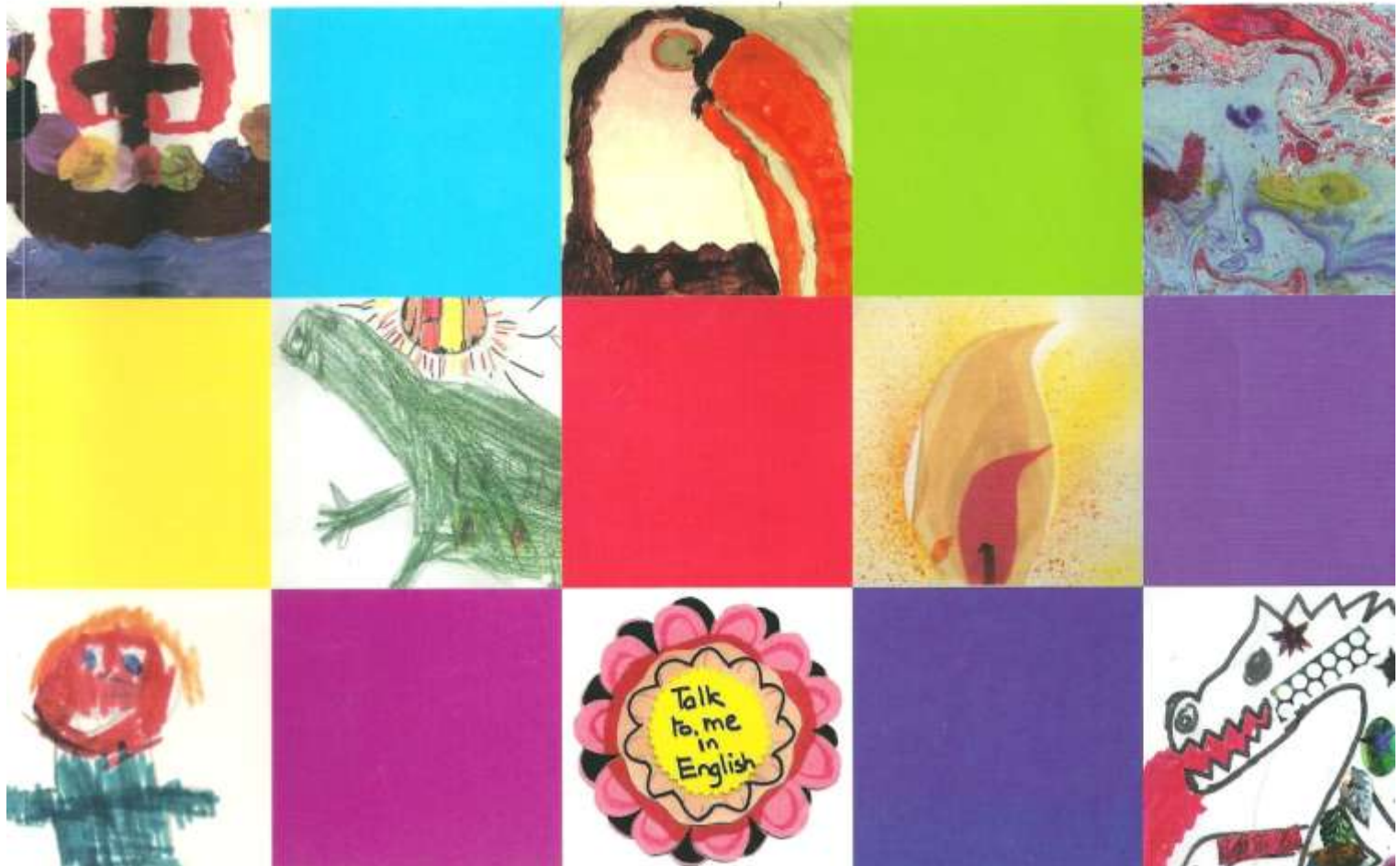


English for Primary Teachers

A handbook of activities & classroom language

Mary Slattery & Jane Willis



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MARY SLATTERY

JANE WILLIS

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Words in **bold** are used in a specialist sense, and are explained in the Glossary (pages 145–6).

 listen to the CD or your cassette copy.

 here you need to **DO** something, not just read. Take time to think about it and follow the instructions carefully. If possible, discuss this with someone you know.

RECORD record yourself doing this, for effective learning and fluency practice.

 this means that this question/exercise/ activity has sample answers in the Key (pages 135–9).

About the Authors



MARY SLATTERY is a teacher and freelance teacher trainer. She began her career in the 1970s teaching English and Spanish in Dublin, Ireland. In the 1980s she started to teach English as a foreign language. She has taught children and adults at all levels and has written articles on various aspects of teaching.

For the past 12 years she has designed and worked on short English language training courses for non-mother tongue primary teachers at the Applied Language Centre in University College Dublin and has given workshops in Europe. She works on Certificate and Diploma teacher development programmes and on short courses for international groups of teachers of English.

Mary is particularly interested in second language learning through storytelling and arts activities. One of the main influences on her teaching was her mother who taught her through Irish and English. She is married and has three sons.



JANE WILLIS began her career teaching French and English in Africa, and for the next 20 years she taught English and trained teachers in many different overseas countries. On returning to Britain she worked as a writer and freelance teacher trainer and consultant, often going overseas to run workshops for non-native speaker teachers.

She has written many articles on ELT and several books for teachers, two of which have won prizes: *Teaching English Through English* (Longman) and *A Framework for Task-based Learning* (Longman).

In 1991 she joined the Language Studies Unit of Aston University, Birmingham, England, where she works with practising teachers of English at all levels, world-wide, on Distance Learning programmes leading to a Masters in TESOL/TEFL.

Jane is married (to another English teacher!) and they have two daughters and several grandchildren. Her pastimes include walking in the mountains, sailing, and being entertained by her grandchildren.

Introduction

As English is being introduced into primary classrooms round the world, more and more teachers are being asked to teach English to Young Learners. This book was written to help such teachers to improve their spoken English and to use it effectively to help their children learn.

This book is for teachers who teach English to children aged 4–12, including:

- **generalist teachers:** i.e. class teachers, who teach all subjects as well as English to one class
- **specialist language teachers** who teach English to several different classes and levels
- **teachers on training courses** (there are lots of practical ideas to try out)
- **tutors on a training course** for primary teachers of English (in-service or pre-service)
- **teachers who want to study at home** (the units are carefully graded).

The book will help you

- to improve your confidence in speaking English in the classroom
- to broaden your range of language teaching activities.

The activities and language will be relevant to your classroom because

- the syllabus for the book comes mainly from our 'bank' of English lessons recorded and contributed by thirteen different teachers from countries round the world. These lessons are samples of good practice from dedicated and committed teachers – not perfect samples specially prepared, but real classes in action.
- they include a wide range of activities and techniques used by teachers and trainers from different parts of the world and include popular activity types from primary textbooks
- we have selected classroom extracts and examples of language that are typically used by successful non-native primary teachers internationally. Our aim is to provide coverage of classroom English in normal everyday settings – not in idealistic situations.

- the classroom language is carefully graded. Unit 1 begins with basic classroom instructions for a typical lesson. The next units cover specific language relevant to particular activity types. In the final units we shift the main focus to longer stretches of talk, for example, telling a story.

If you work through the book and CD you will

- 1 find many practical ideas to adapt and try out in your lessons
- 2 activate the English that you already know and gain the confidence to use more English with your pupils
- 3 benefit from other teachers' experience by hearing typical samples from everyday English lessons. These are real lessons taught by primary teachers (both non-native and native speakers) around the world, but they have been re-recorded in a studio for this book
- 4 expand your range of classroom language. This will help you to:
 - carry out day-to-day classroom organization in English
 - manage each basic activity type in English
 - give your children a rich experience of English of different kinds – from short, simple instructions (for example, Total Physical Response and questions and answers) to longer, **sustained talk** (for example, storytelling)
 - talk to your learners about topics which interest them, and themes that young learners' coursebooks and syllabuses generally cover
 - know when it is helpful to use the children's mother tongue, and when to allow children to use their mother tongue.
- 5 be well prepared for future professional development.

To summarize, we recognize that teaching English can be more rewarding and less stressful if you

- feel confident enough to use English as the main language in the classroom during English lessons – giving your young learners valuable experience of English in use

- have a wide variety of activities that are both fun for young learners and rich in natural language learning opportunities.

This book aims to demonstrate effective language teaching in practice; it rests on sound educational principles and up-to-date theories of child second language acquisition. However, it does not attempt to explain issues in general primary pedagogy or educational psychology.

Working your way through the book

The first unit asks you to reflect on the processes of language learning and to examine ways to create effective learning conditions in class. It also introduces you to the study methods used in the book.

Units 2 to 5 cover listening then speaking activities. Units 6 and 7 deal with reading then writing activities. The next two units illustrate ways of using stories. The final unit covers wider issues such as use of mother tongue, correction, integrating coursebook activities, and lesson planning.

We look initially at the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing separately. We do not recommend they are treated separately in class, but we want to focus on the different challenges that each skill presents to you, as teacher, and to your learners.

Activities for listening and speaking early in the book are recycled and extended in later units. Nearly all the activities recommended are ones actually used by the teachers who contributed their lessons to this book.

How the CD can help you speak English in the classroom

The CD contains 62 recorded extracts from typical English lessons as well as some pronunciation exercises. It forms an integral and vital part of this handbook.

Listening to the lesson extracts gives you first-hand experience of teachers in action. They include typical classroom situations and activities, and they illustrate the English that is useful in those circumstances. While listening, you can, if you wish, read the Classroom Extract in the book.

Listening to the recording and repeating the teacher's part will help you to improve your own intonation and pronunciation and become more fluent. Studying the language used by proficient teachers (with the help of the written Classroom extracts) will help you to pick up useful classroom

phrases as well as techniques for class control and management.

If you don't have a CD player, ask someone to copy the CD onto a C90 audiocassette for you (it is 75 minutes long). Then you can still make full use of the recordings.

What you get from each unit

Each unit begins with an **Overview** and an **Introduction** linking it to earlier units, and showing how the unit progresses.


This is followed by four to five **main sections**, each illustrating a different type of activity, for example, Listen and mime, Listen and colour.

Within each section there are normally some **sub-sections**:

- **An explanation, description, and/or rationale** is given for the activity type.
- **Classroom extracts** demonstrate the situation or activity being used in class. These are recorded on the CD and the written transcripts appear on the unit page.
- **Language Focus** exercises help you study aspects of the language from the classroom extracts, including stress and intonation. They also bring together sets of examples useful for daily classroom functions. You can record these on to your own personal audiocassette (see page 3).
- **Extension Ideas** list more activities of this kind or ways to extend them.
- **Teaching Tips** give ideas for adapting activities or setting them up differently.
- **Topic Talk** sections give you practice in talking about common topics with your classes, for example, families, animals, parties. This gives children a chance to listen to more English. Topic Talk often includes simple tasks that can be done on your own or with a friend or a colleague at work. We recommend that you record yourself doing the tasks on a separate audiocassette; then you can play it back and listen to yourself. The overall aim of Topic Talk is for you to become more fluent and confident in speaking in English in the classroom.
- **Pronunciation Points** focus on individual sounds that sometimes cause difficulty for learners and teachers. They are recorded on the CD. These points are for teachers only, not for children.

Each unit ends with a **Further Ideas** section with suggestions for follow-up reading and activities, things to try out in your classes or ways to plan materials.

Making the most of the CD

Wherever you see the  symbol, prepare to listen to the Classroom Extract. It is always more effective to listen more than once. In fact some teachers listen three or four times, each time for a different purpose. For example:

FIRST LISTENING

(preferably without reading the written extract)

- Try to understand in general what is happening in the lesson.

SECOND LISTENING

(again, possibly, without reading)

- Notice ways the teacher deals with particular situations.
- Notice stress and intonation patterns.

THIRD LISTENING

- Listen and read the Classroom extract in the book.
- Identify useful words and phrases used by the teacher.
- Try reading the teacher's part, out loud, in your own time, paying attention to intonation, stress, and pronunciation.

FOURTH LISTENING

- Practise by pausing the CD or cassette and repeating after the teacher, or by reading out loud, speaking along with the teacher.
- Identify words and phrases you need more practice with.
- Finally record yourself taking the teacher's part, and play it back to compare.

This whole process will help you to improve your pronunciation, gain fluency in speaking, and to acquire naturally many features of spontaneous classroom English.

NOTE

The CD is to help you to improve your own English, not to use in the classroom with children.

Recording yourself to build fluency and confidence

We know that as a teacher you do not have a lot of spare time, but we and our trainees have found that it is very useful to record yourself, on your own personal audiocassette, using some of the language from the extracts, tables, and exercises in that section. Play back your recording and see how you sound. If you are not satisfied, you can always erase your recording and try again.

Keep the recordings that you are happy with, and, after completing each unit, play them back and listen again. This is good revision and will help you recall useful expressions. To help you identify what you have recorded, record the unit and section number before starting.

However, before you record, practise! With the Language Focus activities, adapt the language to suit your own classes. Then, before recording, practise what you are going to say several times, trying out different intonation patterns. You can do the same with Topic Talk sections. You can also record yourself taking the teacher's part of the Classroom extracts, and then listen to the CD, to compare your pronunciation.

If you are lucky enough to have a friend or a colleague who speaks some English, or if you are on a course with other teachers, you could practise speaking with them. This would be especially helpful for sections like Topic Talk, or for storytelling. If you are on your own, then the process of recording yourself and listening as you play it back becomes even more vital for success. Do give it a try. It really does help you to remember the language you need and to speak English more easily.

We also suggest that you record yourself actually teaching in class, carrying out some of the activities from the unit. Later, play back your recording and listen to it once or twice to gain insights into your teaching and language use. A large number of teachers have already found that it helped them to improve their effectiveness. It can also help you focus on the children's progress.

From Unit 5 onwards, we help you to record some of your own teaching materials. So, to gain the most benefit from this book, you need to have two blank audiocassettes, one for personal language practice, and one to record teaching materials. Each time you see **RECORD**:

- *Read the instructions* and follow them carefully
- *Plan* what you could say
- *Practise* several different versions
- *Record yourself* on to your audiocassette
- *Play back*: listen, evaluate, and re-record if you wish to.

Using journals and portfolios to add to your learning experience

Some teachers have found it helpful to keep a *personal journal* while they are studying. After each study session, they write down in a notebook or personal journal what they have learnt or noticed from listening to their recordings, from trying things out in class, or ideas gained from reading or talking to pupils or colleagues. You can note down words and phrases you need to practise. Also, write any questions you have after each unit. Every two or three units, go back over and read what you have written, taking note of significant comments. You may even find answers to your own questions.

Other teachers put together a *portfolio of work*. For each unit, put into a folder or file ideas for new activities, materials for new stories (with visual aids), sample lesson outlines, and reports of lessons where you have tried out new ideas. You could also add an audiocassette, with recordings of yourself in class doing a selection of activities, or with materials for storytelling or listening activities. At the end of your course, you can select a number of your best pieces of work to make up a final portfolio, with title, name, and contents page. This final portfolio can be used

- to show new teachers what can be done
- to take to a job interview or to a training course
- to impress a visitor or an inspector
- for assessment purposes – some training courses and teachers' examining bodies now use final portfolios for end of course assessment.

Website

The Oxford Teacher's Club has a primary Website which includes:

- more examples of lessons and activities
- notes for teachers and course tutors
- opportunities for you to tell us what you think and send in your ideas.

Go to <http://www.oup.co.uk/elt> and click on 'Teacher's Club'.

A word about young learners

The activities suggested in the book are for a variety of ages and levels. Teaching situations differ all over the world, and children start English at different ages in different places, so we often suggest ways that activities can be adapted for older or younger children or for those with more or less English.

What are children like as learners?

They

- are developing quickly as individuals
- learn in a variety of ways, for example, by watching, by listening, by imitating, by doing things
- are not able to understand grammatical rules and explanations about language
- try to make sense of situations by making use of non-verbal clues
- talk in their mother tongue about what they understand and do – this helps them learn
- can generally imitate the sounds they hear quite accurately and copy the way adults speak
- are naturally curious
- love to play and use their imagination
- are comfortable with routines and enjoy repetition
- have quite a short attention span and so need variety.

How can you as teacher help them?

- Make learning English enjoyable and fun – remember you are influencing their attitude to language learning.
- Don't worry about mistakes. Be encouraging. Make sure children feel comfortable, and not afraid to take part.
- Use a lot of gestures, actions, pictures to demonstrate what you mean.
- Talk a lot to them in English, especially about things they can see.
- Play games, sing songs, say rhymes and chants together.
- Tell simple stories in English, using pictures and acting with different voices.
- Don't worry when they use their mother tongue. You can answer a mother tongue question in English, and sometimes recast in English what they say in their mother tongue.
- Constantly recycle new language but don't be afraid to add new things or to use words they won't know.
- Plan lessons with varied activities, some quiet, some noisy, some sitting, some standing and moving.

Because children show different characteristics at different ages, we sometimes make a distinction between very young learners (VYLs) aged under 7 years, and young learners (YLs) aged 7 to 12.

Teaching children under seven

If you are teaching a second language to children under seven, remember that very young learners:

- **acquire** through hearing and experiencing lots of English, in much the same way as they acquire their first language.
- learn through doing things and playing; they are not consciously trying to learn new words or phrases – for them this is incidental.
- love playing with language sounds, imitating and making funny noises. So have fun playing with words and phrases, for example, singing them, exaggerating your expression.
- are not able to organize their learning. Often they will not even realize that they are learning a foreign language. They simply see it as having fun!
- may not be able to read or write in their mother tongue, so it is important to recycle new words and expressions through talk and play.
- their grammar will develop gradually on its own, provided they hear lots of English and learn to understand a lot of words and phrases.

Teaching children between seven and twelve

Children from 7 to 12

- are learning to read and write in their own language
- are developing as thinkers
- understand the difference between the real and the imaginary
- can plan and organize how best to carry out an activity
- can work with others and learn from others
- can be reliable and take responsibility for class activities and routines.

When you are teaching 7–12 year olds you can

- encourage them to read in English (stories, comics, reading games)
- encourage them to work meanings out for themselves
- explain things about language, but only very simple things
- use a wider range of language input as their model for language use
- encourage creative writing and help them to experiment with language
- explain your intentions and ask them to help with organization of activities.

There will be more on these aspects in Unit 1.

We hope that you enjoy using this book and that you will gain satisfaction from experimenting with new ideas and trying out new language. Please let us know (via the Website or publishers) how you get on with this book, and if you have any suggestions for improvements or additions.

We wish you and your learners well.

Mary Slattery, Dublin, Ireland

Jane Willis, Kendal, England

Introduction for trainers and tutors on courses

This book can be used as a basis for any training courses for teachers of English to 4–12 year olds.

We recommend that all tutors and teachers begin by reading carefully through the Introduction, as this gives insights into how the book was planned and advice on how to approach each section.

Recommendations for training sessions

There are some activities which would be best done in group sessions. Many activities denoted by the symbol ☺ will benefit participants more if done in pairs or small groups. On all training courses, there are some participants who feel shy and ashamed of their level of English, and who hesitate to speak English in front of the whole group. In the relative privacy of a small group or pair, they are less likely to worry about making mistakes and are more likely to try out new words and phrases. Working in pairs increases the opportunities they get for spontaneous speech, and helps them develop their fluency and confidence.

Starting a new section

Begin each new section by letting participants read the rationale for the activity type, and then summarize and/or discuss the main points either as a class or with participants in groups.

Using the CD and the classroom extracts

A CD is provided with this book because it gives teachers examples of English in use in the classroom. It is the simplest and most direct way to show how listening to English can improve pronunciation and intonation.

Before playing the CD, ensure teachers understand the classroom context. As you progress through the book, you may get to know some of the teachers on the CD quite well. Note that some of the teachers contributed several lessons at different levels. You may need to explain to participants that the original teachers' recordings had to be re-recorded by actors in a studio, which is why some teachers sound rather similar to each other. (Reassure them that the actors had heard the original tapes and kept as close as possible to the original.)

In the session, you may need to play the CD more than once. Ideas for what to focus on each time are given in the section itself and there are more ideas in the main Introduction. Participants might profit from some choral repetition of short chunks and phrases, to focus on stress and intonation, as well as pronunciation of key words.

In the Language Focus sections we have focused on certain aspects of language used in the lesson extract. Participants could, however, analyse other aspects of an extract.

TEACHING TIPS: participants can read through the tips and relate them to their own experience. Then in pairs or groups they can

- tell others about their own experience of similar techniques, situations ('I once did/used ... with a class of eight year olds ...')
- suggest situations in their classes where such tips might help, and say how they might actually carry them out
- give ideas for adapting the tips or setting activities up differently.

After this, ask some pairs to report their best idea to the class. Give the whole group time to prepare what to say, if they are asked.

EXTENSION IDEAS: participants read through these ideas, then

- choose one they have experience of, or would like to try out, and tell each other what they did/might do in class and what the good things/difficulties were/might be
- try to suggest another similar activity, or another topic this could be done with
- think of ways to extend them further, and add reading or writing activities.

After this, ask some different pairs to report their best idea to the class. Again, give the whole class time to prepare what to say.

Language Focus exercises

These can be done in pairs. Encourage participants to

- add to and adapt the language in the tables (explaining to each other in what context their phrases would be used) and then practise in pairs

- do the task (for example, pairing, adding, sequencing, spotting the odd one out) first on their own and then compare the way they did it with their partner, reading the phrases out loud.
- Let participants try out some short interactions, role-playing with each other, and building on the examples a little more. Encourage them to
- exaggerate the intonation and expression they use while doing this, for fun
 - say the phrases/examples out loud from memory, without reading them from the book
 - see how many they can remember in one minute without looking back at the book
 - choose the most useful language and tell the class what it was and when they could use it
 - write new words and expressions in their language notebooks
 - prepare together in pairs what they are going to record on their personal cassette at home.

During the following session, ask participants if you can hear a short sample from some of their recordings. (Participants can choose what bit to play to the class, and have their cassettes wound back, ready to play, at the start of the session.) This is a good way of ensuring that participants actually do make the effort to record. And always think of something positive to say about their contributions.

We emphasize getting participants to record themselves because we believe that 'going public' greatly enhances the desire to improve their own language, and the effort put into preparing for the recording aids both memory retention and recall.

Topic Talk and Storytelling

These are best done in small groups, to increase opportunities for teacher talk. Topic Talk sections are set up differently in each unit on purpose to give teachers experience of a variety of types of interaction and activity. See the main Introduction for further rationale. You may well wish to change or supplement these topics to suit your local syllabus.

If your participants need more fluency practice and opportunities for sustained talk, ask them to prepare a simple story on a familiar topic, to tell in the next group session. They can do this even before they get to the units on storytelling. You can set a one-minute time limit to begin with. Sometimes they can record their story in their own time and play it back in a group session. If they are shy, they can tell or play their story in small groups of three or four.

Follow-up presentations

After pair or group discussions of Extension Ideas, Teaching Tips, and Topic Talk, participants can be asked to present their findings or best ideas to another small group or to the whole class. Because this constitutes a more 'public' performance, there will be a natural urge to be as accurate and as organized as possible. But before they present their findings in public, they will benefit from some planning time, when they plan roughly what they will say and try to make their language suitably accurate. During this planning time, they can ask a trainer if they are not sure of a language point, or check in a dictionary or with their co-participants.

This process mirrors a three-part Task-based approach (Willis 1996):

TASK

- done in pairs or small groups
- spontaneous talk (mistakes don't matter).

PLANNING

- pairs decide what ideas to present to the whole group
- efforts made to plan appropriate language that is both fluent and accurate.

REPORT

- tutor asks some pairs/groups to report their ideas, i.e. to present their ideas to the whole class
- this is more formal planned talk
- the ideas can then be summarized or discussed.

Further study ideas

Here we would like to encourage teachers to continue in their own personal self-development. Many of the ideas ask teachers to look back again at specific activities and language, to listen again to extracts, and then to plan, work out, and write down ideas for lessons. Then finally teachers can try out their ideas, teach, and record their own classes.

Teachers could keep a record in their journals of any comments or analysis, and the self-evaluation they are doing. Using journals helps trainees structure their own learning and become more aware of their specific needs.

You might find it useful to make notes on some of the things you learn from looking at their journals, if you have agreed beforehand that you can read them.

Organizing teaching practice activities with a focus on classroom language

The following pattern has proved useful for practising classroom language in training sessions. It could be used with the activities or situations illustrated in a classroom extract, or suggested in a Teaching Tips or Extension Ideas section.

Divide participants into groups of three (or possibly four, but not less than three).

Ask them to appoint one teacher, one or two children, and one language secretary.

- Tell and show the 'teachers' from each group what they have to do.
- Tell the 'children' from each group that they must *only* do what they are actually told by the teacher, and nothing else. (As teachers they may see in advance the point of activities and may do what they know is required, not just what the 'teacher' says.)
- Tell the language secretaries to write down as much as they can of what the 'teacher' says. Some groups could use a tape recorder if conditions allow this.

When the activity is finished each group can analyse their performance in terms of language used with the help of a form like the following:

Participants' names _____

Language used for activity	What was clear and why	What was unclear and why	How to improve

Each time you do this let different participants role-play the teacher, the children, and language secretary. When all the groups have finished they can pool their findings and see what they have learnt.

This kind of group activity should help teachers support one another and help them feel less nervous about teaching in front of larger groups.

Contact time on training courses is often limited. You may want to ask course participants to read and study some parts of each unit on their own. They can write down in their own language notebook any new language they see or questions they have, to ask you in class.

Recommendations for individual study during a course

- a in preparation for course sessions, as introductory reading, participants could:
 - read the Introduction to the book
 - read the outline contents and introduction to each unit
 - read the beginnings of sections where some rationale is given
 - prepare some ideas for Topic Talk or storytelling.
- b as a follow-up to course sessions, for language consolidation purposes, participants could:
 - listen to the classroom extracts on the CD again
 - practise their personal pronunciation and intonation using the CD
 - record themselves and play back their recordings
 - prepare to talk about activities that they have done with their own learners.
- c for preparing class activities and teaching practice sessions, and keeping records:
 - prepare new activities to try out in class or in group sessions
 - write their journal and keep up a language notebook
 - keep a record of successful activities and teaching materials for a portfolio.

At the end of the course

Encourage teachers to form local support groups so they continue to have the opportunity to compare and discuss teaching ideas with colleagues. After the training session they may arrange to meet occasionally or regularly, and to share ideas and materials.