

Block

1**THE TEACHER IN THE CLASSROOM**

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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

The central theme of this course is the nature of teaching strategies — ways of creating special contexts that provide learning opportunities and learning experiences that would support and promote language learning. Our specific focus will of course be on the teaching learning of English (by learners in India), but many of the ideas discussed will be relevant to the teaching learning of language in general. We have come across various concepts and explanations that help us to understand the nature of language and of language learning in various units of Courses 1 and 2. In those discussions we were trying to get a sense of language learning and language using wherever and whenever they occur.

We shall now consider the various issues related to the efforts that are made under the head teaching or instruction to bring about language learning. Since languages have always been an important part of the school curriculum, there is a long tradition of planned and deliberate ‘teaching’ of languages. The experience of this large volume of professional effort — available to us as the technical literature of language instruction— is what we shall be drawing on in this course. The central question we shall consider is: what are sensible and efficacious ways of promoting language learning through a programme of instruction? We shall try to identify those general principles (or strategies) that are likely to work. The discussions here (in Course 3) will be somewhat general. But this does not mean theoretical and abstract! These general ideas and principles related to ‘learning from language instruction’ will be worked out and illustrated with more examples in the two parallel elective courses: Course 4 for the primary and elementary level (younger learners) and Course 5 for the secondary level (older learners).

The Language Curriculum — Pre-determined and Open-ended Aspects

We could describe the ground covered by this course in another way by calling it a discussion of the language curriculum. It is important to bear in mind here that ‘curriculum’ is being used in a very broad sense, and covers two complementary aspects. Firstly, there is the system of **pre-designed and pre-determined inputs**. This is what we usually associate with a syllabus scheme: objectives, requirement, course books, teaching techniques, etc. Secondly, there is the dynamic and unpredictable process of implementing such a scheme in real settings. These real settings are the actual classrooms in which particular groups of learners guided by their own teachers actualize the ‘plan’ into teaching-learning activities in a manner unique to them. The uniqueness lies in their particular characteristics as a group (levels of ability and motivation and degree of variation among them), the qualities of the teacher and her relationship with them, the level of facilities and the atmosphere of the school, and the degree of support from the neighbourhood/community which it serves.

Obviously, teaching-learning is located in these everyday classroom processes, and that is where the focus of our discussion will be. All the same, the framework of the formal syllabus does affect what happens in classroom lessons, and so we need to understand the relationship between these two aspects of the language curriculum.

In our discussions we will take as typical the situation of the teacher who is working in a school, handling a class of 30 or 40, and teaching about 50 periods a week, following a given syllabus. The teacher’s work in this very common

situation is governed by the formally prescribed syllabus: objectives, course book(s), examination scheme, etc. This prescribed scheme can sometimes be cumbersome and restrictive, and complaints about the rigidity of 'the system' are commonly voiced, especially by competent and committed teachers. It is important, when considering this point, to make a distinction between the requirements that appear to be imposed on the teacher by the official syllabus, and the support for the teacher that this pre-arranged curriculum represents. The pre-designed and organized curriculum package is the product of the specialized professional efforts of a number of agencies: those who identify needs and lay down objectives, those who frame the syllabus, those who develop course materials, those who prepare the model examination paper and specify the marking scheme, etc. This scheme or package represents resources that are meant to support teachers and learners by providing them with some basic matter or outlines on which to build the 'learning process' we associate with actual classroom lessons.

When a Directorate or Board prescribes a (new) syllabus, it is in an important sense approving and endorsing the work done by the teacher's fellow professionals — which is intended to give the teacher a whole lot of resources, as a sort of initial deposit. Since this package is always general in the sense of being common to hundreds (or even thousands of 'parallel' classes or schools) it cannot possibly be in the form that makes it directly and simply applicable in any particular class. This fact highlights the crucial role that the language teacher (even one following a prescribed syllabus) has to play. She has the responsibility to select what is most useful for her class from the general possibilities and suggestions contained in the curriculum package. She has also then to add to and develop this partial matter or base into the full-fledged lessons that make up the implementation process. In this sense, the teacher's implementation of a language syllabus involves judgement of a high order and initiative, since what is given is incomplete. We have seen that there are two major aspects of the language curriculum taken in its entirety: the pre-organized aspect which is general and common to many separate groups, and the open-ended aspects which evolves during implementation as the specific needs of a given class of learners is responded to.

One of the main aims of this course is to note and gain an appreciation of the complementary functions or (i) the pre-planned or design aspect, and (ii) the unpredictable implementation process aspect of the language curriculum.

Planning in the Curriculum: the Relevance of Strategies

The word planning has two somewhat different but equally important meanings and associations. One is the careful and well organized working out of details so that a programme of activities can be carried out smoothly and efficiently. Teachers who have had to organize the loading of a few hundred children of different ages into 8 or 10 buses by 6.30 a.m. to leave for a day long excursion will fully appreciate the importance of detailed planning for avoiding chaos (even if total smoothness and efficiency is not achieved). The other aspect of planning is related to ideas such as looking ahead, noting possibilities, considering various alternatives and their probable consequences, being ready with many different plans of action. All this points to the quality of being alert and well prepared, but not tied down to a fixed and detailed sequence of actions. The notions of strategy and flexibility are closely linked to this perspective on planning. When we reflect on planning in the context of the curriculum, we can see that both aspects of

planning are important. Education (organized teaching-and-learning) on a large scale requires the efficient assembling and coordination of a variety of human and material resources. A programme for teaching English for example the school level Course of 5 years (Standard VI to X) for regional language medium students, requires as a first step detailed syllabus specifications for each year including the relevant course books. This is the broad level of curriculum planning. More detailed planning is done at the school level when a 'calendar' showing topics/units, tests, etc. weekwise is drawn up. The logic behind all this is easy to see. But we should also note that these plans only deal with resources and teacher based 'inputs'. Nothing has yet been said about learners and the actual operations of learning. This focus emerges only when the planning of lessons is done by the teacher, with her particular group of learners in mind.

As we have already seen, the common curricular package has to serve as a base from which lessons geared to actual classrooms can be developed. The package has to be open and flexible so that there is room for adaptation and elaboration by individual teachers. Planning that is too detailed and efficient will prove to be counterproductive. The planning of lessons by teachers also poses a challenge from the perspective of flexibility. Today we see language learning essentially as process of interaction and negotiation among individuals trying to 'use' language to communicate. Learning 'about' the language (the way we learn about the Indus Valley civilization in history, or about flowering plants in botany) is not central to classroom lessons. The important point is that learners actively contribute to language lessons: they do not merely 'receive' input from the teacher and the course book. This makes language lessons rather unpredictable, since the responses of individual learners cannot be prearranged and controlled. And yet the teacher cannot simply go into class unprepared and expect interaction and language learning to happen automatically. This means planning of the lesson in a manner that leaves it open-ended and emphasises the preparedness to handle a variety of possibilities, rather than providing a detailed step-by-step sequence of actions.

Thus we see that both for the general curriculum and for classroom lessons, it is important to plan ahead by specifying and structuring many details, and to maintain a flexibility that permits appropriate responses to new (unforeseen) situations. In our discussion of ways of promoting language learning spread over this course, we will keep running into this (healthy) tension between these two approaches towards planning. There is the pull towards order and efficiency and also the pull towards openness and flexibility. Neither approach is good or bad in itself. We need to appreciate where in the totality of the curricular process each makes its best contribution, so that their effects are complementary.

The term strategies used in the title of this course symbolizes this double perspective on planning and organizing instruction. We will in various units, review a range of concepts and principles that theory and practice have shown to be helpful in promoting the learning of English. We will also keep observing that the rules and procedures derived from them can only be guidelines; these have to be used purposefully and flexibly, adapting them to particular situations. The course thus suggests broad principles, which need to be understood and appreciated as strategies. This course is not a manual of authorized techniques ready for immediate use by the English teacher.

An Overview of the Contents of the Course

We begin our study of teaching strategies to foster language learning with a look at the various decisions and actions that are largely in the classroom teacher's hands: this is the focus of the units in Block 1. Then we go on to a survey of the principles underlying various 'teaching inputs' that have been found to be helpful in promoting language learning. We will try and identify those techniques and activities that are especially useful for developing particular skills and sub-skills of language ability. We shall look at developing the four skills and their integration in Block 2. There will of course be a fair amount of overlap across these units since these skills are rarely used separately when communicating through language. We shall also look fairly closely at the principles underlying the preparation of materials: printed course books and web-based material. These are probably the most important of the resources prepared by fellow-professionals that the teacher draws on in her day to day work. Finally we shall consider the procedures for evaluating the progress of learners, and the issues that arise when we attempt to do this. We will emphasise the point that test scores of learners tell us as much about us (the usefulness of our efforts to teach) as they do about the learner's success.



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WHAT DOES THIS BLOCK CONTAIN?

A teacher near the blackboard addressing a group of students in their seats in classroom has been — for centuries perhaps — the dominant image of schooling. In recent decades the notion of teaching - instruction has been extended considerably to include the decentralized classroom (group work, pair work), individualized learning, technology based instruction, and independent learning (typified by distance education). All the same, organized instruction, is still predominantly based on teacher-led group instruction in the form of lessons contained in class hours, or periods of about 45 minutes arranged a few times each week. A student's experience of the curriculum for English (or any subject) over a year has as its core or backbone the series of lessons 'taught' by the subject teacher; homework and additional study is invariably linked to this core.

We also talk nowadays of 'learning rather than teaching', 'learner-centred teaching', etc. All this does NOT mean that the teacher has become irrelevant and has little to do. In fact the opposite is true. And the teacher's 'job' is the focus of this block of units. What this approach emphasizes is that traditional 'one-way' teacher talk beamed at largely passive 'listeners' is of limited usefulness — and this is especially true in the case of language learning. A much wider range of student activity has to be brought into the scope of the lesson itself. This means getting the students to think, talk, do, explore,... The responsibility for 'conducting' this vastly more complex type of lesson lies largely with the teacher. Of course, as we have seen in the general introduction to the course, the teacher's fellow professionals who prepare the curricular package give the teacher an important base on which to build. But organizing and conducting the actual lessons seeking to involve 30 or 40 students in various activities is something the teacher herself has to attend to. Managing the activities and interactions of students with the teacher, the subject matter, and among themselves, is different from preparing subject matter for 'presentation' in a well ordered manner.

In the units of this block we shall survey the tasks and responsibilities that make up the main professional work of the 'classroom' teacher of English. As we have noted in the course introduction, the work of others (who make the curricular package) provide the teacher with a fairly extensive base on which to build. But obviously, organizing and conducting the actual lessons (as described above) is something the teacher herself has to do for the most part. In Unit 1, we discuss the various Approaches, Methods and Techniques in English Language Teaching. This will help the teacher to make informed and considered decisions on what strategies to use in her classroom. Units 2 and 3 discuss some of the ways in which 'planning' can be done flexibly. In the next two units (units 4 and 5) we will look at some of the possibilities open to us as individual teachers to reflect on our work and 'profit' from it. Since lessons are unpredictable and (advance) planning cannot (should not) be perfect, it is only after lessons have *emerged* that we can usefully analyze what goes into lessons, what makes them click, how they can be improved and so on. In a final unit on 'Experimenting with teaching' we will look at ways in which a teacher (or a group of teachers) who run into 'problems' can tackle them. The focus is on approaching them in a planned and thoughtful manner which is also in some simple but honest sense scientific. The problem need not be an immediate practical matter to be solved. It could also be some puzzle or mystery about the fascinating complexity called the language curriculum that intrigues the observant teacher.

A final word about the discussion in these units needs to be said here. The course writers were all practicing teachers and they have generally taken access to the situation and resources of a working teacher for granted. This does not necessarily place anyone who is not a teacher while doing this course at a great disadvantage. Such participants could keep in touch with one or two practicing teachers on a fairly regular basis. Discussions with such a person or persons should be as effective as drawing on one's own teaching context or experience for reading and working through these units.



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UNIT 1 APPROACHES, METHODS AND TECHNIQUES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 The Grammar Translation Method
- 1.3 The Direct Method
- 1.4 The Reading Method
- 1.5 The Behaviourist – Structuralist Paradigm
 - 1.5.1 The Structural Approach
 - 1.5.2 The Audio Lingual Method
- 1.6 Another Paradigm Shift: Communicative Language Teaching
- 1.7 Communicational Teaching
- 1.8 The Humanistic Approach
 - 1.8.1 Community Language Learning
 - 1.8.2 Total Physical Response
- 1.9 The Constructivist Paradigm
 - 1.9.1 Discourse Perspective in Constructivism
 - 1.9.2 Vygotsky's Theory of Social Constructivism
- 1.10 The Post Method Era
- 1.11 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.12 References and Further Reading
- 1.13 Answers

1.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you should be able to:

- understand how different methods have impacted language teaching learning in the 20th and 21st century;
- critically analyse and discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each method; and
- use appropriate methods to enhance the teaching-learning process in your classroom.

We have dealt more extensively with some of the methods than others, for example Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) as they continue to be used very widely even now.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Several methods of language teaching learning gained prominence in the twentieth century which are still being followed in the twenty first century. However, the

twenty first century has also thrown up certain exciting perspectives. In this Unit, we will further shed light on all these methods, looking at them from the perspective of the learner, the teacher and materials. We will also at the same time ask you to think ‘beyond’ the concept of methods. We wish to state at the outset that we do not promote the efficacy of any one method. We believe that a teacher knows her teaching-learning situation best and should use whatever methods suits her context. But to be able to do this, you need to be aware of the current trends affecting methods of teaching learning and the rationale for them.

‘Language educators have sought to solve the problem of language teaching by focusing attention almost exclusively on method’ (Stern 1983). In other words, they have assumed that if a teacher teaches using the right method, learning will automatically take place. Therefore, over the twentieth century, researchers have been constantly trying to find the ‘best’ method. However, language learners have not really benefitted from these various methods. Scholars are now arguing that perhaps we have been looking in the wrong direction all this while. Probably there are variables besides *methods* which we need to take into account. Prabhu (1990) proposed that any attempt to find a best method was illogical because the teachers quite reasonably adapted and combined individual methods to suit their classrooms contexts and their own personal beliefs. Applied linguists like Pennycook (1989) suggested that teachers were frustrated because they could not implement any method fully and consistently because their context would not allow it. This search for a ‘best’ method also maintained an unequal relationship between the academics/researchers and the actual teacher who had to engage with her class.

As a result of this sustained criticism, the search for the best method has become less important in the twenty first century and scholars are now talking of a ‘post method’ era where the classroom teacher and her context is given more importance and the teacher herself is encouraged to become a theoretician, theorizing from the classroom.

In the following sections, we shall discuss some of the teaching learning methods that have gained some prominence in the twentieth century and are still in use to a greater or lesser extent in the language classrooms in India as well as in the production of materials.

1.2 THE GRAMMAR TRANSLATION METHOD

The grammar translation method was not based on any theory of language teaching, but its roots can be traced to the way classical languages such as Latin and Greek were taught. It was a way of learning a language through a detailed study of its grammar. The learner then applied the rules of grammar in translating sentences and parts of text from the mother tongue into the target language and vice versa. A distinctive feature of this method was its **focus on translating the sentence correctly**. Grammatical accuracy was given great importance. Literary texts were the basis of this translation exercise. Vocabulary was taught through bilingual word lists and there was a lot of stress on memorization of words. In short, listening and speaking were neglected and the skills of reading and writing occupied an important place. In this method the teacher was totally dependent on the text as she had to rigidly follow the lesson with no scope for any innovation. The learner’s role was passive; s/he did not play any active role in the **use of the**

language. Look at the example given:

These are some of the activities that a teacher using the grammar-translation method would use from the reading passage given below.

Reading passage

I went out. And in the full blaze of sunlight in the field, stood two dogs, a black-and-white, and a big, bushy, rather handsome sandy-red dog, of the collie type. And sure enough this latter did look queer and a bit horrifying, his whole muzzle set round with white spines, like some ghastly growing; like an unnatural beard.

The black-and-white dog made off as I went through the fence. But the red dog whimpered and hesitated, and moved on hot bricks. He was fat and in good condition. I thought he might belong to some shepherds herding sheep in the forest ranges, among the mountains.

He waited while I went up to him, wagging his tail and whimpering, and ducking his head, and dancing. He daren't rub his nose with his paws any more; it hurt too much. I patted his head and looked at his nose, and he whimpered loudly.

He must have had thirty quills, or more, sticking out of his nose, all the way round: the white, ugly ends of the quills protruding an inch, sometimes more, sometimes less, from his already swollen, blood-puffed muzzle.

(From Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine by D. H. Lawrence)

- 1) Write the mother tongue equivalents of the following words in paragraph 1: queer, horrify, ghastly—
- 2) Translate the following sentences from the passage into the mother tongue.
 - i) I went out.
 - ii) The black-and-white dog made off as I went through the fence.
 - iii) I patted his head and looked at his nose, and he whimpered loudly.
- 3) Pick out the nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs from paragraph 1 and say what kind they are.

Reflection

- 1) Do you as a practicing teacher think that your students would benefit from such activities?
- 2) Would this help them learn L2?

Language experts of the early 1940's discarded the grammar translation method because they felt that learning **about** language through a detailed study of grammar was not the same as learning to use a language and that constant translation from the mother tongue stood in the way of the learner becoming a fluent user of the target language. However, in recent years, there has been a revival of the grammar – translation tasks, albeit in modified ways. For example, teachers may often ask a pair of students to get a folk tale in their mother tongue. They may be asked to translate it into English and then compare their translation and make modifications where required. Thornbury (2006) recognizes that the grammar translation may have survived due to its ease of implementation, especially with large classes.

1.3 THE DIRECT METHOD

As a reaction to the grammar translation method, the direct method emerged in Europe at the end of the 19th century. This method was based on the belief that learning a foreign language is similar to learning L1. This method emerged due to the needs of late 19th and early 20th century contexts when international business and travel required people to be able to use and communicate in L2. The primary principles that characterize the Direct method are as follows:

- 1) Classroom interaction was conducted exclusively in the target language;
- 2) The process of learning was essentially of forming associations, i.e. speech associated with appropriate objects, actions, concepts;
- 3) Only everyday vocabulary and phrases were taught;
- 4) Oral communication skills were organized in a graded manner and based on question and answer exchanges between teachers and students in small classes;
- 5) Repetition was essential if associations had to be formed and reinforced;
- 6) Grammar was taught inductively;
- 7) Both listening and speaking were emphasized, and
- 8) Accuracy of pronunciation and grammar was essential.

Adapted from Richards and Rodgers 2001 and Nagaraj, G. (1996)

The Direct method was demanding of both the learners and the teachers, both had to be highly motivated. This method could be best implemented in schools where the class size was rather small. The method placed the teacher at the centre and the role of the text book was minimized. There were a large list of dos and don'ts for the teacher, for example:

- Never translate: demonstrate
- Never explain: act
- Never imitate mistakes: correct
- Never speak single words: use sentences
- Never speak too much: make students speak

(cited in Titone, 1968:100-101)

This method continues to be popular in the elite private schools in India. However, overuse of this method would be detrimental, because it not only rejects the mother tongue of the learners but also puts heavy demands on the teachers.

This could be a possible activity conducted in the classroom using the Direct method.

Activity

Teacher pointing to a picture of a girl:

Teacher: This is Rita.
She has black hair.
She is wearing a blue dress.

Teacher: Who is she? (Pointing to the picture)

Class: She is Rita.

Teacher: What is the colour of her hair?

Class: It is black.

Teacher: What is the colour of her dress?

Class: It is blue.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: Write your answer in the space given below.

- 1) Write your own activity using the Direct Method for class 9 students.

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1.4 THE READING METHOD

This method was very popular in India soon after independence since English at that time was envisaged to be a library language. Michael West who lived in India for a long time was instrumental in popularizing this method. His new 'method readers' emphasized the importance of the reading skill. West believed that silent reading is the key to proficiency and that exercises in reading comprehension would enable proficiency in speech and writing. Vocabulary was seen as an essential component of reading proficiency. This led to the development of the principles of vocabulary control and resulted in the compilation of 'a general service list of English words'. This was used as standard reference for developing teaching materials and Readers graded on the basis of vocabulary were created. Only the grammar necessary for reading comprehension was taught. The vocabulary of the early reading passages and texts was strictly controlled for difficulty. An attempt was made by the teacher to expand the vocabulary as quickly as possible, since the acquisition of vocabulary was considered more important than the grammatical skills.

English is no longer considered a library language in India. Therefore, the emphasis on the Reading Method can no longer be considered. However the importance of vocabulary has again taken centre stage in English language teaching learning.

Reflection

How do you teach vocabulary in your classroom? Do you teach it as part of the reading comprehension exercise or are there any other contexts that you consider?

1.5 THE BEHAVIOURIST – STRUCTURALIST PARADIGM

1.5.1 The Structural Approach

About 1940's and later, language experts like Charles Fries applied the principles of behaviourism in psychology and structural linguistics to language teaching. They were of the view that different languages have different ways of expressing the same meaning. These are what we call *patterns* or *structures* of the language. In any language, a pattern is made up of words, but in each language, the words are put together in certain specified ways. To be able to use the language, therefore, one needs to know the words and the order in which they occur in that language. To teach a language (English in the present context) a particular pattern or structure is presented and practiced thoroughly before the learner goes on to a new one. Only when a learner 'masters' the individual structures that make up that language, can s/he be expected to come out with an infinite number of new utterances as required by a situation. A learner in this approach is expected to be accurate in whatever s/he says or writes and this grammatical accuracy is to be realized through constant drills and construction of correct (error free) sentences from substitution tables. The aim of such substitution tables is to condition the pupils into using the correct forms of the structure by getting her/him to **imitate** or produce many examples of the correct form, i.e., **repeated reinforcement**. In fact, errors were seen as **serious aberrations** which had to be removed immediately before they became '**habits**'. Errors were considered to be the result of interference from the first language, and were viewed as bad habits which were to be prevented at all costs and eliminated if they occurred. The focus of instruction did not move beyond the sentence level.

Teachers in India continue to be influenced by the structural approach and still use manipulative drills, substitution tables and fill-in-the-blank exercises.

Do you use exercises like the following?

A. Make as many correct sentences as you can from the following table.

1	2	3	4
I You We They	have been	watching TV doing the assignments pottering in the garden painting	for an hour. since 8 o'clock.
He She	has been	waiting for the doctor cleaning the cupboards	

B) Fill in the blanks with **a** or **an** where necessary:

- 1) Raju hopes to be _____ engineer.
- 2) He comes _____ home twice _____ week.
- 3) Draw _____ elephant.
- 4) He is the son of _____ accountant.

Reflection

Do such exercises serve a useful purpose? What would the students learn from such an exercise? What problems/advantages do you foresee in using such an exercise?

1.5.2 The Audio Lingual Method

The Audio Lingual Method was one of the methods which was based on the **Behaviourist – Structuralist Paradigm**. Towards the end of World War-II, the US armed forces needed to learn foreign languages on a large scale as US soldiers needed to communicate with both their allies as well as the enemy countries where they had been deployed. The languages taught ranged from European languages such as French and German to East Asian languages such as Japanese and Korean. This method focused on oral/aural work and pronunciation taught through drills as well as dialogue practice in small groups of motivated learners and native language teachers. Dialogues were the main aspect of the audio-lingual approach as they provided the learners an opportunity to mimic/imitate, practice and memorise bits of language considered to be relevant to their situations. In fact, the Audio lingual method adapted many strategies of the Direct method, especially the emphasis on the spoken skill. Based on the principle that language learning is **habit formation**, the method encouraged imitation and memorization of set phrases. Structures were taught one at a time using drills. Little or no grammatical explanation was provided. Vocabulary was limited and taught in context. There was use of language laboratories, tapes and visuals. Teaching points were often determined by the differences and similarities between L1 and L2, with an emphasis on the differences. Successful responses were reinforced; great care was taken to discourage errors, as it was felt they led to bad habits. Great emphasis was given to native-like pronunciation.

Read the following conversation. The verbs in **bold** are in the simple past tense:

Priya: **Did** you go someplace last week?

Venkat: Yes, I **did**.

Priya: **Did** you have a good time?

Venkat: Yes, I **did**. I **had** a very good time.

Priya: What time **did** you get home?

Venkat: My flight **got** in a little after eleven.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: Write your answer in the space given below.

- 1) Suggest the five key words which describe the Behaviourist model.

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- 2) Explain the main features of language learning through the structural approach.

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- 3) Write any two main features of the Audio Lingual method of language teaching.

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1.6 ANOTHER PARADIGM SHIFT: COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING

Communicative language teaching (CLT) emerged in Europe and in the USA in the 1970s. This has been the dominant paradigm for several years in all the different contexts where English is taught. It continues to be the major teaching methodology in the Indian context even now.

The origin of CLT can be traced to the changing view of language which veers away from language structure towards language functions and communications (Hall, 2011). Thus language teaching moved away from individual linguistic structures to teaching people how to use language effectively when communicating. In other words, it moved from linguistic competence to communicative competence (Hymes, 1972). Communicative competence essentially suggests that forming grammatically correct sentence by the learners is not enough, they should be able to use language appropriately in a variety of settings and situations and with different types of interlocutors.

For example, linguists pointed out the hiatus that exists between form and functions of utterances. For example, how will you understand the utterance – ‘Why don’t you close the door?’ What kind of a sentence is this in grammatical terms? What meaning does this utterance convey? Is it a question or a request? Is it about asking someone to shut the door or asking someone why they are not shutting the door?

To quote Littlewood, “... from a structural viewpoint the sentence is unambiguously an interrogative, from a functional viewpoint, however, it is

ambiguous. In some circumstances, it may function as a question. For example, the speaker may genuinely wish to know why his companion never closes a certain door. In others, it may function as a command – this would probably be the case if a teacher addresses it to a pupil who had left the classroom door open. In yet another situation, it would be interpreted as “a plea, a suggestion or a complaint”.

In other words, whereas the sentence structure is stable and straightforward, its communicative function is variable and depends on specific situational and social factors. A second language learner may not be able to interpret or judge the intention of a speaker and would need to be taught.

The key word in CLT is ‘learner centred’ and activities should be planned in such a manner where active learner participation is essential. Unlike other approaches where the learner has a passive role, here the learner is the active agent and negotiator who must contribute as much as s/he gains in a cooperative atmosphere. Hence, there is a great emphasis on pair work and group work. The teacher’s role also changes to that of a facilitator, organizer, guide, monitor, manager and counselor. The teacher has to facilitate the communication process between the learners, the text and the various activities which the student and the teachers must participate together.

The communicative approach to language teaching also ushered in an era of *fluency over accuracy* and the teacher was expected to stress more on the ‘meaning of a message conveyed’ rather than on the ‘grammatical correctness of the utterance’.

In the initial stages the syllabus based on CLT concentrated on the notional functional syllabus. However, the focus later became more **eclectic**. There were primarily three types of materials used: 1) text based, 2) task based and 3) realia (authentic material). The textbooks produced according to CLT in the Indian context have been varied. Many of them have followed the traditional ‘structural’ syllabus but included tasks which include games, role plays, information gap, problem solving and so on. Many of the books have also been divided around themes which are close to the student’s world, such as - my family, school, holidays, travel, culture, environment and so on. Realia has also been included as part of CLT, i.e. posters, advertisement, maps, train schedule, graphs. The tasks set have a specific communicative purpose and train the learners to be fluent as well as accurate, although CLT has tended to emphasize fluency over accuracy.

Example of a problem solving activity:

In the passage below, two paragraphs are jumbled up. Can you separate them again into two paragraphs?

Once there lived a cruel wolf in a town. One day a king saw an old man planting small mango plants. He asked him, “When will you get any fruit from these plants?” Saint Francis visited the town and wanted to see the wolf. The king laughed and said “You’ll die before the trees bear fruit.” People told him that he would be killed. But the saint would not listen. The old man smiled and said “Yes, but others will eat the fruit. Now, I am eating the fruit from the trees which my grandfather planted.” He went into the forest. When the wolf ran towards

him, he said “Come here Brother Wolf”. The king was ashamed. The cruel wolf closed its mouth and sat down at his feet.

Example of Gap filling activity

Ramesh Sinha is 12 Years old. He was born on 10th May 2001. His father Rakesh Sinha is a doctor. They live at No. 10, Kutab Institutional Area, Delhi. Ramesh studies in Adarsh Vidyalaya. He plays cricket and chess. His hobbies include painting and coin collection. Ramesh wants to join the local children’s club. Could you help him fill in the application form below?

The Kutab Children’s Club

Name:

Age:

Date of Birth:

Father’s Name:

Father’s Occupation:

Mother’s Name:

Mother’s Occupation:

Address:

Name of School:

Hobbies:

Any Special Interest:

(The teacher could get photocopies of authentic forms and ask the children to fill them).

However, all methods are subject to criticism, and from the 80’s itself there was a questioning of CLT. Brumfit (1984) for example, questioned the overemphasis on fluency at the cost of accuracy. Towards the late eighties there was again an emphasis on grammar teaching and vocabulary acquisition which had been relegated to the background in the early years of CLT. Additionally, the so-called authenticity of communicative activities was questioned. Widdowson (1998) for example questioned the authenticity of tasks such as giving directions in a classroom context, suggesting that such pair work activities cannot be termed genuine, taken away as it were from the context in which it is required. Moreover, it was suggested that CLT was not appropriate for all cultures and contexts. For example, pair work, group work, and less teacher intervention may not be suitable in more traditional cultures where there are certain expectations from a teacher.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: Write your answer in the space given below.

- 1) How is ‘linguistic competence’ different from ‘communicative competence’? Explain with examples.

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- 2) Why did communicative language teaching not produce the results it was expected to?

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1.7 COMMUNICATIONAL TEACHING

Communicational teaching refers to a five-year project of exploratory teaching of English as a second language which was ‘planned, carried out and reviewed regularly by a group of interested teacher trainers and teachers of English as a part-time activity but with institutional support from the Regional Institute of English, Bangalore and the British Council in Madras (now Chennai) from 1979 to 1984’ (Prabhu 1987). The origin of this project was ‘A strongly-felt pedagogic intuition that the development of competence in a second language requires not systematization of linguistic inputs or maximization of planned practice, but rather the creation of conditions in which learners engage in an effort to cope with communication.’ This project and its findings caused a lot of excitement all over the world and while it has not been formalized into an approach, it greatly influenced other approaches, especially the Task based approach to language teaching.

Some features of the communicational teaching

- It was a reaction against the structural-oral-situation method that was predominant at the time where the focus was on structure and its repetition.
- Problem-solving activities or tasks were the main thrust of the teaching-learning process. The communicational syllabus was not based on pre-selected language items but driven by the difficulty level of the tasks.
- The tasks provided ‘meaning-focused’ activity that required students to understand and convey meaning and where attention to language forms was incidental. These tasks were primarily cognitive in nature.
- In dealing with the class, the teacher controlled her language just as any adult would do when speaking to a child. This is called ‘natural control’.
- In communicational teaching the learner has to engage with more than one language that may be required for problem-solving activities. Hence the use of mother tongue or other languages were not prohibited.

Sample task

Given below are a few of the tasks used during the project:

CTP Lesson: 30 January 1981

Standard VIII

The following is written on the blackboard

Mr. George	
9.15 am	Leaves home
9.45 am	Arrives at his office
10.45 am	Goes to the court
3.30 pm	Returns to his office
5.30 pm	Leaves the office
6.00 pm	Arrives home

Mrs. George	
9.45 am	Leaves home
10.00 am	Arrives at the college
12.30pm	Leaves the college
12.45pm	Arrives home
1.45 pm	Leaves home
2.00 pm	Arrives at the college
4.30 pm	Leaves the college
4.45 pm	Arrives home

Pre-task: Questions which are deliberately varied in form are as follows:

- 1) Where is Mr. George at 10.00 am?
- 2) Who leaves home first in the morning?
- 3) When does Mrs. George arrive at the college, in the afternoon?
- 4) How long does Mrs. George take to go from her house to the college?
- 5) Who is at home at 1.00pm?
- 6) How much time does Mr. George spend at his office, in the morning?

Task:

- 1) Who comes home last, in the evening?
- 2) Where is Mrs. George at 1.30 pm?
- 3) How much time does Mrs. George spend at the college, in the morning?
- 4) When does Mrs. George leave the college in the afternoon?
- 5) Who is at home at 9.30 pm?
- 6) Where is Mr. George at 4.30 pm?
- 7) How long does Mr. George spend at his office in the afternoon?
- 8) Who does not come home for lunch?

Pre-task is guided by the teacher. It is a whole class activity. The pre-task activity is meant to orient the learner for the task based activity, which means the learner is expected to do the task by herself.

(Nagaraj, 1996, pp 92 -93)

1.8 THE HUMANISTIC APPROACH

The Humanistic movement in language teaching emerged, as did some of the other approaches, from developments which occurred in education and psychology. The ideational basis of humanistic education was developed by authors such as Maslow (1970) and Rogers (1961). In terms of acquisition of L2, this approach argued even more strongly against the authoritarian teacher-centred classroom and emphasized the importance of creating environments which minimized anxiety, enhanced personal security and promoted genuine interest through a deeper engagement of the learner's whole self (Roberts, 1975). Unlike the Communicative approach which to a large extent remained syllabus-centred, the Humanistic approach permitted students to diagnose their own needs and create their syllabus. The key concerns of this paradigm shift included factors such as the following:

- Respect for learners as people, being sensitive to their feelings and encouraging respect for each other. The affective nature of the learning experience was emphasized.
- Respect for the learners own knowledge and independence, and faith that learners know best how and when to learn. The classroom activities focused on what the learners wished to engage in. This contributed to learner autonomy and critical thinking skills as well as encouraged self-discovery.
- Responsibility and respect for the need for criticism and correction.
- Teachers were regarded as enablers and facilitators who assisted the learners in their process of self-discovery rather than instructors that transmit knowledge to learners.

The ways in which these psychological and educational principles can be implemented in second language teaching learning was explored and tried out by four language teaching methods. These include 'Asher's Total Physical Response, Curran's Community Language Learning, Gattegno's Silent Way, and Lozanov's Suggestopedia.' We shall discuss briefly two of these methods which will bring out the ways in which the basic principles of humanism can be realized in the classroom.

1.8.1 Community Language Learning

Charles Curran, who was the originator of community language learning (CLL), was a catholic priest who taught psychology and counseling. His approach to teaching L2 is heavily influenced by the methods of counseling therapy. In a CLL class, learners typically sit in a circle and talk naturally about the subject which is of personal relevance to them. The learners may speak either in the first language L1 or in the L2. The teacher stands behind the learner who is speaking and either gives the L2 translation of what the learner has said in L1, or reformulates the learner's L2 utterance correctly and appropriately. The learner then repeats what the teacher says and so that class moves on from one learner to the other in a similar fashion. The conversations are recorded and replayed at the end of the class. The whole purpose being to help the children analyse the contents and learn from the experience.

A CLL class thus had no preset syllabus; the language content was derived directly from the interests and concerns of the learners themselves. The teacher had two roles: first was that of the resource person who helps the learner to formulate the L2 message that they wish to convey. The second was to create a supportive and non-judgmental, anxiety free atmosphere in the classroom.

Most institutional settings such as schools and colleges find such an approach much too democratic to follow. However, many language programmes have drawn upon its principles such as the emphasis on learner-centeredness, group work, learner autonomy and the facilitative role of the teacher.

1.8.2 Total Physical Response

This method was evolved by James Asher, an experimental psychologist who theorized that the acquisition of L2 is very similar to L1. Since young children acquire their first language largely in the form of commands or encouragement to act ('sit down' 'finish your dinner') the acquisition of L2 should follow a similar pattern through commands that require a physical response. Central to TPR is the notion that all language learning (including L1 and L2) can be presented through commands and physical actions.

TPR did not become a fully implemented method within ELT. However, teachers might draw on it from time to time especially when teaching young learners. This method can be offered at the beginner level but may not appeal to learners at an advance level.

Check Your Progress 4

Note: Write your answer in the space given below.

- 1) Describe the salient features of the Humanistic approach to language teaching.

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1.9 THE CONSTRUCTIVIST PARADIGM

The National Curriculum Framework 2005 (NCF 2005) envisioned the aim and methodology of teaching learning as the process of construction of knowledge by the child. Every experience of life adds to the previous knowledge and helps to create and develop new ideas. Thus in constructivist methodology the teaching learning environment should be designed to support the learners' knowledge construction process. Wilson 1996 defines a constructivist learning environment as "a place where learners may work together and support each other as they use a variety of tools and information sources in their guided, pursuit of learning goals and problem solving activities". He calls it a learning

environment rather than an instructional environment because in a constructivist setting learning rather than teaching is emphasized. Designers of the constructivist learning environment emphasize the following seven pedagogical goals:

- 1) Provide experiences with the knowledge of what is a constructivist process;
- 2) Provide experiences and appreciation for multiple perspectives;
- 3) Embed learning in realistic and relevant contexts;
- 4) Encourage ownership and voice in the learning process;
- 5) Embed learning in social experiences;
- 6) Encourage use of multiple mode of representation. For example, written and spoken modes as well as films, projects, experimentation and so on; and
- 7) Encourage self awareness of knowledge of construction process.

Cuningham et al 1993

For the proper facilitation of knowledge construction, a teacher should create an interactive environment between students and teachers and between the students themselves. This can happen when students are engaged in collaborative activities which involve leadership, negotiation and cooperation thus encouraging an authentic way of learning. At the same time, students should be encouraged to make optimal use of what they know and be individual in their thinking process.

A good example of this could be role play where students take on the roles of characters in a book, famous historical figures, body parts and plant parts. In this way, they will understand the depth and importance of these perspectives.

1.9.1 Discourse Perspective in Constructivism

Anandan 2012 strongly feels that since language exists only in the form of discourses, our focus should be on enabling children to construct discourse, both orally as well as in the written form. This is possible only through providing authentic linguistic experience to children through discourses.

Discourse oriented pedagogy necessitates redefining curricular objectives in terms of discourses and not in terms of structures. For example, grammar teaching and teaching of writing are not separate skills but are inextricably linked to the students own writing. Using the students' own writing as a text, teachers using the constructivist approach teach grammar using one or a combination of the following methods: mini-lessons, grammar journals, one-to-one conferences and peer group activities. We shall briefly discuss each of these methods.

Mini-lessons arise from student written work and are designed to be very brief, say 5 to 10 minutes. For example, if a teacher has noticed certain problematic sentences from students' essays, rather than refer to textbook exercises to address the issue, she may select sentences from the students' work and use those sentences as a way to promote discussion about the stylistic choices that students make. Note the strategy emphasises stylistic choices rather than right or wrong answers, therefore, it gives students an opportunity to discuss their own writing as well as that of their peers. It sharpens their critical skills as they must consider whether their sentences work or don't work effectively. The goal is to have the students work on 2 or 3 sentences every day, hence the term 'mini-lesson'.

A Grammar Journal is a notebook in which students keep a record of ungrammatical sentences they have written. Teachers often guide the students to these errors but do not correct them. Students rewrite these sentences, making alternative stylistic choices to improve each sentence. During the one-to-one conference, the teachers discuss the editing choices and monitor the student's progress (Gupta 2012, pp159-160).

The following section would give you an idea about a typical lesson which follows the discourse perspective.

The Unit is titled "The Voice of the Voiceless".

The issue of discrimination is presented using a number of discourses like cartoon, newspaper report, profile, story and poem.

We present here a lesson transaction using the news reports.

Reading the news reports:

Process-reading

Let the learners go through the news reports individually.

Ask one or two learners to present the ideas they have conceived from the reports.

Divide the class into 5/6 member groups.

Assign each piece of news to two groups and ask them to read it again.

Interact with the groups and help them with their reading (by asking them to refer to the glossary, asking probing questions, etc.)

You may ask questions such as:

What is the report about?

Where did it happen?

Who were involved in it?

Let the groups present what they have understood from the news reports.

Let there be a brief discussion on the atrocities against the weaker sections of the society based on the newspaper reports.

Ask the learners to present instances of such atrocities against the weaker sections of the society in their neighbourhood.

Let the groups collect as many reports and photos as possible in English or any other language from newspapers and magazines.

Let them categorise those issues under five or six heads.

Let all groups compile a 'magazine', each using the collection of newspaper reports and photos based on different issues.

Based on all the issues, let them fill in the table given in the text.

Assessing the data entered in the table, the learners may prepare a brief report.

(Activity taken from English Sourcebook (p.45), Standard-7, Government of Kerala, SCERT, 2008)

In this paradigm, it is expected that the teachers fix goals together with students, asking them what they need and want to achieve and the different discourse domains and skills. This methodology avoids the linear mode of presenting language elements to learners whether in terms of structural grading or lexical grading or even in terms of functions and notions. Instead, the text book is now worked out in terms of gradation of discourses. For example, diary as a discourse is introduced in class four and autobiographical writing at the secondary level.

Check Your Progress 5

Note: Write your answer in the space given below.

- 1) Create a classroom activity using the discourse perspective for class IX students.

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1.9.2 Vygotsky's Theory of Social Constructivism

Social Constructivism was developed by the Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky. Vygotsky, although himself a cognitivist, believed that it was not possible to separate learning from its social context. He firmly asserted that learning was not simply the assimilation and accommodation of new knowledge by the learners. Instead, he argued that all cognitive functions originate in social interactions. Therefore, the active learner not only links new knowledge to prior knowledge, but also applies it to understand authentic situations.

Vygotsky's main interest was in the study of language development. Learning for him occurred through dialogue which took place between the teacher and the learners, between the learners themselves and between the learner and the text. Vygotsky believed that learners made sense of new knowledge through an internal or intermental dialogue. Thus learning was interacting in a social setting as well as reconstructing ideas in one's own mind and sharing them with others. Language was used by the learner to organize thought, to learn as well as to communicate and share experiences. In other words, language enabled a child to imagine, create, manipulate and use new ideas and share them with other people. Parents and teachers provided learners with new vocabulary in terms of words, phrases and chunks along with the structures of language. Children jointly reconstructed experiences which provided guided support to each other, hence furthering their learning. While working with others, in groups or in pairs, the children brought about developmental change not only in themselves but also in others.

Some of the major tenets developed by Vygotsky was the **Zone of Proximal Development** and the **Level of Actual Development**. The area in which an individual's optimum learning can occur is called the **Zone of Proximal Development**. The **Level of Actual Development is the level of development that learners' have already reached, and can attempt any activity independent of any help**. Vygotsky conceptualized ZPD and recognized that learners were able to reach beyond their capacity if they were guided and given prompts by someone more advanced. They needed to be scaffolded until they gained confidence to work independently.

Since the basis of constructivism is learner centredness where the learner is actively engaged in the construction of knowledge, a set of language learning strategies are implemented by the learner. Some of the strategies which have gained prominence in recent years are Critical Thinking and Reflective Learning.

Critical thinking is that mode of thinking — about any subject, content, or problem — in which the thinker improves the quality of his or her thinking by skillfully analyzing, assessing, and reconstructing it. Critical thinking is self-directed, self-disciplined, self-monitored, and self-corrective thinking. It produces learners who are bright and innovative and likely to succeed in the academic and other spheres of life. According to Halpern (1996), Critical thinking is purposeful, reasoned and goal directed. It involves problem solving, making inferences, predicting and using skills which involve inferencing in specific contexts. Critical thinking is also sometimes called directed thinking because it focuses on the desired outcome. In order to be critical thinkers, we must encourage our students to assess the validity of statements, news stories, arguments and so on. Therefore, using the material and class room activities, the teacher should help the learner develop critical thinking skill. This would involve:

- 1) the ability to identify and interpret information, facts, opinions, intentions in any reading / writing material.
- 2) employ contextual clues to analyse the meaning of sentences and words.
- 3) express personal response to description of experiences using reasoned judgement.
- 4) make hypothesis, explore alternatives and predict consequences.
- 5) communicate effectively.

Reflective Learning is a part of critical thinking which refers to the process of analyzing and making judgements of what has happened. Reflective learning helps learners to develop higher order thinking skills by inducing them to relate new knowledge to prior understanding. It enables them to think in both abstract and conceptual terms, applying specific strategies to novel tasks. The reflective learner must understand their own thinking and learning strategies. If a teacher must give scope for reflective learning to her learners, she must provide enough *wait time* to the learners when they are asked a question. She must provide an emotionally supportive and non-threatening environment in the classroom. In a reflective classroom, the teachers ask questions which require reason and evidence providing some help / explanation to guide the learners' thoughts during exploration. In a reflective socioconstructivist classroom there is a lot of peer/ group work which help learners to see the other's point of view. This helps learners to become sensitive to the people and issues around them.

Check Your Progress 6

Note: Write your answer in the space given below.

- 1) What was the main emphasis of the Social Constructivist Approach and how did it differ from other constructivists?

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1.10 THE POST METHOD ERA

For over a century, ‘language educators sought to solve the problems of language teaching by focusing attention almost exclusively on Method’ (Stern, 1983:452). Traditionally it was believed that if we followed the right set of teaching principles it would lead to the most effective learning outcomes. However, this thinking has been questioned in recent times as we have witnessed the rise and fall of several methods throughout the recent history of language teaching learning (Brown, 2002). Hence, now there is disillusionment with ‘methods’ as a problem solver for the teaching learning problem. In this ‘post methods era’, attention has shifted from **method** to **pedagogy**, i.e. to the teaching learning processes and the contribution of the teacher to this process. Brown (2002) discusses some of the reasons for the decline of what he calls the “method syndrome”:

- There cannot be an all –purpose ‘designer method’ that will work for all the disparate contexts where L2 is taught
- It leads to an unequal power relationship between ELT academics and researchers on the one hand and teachers in the classroom on the other hand, as she merely has to apply the method which is handed to her. It is forgotten that it is the teacher in the classroom who best understands her students and their contexts.
- **Methods** suggest a static set of procedures while **Pedagogy** suggests a dynamic interplay between learners, teachers, and the instructional materials during the process of teaching learning.

Kumaravadivelu (2003) noted that in the initial form, post method practice may be termed as: principled eclecticism in which the teachers plan and adapt their classroom procedure by absorbing practice from a variety of methods. However, while this is how most classes are actually taught, the post method discourse has developed further via three principles: Particularity, Practicality and Possibility (Kumaravadivelu, 2006 page: 59).

These principles are as follows:

Particularity: Teachers have to take into account the social, linguistic and culture background of their learners.

Practicality: The teachers are encouraged to theorize from their own practices from their classrooms and put into practice their own theories. This gives them autonomy and self respect.

Possibility: The socio political consciousness of learners is addressed in the classroom ‘as a catalyst for identity formation and social transformation’.

Brown (2002) suggests that a teacher must prepare a checklist of questions in the dynamic process of teaching learning:

- 1) Does the technique appeal to the genuine interests of your students? Is it relevant to their lives?
- 2) Is the technique presented in a positive, enthusiastic manner?
- 3) Are students clearly aware of the purpose of the technique?

- 4) Do students have some choice in: (a) choosing some aspect of the technique? And/ or (b) determining how they go about fulfilling the goals of the technique?
- 5) Does the technique encourage students to discover for themselves certain principles or rules (rather than simply being “told”)?
- 6) Does it encourage students in some way to develop or use effective strategies of learning and communication?
- 7) Does it contribute – at least to some extent – to students’ ultimate autonomy and independence (from you)?
- 8) Does it foster cooperative negotiation with other students in the class? Is it a truly interactive technique?
- 9) Does the technique present a “reasonable challenge”?
- 10) Do students receive sufficient feedback on their performance (from each other or from you)?

(Brown, 2002, p.15)

Check Your Progress 7

Note: Write your answer in the space given below.

- 1) What is the difference between method and pedagogy?

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1.11 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we discussed the various methods which have attempted to solve the teaching learning problems in recent times with little success. We discussed the fact that there has been a preoccupation with the search for the best ‘method’ which would serve as a panacea for all the problems of teaching learning of L2. In the current scenario there has been a major shift from the obsession with method to the stress on pedagogy. This was primarily because the concept of ‘method’ was too prescriptive, assuming knowledge of contexts in a top-down fashion. The shift to language pedagogy is much more dynamic involving an interplay between the teachers, learners, the instructional material as well as the curricular objectives.

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1.13 ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 2

- 1)
 - Stimulus - response
 - Imitation
 - Repetition
 - Reinforcement
 - Habit formation
- 2)
 - A particular language pattern or structure is presented and practiced thoroughly before the learner goes on to a new one.
 - Grammatical accuracy is emphasized which is realized through constant drills and construction of correct (error free) sentences from substitution tables.
 - Errors are seen as serious aberrations
 - The focus of instruction does not move beyond the sentence level.
- 3)
 - Audio Lingual method focused on oral/aural work and pronunciation was taught through drills as well as dialogue practice.
 - Dialogues were the main aspect of the audio-lingual approach as they provided the learners an opportunity to mimic/imitate, practice and memorise bits of language considered to be relevant to their situations.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) 'Linguistic Competence' refers to the mastery of grammatical rules and structures of the language. 'Communicative Competence', on the other hand, refers to the ability to understand the appropriateness of the social context in which utterances are produced and exchanged. It also involves the ability to produce socially appropriate utterances.
- 2)
 - CLT over emphasised on fluency at the cost of accuracy.
 - Authenticity of communicative activities was questioned.
 - CLT was not appropriate for all cultures and contexts.

Check Your Progress 4

- 1)
 - Respect for learners as people, being sensitive to their feelings and encouraging respect for each other. The affective nature of the learning experience was underscored.
 - Respect for the learners own knowledge and independence, and faith that learners know best how and when to learn. The classroom activities focused on what the learners wished to engage in. This contributed to learner autonomy and critical thinking skills as well as encouraged self-discovery.
 - Responsibility and respect for the need for criticism and correction.
 - Teachers were regarded as enablers and facilitators who assisted the learners in their process of self-discovery rather than instructors that transmit knowledge to learners.

Check Your Progress 5

- 1)
 - Emphasis on social interaction
 - Knowledge construction to be built through a social activity
 - Other constructivist approaches primacy given to the individual and knowledge construction at an individual level.

Check Your Progress 7

- 1) **Methods** suggest a static set of procedures while **Pedagogy** suggests a dynamic interplay between learners, teachers, and the instructional materials during the process of teaching learning.

UNIT 2 DAILY LESSON PLANS AND STRATEGIES FOR CLASSROOM TRANSACTION-I

Structure

- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Objectives
- 2.3 Instruction in the Classroom : From Course Book to Lessons
 - 2.3.1 Adapting the Course to the Particular Class
 - 2.3.2 The Class as a Social Group
 - 2.3.3 Diversity in the Classroom
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 - 2.3.5 Features of a Learner Centered Pedagogy
- 2.4 Key Features of Language Lessons
 - 2.4.1 The Subject Matter of English Courses
 - 2.4.2 Transactions in the Classroom Setting
- 2.5 Planning at the Level of the Teacher
- 2.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.7 Suggested Readings
- 2.8 Answers

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In any teaching-learning programme, two complementary aspects are working simultaneously. First, the pre-designed and pre-determined inputs which are associated with a prescribed syllabus and text book(s) and then the dynamic and unpredictable process of implementing such a broad scheme in a unique setting. These unique and ‘real’ settings are the classrooms in which particular groups of learners guided by their teachers’ as well as other inputs from them; participate in activities in ways which suit their individual styles. In fact, the teacher’s job is to adapt what is provided to her as a ‘given’ i.e. the syllabus and course book to the local situation – the characteristics of the particular student in a class.

In this unit, our main aim is to help you gain an appreciation of both aspects of teaching learning process, i.e. the support that you receive from a pre-arranged syllabus and the unpredictable implementing of this syllabus to a discreet set of learners.

2.2 OBJECTIVES

This unit deals with teaching-learning in the classroom setting where curriculum transaction is primarily located. The teacher takes the lead in generating learning experiences for the student. After going through this Unit, you should be able to:

- develop an awareness and appreciation of the nature of learning experiences that can be generated in classrooms;

- differentiate between ‘teaching’ a body of content and ‘facilitating skill development’;
- appreciate and identify learner diversity as a positive learning resource;
- promote participation of students as partnership with the teacher in the teaching- learning process; and
- understand the nature of planning for English lessons.

2.3 INSTRUCTION IN THE CLASSROOM: FROM COURSE BOOK TO LESSONS

Learning in different domains – especially learning languages – takes place in various contexts. The settings range from natural and informal to planned and highly structured environments. Developments in technology have extended the possible settings and modes of teaching-learning. At the same time, formal instruction in ‘classrooms’ remains the most common arrangement at the school level. When we talk about the classroom we are actually referring to the *activity* during *lessons* of forty minutes. The physical classroom can be the traditional single room, a part of a larger hall (bounded by curtains or wooden screens), a verandah or a space under a tree. It is like a stage on which curriculum transaction is acted out. Our focus now is on the general features of the process: the lessons that occur hour after hour, day after day, under the supervision of the teacher.

2.3.1 Adapting the Course to the Particular Class

The syllabus -textbook package for each grade level provides a general framework. The ideas and suggestion in it have to be made real as learning activities in actual lessons. While doing this, the general plan has to be *adapted* by the teacher to suit the learners in her own (unique) class. Such adaptation is one of the most important responsibilities of the teacher. It is *only* the teacher who knows the group of students in her class *as learners*: their general academic level, their wider knowledge and interests, their ways of interacting with one another, and especially what they have studied recently.

To get a better picture of the process of adaptation, let us consider a teacher providing individual instruction to a child who is unable to attend regular school. This could be happening for various reasons: the need to rest after a serious illness, an orthopedic condition and so on. Remember that such ‘home schooling’ is *not* private tuition which is always an addition to regular instruction at school. The teacher matches her teaching to the needs of this individual learner. This is done by modifying the complexity of presentation, the speed or pace of coverage, the nature of explanations and illustrations, the extent of repetitions and review, etc.

The classroom teacher with her group of forty odd learners faces a similar challenge. Certain topics might be quite new and difficult for these learners; or it could be old matter which is being repeated and seem boring to them. Some warming up and special preparation is done by many teachers before a new topic is taken up. Often this means going back to earlier lessons and recalling specific ideas to provide a helpful starting base. Sometimes, parts of what is in the current unit of the textbook can be skipped or left for students to read on their own, or

postponed for the time being. Sometimes additional material or activity not given in the book might be appropriate.

These are some of the decisions that the classroom teacher has to take - every day in fact. The adaptation occurring in each classroom is unique. Even in parallel sections in the same school there will be differences in the way lessons on the same topic take shape. At the same time we have to be realistic and recognize the limitations of group instruction. While each learner is unique, all her personal needs cannot be met by a single teacher. Genuine individualization is not possible in the classroom setting. But the teacher does have a good sense of the general level of ability or readiness of her group, and some awareness of their different styles of learning and interests. So she can modify and extend the standard or common matter given in the course book units in ways that could help most of her students. This flexibility in teacher managed classroom lessons is unique. Such curriculum transaction in classrooms is very different from what learners find in distance mode or technology (satellite TV, computer) based instruction.

2.3.2 The Class as a Social Group

Children have always been put into classes of the same broad age level. This makes educational sense, but administrative convenience and efficiency are also major considerations. We (teachers and parents) often complain about group instruction, especially, because paying individual attention to students in large classes is difficult. At the same time we must note that the social context of the classroom is a positive feature. It is natural for children to be with others. In fact this is what they desire. When children want to “go out to play”, it is always to play *with others*. Parents usually get anxious when a child shows a lack of interest in interacting with other children .

However, traditionally, when a classroom lesson begins, students are expected to ignore one another and pay attention (only) to the teacher. All of us have memories of teachers who were very strict in this regard. However, each one of us knows that no teacher has ever succeeded in totally eliminating interaction involving mild levels of distraction and mischief during lessons. Serious indiscipline which disrupts lessons is of course unacceptable. But the image of the ideal lesson with silent and serious children listening to the teacher is changing. Classrooms and lessons in which there is activity and fun (in frequent spells at least) is becoming the norm.

We will see that peers are in various ways an important resource for the emotional and social development of all children. Many desirable aspects of development depend on contact and interaction with other children, and this is something group instruction makes available all the time.

2.3.3 Diversity in the Classroom

While formal schooling places children of approximately the same age together in the same class, there are always individual differences amongst them. These differences are invariably quite large since children come from different families and social backgrounds. As we know, even twins are not exactly alike. Some of the complaints about large classes relate to the range of differences among the children present. This variation can be seen as a burden. “How can the teacher do justice to ‘toppers’ and to very ‘weak’ students during a single lesson?” – is a

question often asked. This is a challenge and there is no easy solution. But this view of the ‘problem’ assumes that all students must learn the same things in the same way and **produce** the same right answers in tests. Today, we do not believe that this is the most important function of school. In this perspective we see *diversity* as a resource and potential advantage.

Earlier most discussions about individual’s differences (especially among teachers and parents) took only two dimensions seriously. One was *academic ability* (which leads to high or low marks on formal tests). The other was *motivation* which differentiates the serious and hardworking students from those who are not. This was based on a very narrow view of ‘good and poor’ learners. Today we recognize better that children in school come from many cultural backgrounds. Quite naturally they have varied likes and dislikes, and also many types of talents and interests, and so on. This shows us that children have different patterns of strengths and weaknesses. No child is by nature a weak or poor *learner*. Each one learns in different ways and at different rates and is ‘good’ in some areas and less so in others. Teachers need to recognize this diversity of potential. Then they can help students also to appreciate that every child has something to share with others. Developing such attitudes in classroom lessons and in the school generally would be a great contribution to the morale of individual children.

2.3.4 The Emerging Pattern of Lessons: Taking Advantage of Diversity, Participation and Partnership

We generally view diversity now more as an advantage than a problem. What does this mean? How can diversity be brought in as a resource that enriches activity in classrooms? A principle that we noted earlier is helpful here: what students gain from school is not only what is given in textbooks, but something wider and richer. This new knowledge comes from relating ideas given in the books to life outside school. This means importantly the *child’s* life. Each child has to be actively involved in learning as *only* she can make the link to her life. For this to happen, children should have opportunities to express *their own* ideas and experiences – by speaking, writing, drawing, and acting. Classroom lessons should have spells in which there is student activity involving talk or *discussion* – pair work and group work are very useful here. This points to a new meaning of the expression ‘active learners’. Instead of only receiving the knowledge in the book as presented by the teacher, students contribute their own ideas to the new knowledge created in the classroom.

From the perspective of enhancing the motivation of the learners, discussion in the classroom has a great advantage. It is a space in which there are *no* correct answers. It is possible in the first round of discussion at least to treat whatever a child says as worth accepting, without any judgement. Obviously, anything and everything that is said should not to be uncritically taken as valid or true. The ideas put forward should be clarified and refined thoughtfully. This happens best through a process of listening to and learning from peers, rather than from correction by teachers. As these different opinions are heard, a child might change her ideas. This would be genuine learning, because the changes come from better understanding, and are not only a matter of knowing ‘correct answers’. The motivational advantage is great for so called weak or shy students. They would feel encouraged to express their ideas in such an atmosphere because the risk of being wrong and being criticized for it is low.

These activities in which learners participate actively are also important for the teacher who needs to get to know her students. In the conventional class the learners are listening most of the time, and conventional tests only show how much they have learnt. When they express themselves as described above, they give a chance to the teacher to learn about their point of view and ways of thinking. Such knowledge will help her planning activities and in identifying those most in need of individual attention.

Discussions based on students' ideas can also raise the general motivation and encourage class participation because learners see that their ideas are considered as important in addition to what is in textbooks. The teacher should be able to judge how to bring in such discussions in a way that supports the main aim of lessons in progress. The important point is that what is given in textbooks (based on a planned syllabus) is related to children's lives. Simply letting children talk without some plan is not of much value.

Discussions in which children share their ideas provide a valuable opportunity for children to listen to and learn from one another. Through lessons including discussions, students see or experience diversity in a real manner. It is a step towards learning to accept and respect others 'who are different', which is what valuing diversity means.

2.3.5 Features of a Learner Centered Pedagogy

What we have discussed above helps us to understand the meaning of the now fairly common statement that the teacher should not *teach*, but rather should be more a facilitator and partner. Thus, the older notion of teaching as almost entirely teacher centered has to change. Teachers and teaching *are still very important*. The older approach emphasized transmitting knowledge in a way that everyone gets the same input, with some students learning and remembering more and others learning less. Today the emphasis is on adaptation of the general plan using the contributions of learners to enrich lessons. Clearly the teacher has an important role here. Facilitating learning involves the teacher's interaction with learners, not only the presenting of subject matter (talking) to them. Such classroom activity calls for skill and resourcefulness on the part of the teacher. This is far more demanding than preparing and delivering conventional lessons. A possible new image for the classroom/lesson is the *discussion* (in which many persons participate) rather than the *lecture* (in which one person talks).

These types of lessons obviously require a high level of student participation in various activities. One of the major challenges facing the teacher is to get many or most students to participate. One feasible and productive way of managing this is to introduce activities involving *working together* –in pairs and small groups. In these decentralized activities, students talk more to one another than to the teacher. Especially when they have to collaborate and do something together, they will have to talk. The teacher observes and monitors and sometimes joins the group for a few minutes. Quite often there will be some 'output' from the pair or group. The teacher arranges for this to be shared with the whole class. Such activity would lead to the production of a range of *language texts*. These can supplement the language samples in the book and the teacher's notes. Note that such output is different from what is produced by students working on their own (individual seat work) which mostly involves exercises or problems with correct answers. The activities taken up in pair/group work are more *open ended*,

and lead to ideas and suggestions for discussion rather than fixed correct answers. The challenge for the teacher is to utilize these texts and ideas coming from students in various ways in later lessons. As she gains skill in doing this, there is more real contribution *by students* to the learning process. This is also a way of reducing the *dominance* of textbook based content, and concentrating what the learner has to 'say' or 'do' – and this is especially relevant for language instruction.

The type of lessons discussed above include both active participation and the contribution of students (small but important) to the curricular process. This points to classroom setting in which the teacher and her students are beginning to *work together* to transact the curriculum. The notions of 'teacher as partner' and, 'participating in the construction of knowledge' come from the classroom processes activated by such techniques. In the next section we look at the implications of these ideas and perspectives for the language classroom.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: Write your answer in the space given below.

- 1) What is the essential difference between the contributions to the process of instruction made by the course book writer and by the classroom teacher?

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- 2) Why are lessons based on the same unit of a common course book taught in different schools likely to be different?

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2.4 KEY FEATURES OF LANGUAGE LESSONS

In the previous section we have noted some of the features of classroom based instruction guided by the learner centred approach. Special emphasis was given to the role of learners as active participants in the process. Obviously, the nature of the subject matter in the syllabus will influence how lessons actually take shape. We can expect English lessons to be different from those of other subjects.

For millions of school children (with practically no contact with English in the home and neighbourhood), English lessons in classrooms will be the only means

of learning the language. So making English lessons effective for all is a challenge. Let us try now to find out how the objectives and pedagogic approach of English course(s) help learning in the classroom.

2.4.1 The Subject Matter of English Courses

A distinction is generally made in the overall school syllabus between *skill* oriented subjects like language and *content* oriented subjects like history. Obviously these are not neat and watertight compartments, but there is an important difference. The syllabus for content subjects (history, math, environmental studies, etc.) lists a number of topics which represent *a body of knowledge*. This is made up of information, technical terms, concepts and principles associated with the subject, which is often a field of specialization at the university level. The main objective of instruction is to help students gain both knowledge of facts and terminology and understanding of concepts and principles. The central objective of teaching language (especially English taught as a second or foreign language) is different. It is for the student to gain the *ability to use language* for communication – to express ideas in speech and writing and understand what is in spoken and written texts. English language course books have traditionally had an anthology structure. Here, the anchor of the typical unit is a prose passage or a poem. Most of the exercises are linked to these texts: they deal with the ideas (under ‘comprehension’) and the language forms illustrated in them. We need to be clear about the function of these texts in a language course. It is essentially to provide samples of the language in use which in turn facilitates exposure to or contact with the language. Materials developers follow principles of curriculum design when selecting and ordering these texts, as we will see in later units. The texts illustrate language forms (words, grammatical structures, spelling, etc.) using the content (themes) as a medium. The structure of the language (rules of grammar, spelling, word formation, pronunciation) has to be learnt, but only to be able to use them with fluency and accuracy. However, it is important for a teacher of English to have the knowledge of the structure of English. But the learner in class IV or VII needs to *learn* these rules in a different way. They should be able to apply them when *using* the language, rather than just know them. All the technical information related to them is not needed. So we have to be careful not to make the English lesson look too much like a linguistics lesson. A helpful distinction to keep in mind is that between *learning to use* language and *learning about* language.

Similarly, we need to be clear about the role of the specific content (information and ideas) in the texts. Each text has to be understood by the student (reader), just as a listener needs to understand what a speaker says to her. As the student tries to understand the text, some help (clue or explanation) from the teacher is often necessary. But after the text has been understood to some degree, the specific details are no longer of relevance for language learning. These ideas (relating to the discovery of penicillin, migration of birds, customs of some community, incidents and characters in a story, and so on) serve mainly as illustrations of language in use. The widening of the student’s general knowledge is useful as a bonus, but it is not the primary aim. What is learnt about the way language forms convey meaning in the text is more important. This knowledge becomes a resource for understanding and for producing texts. Unfortunately, as we know, the content of these texts in language has been a major focus. A large proportion of examination questions simply ask for memorized information from them.

Students get high marks for remembering details from these texts. This focus changes English into a *content* subject, which it certainly is not. In a history or chemistry or biology course the content (specific ideas) in the textbook is central, and teaching and testing focus on this body of knowledge. This is what makes a content subject fundamentally different from a skill subject like language. So we need to keep the purpose for which texts are included in mind, when using them as a resource for language learning.

However, there is a problem regarding the language curriculum that needs to be sorted out. The argument above is that neither ‘information’ about the English language as a system nor the ‘ideas’ in passages and poems are central to the language curriculum. What does it consist of then? Language is learnt most successfully by experiencing its use. This does not mean that learners have to talk and write (produce complex texts) most of the time. What it means is that during lessons they should get opportunities to experience language in use – exposure to texts that need to be understood and situations where ideas need to be expressed in texts they produce. A major part of the experiences in the language class should be similar to those of the child acquiring a language *naturally* through exposure to its use in everyday communication. A point to note here is that the child usually experiences only spoken language in use in the world outside, while the child in class deals more with the written language found in books.

2.4.2 Transactions in the Classroom Setting

We see now that the main teaching objective guiding English lessons should be to provide experiences of *using language* to learners. We need to exploit the range of language texts given in the course books in a manner that provides these experiences. The English teacher has certain advantages over the subject teacher when dealing with the textbook. The typical English textbook contains a wide range of texts (stories, poems, plays, essays, comic strips, cartoons, posters, advertisements, etc.). When selecting these, the interests of children of the given age are an important consideration. Some principle of gradation is applied in deciding the sequence of units, but the book does *not* have to be followed strictly page by page. Jumping ahead to pick up something from a later unit because it seems especially interesting and relevant at some point is possible and indeed desirable (Unusual current events prominent in the media could be the reason: medals at the Olympics, an invention, a spacecraft reaching Mars, some curious incident involving animals, etc.). What is in the book can be supplemented or even replaced by some other text. A text which is seen as interesting can be taken up for some purpose even if it has a new grammatical form or a couple of difficult words. These language items do not have to be taught (and finished) immediately. They will appear over and over again in the same year and in the curriculum of higher classes. The flexibility in choosing the text and related activity allows the teacher to give priority to students’ **getting involved** in the tasks. This essentially means that learners attempt to understand what is current and express their view about the same. Such efforts to use their **partial knowledge** of language will of course not be wholly successful. The teacher can provide support, guidance and encouragement. Because an activity is of interest to the student; they are more accepting of inputs from the teacher. This readiness to receive teacher inputs is a great advantage, especially ideal for language learning.

Compared with this, the teacher of a content subject (who also has well designed textbooks as support) has to work with many restrictions. The given sequence of

topics/sub-topics has to be followed. Extra material if used must help to illustrate and explain a difficult concept. There is less scope for going in different directions. In the language class, on the other hand, it is the activity that matters, and any text (whatever the topic) that students are likely to engage with is acceptable.

A second advantage that the English teacher enjoys when using language texts in class is related to the way in which they are to be treated. Obviously students should understand what is in the texts whether it is written passages and now increasingly, recorded spoken texts. But it is not necessary to aim for complete *comprehension* immediately. After some sense of the overall nature and message has been gained, many questions for discussion can be raised. Who created it? Who is the sender/author? Who is it addressed to? Why was it created? When? Where? Could the same 'message' have been conveyed in some other way(s)? Will other 'receivers' respond in the same way? Students themselves might suggest some of the questions. These are the open-ended questions facilitating *discussion* that we noted above. The point here is *not* that dozens of trivial comprehension questions must be asked in relation to every 'passage'. In fact these are not 'comprehension' questions as such. They are, rather, ways of helping students see that texts represent an act of communication between a sender and a receiver (or receivers). Learners are also able to see that there is often more to the message than the explicit meaning of the sentences. Creating an interest in going back to the text to understand it better, should also be among the teacher's aim. Discussion based on such questions on different texts would lead students to pay attention to words, grammatical elements, and also gradually to organization and style.

Another advantage of English lessons lies in the space for open ended questions and tasks, many of which do not lead to single correct answers. Such tasks can *take off* from the texts: dramatization, role play, expressing some aspects in a picture or cartoon, imagining different endings for stories, finding or remembering other very similar or dissimilar texts. They provide learners with opportunities to use language, and many are suitable for pair/group work. The absence of right answers allows students to engage with tasks following their own interests, attitudes and styles—which is important for their motivation and morale. A caution needs to be noted here. The texts (samples of language) in the course books and others used are an *important base and learning resource* for those who have very low exposure to English outside class, or are less confident about expressing their own ideas initially. Going beyond the text is easier for students whose skill level is higher. While these further creative activities are desirable, the initial opportunity to learn from the given text should not be lost—for those who need it. The point about not focusing *only* on specific content, does not mean neglecting the given text(s); the experience and expertise of materials developers has gone into them.

The general principle for language instruction that emerges from this discussion is, that the language lesson should provide for a variety of open-ended tasks demanding attention and effort from all the pupils. There should also be some measure of interaction or communication among them. Of course the use of English is to be encouraged, but the occasional use of the L1 is not in any way undesirable. However, the use of this support should gradually be decreased. This will happen naturally as the *ability to use* English increases. As noted earlier, presentation and explanation by the teacher (to which pupils listen) should be

only one of the strands in lessons. Learner activity should be planned as a major lesson component, and not merely something to be taken up (time permitting) after the teacher has finished her part. But learner activity is not an end itself. It has to be **planned** ('when' and 'how') so that relevant learning experiences are generated. Simply reducing 'teacher talk' will not automatically lead to better language learning.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: Write your answer in the space given below.

- 1) Differentiate between the objectives of teaching content oriented and skill oriented subjects like language.

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- 2) What is the role of text content in the language classroom?

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- 3) Mention the advantage that a language teacher has over the subject teacher when using the text book.

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- 4) A passage on Mohenjodaro and Harappa can occur in an English Reader. The same content (more or less) can also occur in a chapter in the History textbook. Mention one learning activity as an English teacher you would include in a lesson related to this passage, that the History teacher most probably will not use.

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2.5 PLANNING AT THE LEVEL OF THE TEACHER

We have noted that the individual teacher is working within the framework represented by the syllabus and course materials. In a typical school the academic calendar for the year (agreed upon at a general staff meeting) will indicate the number of hours/periods for each subject over a term, weekly timetable, dates for units tests and term end tests, and so on. So a lot of planning is already in place. The *teacher's* real work of planning begins when a unit in the syllabus / course book has to be taken up and covered in, say, about eight lessons spread over two weeks. However elaborate the course book, it will not (and cannot) indicate in detail the transactions for each lesson - involving forty particular learners and their teacher. We noted earlier that only the teacher knows the background and readiness of the group for the matter in the new unit. She can judge whether some revision or special preparation is necessary, and some supplementary material would be useful. She uses this knowledge to work out the overall teaching plan for the unit and for each lesson.

The skill development orientation of language teaching (which is different from that of 'body of knowledge' based content subjects) is important. The English teacher has much less presenting to do, but much more organization of learners' activity. For the subject teacher the planning and preparation for a lesson will be based centrally on the topic. How can I best present-explain this concept? What types of exercises/problems will help consolidate the new ideas? For the English teacher the central questions would be: Given the theme (story, passage, dialogue, puzzle) serving as the base, how can I get my learners to use the ideas or situations or characters they come across in order to participate in tasks/activities requiring them to read or speak or write? Most course books today include several activities in each unit, usually related to a set of texts, both spoken and written. (These represent the language exposure students receive in a given lesson. Other lessons will give them exposure to different samples.). The teacher can select what would be most appropriate, and sometimes modify them. As noted in section 2.4.2, it is possible (even desirable sometimes) to jump to something in a later unit if it seems 'appropriate'.

The next step is to decide what kind of revision and or special preparation the students need so that the text and activities seem manageable to them. Sometimes this could be through presentation and explanation of some concept or principle by the teacher. This will help in getting the students get started on the activities on the right lines. After that the teacher has to observe and step in where help seems needed. These are occasions when the teacher's input can be very effective, because of the need and readiness we noted above. The important principle is that they cannot be planned in the usual sense, as they emerge in an unpredictable way. This means thinking ahead and anticipating some likely responses of learners: good and smart or partially correct/ appropriate or wrong because of misunderstandings, or reflecting lack of interest and carelessness. The question to ask is: What should I do if 'this' happens? Some preparation can be done in this way which becomes part of the overall plan. Obviously everything that could happen cannot be anticipated correctly. But having some options ready will help the teacher. Thus the teacher's plan should include various options for each stage, rather than a set of fixed steps (as in a recipe). The options are a resource base which can be drawn on in a dynamic manner as the lesson progresses.

2.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have looked at the main features of classroom based instruction which is in the hands of the teacher. We noted how the older view of good lessons as efficient transmitters of predetermined knowledge to students who silently receive what is given is being replaced by the image of lessons with learners actively participating, contributing with their ideas, often enriching what the teacher presents. Organizing such instruction requires more skill and effort than conventional teaching. We learnt that in such a learner centred view, diversity in a class is an advantage rather than a burden. We went on to look at the essential features of English (language) instruction which is different from that for content subjects. We noted that materials should expose learners to language texts, and classroom transaction should provide opportunities for learners to try and comprehend texts and express their ideas using whatever language they know at any stage. We learnt that planning English lessons involves using the syllabus/textbook matter as a base and preparing a range of possible activities – which will be taken up in a flexible manner because the classroom process is somewhat unpredictable.

2.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

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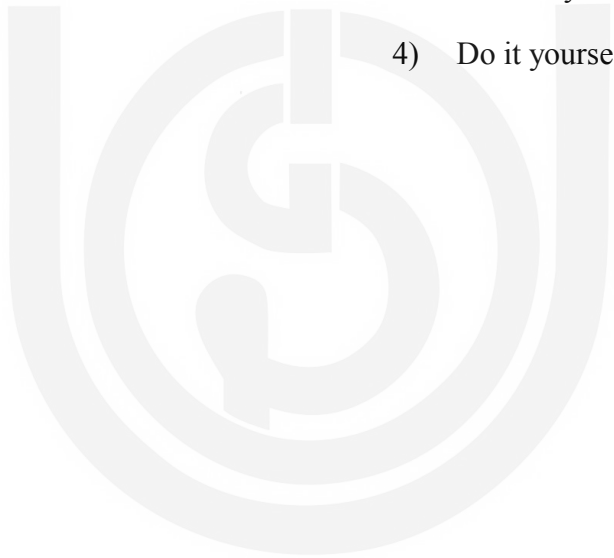
2.8 ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) The course/lesson writer provides a general framework of ideas and suggestions which is the same for all classes of the same level in thousands of schools in the state's system. The teacher adapts the general plan given by the lesson writer to suit the learners in her classroom.
- 2) A teacher is expected to adapt the text content given in a common course book to suit the unique nature of the learners in her classroom. Therefore, a teacher may provide additional input in the form of content or activity or some time may skip a part of the text content or ask students to read on their own or may postpone for the time being. So, lessons based on the same unit of a course book taught in different classes/schools are likely to be different.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1)
 - The main objective of teaching content oriented subject is to help students gain both knowledge of facts, terminology and understanding of concepts and principles.
 - The main objective of teaching language is to help the student to gain the ability to use language for communication – to express ideas in speech and writing and understand what is in spoken and written texts.
- 2) Text contents serve mainly as illustrations of language in use. It helps in learning about the way language forms convey meaning.
- 3) A language teacher does not have to follow the sequence of lessons strictly page by page. Content from a later lesson or current events can be picked up for illustrating certain language forms and use. A subject teacher has to follow the given sequence of the topics/subtopics. There is very little scope for going in different directions. Extra material if used must help to illustrate and explain a difficult concept. In the language class, on the other hand, it is the activity that matters, and any text whatever be the topic that students are likely to engage with is acceptable.
- 4) Do it yourself.



UNIT 3 DAILY LESSON PLANS AND STRATEGIES FOR CLASSROOM TRANSACTION-II

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 The Importance of Lesson Planning
- 3.3 Planning a Lesson
 - 3.3.1 Choosing a Lesson Plan Format
 - 3.3.2 Lesson Planning: Using Into, Through and Beyond
 - 3.3.3 Hints for Effective Lesson Planning
- 3.4 Sample Lesson Plans
 - 3.4.1 Writing for Newspapers
 - 3.4.2 Listening and Speaking
 - 3.4.3 Beginning Reading (Vocabulary)
 - 3.4.4 Creative Writing
 - 3.4.5 Integrated Lesson Plan
- 3.5 Strategies in the Classroom
- 3.6 Classroom Management
- 3.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.8 References and Suggested Readings
- 3.9 Answers

3.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you should be able to:

- understand the importance of lesson planning;
- recognise the features of an effective lesson plan;
- review some sample lesson plans;
- explain the principle behind integrated lesson plans;
- use some new strategies in the classroom; and
- understand some principles of classroom management;

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Teachers all over the world, teaching at any level, or teaching any subject, are aware that they cannot walk into a classroom without a teaching plan in mind. This is relevant to the nursery class and also the college lecturer. Ralph Tyler one of the early educationists stated that it was necessary to have lesson plans for the “effective organization of educational experiences to achieve the educational purpose of the school”.

- The days when a teacher could teach without a lesson plan have long since disappeared. In the 21st century the teacher requires a deep knowledge of a variety of issues. A professional approach implies that the teacher’s energy is channelled into planning and setting expectations, targeting key elements which will make a difference to their pupils and the results that they are able to achieve. In essence lesson planning is: “an opportunity to formalise the process that effective teachers undertake, in some form or another everyday”.

3.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF LESSON PLANNING

In any teaching learning process if the objective of the process is to be achieved then it is important to list the same down. Write down why planning is an important aspect of any teaching activity. Compare your answer with the following list.

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Lesson Planning:

- Is conducive to efficient teaching
- Guarantees that the teaching follows an organized approach
- Ensures that the syllabus is covered
- Gives the teacher confidence when delivering the lesson
- Acts as a base for future lessons
- Helps in dealing with differences
- Is indicative of the effort put in by the teacher

Lesson plans also have a great effect on the teaching process. Here are some more reasons for the same:

- **Clarity:** It provides clarity on the decisions to be made to help students move towards learner goals.
- **Unpredictable events:** Teachers can deal better with unpredictable events as they are likely to have an alternative plan already lined up.
- **Framework:** It gives teaching a format, a kind of sequence.
- **Professionalism:** It provides a professional base for the work in hand, namely, teaching.
- **For the learner:** It makes them feel that the teacher is well organized and is concerned about their learning.

3.3 PLANNING A LESSON

The teacher actually imagines a lesson before it has happened. This involves prediction, anticipation, sequencing, organising and simplifying. Of course the final decisions would depend on the teaching-learning situation in the classroom, the learner’s needs and interest. However most often decisions would depend upon:

- the aims of the lesson
- the content
- the group that is being addressed
- the tasks to be presented
- the available resources

The format for a lesson can differ between subjects and also between schools. By and large it is said that the traditional lesson plan of objectives, content, methods, materials and evaluation needs to be replaced by a strategic approach which is learner-centred. Whatever approach is adopted, there are some key curriculum principles that go into lesson planning. They are:

- *objectives*
- *differentiation* - Dealing with a diverse population of children
- *breadth and balance* - The subject matter to be dealt with
- *progression* - The movement from easy to difficult
- *continuity* - Logical connectives within the subject
- *depth* - How much exposure is expected
- *relevance* - Is it within the student's learning sphere
- *personalisation* - How can teaching-learning be made meaningful to every child
- *assessment* - Does it incorporate both formative and summative assessment

A good lesson plan will try to cover a range of accepted learning behaviours and experiences like the ones given below:

Opportunities for:

- *developing enquiry skills*
- *problem solving individually and in groups*
- *evaluating outcomes*
- *processing information*
- *reflecting and reviewing*
- *developing social skills*
- *taking responsibility for learning*
- *converting mistakes into learning opportunities*

Check Your Progress 1

Note: Write your answer in the space given below.

- 1) Give five reasons which support the view that a teacher should always have a plan in mind.

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2) List the curriculum principles that go into lesson planning.

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3) What learning behaviours should be included in a lesson plan?

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3.3.1 Choosing a Lesson Plan Format

Usually schools have a lesson plan format worked out. Often, the subject teams work out their own formats. Finding the right format is a process of trial and error. It is a dynamic process and value must be attached to making mistakes and correcting them.

Once a lesson planning culture is developed, it is necessary to identify the learning opportunities. These should include the opportunities listed earlier. All lesson plans should include subject, class, unit of work and place in the sequence of learning. The evaluation process should also be included to ascertain the success of the lesson in question. Teachers need to reflect at the end of each lesson to plan further lessons for the future. They need to ask at the end of the lesson:

- What happened?
- What effect did the lesson (plan) have?
- Why did the events unfold as they did?
- How could the plan be improved?
- How might the teacher /students have behaved differently?
- How should things be done the next time?

Some other aspects that can be included in a lesson plan are:

- Class details
- Seating plan for group work/pair work/individual work/whole class
- Subject details –in terms of sequence of learning
- Learning objectives

- Link to previous lesson
- Resources available
- Procedures (under this head we could include the following key issues)
 - Are the activities clearly stated?
 - Is there a clear structure?
 - Are the key points apparent?
 - Are differentiated strategies highlighted?
 - What is the role of ICT?
 - Is inclusive education taken care of?

When writing the objectives of the lesson these points should be clearly articulated and should indicate what the student would be able to do at the end of the lesson.

Here are some examples of how the teacher can articulate what the student should take back from the teaching-learning process in behavioural terms.

At the end of the lesson the student should be able:

- to identify and describe;
- to explain;
- to recognise;
- to participate in;
- to combine;
- to communicate ideas in writing/speaking;
- to generate ideas;
- to use a range of vocabulary/expressions/structures;
- to develop an awareness of formal/informal writing;

When planning a lesson teachers need to remember that every student is different. Sometimes it is good to invite another teacher to observe your lesson and give feedback. Lessons are effective when students are clear about what they are doing and why they are doing it. An environment that is challenging and stimulating, offers a variety of learning opportunities for the students. Lesson planning supports teachers in their “search for excellence and transformation and for this to happen it must be relevant and purposeful, long on impact and short on tedium. In the hands of skilled and professional teachers, structure and purpose will be tempered by flexibility and intuition, enriched by creativity and imagination and distilled by professionalism and the belief that every child matters, as does every teacher” Lynn Maidment (2008).

Check Your Progress 2

Note: Write your answer in the space given below.

- 1) Why is it important for teachers to assess themselves at the end of a lesson?

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2) What should a teacher consider when planning a lesson?

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3.3.2 Lesson Planning: Using Into, Through and Beyond

Sometimes we can also plan a lesson by using the verbs *Into*, *Through* and *Beyond*. How do we do this?

Into

This is actually preparing students to receive the new material to be presented. In other words to get **into** the material. This helps in increasing their interest, and motivation to learn, and creates a positive and receptive atmosphere. This also helps in preparing for the new learning experience.

You have to decide what preparation is necessary.

- Vocabulary
- Stimulate curiosity
- Provide some relevant background information
- Talk through the new subject and highlight some parts
- Relate previous material to the new material
- What additional material could you use – videos, music, storytelling or an excursion

This preparation if incorporated with a true understanding of your students will make the new learning more meaningful.

Through

After the stage has been set by taking students **into** the material we now look at how to take them **through** the material. This implies helping them understand, comprehend, explore the terms, concepts, etc. How can this be done?

- Through reading response logs;
- Relating story to personal experiences;
- Recording questions as you proceed;
- Dramatization;
- Visualisations;
- Illustrations; and
- Discussions.

Beyond

This is the stage when an opportunity is taken to expand and deepen the students learning experience. It means helping students develop new insights, think critically and clarify their understanding of what has been introduced. How can we do this?

- Ask them to share their insights, individually, and in groups;
- Design activities to apply and extend their comprehension;
- Get them to work in groups and move beyond the classroom into the community;
- Offer credits for individuals who can really move beyond the text.

Check Your Progress 3

Note: Write your answer in the space given below.

- 1) Take up any one aspect of lesson planning - **into, through, beyond** and write about it with an example that you tried out in your class.

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3.3.3 Hints for Effective Lesson Planning

Given below are some cues which you could use when planning lessons.

- When planning, think about your students and your teaching context first.
- Prepare more than you may need. It is advisable to have “reserve” activity ready in case of extra time. Similarly, it is important to think in advance which component(s) of the lesson may be skipped, if you find yourself with too little time to do everything you have planned.
- Keep an eye on the time allotted. Include timing in the plan itself. The smooth running of your lesson depends to some extent on proper timing.
- Think about transitions (from speaking to writing or from a slow task to a more active one).
- Include variety if things are not working the way you have planned.
- Pull the class together at the beginning and at the end.
- End your lessons on a positive note.
- Planning enables you to think about your teaching in a systematic way before you enter the classroom. The outcome of your planning is a coherent framework which contains a logical sequence of tasks to prepare the field for more effective teaching and learning.

- Plans not only express your intentions, there are projects which need to be implemented in a real classroom with real students. Many things may happen which you had not anticipated. In the end you need to adapt your plans in order to respond to your pupils' actual needs. It is important to bear in mind Jim Scrivener's words: *Prepare thoroughly. But in class, teach the learners not the plan.*

Check Your Progress 4

- List at least five qualities of an effective lesson from the hints given above.

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3.4 SAMPLE LESSON PLANS

Given below are examples of lesson plans:

3.4.1 Writing for Newspaper

Students often read newspapers for a wide variety of reasons, not least of which is to keep informed in English. As you know, newspaper writing style tends to have three levels: Headlines, leading sentences, and article content. Each of these has its own style. This lesson focuses on calling students' attention to this type of writing style on a deeper, grammatical level. It ends with students writing their own short articles with a follow-up listening comprehension opportunity.

Level: Class 8

Objectives

- To develop an understanding of newspaper writing style –differentiating between headline, leading sentence and article content;
- To familiarize learners with newspaper writing style;
- To develop writing skills in the style of newspaper article writing; and
- To develop listening comprehension.

Activities:

- Reading short newspaper articles
- Writing short newspaper articles
- Listening to an article

Outline:

- Ask students to get the previous day's newspaper to class.
- Ask students to read the newspaper article selected and summarize the contents.

- Have students analyze the difference between the headline, leading sentence and article content in terms of tense usage and vocabulary in small groups (3-4 students).
- As a class, check that the differences between headline, leading sentence and article content are clear.

Here is a short guideline to the main differences:

- **Headline:** Simple present or past tense, idiomatic, catchy vocabulary, no use of function words.
- **Leading sentence:** Present perfect tense often used to give general overview.
- **Article content:** Proper tense usage, including a change from present perfect to past tenses to give detailed, specific information about what, where and when something happened.

Once the differences have been understood, have students divide into pairs or small groups (3-4 students).

Using the work sheet, small groups should write their own newspaper articles using the headlines provided or come up with their own stories.

Have students read their newspaper articles aloud allowing you to incorporate some listening comprehension into the lesson.

Task

Choose a Headline and Write Your Own Newspaper Article.

Newspaper Article 1

TRUCK CRASHES INTO LIVING ROOM

Leading sentence: *provide your leading sentence*

Article content: *write at least three short paragraphs about the incident*

Newspaper Article 2

SCHOOLS CLOSED-INTENSE COLD

Leading sentence: *provide your leading sentence*

Article content: *write at least three short paragraphs about the situation.*

Newspaper Article 3

NO FAILURES IN SCHOOLS-AUTOMATIC PROMOTIONS

Leading sentence: *provide your leading sentence*

Article content: *write at least three short paragraphs about the new policy development.*

Students can work on these articles as a group or in pairs.

3.4.2 Listening and Speaking

Class 7

Objectives

- To develop listening skills;

- To develop speaking skills and;
- To practice listening and speaking skills with classmates.

Materials

- Video of people speaking clearly and in simple English (if available/can be created)
- Pencils and erasers
- “Have You Ever...” search paper, 1 copy per student (see procedures below)
- Computer with Internet access (optional)

Procedures

- 1) Before beginning the lesson, create a “Have You Ever?” search paper by dividing a piece of white paper into 16 equal squares: Draw four columns down and four rows across the sheet of paper. At the bottom of each square write something that at least one student in the class may have experienced or a quality at least one student may have, such as “broken a bone,” “loves pizza,” “speaks two foreign languages,” “has been on train,” or “is good dancer.” Photocopy one copy of the search paper for each student.

“Have You Ever”

Broken a bone	Sung in public	Experienced an earthquake	
Broken a valuable object	Been very frightened	Kept a diary	
Played squash	Forgotten to do something important	Forgot to study for an exam which was to be held the next day	
Visited a foreign country	Scored 100 marks in any subjects in class 7 th	Stayed awake all night	
Been bored	Cried while watching a movie	Done something dangerous	

We have given you several examples. You may complete the rest yourself.

- 2) Tell students that they will walk around the classroom and ask their classmates questions to fill in the squares on their sheet, such as “Have you ever broken a bone?” If a classmate has broken a bone, they meet the criterion, and the student should write the classmate’s name in that square. If not, the student can choose to ask the person a different question or move to a different classmate until they have found one who has broken a bone. Explain to students that they will also answer questions. For example, if Sunita is asking Jagdish a question, she cannot leave him when he has answered her question. She should wait until Jagdish asks his question and they are both ready to move to new classmates.

- 3) Remind students that everyone in the classroom will be working on their scavenger hunt at the same time, so it is important that students speak quietly; listen to what their classmates are saying very carefully, and not to run. The first person to fill in all of their squares without repeating a name wins. Tell students to raise their paper and call out if they think they have won.
- 4) Give students time to complete their scavenger hunt. Walk around the classroom while students are engaged to make sure everyone is playing fairly and nobody is running. Call time when a student has announced they have finished and have the students quietly freeze where they are standing while you check the possible winning sheet. If the student is mistaken, have the class resume the activity. If not, ask the students to return to their seats.
- 5) Discuss the scavenger hunt with students. Who learned something new about their classmates? What did they learn? Why was it important to use good listening skills during the scavenger hunt? Why was it important to use good speaking skills?
- 6) If time allows, students can practice their reading and listening skills online with interactive stories at this Web site <http://www.alfy.com/Storyville>.

A classroom management skill involves controlling noise levels with adequate signals. While the task is to be completed individually, there is a lot of interaction between the students.

Evaluation

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- **Three points:** Students were highly engaged in class and group discussions; enthusiastically participated in the scavenger hunt; followed the rules of the scavenger hunt without needing teacher guidance or supervision; and demonstrated a clear understanding of the importance of having good speaking and listening skills.
- **Two points:** Students generally engaged in class and group discussions; participated in the scavenger hunt; followed the rules of the scavenger hunt with some teacher supervision or guidance; and demonstrated a basic understanding of the importance of having good speaking and listening skills.
- **One point:** Students participated minimally in class and group discussions; were unable to participate in the scavenger hunt without constant teacher supervision or refused to participate in the scavenger hunt; and were unable to demonstrate a basic understanding of the importance of having good speaking and listening skills.

(adapted from www.discoveryeducation.com)

3.4.3 Beginning Reading (Vocabulary)

- **Subject:** Reading
- **Class** 6
- **Duration:** 1-2 class periods

Objectives

- Define the terms antonym, synonym, and homophone; and
- Identify pairs of antonyms.

Materials

- Writing paper
- Dictionaries and thesauruses
- Index cards, 20 per student
- Crayons, markers, or coloured pencils
- Pencils and erasers

Procedures

- 1) Ask students to define the terms synonym, antonym, and homophone. Ask them how homophones differ from synonyms and antonyms?
- 2) Ask each student to share at least one example of a pair of synonyms, antonyms, and homophones. Write examples on the board or on a piece of chart paper and discuss them. Assess the students' understanding of the types of words and make sure they understand the differences before moving on.
- 3) Next, tell them that they will create a game called Antonym Match-Up. Have students quietly and individually create lists of 10 pairs of antonyms e.g. hot - cold. Tell them not to share their lists with one another. Students may use a dictionary or thesaurus.
- 4) Give each student 20 blank index cards: They will write one word from their list on each card and draw a picture representing it on the same card, if possible.
- 5) Next, have students pair up and play their games by mixing up their antonym pairs and laying the cards on a surface in rows of five so their partner can see all the cards. Partners must correctly match all the antonym pairs. Each partner should take a turn. If time permits, allow students to play with a different student. Walk around the classroom and assess student behavior and understanding while they are playing.
- 6) After students have finished playing, discuss some of the antonyms. Which were easier antonyms to match? Which were difficult? If any antonym pairs did not seem clear, discuss them with the class to see if they are actually antonyms.
- 7) Have students keep their match-up games in their desks to play during free time. If time and resources permit, allow students to create match-up games for homophones or synonyms.

The lesson is planned as a pair work activity. The teacher should ensure that both the students are involved.

Assessment

Use the following three-point rubric to evaluate students' work during this lesson.

- **Three points:** Students easily and clearly defined the terms, *synonym*, *antonym*, and *homophone* and provided clear examples of all three types of words; created unique and colourful match-up cards with 10 pairs of true antonyms; were able to easily determine all 10 pairs of antonyms in the game with little or no assistance.
- **Two points:** Students sufficiently defined at least two of the terms synonym, antonym, or homophone; provided adequate examples of at least two of the types; created somewhat unique and colourful match-up cards with at least eight pairs of true antonyms; were able to determine at least six pairs of antonyms in the game with some assistance.
- **One point:** Students were unable to define the terms synonym, antonym, or homophone and did not provide examples of any of the types of words; created incomplete or incorrect match-up cards with four or fewer pairs of true antonyms; were unable or unwilling to determine the pairs of antonyms in the game without a great deal of assistance.

Vocabulary

Antonym

Definition: A word having a meaning opposite of another word.

Context: *Hot* and *cold* are antonyms because they are opposites.

Homophone

Definition: One of two or more words that are pronounced the same but differ in meaning, origin, and sometimes spelling.

Context: The words *see* and *sea* are homophones.

Synonym

Definition: A word having the same or nearly the same meaning as another word or other words.

Context: *Fast* and *rapid* are examples of synonyms because they have the same meaning.

(adapted from www.discoveryeducation.com)

3.4.4 Creative Writing

Primary Subject	-	English (Creative Writing)
Secondary Subject	-	Computers and Internet
Grades/class	-	5 – 6

Objectives – By the end of the lesson the student should be able to:

- write the outline of a story
- develop content for the story in the form of images
- use Microsoft word

- use internet

Materials

Picture of a desert

Music of waves

Computer access

Introduction

“I want everyone to close your eyes. (Turn on the music of the waves.) Ok, I want you all to imagine that you are on a boat enjoying your vacation. All of a sudden, your boat is faced with a terrible storm. Your boat is tossed about on the ocean. You realize that the only way that you and your family are going to survive is if you jump off your boat and swim to the little island 20 miles away. You put on your life jacket, and you and your family jump off the boat. In the process of jumping, you hit your head and you are knocked unconscious. You wake up on the shore of the little island with your family and a few of the supplies from the boat: a large piece of wood, a tarp (like a blanket, but made of plastic), some netting, and a box. Open your eyes. This island is yours and your family’s new home (hold the picture of the deserted island up), at least until you are rescued.”

Transition:

“Now that you have survived the jump and are now on the island, I want you to write and tell me in story form what you are going to do on your island. How are you going to survive? What are you going to do for shelter, entertainment, etc? Remember to look at the picture for help. Also remember that you have some supplies from your boat. You can hand write some ideas, but the final copy must be typed.”

Students will work in small groups of four.

Task

Each group to write a story about what they were going to do in the island, and their strategies for survival. Ask them to brainstorm and collect ideas from everyone and then attempt writing. They should use support vocabulary, edit their work and also add illustrations.

Vocabulary

Here are some vocabulary items:

Scared, worried, solve problem, food, fruits, coconuts, bananas, design, weather, unbearable.

Closure

Ask each group to display the story on the board. Students walk around to read each others story. Get students together and draw out what was a good story, and how it could be improved upon. Also discuss any grammatical errors, style of writing and the development of content.

Home Task

Write a story in about 250 words on “The Day I got lost in the market”.

The lesson advocates group work. Teachers should ensure that all the students participate actively and also have well defined roles.

Here is a sample lesson plan that integrates the teaching of science with the teaching of English.

3.4.5 Integrated Lesson Plan

Insect Travel Brochure

Class: 7/8

Topic: Insects and their habitats

Mode: Project mode

Time: 2 to 3 days

Objectives

Science

- The student will become familiar with the habitats of different insects;
- S/he will be able to understand various concepts such as carnivore, herbivore, omnivore, producer, consumer, autotrophy, heterotrophy etc;
- S/he will observe various habitats and find out why some habitats are suitable for some insects and why some are not suitable;
- S/he will develop the skill of scientific enquiry-the ability to use evidence effectively; and
- S/he will draw conclusions based on evidence.

Language skills

- Develop vocabulary associated with the insect world.
- Learn to communicate conclusions of observations effectively.
- Learn to design a brochure.
- Develop interviewing skills.
- Develop presentation skills.
- Develop comprehension and research skills.

Steps

Introduction

Begin by asking the class if they could talk about a favourite vacation. They could share this in groups as the teacher walks around and supports the discussion with adequate vocabulary. Some questions that could help take the discussion forward are:

- Where did they go?
- Was it near or far from home?
- Why did they like it?
- Was it similar to home?
- How did they learn about it?

The teacher will show them advertisements from the newspapers and travel guides about vacation spots.

Attention will be drawn to vocabulary and language used in such guides to attract people. They will also look at the layout and the general attractiveness of the brochure. The features of a brochure will be listed on the board.

Setting the task

Students will be asked to create a travel brochure that will entice an insect to travel to that site. In doing this they have to keep in mind what they know about the insect:

- Habitat
- Food habits
- Basic needs of the insect

The brochure should have a picture and description of the insect and the place advertised.

Students may also be provided reference material in the class.

Students may also be asked to use technology if needed, accessing the internet under supervision.

Presentation

Students work in groups. Teacher facilitates responsibilities, e.g. art work, writing, collecting information, collating information and preparing for presentations. Leaders to be identified by the groups. Students be guided within the group to give constructive criticism, to question, and to remain with the group when presenting eventually.

As students present they will be questioned on their scientific knowledge about insects by a subject expert.

Students share information, teach each other, improve their knowledge on insects and their habitats, develop confidence as they are able to communicate better. Ensure that every student has a part to play. They are also exposed to the language of a brochure.

Moving ahead

The project can move forward to a finale involving an exhibition of insects and their habitats. They can include a poster that creates an understanding of how insects play a role in the environment. They develop a better understanding of what is needed for a healthy habitat. All the new vocabulary gained and the facts learnt can be listed and displayed so that the students imbibe the information.

The activity can be related to other content areas. Through social studies they can look at landscapes and features of other lands and find out about insects in foreign lands.

To add to language learning they can write stories of how the insect visited the land advertised and its reflections on visiting that land.

It can be tied to mathematics if they can create graphs of the number of different types of insects selected.

Assessment

Information presented: 10 marks

It should be accurate, indepth and demonstrate knowledge about the insect.

Brochure: 10 marks

Design and language of the brochure. Pictures used, do they support the information given etc.

Creativity: 10 marks

Is the brochure attractive and presented well?

Presentation skills: 10 marks

Confidence and language skills in the final presentation.

Group skills: 10 marks

Team skills of sharing and collaborating. Leadership skills exhibited.

Assessment should have clearly stated rubrics under each head to make it as objective as possible.

Since it is a group activity, all the principles of this type of activity must be kept in mind.

The teacher is the person who must ultimately decide what is best for the students. Do remember however that while subjects are compartmentalised for us, the child comprehends better when it is integrated as she has then a holistic view to learning.

Check Your Progress 5

Note: Write your answers in the space given below.

- 1) Design a lesson plan on “tenses” using any of the models given above.

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3.5 STRATEGIES IN THE CLASSROOM

Given below are some useful strategies in your language class.

Using Images to generate writing/speaking

Using images is a key strategy to use with learners of English. Once the class is shown the picture which could be on the computer screen/printed copies/overhead, students are asked to write whatever they observe at random. Then they are asked to write down any questions they would like to ask about the picture. They

ask each other the questions. Once they have been able to locate the answers, then they are asked to categorise the information. They then write different paragraphs. The class can be given a single picture or many different ones group-wise. The teacher facilitates the writing by helping with vocabulary and correct sentence structures.

Students can select a photo and record what they see. They can then listen to their recordings. There are many internet sites that can help you select the right pictures.

The best pictures are the ones that raise some curiosity, have something strange about them.

Thought Bubbles and Picture Dictation

They can use thought bubbles for the people in the pictures. In picture dictations students draw pictures as the teacher dictates. It can also be a partner activity where half the class is given one picture and the other half another picture. Students with different pictures partner with each other. One student describes and the other draws. Roles are then reversed. When it is completed the feedback is given.

Thought bubbles: Write in the bubble what you think the girl is thinking.



Activity: Listen and draw

- 1) In the middle of the picture is a round table.
- 2) A dog is under the table. It is a brown dog.
- 3) A fruit basket is on the table. Near the basket is a knife.
- 4) Near the table is a chair. A girl is sitting on it. She is eating ice cream.



Blooms Taxonomy

Pictures are given to students and questions are framed according to Blooms taxonomy.

Knowledge: In which geographical area is the picture located?

Comprehension: What do you think is happening in the picture?

Application: How would you describe the picture in one sentence?

Analysis: What do you think is likely to happen to the people in the picture?

Synthesis: What are they thinking?

Evaluation: Are they too young/old to be doing what they are doing?

Compare and Contrast

In this case the students are provided with two images and they are asked to compare the two. They should then generate a paragraph about the similarities and differences in the pictures.

Check Your Progress 7

Note: Write your answer in the space given below.

- 1) Using any of the strategies discussed in section 3.4, plan an activity for your class and write a report.

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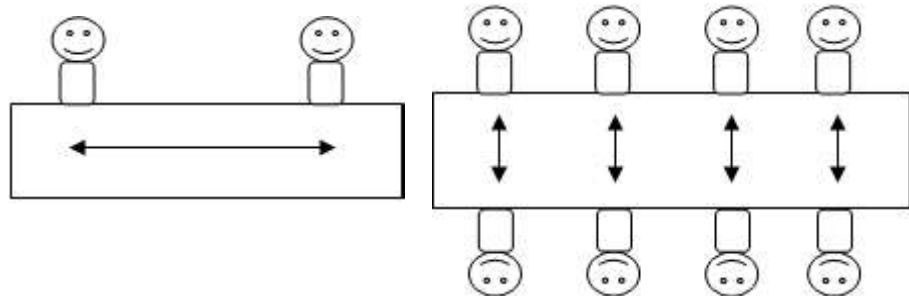
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3.6 CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Classroom Management

In a communication oriented teaching learning situation some of the following strategies are most useful for effective communication. These include pair work, group work and role play.



Why is it needed?

- Gives learners a chance to work independently
- Prepares learners for group work
- Provides an opportunity to talk face to face, which reflects real situations

How do I organize pair work?

- Ensure that you have enough copies of materials required for pair work
- Give clear instructions
- Make sure the students understand the task by asking a few questions
- Use the recommended classroom arrangement as shown in the figure above as far as possible
- Help students to form pairs quickly
- Set a time limit and keep to it
- Keep the activity simple and short

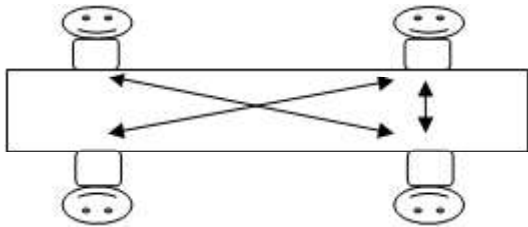
What's the teacher's role during pair work?

- Organise and observe
- Move around the class and help whenever asked
- Control the noise level
- Encourage and involve shy students
- Record grades for continuous assessment

How do I know if learning is taking place?

- Reports by group leaders
- Class discussions
- Informal supervision
- Feedback to students by you (both positive and negative)

1) Group Work



What is the difference between pair work and group work?

Pair and group work differ in:

- Time set
- Nature of the group
- Type of activity

	Pair Work	Group Work
Time	5 to 7 minutes	10 to 15 minutes
Size of the group	2 students	4 to 6 students
Type of activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information gap • Interview • Completing tables • Filling maps • Puzzling out meanings • Answering short Qs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting • Panel discussions • Drafting written work

Why is group work needed?

Students

- are encouraged to participate
- can pool their ideas
- correct each other

How do I organize group work?

Forming Groups

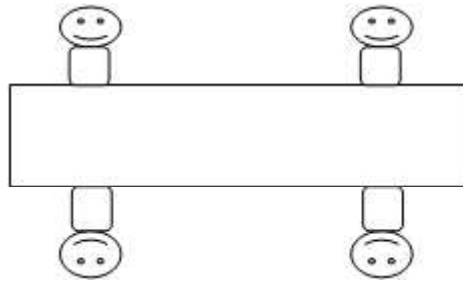
- form mixed ability groups
- plan ahead in case of change in groups
- keep the movement of the students to the minimum (students turn and face each other)

What is the teacher's role during group work?

Monitoring

- allow groups to select the leader
- ensure that everyone gets a chance to speak
- help when asked and when you feel a group needs it
- control noise level
- accept occasional use of mother tongue
- involve shy students
- record grades for continuous assessment

2) Role Play



How do I know if learning is taking place?

Feedback is provided by

- group reports
- informal supervision
- class discussion

What is it? Why is it needed?

- students play imaginary characters in given situations
- brings a wide variety of experiences into the classroom
- helps better self expression (as it is full of fun)

How do I organize role play?

- prepare enough sets of cue cards in advance (cue cards are given to learners to tell them which role they are to play and what they have to do)
- allot the roles to suitable students
- give clear instructions for the task
- make sure the students have understood the situation and the task
- set a time limit and keep to it

What's my role during role play?

- organise and observe
- move around the class and help when asked for
- note the errors and deal with them later
- control noise level
- encourage and involve shy students
- record grades for continuous assessment

How do I know if learning is taking place?

- reports by group leaders
- class discussions
- informal supervision
- feedback to students by you (both positive and negative)

3.7 LET US SUM UP

The importance of lesson planning cannot be undermined. All teachers need to ensure that lessons are planned carefully and that they provide the teacher with guidance to proceed with the lesson. Teachers must constantly update themselves with the relevant and new strategies used in classrooms to ensure that the lessons are interactive and learner centred.

3.8 REFERENCES & SUGGESTED READINGS

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3.9 ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Clarity: It provides clarity on the decisions to be made to help students move towards learner goals
 - Unpredictable events: Teachers can deal with unpredictable events as they are likely to have an alternate plan lined up.
 - Framework: It gives teaching a structure.
 - Professionalism: It provides a professional base for the work in hand namely teaching
 - For the Learner: The learner feels reassured that the teacher is well organized and is concerned about their learning.
- 2)
 - Objectives
 - Differentiation – dealing with a diverse population of children
 - Breadth and balance – the subject matter to be dealt with
 - Progression – the movement from easy to difficult
 - Continuity – logical connectives within the subject
 - Depth – how much exposure is expected
 - Relevance – is it within the student’s learning sphere

- Personalisation – how can it be made meaningful to every child
 - Assessment – does it incorporate both formative and summative assessment
- 3)
- Developing enquiry skills
 - Problem solving individually and in groups
 - Evaluating outcomes
 - Processing information
 - Reflecting and reviewing
 - Developing social skills
 - Taking responsibility for learning
 - Converting mistakes into learning opportunities.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Teachers need to reflect at the end of each lesson in order to plan further lessons for the future. They need to ask at the end of the lesson:
- What happened?
 - What effect did it have?
 - Why did it happen?
 - How could it be improved?
 - How might the teachers/ students have behaved differently?
 - How should things be done the next time?
- 2) When planning a lesson teachers need to remember that every student is different. Sometimes it is good to invite another teacher to observe your lesson and give feedback. Lessons are effective when students are clear about what they are doing and why they are doing it. An environment that is challenging, stimulating, offers a variety of learning opportunities for the students.

Check Your Progress 4

Five qualities:

- being aware of the teaching – learning context.
- keep an eye on the time allotted.
- include a variety of tasks
- keep the unexpected in mind.
- end your lessons on a positive note.

UNIT 4 MONITORING INSTRUCTION: THE REFLECTIVE TEACHER

Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Monitoring in the Classroom
- 4.3 The Importance of Monitoring in the Classroom
- 4.4 How Can We Monitor Our Own Class?
 - 4.4.1 What are Your Beliefs About Teaching Language?
 - 4.4.2 What are the Learners' Beliefs and Attitudes About Language Learning?
 - 4.4.3 How did Tasks/Exercises Work in Class?
 - 4.4.4 Classroom Observation
 - 4.4.5 How do Students Learn in Class?
- 4.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.6 Answers

4.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you should have gained

- an understanding of the concept of monitoring as an ongoing activity
- an understanding of the nature of monitoring of one's own teaching
- an appreciation of the value of monitoring one's own class
- familiarity with aspects of instruction that can be usefully monitored
- familiarity with some of the tools and procedures that can be used for monitoring.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Planning for classroom instruction has to be flexible. What actually happens during lessons cannot be fully predicted and controlled. Thus planning effectively means being prepared with ideas and resources to deal flexibly with situations that emerge as existing plans proceed. The teacher has to judge the situation from lesson to lesson and indeed from stage to stage within lessons, and make appropriate decisions and choices. For this she needs to seek and obtain information in the form of feedback about ongoing instruction. She has also to use this information to fine-tune her teaching so that best use is made of the opportunities the classroom context provides. In this unit we shall focus on this extra effort (paying special attention to what is going on) that is demanded by a flexible approach to teaching. We will also see that monitoring in the long run helps to make the teacher a reflective practitioner "one who is learning from experience, understanding ideas more deeply and thus growing professionally.

Watching and keeping track of something that is happening is something that we do quite naturally and almost unconsciously as part of our everyday lives. Sometimes this is deliberate and conscious. For instance, while crossing a road

with heavy vehicular traffic or driving on such a road, or while cooking something unusual or special we tend to pay close attention both to what is happening around us and to our own actions. However, while engaging in routine and habitual activities (the daily walk to the bus stop, locking doors and turning off lights every night, etc.), we hardly pay any attention to the detailed actions or steps. However, we are monitoring here too, because as soon as something unusual happens or something goes wrong we immediately become fully aware of what is going on. This process of watching or observing something as it happens is called monitoring. In our discussion here, we will be focusing more on the monitoring that is done with a higher level of conscious attention. However, a valuable base level of informal and unconscious monitoring is always present when we engage in any purposeful activity. Systematic monitoring is a matter of building on that base, not a correction or remedy applied to something that is faulty.

The word monitoring has associations with inspection and evaluation by an 'external' authority. The traffic policeman, the health inspector (at a food processing plant), the referee for games like football and hockey, are all monitoring in this inspection mode. They are external agents who have been vested with some power or authority. However, there is another quite different mode of monitoring that people engage in, without any 'official' power to do so being given to them. Consider a scooterist going through heavy traffic. S/he is monitoring what is going on all around him/her very carefully and constantly adjusting his/her path (speed, direction, lane, etc.) in response to this information. Similarly, a doctor who is monitoring the progress of a patient will study the 'data' and make various decisions about treatment and review them after a day or two or maybe after a few hours. In both cases the person who is doing the monitoring uses the information as the basis for action, and this action relates importantly to that person's own plans and operations. In this unit we consider the processes of monitoring when the teacher is getting feedback about her own teaching. Monitoring helps her become more aware of what is going on in class and she can use this awareness to modify (improve) her teaching.

4.2 MONITORING IN THE CLASSROOM

We have seen some general examples of monitoring ongoing activities above. Now let us see how monitoring occurs in the setting of the classroom lesson; after all a lesson is a planned sequence of activity leading to a goal. Here are some examples of teacher activity in class that are linked to the monitoring function.

Example 1 A science teacher is explaining a new concept (e.g., friction). She presents two detailed examples to help clarify the concept. She notices that many students are puzzled and are glancing at one another anxiously. She decides to take up a somewhat informal example, one that was not in her plan initially. (And fortunately this seems to 'work'....)

Example 2 A language teacher is dealing with a poem from the Reader. During the discussion, a student of 'average' ability (one who rarely says anything in class) offers his interpretation of a symbol. This is novel, and also quite insightful for a child of that age. Some other students seem to find this perspective interesting. The teacher sets aside the interpretation-explanation she was leading

the class towards (in her plan) and spends about ten minutes exploring this new possibility. She is especially concerned about accepting and encouraging students who are quiet and shy, and building up their confidence.

Example 3 A language teacher dealing with a prose extract, has allowed about 15 minutes for discussion in small groups in her plan. The class does not seem very enthusiastic, and the groups take a long time to settle down. But after about 12 minutes she finds that most groups are getting into fairly serious discussions, and that there is a high level of participation on the whole. She decides to let the discussions continue for another ten minutes. As a consequence the 'reporting back' stage is set back to the next lesson. This teacher was keen on taking full advantage of discussion questions that the students obviously found interesting, and promoting widespread participation.

What do we find in these examples that might be stated as a general 'principle'? It is that teachers are not rigidly following detailed plans they might have thought of very diligently. They are modifying their plans **based on the feedback** they get about what is happening, and what students are doing. However, they are not just giving up and trying something different away from the plan. The changes appear to be purposeful in response to the real situation in the class.

Thus we can say that monitoring is a typical and normal aspect of the teacher's classroom behaviour. However, this does not mean that monitoring is always a highly conscious and systematic process. In fact it is usually not so. Monitoring is more likely to be done without the teacher being fully aware of it - something that is more or less automatic. Now this is very different from doing it casually or carelessly. Let us recall the skilled scooterist or driver on a busy road. S/he is getting information and acting on it all the time, but may not be conscious of it - because this observation and response has been so well practised that it is virtually automatic. Here again we must remember that this 'automatic' behaviour is not a matter of fixed or rigid habits, it remains highly flexible.

In the same way, a teacher who is monitoring her class and acting on the information, may not be quite aware of it. Suppose we asked a teacher shortly after a lesson, to write down specific instances from the lesson where she got relevant information from monitoring and then took a clear decision to change her plan. She would probably say she cannot remember any specific stage where she did this. Suppose on the other hand, that when she was relaxed and had some free time, we asked her do the following exercise. [If you are a practising teacher now, please do this in relation to a class you taught recently.]

Think back to some incident or development that occurred in class that you had not expected. For example,

- a sudden noise in a corner when the class was listening to you attentively;
- an error made by a 'good' student;
- a brilliant answer given by a 'weak' student.
 - 1) What exactly happened?
 - 2) Why do you think it happened that way?
 - 3) How did you handle it?

Here we have given the cue that **unexpected event(s)** should be the starting point. The teacher will probably be able to recall one or more specific stages of the lesson. (As we know from general experience, unexpected events are always easier to remember). The teacher would also probably be able to state what her response to the situation was, what consequences it had. In other words, she would normally be able to comment on the incident(s), and even offer some sort of interpretation. What this suggests is that even though a teacher might say that she did not do any conscious monitoring, when encouraged to think back to the class and reflect on it, she will often show evidence of having ‘taken in’ information about various aspects of the class - and these could easily be aspects that she did not intend to pay special attention to. One reason for this is that teachers do have some plan for a lesson. What will be done and what is supposed or expected to happen has been **thought about beforehand**. Teachers, thus, generally monitor at least some aspects of the classes they teach, though not very consciously most of the time.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: Write your answer in the space given below.

- 1) Some common activities get very little attention from us while others are attended to carefully. What is the difference between the two?

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- 2) Even in the case of activities that do not usually get much attention, the level of attention can suddenly increase. Why does this happen?

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4.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF MONITORING IN THE CLASSROOM

As we have seen above, an informal level of monitoring is going on while the teacher is conducting a lesson. This is an interesting and encouraging phenomenon. However, we must be careful not to assume that all teachers monitor carefully and successfully all the time, and their teaching is therefore very relevant to the needs of their students.

Far from it! In fact in all areas of education, and language courses are no exception, there is the persistent problem of the curriculum-in-operation not being very effective or satisfactory. Even newly designed courses, supported by sophisticated materials and appropriate teacher orientation reveal many inadequacies, especially when followed in a variety of institutions. The explanation lies in the fact that the teaching - learning process is not a simple and straightforward matter of predetermined and neatly organized inputs leading to clearly predictable outcomes. As we know from everyday experience, even simpler operations can go wrong. For example, when assembling a household gadget following a manual, or when baking a cake using a recipe, following a set procedure does not always guarantee success.

It should not surprise us therefore, that in our teaching- learning endeavours, there is nearly always a gap between our intentions and what is realized. The processes activated in class (cognitive, motivational, interpersonal, ...) are influenced by various factors, thus making outcomes highly unpredictable. This does not mean that we give up and accept that teaching cannot be planned and organized and made (more) effective. This complexity of the teaching-learning situation presents us as individual teachers with a challenge - that of monitoring several aspects of the actual situation and going as far as possible to take account of the information obtained as a lesson progresses. A plan for teaching should not be followed strictly like a recipe, but used as a starting point for further 'situation-specific' decisions.

This need for modification or adjustment of plans is what our earlier discussion of flexible planning points to. What learners in a given class will actually do (or be prepared to try to do seriously) - and this is their contribution to the lesson – cannot be controlled, or even predicted accurately when planning in advance. Hence the teacher must keep getting 'up to date' information (especially about the learner involvement and progress) and 'fine-tune' her planned inputs accordingly.

Monitoring is the means of obtaining feedback on an ongoing basis so that teaching can be made sensitive or responsive to the immediate situation in the class. We have already seen that a predisposition to monitor (informally) is present in teachers.

Monitoring needs to be carried out in a more conscious and systematic manner if it has to help with 'improving' instruction. Monitoring of instruction can, of course, be done by others (outsiders) as well. This has advantages and disadvantages. Here our focus is on self-monitoring. This process as noted above, helps immediately in the (more) effective handling of given lessons. In the long term, it plays a major role in enhancing the teacher's professional skills. The rationale for self-monitoring can be summed up as shown below.

- i) A teacher who has an awareness of teaching and its different components is better prepared to make appropriate judgements and decisions in teaching.
- ii) Critical reflection can trigger a deeper understanding of teaching. Critical reflection, as we saw earlier, involves examining our own experiences as a basis for decision-making and self-development. It involves asking questions about how and why things are the way they are, the value systems they represent, alternatives available, etc.

- iii) Much can be learned about teaching through self-inquiry. Very often class visits by outsiders are not feedback-oriented but are judgement-oriented. Moreover, rather than depending on external sources for information, the approach that seems to have a lot of potential for self-development is one where teachers monitor and collect information about their teaching either individually or through collaborating with a colleague and making decisions about what alternatives to adopt. Lawrence Stenhouse, a well-known expert in curriculum-research, is of the opinion that all well-founded curriculum research and development, whether the work of an individual teacher, of a school, of a group working in a teachers' centre or of a group working within the coordinating framework of a national project, is based on the study of classrooms. It thus rests on the work of teachers. He further adds: 'It is not enough that teachers' work should be studied: **they need to study it themselves**'.
- iv) Another related concept to self-monitoring is the view that experience by itself is insufficient as a basis for professional growth. We know that for many experienced teachers, many classroom routines and strategies are applied almost automatically and do not involve a great deal of conscious thought and reflection. Experience is the starting point, but for the experience to play a productive role, it is necessary to examine such experience systematically. For this, systematic procedures are needed. A more detailed discussion of these points is available in Richards and Lockhart (1994).

Self monitoring then is 'illuminative' because it involves raising the consciousness of teachers as to what is actually happening in the classroom as opposed to what is supposed to happen. It is also formative in purpose since the information we get about the process and product of teaching-learning can be immediately fed back to alter or improve our own class. Therefore it involves descriptions of what happened, and why and how this self-awareness helps in developing deeper insights into the complexities of a classroom. Therefore monitoring plays a major role in a teacher's self-development. Monitoring therefore involves systematic observation and explanation of classroom processes.

Task: If you are already a teacher, can you identify changes, however small, you have made to your teaching? Why did you make these changes? How did these changes come about?

Check Your Progress 2

Note: Write your answer in the space given below.

- 1) What would be two examples of changes in a plan that a teacher can make fairly smoothly during a lesson, as a result of the feedback received through monitoring?
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2) What is the basic reason for the gap between intentions and outcomes that seems a characteristic of teaching?

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4.4 HOW CAN WE MONITOR OUR OWN CLASS?

Having examined the need to monitor our own classrooms, we shall discuss in this section: **what** aspects of teaching-learning should we monitor and **how** can we monitor them.

To recapitulate very briefly what we have discussed earlier: self monitoring is simply the practice of teachers themselves observing and reflecting on what takes place in class with a view to bringing about desirable changes in teaching and learning.

What does teaching-learning consist of? No matter what kind of class it is, it seems to have certain factors that are common.

Task: What does a typical class involve? List some aspects that come to your mind from your experience. Some are mentioned to start you off.

- selecting activities/tasks/exercises
- presenting learning activities
- setting up a group or pair-work task
- giving instructions for a task/exercise
- teacher explaining, clarifying, discussing
- learners responding to teachers
- learners responding to other learners(continue

The list of factors is likely to include factors that relate to (i) different **stages** of teaching-learning, (ii) the main participants in the class i.e. teacher and students, and what they bring to a class by way of their beliefs, attitudes, expectations, assumptions about teaching-learning and (iii) the physical features of the classroom.

You would have realised while doing this task that each of these factors overlaps to quite an extent with other factors. This does not matter. This in fact means that a lesson is a complex combination of different factors and is therefore holistic. Very often it is quite difficult and sometimes impossible to isolate factors and examine them individually. This does not mean that we cannot look closely at a few of the aspects at a time. What we would like to examine actually depends on

what stage we are in at a given time. We might also want to look at the same phenomenon from different perspectives i.e. from our own perspective (that of the teacher's), from the perspective of students, and so on.

We will now discuss how we can monitor our own class systematically and in a principled way. In talking about it, we will try and cover as many aspects of a class as possible. For example teachers' and students' beliefs about language, and language learning that affect the actual learning in the classroom, the roles of teacher and students, classroom interaction which is a major factor in language learning, the nature of language learning tasks - including tasks used for assessment and so on. We may not, as we saw earlier, deal with these in this order or even separately. There are overlaps among the different aspects and therefore there would be overlaps in the way we monitor them.

We can collect information about the different aspects of teaching and learning using a variety of different procedures. These procedures incorporate a formative element by allowing us to get continuous, on-going feedback about the class, about the different aspects of ELT curriculum in process. They seek to provide the teacher with insights into what actually happens when teaching and learning is taking place.

The main procedures suggested in the unit are diaries (also referred to as journals and field-notes), observation, checklists and inventories, and self-assessment forms.

4.4.1 What Are Your Beliefs About Teaching Language?

- a) Let us first look at our own beliefs and attitudes which influence the way we behave in the classroom. Whether you are presently a teacher or not, as a student you would have seen different kinds of teachers, for example, teachers with different styles. Teachers' style is inevitably influenced by their attitudes and beliefs; for example, the nature and role of knowledge, in the case of language learning – their view of language and the nature of learning and teaching.

According to the views one holds about these and other related issues, one could be what Douglas Barnes calls a **transmission** teacher or an **interpretation** teacher. These two basic types are not exact opposites, but are tendencies towards one extreme or the other.

In very general terms, a *transmission* teacher maintains a high degree of control over the learners in order to impart knowledge which she embodies. The subject matter is central and the teacher of this type will reward contributions from learners which she approves of. The teacher also judges whether the learners have come up to the expectations set prior to teaching. On the other hand, an *interpretation* teacher prefers to disperse responsibility for learning among learners and creates conditions that are conducive to learning. The teacher organises classroom activities, sets up learning tasks and assists learners in doing these activities. She also allows for individual learning styles and therefore for differential learning.

Task : The beliefs and attitudes of the teacher are realised in classroom action. Are you a *transmission* teacher or an *interpretation* teacher? Why? Can you think of one or two specific instances from your class which substantiate your answer? Which aspects would you like to analyse further?

- b) You can analyse your own beliefs about teaching with the help of a checklist suggested below. Select 5 statements that most closely reflect your beliefs about how English is learnt and how it should be taught.
- 1) Language is a set of grammatical structures and words which are to be taught systematically in class.
 - 2) Language is meaningful communication and is learned by practice in informal situations.
 - 3) When students learning English as L2 make errors, these errors should be corrected immediately and later explained through examples.
 - 4) When students learning English (L2) make errors, it is best to ignore them as long as we know what they are saying.
 - 5) Students learning English (L2) usually need to master some of the basic listening and speaking skills before they can begin to read and write.
 - 6) It is important to repeat and practise a lot for learning a language.
 - 7) The most important part of learning a second /foreign language is learning the grammar.
 - 8) It is easier for children than adults to learn English as a second language.
 - 9) It is not necessary to actually teach students how to speak English. They usually begin speaking on their own.
 - 10) Everyone can learn English.

Adapted from Richards, J. and Lockhart, C. (1993). *Reflective teaching in second language classrooms*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

From the statements you have selected, can you state what according to you is language learning and teaching? Do you wish to analyse it further?

4.4.2 What Are The Learners' Beliefs And Attitudes About Language Learning?

Learners, too, bring to learning their own beliefs, goals and attitudes which influence how they learn. We know that learning is the goal of teaching, but learning is not the mirror image of teaching. We may want to know what assumptions and expectations learners bring to classrooms.

You could draw up an inventory as shown below and give it to your students for their opinion. Find out from students to what extent they agree with each of these statements:

- 1) English is much more difficult than other languages.
- 2) English is the most important language in the world.
- 3) You need to know a lot of words if you want to know English.

- 4) We need to practise every day to improve our English.
- 5) Teachers should explain grammar rules of English in the class.
- 6) It is enough if the teacher gives grammar exercise(s) as homework.
- 7) It is important to speak English very well.
- 8) It is better if the teacher corrects all our mistakes.
- 9) I like group work because when I make mistakes my friends don't correct me.
- 10) It is not correct to ask the teacher when you have a doubt.
- 11) I know the rule but I forget it when I speak.

Adapted from Richards, J. and Lockhart, C. (1993). *Reflective teaching in second language classrooms*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

(You could modify this list depending on what aspects you would like information on.)

You could speculate about the kinds of learners who will agree/disagree with the above statements. Is it likely that statements 3, 4, 5, 8, 10 are chosen by the same learners? Why? Are any of the characteristics reflected by the statements at odds with your beliefs? Would you like to investigate it further?

4.4.3 How Did Tasks/Exercises Work In Class?

You might be interested in how well the tasks/exercises/activities you set up measured up to the criteria you had in mind. You could list a set of criteria as suggested below and observe and record your views as the class progresses.

The Tasks	At the end of 20 minutes Yes/No	At the end of the class Yes/No
1) Were based on real-life needs.		
2) Provided opportunity for skill-practice.		
3) Provided for different levels of learners.		
4) Allowed interaction among learners.		
5) Promoted information sharing.		
6) Encouraged learners to reflect critically.		
7) Encouraged learners to evaluate themselves.		
8) Were interesting/informative/challenging.		

The criteria given are adapted from Nunan, D. (1989). *Understanding Language Classrooms*. London: Prentice Hall.

Which tasks/aspects of tasks would need to be modified? Why?

4.4.4 Classroom Observation

- a) If on the other hand you would like to monitor your class as a whole, you could use this observation schedule adapted from Scrivener, J. (1994). *Learning teaching*. Heinemann.

Observation Schedule [Make observations after 20 and 40 minutes]

The Tasks	Yes	Not sure	No
1) All instructions were clear.			
2) The class understood what was wanted at all times.			
3) Every student was involved at some point.			
4) Students were interested in the lesson.			
5) The teacher made sure all students understood.			
6) Materials and learning activities were appropriate.			
7) Class atmosphere was positive			
8) The pacing of the lesson was appropriate.			
9) There was enough variety in the lesson.			
10) There was the right amount of teacher talk.			
11) Error correction and feedback were appropriate.			
12) There was genuine communication.			
13) Group work was well organized.			
14) Explanation of points of language was clear.			

At the end of the class you could note down any comments you may have about each of these statements and the class as a whole. What did you learn from this exercise? This exercise is based entirely on your own retrospective observation. Another exercise you could try is to record your class on an audio-tape recorder. Play it at the end of the class and then make your comments.

- b) You could also write a diary on the following lines to keep a record of how things were planned and implemented in class. Before the lesson, think about your plan and ask yourself the questions in the First set. After the lesson, ask yourself the questions in the Second set. At the end, answer the questions in the Third set.

First set - Before the lesson

- 1) Is the lesson that you have planned interesting?
- 2) Does it provide opportunities for students to be actively involved?
- 3) What classroom arrangement will you use? What materials do you need?
- 4) Which skills will you focus on in the class?
- 5) What might the students learn? Write the aim of your lesson.
- 6) Are the instructions clear?
- 7) What provision have you made for students who finish slowly/quickly?

Second set - After the lesson

- 1) What evidence was there that (a) the students were interested (b) the lesson was smoothly/badly organized?
- 2) Which learners were not involved? Why?
- 3) Write down some example of the language that the students used. Was it meaningful?
- 4) What will you do next to follow up the lesson?
- 5) Which of your aims were achieved? Were other things achieved instead?
- 6) When did the students give their own ideas? Did you accept their ideas? Did they have a fair share of time to talk or did you dominate the class?

Third set

- 1) What have I learnt?
- 2) How would I like to improve/change/develop my teaching in the future?

4.4.5 How Do Students Learn In Class?

- a) When you need to monitor student learning, it could be done by observing them in class - working in groups or pairs or individually. Since observing the whole class may not be very easy, you might want to focus on a few students on a given day or on one group/pair on a given task. The following checklist might help.

Checklist for Informal Assessment

Dimensions of Student Behaviour	Student's names			
Use these letters to code performance: F = frequently O = occasionally R = rarely N = never				
1) Substantiates own views				
2) Argues logically				
3) Shows creativity/originality				
4) Responds to others' views/ideas				
5) Asks relevant questions				
6) Attempts to answer questions when asked				

7) Obstructs discussion (monopolises, is discourteous/disruptive, etc.)				
8) Uses L1 (mother tongue) Comments				

- b) If on the other hand you want students to monitor themselves and give you their views on it, you could give them a self- evaluation form as suggested below. This could be repeated every fortnight or month to see any progress in their learning indicated by their entries.

Checklist for Self-Evaluation of Learners

- 1) How much time outside class have you spent
 Speaking English?
 Listening to English?
 Reading English?
 Writing English?
- 2) Who have you spoken to this week in English? (not including your teacher)
 Do you feel your conversations were generally successful?
 Yes/No Why?
- 3) What films/TV programmes/radio programmes have you watched/listened to this week?
 What did you think of it?
 Did it help you with your English?
 If yes, how?
 If no, why not?
- 4) Have you written anything in English this week? If yes, what?
- 5) Write down 10 new words in English that you have learnt this week.
- 6) Do you feel confident using these words when you speak/write?
- 7) Where did you learn them?
 Other context (please specify)
- 8) What progress do you feel you have made in English this week?
 a lot quite a lot a little not at all
 speaking.
 listening
 reading
 writing
- 9) What are you going to work on/try to improve next week?
 speaking
 listening

reading

writing

How are you going to do this?

10) Now rate your progress for this week on your own personal scale from 1-11

(1 = lowest 11=highest) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11

Check Your Progress 3

Note: Write your answer in the space given below.

1) How can monitoring be of help in the professional growth even of teachers who are already quite experienced?

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2) What are some of the aspects of the teaching-learning situation that a teacher should be able to monitor without much difficulty?

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4.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have looked at the general notion of monitoring, or observing events (especially our own actions) as they are occurring. We have seen that teaching is an activity that is usually monitored informally by teachers. The principle of flexibly planning instruction so that it can be made responsive to the actual teaching-learning situation indicates that monitoring has an important role to play. It helps the teacher with the ‘final’ stages of implementing a curriculum in a particular class. The practice of monitoring in the long run helps to make the teacher into a reflective practitioner - one who is not only doing a technical job but also learning from experience. We have also noted some of the aspects of the teaching situation that can be monitored by the teacher, and looked at the procedures and instruments that a teacher can fairly conveniently use. (A number of tasks for you to attempt - assuming the role of a teacher usually - have also been suggested. These were meant primarily as exercises to sensitize you and help you to relate concepts introduced here to your experience.

4.6 ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1)
 - i) Activities that are routine and habitual are carried on more or less automatically or ‘unconsciously’.
Examples: i) washing ones hands and drying them with a towel.
 - ii) Moving past rows of desks, handing out sheets or booklets.
Activities that are not well practiced or are new tasks in new situations call for concentration and attention,
Examples: i) Carrying a tray with tea cups filled to the brim.
 - iii) Going from desk to desk in an examination hall checking hall tickets, seat numbers, etc.
- 2) In routine activities while things are proceeding normally attention remains minimal, but if something unexpected happens (something goes wrong) full attention is given to the activity.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1)
 - i) A detailed explanation of some point with various examples can be cut short if there is a clear indication that most students have understood.
 - ii) An idea that is clearly of great interest to students comes up during a lesson, and the teacher decides to take up a discussion or task related to it immediately (and not a day or two later as in her plan).
- 2) The teacher’s plan and intentions are necessarily based on assumptions about the learners. Even if she knows them well, it is impossible to predict how they (30 or 40 of them) will react during a particular lesson on a particular day. They will invariably ‘push’ some aspect of the lesson in some unforeseen direction or the other.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) As a teacher gains experience on the job, more and more of her teacher behaviour tends to become routine and habitual. One learns from experience by reflecting on it, and hence the value of monitoring for the experienced teacher. It can help her teaching (probably quite good by general standards) to become even more effective for more of her diverse learners.
- 2)
 - the teacher’s beliefs and assumptions
 - the learners’ attitudes and expectations
 - the difficulty and manageability of certain new task types
 - the quantity and quality of interaction among the members of one or more of the groups set up in class.
 - the level of satisfaction or sense of progress that students themselves feel.

UNIT 5 EXPERIMENTING WITH TEACHING

Structure

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 What is Practitioner Research?
- 5.3 Why Practitioner Research?
- 5.4 How Can We Carry Out Practitioner Research?
- 5.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 5.6 Key Words
- 5.7 Suggesting Readings
- 5.8 Answers

5.0 OBJECTIVES

This unit will enable participants to:

- get an awareness of what experimenting with one's own teaching involves and why it is necessary;
- identify and articulate questions in relation to teaching-learning in the classroom that need to be examined closely and carefully;
- carry out small-scale classroom based research leading to improved classroom pedagogy.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous Unit on 'Monitoring Instruction - The Reflective teacher', we emphasized the value of monitoring by the teacher herself. Self-monitoring, we learnt, involves critical reflection by the teacher herself, which triggers a deeper understanding of teaching, which in turn forms a basis for making decisions about what alternatives to adopt. This self-inquiry is illuminative in the sense that it gives us information about the actual process of teaching that can be immediately fed back to alter or improve our own class.

In this Unit, we will pick up the question of reflecting on one's own teaching and relate it to what is normally called action research. Action research or practitioner research is conducted by teachers in their own classrooms and schools. It is an on-the-job activity, unlike the more traditional forms of research where outside researchers come into schools, investigate questions that focus on one or more aspects of the curriculum and then leave. The 'job' of action research that is required of the teacher should not be viewed as an added burden but as a special dimension to the routine act of teaching that teachers engage in.

Task: Consider a typical lesson that you teach such as prose, poetry, grammar or composition lesson. What format does this kind of lesson follow? Why does it have the format it does? How personalized or flexible is it?

In thinking back to your own **regular** teaching, you were trying to question your own established practices which probably brought to surface some shocking truths! For example, are there some routines which you have resorted to as a matter of habit? Probably because your teachers practised them? Or because that is what is standard teaching practice? What beliefs account for this practice? Would you like to continue with them?

These questions point to the need for a questioning attitude in our everyday teaching. A questioning or a research attitude underlies practitioner research or action research (we use the terms action research and practitioner research interchangeably here although there are some differences in the way they are conceptualized and practiced).

Let us now see what practitioner research involves.

5.2 WHAT IS PRACTITIONER RESEARCH?

As we said earlier, practitioner research is carried out by the teacher herself in her classroom or school. It is a kind of research in which teachers critically look at their own classrooms primarily for the purpose of improving their teaching and the quality of education as a whole. It is contrasted with the outside researcher/expert conducting an enquiry into classroom processes. It is participatory since teachers and students, the main stakeholders of the curriculum, are involved in it. Teachers are no more ‘subjects’ who are subjected to classroom observations or interviews by outside researchers but are an integral part of the continuous research process.

Practitioner Research is also situational or context-based in that it is ‘grounded’ in classroom realities. This means that it can take account not only of the classroom as a ‘real’ social setting, but also of the institutional factors that have an impact on the work of the teacher. Therefore, this research allows for interpretations that stem from actual data from the classroom and not from theoretical arguments alone.

It is also self-evaluative i.e. based on the on-going evaluation of improvements achieved. Teachers can themselves decide which findings from their experimentation are useful and relevant to the given situation, which ones need to be discarded and which ones need to be repeated and more importantly, why. But even this research by teachers may sound a little daunting since it appears to involve extra work and therefore difficult. It might be useful to look at some examples of teachers who have engaged in systematic enquiry with the purpose of understanding and improving their practice.

Example 1:

Read the account of Teacher X as he did a Diary study:

Although I have often analysed a day’s work in a few minutes at the end of the day, I had never carried out a systematic step-by- step analysis. When I came to know about “Diary Study” I felt that it was a unique chance for an objective and frank self-analysis. The study involved detailed analysis based on certain important questions within a period of about a fortnight.

Step I

First, I decided to analyse my performance on the basis of a lesson in the Main Course Book. In short, it involved a debate on *Setting up a mill at Srutipur*. I chose this topic because I felt that it would be highly motivating and the inhibited students would be encouraged to join the mainstream. I planned the lesson well in advance. Students would bring magazine clippings on debatable topics. These clippings would then be read out (at least the most interesting ones). Coming back to the lesson, I would introduce the topic and assign various roles. The students would be divided in groups of six. They would discuss in groups, followed by a class debate, and then draft a letter to the editor.

My findings at this point

- 1) I had managed to motivate the students quite well. They were extremely eager about the new course. They brought a lot of magazine clippings and their faces glowed, eager to participate!
- 2) I felt that some students showed the tendency of leaving the initiative to others. These students had to be constantly encouraged.
- 3) Occasionally, the class seemed to degenerate into chaos. I could not scold them as it would kill their enthusiasm. At the same time, I felt the need for better organisation with rules and regulations to avoid any sort of indiscipline.
- 4) Some students kept asserting their points without listening to others. They had to be told listening was as important as contradicting. Unless you listen carefully, how can you argue against a point of view. Equally important is the critical analysis of what the opponent says.
- 5) When the students spoke spontaneously, some of their language habits and mannerisms became obvious! If they had thought about and planned what they had to speak, maybe, we would never have been able to find out this important information!

Step II

This time I chose a topic more relevant to their day-to-day life: **TV viewing is harmful to children**. The class organisation was different this time. In every group there was a group leader, a group secretary, a group artist and a group speaker. The roles and duties were clearly assigned

My findings this time

- 1) I felt that the entire class moved on smoothly without a moment of chaos.
- 2) Students who kept asserting their points previously now spoke only after listening to their opponents. They had understood what I had told them in this regard.
- 3) The instructions seemed clearer this time. There was no misunderstanding.

Check Your Progress 1

Note: Write your answer in the space given below.

- 1) Does this diary indicate an objective and frank self-analysis? Give instances.

.....

- 2) Does the teacher’s account indicate a change in teacher’s decisions after Step I? Do these decisions concern the teacher’s planning before the lesson or on-the-spot situational ones related to on-going classroom activities or both?

.....

Example 2

This is a report on students’ evaluation of the new course.

As a way of involving students in a process of evaluation of the new course, a small study was carried out in which students were asked to give their feedback about the course material, teaching methods and about themselves.

This is what they reported:

1) About the Course Books:

Good points:

- The course gives room for group and class discussion.
- There is possibility for original and free interaction.
- Creativity increases and it builds up confidence.
- Some exercises in the Main Course Book are challenging.
- Use of audio material in the classroom situation is an innovative process.

Bad points:

- Certain exercises in the Work Book are not clear. Explanations given are not enough, they are often monotonous and sometimes it is difficult to comprehend them.

- Choice of lessons in the Literature Reader is not up to the level of Class X (some examples are quoted).
- Internet based activities should be included.

2) About the Teaching:

Good points:

- All are given equal opportunity and individual attention and encouragement is given to all.
- Lessons in the Main Course Book and the Literature Reader are taught very well, but Work book needs attention.
- Teacher takes pains to teach all the lessons well.
- Class is made lively and humorous.
- The emphasis is on learning the language rather than on testing. The methods must not pressurize students as they are not examination-oriented.
- Time management is excellent.
- Teacher is able to get students' attention and cooperation.
- Teacher is a facilitator and does not dominate.
- Completing syllabus is not stressed. Helps to think and fend for oneself rather than 'spoon feeding'.

Bad points

- Teaching is slow.
- The methods of teaching Work Book exercises should be changed; more exercises should be added.
- Regarding the Main Course Book, teacher does not explain certain lessons.
- Accessibility to audio visual material is a problem.

3) About Students Themselves: Good points:

- All get equal opportunity. Even weak students are taken care of.
- Students get an opportunity to voice their opinion and thereby gain confidence.
- Due to group work activities, students learn to cooperate and compromise.
- They are looking forward to such methods being used in classes XI and XII.
- Students develop interest in studies as there is no rote learning.
- There is healthy noise generated in the class.
- Due to discussions, vocabulary and expressions improve.

Bad points:

- Sometimes peers do not cooperate. Some still feel very shy to come forward, as certain students continue to dominate.
- Students are not confident to answer long answers either orally or in written form. Due to more of oral discussions students get overconfident even though they are ill- equipped (test performance speaks for this)
- Sometimes noise level in class is disturbing.
- Difficult to score more in the examination as **60%** of the paper is not text based.
- Group work gives a good cover for private chat and gossip.
- **60%** for internal assessment in class IX is not welcome.

Conclusion:

- 1) Work book needs revision. More interesting exercises need to be included. Also digital technology.
- 2) The teacher should try to convince the students that the new methodology focuses on student involvement and active participation.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: Write your answer in the space given below.

- 1) Can you add at least two more conclusions to the findings ?

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- 2) This small study focused on getting students' response to the new course. Who are the others whose response could also be sought? How?

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- 3) In what way is this study valuable to the teacher?

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5.3 WHY PRACTITIONER RESEARCH?

In our discussion so far it must be somewhat clear why we are advocating research-mindedness or a questioning-attitude to our profession. We will briefly explain the specific reasons and clarify in the process the questions/issues that come up.

- 1) As we mentioned earlier, research done by outside researchers seems to have many problems: firstly the teacher or school has no control over such research. Teachers and students are merely subjects on whom the study is conducted. The research findings that may or may not be communicated to participating schools often are of little relevance or of direct benefit to the people teaching and learning in those schools. The researcher's assumptions about teaching/learning and the teacher's own perspective of the classroom are often incompatible, resulting in the researcher speaking a different 'language' from that of the teacher. As a result, the concept of teachers and researchers as collaborators is gaining ground as a way of integrating research and pedagogy.
- 2) Often when teachers use 'knowledge' generated by researchers by way of policies or directives, they are rather dissatisfied, because these directives or policies may not be relevant to their experience. Therefore, as Lawrence Stenhouse says,

"It is difficult to see how teaching can be improved or how curricular proposals can be evaluated without self monitoring on the part of teachers. A research tradition which is accessible to teachers and which feeds teaching must be created if education is to be significantly improved." (p.165)

What this amounts to, then, is that the teacher should see all established methodologies and techniques only as a framework for pedagogic activity that needs to be tried out and modified to accommodate new insights and new experiences in teaching, Widdowson (1984) also suggests that teachers should adopt a theoretical orientation to their task. This does not mean that they should adjust their teaching to theoretical pronouncements and experimental findings. In fact it means the opposite: they should learn to treat such pronouncements and findings with circumspection, enquire into them, probe them for their conceptual validity and supporting evidence and then use them only as initial hypotheses to be tested against classroom experience (pp.89-90).

The crucial role that teachers would have to play is that of an 'experimenter'. Hopkins (1985) expresses this aspect of practitioner research in the following words:

"Teachers are too often the servants of heads, advisers, researchers, text books, curriculum developers, examination boards, or the Department of Education and Science among others. By adopting a research stance, teachers are liberating themselves from the control position they so often find themselves in By taking a research stance, the teacher is engaged not only in a meaningful professional development activity but (is) also engaged in a process of refining, and becoming more autonomous in, professional judgement." (p.3)

Experimenting with one's own teaching marks a departure from 'follow the right method' approach. The implication here is that, there is no 'correct' method which will work for all students in all situations. If this is so, the teacher will have to examine any approach with a critical eye and adopt an experimental approach to incorporating it into the classroom. This also means that rather than judging the efficiency of the approach on intuitive grounds, the teacher has to set up a small 'experiment' to carefully monitor, observe and document what actually happens during the experiment.

Let us see in the next section how we might actually carry out practitioner research.

5.4 HOW CAN WE CARRY OUT PRACTITIONER RESEARCH?

In the previous unit on 'Monitoring instruction', we looked at some ways of monitoring in the classroom. These would in fact be some of the techniques/modes that will need to be used to observe the goings-on in your class.

But before that, let us agree that experimenting with our own teaching can range from having a simple questioning attitude/research bent of mind to what you do in class, to setting up properly planned small-scale research studies. Whatever the kind of sophistication you bring to your work as teacher-as-researcher, it must be remembered that it is carried out systematically and is aimed at improving the given teaching/learning situation. Moreover, it is a continuous process based on a number of steps which progress as a spiraling and evolving procedure. David Hopkins refers to four basic 'moments' of action research; planning, action, observation and reflection.

A wide range of processes can be considered and drawn on in a flexible way within the framework of the research questions under consideration, for e. g. explanation, identification, planning, data collection, observation, etc. But remember that we are not suggesting that, to be a good teacher, you need to set up sophisticated experiments and carry them out rigorously. What we are suggesting is, that we as teachers go through an on-going cycle of researching (suggested above), which in fact is part of 'good' teaching.

Having understood what experimenting with our own teaching might involve, we will in this section, examine a few examples of different types of questions that we are normally confronted with, in the context of teaching-learning.

We could broadly divide the questions into the following areas:

- Syllabus/materials related
- Planning and preparation (on the part of teachers)
- On-going classroom processes/activities (classroom management, interaction, participation, etc.)
- Student learning (outcome)
- Student-related factors (motivation, weak/bright learners, influence of the mother tongue, attitude to language learning/English language learning, etc.)

The Teacher in the Classroom

- Teacher-related factors (beliefs, attitudes, teacher’s language competence, etc.)

The above areas/concerns can be articulated as possible research questions:

- 1) What is my role as a teacher? How do my students perceive my role as a teacher?
- 2) What format or structures do my lessons have? Do they vary from one type of lesson to another? Why?
- 3) Why don’t all students participate actively in a lesson?
- 4) Which type of homework do my students like? Why? Which ones are beneficial for language learning?
- 5) Why do the students make the same grammar mistake even though I correct them every time?
- 6) Why does a particular group of students always score low marks?
- 7) Does the way I comment on their compositions make a difference? How?
- 8) Why can’t I finish a given exercise in a given time?
- 9) How should I plan my lessons? Once a month/week or every day? In what detail?
- 10) Why do I have too little/much time even though I plan my lessons in advance?
- 11) Why don’t my students like ‘revision’?

Check Your Progress 3

Note: Write your answer in the space given below.

- 1) Can you try and relate these questions to the areas we mentioned earlier? Remember one question may relate to more than one area.

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- 2) Do you encounter such situations? Can you add one or two other questions that come up every now and then in your context?

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The assumption underlying this activity as you would have gathered by now is that every teacher needs to look critically at his/her lesson, question why it happened the way it did, gather more information about particular events/happenings and exploit the situations to get a deeper understanding of teaching/learning. You probably encounter these and/or other similar questions in your everyday teaching but may or may not have thought about it seriously enough. What could we possibly do once we have recognised these questions?

Let us take an example from the list given here. A common problem that occurs is given in Question 3: Why don't all students participate actively in a lesson? This relates to the area of on-going **classroom- processes / activities**. We can now ask other related sub-questions that will guide us to investigate it further. For example:

- 1) Do I include all students? Why?
- 2) How do I respond to different students' needs?
- 3) Is the class too large?
- 4) Is the class divided into small groups/pairs?
- 5) Is the lesson/activity interesting/challenging enough to all students?
- 6) Do the bright ones dominate the shy/weak ones? And so on.

Which ones of these seem most crucial to you in your context? You will need to focus on those questions and examine them further. Let us say the problem of heterogeneity or that of weak versus bright students is quite serious in your class. That may be one main reason why all don't participate in the lesson. You would like to do something about it. How shall we go about it? There are several strategies or approaches you can adopt.

You can observe a set of students (the whole class may be difficult) comprising both bright and weak students on a particular day. You could draw up a list of points/aspects that you think are important (you already have examples of such checklists in the last Unit). You could add to it as you observe your students, and at the end of the lesson, some interesting things might emerge. You might want to repeat this on the same group or go on to another group.

You could also ask students what they have to say about their participation. You could give them a checklist as shown below.

Say which statements are true in your case.

- 1) I don't find most lessons interesting.
- 2) I find that most lessons are too easy (or difficult).
- 3) The teacher never asks me any question.
- 4) Other students never give me a chance to speak.
- 5) I don't know how to say things in English.
- 6) I can't understand the instructions/questions the teacher gives.

You can add to the list or modify these statements. When students answer these, you will not only get their side of the story but also help them to understand their

own behaviour better. On the basis of what you gather, you may decide to alter your own approach to teaching or do something specific about particular students.

You can work on other questions in a similar way. The Unit on ‘Monitoring Instruction - The Reflective teacher’ has some examples of checklists and instruments. We have also suggested to you a set of books which offer several such checklists. But remember, you need to adapt these according to the purpose of your inquiry or study. The units on Evaluation at the end of this course will give a more extended exposure to evaluation of classroom practices, including student performance, leading to effective change.

5.5 LET US SUM UP

We have tried, in this unit, to emphasize the need to carry out small-scale research by the classroom teacher. We have provided some tools to the teacher to carry out such experiments. Action research will help the teacher to:

- critically reflect on her own teaching
- get student responses to her performance, to the materials, about themselves and their peers.

This will enable the teacher to identify and articulate questions/problems about teaching/learning in the classroom, which will lead to improved classroom pedagogy.

5.6 KEY WORDS

- action research** : research carried out by the teacher herself in her classroom or school.
- practitioner research** : by conducting this research, the teachers critically look at their own classrooms for the purpose of improving the quality of instruction.

5.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

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5.8 ANSWERS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) I think it does. For instance the teacher is quite ready to accept that the class “degenerated into chaos” after Step I. Notice that this is corrected in Step II.
- 2) Yes, there’s a change in the teacher’s decisions after Step 1. She appears to have done her planning before the class – notice the new topic. She suggests what is more relevant to the students. Class management is better organised, and instructions are clearer. The teacher seemed to have planned everything before the lesson.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1)
 - i) The teacher should give explanation/practice if the class requires/ desires it. The teacher should be more eclectic in her approach.
 - ii) The teacher needs to give more practice in writing after the discussion is completed.
- 2) Of course the teacher is both a facilitator, and an evaluator. Materials writer? (any other that you can think of)
- 3) This research gives invaluable information about the students’ response to the texts in terms of
 - interest, difficulty level, whether it contains enough explanation or not, etc.
 - the teacher’s handling of it
 - the teacher’s handling of the students
 - accessibility of equipment like audio/video tapes/ICT
 - students’ own assessment of themselves and their peers
 (Please add more points. These points are given only to start you off.)

