 19: Matching sentence halves

However, the activity becomes much more enjoyable and interactive if we put the sentence halves on cards. Each student then gets one card and has to walk around the room until they find their pair. They have to do this without showing their cards to other people, so they have to read them aloud and then discuss which pairings are or are not possible.

Example 10: <i>Find someone who ...</i> and other surveys	Language:	elementary
	Age:	young adult plus
	Level:	any

Find someone who ... is the name given to an ever-popular mini-survey activity. In its simplest form, students get a chart which asks them to find the names of various people by going around the class and asking questions (see Figure 20). If they ask a classmate *Do you like chocolate?* and the classmate says *no*, they do not write down a name, but if the classmate says *yes*, they write down the name and then move on to the next question.

Find someone who ...

- 1 likes chocolate.
- 2 often goes to the cinema.
- 3 has three brothers.
- 4 went to bed late last night.
- 5 plays the guitar.

FIGURE 20: A simple *Find someone who ...* chart

Find someone who ... can be adapted to suit any structure or structures. For example, we could make a chart asking students to find someone who has never been to India, has always liked music, has never eaten raw fish, has always had coffee for breakfast, etc. We can also get students to write the questions themselves to make it more interesting for them or, at the beginning of a term or semester, we can find out one interesting fact about each individual student and put these facts into the chart (e.g. *Find someone who is a keen swimmer, Find someone who plays in an orchestra, etc.*). The activity thus becomes an excellent way for them to get to know each other.

There are many mini-surveys that we can use for grammar practice in this way. For example, we can construct (or have our students construct) any number of lifestyle questions asking such things as *What time do you normally get up? What do you have for breakfast? How many cups of coffee do you drink in a day?* Or, if we want students to practise past tenses, they can design a questionnaire in order to ask *When did you last go to the cinema? Who did you go with? What was the name of the film? What did you think of the film?* etc.

Example 11: Perfect one liners	Language:	past perfect continuous
	Age:	any
	Level:	intermediate to advanced

In this activity, students practise the past perfect continuous tense by making sentences in response to prompts from the teacher. They are required to use their imaginations and/or sense of humour and the exercise is given added enjoyment by being designed as a team game.

The teacher divides the class into small teams of two to four students. She tells them that she will be reading sentences for which they have to find appropriate responses, using the past perfect continuous. She starts by giving them a sentence such as *When I got home last night, my flatmate was asleep in the car.* She asks the class, in general, what reasons they can think of to explain this, and hopes to elicit sentences like *Well, she had been listening to a programme on the radio and fallen asleep,* or *Yes, well that's because she had been talking to a hypnotist on her mobile phone,* etc.

Now that the students understand the idea of the exercise, she reads out the sentences in Figure 21. (Some of the sentences in a coursebook, such as the one about Henry VIII and, perhaps, the blood-soaked wedding clothes, may not be appropriate for all students, so we may have to come up with sentences of our own.)

- a) When I came to see you yesterday, your cat was in the fridge.
- b) Can you explain why you bit my dog?
- c) That was my new Rolls Royce your son pushed over the cliff.
- d) You had blood all over your wedding clothes after the ceremony.
- e) You were the only one in the room before the theft.
- f) You had different coloured socks on the other day.
- g) Why did Henry VIII have his wife Anne Boleyn beheaded?

FIGURE 21: Sentences from *The Anti-grammar Grammar Book* by N Hall and J Shephard (Pearson Education Ltd)

The teams are given a short time to come up with a good explanation for each sentence. If they are correct and/or appropriate, the teacher awards a point, but no team can offer a sentence that has been used previously.

This game-like practice forces students to make sentences using a particular verb tense. Yet by adding the element of surreal humour, it can provoke great enjoyment. And the best thing about it is that it requires no material or technology and can be slotted into lessons at many different stages.

D Grammar games

As we shall see on page 349, many games from television and radio (and games that people play at home in their everyday lives) can be adapted for classroom use. The following four examples, however, show how we can design games especially for learners. We hope they (and games like them) will engage students and encourage them to use the target structures with enthusiasm.

Example 12: Ask the right question	Language:	any
	Age:	older children plus
	Level:	elementary plus

Students sit in two teams. There is a pile of cards between them. On each card there is a word or phrase (see Figure 22). The cards are face down.

A member of team A picks up the first card and then has to ask the other team members questions until they give exactly the answer that is written on the card.

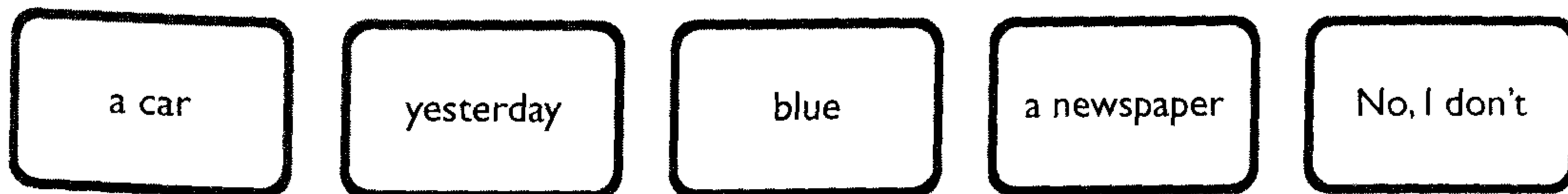


FIGURE 22: Answer cards

The game, which is suitable for all levels, forces students to think extremely carefully about the exact construction of the questions they are asking.

Example 13: Putting sentences back together again	Language:	comparatives and superlatives
	Age:	young learners
	Level:	intermediate

A common way of practising and testing syntax (see page 383) is to give students sentences with the words in the wrong order, e.g. *bananas / don't / eating / I / like* for *I don't like eating bananas*. But such word-ordering activities can be used in a more game-like way, too.

The teacher provides two sets of envelopes, each numbered 1–12 (for example). In each envelope there are the words that make up a sentence. Both envelopes marked 1 will have the same word cards (see Figure 23), and there will be two envelopes for sentence number 2 and number 3, etc.

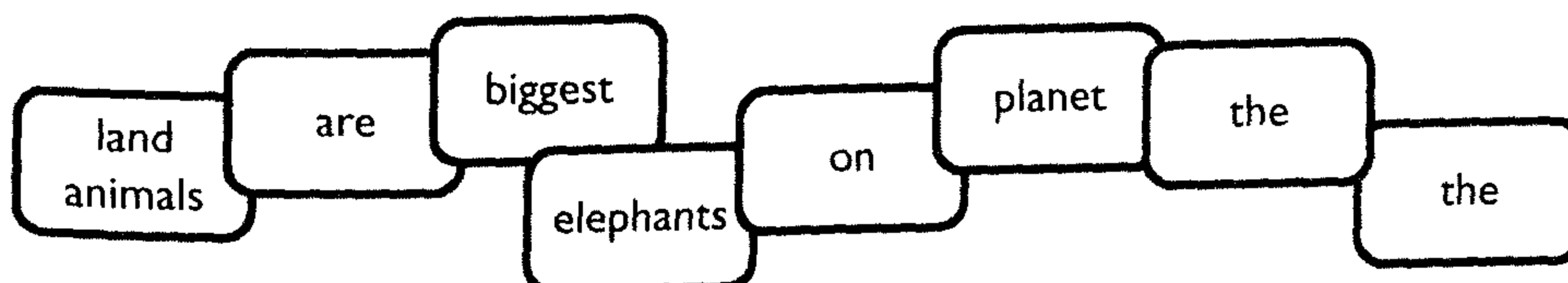


FIGURE 23: Cards for game envelope 1

The teacher then writes the numbers 1–12 on the board twice, once for each team. The two piles of envelopes are put at the front of the class. A student from each team comes up and selects an envelope (they don't have to choose them in order), and takes it back to the team. When the team have rearranged the sentence and written down on a piece of paper what they think it should be, they cross off the relevant number of the envelope on the board.

The first team to finish gets two bonus points. The teacher then looks at the sentences they have written down and each team gets a point for each correct sentence.

Example 14: One question behind	Language:	assorted questions
	Age:	teenagers plus
	Level:	beginner to intermediate

This game, adapted from a television programme, involves easy mental gymnastics which 'make very drill-like activities palatable' (Rinvoluceri and Davis 1995: 96). It is based on the simple idea that students should answer not the question they are being asked now, but the previous question.

Students are given the questions in Figure 24. For the first question, they either don't answer at all or they just say *Mmmm*. And then for the second question (*Where do you eat?*) they give the answer they would have given to the first question (*In a bed*).

Where do you sleep?
 Where do you eat?
 Where do you go swimming?
 Where do you wash your clothes?
 Where do you read?
 Where do you cook?
 Where do you listen to music?
 Where do you get angry?
 Where do you do your shopping?
 Where do you sometimes travel to?

FIGURE 24: Questions for *One question behind*, adapted from *More Grammar Games* by M Rinvoluceri and P Davis (Cambridge University Press)

We could add a competitive element to this game by timing it, or seeing who can shout out the *One question behind* answer first. But the fun of it is just trying to concentrate hard enough to remember what the previous question was.

We can choose whatever grammar area we want to make the questions with (or we can get students to write their own questions to use with a partner or another team).

One question behind is very enjoyable, but remember not to let it go on for too long.

E Grammar books

Grammar books come in many shapes and sizes. They range from ones for students at lower levels (which tend to offer quick digestible explanations of grammar points and provide opportunities for practice of these specific points) to works designed for the more serious researcher, teacher or advanced student.

Many commentators make a distinction between *descriptive* and *pedagogic* grammars. The

former describe everything there is, the whole of the language and its workings, whereas the latter are designed specifically to be of help to teachers and students of the language. The way in which grammar rules are offered will depend on the level the grammar is designed for, of course, and, as a result, compromises frequently have to be made about the amount of detail we may want to give about a particular grammar point. If we give too much detail, we may confuse lower level students; if we give too little, we may not be telling students things they ought to know.

Michael Swan, a noted author of pedagogical grammar material (see especially Swan 2005a – and Example 15 below), suggests that good grammar rules (for a pedagogic grammar) should exhibit *simplicity*, *truth* (because some grammar rules are more ‘true’ than others), *clarity* (because if a rule is unclear, it doesn’t help anybody) and *relevance* (because there are some things which neither the students nor the teacher really need to know) (Swan 1994). But, of course, a lot depends on what it is we are trying to explain. For whereas the rules which govern the formation of the third person singular of the present simple (*she speaks, he drives, it watches*) may be fairly easy to state, the rules for the use of *some* and *any*, for example, are somewhat more complex. The question that grammar-focused writers have to ask themselves is how far they can simplify or complicate and still write information which will be useful and appropriate.

In their grammar practice book for elementary students, Brigit Viney, Elaine Walker and Steve Elsworth discuss the use of *a/an*, *some*, *any* and *no* with countable and uncountable nouns (see Figure 25).

5 *a/an, some, any, no*

We’ve got **some** tomatoes, **some** bread and **an** orange.
 We haven’t got **any** bananas or **any** cheese. We’ve got **no** biscuits and **no** milk.
 Have we got **any** eggs? Have we got **any** juice?

- We use *a/an* with singular countable nouns (see Unit 2):
We haven’t got a melon. We’ve got an orange.
- We use *some* with plural countable nouns and uncountable nouns in affirmative sentences: *We’ve got some tomatoes. We’ve got some bread.*
- We use *any* with plural countable nouns and uncountable nouns in negative sentences and questions:
We haven’t got any bananas. We haven’t got any cheese.
Have we got any eggs? Have we got any orange juice?
- We use *no* with singular and plural countable nouns and uncountable nouns, to mean ‘not one/not any’. We use *no* with an affirmative verb:
We’ve got no biscuits. We’ve got no milk.
- We usually use *some* (not *any*) in questions when we offer something to someone or when we ask for something:
Would you like some biscuits? Can I have some juice?

FIGURE 25: *Some and any* from *Grammar Practice for Elementary Students* by B Viney, E Walker and S Elsworth (Pearson Education Ltd)

The diagrammatic representations and simple explanations offered here are designed specifically for students at this level. They appear to satisfy the clarity, simplicity and relevance requirements that Michael Swan suggests, though the truth they offer is only partial.

In contrast, Ronald Carter and Michael McCarthy, in their grammar for advanced users (including teachers and language researchers), offer a significantly more complex account of how these two words are used. (See Figures 26 and 27 for the first sections of their entries on *some* and *any*.)

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Some and any: strong versus weak forms

Some and *any* each have strong forms, which are stressed, and weak unstressed forms. The weak form of *some* is pronounced /səm/.

The weak forms indicate an indefinite quantity of something:

- * *Would you like **some** cheese?*
- * *Are there **any** messages on the answerphone?*

The strong forms have different meanings. The strong form of *some* most typically means 'a certain' or 'a particular' when used with singular count nouns:

- * ***Some** child was crying behind me throughout the whole flight and I never slept.*

Strong form *some* contrasts with *others*, *all* or *enough* when used with plural count nouns and with non-count nouns:

[talking of student grants]

- * ***Some** students get substantial amounts and others get nothing.*

[talking of dried beans that need to be soaked before use]

- * A: *But dry ones you have to soak them overnight and then get rid of that water and stuff.*
- B: *Right. And lentils as well?*
- A: ***Some** of them. Not all.*

- * *We've got **some** bread but not enough for three people.*

Strong form *any* is used most typically with singular count nouns and with non-count nouns to mean 'it does not matter which':

- * *If you have the warranty, **any** authorised dealer can get it repaired for you.*
- * ***Any** fruit juice will make you sick if you drink enough of it.*

FIGURE 26: Screenshot 1 from the CD-ROM of the *Cambridge Grammar of English* by R Carter and M McCarthy (Cambridge University Press)

196c

Some, any and zero determiner

Although *some* and *any* indicate an indefinite quantity, they are not used for large or unlimited indefinite quantities. The zero determiner indicates an indefinite quantity without reference to size when used with non-count nouns and with plural count nouns:

- * *There are **some** extra blankets in the wardrobe if you need them.*
(an indefinite but limited number)

[government spokesman after a major earthquake]

- * *We need **help** from the international community. We need **tents** and **medicines** and **blankets**.*
(~~We need some help from the international community. We need some tents, some medicines and some blankets.~~)

- * *Are there **any** frogs in that pond?*
(indefinite but probably limited expectation of quantity)
- * *Do you have **red** ants in your garden?*
(no expectation about quantity)

FIGURE 27: Screenshot 2 from the CD-ROM of the *Cambridge Grammar of English* by R Carter and M McCarthy (Cambridge University Press)

Carter and McCarthy's descriptions are clearly more 'truthful' than those in grammars designed for lower levels, partly because they recognise that strong and weak forms represent different grammatical behaviours for *some* and *any*, but mostly because they explain everything in far more detail than lower-level grammars do. Potential users, however, would need to apply the criteria of simplicity and clarity, too, to see whether this exemplary modern grammar matched their own needs and level.

E1 Using grammar books

Both students and teachers may consult grammar books for a number of reasons. For example, students may be drafting or re-drafting a piece of written work and may want to check that they are using some aspect of grammar correctly. Alternatively, a teacher, having noticed that a student is making a lot of mistakes in one particular area, might tell that student to look up the language in a grammar book in order to understand it better. Perhaps a student gets back a piece of written homework which has correction marks on it highlighting grammatical problems; when the student is re-writing the homework, he or she can consult a pedagogic grammar (such as the *Cambridge Grammar of English* above). But students can also work through the explanations and exercises in self-study grammars such as *Grammar Practice for Elementary Students*, either on their own or because a teacher sets exercises for homework or as classwork. Finally, teachers often use grammar books to check grammar concepts, especially where students ask difficult questions which they cannot answer on the spot, or where an area is so complex that they need to re-visit it from time to time to remind themselves of the full picture. Grammar books are also vital for the preparation of materials.

Example 15: Say and tell

Language: verb complementation (*say* and *tell*)

Age: any

Level: intermediate and above

A student has got a corrected piece of homework back from the teacher. The teacher has underlined the sentence *He was tired of people saying him what to do*. In the margin he has written *There is a problem here with the verb 'say'. Look at 'Practical English Usage', pages 509 and 510, and re-write the sentence before the next class.*

When the student looks at *Practical English Usage*, she reads that both verbs can be used with direct and indirect speech and that *say* refers to any kind of speech whereas *tell* is only used to mean *instruct* or *inform*. Crucially, she reads that *say* is most often used without a personal object (see Figure 28).

<p>504 say and tell</p> <p>1 meaning and use</p> <p>Both <i>say</i> and <i>tell</i> are used with direct and indirect speech. (<i>Say</i> is more common than <i>tell</i> with direct speech.) <i>'Turn right,' I said.</i> (OR <i>'Turn right,' I told him.</i>) <i>She said that it was my last chance.</i> (OR <i>She told me that it was my last chance.</i>)</p> <p><i>Tell</i> is only used to mean 'instruct' or 'inform'. So we do not use <i>tell</i> with greetings, exclamations or questions, for example. <i>He said, 'Good morning.'</i> (BUT NOT <i>He told them, 'Good morning.'</i>) <i>Mary said, 'What a nice idea.'</i> (BUT NOT <i>Mary told us, 'What a nice idea.'</i>) <i>'What's your problem?' I said.</i> (BUT NOT <i>'What's your problem?' I told her.</i>)</p> <p>2 say: objects</p> <p><i>Say</i> is most often used without a personal object. <i>She said that she would be late.</i> (NOT <i>She said me...</i>) If we want to put a personal object after <i>say</i>, we use <i>to</i>. <i>And I say to all the people of this great country...</i></p> <p>3 tell: objects</p> <p>After <i>tell</i>, we usually say who is told. <i>She told me that she would be late.</i> (NOT <i>She told that...</i>) <i>Tell</i> is used without a personal object in a few expressions. Common examples: <i>tell the truth, tell a lie, tell a story/joke.</i> <i>I don't think she's telling the truth.</i> (NOT <i>...saying the truth.</i>) Note also the use of <i>tell</i> to mean 'distinguish', 'understand' as in <i>tell the difference, tell the time.</i> <i>He's seven years old and he still can't tell the time.</i> <i>Tell</i> is not used before objects like <i>a word, a name, a sentence, a phrase.</i> <i>Alice said a naughty word this morning.</i> (NOT <i>Alice told...</i>)</p>	<p>We do not usually use <i>it</i> after <i>tell</i> to refer to a fact. <i>What time's the meeting? ~ I'll tell you tomorrow.</i> (NOT <i>I'll tell you it tomorrow.</i>)</p> <p>4 infinitives</p> <p><i>Tell</i> can be used before object + infinitive, in the sense of 'order' or 'instruct'. <i>Say</i> cannot be used like this. <i>I told the children to go away.</i> (NOT <i>I said the children to go away.</i>)</p> <p>5 indirect questions</p> <p>Neither <i>tell</i> nor <i>say</i> can introduce indirect questions (see 276). <i>Bill asked whether I wanted to see a film.</i> (NOT <i>Bill said whether I wanted to see a film.</i> OR <i>Bill told me whether...</i>) But <i>say</i> and <i>tell</i> can introduce the answers to questions. <i>Has she said who's coming?</i> <i>He only told one person where the money was.</i></p> <p>For <i>so</i> after <i>say</i> and <i>tell</i>, see 540</p>
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FIGURE 28: From *Practical English Usage: 3rd edition* by M Swan (Oxford University Press)

Now she can re-write the homework sentence as *He was tired of people telling him what to do* and know that she has got it right. Research has offered a powerful alternative to teacher explanation.

Chapter notes and further reading

- **Grammar activities**

See S Thornbury (1999a: Chapters 3–6) for examples of different kinds of grammar teaching and learning.

- **Grammar books**

There are a large number of grammar books available. Two of the most impressive modern reference grammars are R Carter and M McCarthy (2006) and D Biber *et al* (1999).

For teachers, students and researchers at a range of levels, my favourite work is M Swan (2005a), and there is also G Leech *et al* (2001), D Biber *et al* (2002) and, for language teachers especially, M Parrott (2000).

- **Grammar practice**

For students, the most common study-and-practise grammar is the *English Grammar in Use* series by R Murphy and others (Cambridge University Press), but see also *Grammar Practice for Elementary Students* (and the other levels) by E Walker and S Elsworth (Pearson Education Ltd) and *Real English Grammar* by H Lott (Marshall Cavendish ELT).

The *Grammar in Practice* series by R Gower (Cambridge University Press) has six levels. The *Language Practice* series (*Elementary, Pre-intermediate, First-certificate* and *Advanced*) by M Vince and others is published by Macmillan Education. *The Oxford Learner's Grammar* is written by J Eastwood (Oxford University Press).

14

Teaching vocabulary

In Chapter 12, B1 we saw some of the many ways we can explain meaning, and when teaching vocabulary this is a major part of the teacher's art. Students need to see words in context to see how they are used. Accordingly, the best way, perhaps, of introducing new words is for students to read texts or listen to audio tracks and see or hear those words in action.

A major reason for reading texts in class (in contrast to extensive reading – see Chapter 17, A1) is to give students new language input. And whenever we ask students to read or listen, we will want them to see how words are used. That is why when students read the text on page 291 we will ask them to do exercises such as matching words from the text with their definitions. If they read the text about plastic surgery (on page 298), we may ask them to find a word in the text that means 'people whom doctors see and care for' (*patients*), etc. We may ask them to say what a word means, or ask them which word in the text is the opposite of a given word, etc. Sometimes we draw their attention specifically to chunks of language, such as *being human, Does that make sense? the whole gamut of human experience, delve deep into your own consciousness*, etc. in the audio interview on page 316.

However, at other times we set out to teach or practise a specific area of vocabulary, and the examples in this chapter show various ways in which this can be done. We will also look at activities designed to get students to research words for themselves using reference and production dictionaries.

A Introducing vocabulary

When we introduce new vocabulary, there is always a chance, of course, that it is not new to some of the students in the class. That is why elicitation is so important (see page 203). By the time students get to upper intermediate level or beyond, we can be sure that some of them will know some of the words we are asking them to focus on. Example 4 below is clearly designed to focus the students' attention on an aspect of vocabulary they certainly know quite a lot about, but they may never have studied prefixes in quite such detail before.

Example 1: Walking, running, jumping	Focus: verbs of movement
	Age: adult
	Level: beginner

The teacher starts by showing or drawing pictures, or miming the actions in Figure 1. The words are carefully modelled, and the teacher may well conduct a rapid cue-response drill where she points to a picture or mimes the action and then nominates a student to say *walk, climb*, etc.

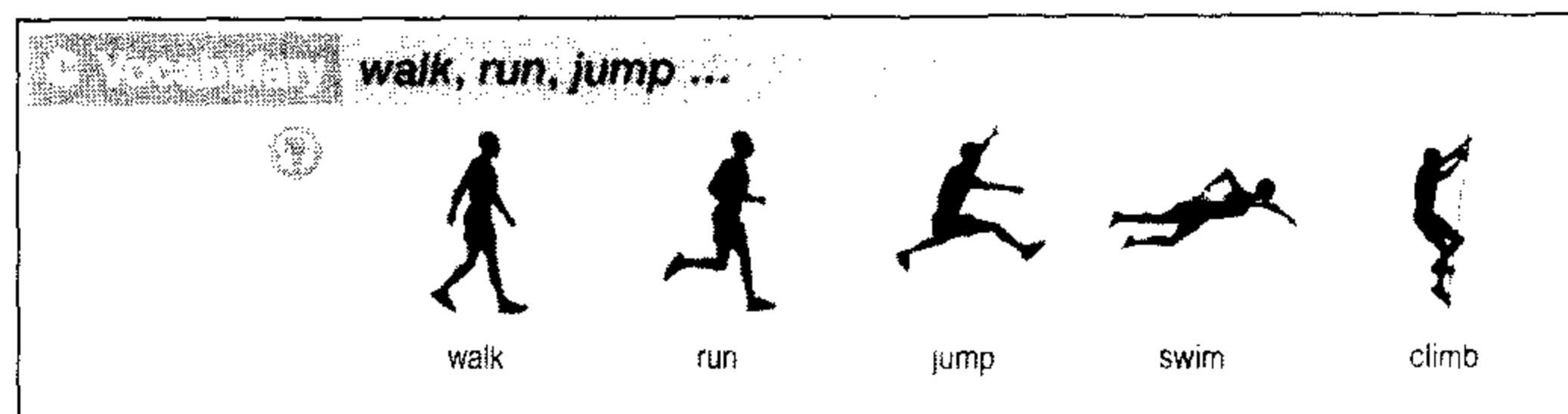


FIGURE 1: From *Language Links* by A Doff and C Jones (Cambridge University Press)

Students are now asked to put the correct verb in the sentences in Figure 2. These can be projected or written onto the board, provided that the students can still see the pictures. This can be done with the whole class or the students can work in pairs.

If the students have worked on the exercise in pairs, the teacher now goes through the answers, making sure that the students pronounce the words correctly. They can then (depending on their age) do a quick round of *class robot*, where one student is a robot and the others give instructions, such as *run to the window*, *swim to the door*, etc. and the robot has to mime these activities.

4 Complete the sentences.

a You <u>run</u> along a road.	e Then you down a wall.
b Then you across a stream.	f Then you across a river.
c Then you up a tree.	g Then you over a wall.
d Then you across a bridge.	h Then you along a road.

FIGURE 2: Practising *walk, run, jump*

Finally, the students can be asked to write new instructions using the new words, as in Figure 3 – or they can invent their own fitness exercise or design their own activity sequence, like the one in Figure 2. Whichever they choose, they can write (and draw) their own instructions.

5 Write instructions for this fitness exercise. Use words from the boxes.

a Sit down.	walk	up
b	run	down
c	stand	on the box
d	sit	off the box
e	lie	round the room
f	climb	
g	jump	

FIGURE 3: Using *walk, run, jump*, etc.

This kind of procedure, which we might call PPP, or Straight arrows if we follow the ESA form of description (see page 67), is a very effective way of teaching small numbers of individual words at beginner level.

Example 2: Inviting

Focus: functional language

Age: adult

Level: pre-intermediate

The following sequence gets students to make invitations and to accept or refuse them. Like many lessons focusing on functional language, it concentrates on lexical phrases or chunks (see page 37).

The students are shown a picture of a lake or a river where people are rowing each other around. In the foreground, a woman is talking to a young man with a broken arm. We tell the students that they should read the following dialogue and see if they can guess the word or words that are missing in each of the blanks.

Matt: *Hi, Liz.*

Liz: *Hi, Matt.*

Matt: *Would you like to a _____ rowing?*

Liz: *Rowing?*

Matt: *Yeah. Rowing. You know. In b _____.*

Liz: *c _____ it's 'in a boat'. It's just that, well, you have a d _____.*

Matt: *You're right! e _____ I thought you could f _____ the actual rowing.*

Liz: *Oh no.*

Matt: *No? g _____?*

Liz: *I'm not h _____ rowing, actually. I'm not i _____ at it.*

Matt: *Oh ... right. Well, how about a walk?*

Liz: *I'm a bit tired.*

Matt: *Or ... a coffee?*

Liz: *Now you're talking!*

When the students have compared their possible answers, they hear the dialogue spoken on an audio track so that they can see if they were right (the answers are *go, a boat, Of course, broken arm, That's why, do, Why not? crazy about, very good*). We can then get them to practise speaking the dialogue.

We now have the students study two elements of inviting. In the first place, we get them to make invitations by completing these phrase stems with *go rowing?* or *going rowing?*

Invitation phrase stems

Do you fancy ...

Do you want to ...

How about ...

Would you like to ...

We can then get the students to repeat the different phrases both chorally (if appropriate) or individually.

They now look at a list of phrases and have to decide whether they mean that the speaker is saying *yes*, is not sure or is saying *no*.

Copy and complete the chart with the phrases.

I'd love to. I'd love to but ... I'd rather not.
 I'm not really sure. No, thanks. Perhaps.
 That would be great. What a fantastic idea! Why not?
 Yes, OK. Yes, please. Now you're talking!

Saying yes	Not sure	Saying no

Once again, we will have the students say the phrases correctly, paying special attention to the intonation they use. We help them to think of ways of completing the phrase *I'd love to but ...* (*I'm working this evening*).

We can now get them to practise simple invitation–reply exchanges by cueing them with words like *dinner* (*How about coming to dinner? That would be great*).

In pairs they can now write longer dialogues. While they are doing this, we can go round the class monitoring their progress and helping where necessary.

Finally, the students read out (or act out) their dialogues and we give them feedback.

It is worth noticing that the level of the original dialogue is somewhat higher than the language the students are being asked to produce. That is because we think students can cope with more language when they read and listen than they can when they have to come out with it themselves.

When we teach functional language like this, we almost always end up getting students to use phrases (rather than individual words), precisely because certain common exchanges (like inviting) tend to use these pre-fabricated chunks (*I'd love to, I'd rather not, Would you like to ...*) as a matter of course.

Example 3: Explaining what you mean Focus: *type, kind, something you use ...*
 Age: young adult plus
 Level: intermediate

The following sequence helps students with vocabulary that they can use when they do not know the words to describe things. The sequence starts when students talk to each other in pairs or groups and discuss situations in which they need to explain things to visitors, family and friends, etc. They then read some descriptions (see Figure 4) and have to say (guess) what is being described.

- 1 **'It's a type of sport** which you do in the sea. You need a board and big waves. It can be dangerous, but it's really exciting.'
- 2 **'It's a kind of meal** you get in Indian restaurants. It's hot and spicy and usually has meat in it. You eat it with rice.'
- 3 **'It's the stuff you find** under grass. It's brown. You see it when it rains.'
- 4 **'It's something you use for** cleaning the house. It's a machine that picks up dust and small pieces of dirt.'
- 5 **'They are usually made of** wood. They are a useful **thing** to have in the house, because you can put books on them.'

FIGURE 4: From *Total English Intermediate* by A Clare and J J Wilson (Pearson Education Ltd)

They can then check their answers with words written at the bottom of the page (*surfing, curry, mud/earth, vacuum cleaner/h Hoover, bookshelves*) before discussing with the teacher a) when the expressions in bold are used (when we don't know a word for something, or we want to explain the meaning of something), and b) whether *thing* and *stuff* are used for countable nouns or uncountable nouns.

Now that the words and phrases have been properly introduced, the students do a practice exercise to help them get used to them (see Figure 5).

The next stage of the lesson sequence is for students to compile lists of things so that they can use these things in subsequent exercises. In groups, they have to a) draw things which are rectangular, oval, round or square, b) name animals that are enormous/huge, tiny, etc. and c) name things that are smooth, rough, sticky, soft or hard. They then compare their choices with a speaker on an audio track.

3 Put the words in order to make sentences. Then match the descriptions to the pictures.

- 1 It's in windows something find of you front
- 2 It's you a pasta type cheese which on of put
- 3 It's you opening wine use bottles something for
- 4 It's Spain kind a dish of from rice
- 5 It's your for use stuff you hair washing the
- 6 It's large made stone figure of a

FIGURE 5: Practising 'explaining' words and phrases

Students are now in a position to describe things for each other. They do this by taking part in an information-gap activity (see page 70) where one student in each pair has the crossword for student A and the other has the crossword for student B (see Figure 6). They take turns describing the words in their crosswords by explaining what they are rather than naming them. So when, for example, student A asks student B what 1 down is, student B might reply *It is stuff you make candles with and it is sticky when it is hot.*

Vocabulary 5 | Ex. 5, page 71

Student A

Vocabulary 5 | Ex. 5, page 71

Student B

FIGURE 6: Information-gap crossword

As with the two previous examples, the sequence has followed a fairly straightforward PPP/Straight arrows type progression. As a result of what they have done, students can now start to explain themselves when and if they have trouble remembering words.

Example 4: Word formation

Focus: prefixes and suffixes

Age: young adult plus

Level: upper intermediate

The following sequence is from *First Certificate Gold* by Richard Acklam and Sally Burgess (Pearson Education Ltd) which, as its name suggests, is designed for people studying for the Cambridge ESOL First Certificate exam (an exam that is taken at the end of the upper intermediate – B2 – cycle of study).

Students are reminded of a sentence from a text they have just read (*And so began two hours and forty minutes of **disbelief** ...*), and they are then asked to say what various prefixes mean (see Figure 7). When they have discussed these with their teacher, they look at a number of words with suffixes, such as *quickly* and *backwards* (for adverbs), *employment* and *happiness* (for nouns) or *brownish* and *useless* (for adjectives).

Students are now given a kind of construction-kit exercise where they have to try to make as many words as they can by adding prefixes and suffixes (see Figure 8). This can be done in pairs or groups, or even, perhaps, as a team game where they have a set time limit.

Finally, they are asked to choose six of the words they have formed so that they can write a sentence for each. They can then share their various sentences so that other students can look at them and perhaps amend or correct them. The class can vote for the sentences they like the best, or the students can turn their own sentences into mock test-items for their classmates to try, e.g.

Add a prefix or suffix to the word in italics so that it has an appropriate meaning in the sentence.

Sienna could not hide her *appointment* when she heard that she had failed the test.

1 What do the following prefixes in **bold** mean?

EXAMPLE: *re-* means 'again'.

- 1 **re**play/**re**do
- 2 **dis**belief/**im**polite/**il**logical/
unusual/**ir**responsible/**in**visible
- 3 **over**crowded/**over**charge
- 4 **under**estimate/**under**weight
- 5 **post**graduate/**post**mortem
- 6 **ex**-husband/**ex**-President
- 7 **sub**marine/**sub**way

FIGURE 7: Prefixes

3 Make as many words as you can by combining different parts of the box.

dis	excite	ful	ment
un	appoint	less	ness
im	honest	able	ion
in	patient	ly	
	success	y	
	direct	ship	
	kind		
	profit		
	help		
	friend		
	luck		
	like		

FIGURE 8: Making words

B Practising vocabulary

In the following lesson sequences the aim of the activity is either to have students use words that they more or less know, but which they need to be provoked into using, or to get them to think about word meaning, especially in context (see Example 8).

Example 5: Word circle

Focus: compound nouns

Age: young adult plus

Level: intermediate

In this activity, students look at a wheel of words (see Figure 9) and try to say which words combine with *book* and *TV* to make compound words.

We start by showing students the wheel and then make sure that they realise that while *book + case* can make *bookcase*, *TV + case* doesn't work in the same way.

Students are put into pairs or groups and told to come up with the combinations as quickly as possible. They should do this without using dictionaries at first, and then when we go through the answers with the class, we can put up some of them on the board and ask students to check with their dictionaries to see if they are right (some of them will not be).

Students can now use these compound words in sentences, or some of them can be put in noughts and crosses squares (see page 256) so that students have to make sentences using them to win a square. Alternatively, students can choose any three of the words and write a questionnaire to find out about people's attitudes or habits concerning books or TV.

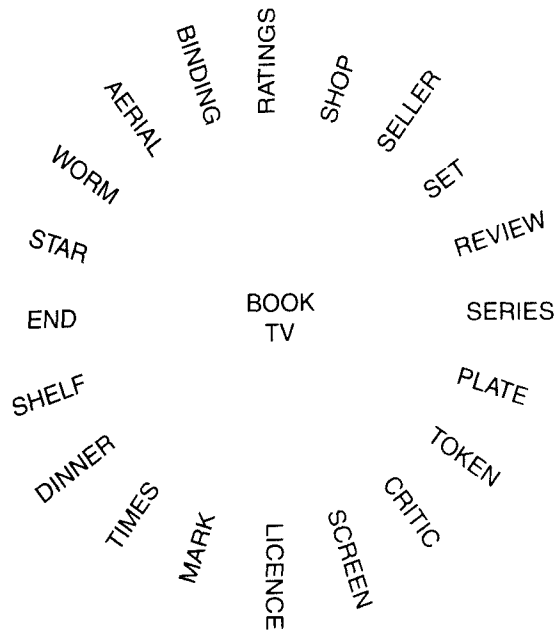


FIGURE 9: Word circle from *Have Fun with Vocabulary* by A Barnes, J Thines and J Welden (Penguin Books)

Example 6: Word map

Focus: houses, rooms, objects

Age: any

Level: any

Word maps are an extremely engaging way of building up vocabulary knowledge as well as provoking students into retrieving and using what they know.

In this sequence, the students are going to work on aspects of houses and the things in them. We start by putting the beginnings of a map on the board (see Figure 10).

Students then come to the board and add some rooms to the diagram as in Figure 11.

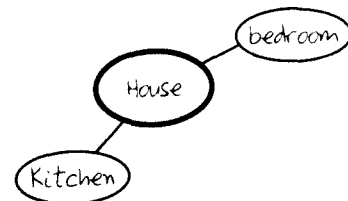


FIGURE 10: The word map begins

Students should by now have begun to get the idea (even if they haven't done a word map before this), but just to be sure, we elicit words for one of the rooms, such as the kitchen (see Figure 12).

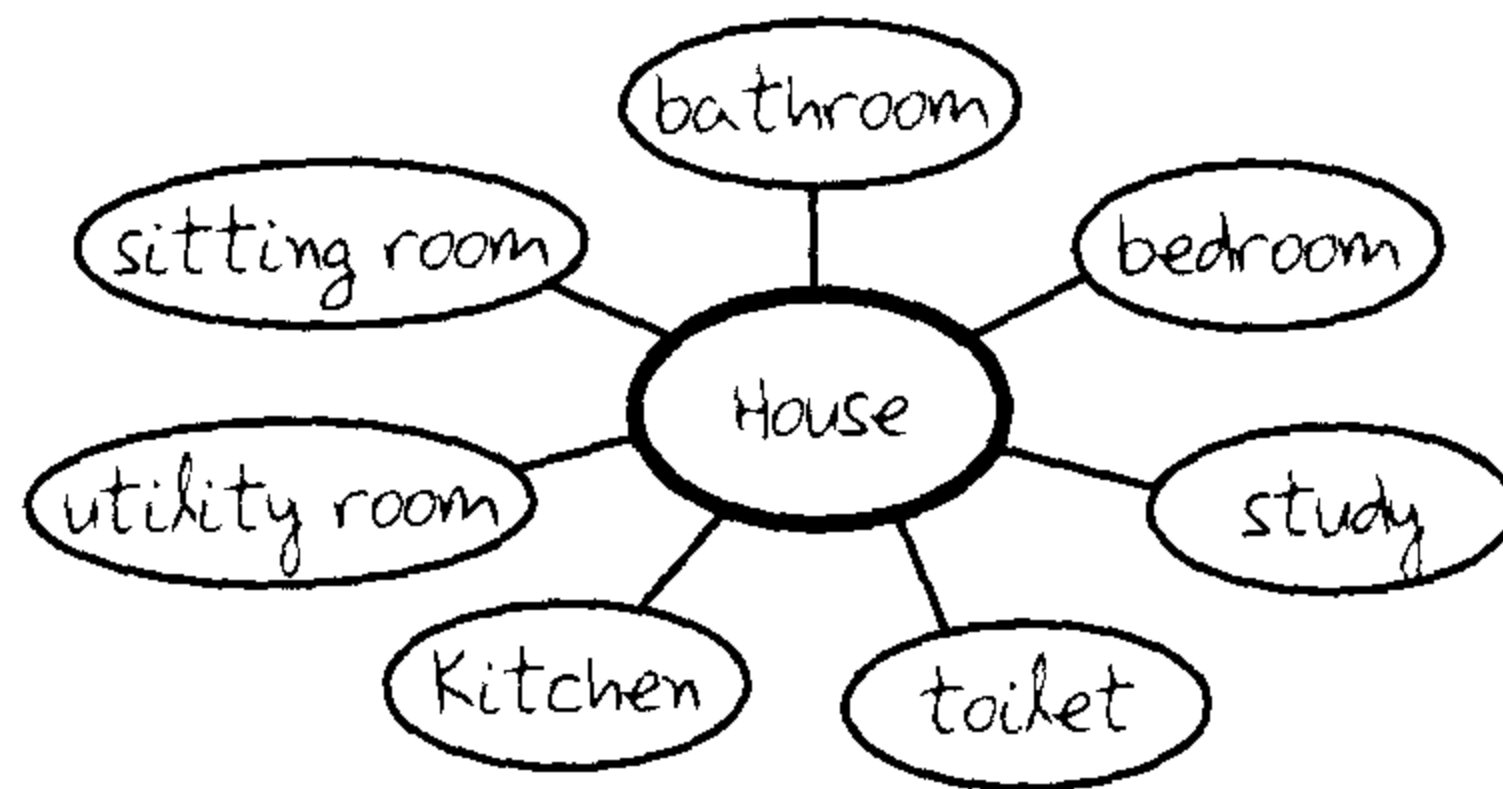


FIGURE 11: Word map stage 2

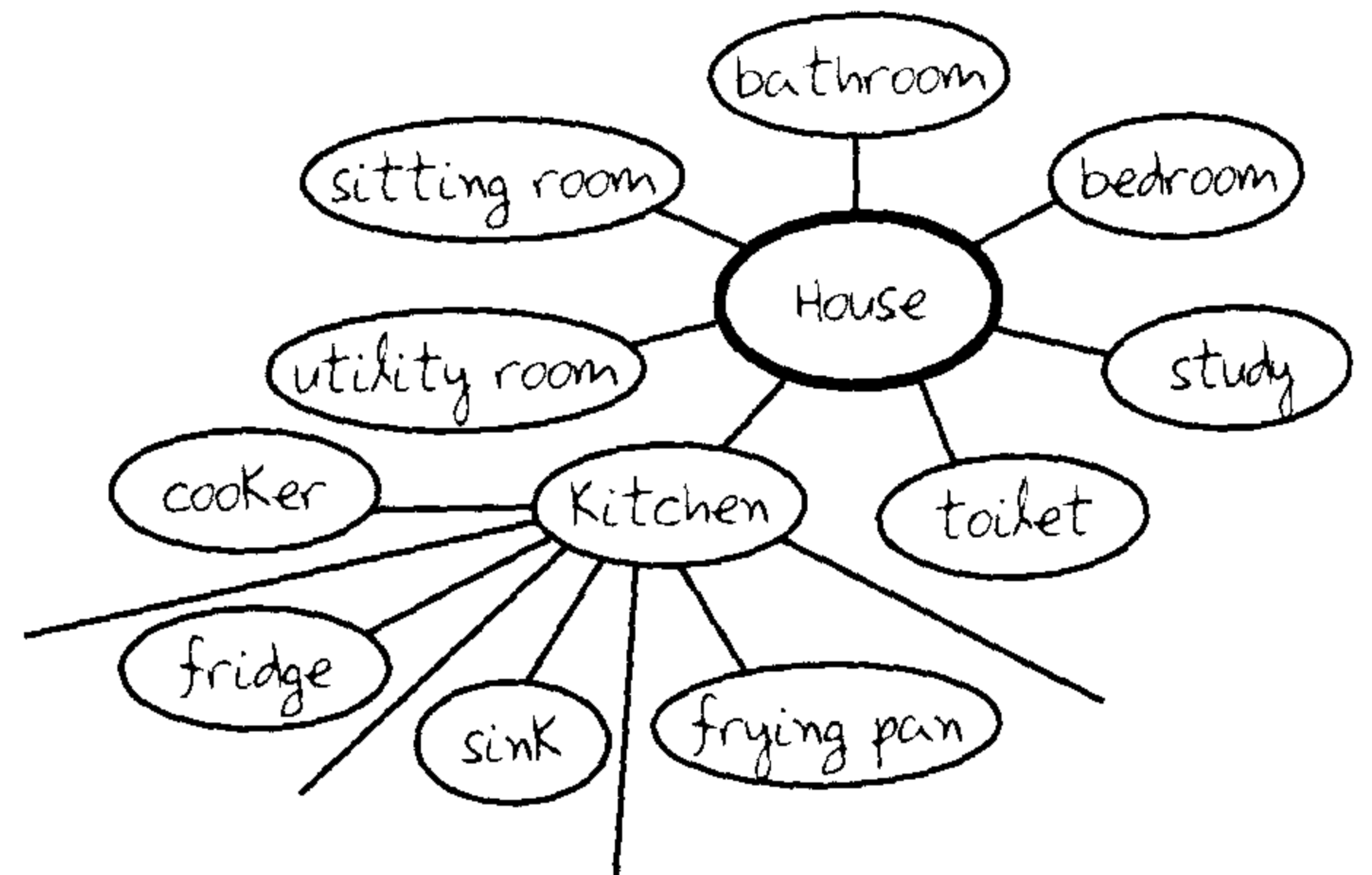


FIGURE 12: The word map takes shape

We can now put students in groups, and allocate one room per group. They are given marker pens and told to add as many words as they can to the word map for their room. It will be entirely appropriate if they think they are in competition with the other groups to see who can find the most words.

The board gradually fills up with words. Students help each other by offering words they know but which, perhaps, other members of the group have forgotten. They can look for words in dictionaries and while we walk around monitoring their progress, they can ask us for one or two words they do not know (though if there is a game element here, we will have to be fair about how much help we give).

Once the word map is complete (or as full as it is likely to be), we can make sure students can say the words correctly before going on to ask them to describe their favourite room at home or have a discussion about why people don't put televisions in the bathroom (usually) or fridges in the bedroom. We can give students a picture or plan of an empty room and ask them to decide what to put in it.

Word maps are sometimes used by teachers to show students how words group together. Getting students to build up their own maps by working in groups (as we have suggested) has the added advantage of making them try to remember some of the many words they know, while at the same time learning new words from their peers.

Example 7: In the queue

Focus: physical description

Age: adult

Level: beginner

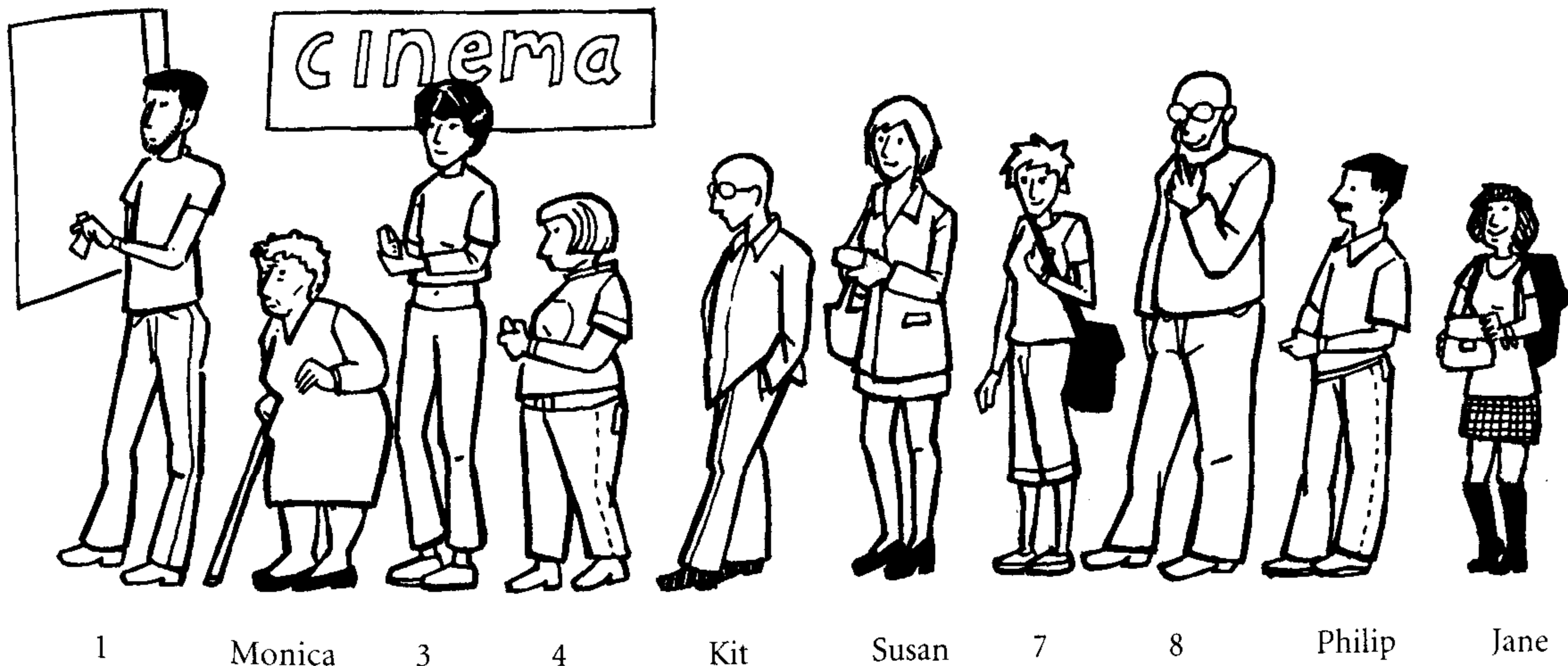
In this practice activity, designed to get students using the language of description (e.g. *he's quite tall, she has blonde hair, he has a beard*), an artificial information gap is created by getting the students to look at different pictures.

The teacher starts by putting a picture of people in a queue on the board and giving the students a list of names. They can then ask questions, e.g. *What's John like?* to which the teacher replies *He's quite tall with grey hair and glasses. He has a beard.* One student then comes up and points to the correct person in the picture.

The teacher now puts the students in pairs. In each pair one student is A and the other is B. Each Student A looks at the following picture – which is in colour in the original – and is told a) to find out which of the following names apply to which of the numbered people in the cinema queue:

Alice Cathy Mick Jim Karly

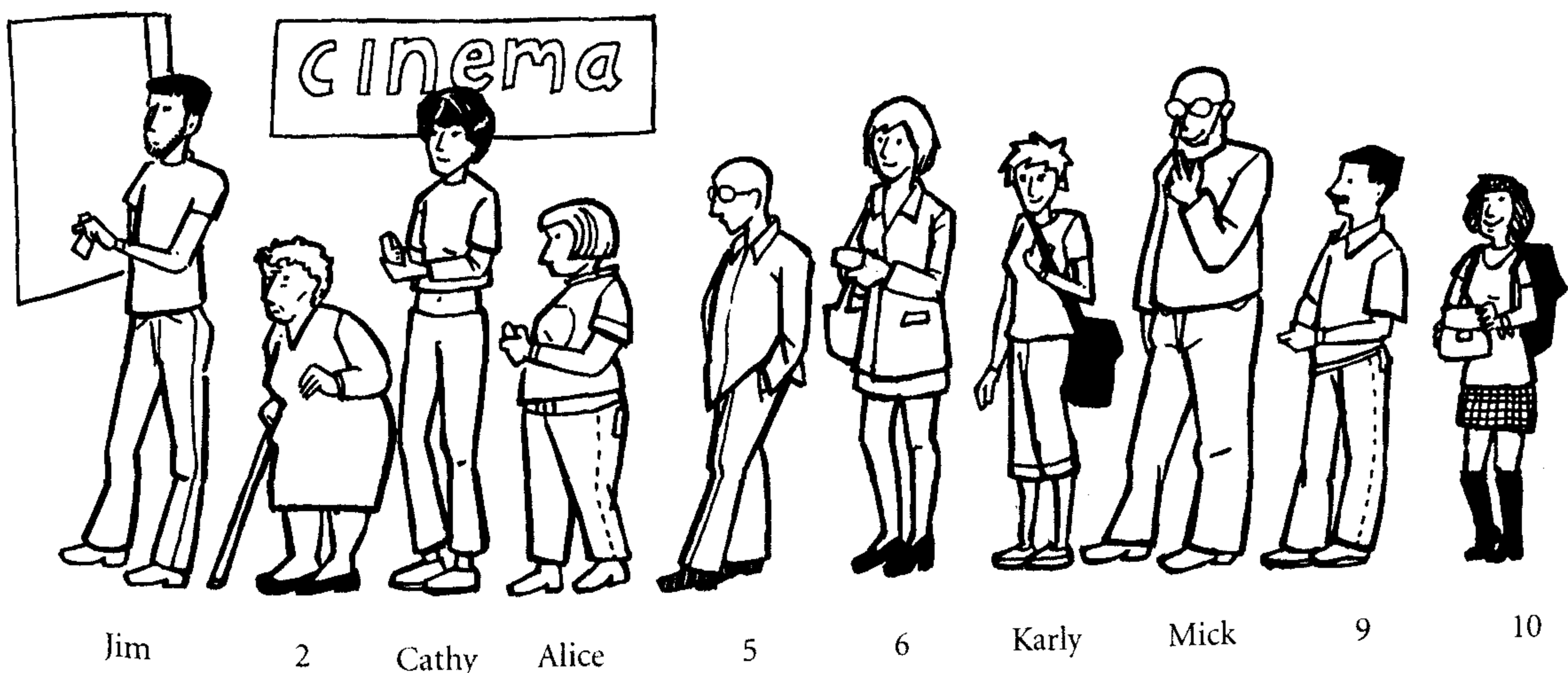
and b) to answer B's questions about the other people in the picture. Thus A will ask *What's Alice like?* and B will reply *She's quite young and she has red hair. She's quite short, too.*



Each Student B has the same picture with different captions and is told a) to find out which of the following names apply to which of the numbered people in the queue:

Kit Jane Monica Philip Susan

and b) to answer A's questions about the people named in the picture. Thus B will ask *What's Kit like?* and A will reply *He's about 50. He's quite short and well-built. He's bald and he has glasses.*



When the activity is over, the teacher has different students describe the various characters (Mick, Alice, Susan, etc.) to check that they are happy using the description language.

C Vocabulary games

There are many games which are appropriate for use with collections of vocabulary items. Sometimes games which are not designed especially for language students work equally well in our lessons. These include *Pictionary* (where players have to draw words which their team then have to guess), *Call my bluff* (see page 350) and *charades* (where players have to act out the title of a book, play or film).

The three game examples in this section are designed to engage students, though only one of them involves the kind of guessing which many games (such as the ones mentioned above) often include.

Example 8: Got it!

Focus: word recognition/enjoyment
Age: any
Level: elementary plus

This game is designed to engage students with a list of vocabulary items which will be used in the lesson sequence which follows. It does not involve any guessing or complex mental processing. But, as a result of it, students see and hear a range of words – and have a good time doing it.

Students are put into groups of four or five, all sitting round a table. The teacher gives each group a collection of 20–30 words written on individual cards or pieces of paper (e.g. words associated with cooking, such as *slice, chop, cut, frying pan, saucepan, dish*). The students have to place the cards face up on the table in front of them so that all of them can be seen.

The teacher now reads out the words one by one. The task of each individual in a group is to try to snatch the card with the word on it. When they do this (before the other members of the group), they have to hold the card up and shout *Got it!*

Each student keeps the cards they have managed to snatch, and so at the end of the game there is a winner in each group – and an overall winner who has collected the greatest number of cards.

Got it! is an entertaining way of getting a class going. The words can now be used in a lesson about cooking, they can form the basis of a word map (see above), or students can be asked to look them up in dictionaries or use them in conversations or writing.

Example 9: Backs to the board

Focus: explaining word meaning
Age: young adult plus
Level: intermediate plus

In the following game, students have to explain the meaning of a word or phrase to one of their team members so that he or she can guess what the word is.

Students are put into small teams. In each team one member sits with their back to the board.

The teacher now writes a word or phrase on the board. All of the group who can see this word have to explain what it means (without saying the word or phrase itself) to the team member who has their back to the board. The first student to guess the word or phrase gets a point for their team.

The game can be made more formal in structure if the students with their backs to the

board have to get their information by asking *yes/no* questions only, e.g. *Is it more than one word? Can you find it in the house?*

Hidden definitions is especially effective if the teacher puts up words and phrases which the students have recently studied.

Example 10: Snap!

Focus: word meaning

Age: any

Level: beginner

This game is particularly useful for simple word-meaning recognition. It can be played in pairs or groups.

Two students have a pack of cards each. One pack has pictures; the other has words which relate to the pictures. The students deal their cards, putting down each card at the same time as their partner. When a picture card (e.g. a picture of a bird) matches the word card (*bird*) put down at the same time, the first person to say *Snap!* keeps the pair of cards. The object of the game is to collect as many pairs as possible.

Many games like *Snap!* have been replicated on CD-ROMs or online and, as a result, can be played by students working on their own. Figure 13 shows just this kind of activity, where the player can use the arrows under the picture or the word to find the different options so that words can be matched with their correct pictures.

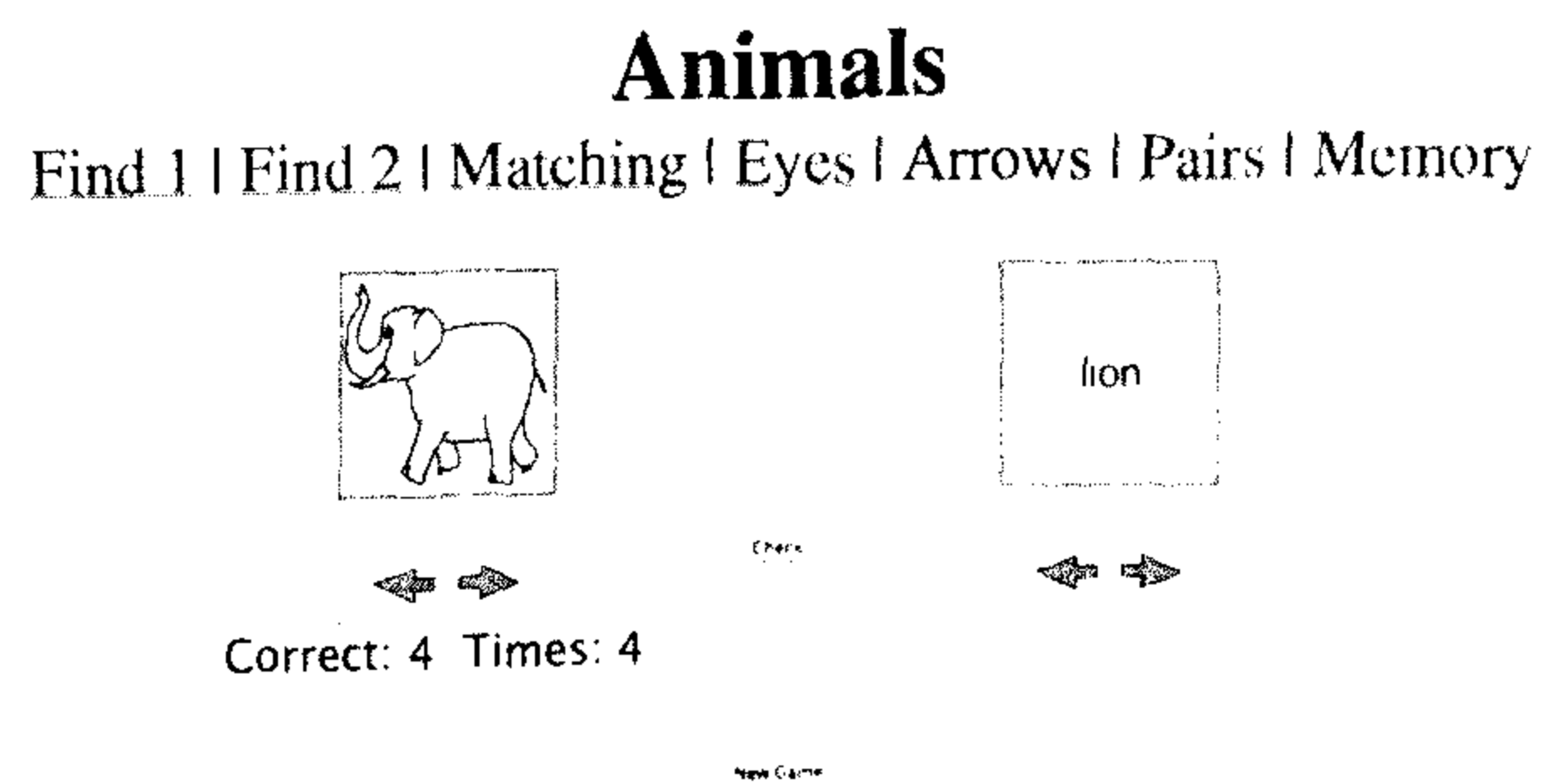


FIGURE 13: Animal matching game at www.manythings.org/lulu/d5.html

D Using dictionaries

Dictionaries, whether they are in book form, on CD-ROMs, online or bundled into the electronic machines that students like to carry around, are perhaps the greatest single resource students can have at their disposal. However, they are sometimes the least widely-used resource that learners work with. This is sad because they contain a wealth of information about words, including of course what they mean, but also how they operate (see below).

In this section we will discuss the difference between reference and production dictionaries and then look at exercises designed to train students in dictionary use or which incorporate dictionary use into lesson sequences.

D1 Reference and production dictionaries

Reference dictionaries – the kind that we most frequently use – need to be distinguished from production dictionaries, a comparatively new type of dictionary which has recently emerged.

A *reference* dictionary is one where a student looks up a word to see what meanings it has, how it is used and the way it is spelt and pronounced, as in Figure 14.

<p>research¹ noun W1 S2</p> <p>[uncountable] <i>also</i> researches formal</p> <p>1 serious study of a subject, in order to discover new facts or test new ideas</p> <p>research into/on</p> <p>✦ <i>research into the causes of cancer</i></p> <p>scientific/medical/historical etc research</p> <p>✦ <i>a research team</i></p> <p>do/conduct/undertake research</p> <p>✦ <i>I'm still doing research for my thesis.</i></p> <p>✦ <i>Gould was helped in his researches by local naturalists.</i></p> <p>2 the activity of finding information about something that you are interested in or need to know about</p> <p>✦ <i>It's a good idea to do some research before you buy a house.</i></p> <p>[↪ investigation] → MARKET RESEARCH</p>	<p>research² verb Verb form Word set</p> <p>[intransitive and transitive]</p> <p>1 to study a subject in detail, especially in order to discover new facts or test new ideas [↪ investigate]</p> <p>✦ <i>He's been researching material for a documentary.</i></p> <p>research into</p> <p>✦ <i>Ten years ago I began researching into the role of women in trade unions.</i></p> <p>2 to get all the necessary facts and information for something</p> <p>✦ <i>This book has been very well researched.</i></p> <p>—researcher noun [countable]</p>
--	--

FIGURE 14: Entries for *research* in the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English CD-ROM* (Pearson Education Ltd)

In today's dictionaries there is a good chance that there will also be extra information telling the user about such things as:

- differences between British and American usage, for example *Monday to Friday inclusive* (British), and *Monday through Friday* (American)
- similar words, for example the difference between *gaze*, *stare* and *gape*
- frequency in different media, for example the fact that *certainly* is more common in speech than in writing (in the example in Figure 15 the noun *research* is in red, which instantly tells us that it is one of the 3,000 most common words in English; [S2] = in the top 2,000 most common words in speech; [W1] = in the top 1,000 most common words in written English)
- levels of formality, for example the fact that *indolent* is a formal word
- connotation, for example the fact the *vagabond* is 'especially literary' and that certain words are taboo

Dictionaries are generally used when students have already come across a word and then look it up to check that they know how to use it. Sometimes they will find a word in their bilingual dictionaries and then check with a monolingual learners' dictionary (MLD) to see if they have understood correctly.

Production dictionaries, on the other hand, are designed for students to use the other way round, starting with a meaning they wish to express and looking for the word that expresses it. Suppose, for example, that they wish to express the idea of someone secretly listening to someone else while standing near him, perhaps on the other side of a door. A native speaker would immediately choose the word *eavesdrop* to describe the situation. The

LISTEN

➔ see also **HEAR**

⚠ Don't confuse **listen** and **hear**. If you **listen** to something, you pay attention so that you can **hear** it well.

listen /'lɪsən/ [v I] to pay attention to what someone is saying or to a sound that you hear: *I didn't hear the answer because I wasn't listening when she read it out.*

+to *Gordon was lying on his bed, listening to music.*

listen carefully *They all listened carefully while she was telling them the story.*

foreign student might find this in a bilingual dictionary, but would have more trouble with a reference MLD since, not knowing the word in the first place, he or she would not, of course, be able to look it up.

In a production dictionary students look for a general word that they already know, and which is a bit like the concept they wish to be able to express in English. In the case of *eavesdrop*, for example, that word might be *listen*. Opening a production dictionary (in this case the *Longman Essential Activator*), the student will find the entries in Figure 15. Going down the column, they come across a word which they can see, through its definition and the examples given, is exactly what they are looking for. They can now use it with confidence.

Reference MLDs are packed full of information which is invaluable to students checking word use. Production dictionaries, in contrast, allow students to find new words.

FIGURE 15: From the *Longman Essential Activator* (Pearson Education Ltd)

Listen! SPOKEN (say this when you want to get someone's attention)
Listen! I've just had a brilliant idea.

⚠ Don't say 'I listen music'. Say **I listen to music**.

pay attention /,peɪ ə'tenʃən/ to listen carefully to what someone is saying: *I have some important information about travel arrangements, so please pay attention.*

+to *She went on talking, but I wasn't really paying attention to what she was saying.*



eavesdrop /'i:vzdrɒp -drɔ:p/ [v I] to secretly listen to someone else's conversation by standing near them, hiding behind a door etc: *"How does Jake know that?" "He must have been eavesdropping."*
+on *I used to sit in cafés and eavesdrop on the conversations around me.*

D2 Dictionary activities

The following activities are designed both to train students in how to use dictionaries and also to get them to use dictionaries as part of normal classroom work.

We need to persuade students that dictionaries can give them extraordinary power (see above). And so we will extol the virtues of dictionaries not only by talking about them, but also by using them ourselves if and when students ask us awkward questions about the meanings of words, for example.

The second stage of trying to turn our students into successful dictionary users involves training them in how to read and understand the information contained in the various entries. Finally, in stage 3, we need to make sure that we include dictionary use in our lessons.

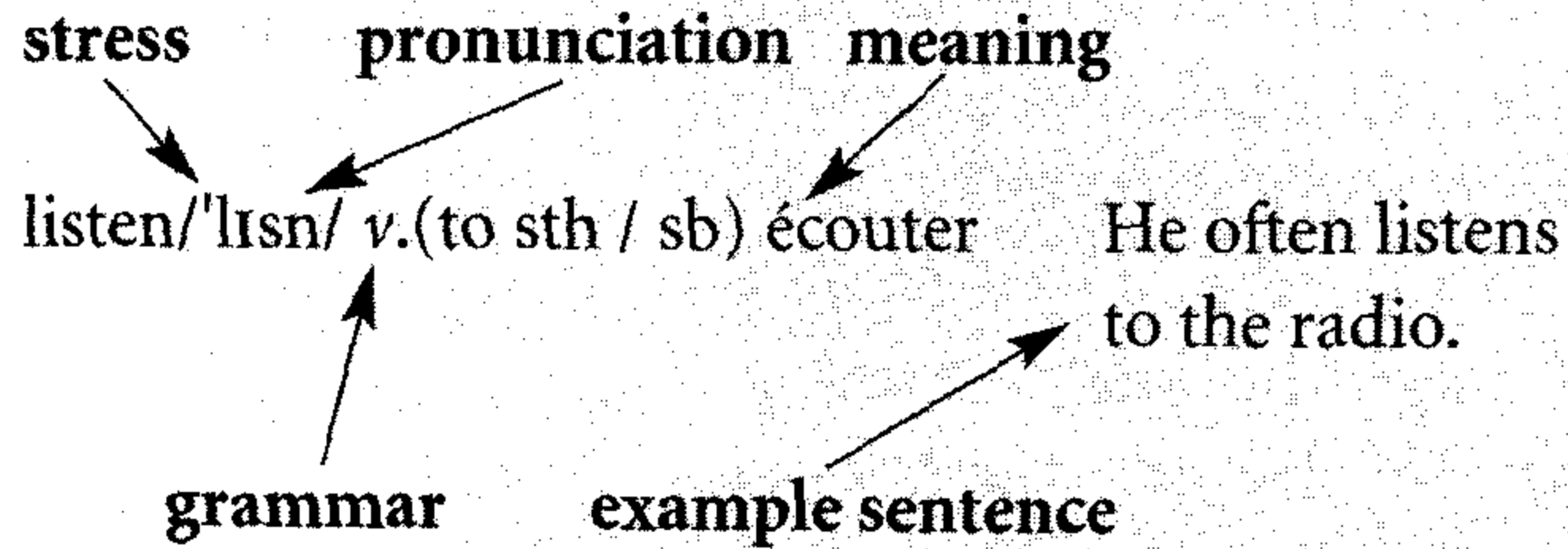
Example 11: Training activities

Focus: understanding dictionary entries
Age: young adult plus
Level: pre-intermediate/intermediate

The example in Figure 16 from a coursebook for pre-intermediate learners is based on the assumption that students will be using a bilingual dictionary and points out to them some of the things they can find out from it.

□ **How can a good dictionary help me?**

A good bilingual dictionary is very important for efficient language learning. A dictionary doesn't only tell you the meaning of a word. It also tells you the grammar, pronunciation, and stress. It sometimes gives you an example sentence too.



1 Dictionary abbreviations What do they mean?

- | | | | |
|---|-------|-----------|----------------|
| 1 | sth | something | |
| 2 | sb | _____ | |
| 3 | n. | _____ | (e.g. house) |
| 4 | adj. | _____ | (e.g. fat) |
| 5 | v. | _____ | (e.g. go) |
| 6 | prep. | _____ | (e.g. in) |
| 7 | adv. | _____ | (e.g. slowly) |
| 8 | pron. | _____ | (e.g. we / us) |

FIGURE 16: From *English File Student's Book 2* by C Oxenden et al (Oxford University Press)

When students start using dictionaries – especially MLDs – for the first time, it is a good idea to include small training activities of this kind (often lasting only a few minutes each) in every lesson. For example, we could show them the entry for *swollen* (see Figure 17), and then ask them questions, such as *What parts of speech can 'swollen' be? How do you know? How many meanings of 'swollen' are given? How do you know? Are any of the uses of 'swollen' particular to any special national or regional language variety? How do you know?*

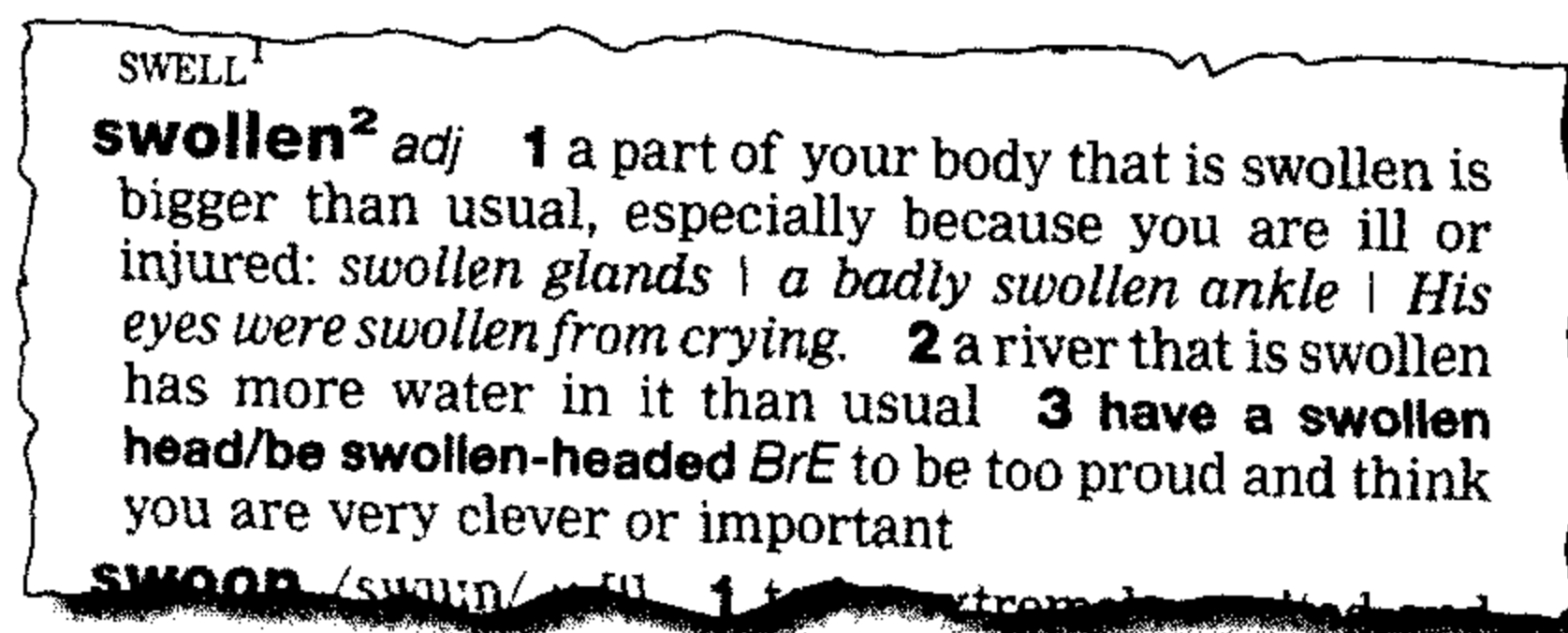


FIGURE 17: Entry for *swollen* from the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (Pearson Education Ltd)

Example 12: Definition game	Focus: working with definitions
	Age: young adult plus
	Level: upper intermediate

This game teaches students how to use dictionaries and, especially, gets them used to the way in which definitions are written. Modern MLDs often use a special defining vocabulary, which means that even the most complex words are explained using words that students will be able to understand. For example the word *pernickety* is described in the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* as ‘informal worrying too much about small and unimportant things = fussy’. The game works with these same definitions. Its special feature is that the student who has to try to guess the answer is the same student who chooses (without knowing it) what the question is.

The class is divided into two teams. Each team has at least one copy of a dictionary – in this case the *Oxford Advanced Learners’ Dictionary (OALD)*. One student in team A has to choose a number between 1 and 1,364 (the number of pages in the edition of the dictionary I have in front of me). They then say *left* or *right* to indicate the column on the page they have chosen (the *OALD* has two-column pages). They then give a number between 1 and 10. One member of Team B then looks for, say, the fifth word in the right-hand column on page 328 of the dictionary. They then read the definition of the word back to the Team A member who has to guess what the word is. For our example the definition is *verb: to say one does not know of, is not responsible for, or does not believe in something*. If the member of Team A guesses the word *disavow* straight away, they get three points. If they have to be given the first letter but can then guess it, they get two points. If they are given two letters, they only get one point.

Disavow is an extremely rare and difficult word, but many of the words that are chosen at random like this (because the person choosing the page number, column, etc. has no idea what the word will be) are much more common. However, if we want to make sure all the words are ones which the students should know, we can change the game slightly. The Team A student still chooses the page number, but this time they might choose the fourth red word (if red is the way that particular dictionary uses to indicate word frequency). If the word has three different meanings, the member of Team B will say that there are three different meanings and ask which one the Team A student wants. If there is no red word on the page the student has selected, the players go to the next page or the one before it.

Example 13: At home with <i>do</i> , <i>make</i> and <i>take</i>	Focus: collocations
	Age: teenage plus
	Level: elementary

This activity is a combination of dictionary training and a language awareness exercise. It focuses on three verbs that collocate strongly with various noun phrases – but for which there are no easy rules as to why we use one verb rather than another.

Students are given the following grid and have to say which verb collocates with the noun phrases in the right-hand column. They can do this activity in pairs or small groups. If they are unsure (or if they need to check), we suggest they should look for information in their dictionaries. We will tell them to think carefully about which word to look for in each case.

do	make	take	
	✓		a lot of noise
			always _____ their homework
			always _____ excuses
			breakfast
			family photographs
			friends easily
			nothing all the time
			sugar in their coffee
			supper
			the beds
			the cooking
			the dishes
			the ironing
			the laundry
			a lot of mistakes
			the housework

While the students are doing the activity, we can walk round the class monitoring their efforts and helping them to look up words either in their paper dictionaries or on a CD. This is where we can be especially useful in helping them to see what they need to find when checking an entry. For example, if they want to check which verb goes with *a lot of noise*, they can look at the word *noise* on their dictionary CD-ROM and they will find the information shown in Figure 18.

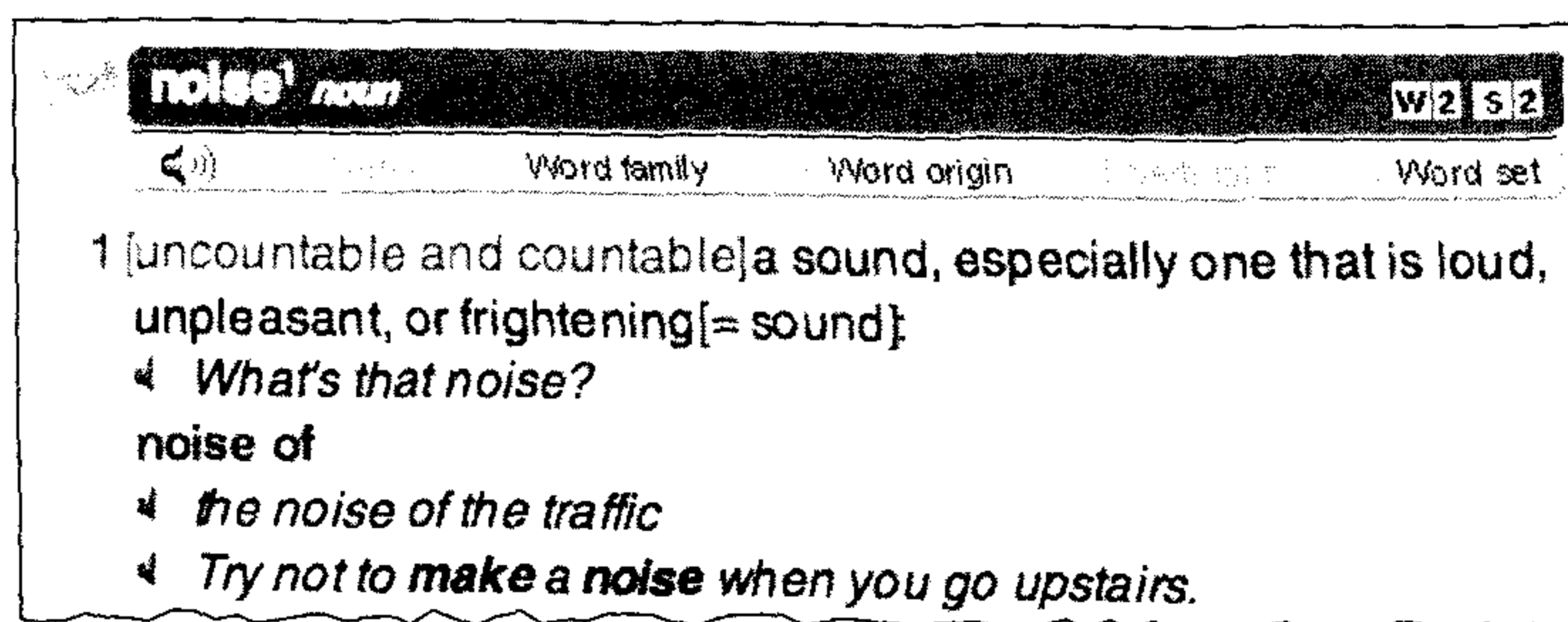


FIGURE 18: First part of the entry for *noise* from the CD-ROM for the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (Pearson Education Ltd)

And they can investigate the collocation (in bold) further by looking at a list of phrases in which *noise* occurs, e.g.

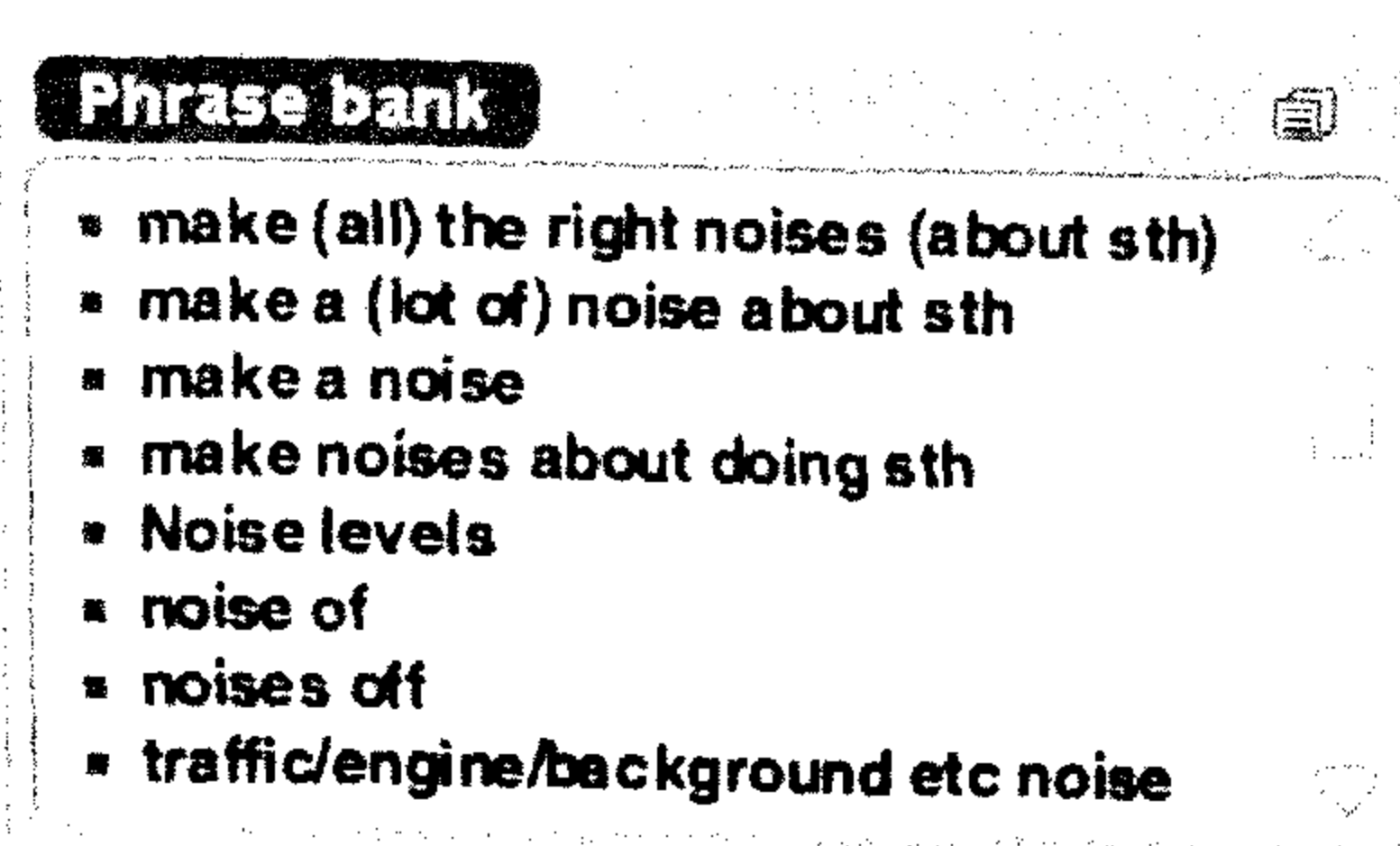


FIGURE 19: Phrases from the CD-ROM accompanying the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (Pearson Education Ltd)

Once they have completed the grid, they can ask each other questions, such as *Who makes a lot of noise in your house?* or *Do you make a lot of mistakes?*

The attractive feature of this activity is that it genuinely helps students to learn more about *make, do* and *tell*, while at the same time ensuring that they become better dictionary users.

Example 14: Monday morning	Focus: previewing vocabulary
	Age: adult
	Level: advanced plus

When working with advanced students, the teacher Philip Harmer sometimes likes to start the week with a vocabulary worksheet. The worksheet contains various vocabulary questions which relate to words and phrases which the students are going to meet during the forthcoming week's work. These words and phrases either relate to the topics they are going to study or they come from the materials Harmer is expecting to use in the next few days.

Having prepared such a worksheet (see Figure 20 for an example) we can come to the first lesson of the week and start by getting students to work in pairs and use whatever dictionaries are available to complete the tasks.

- 1 Why might someone be TOLD OFF?
- 2 What is the difference between ...
SYMPATHY and EMPATHY?
CONTINUOUS and CONTINUAL?
DISINTERESTED and UNINTERESTED?
- 3 How might someone be IMPOVERISHED?
- 4 What could be DEAFENING?
- 5 Which preposition?
to put something _____ jeopardy _____ all odds
to run the risk _____ the belief that
- 6 What do you say when you TOSS A COIN?
- 7 How could someone ...
 - RISK LIFE AND LIMB?
 - TEMPT FATE?
 - TAKE PRECAUTIONS?
 - LULL someone INTO A FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY?

FIGURE 20: Monday morning worksheet

The advantage of this procedure is that the students start the week by claiming words and phrases as their own. Of course we will monitor their work, but it is they who are in charge (who have *agency* – see page 103). And by making dictionary use central to the activity, we reinforce understanding of the benefits that students can get from dictionary work.

Example 15: Films	Language: film vocabulary
	Age: teenage and above
	Level: elementary

If students are doing a project on films, they need to find appropriate words and phrases for the topic. They could rely on the teacher or the textbook, of course; both or either of these could give them everything they need. But they might be working on their own, in which case they need to consult some other source of information.

Students who consult a production dictionary will be able to research words they have, perhaps, never heard or seen before. Thus, within the topic of films, they might search for words for films and going to see them (e.g. *film*, *movie*, *cinema*, *go to the cinema*, etc.), types of film (*horror*, *comedy*, *war film*, *road movie*, etc.), people in films (*actor*, *actress*, *star*, etc.), people who make films (*director*, *producer*, *film crew*, etc.) and various other categories, including what happens in a film (see Figure 21). Provided that the dictionary designers have managed to predict the words which the students are likely to need, such production material is an ideal tool for language research. The students can now use the words for the project or task they are involved in.

what happens in a film

story /'stɔ:ri/ [n C] **a love story** *The movie is basically a love story.*

plot/storyline /'plɒt, 'stɔ:rilain plɑ:t/ [n C] the events that happen in a film, and the way in which these events are connected: *Tom Hanks was great, but I thought the plot was really boring.* | *The film has a great storyline.*

scene /si:n/ [n C] one part of a film: *The first scene takes place on a beach.*

a love/war/battle scene *The battle scenes were very realistic.*

special effect /,speʃəl ɪ'fekt/ [n C] an unusual image or sound that is produced artificially, in order to make something that is impossible look as if it is really happening: *The special effects were amazing – the dinosaurs looked as if they were alive.*

ending /'endɪŋ/ [n C] the way that the story in a film ends: *I don't want to give away the ending of the film.*

a happy/sad ending *I like movies with a happy ending.*

twist /twɪst/ [n C] something surprising that happens in a film, which you did not expect: *The film has a twist at the end, when we discover that the detective is the murderer.*

FIGURE 21: From the *Longman Essential Activator* (Pearson Education Ltd)

D3 When students use dictionaries

Many teachers are frustrated by their students' overuse of dictionaries, especially electronic dictionaries (see Chapter 11, G1). They find that their students want to check the meanings of words at any stage of the lesson, even when, for example, the teacher or some other student is in the middle of saying something and had hoped for the (other) students' full attention. At the same time, however, as this chapter has made clear, we want to encourage students to use their dictionaries in appropriate circumstances because we believe that they are such a valuable resource.

Students need to know when dictionary use is appropriate and acceptable and when it is less useful (as in the example in the previous paragraph). It will be useful to talk to them about how, for example, it is a good idea to try to read a text for gist (and guess the meaning of some unknown words) before later, perhaps, using dictionaries to check the meaning of words they do not know (see page 287). They need to understand that if they overuse dictionaries when they should be listening, they lose the benefit of hearing English spoken naturally – and the opportunity this gives them to practise their listening skills. However, we should also be sympathetic to the students' desire to understand every word since most people speaking a foreign language have this need.

The best way to resolve this dilemma is to come to some kind of a bargain with the students, very much like the bargain that Dilys Thorp struck with her students all those years ago (see page 77). The bargain will involve students agreeing when they will and won't use dictionaries. This, together with our use of dictionary activities like the ones mentioned in D1 above, will ensure successful and appropriate dictionary use in our lessons.

Chapter notes and further reading

- **Vocabulary activities**

There are many different vocabulary activities in S Thornbury (2001a: Chapters 5–7). See also J Morgan and M Rinvoluceri (2002), and the series *English Vocabulary in Use* by M McCarthy and F O'Dell (Cambridge University Press).

- **Games**

Film of the first two games described in Section C is included on the DVD which accompanies J Harmer (2007). On games in language learning, see A Wright *et al* (2006). For vocabulary game activities, see F O'Dell and K Head (2003), the series *Vocabulary Games* by J and C Hadfield (Pearson Education Ltd) and the *Language Games* CD-ROM, published by Macmillan Education.

- **Dictionaries**

See the references to dictionaries on page 198 of this book.

15

Teaching pronunciation

A Pronunciation issues

Almost all English language teachers get students to study grammar and vocabulary, practise functional dialogues, take part in productive skill activities and try to become competent in listening and reading. Yet some of these same teachers make little attempt to teach pronunciation in any overt way and only give attention to it in passing. It is possible that they are nervous of dealing with sounds and intonation; perhaps they feel they have too much to do already and pronunciation teaching will only make things worse. They may claim that even without a formal pronunciation syllabus, and without specific pronunciation teaching, many students seem to acquire serviceable pronunciation in the course of their studies anyway.

However, the fact that some students are able to acquire reasonable pronunciation without overt pronunciation teaching should not blind us to the benefits of a focus on pronunciation in our lessons. Pronunciation teaching not only makes students aware of different sounds and sound features (and what these mean), but can also improve their speaking immeasurably. Concentrating on sounds, showing where they are made in the mouth, making students aware of where words should be stressed – all these things give them extra information about spoken English and help them achieve the goal of improved comprehension and intelligibility.

In some particular cases, pronunciation help allows students to get over serious intelligibility problems. Joan Kerr, a speech pathologist, described (in a paper at the 1998 ELICOS conference in Melbourne, Australia) how she was able to help a Cantonese speaker of English achieve considerably greater intelligibility by working on his point of articulation – changing his focus of resonance. Whereas many Cantonese vowels occur towards the back of the mouth, English ones are frequently articulated nearer the front or in the centre of the mouth. The moment you can get Cantonese speakers, she suggested, to bring their vowels further forward, increased intelligibility occurs. With other language groups it may be an issue of nasality (e.g. Vietnamese) or the degree to which speakers do or do not open their mouths. Some language groups may have particular intonation or stress patterns in phrases and sentences which sound strange when replicated in English, and there are many individual sounds which cause difficulty for speakers of various different first languages.

For all these people, being made aware of pronunciation issues will be of immense benefit not only to their own production, but also to their understanding of spoken English.

A1 Perfection versus intelligibility

A question we need to answer is how good our students' pronunciation ought to be. Should they sound exactly like speakers of a prestige variety of English (see page 24) so that just by listening to them we would assume that they were British, American, Australian or Canadian?

Or is this asking too much? Perhaps their teacher's pronunciation is the model they should aspire to. Perhaps we should be happy if they can at least make themselves understood.

The degree to which students acquire 'perfect' pronunciation seems to depend very much on their attitude to how they speak and how well they hear. In the case of attitude, there are a number of psychological issues which may well affect how 'foreign' a person sounds when they speak English. Some students, as Vicky Kuo suggests (see page 21), want to be exposed to a 'native speaker' variety, and will strive to achieve pronunciation which is indistinguishable from that of a first language English speaker. Other students, however, do not especially want to sound like 'inner circle' speakers (see page 17); frequently they wish to be speakers of English as an *international* or global language and, as we saw in Chapter 1, this does not necessarily imply trying to sound exactly like someone from Britain or Canada. It may imply sounding more like their teacher, whatever variety he or she speaks (see our discussion about native and non-native speakers in Chapter 6 E). Frequently, too, students want to retain their own accent when they speak a foreign language because that is part of their identity. Thus speaking English with, say, a Mexican accent is fine for the speaker who wishes to retain his or her 'Mexican-ness' when speaking in a foreign language. Finally, as we saw in our discussion of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) in Chapter 1, B1, certain phonological differences (e.g. between /d/ and /ð/) may not be critical to a speaker's ability to make themselves understood.

Under the pressure of such personal, political and phonological considerations it has become customary for language teachers to consider intelligibility as the prime goal of pronunciation teaching. This implies that the students should be able to use pronunciation which is good enough for them to be always understood. If their pronunciation is not up to this standard, then clearly there is a serious danger that they will fail to communicate effectively.

If intelligibility is the goal, then it suggests that some pronunciation features are more important than others. Some sounds, for example, have to be right if the speaker is to get their message across (for example /n/ as in /sɪnɪŋ/ versus /ŋ/ as in /sɪŋɪŋ/), though others (for example /d/ and /ð/ in ELF) may not cause a lack of intelligibility if they are used interchangeably. In the case of individual sounds, a lot depends on the context of the utterance, which frequently helps the listener to hear what the speaker intends. However, stressing words and phrases correctly is vital if emphasis is to be given to the important parts of messages and if words are to be understood correctly. Intonation (see page 38) is a vital carrier of meaning; by varying the pitch of our voice we indicate whether we are asking a question or making a statement, whether we are enthusiastic or bored, or whether we want to keep talking or whether, on the contrary, we are inviting someone else to come into the conversation.

The fact that we may want our students to work towards an intelligible pronunciation rather than achieve an L1-speaker perfection may not appeal to all, however. Despite what we have said about identity and the global nature of English (and the use of ELF), some students do indeed wish to sound exactly like a native speaker. In such circumstances it would be absurd to try to deny them such an objective.

A2 Problems

Two particular problems occur in much pronunciation teaching and learning.

- **What students can hear:** some students have great difficulty hearing pronunciation features which we want them to reproduce. Frequently, speakers of different first languages have

problems with different sounds, especially where, as with /b/ and /v/ for Spanish speakers, their language does not have the same two sounds. If they cannot distinguish between them, they will find it almost impossible to produce the two different English phonemes.

There are two ways of dealing with this: in the first place, we can show students how sounds are made through demonstration, diagrams and explanation. But we can also draw the sounds to their attention every time they appear on a recording or in our own conversation. In this way we gradually train the students' ears. When they can hear correctly, they are on the way to being able to speak correctly.

- **What students can say:** all babies are born with the ability to make the whole range of sounds available to human beings. But as we grow and focus in on one or two languages, we lose the habit of making some of those sounds. Learning a foreign language often presents us with the problem of physical unfamiliarity (i.e. it is actually physically difficult to make the sound using particular parts of the mouth, uvula or nasal cavity). To counter this problem, we need to be able to show and explain exactly where sounds are produced (e.g. Where is the tongue in relation to the teeth? What is the shape of the lips when making a certain vowel?).
- **The intonation problem:** for many teachers the most problematic area of pronunciation is intonation. Some of us (and many of our students) find it extremely difficult to hear 'tunes' or to identify the different patterns of rising and falling tones. In such situations it would be foolish to try to teach them.

However, the fact that we may have difficulty recognising specific intonation tunes does not mean that we should abandon intonation teaching altogether. Most of us can hear when someone is surprised, enthusiastic or bored, or when they are really asking a question rather than just confirming something they already know. One of our tasks, then, is to give students opportunities to recognise such moods and intentions either on an audio track or through the way we ourselves model them. We can then get students to imitate the way these moods are articulated, even though we may not (be able to) discuss the technicalities of the different intonation patterns themselves.

The key to successful pronunciation teaching, however, is not so much getting students to produce correct sounds or intonation tunes, but rather to have them listen and notice how English is spoken – either on audio or video or by their teachers themselves. The more aware they are, the greater the chance that their own intelligibility levels will rise.

A3 **Phonemic symbols: to use or not to use?**

It is perfectly possible to work on the sounds of English without ever using any phonemic symbols. We can get students to hear the difference, say, between *sheep* and *cheap* or between *ship* and *sheep* just by saying the words enough times. There is no reason why this should not be effective. We can also describe how the sounds are made (by demonstrating, drawing pictures of the mouth and lips or explaining where the sounds are made).

However, since English is bedevilled, for many students, by an apparent lack of sound and spelling correspondence (though in fact most spelling is highly regular and the number of exceptions fairly small), it may make sense for them to be aware of the different phonemes, and the clearest way of promoting this awareness is to introduce the symbols for them.

There are other reasons for using phonemic symbols, too. Paper dictionaries usually give the pronunciation of headwords in phonemic symbols. If students can read such symbols, they can know how the word is said even without having to hear it. Online and CD-ROM dictionaries have recordings of words being said, of course.

When both teacher and students know the symbols, it is easier to explain what mistake has occurred and why it has happened; we can also use the symbols for pronunciation tasks and games.

Some teachers complain that learning symbols places an unnecessary burden on students. For certain groups this may be true, and the level of strain is greatly increased if they are asked to write in phonemic script (Newton 1999). But if they are only asked to recognise rather than produce the different symbols, then the strain is not so great, especially if they are introduced to the various symbols gradually rather than all at once.

In this chapter we assume that knowledge of phonemic script is of benefit to students.

A4 **When to teach pronunciation**

Just as with any aspect of language – grammar, vocabulary, etc. – teachers have to decide when to include pronunciation teaching in lesson sequences. There are a number of alternatives to choose from.

- **Whole lessons:** some teachers devote whole lesson sequences to pronunciation, and some schools timetable pronunciation lessons at various stages during the week.

Though it would be difficult to spend a whole class period working on one or two sounds, it can make sense to work on connected speech, concentrating on stress and intonation, over some 45 minutes, provided that we follow normal planning principles (see Chapter 21B). Thus we could have students do recognition work on intonation patterns, work on the stress in certain key phrases, and then move on to the rehearsing and performing of a short play extract which exemplifies some of the issues we have worked on.

Making pronunciation the main focus of a lesson does not mean that every minute of that lesson has to be spent on pronunciation work. Sometimes students may also listen to a longer recording, working on listening skills before moving to the pronunciation part of the sequence. Sometimes they may look at aspects of vocabulary before going on to work on word stress and sounds and spelling.

- **Discrete slots:** some teachers insert short, separate bits of pronunciation work into lesson sequences. Over a period of weeks, they work on all the individual phonemes, either separately or in contrasting pairs. At other times they spend a few minutes on a particular aspect of intonation, say, or on a contrast between two or more sounds.

Such separate pronunciation slots can be extremely useful, and provide a welcome change of pace and activity during a lesson. Many students enjoy them, and they succeed precisely because we do not spend too long on any one issue. However, pronunciation is not a separate skill; it is part of the way we speak. Even if we want to keep our pronunciation phases separate for the reasons we have suggested, we will also need times when we integrate pronunciation work into longer lesson sequences.

- **Integrated phases:** many teachers get students to focus on pronunciation issues as an integral part of a lesson. When students listen to a recording, for example, one of the things which we can do is to draw their attention to pronunciation features on the recording, if necessary having them work on sounds that are especially prominent, or getting them to imitate intonation patterns for questions, for example.

Pronunciation teaching forms a part of many sequences where students study language form. When we model words and phrases, we draw our students' attention to the way they are said; one of the things we want to concentrate on during an accurate reproduction stage is the students' correct pronunciation.

- **Opportunistic teaching:** just as teachers may stray from their original plan when lesson realities make this inevitable, and teach vocabulary or grammar opportunistically because it has 'come up' (see Chapter 12, A1), so there are good reasons why we may want to stop what we are doing and spend a minute or two on some pronunciation issue that has arisen in the course of an activity. A lot will depend on what kind of activity the students are involved in since we will be reluctant to interrupt fluency work inappropriately, but tackling a problem at the moment when it occurs can be a successful way of dealing with pronunciation.

Although whole pronunciation lessons may be an unaffordable luxury for classes under syllabus and timetable pressure, many teachers tackle pronunciation in a mixture of the ways suggested above.

A5 Helping individual students

We frequently work with the whole class when we organise pronunciation teaching. We conduct drills with minimal pairs (see B1 below) or we have all of the students working on variable stress in sentences (see page 43) together. Yet, as we have seen, pronunciation is an extremely personal matter, and even in monolingual groups, different students have different problems, different needs and different attitudes to the subject. In multilingual groups, of course, students from different language backgrounds may have very different concerns and issues to deal with.

One way of responding to this situation, especially when we are working with phonemes, is to get students to identify their own individual pronunciation difficulties rather than telling them, as a group, what they need to work on. So, for example, when revising a list of words we might ask individual students which words they find easy to pronounce and which words they find difficult. We can then help them with the 'difficult' words. We can encourage students to bring difficult words to the lesson so that we can help them with them. This kind of differentiated teaching (see page 27) is especially appropriate because students may be more aware of their pronunciation problems – and be able to explain what they are – than they are with grammar or vocabulary issues.

It is vitally important when correcting students (see Chapter 8) to make sure that we offer help in a constructive and useful way. This involves us showing students which parts of the mouth they need to use (see the diagram on page 40), providing them with words in their phonological context, and offering them continual opportunities to hear the sounds being used correctly.

B Examples of pronunciation teaching

The areas of pronunciation which we need to draw our students' attention to include individual sounds they are having difficulty with, word and phrase/sentence stress and intonation. But students will also need help with connected speech for fluency and with the correspondence, or lack of it, between sounds and spelling. All of these areas are touched on in the examples below.

B1 Working with sounds

We often ask students to focus on one particular sound. This allows us to demonstrate how it is made and show how it can be spelt – a major concern with English since there is far less one-to-one correspondence between sound and spelling than there is in some other languages – especially Romance languages.

We can have students identify which words in a list (including *bird, word, worm, worth, curl, heard, first, lurch*, etc.) have the sound /ɜ:/. They are then asked to identify the one consonant (*r*) which is always present in the spelling of words with this sound. We could also show or demonstrate the position of the lips when this sound is made and get students to make the sound and say words which include it.

Two more examples show specific approaches to the teaching and practising of sounds.

Example 1: *Ship and chip*

Sounds: /ʃ/ and /tʃ/
Level: intermediate

Contrasting two sounds which are very similar and often confused is a popular way of getting students to concentrate on specific aspects of pronunciation.

The sequence starts with students listening to pairs of words and practising the difference between /ʃ/ and /tʃ/, e.g.:

ship	chip	washing	watching
sherry	cherry	cash	catch
shoes	choose	mash	match
sheep	cheap	wish	which, witch

From *Sounds English* by J D O'Connor and C Fletcher (Pearson Education Ltd)
The teaching sequence described here comes directly from this book.

If they have no problem with these sounds, the teacher may well move on to other sounds and/or merely do a short practice exercise as a reminder of the difference between them. But if the students have difficulty discriminating between /ʃ/ and /tʃ/, the teacher asks them to listen to a recording and, in a series of exercises, they have to work out which word they hear, e.g.:

- 1 Small shops/chops are often expensive.
- 2 The dishes/ditches need cleaning.
- 3 I couldn't mash/match these things up.
- 4 She enjoys washing/watching the children.

They now move on to exercises in which they say words or phrases with one sound or the other, e.g.

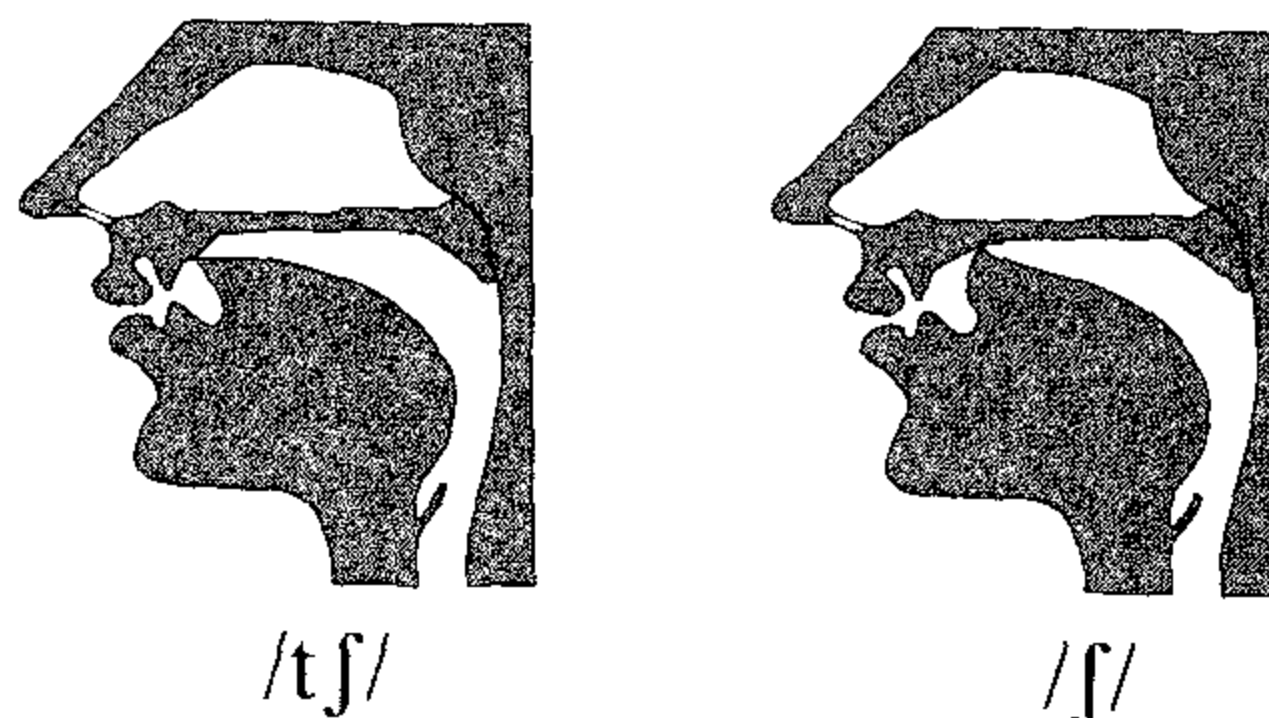
It's very cheap.
a grey chair
a cheese sandwich
You cheat!
no chance
a pretty child

before doing a communication task which has words with the target sounds built into it, e.g.

How much do you enjoy the things in the chart below?
1 very much 2 not much 3 not at all
Fill in the chart for yourself, and then ask three other people.

	You		
playing chess			
watching TV			
washing up			
going to a football match			
cooking chips			
eating chips			
lying in the sunshine			
shopping			

If, during this teaching sequence, students seem to be having trouble with either of the sounds, the teacher may well refer to a diagram of the mouth to help them see where the sounds are made, e.g.



Contrasting sounds in this way has a lot to recommend it. It helps students concentrate on detail, especially when they are listening to hear the small difference between the sounds. It identifies sounds that are frequently confused by various nationalities. It is manageable for the teacher (rather than taking on a whole range of sounds at the same time), and it can be good fun for the students.

This kind of exercise can be done whether or not the teacher and students work with phonemic symbols.

Example 2: The phonemic chart

Sounds: all

Level: any

The writer Adrian Underhill is unambiguous about the use of phonemic symbols (see A3 above) and has produced a phonemic chart, which he recommends integrating into English lessons at various points.

This phonemic chart is laid out in relation to where in the mouth the 44 sounds of southern British English are produced. In its top right-hand corner little boxes are used to describe stress patterns, and arrows are used to describe the five basic intonation patterns (i.e. fall, rise, fall-rise, rise-fall and level).

ɪ	I	ʊ	u:	ɪə	eɪ	ː	↘
e	ə	ɜ:	ɔ:	ʊə	ɔɪ	əʊ	
æ	ʌ	ɑ:	ɒ	eə	aɪ	aʊ	
p	b	t	d	tʃ	dʒ	k	g
f	v	θ	ð	s	z	ʃ	ʒ
m	n	ŋ	h	l	r	w	j

The phonemic chart from *Sound Foundations* by A Underhill (Heinemann)

What makes this chart special are the ways in which Adrian Underhill suggests that it should be used. Because each sound has a separate square, either the teacher or the students can point to that square to ask students to produce that sound and/or to show they recognise which sound is being produced. For example, the teacher might point to three sounds one after the other (/ʃ/, /v/ and /p/) to get the students to say *shop*. Among other possibilities, the teacher can say a sound or a word and a student has to point to the sound(s) on the chart. When learners say something and produce an incorrect sound, the teacher can point to the sound they should have made. When the teacher first models a sound, she can point to it on the chart to identify it for the students (Underhill 2005: 101).

The phonemic chart can be carried around by the teacher or left on the classroom wall. If it is permanently there and easily accessible, the teacher can use it at any stage when it becomes appropriate. Such a usable resource is a wonderful teaching aid, as a visit to many classrooms where the chart is in evidence will demonstrate.

There are many other techniques and activities for teaching sounds apart from the ones we have shown here. Some teachers play sound bingo where the squares on the bingo card have sounds, or phonemically 'spelt' words instead of ordinary orthographic words. When the teacher says the sound or the word, the student can cross off that square of their board.

When all their squares are crossed off, they shout *Bingo!* Noughts and crosses can be played in the same way, where each square has a sound and the students have to say a word with that sound in it to win that square, e.g.

/æ/	/dʒ/	/t/
/i:/	/ə/	/d/
/ʊ/	/ɔ:/	/z/

Teachers can get students to say tongue-twisters sometimes, too (e.g. *She sells sea shells by the sea shore*) or to find rhymes for poetry/limerick lines. When students are familiar with the phonemic alphabet, they can play 'odd man out' (five vocabulary items where one does not fit in with the others), but the words are written in phonemic script rather than ordinary orthography.

B2 Working with stress

Stress is important in individual words, in phrases and sentences. By shifting it around in a phrase or a sentence, we can also change emphasis or meaning.

As we saw in Figure 4 in Chapter 12, it is assumed that when students meet new words in class (and if the new words end up on the board), the teacher will mark the stress of those words (using a consistent system of stress marking). Another common way of drawing our students' attention to stress issues is to show where the weak vowel sounds occur in words (rather than focusing on the stressed syllables themselves). We can draw attention to the schwa /ə/ in words like /fətɒgrəfə/ (*photographer*), or /klu:ləs/ (*clueless*).

However, we can also focus on stress issues in longer phrases and in sentences, as the following two examples demonstrate.

Example 3: Fishing

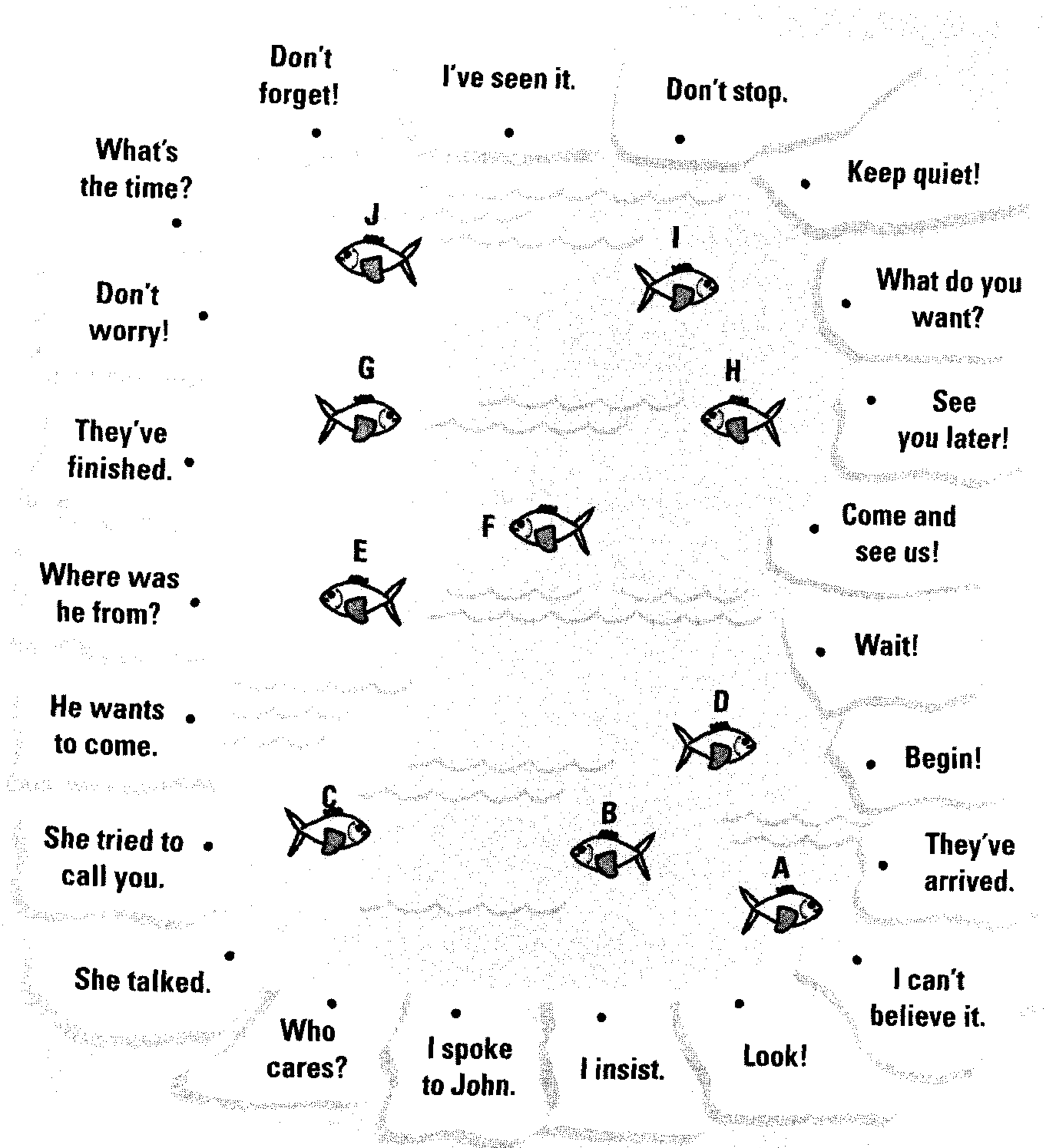
Sounds: phrase stress patterns

Level: pre-intermediate upwards

The following activity (in which students are asked to recognise stress patterns in phrases) comes from a book of pronunciation games which are designed to '... engage learners in a challenge and, at the same time, highlight an aspect of pronunciation' (Hancock 1995: 1).

The sequence starts when the teacher chooses some short phrases which the students are familiar with and writes them on the board. She then reads the phrases aloud and, as she does so, she draws a large circle under each stressed syllable (which will be in the content words like *bel'ieve*, and *'later*, as opposed to grammatical words like *to*, *of* and *by*) and small circles under the unstressed syllables.

Now that students are clued in to the big and small circles, the teacher gives them a copy of the following game board:



From *Pronunciation Games* by M Hancock (Cambridge University Press)

Using the 'circles' stress patterns, they have to join pairs of phrases with the same stress patterns, e.g. Look! – Wait!; Begin! – She talked; Who cares? – Don't stop etc. The object of the game is to discover which fish is caught (a fish is caught when it is completely surrounded by lines). If students get the exercise right, they will have encircled fish B.

Students can now say the phrases and the teacher can ask them to come up with their own phrases to follow the various stress patterns – or she can make her own games along similar lines.

Example 4: Special stress

Sounds: variable stress

Level: elementary

The stress in phrases changes depending upon what we want to say. The following exercise draws students' attention to this fact and gets them to ask why it happens.

Students listen to the following conversation:

3 Special stress

- 1 **T.9.3.A.** Walter is a waiter in a busy snack bar.
Listen to some of his conversations with the customers.



- a W So that's two coffees, a beef sandwich, and a tomato soup ...
C *No, a chicken sandwich.*
W Sorry, sir ...
- b W Yes, sir?
C A small mushroom pizza, please.
W Okay ...
C *No, make that a large mushroom pizza.*
W Certainly, sir ...
- c W Okay, so you want one coffee, six colas, four strawberry ice-creams, two chocolate ice-creams and a piece of apple pie ...
C *No, four chocolate ice-creams and two strawberry ...*
W Anything else?

From *Headway Elementary Pronunciation* by S Cunningham and P Moor (Oxford University Press)

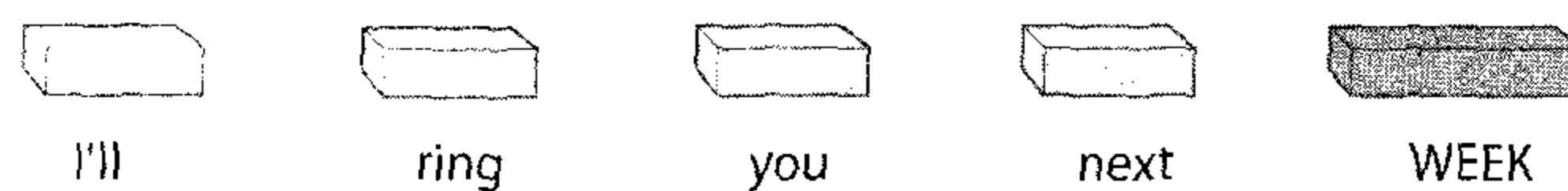
The students are now asked to listen again and look at the lines in italics. They have to underline the words that are specially stressed and then say why they think this happens in this particular conversation (because the customer is correcting a mistake). Students can then practise saying the dialogues.

We might also give students a straightforward sentence like *I lent my sister ten pounds for a train ticket last week* and ask them what it would mean if different words took the main stress, e.g. *I LENT my sister ten pounds ...* (= I didn't give it to her), or *I lent my sister ten pounds for a train ticket last WEEK* (= Can you believe it? She still hasn't paid me back!).

There are many other ways of teaching and demonstrating stress. Some teachers like to choose appropriate texts and have students read them aloud after they have done some work on which bits of phrases and sentences take the main stress. Some teachers like to train students in the performance of dialogues, much as a theatre director might do with actors. This will involve identifying the main stress in phrases and seeing this in relation to the intonation patterns (see below).

Cuisenaire rods (see Chapter 11, C4) are also useful in that they can provide graphic illustrations of how words and phrases are stressed. These rods of different lengths and colours can be set up to demonstrate the stress patterns of phrases and sentences as in the

following example, *I'll ring you next WEEK*:



Whereas if we want to say *I'll RING you next week* (= I won't come and see you), we can organise the rods like this:



For stress in words, we can ask students to put words in correct columns depending upon their stress patterns, e.g.

■ ■ ■ ■	■ ■ ■ ■
information	discovery
consultation	recovery
aggravation	acknowledgement
insulation	catastrophe
agoraphobic	photographer

Finally, another technique that is enjoyable is to give students a list of utterances and then let them hear the phrases said with nonsense syllables (but with the right stress and intonation). The students have to match the nonsense patterns with the real thing. For example, if one of the utterances the students have is *absolutely terrible*, what they might hear is *do-di-do-di-DOO-di-di*.

B3 Working with intonation

We need to draw our students' attention to the way we use changes in pitch to convey meaning, to reflect the thematic structure of what we are saying and to convey mood.

One simple way of doing this is to show how many different meanings can be squeezed out of just one word, such as *yes*. To do this we can get students to ask us any *yes/no* question (e.g. *Are you happy?*) and answer *yes* to it in a neutral way. Now we get them to ask the question again. This time, through changing our intonation, we use *yes* to mean something different, e.g. *I'm not sure* or *How wonderful of you to ask that question* or *How dare you ask that question?* Students can be asked to identify what we mean each time by using words for emotions or matching our intonation to pictures of faces with different expressions. We can now get them to ask each other similar *yes/no* questions and, when they answer, use intonation to convey particular meanings which their classmates have to identify.

In his book on teaching pronunciation, Gerald Kelly uses the interjection *mmm* (Kelly 2000: 99). After demonstrating the different ways in which this can be said, students have to match different intonations with different meanings, e.g.

I Match the intonation tune to the meaning.**a** //↘mmm//**b** //↗↘mmm//**c** //↗mmm//**d** //↘↗mmm//**e** //→mmm//**i** Reflects boredom or lack of interest.**ii** I agree.**iii** Strong agreement.**iv** I agree, but ...**v** The speaker wants the listener to say more.

The point of using exercises like this is not so much to identify specific intonation patterns – especially since many languages can change the meaning of individual words in the same way – but rather to raise the students' awareness of the power of intonation and to encourage them to vary their own speech. It also trains them to listen more carefully to understand what messages are being given to them.

Example 5: Falling and rising tones

Sounds: falling and rising tones

Level: pre-intermediate

In the following exercise, students listen to identify nuclear stress (that is the main stress where there is a change of pitch) in phrases and to hear falling and rising intonation.

1 Listen to these examples. Prominent words are in capital letters. Notice how the voice FALLS at the end.

It's **MINE**. She's from **ROME**. Is it **YOURS**?
I **MET** him at a **DISCO**.

Now listen to these examples. Notice how the voice RISES at the end.

I **THINK** so. **PROBABLY**. Are they **HERE** yet?
Is **THIS** the **PARIS** train?

From *Pronunciation Tasks* by M Hewings (Cambridge University Press)

When they have done this, the teacher may ask them to repeat the phrases with the right intonation before moving on to the next exercise where they have to listen to a recording and identify whether the voice falls or rises:

2 Listen to these sentence halves. Write (↘) in the space if the voice falls at the end and write (↗) if it goes up. Two are done for you.

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1 a) I went to London ... (↘) | b) ... on Saturday. (↗) |
| 2 a) David ... () | b) ... works in a bookshop. () |
| 3 a) There's some cake ... () | b) ... in the kitchen. () |
| 4 a) In Hong Kong ... () | b) ... last year. () |
| 5 a) I'm fairly sure ... () | b) ... it's upstairs. () |
| 6 a) Yes, ... () | b) ... of course. () |
| 7 a) Turn left here ... | b) ... then go straight on. () |
| 8 a) Oh dear, ... () | b) ... I <i>am</i> sorry. () |
| 9 a) I like it ... () | b) ... very much. () |
| 10 a) I don't smoke ... () | b) ... thank you. () |

They then join the sentence halves together before working in pairs to answer questions with their new complete sentences, e.g. *What does your son do now? David works in a bookshop, etc.* Later they make their own conversations after noticing how a character uses a rising tone for a subject which is already being talked about and a falling tone to give new information.

This exercise not only gets students to listen carefully to intonation patterns, but by dividing sentences in two before joining them up again, it allows them to identify basic fall-rise patterns. We can also get students to listen to the way speakers react to see whether words like *OK* or *Really* indicate enthusiasm, boredom or indifference.

There are other ways to teach intonation, too: some teachers like to get their students to make dialogues without words – humming the ‘tune’ of what they want to say in such a way that other students can understand them. Many teachers also use a variety of devices such as arrows on the board and arm movements which ‘draw’ patterns in the air to demonstrate intonation. Some teachers exaggerate (and get their students to exaggerate) intonation patterns, which can be extremely amusing and which also makes patterns very clear.

Example 6: Sound waves

Sounds: intonation and stress

Level: any

The following examples show how a software program (in this case the CAN-8 Virtual laboratory) can be used to help students see their intonation and stress patterns.

Students working at a computer with a headset read a sentence and hear it being said by a competent speaker of English (the first soundwave pattern at the bottom of Figure 1). They then say the sentence themselves and can instantly see how closely their version (see the second sound wave pattern in Figure 1) approximates to the first.

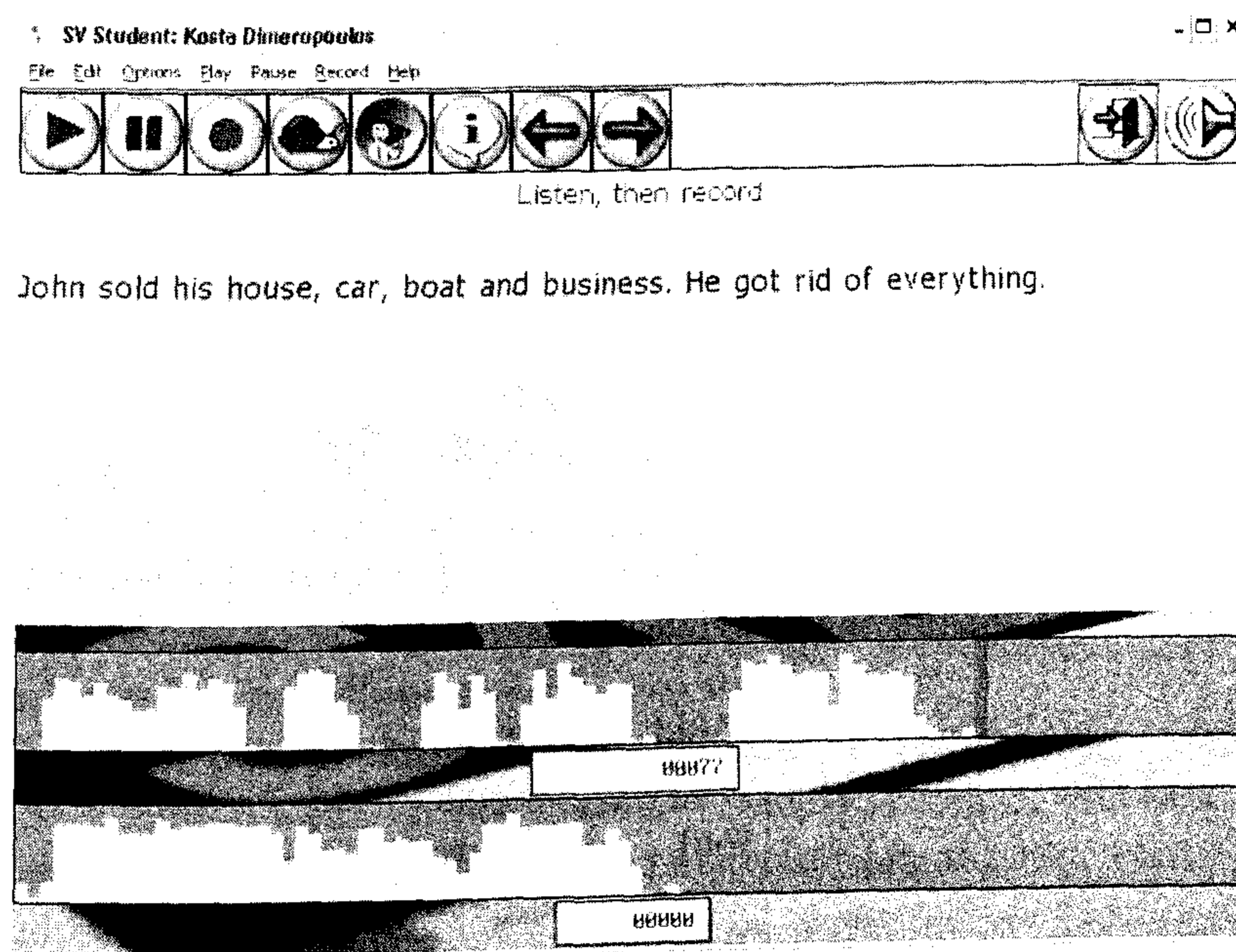


FIGURE 1: Soundwaves 1

The graphic indicates clearly that the student is speaking the sentence using different stress and intonation from the competent speaker. The student is now in a position to try to change their speed, pauses, stress and intonation. With luck, they will then produce something much more like the model (see Figure 2).

This kind of software would be especially useful with language that is more conversational than the example given here. But even with sentence-like examples, the fact that students

(especially those who are more visually oriented) can 'see' what they are saying is potentially extremely useful.

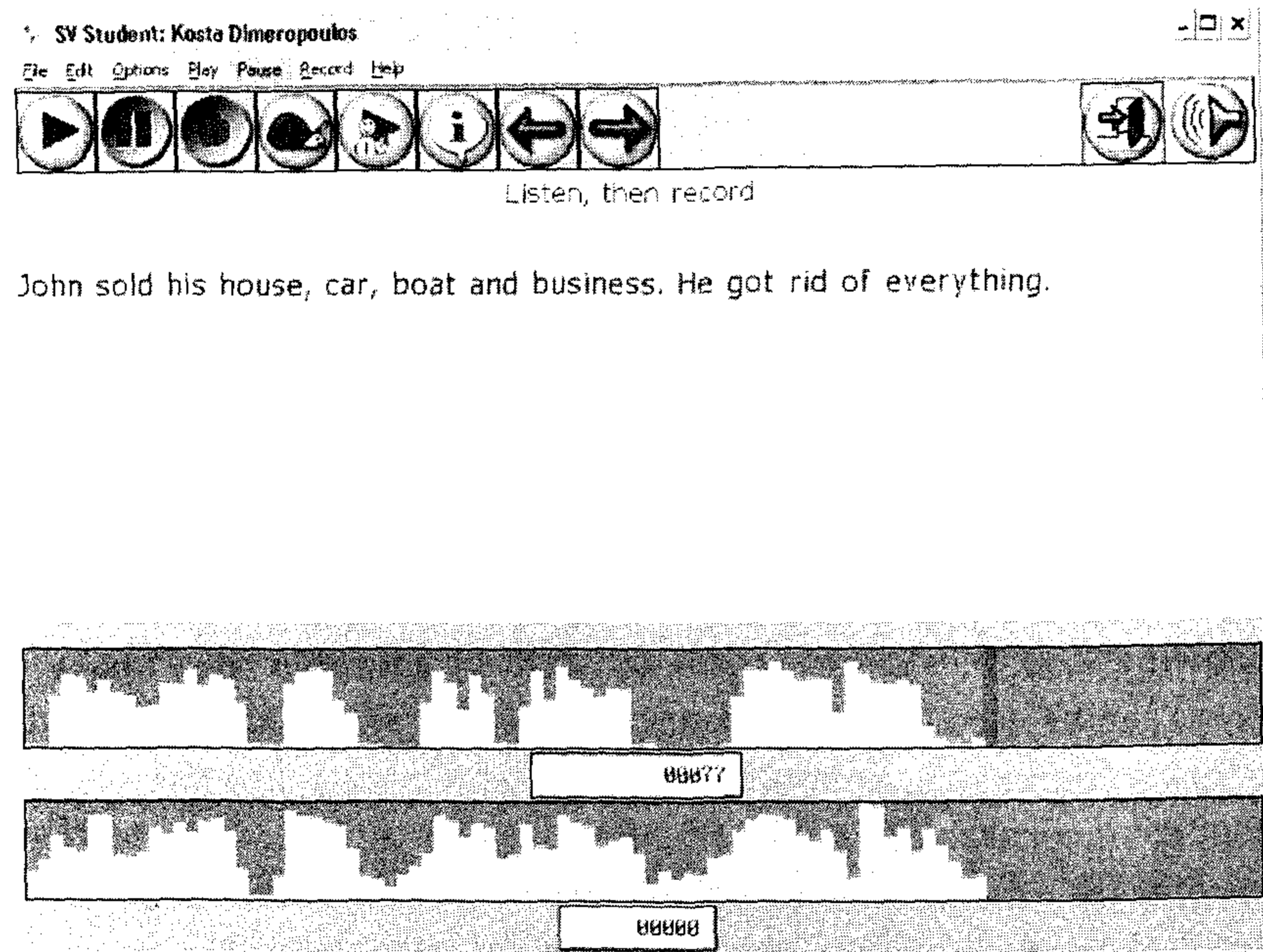


FIGURE 2: Soundwaves 2

B4 Sounds and spelling

Although there are many regularities in English spelling (such as word roots and grammatical endings), the fact that there is no one-to-one correspondence between letters and phonemes causes many problems for learners. The following two exercises are designed to teach sound-spelling correspondence for particular spellings.

Example 7: Sounds of *ou*

Level: elementary

Students are asked to listen to a recording and see how many different pronunciations they can find for the *ou* spelling in words like the following:

could	rough
country	sound
foul	thought
ground	though
house	through
out	unconscious
round	young

They can record the different sounds in their vocabulary books.

Teachers can also help students by giving them typical spellings for sounds every time they work on them. In a class on /ʃ/ and /tʃ/, for example, they can be given the following information:

S P E L L I N G

<p>/ʃ/ Shop</p> <p><i>Common:</i> ALL sh shop, wish, bishop</p> <p><i>Endings with</i> ti + vowel or ci + vowel education, initial, musician, delicious</p>	<p><i>Less common:</i> ch in words of <i>French origin:</i> machine, champagne s insurance</p>
--	--

/tʃ/ chin

MOST **ch** chin,
rich

ALL **tch** match,
butcher,
kitchen

ALL **t + ure**
future,
nature,
picture

From *Sounds English* by C Fletcher and J D O'Connor (Pearson Education Ltd)

Example 8: Looking for rules

Level: intermediate and above

In this exercise, students are asked to read the following two lists of words aloud. When they have agreed that the letter *c* can be pronounced in two ways, we can ask them if they can see what the rule is which decides which pronunciation will be used. We might have to prompt them by suggesting that they look at the letter which follows the *c*.

These are the lists they see:

	A		B
centre	certain	cap	can
nice	fence	cup	coffee
city	cycle	crack	coin
policy	bicycle	call	café
decide	cinema	come	cost
		custom	could

This kind of discovery approach (see Chapter 12C) to sound and spelling rules allows students to become aware that English spelling is not quite as random as they might think.

B5 Connected speech and fluency

Good pronunciation does not just mean saying individual words or even individual sounds correctly. The sounds of words change when they come into contact with each other. This is something we need to draw students' attention to in our pronunciation teaching.

We can adopt a three-stage procedure for teaching students about features such as elision and assimilation.

- **Stage 1/comparing:** we can start by showing students sentences and phrases and having them pronounce the words correctly in isolation, e.g. *I am going to see him tomorrow* /aɪ/ /æm/ /gəʊɪŋ/ /tuː/ /sɪː/ /hɪm/ /təmɔrəʊ/. We then play them a recording of someone saying the sentences in normal connected speech (or we say them ourselves), e.g. /aɪmgɔnəsɪjɪmtə mɔrəʊ/. We ask students what differences they can hear.

- **Stage 2/identifying:** we have students listen to recordings of connected speech (or we say the phrases ourselves), and they have to write out a full grammatical equivalent of what they hear. Thus we could say /dʒəwɒnəkɒfi/ and expect the students to write *Do you want a coffee?* or we could play them a recording of someone saying /aɪdəvklʌmbɪfɔː/ and expect them to write *I would have come before.*
- **Stage 3/production:** in our modelling and teaching of phrases and sentences we will give students the connected version, including contractions where necessary, and get them to say the phrases and sentences in this way.

Fluency is also helped by having students say phrases and sentences (such as the ones used in stages 1–3 above) as quickly as possible, starting slowly and then speeding up. Getting students to perform dialogues and play extracts – if we spend some time coaching them – will also make them aware of speaking customs and help them to improve their overall fluency.

Chapter notes and further reading

- **Meaning and perfection**
For a discussion about what pronunciation norms and models we should get our students to aim for, see J Jenkins (1998). See also C Dalton and B Seidlhofer (1994: Chapter 1). R Walker (2001) discusses international intelligibility, K Keys and R Walker (2002) consider ten questions on the phonology of English as an international language, and J Field (2003) discusses the ‘fuzzy’ nature of intelligibility.
- **Different languages**
For the pronunciation difficulties experienced by different first language speakers, see G Kelly (2000: Chapters 3 and 4).
- **Phonemic chart**
G Kelly (2000: 143) has created a different pronunciation chart for students, which categorises sounds in terms of their place of articulation, and whether they are voiced or voiceless (in the case of consonants).
- **Sounds and spelling**
See G Kelly (2000: Chapter 8). C Jannuzi (2002) suggests using phonics practice in class.
- **Intonation**
For two brief but illuminating articles on teaching intonation, see M Hancock (2005) and G Kelly (2005). J Lewis (2001) discusses teaching focus (international prominence) in conversation.
- **Pronunciation and music**
C Fonseca Mora (2000) suggests a connection between pronunciation (and language acquisition in general) and ‘melody singing’. P Blanche (2004) suggests using dictations to teach pronunciation.