

## Reading Homework due Week 3

### Task:

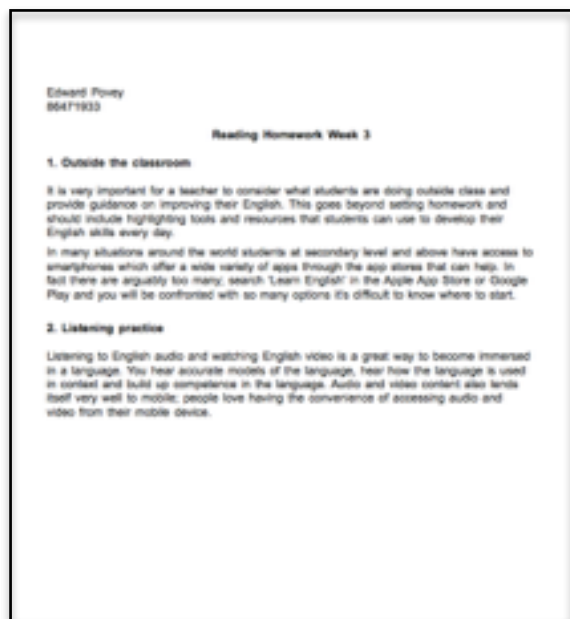
Choose **two** sections from the text and write 1~2 paragraphs for each section including your thoughts and reflections. (A 'section' can be anything from a paragraph to a few pages.)

Be prepared to discuss this reading in Week 3.

Reflections can include:

- thoughts or opinions related to the content of the text
- your examples, such as activities or materials you have used in your teaching
- how the content of the reading text will affect your future teaching

Example of a reflection paper:



Submission guidelines:

- Create a new text document for your answers
- Include your name and student number
- Use 12 point Arial font, single spaced
- Try to keep your answers to 1-2 A4 pages
- Print and bring your summary and answers to the deadline class for collection
- If you are absent, then bring them to the following class

## Chapter 2 **Starting out**

This chapter is an introductory overview of:

- the subject matter of language teaching;
- some first lesson hints and suggestions;
- what we mean by method.

### **1 The subject matter of language teaching**

What exactly are we teaching? What is the subject matter of language teaching?

An outsider might imagine that the content would comprise two major elements, namely knowledge of the language's grammar and knowledge of lots of vocabulary. Of course, these do form an important part of what is taught/learned, but it is important to realise that someone learning a language needs far more than 'in-the-head' knowledge of grammar and vocabulary in order to be able to use language successfully.

In staff rooms, you'll find that teachers typically classify the key subject matter of language teaching under two main headings: 'Language systems' and 'Language skills'. There are other important subject areas as well (including 'Learning better ways of learning', 'Exam techniques', 'Working with and learning about other people').

#### **Language systems**

We can analyse a sentence such as *Pass me the book* in different ways.

We could consider:

- the sounds (phonology);
- the meaning of the individual words or groups of words (lexis or vocabulary);
- how the words interact with each other within the sentence (grammar);
- the use to which the words are put in particular situations (function).

If we extend our language sample into a complete (short) conversation, e.g.

A: Pass me the book.

B: Mary's gone home.

then we have an additional area for analysis, namely the way that communication makes sense beyond the individual phrase or sentence, analysing how the sentences relate (or don't relate) to each other (known as **discourse**).

Figure 2.1 shows a brief analysis of the language sample from each of these viewpoints.

Phonological	/pɑ:s mi: ðə 'bʊk/ or /pæs mi: ðə 'bʊk/ The stress is probably on <i>book</i> , but also possible (with different meanings) on <i>Pass</i> or <i>me</i> . The words <i>me</i> and <i>the</i> probably have a weak vowel sound.
Lexical	<i>Pass</i> = <i>give; hand over; present</i> <i>me</i> = reference to speaker <i>the book</i> = object made of paper, containing words and/or pictures and conveying information
Grammatical	Verb (imperative) + first person object pronoun + definite article + noun
Functional	A request or order
Discoursal	Assuming that the reply <i>Mary's gone home</i> is intended as a genuine reply to the request, it may suggest a reason why the book cannot be passed (e.g. I can't because Mary took the book with her). In order to fully understand the meaning, we would need to know more about the situational context (i.e. who is talking, where, etc.) and more about the surrounding conversation (i.e. what knowledge is assumed to be known or shared between the speakers).

**Figure 2.1** Analysis of a language sample

So we have five language systems, though all are simply different ways of looking at the same thing. If we are considering teaching an item of language, one thing we need to decide is which system(s) we are going to offer our learners information about.

We might plan a lesson focused on only one area, e.g. grammar, or we might deal with two, three or more. An example of a commonly combined systems focus in many language lessons would be:

grammar + pronunciation + function

(i.e. how the language is structured, how to say it and how it's used).

### **Task 9: Recognising language systems**

Imagine that you intend to do some teaching using this piece of language: *Can you play the guitar?* Match some points you might focus on with the correct system name:

- 1 the construction *can* + pronoun
- 2 the meaning of *play* and *guitar*
- 3 variations, e.g. strong /kæn ju:/ vs. weak /kən jə/, stress on *guitar*, etc.
- 4 asking about ability
- 5 typical question-and-reply sequences containing this language

- a function
- b discourse
- c lexis
- d grammar
- e pronunciation

**Answers**

1 d 2 c 3 e 4 a 5 b

**Task 10: Distinguishing language systems**

You want to teach a lesson contrasting two potentially confusing areas of language. Classify each of the following teaching points as 'G' for grammatical, 'L' for lexical, 'P' for phonological, 'F' for functional.

Example: *house* compared to *flat* = L (lexical)

- 1 *I went to Paris* compared to *I've been to Paris*
- 2 *Lend us a fiver* compared to *Could you possibly lend me £5?*
- 3 *library* compared to *bookshop*
- 4 *woman* compared to *women*
- 5 *Sorry* compared to *Excuse me*
- 6 *hut* compared to *hat*
- 7 *impotent* compared to *important*
- 8 *some* compared to *any*

**Answers**

1 G 2 F 3 L 4 G/P 5 F 6 P (changing vowel sound)  
7 P (changing word stress)/L 8 G

**Language skills**

As well as working with the language systems (which we can think of as what we know, i.e. 'up-in-the-head' knowledge), we also need to pay attention to what we do with language. These are the language skills. Teachers normally think of there being four important macro language skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing. Listening and reading are called 'receptive skills' (the reader or listener receives information but does not produce it); speaking and writing, on the other hand, are the 'productive skills'. Skills are commonly used interactively and in combination rather than in isolation, especially speaking and listening. It's arguable that other things (e.g. 'thinking', 'using memory' and 'mediating') are also language skills.

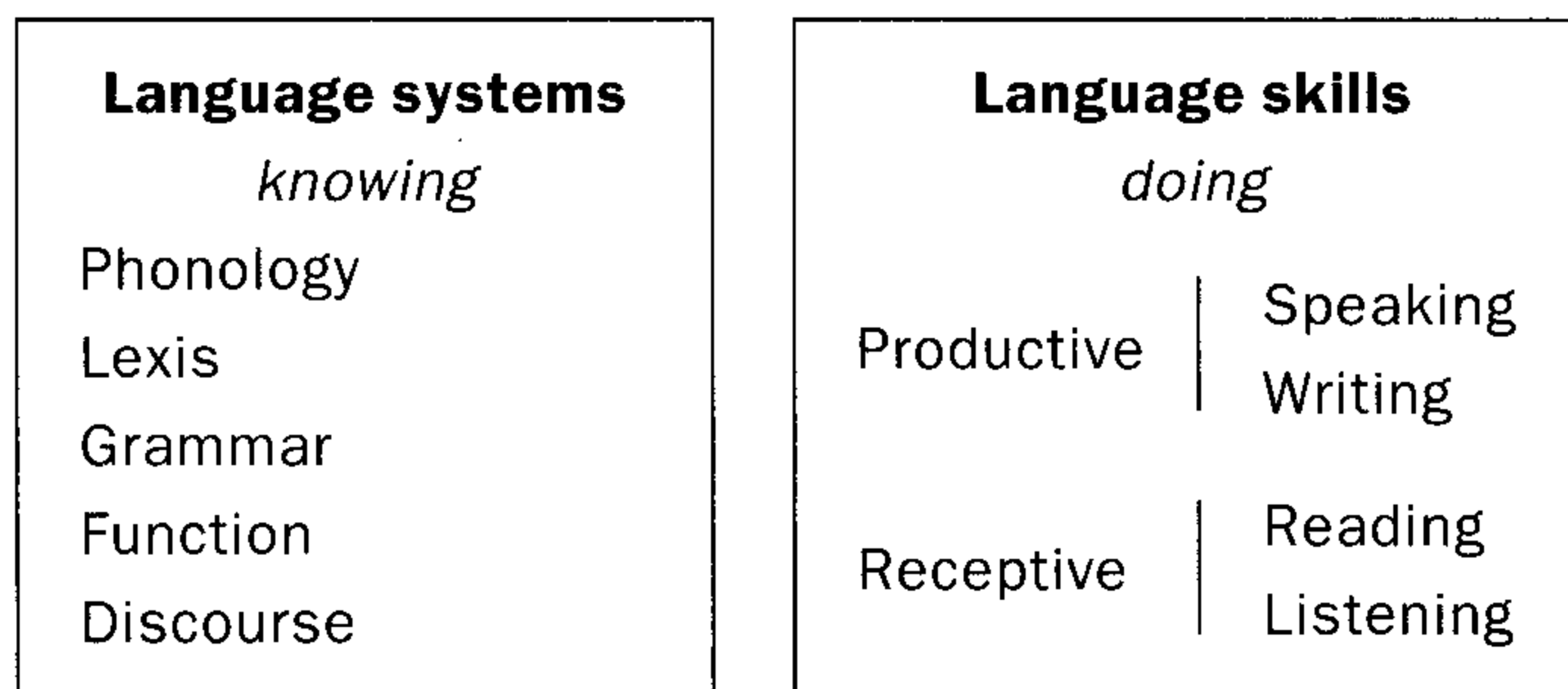


Figure 2.2 Language systems and skills

The main four skills are referred to as ‘macro’ because any one of them could be analysed down to smaller micro skills by defining more precisely what exactly is being done, how it is being done, the genre of material, etc. For example:

**Macro skill** Listening

- Some micro skills**
- Understanding the gist of what is heard, e.g. Who is talking? Where are they? What are they doing? What is their relationship? How do they feel?
  - Understanding precise information re. quantity, reference numbers, prices, etc. when listening to a business telephone call where a client wants to place an order.
  - Compensating for words and phrases not heard clearly in an informal pub conversation by hypothesising what they are, based on understanding of the content of the rest of a conversation and predictions of likely content.

### **Task 11: Listening to a radio weather forecast**

Consider briefly how you listen to the radio weather forecast in your own language. What would be different if you listened to one in a foreign language that you have been studying for a year or so?

### **Commentary ■ ■ ■**

Many of the skills that we have in our own native language are directly transferable to a foreign language. But we do need practice in a number of areas. For example, I know how I listen to a weather forecast in my own language: I only half-listen until I hear the forecaster mention my part of the country, then I ‘switch on’ and concentrate to catch the key phrases about it, then switch off again. But when I listen to a weather forecast in a foreign country in a different language, I will have problems, even if I know all the words and all the grammar the forecaster uses. Trying to decipher words in the seemingly fast flow of speech, trying to pick out what is important and what is not, is a skill that needs to be practised; it is work that needs attention in its own right, quite apart from the study of the grammar and vocabulary involved. ■

### **The importance of skills work**

Don’t underestimate the importance of skills work. Not every lesson needs to teach new words, new grammar, etc. Lessons also need to be planned to give students opportunities to practise and improve their language skills. Skills work is not something to add in at the end of a five-year course in English. There is no need to wait for extensive knowledge before daring to embark on listening and speaking work. On the contrary, it is something so essential that it needs to be at the heart of a course from the start. Even a beginner with one day’s English will be able to practise speaking and listening usefully.

### **A purpose-based view of course content**

Another way of looking at possible course content is to consider the communicative purposes that students need language for. The Common European Framework (see page 134) focuses on what learners can do with

language. For example, can an individual learner successfully attend company planning meetings? Or take notes in physics lectures at university? Or give unambiguous instructions to junior doctors on a ward? An analysis of such *can do* requirements suggests a different kind of course content, one based around students planning, undertaking and reflecting on tasks that reflect these real-life purposes. This course content would clearly include systems and skills work, but would be organised around this key idea of real-world uses.

### **Changes of emphasis**

Traditionally, language teaching in many countries concentrated on grammar and vocabulary reinforced by reading and writing. The reading and writing was primarily to help teach the grammar and vocabulary rather than to help improve the students' skills in reading or writing. In the twentieth century, teaching approaches based mainly around oral language practice through repetition and drilling were also widely used. Until the 1960s, a lot of courses were based on mainly grammatical syllabuses, but in the late 1970s and 1980s, a number of courses and coursebooks used a functional syllabus, grouping language by the purpose for which it could be used (e.g. the language of greeting or requesting or apologising).

Nowadays, most interest is expressed in work on all language systems and skills, particularly emphasising listening and speaking (because in everyday life we often do far more speaking and listening than we do reading and writing). Grammar is typically still the language system that features most prominently on courses and in coursebooks – and, at lower levels, is also the area that many students say they want or expect to study in most detail. Often coursebooks teach grammar with an emphasis on **communication of meaning** rather than purely mechanical practice.

Despite the continuing predominance of grammar, the implications of a more lexically oriented view of language (see page 226) are increasingly having an impact on material and task design. The growing influence of the Common European Framework (see page 134) has encouraged course designers, teachers and examiners to increasingly see successful communication in real-world tasks as a more important goal than that of accurate language use.

### **Task 12: Balancing systems and skills**

Here are two teaching situations. What balance of systems and skills would make a useful course for these learners?

- 1 A 24-year-old Japanese learner has studied grammar at school for nine years; she can read and understand even complex texts well. She has arrived in England to take a two-week intensive course. In her placement test (which was mainly multiple-choice grammar questions), she scored very well, but at the initial interview, she had trouble answering even simple questions about herself and often haltingly asked the interviewer to repeat the question.
- 2 A group of three undergraduate science students have enrolled for an English course at a language school in the Czech Republic. They know no English at all.

**Commentary ■ ■ ■**

- 1 The Japanese learner clearly needs a lot of work on the skills of listening and speaking. As she knows a lot of grammar, the course could concentrate on helping her activate this passive knowledge; the main thrust of the work could be on realistic listening and speaking activities to promote fluency and improve communicative abilities.
- 2 Most beginners need a balanced course that introduces them to the five systems and four skills. In their future careers, these science learners may well need to read and write English quite a lot, but may also need to visit other countries, listen to conference speeches (and give them), greet visiting scientists, etc. If they are likely to meet English-speaking people soon, it might be sensible to focus on speaking and listening, alongside work to help them read and write more effectively. ■

**The communicative purpose of language learning**

It is important to remember that no one area of skills or language systems exists in isolation: there can be no speaking if you don't have the vocabulary to speak with; there's no point learning words unless you can do something useful with them.

The purpose of learning a language is usually to enable you to take part in exchanges of information: talking with friends, reading instructions on a packet of food, understanding directions, writing a note to a colleague, etc. Sometimes traditional teaching methods have seemed to emphasise the learning of language systems as a goal in its own right and failed to give learners an opportunity to gain realistic experience in actually using the language knowledge gained; how many students have left school after studying a language for years, unable to speak an intelligible sentence?

**Task 13: Recognising skills or systems aims**

Every activity is likely to involve some work on both language systems and skills, though, usually, the aim is directed more to one area than the other. In the following list, classify each activity as 'mainly skills' or 'mainly systems' by ticking the appropriate box. Then decide which skills or which language systems are being worked on.

	Mainly systems	Mainly skills
1 You write a grammar exercise on the board which learners copy and then do.		
2 Learners read a newspaper article and then discuss the story with each other.		
3 Learners underline all past simple verb forms in a newspaper article.		
4 Learners chat with you about the weekend.		
5 Learners write an imaginary postcard to a friend, which you then correct.		
6 Learners write a postcard to a friend, which is posted uncorrected.		

	Mainly systems	Mainly skills
7 You use pictures to teach ten words connected with TV.		
8 You say 'What tenses do these people use?' Learners then listen to a recorded conversation.		
9 You say 'Where are these people?' Learners then listen to a recorded conversation.		

### Commentary ■ ■ ■

In Activity 1, the students do read and write, but use few of the skills that we need when we read and write in our normal life. Certainly, comprehending the teacher's handwriting and forming one's own letters on the page may be quite demanding for some students (especially for those whose native language does not use roman script), but beyond this, the activity's main demand is on use of grammar correctly.

Activity 2 involves the skills of reading and speaking in ways very similar to those in the outside world. Vocabulary and grammar will be encountered in the reading, but the main aim is for understanding rather than analysis and study. Compare this with Activity 3, where the same material is used, but now with a specific grammar aim. Compare then with Activities 5 and 6, and 8 and 9. The aim in Activity 4 is to encourage fluent speaking. The aim in Activity 7 is to teach some vocabulary, and the speaking and listening and writing involved are of less importance. ■

### Other areas that are part of language learning

The map of language systems and language skills is useful to keep in mind as an overview of the subject matter of English language teaching. However, it may well be an over-simplification. Elsewhere in this book, you'll come across some doubts about it (for example, when we ask if grammar is more fruitfully viewed as a 'skill' students need practice in using rather than as a 'system' to learn). And, of course, there is more to English language teaching than simply the language itself:

- Students may be learning new ways of learning: for example, specific study skills and techniques.
- They will also be learning about the other people in their class, and exploring ways of interacting and working with them.
- They may be learning about themselves and how they work, learn, get on with other people, cope with stress, etc.
- They may be learning a lot about the culture of the countries whose language they are studying.
- They may be learning how to achieve some specific goal, for example passing an exam, making a business presentation at an upcoming conference, etc.
- They may also be learning about almost anything else. The subject matter of ELT can encompass all topics and purposes that we use language to deal with.

Many teachers seem to become quite knowledgeable on the environment, business protocol, the British education system, desert survival techniques, etc. This is probably what keeps the job interesting! Some coursebook texts seem to achieve nearly legendary status amongst teachers! (Ask a teacher who's been in the business a few years if they know anything about a nun called Sister Wendy!)

If we start using English in class to do more than simple mechanical drills, then the subject matter becomes anything that we might do with language, any topic that might be discussed with English, any feelings that might be expressed in English, any communication that we might give or receive using English. The people who use the language in class, and their feelings, are, therefore, also part of the subject matter. This might be a little daunting and may lead you to keep the uses of language in class at a more mechanical, impersonal level, without allowing too much 'dangerous' personal investment in what is said or heard. This seems sad to me; I believe that we need to give our students chances to feel and think and express themselves in their new language.

## **2 First lessons – hints and strategies**

In your early lessons as an English teacher, you may find that 'survival' is your main priority. You would like to teach well and for your students to learn and enjoy what happens, but more than that you want something that you can prepare easily, something that is guaranteed (or nearly guaranteed) to work, something that will let you go into the classroom, do some useful work with the learners and get out alive. This section offers a number of hints and strategies that might help you do this.

### **Key hints when planning your first lessons**

- **Use the coursebook (if there is one)**  
Don't feel that you have to come up with stunning original lesson ideas and creative new activities. If you have a coursebook, then you have an instant source of material. It's fine to rely on the longer experience of the coursebook writer and do the lesson exactly as it was written. Take your time before the lesson to read carefully through the unit (and give the same attention to the Teacher's Book, if you have access to one). There's a reasonable chance you'll end up with a workable lesson. Many teachers also use ideas books, known as 'recipe books', which do exactly what that nickname suggests – give you everything you need to know to be able to walk into class with the right ingredients to 'cook up' a good activity.
- **A lesson is a sequence of activities**  
Think of the lesson as a series of separate but linked activities. Your first planning job is to select some appropriate activities. Read Chapter 3 and be clear what an activity is and how you can organise it in class.
- **Learn something about your students**  
If possible, talk to other teachers and find out something about the class and the people in it.
- **Plan student-focused activities**  
Don't plan first lessons that will put you upfront in the spotlight feeling the

need to burble. That leads to panic and muddle. Plan activities that are based on the following route map:

- 1 Lead-in (a brief introduction to the topic, e.g. you show a picture to the class and invite comments).
- 2 Set up the activity (i.e. you give instructions, arrange the seating, etc.).
- 3 Students do the activity in pairs or small groups while you monitor and help.
- 4 Close the activity and invite feedback from the students.

Steps 1, 2 and 4 should take relatively little time. The heart of this sequence is Step 3. This route-map lesson plan is looked at in more detail in the Chapter 3.

- **Make a written plan of the running order of your activities**  
Write out a simple list showing the activities in order. You don't need to include a lot of detail, but make sure you have a clear idea of your intended sequence of stages, perhaps with estimated timings.
- **Consider aims**  
Think about what students will get from your lesson, i.e. what is the point of them spending their time in this lesson?
- **Fluency or accuracy?**  
Decide, for each stage in the lesson, if you are mainly working on fluency or accuracy – this a key choice for many activities (see Chapter 7, Section 4).
- **Get the room ready; get yourself ready**  
If the timetabling and organisation of your school allows it, take time before any students arrive to make sure everything is ready before the class starts. Make sure the room is set up as you wish (e.g. how will you arrange the seating?). Make sure you have everything you need (e.g. chalk or board pens) – don't expect them just to magically be there! And most importantly, just feel what it's like to be in that room. Start to settle into it, to exercise ownership over it. For the length of the lesson, it's your space.
- **Have at least one emergency activity!**  
Prepare your own personal emergency 'Help I've run out of things to do and still have five minutes left' activity (e.g. a word game, an extra photocopied game, etc.). Keep this and add more emergency ideas day by day.

### **Key hints when teaching your first lessons**

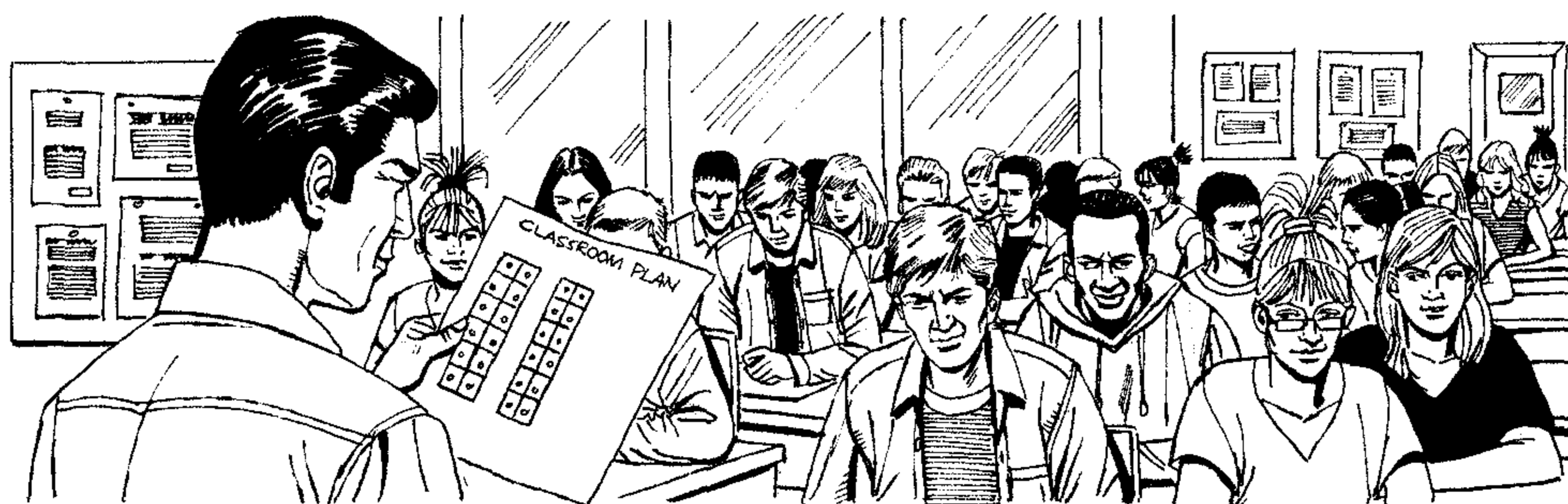
- **Talk to the students as they come into the room**  
Don't hide or do not-really-necessary 'business' while you wait for all students to arrive. This quickly builds up a tension and distance between you and the students and makes the start of the lesson much more demanding. Instead, think of the lesson as starting from the first moment a student arrives in the room. You can calm your own nerves and break the ice with students very quickly by chatting with each of them as they come into the room. Try sitting with them (even just for a minute or two) rather than standing in front of them. Welcome them. Ask them their names. You'll immediately start to learn something about them as real people rather than as generic 'students', and you'll find that you can start to relax a little.

- **Learn names as soon as possible**

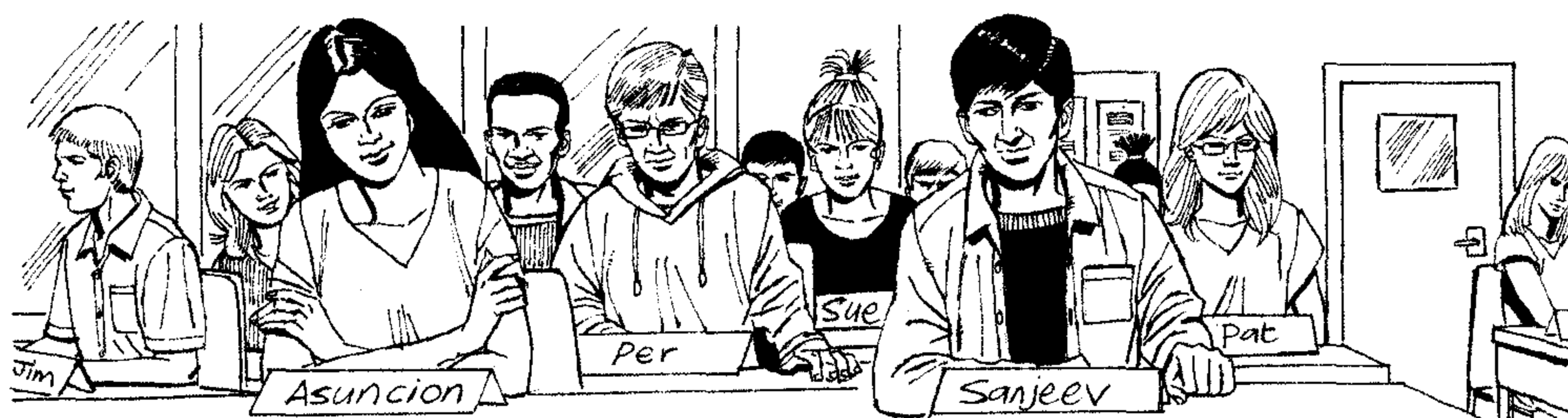
There is a huge difference in comfort levels if you know people's names. They stop being scary anonymous entities and start to become humans. In everyday life, if we meet a number of people in one go, say at a party, we are often a little careless about learning names. But in class, it is a very important teacher skill, and you should aim to internalise names as soon as possible. It is a bit embarrassing if you have to ask people their names over and over again. Don't say 'I'm bad at remembering names.' Make learning names quickly and accurately your first priority. If for any reason the pronunciation of names is a problem, take time to get the sounds right; if you are teaching in another country, maybe get a local speaker to help you.

*Practical Ideas*

- 1 As you ask each student for their name, write it down on a mini-sketch-map of the classroom. When you have all the names, test yourself by covering up the map, looking at the class and saying the names to yourself. Check and repeat any names you don't yet know.



- 2 Ask students to make a small place card for themselves by folding an A5 piece of paper in half. They should write their names on this so that every name is visible to you at the front. As the lesson proceeds, turn individual cards around when you think you know the student's name. (Some teachers use cards like these through whole courses; that seems rather lazy to me! This strategy is to help you learn names, not a substitute for that learning!)



- 3 Use name games from Chapter 16, Section 5. If it's not just you, the teacher, who is new, but your students are also new to each other, then using some of these name-game activities will definitely be a good idea.
- **Be yourself**  
Don't feel that being a teacher means you have to behave like a 'teacher'. As far as possible, speak in ways you normally speak, respond as yourself rather than as you think a 'teacher' should respond. Students, whether children, teens or

adults, very quickly see through someone who is role-playing what they think a teacher should be. Authenticity in you tends to draw the best out of those you are working with.

- **Teaching doesn't mean 'talking all the time'**  
Don't feel that when you are 'in the spotlight', you have to keep filling all the silences. When you are teaching a language, the priority is for the learners to talk, rather than the teacher. Start to notice the quantity of your own talk as soon as possible – and check out how much is really useful. High levels of teacher talk is a typical problem for new teachers. Read more about this in Chapter 5.
- **Teaching doesn't mean 'teaching' all the time**  
Don't feel that being a teacher means that you have to be doing things all the time. It may feel a little odd, but it really is quite OK to sit down and do nothing when students are working on a pair or group task. There are times when your 'help' will actually be interference. Take the chance to recover from your exertions, check your notes, enjoy watching your class at work, etc.
- **Slow down**  
A large number of new teachers tend to do things much too fast. They often seriously underestimate how difficult things are for students, or are responding to a fear that students will find things boring. Learning to really slow down takes time – but it's worth bearing in mind from your first lesson onwards. For example, don't ask a question and then jump straight in again because you think they can't answer it. Instead, allow three times the length of time you feel students need (this is sometimes called **wait time**).

### **Key hints for starting to teach better (once you've got past the first few classes)**

- **Turn your radar on**  
You are likely to be a little self-focused during your early lessons, but as soon as you can, start to tune in more to the students. Start to ask for comments and brief feedback on things you do. Watch the students at work and learn to notice what is difficult, what is easy, what seems to engage, what seems boring. Study your students.
- **Don't teach and teach ... teach then check**  
Practice is more important than input. Checking what students have understood and testing if they can use items themselves is usually more important than telling them more about the new items. Don't do endless inputs. Teach a very little amount ... then check what students have taken in. Give students the opportunity to try using the items, e.g. a little oral practice, a written question or two, or even simply 'repeat'. (Here's a rule-of-thumb ratio to experiment with: Input 5%, Checking and practice 95%.)
- **Are you teaching the class ... or one person?**  
When you ask questions/check answers, etc., are you really finding out if they all know the items ... or is it just the first person to call out? If one person says an answer, does that mean they all know? What about the others? How can you find out?

### 3 **Method? What method?**

#### **Task 14: Your own teaching method**

- What teaching method do you use? Can you name it?
- Can you describe key features of it?
- Can you describe any of its underlying principles?

#### **Commentary ■ ■ ■**

A **method** is a way of teaching. Your choice of method is dependent on your **approach**, i.e. what you believe about:

- what language is;
- how people learn;
- how teaching helps people learn.

Based on such beliefs, you will then make methodological decisions about:

- the aims of a course;
- what to teach;
- teaching techniques;
- activity types;
- ways of relating with students;
- ways of assessing.

Having said that, some methods exist without any apparent sound theoretical basis! ■

#### **Some well-known methods and approaches**

Well-known methods and approaches include:

##### *The Grammar-Translation Method*

Much traditional language teaching in schools worldwide used to be done in this way, and it is still the predominant classroom method in some cultures. The teacher rarely uses the target language. Students spend a lot of time reading texts, translating them, doing exercises and tests, writing essays. There is relatively little focus on speaking and listening skills.

##### *The Audio-Lingual Method*

Although based on largely discredited theory, the techniques and activities continue to have a strong influence over many classrooms. It aims to form good habits through students listening to model dialogues with repetition and drilling but with little or no teacher explanation.

##### *Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) or Communicative Approach (CA)*

This is perhaps the method or approach that most contemporary teachers would subscribe to, despite that fact that it is widely misunderstood and misapplied. CLT is based on beliefs that learners will learn best if they participate in meaningful communication. It may help if we distinguish between a stronger and a weaker version of CLT:

**Strong CLT:** students learn by communicating, i.e. doing communication tasks with a limited role for explicit teaching and traditional practice exercises.

Weak CLT: students learn through a wide variety of teaching, exercises, activities and study, with a bias towards speaking and listening work.

Most current coursebooks reflect a version of weak CLT.

*Total Physical Response (TPR)*

A method devised by Dr J. Asher, mainly useful with beginner and lower-level students. Learners listen to instructions from the teacher, understand and do things in response, without being required to speak until they are ready (see page 281).

*Community Language Learning (CLL)*

A method based around use of the learners' first language and with teacher help in mediating. It aims to lower anxiety and allow students to communicate in a more genuine way than is typically possible in classrooms (see page 309).

*The Natural Approach*

Devised by Stephen Krashen, this is a collection of methods and techniques from many sources, all intended to provide the learner with natural comprehensible language so that the learner can pick up language in ways similar to a child learning their first language.

*Task-Based Learning (TBL)*

A variant of CLT (see above) which bases work cycles around the preparation for, doing of, and reflective analysis of tasks that reflect real-life needs and skills.

*The Silent Way*

Devised by Caleb Gattegno, this method requires the learner to take active ownership of their language learning and to pay great attention to what they say. Distinctive features include the relative restraint of the teacher (who is not completely silent!) and the use of specially designed wallcharts. The use of Cuisenaire rods in mainstream ELT arose from this method.

*Person-Centred Approaches*

Any approach that places learners and their needs at the heart of what is done. Syllabus and working methods will not be decided by the teacher in advance of the course, but agreed between learner and teacher.

*Lexical Approaches*

Proposed by Michael Lewis and Jimmie Hill. On the back of new discoveries about how language is really used, especially the importance of lexical chunks in communication, proponents suggest that traditional present-then-practise methods are of little use and propose a methodology based around exposure and experiment.

*Dogme*

Scott Thornbury's proposed back-to-basics approach. Teachers aim to strip their craft of unnecessary technology, materials and aids and get back to the fundamental relationship and interaction of teacher and student in class.

Some schools (or individual teachers) follow one of these named methods or approaches. In naming a method, a school suggests that all (or most) work will fit a clearly stated, recognisable and principled way of working. Other schools sometimes advertise a unique named method of their own, e.g. the Cambridge Method. These are usually variations on some of the methods listed above, or not a method at all but something else, e.g. simply the name of the coursebook series

being used (e.g. the Headway Method), a way of dividing levels according to a familiar exam system, or an eclectic contemporary lucky dip.

### **Personal methodology**

Despite the grand list of methods above, the reality is that very few teachers have ever followed a single method in its entirety (unless they work in a school that demands that they do and carefully monitors adherence).

I remember watching many language teachers at work in the (then) Soviet Union, which was well known as a bastion of traditional Grammar-Translation teaching. Yet I was struck by how every teacher had their own personal way of working in the classroom. There were some similar factors between different teachers, and if I listed all the most frequently observable features and added them together I could have found a core of things that were recognisably Grammar-Translation. But the truth was that there was no monolithic method at work.

Many teachers nowadays would say that they do not follow a single method. Teachers do not generally want to take someone else's prescriptions into class and apply them. Rather they work out for themselves what is effective in their own classrooms. They may do this in a random manner or in a principled way, but what they slowly build over the years is a **personal methodology** of their own, constructed from their selection of what they consider to be the best and most appropriate of what they have learned about. The process of choosing items from a range of methods and constructing a collage methodology is sometimes known as **principled eclecticism**.

I offer some suggestions for a way to construct your own principled personal methodology in Chapter 6 on planning.