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The Language Teaching Matrix

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Contents

Preface

The Language Teaching Matrix is designed to serve as a textbook in courses on language teaching methodology and teacher preparation, and as a source book for courses on language curriculum design, materials development, and teaching practice. The "matrix" in the title is a metaphor for an interactive and multidimensional view of language teaching; for in this book effective language teaching is seen to result from interactions among the curriculum, teachers, students, methodology, and instructional materials. In particular, three factors are singled out as central to effective teaching: the curriculum, methodology, and instructional materials.

This is not a book of prescriptions, where teaching is approached in terms of *methods,* or *products* that offer teachers predetermined models to follow. Rather, teaching is approached as a dynamic *process.* Teaching depends upon the application of appropriate theory, the development of careful instructional designs and strategies, and the study of what actually happens in the classroom. Because these ingredients will change according to the teaching context, effective teaching is continually evolving throughout one's teaching career. Discussion questions and tasks at the end of each chapter will aid teachers in their personal journeys toward effective teaching.

Each chapter in the book takes a central issue in language teaching and examines its position within the language teaching matrix – that is, its role and position within the network of factors that have to be considered. Chapter 1 presents an overview of curriculum development processes and suggests that an effective second language program depends upon careful information gathering, planning, development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. Chapter 2 contrasts two approaches to conceptualizing the nature of methodology in language teaching. One is the familiar methods-based approach to teaching. This is seen to be a "top-down" approach because it involves selecting a method, then making teachers and learners match the method. The other is a "bottom-up" approach; it involves exploring the nature of effective teaching and learning, and discovering the strategies used by successful teachers and learners in the classroom. This chapter hence seeks to draw attention away from methods and to address the more interesting question of how successful teachers and learners achieve their results.

The next four chapters of the book focus on the teaching of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Each skill is discussed from a different perspective.

Chapter 3 looks at a key issue in the teaching of listening comprehension: the design of suitable instructional materials. It is argued that teaching materials should recognize the difference between two kinds of listening processes, referred to as top-down and bottom-up processing. In addition, differences between interactional and transactional purposes for listening are discussed. These distinctions are then used as a framework for designing listening exercises.

In the next chapter, teaching conversation is approached through an examination of the nature of casual conversation and conversational fluency. Two approaches are compared -- an indirect approach, which teaches conversation through the use of interactive tasks, and a direct approach, which focuses on the processes and strategies involved in casual conversational interaction. The need to monitor classroom activities to determine their effectiveness in promoting conversation skills is emphasized.

In Chapter 5 a case study is presented of an effective reading teacher. From interviews and video recordings of the teacher's class, an attempt is made to understand how the teacher approaches his teaching and the kinds of planning and decision making that the teacher employs. In Chapter 6 approaches to the teaching of writing are considered. The importance of an adequate theory of writing is stressed, and product- and process-based approaches to teaching writing are compared. Implications for the roles of learners, the teacher, and instructional activities are discussed.

Chapter 7 discusses ways in which teachers can explore the nature of their own classroom practices and improve the effectiveness of their teaching through self-monitoring. Three approaches to self-monitoring are elaborated: personal reflection through journal or diary accounts of teaching, self-reports based on focused reports of lessons, and audio or video recordings of lessons. Practical suggestions are given on what teachers can look for in their own lessons, procedures for carrying out self-monitoring, and how to use the information obtained.

In Chapter 8 approaches to developing programs for students of limited English proficiency are considered. Traditionally language proficiency has been the main focus of such programs. The goal has been to develop minority students' language skills to a level where they can cope with the demands of regular classroom instruction. It is suggested that this approach is inadequate, and that an effective program must address three crucial dimensions of classroom learning, referred to as the interactional dimension (the ability to understand and use the social rules of classroom discourse), the instructional task dimension (the ability to

understand the nature of learning in mainstream classrooms), and the cognitive dimension (the ability to understand and assimilate concepts and information in different content areas).

The book concludes with a short chapter offering reflections on some of the key points of the book. The primary goal of *The Language Teaching Matrix* is to engage teachers and teachers-in-training, as well as teacher educators, in the investigation of classroom teaching and learning. In order to facilitate this and to assist instructors using the book, each chapter concludes with a set of discussion questions and practical activities. These serve to link the information in each chapter with practical issues in curriculum development, methodology, classroom observation, and materials design.

This book resulted from graduate courses I taught as a faculty member of the Department of English as a Second Language at the University of Hawaii, from 1981 to 1988. Discussions with students and colleagues helped clarify my understanding of many of the issues discussed here. For ongoing support, advice, and encouragement while the book was being written, I am particularly grateful to my former colleagues Richard Day, Richard Schmidt, and Martha Pennington. Others whose advice has always been both constructive and supportive include particularly Chris Candlin, Fred Genesee, David Nunan, and Tom Scovel. Lastly, special thanks are due to Ellen Shaw at Cambridge University Press, whose guidance and encouragement helped shape the book into a more readable and coherent form; to Barbara Curialle Gerr, who saw the book through production; and to Sandra Graham, whose skillful copy editing helped remove many a circumlocutious thought and infelicitous phrase – though not this one!

1 Curriculum development in second language teaching

Second language teaching is often viewed from a very narrow perspective – that of the teaching act. Consequently much of the literature on second language teaching deals with teaching methods or with the design and use of instructional materials. If students aren't learning it is assumed to be the fault of the method, the materials, or the teacher. Yet the success of a language program involves far more than the mere act of teaching. As with any successful educational program, a number of levels of planning, development, and implementation are involved. Goals and objectives for the program have to be developed as well as syllabuses and instructional materials. Instructional strategies have to be determined, teachers selected and trained; and tests and assessment procedures chosen. Once the program is in operation, procedures are needed to enable the program to be monitored and its effects on learners and learning evaluated. In order to plan for effective second language teaching, a comprehensive view is needed of the nature and process of language program development. Providing such a view is the goal of this chapter, in which issues and practices in language curriculum development are reviewed and their contribution to effective language teaching assessed.

Language curriculum development, like other areas of curriculum activity, is concerned with principles and procedures for the planning, delivery, management, and assessment of teaching and learning. Curriculum development processes in language teaching comprise needs analysis, goal setting, syllabus design, methodology, and testing and evaluation.

Steps in Curriculum development

Needs analysis

> Needs assessment refers to an array of procedures for identifying and validating needs, and establishing priorities among them. (Pratt 1980:79)

In language curriculum development, needs analysis serves the purposes of:

1. providing a mechanism for obtaining a wider range of input into the content, design, and implementation of a language program through

involving such people as learners, teachers, administrators, and employers in the planning process
2. identifying general or specific language needs that can be addressed in developing goals, objectives, and content for a language program
3. providing data that can serve as the basis for reviewing and evaluating an existing program.

In language teaching, the impact of needs analysis has been greatest in the area of special-purposes program design, and a considerable literature now exists on the role of needs assessment in English for specific purposes (ESP) (Robinson 1980). But needs analysis is also fundamental to the planning of general language courses.

Parameters, sources, and procedures

Needs analysis may focus on either the general parameters of a language program or on the specific communicative needs of language learners. The first approach may be referred to as *situation analysis*, and involves focusing on the following kinds of questions:

Who are the learners?
What are the learners' goals and expectations?
What learning styles do the learners prefer?
How proficient are the teachers in the target language?
Who are the teachers?
What training and experience do the teachers have?
What teaching approach do they favor?
What do teachers expect of the program?
What is the administrative context of the program?
What constraints (e.g., time, budget, resources) are present?
What kinds of tests and assessment measures are needed?

The second approach, *communicative needs analysis* (Munby 1978), is concerned with gathering information about the learners' communicative needs in the target language, and involves questions such as these:

In what settings will the learners use the target language?
What role relationships are involved?
Which language modalities are involved (e.g., reading, writing, listening, speaking)?
What types of communicative events and speech acts are involved?
What level of proficiency is required?

Answers to these questions help determine the type of language skills and level of language proficiency the program should aim to deliver. An example of a questionnaire in the domain of situation analysis is given

in Appendix 1, and one in the domain of communicative needs analysis in Appendix 2.

Determining needs is not an exact science, however, since it involves both quantitative and qualitative approaches, requires the use of a variety of formal and informal data-gathering procedures, and seeks to identify or quantify needs that may be by nature imprecise. Needs statements thus represent judgments by the needs analyst as to what should be analyzed, the means to be used, and the meaning and significance of the data collected. Methods employed in gathering data vary according to setting and may involve participant observation, interviews, questionnaires, content analysis of job descriptions and job advertisements, tests, role play, and analysis of communication breakdowns (Roberts 1980; Schroder 1981).

Needs-analysis procedures generate a considerable amount of data, including information about the context of the language program, the learners, the teachers, and the administrative factors that affect the program. This information is then used in planning the program itself. Let us examine some of the key processes involved in more detail.

Goals and objectives

Curriculum goals are general statements of the intended outcomes of a language program, and represent what the curriculum planners believe to be desirable and attainable program aims based on the constraints revealed in the needs analysis. Goals can be used as a basis for developing more specific descriptions of the intended outcomes of the program (the program objectives). Goal statements refer to elements of the program that are actually going to be addressed by instruction. For example, a needs analysis might reveal that a group of learners had unfavorable attitudes toward the proposed language program. A goal statement reflecting this might be:

Students will develop favorable attitudes toward the program.

However, while this goal might represent a sincere wish on the part of teachers, it should appear as a program goal only if it is to be addressed concretely in the program.

Types of objectives

From goals to objectives

In language teaching, a number of different ways of stating program objectives are commonly employed, including behavioral, skills-based, content-based, and proficiency-based objectives.

BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES

The most familiar way to state objectives is in terms of behavior. Mager (1962) specified three essential characteristics of behavioral objectives:

1. They must unambiguously describe the behavior to be performed;
2. They must describe the conditions under which the performance will be expected to occur;
3. They must state a standard of acceptable performance (the criterion).

Findlay and Nathan (1980) give examples of behavioral objectives in "competency-based" language programs. Sample objectives for a survival language course include:

Given an oral request, the learner will say his/her name, address and telephone number to a native speaker of English and spell his/her name, street and city so that an interviewer may write down the data with 100% accuracy.

Given oral directions for a 4-step physical action, the learner will follow the directions with 100% accuracy.

Sample objectives for an ESP course for clerical workers are:

Given a letter with 10 proofreading marks for changes, the learner will rewrite the letter with 90% accuracy in 10 minutes.

Given the first and last names of 10 persons, five with Spanish surnames and five with English surnames from a local telephone directory, the learner will locate the names and write down the telephone numbers in 5 minutes with 90% accuracy. (Findlay and Nathan 1980: 226)

Four justifications are commonly made to support the use of behavioral objectives in curriculum planning:

1. They help teachers to clarify their goals.
2. They facilitate instruction by highlighting the skills and subskills underlying different instructional content.
3. They make the evaluation process easier.
4. They provide a form of accountability.

A criticism that is often made, however, is that representing language teaching goals in terms of behavioral objectives is impractical, as well as undesirable. Some learning goals cannot readily be stated in terms of behavioral changes expected in students. In such cases, it is preferable to focus on the classroom tasks and learning activities that learners should engage in, and the intrinsic worth and value of these experiences for their own sake, without specifying precise learning outcomes. This is sometimes referred to as a process-based approach (Stenhouse 1975).

Behavioral objectives also tend to deal only with aspects of second language proficiency that can be represented as "competencies" and hence tend to trivialize the nature of second language acquisition.

SKILLS-BASED OBJECTIVES

A common way of stating objectives in language programs is to specify "microskills," or processes that account for fluency in such specific "macroskill" areas as reading, writing, listening, and speaking. In specifying microskills, the curriculum planner tries to describe the competencies that account for functional ability in a given skill but are "independent of specific settings or situations" (Krahnke 1987: 49). For example, Nuttall (1983: 146) presents objectives for an intensive reading program in the following form:

After completing the reading course, the student will:

a) Use skimming when appropriate to ensure that he reads only what is relevant, to help subsequent comprehension.
b) Make use of non-text information (especially diagrams etc.) to supplement the text and increase understanding.
c) Read in different ways according to his purpose and the type of text.
d) Not worry if he does not understand every word, except when complete accuracy is important.
e) Recognize that a good writer chooses his words carefully and would have meant something different if he had chosen A rather than B. (An advanced reader will be able to explain the difference.)
f) Make use of the reference system, discourse markers, etc., to help himself unravel the meaning of difficult passages.
g) Be aware that a sentence with the same signification may have a different value in different contexts, and be able to identify the value.
h) Be able to make use of the rhetorical organization of the text help him interpret a complex message.
i) Be aware that a writer does not express everything he means, and be able to make inferences as required.
j) Be aware that his own expectations influence his interpretation and recognize those occasions when the writer's assumptions differ from his own.
k) Be aware, when necessary, that he has not understood the text, and be able to locate the source of misunderstanding and tackle it.
l) Respond fully to the text in whatever way is appropriate.

Richards (1985a: 199) lists among the microskills needed for academic listening the ability to

1. identify the purpose and scope of a lecture
2. identify and follow the topic of a lecture

3. identify relationships among units within discourse (e.g., major ideas, generalizations, hypotheses, supporting ideas, examples)
4. identify the role of discourse markers in signaling the structure of a lecture
5. infer relationships (e.g., cause, effect, conclusion)
6. recognize key lexical items related to a topic
7. deduce meanings of words from context.

Krahnke (1987) discusses the advantages and disadvantages of a skills-based approach. Relevance to students' needs is a key advantage, whereas the potential ambiguity and subjectivity of skills taxonomies are disadvantages.

CONTENT-BASED OBJECTIVES

Many language programs specify objectives in relation to content. For example, the Council of Europe's Threshold Level English (Van Ek and Alexander 1980: 29) includes objectives related to fourteen topic areas. Under the topic "House and Home," for example, the following are among the specifications given:

Learners should be able to discuss where and under what conditions they live, specifically:

types of accommodation	describe the type of house, flat etc in which they live themselves, as well as those in the neighborhood, and seek similar information from others
accommodation, rooms	describe their own accommodation, house, flat, etc and the rooms in it, and seek similar information from others
furniture, bedclothes	mention and inquire about the availability of the most essential pieces of furniture and bedclothes
rent	state, rent and/or purchase price of their own accommodation and inquire about that of other houses, flats, etc

Lists of functions, often related to specific situations or settings, are also employed as objectives in language programs. For example, a syllabus guide for vocational English in industry lists "core needs" in the following form (MacPherson and Smith 1979):

To ask:
  someone to lend you something
  someone to pass something that's out of reach
To ask for:
  change in deductions
  change in holiday dates

  change in shift
  help from workmates when the job is too much for one person

It is clear that in using skills taxonomies and content-based descriptions as objectives, the distinction between "objectives" in the sense proposed by Mager and "syllabus" – that is, between goals and content – has been blurred.

PROFICIENCY SCALES

A related development in language curriculum development is the use of proficiency scales. Program objectives may specify a level of proficiency, such as "survival English," or "Level 3 on the Foreign Service Oral Proficiency Scale." An example of the use of proficiency-based objectives in large-scale language program design is the Australian Adult Migrant Education On-Arrival Program, a program for immigrants (Ingram 1982).

In order to ensure that a language program is coherent and systematically moves learners along the path towards that level of proficiency they require, some overall perspective of the development path is required. This need resulted . . . in the development of the Australian Second Language Proficiency Ratings (ASLRP). The ASLRP defines levels of second language proficiency at nine (potentially twelve) points along the path from zero to native-like proficiency. The definitions provide detailed descriptions of language behaviour in all four macroskills and allow the syllabus developer to perceive how a course at any level fits into the total pattern of proficiency development. (Ingram 1982: 66)

Likewise instruments such as the Foreign Service Institute Oral Interview (a scale that contains five levels of oral proficiency supplemented by ratings for accent, grammar, vocabulary, and fluency) can be used not only to assess proficiency for diagnostic or placement purposes but also to establish levels of proficiency as program objectives. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) in 1982 published Provisional Proficiency Guidelines, which are "a series of descriptions of proficiency levels for speaking, listening, reading, writing, and culture in a foreign language. These guidelines represent a graduated sequence of steps that can be used to structure a foreign-language program" (Liskin-Gasparro 1984: 11). However, Ingram and others have stressed that proficiency descriptions complement rather than replace the use of program objectives since, particularly at the lower levels, they tend to resemble profiles of incompetence and hence are hardly suitable as statements of objectives (Brindley 1983: 39). It has also been observed that there is little relevant empirical data available to develop valid statements of proficiency levels across skill areas, an issue that has proved problematic with the ACTFL proficiency scales (Lee and Musumeci 1988).

No matter what approach to stating goals and objectives is used, all language programs operate with explicit or implicit objectives. Where the program fails to make objectives explicit, teachers and learners have to infer them from the syllabus, materials, or classroom activities. Teachers may hence regard objectives merely as instructional goals (e.g., "to develop learners' confidence in speaking"), as course descriptions (e.g., "to concentrate on listening skills"), or as descriptions of the material they intend to cover (e.g., "to cover Chapter 3 of *Strategies*") (Brindley 1984). Without clear statements of goals and objectives, questions of content, methodology, and evaluation cannot be systematically addressed.

Syllabus design

In standard models of curriculum processes, curriculum planners progress systematically from needs assessment, to goals and objectives, to specification of the instructional content of the program. Taba's model of curriculum processes (1962: 12) consists of:

Step 1: Diagnosis of needs
Step 2: Formulation of objectives
Step 3: Selection of content
Step 4: Organization of content => = Syllabus design
Step 5: Selection of learning experiences
Step 6: Organization of learning experiences
Step 7: Determination of what to evaluate and means to evaluate

In language teaching, Steps 3 and 4 are usually known as *syllabus design*. Syllabus design (the product of which is usually referred to as a *syllabus* in British usage and a *curriculum* in American usage) is concerned with the choice and sequencing of instructional content. If the Taba model were followed, the procedures for developing a syllabus would involve examining instructional objectives and arranging them by priorities, and then determining what kind of content was required to attain the objectives.

In reality, in language teaching the syllabus has traditionally been the starting point in planning a language program, rather than an activity that occurs midway in the process. The concept of a language syllabus has been fundamental in the development of language teaching practices in the twentieth century. In the work of such British language teaching specialists as Harold Palmer, Michael West, and A. S. Hornby, and such American specialists as Charles Fries and Robert Lado, questions concerning the linguistic content of a language program were considered primary and a necessary basis for planning a language program. This reflects the fact that many applied linguists were trained as linguists, rather than as educational planners. Hence from the 1920s through to the present, debate over the most appropriate form for syllabuses in language teaching has continued. A properly constructed and planned syllabus is believed to *assure* successful learning, since it represents a linguistically and psycholinguistically optimal introduction to the target language. Syllabus design theory has consequently been one of the most active branches of applied linguistics in recent years (e.g., Wilkins 1976; Shaw 1977; Yalden 1983; Krahnke 1987; Nunan 1988) – to the astonishment perhaps of those with a broader educational view of curriculum issues.

Conceptions of the nature of a syllabus are closely related to the view of language and second language learning that the curriculum designers subscribe to. Under the impact of grammar-based views of the nature of language, language syllabuses were traditionally expressed in terms of grammar, sentence patterns, and vocabulary. As a result of the more recent movement toward communicative theories of language and language learning, syllabuses have tended to be expressed more in communicative terms. The following kinds of syllabuses (or variants and combinations of them) are commonly found in current English as a second language (ESL) courses and materials, particularly those dealing with speaking and listening.

types of syllabuses

1. Structural (organized primarily around grammar and sentence patterns)
2. Functional (organized around communicative functions, such as identifying, reporting, correcting, describing)
3. Notional (organized around conceptual categories, such as duration, quantity, location)
4. Topical (organized around themes or topics, such as health, food, clothing)
5. Situational (organized around speech settings and the transactions associated with them, such as shopping, at the bank, at the supermarket)
6. Skills (organized around skills, such as listening for gist, listening for specific information, listening for inferences)
7. Task or activity-based (organized around activities, such as drawing maps, following directions, following instructions)

Despite the extensive literature on syllabus design in recent years, there is little empirical evidence to warrant commitment to any particular approach to syllabus development. In practice, a combination of approaches is often used, since many would agree with Johnson (1981: 34):

> A syllabus is essentially a job specification, and as such it should set out clearly and precisely what is to be done, and the standards or criteria to be met by those who do it. If seen in this light, arguments as to the relative merits of notional, situational, or topic based syllabuses, etc. are no more sensible than arguments as to whether the specifications in a construction contract should cover the foundations, or the steel framework or the concrete or the glass or the interior design etc. The obvious answer is that all of these must be covered.

In addition, it should be emphasized that the form in which a syllabus is presented reflects the intended users and uses of the syllabus. Is the syllabus primarily a guide for materials writers, or are classroom teachers expected to teach from it? Is the syllabus a document teachers will consult, and if so, what do they expect to find in it? Will learners be tested on the content of the syllabus, or are teachers free to adapt and supplement it? What teaching skills and teaching styles do the teachers have who will be using the syllabus? The effect of different answers to these kinds of questions is seen when syllabuses are compared.

Appendix 3, for example, is taken from the *Malaysian Communicational Syllabus* (1975), a syllabus for the teaching of English in upper-secondary school. The syllabus specifies activities and tasks rather than notions, functions, grammar, or vocabulary, as well as the level at which tasks are to be accomplished. Procedures suggested for classroom use include various kinds of communication tasks, role plays, and simulations, and the syllabus provides sample situations as a guide to the teacher. The syllabus reflects the philosophical assumptions of the syllabus planners: a commitment to communicative language teaching and to a needs-based approach to program content. At the same time the syllabus assumes that teachers have a high degree of proficiency in English and are able to adapt and plan materials and classroom activities around the syllabus. The syllabus was also intended as a guide for textbook writers, who were expected to write materials that exemplified the principles of the syllabus.

The syllabus example in Appendix 4 is very different in form and approach. This is part of a tutor's kit intended for volunteers working with Vietnamese refugees in Britain. In this case the syllabus is planned around topics and content, and a great deal more linguistic specification is given. This reflects the fact that the users of this syllabus were not expected to have the same high degree of training and experience as the teachers using the Malaysian syllabus.

Appendix 5 is from a syllabus for refugees in the United States who need survival-level skills to enter the job market. The philosophy of the

syllabus planners is evident in the "competencies" specified, which provide clear guidelines for both teaching and testing. The syllabus is planned around topics, and competencies are listed for each topic area. Teachers are expected to teach to the syllabus and to test students in and out of the program based on the learners' mastery of the content of the syllabus.

Methodology

It is not until the goals, objectives, and content of a language program have been determined that decisions about methodology can be taken up in detail. The focus of this phase of program development is on the kind of instruction that will be required to achieve the goals of the program. From the perspective of curriculum development, questions of methodology do not center on the choice of a "method." (See Chapter 2 for a detailed critique of this approach to teaching.) Appropriate teaching methodology is not predetermined; nor can it be imposed on teachers and learners. Rather, it evolves out of the dynamics of the teaching process itself (see Chapters 2 and 5). This does not mean, however, that effective teaching cannot be planned for and conceptualized in advance.

Methodology can be characterized as the activities, tasks, and learning experiences selected by the teacher in order to achieve learning, and how these are used within the teaching/learning process. These activities are justified according to the objectives the teacher has set out to accomplish and the content he or she has set out to teach. They also relate to the philosophy of the program, to the view of language and language learning that the program embodies, and to the roles of teachers, learners, and instructional materials in the program. Since the assumptions underlying methodology are not necessarily shared by teachers, administrators, and learners, it is a useful exercise for all who are involved in a language program to clarify their assumptions about the kind of teaching and learning the program will try to exemplify. This can be done through teacher preparation activities that examine attitudes, beliefs, and practices concerning five central issues:

1. the approach or philosophy underlying the program
2. the role of teachers in the program
3. the role of the learners
4. the kinds of learning activities, tasks, and experiences that will be used in the program
5. the role and design of instructional materials.

The approach or philosophy

First, assumptions about the nature of language and language learning need to be clarified. What view of the subject matter or content of the course (e.g., listening to lectures, reading for study purposes, conversation skills for social survival) does the program reflect? For example, is reading viewed as primarily a "top-down" or "bottom-up" process (see Chapter 4)? What does listening comprehension involve and what skills does it depend upon? How is conversation understood and what are its most important components? In order to answer questions like these, teachers and curriculum planners need to find ways of clarifying and sharing their perceptions and beliefs in order to reach an understanding of the very skill they are setting out to teach. If different viewpoints are not resolved, teachers may set about their teaching in ways that seem incorrect or puzzling to each other or to a program supervisor.

Closely related to the teachers' understanding of the nature of language and the specific aspects of language proficiency that the program sets out to teach is their understanding of how proficiency in reading, writing, listening, and speaking is achieved. What beliefs do teachers have about how people acquire conversational skills, learn to write effectively, or gain a better mastery of the phonology or grammar of the target language? What theory of second language learning do the teachers subscribe to, and how divergent or relevant to the particular program are the beliefs or assumptions they hold? Opportunities for clarification of these questions should be planned for during the curriculum development process.

The role of the teacher

Teaching is usually regarded as something that teachers do in order to bring about changes in learners. A central component of methodology is how teachers view their role in this process. What kinds of teaching style do they regard as desirable? What kinds of teacher–learner interactions do they favor? The following are among the kinds of roles teachers may see for themselves in the classroom:

monitor of student learning
motivator
organizer and controller of pupil behavior
provider of accurate language models
counselor and friend
needs analyst
materials developer
evaluator

The roles teachers adopt form the basis for teachers' decisions on how the program's activities, techniques, and learning experiences can best be used to bring about learning. In thinking about these kinds of issues, teachers can better understand the assumptions that guide their own teaching. Willing (1985) suggests a number of values-classification and other kinds of exercises that enable teachers to explore these issues. For example, teachers may discuss such questions as:

1. Suppose a total stranger walked in and observed one of your classes. What aspects of your teaching style would give that person clues as to your basic personality?
2. What aspects of your teaching style might mislead that same person about your true personality?
3. Who does best in your classes? How would you describe a typical "excellent learner" for the sort of teaching you do?
4. Have you ever gone through a major change of teaching style?

(Willing 1985: 14)

Procedures that teachers can use to monitor and examine their own teaching are given in Chapter 7.

The role of the learners

How do those involved in the program view the role of learners in the learning process? How are learners expected to learn within the program? Are they viewed as the passive recipients of an educational technology that is imposed on them, or are they viewed as having active input into the learning process? To what extent will learners be consulted concerning the kinds of learning and learning activities they will undertake? What will characterize a good approach to learning from the point of view of both teachers and learners? Is there any conflict between this and the learners' view of their role in learning and their approach to learning? The role of the learners will therefore relate to:

approaches to learning
attitudes to learning
preferred learning styles and strategies
preferred learning activities
patterns of learner-to-learner interaction
patterns of teacher-to-learner interaction
degree of control learners exercise over their own learning
how learners characterize effective teaching
how learners characterize effective learning

Information obtained during needs analysis will be useful in thinking about these issues. When such information is not available in advance, it should be sought as the program is being implemented (i.e., as part of formative evaluation, discussed later in this chapter).

Learning activities, tasks, and experiences

Teaching consists of the activities, tasks, and learning experiences selected to help bring about learning, and how these are used in the classroom. What principal kinds of activities, tasks, and learning experiences will the program make use of and what criteria will be used for selecting them? How much weight will be assigned to each activity type per lesson/unit, and what configurations of teacher and learners will activities involve? A conversation course, for example, may include the following activities:

pair work or group work (learner to learner)
practice with the text (teacher to learner)
free conversation (teacher to learners / learner to learner)
dialogue work (learner to learner)
pronunciation exercises (teacher to learner)

These activities are selected on the basis of the kinds of conversational interaction and the opportunities for conversational practice they bring about. A writing course, on the other hand, may be organized around activities such as the following:

brainstorming (learner to group)
quickwriting (learner to self)
group writing (learner to group)
peer feedback sessions (learner to group)
blackboard writing (teacher to group)
free composition activities (learner to self)
analysis of models of good writing (teacher to group)

Activities are selected according to the opportunities they provide for developing composing skills (planning, drafting, revising) as well as for gaining control of the mechanics of writing.

Instructional materials

Methodology also depends upon the role of instructional materials in the program. The following kinds of questions will have to be asked at this point:

1. Will materials provide the primary source of language input for the learners or are they merely viewed as supplementing input provided by the teacher?

2. Will materials be adopted, adapted, or specially prepared for the program? Which of these options is best matched to the financial resources available and to the skills/abilities of teachers in the program?
3. If existing materials are going to be used (e.g., commercially published textbooks), what kind of preparation will teachers need in order to use them effectively?
4. If materials are to be specially written for the program, who will be involved in preparing them and under what circumstances?
5. Will adequate provisions be made for development, testing, and revision of the materials?

Good instructional materials are an important part of the process of instruction. They set out to teach through the process of

defining instructional objectives
setting learning tasks or activities to attain the objectives
informing learners of what tasks they have to perform
providing guidance in how to perform tasks
providing practice in performing tasks
providing feedback on performance
enhancing retention of the skills the learner acquired through performing the task.

At the same time, effective instructional materials in language teaching have the following characteristics:

They are based on theoretically sound learning principles.
They arouse and maintain the learners' interest and attention.
They are appropriate to the learners' needs and background.
They provide examples of how language is used.
They provide meaningful activities for learners.
They provide opportunities for communicative and authentic language use.

Attention to these kinds of issues is an essential aspect of the design of effective instructional materials.

Testing and evaluation

Testing occupies a central role in curriculum development, since it is often a component of both needs assessment and evaluation, and has consequences for the design and delivery of instruction as well as for the administration of the program itself. A large number of decisions made in the course of designing and implementing a language program are hence dependent on the use of tests. Traditionally four different kinds of tests have been distinguished in the literature on language testing according to the purposes for which they are typically used. *Proficiency tests* are tests that measure how well a learner can use a language relative to a specific purpose before a course of instruction, such as the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language), which is used to measure the English language proficiency of foreign students who wish to study in the United States. Proficiency tests are usually general in nature and not linked to a specific course of instruction. *Placement tests* are used to place students at an appropriate level within a language program. Although the same kinds of test items may be used in both a proficiency test and a placement test, proficiency tests are generally designed for a specific program or language course. *Achievement tests* measure how much of a language someone has learned in a particular course of study or program of instruction. They thus aim to measure gains in proficiency that result from the program itself, and can consequently be used to monitor the effectiveness of teaching, of the materials, or of the curriculum itself. *Diagnostic tests* aim to diagnose students' particular learning problems; for example, a diagnostic pronunciation test can be used to find out which aspects of English phonology a student is having difficulty with.

In recent years a further distinction has been made between norm-referenced and criterion-referenced tests. A *criterion-referenced* test is

> a test which measures a student's performance according to a particular standard or criterion which has been agreed upon. The student must reach this level of performance to pass the test, and a student's score is therefore interpreted with reference to the criterion score, rather than to the scores of other students. (Richards, Platt, and Weber 1985)

This is contrasted with a *norm-referenced test,* which is

> a test . . . designed to measure how the performance of a particular student or group of students compares with the performance of another student or group of students whose scores are given as the norm. A student's score is therefore interpreted with reference to the scores of other students or groups of students, rather than to an agreed criterion score. (Richards et al. 1985)

A criterion-referenced approach to testing is often thought to be more appropriate to the proficiency-based view of language teaching increasingly being advocated in current discussions of language teaching, since tests should reveal whether students have developed the specific skills and proficiencies identified in the program objectives, rather than show how students' performances compare to each other. The test designer's goal, particularly for placement and achievement tests, is hence to develop tests that directly measure the kinds of language proficiencies described in the program objectives (see Dick and Carey 1985).

Evaluation is concerned with gathering data on the dynamics, effectiveness, acceptability, and efficiency of a program to facilitate decision making (Popham 1975; Jarvis and Adams 1979).

> Evaluation is the determination of the worth of a thing. It includes obtaining information for use in judging the worth of a program, product, procedure or objective, or the potential utility of alternative approaches designed to attain specified objectives. (Worthen and Sanders 1973: 19)

The relatively short life span of most language teaching methods and the absence of a systematic approach to language program development in many institutions where English is taught are largely attributable to the fact that adequate allowance is not made for evaluation procedures in the planning process.

The primary focus of evaluation is to determine whether the goals and objectives of a language program are being attained – that is, whether the program is effective. When a decision must be made as to whether to adopt one of two possible program options geared to the same objectives, a secondary focus is on the relative effectiveness of the program. In addition, evaluation may be concerned with *how* a program works: that is, with how teachers and learners and materials interact in classrooms, and how teachers and learners perceive the program's goals, materials, and learning experiences. Evaluation differs from educational research in that even though it shares many of the procedures of educational research (tests, assessment, observation), information obtained from evaluation procedures is used to improve educational practices rather than simply describe them (Popham 1975).

Summative versus formative evaluation

A widely used distinction is between evaluation carried out at the completion of a course or program in order to measure how effective it was in attaining its goals (*summative evaluation*) and evaluation carried out during the development and implementation of a program, in order to modify and revise aspects of the program or the materials and to ensure the efficiency of the program (*formative evaluation*).

Summative evaluation may be used to support decisions about the continuation or modification of the program and typically involves the use of criterion-referenced or other achievement tests based on the program objectives. Typically differences between pretest and posttest scores are used as evidence of program effectiveness. Most institutions lack the resources necessary to measure a program's effectiveness through a true experimental design, using control or comparison groups. As Pratt notes,

> There is adequate guidance in the literature as to how to control such factors as differences in student aptitude between two classes, but little as to how

> to control teacher differences in instruction; even the imposition of detailed lesson plans does not guarantee equivalent teaching. Finally, to compare the efficiency of two programs, they must be aiming at the same results and evaluated by tests equally appropriate to both curricula. (Pratt 1980: 421).

Other measures of a program's effectiveness are also available, however, such as interviews with graduates and dropouts from the program, interviews with employers and others who have contact with the learners after completion of the program, as well as interviews with teachers (Pratt 1980). Summative evaluation may be concerned with gathering data about a program over a period of years, which will ultimately be used to make decisions about the future of the program.

Formative evaluation addresses the efficiency and acceptability of the program, and frequently involves subjective and informal data (obtained, for example, from questionnaires or observation). Bachman suggests that the following processes are involved in formative evaluation:

> The process of formative evaluation parallels that of program development, and comprises two types of activity: the internal assessment of what the program is supposed to be, and the gathering and interpretation of external information during field testing... Given a particular objective set, one aspect of internal assessment is to evaluate these objectives themselves. Is the rationale for each objective cogent? Are there undesired consequences associated with achieving certain objectives?... Another aspect of internal assessment is content-based review. Are the materials accurate? Do they constitute an appropriate range, in both difficulty and interest, vis-à-vis the learner?... Once the developer is satisfied, on the basis of the internal assessment, that the program incorporates the intended objectives and processes, he or she must then determine how it can most effectively produce the intended outcomes. This typically involves field testing. (Bachman 1981: 110–11)

Formative evaluation thus addresses such criteria as the appropriateness of the program's objectives; the degree of preparation of teachers; teachers' competence in the classroom; the usefulness of the syllabus, text, and materials; the effectiveness of scheduling and organization; the selection and use of test instruments. Pfannkuche proposes a comprehensive model that is characterized by a focus on the attainment of goals: "A certain set of learning goals and objectives are identified, and an assessment is made as to how well these goals are being met during the course of instruction" (Omaggio et al. 1979:254). This model involves the following processes:

> 1. Identify a set of program goals and objectives to be evaluated;...
> 2. Identify program factors relevant to the attainment of these objectives;...
> 3. For each factor in Step 2, develop a set of criteria that would indicate that the objectives are being successfully attained...
> 4. Design appropriate instruments to assess each factor according to the criteria outlined...

> 5. Collect the data that is needed.
> 6. Compare data with desired results...
> 7. Match or discrepancy?...
> 8. Prepare evaluation report...
>
> (Omaggio et al. 1979: 254–63)

Pfannkuche emphasizes that such a comprehensive approach to formative evaluation can be realized only if one or two aspects of the language program are evaluated at a time; thus the total picture emerges over a period of several years.

Procedures used in conducting formative evaluation are varied. Bachman emphasizes that "although the most useful information is of an informal and subjective nature, this is not to say, however, that it cannot be systematic" (1981: 115). Evaluation of the program's objectives may involve the use of needs-analysis procedures; analysis of program characteristics may make use of checklists; in-class observation may provide data on the efficiency of the program and the use of equipment and materials; data on the processes actually used in teaching a class may be used to determine the degree of fit between the philosophy underlying a methodology and the classroom processes that result from it (Long 1983a); data on the acceptability and difficulty of materials may involve questionnaires to teachers and learners; enrollment and attrition figures for a program may be used as evidence of student attitudes about the program; interviews with students and teachers may identify weaknesses in content, sequencing, and materials; analysis of test results may be used to identify whether the content and methodology are consistent with the curriculum and appropriate to the objectives and the learners.

Although evaluation is discussed here as the final phase in the cycle of curriculum processes, evaluation processes apply to all phases of curriculum development, and formative evaluation procedures in particular have to be developed at the same time that objectives, syllabuses, learning content, and activities are being planned. Hence a curriculum can be viewed as a retrospective account of how an educational program was developed. For, as Stenhouse observes, "A curriculum, like the recipe for a dish, is first imagined as a possibility, then the subject of an experiment. The recipe offered publicly is in a sense a report on an experiment" (1975: 4).

Implications

The following dimensions of language curriculum development have been examined:

1. Needs analysis (situation analysis, communicative needs analysis)
2. Goals and objectives (behavioral objectives, skills-based objectives, content-based objectives, proficiency scales)
3. Syllabus design (syllabus types)
4. Methodology (approach or philosophy, role of the teacher, role of the learners, learning activities and tasks, instructional materials)
5. Testing and evaluation (proficiency tests, placement tests, achievement tests, diagnostic tests, summative evaluation, formative evaluation)

It has been stressed that effective language teaching programs are dependent upon systematic data gathering, planning, and development within a context that is shaped and influenced by learner, teacher, school, and societal factors. Each of these factors must be considered and addressed in educational program design. In an optimum program, design, content, instructional, learner, and teacher considerations are taken into account, as well as the broader questions that relate to the various levels of decision making. Potential conflicts are hence identified and system stability is aimed for. In moving toward a more cooperative perspective it is productive for participants at the different levels of educational decision making to have a more global view of the process of curriculum planning and of the various participants involved. In this way potential obstacles to successful design and implementation can be anticipated.

In Rodgers and Richards (1987) a practical approach to bringing this about is illustrated through the use of a Program Planning Profile (see Figure 1.1).[1] This consists of a problem-solving and group-discussion exercise for administrators, curriculum planners, and teachers that focuses on the different categories of considerations in curriculum design discussed here. These considerations are arranged under four categories: knowledge factors, learner factors, instructional factors, and administrative factors (Rodgers 1986). The profile is a device to stimulate group discussion, evaluation, and problem solving.

Curriculum development is typically a group planning process, and group planning plays an important part in almost all curriculum development projects that have been analyzed (e.g., see Schaffarzick and Hampson 1975). Central questions in this process concern how group educational planning can be most effective, how planning groups can be constituted and operate, and in particular, what factors planning groups should direct their attention to.

The factors proposed in the Program Planning Profile are ones that have emerged as worthy of early consideration from twenty years of curriculum design experiences of the staff of the Curriculum Research and Development Group at the University of Hawaii. The factor inventory has been revised several times and will undoubtedly be revised again. At this point, the factor inventory is intended to be more than suggestive but less than comprehensive.

The scales are organized so that low-difficulty factors are on the left and high-difficulty factors on the right. For example, if a proposed program's ***subject area*** (Factor 1) is already highly familiar to educators and the community (e.g., reading), the assessment would suggest "low difficulty" loading on this factor. If subject matter is highly unfamiliar (e.g., discourse analysis), assessment would indicate "high-difficulty" loading on this factor.

In use, each member of a planning group is given a profile sheet. The proposed educational program is described by the team leader and substantive questions are entertained. Each of the factor scales is "read" and briefly discussed to ensure a more or less common interpretation of the factor. Each of the participants then privately provides an assessment indicating which of the four points on the scale best represents the current status of that factor and marks the scale accordingly. The exercise leader may want to "pulse" this so that participants consider each factor equally and complete this phase of the exercise together. Participants then divide into subgroups of about four or five, each group containing a mix of people with different sorts of educational affiliations. The groups then discuss each factor (or a subset of factors) and comment on their individual assessments. Afterward a group secretary records assessment on a clean profile sheet. Consensus and disagreement are both important to note. The group then reconvenes as a whole, and secretaries report the results of the subgroup discussions.

The group can then make several kinds of assessments and determinations. For example:

1. How "difficult" does the project look as a whole? (Do assessments bias to the left/low-difficulty or to the right/high-difficulty end?)
2. What "high-difficulty" factors are most susceptible to manipulation, which could make them less difficult?
3. What factors will be most critical in the likely success or nonsuccess of the project?
4. When considerable disagreement exists as to assessment rating, why is this so? Would more data/discussion help?
5. Which factors contain the greatest unknowns? Could/should more information be gathered on these factors?
6. Do representatives with the same affiliations assess factors similarly? What are the implications for intergroup/intragroup communication and cooperation?

The following examples clarify the kinds of application that can be made from deliberation on the Profile.

1 The rest of this chapter is adapted from Rodgers and Richards (1987).

Knowledge factors						
1. Subject area	Familiar	1	2	3	4	Unfamiliar
2. Knowledge base	Defined	1	2	3	4	Undefined
3. Knowledge structure	Simple	1	2	3	4	Complex
4. Relevant materials	Available	1	2	3	4	Unavailable
5. Knowledge outcomes	Facts	1	2	3	4	Values
Learner factors						
6. Group size	Limited	1	2	3	4	General
7. Homogeneity	Homogeneous	1	2	3	4	Heterogeneous
8. Teachability	Easy to teach	1	2	3	4	Hard to teach
9. Motivation	Aspiring	1	2	3	4	Non-aspiring
10. Attainment expectations	Basic	1	2	3	4	Sophisticated
Instructional factors						
11. Curriculum design	Simple	1	2	3	4	Complex
12. Educational plan	Well-researched	1	2	3	4	Intuitive

Figure 1.1 Program Planning Profile (from Rodgers and Richards 1987: 36–7)

Case A: A national communicative curriculum is proposed to replace a grammar/literature upper-secondary syllabus in an EFL situation. The planning group notes that communicative approaches are unfamiliar to teachers (Factor 1), locally relevant materials are unavailable (Factor 4),

13. Instructional media	Technically simple	1	2	3	4	Technically complex
14. Teacher retraining possibilities	Extensive	1	2	3	4	None
15. Target schools (system)	Coherent	1	2	3	4	Disjoint
16. Target schools (problems)	Known/Simple	1	2	3	4	Unknown/Profound
17. Competing programs	None	1	2	3	4	Many
Administrative factors						
18. Change effort (breadth)	Local	1	2	3	4	International
19. Change effort (depth)	Partial	1	2	3	4	Complete
20. Development time	Extensive	1	2	3	4	Limited
21. Development team	Experienced	1	2	3	4	Inexperienced
22. Agency reputation	Excellent	1	2	3	4	Poor/Unknown
23. Agency leverage	Great	1	2	3	4	Limited
24. Development resources	Large	1	2	3	4	Small

and time and resources for development for teacher retraining are highly limited (Factors 14, 20, 24). Deliberation suggests that because these and a number of other factors are weighted toward the high difficult end of the factor scales, a modest change in subject matter should be attempted initially. Using the principle of least change, a program built around communicative pair practice of exercise types familiar to and favored by teachers and maintenance of a literature element is proposed.

Case B: A computer-based guided composition program has been devised by a university team and tested for secondary school age students in the university laboratory school. Several enthusiastic school administrators are now proposing to install the program regionally. A budget is proposed for equipment purchases and for teacher inservice training at the university. Program factor analysis indicated "guided composition" to be an unfamiliar educational technique for most teachers (Factor 1). Current administrative disagreements regarding computer choice, software design, and equipment security and maintenance also yields a "high-difficulty" rating for Factor 13. The university team has high prestige (Factor 22) but little leverage (Factor 23). After deliberation, a decision is made (a) to introduce guided composition techniques through a newsletter with sample reproducible paper and pencil exercises; (b) to form a town/gown consortium to test and promote the new guided composition program; and (c) to hold inservice training sessions in familiar and easy-to-reach local schools rather than at the university.

Case C: Following successful trial and piloting of a process-based academic writing curriculum in a university English Language Institute, a decision has been made to use such an approach on a wider scale. Program factor analysis indicates that there is a wide disparity among teachers as to what constitutes a "process-based approach" (Factor 1), that learners might resist such an approach because it differs strongly from their previous experience of how writing is taught and because it involves extensive use of peer feedback (Factor 8), that a less textbook-oriented curriculum would require more teacher as well as learner initiative (Factor 13), and that teacher turnover is high, with most new teachers having had little experience in teaching writing at this level (Factor 21). Deliberation resulted in the suggestion that the existing program be modified to involve more process-directed activities, that ongoing inservice training be provided, and that an orientation program be provided for students entering the program.

The use of an activity like this has several benefits. It helps planners at all levels to

1. conceptualize educational planning in a new way
2. find out what they don't know and need to know
3. focus on issues of feasibility in education renewal
4. become more sensitive to the concerns of other individuals and agencies involved in educational change

5. identify factors requiring more detailed analysis
6. plan allocation of time, energy, and resources.

Perhaps most critically, the exercise of group deliberation built around the profile helps individuals involved in planning and implementation to develop cohesiveness and a deliberative style that facilitates more difficult problem resolution in the teaching and learning tasks that lie ahead. This contrasts with the approach to educational design typically seen in the field of language teaching. Program or curriculum development in language teaching has not generally been viewed as an integrated and interdependent set of processes that involves careful data gathering, planning, experimentation, monitoring, consultation, and evaluation. Rather, simplistic solutions are often advocated that address only one dimension of the process, for example by advocating changes in teaching techniques, methods, learning styles, technologies, materials, or teacher preparation. If the field of second and foreign language teaching is to attain the degree of rigor found in other areas of education, however, a more comprehensive basis for educational practices is needed.

Discussion topics and activities

1. Examine the list of questions related to situation analysis on page 2. Suggest three different procedures for finding answers to the questions, in relation to a language program or language teaching situation you are familiar with. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each procedure?
2. Prepare a plan to carry out a communicative needs analysis for the following situations:
   a) A group of foreign doctors requires an intensive language course before doing observations at local hospitals.
   b) A group of recently arrived immigrants requires a course to prepare them for hotel work.
3. Prepare three examples of goals for each of the situations you discussed in question 2, and three objectives for each program. Then discuss any difficulties you had in developing statements of objectives.
4. Prepare a description of microskills relating to conversational ability at a basic social or survival level.
5. Compare the syllabuses in Appendixes 3–5. How do they differ?
6. Prepare a syllabus outline for the following topic, which is to be included in a conversation course: "Inviting someone to do something." Your syllabus outline (one or two pages in length) should cover one unit of instruction.

7. Examine an ESL or foreign language course book. What assumptions underly the book with respect to
   a) the syllabus?
   b) the role of the teacher?
   c) the roles of the learners?
   d) learning theory?
8. In groups, examine a language teaching situation or program you are familiar with, in terms of the factors contained in the Program Planning Profile (Figure 1). Then compare your assessments with other groups.

Appendix 1: Situation analysis

The following is part of a questionnaire that tries to identify the learner's needs and preferred modes of learning.

QUESTIONNAIRE 2: HOW DO YOU LIKE LEARNING?

Put a circle around your answer.

a) In class do you like learning
   1. individually — YES / NO
   2. in pairs? — YES / NO
   3. in small groups? — YES / NO
   4. in one large group? — YES / NO

b) Do you want to do homework? — YES / NO
   If so, how much time have you got for homework outside class hours?
   _____ hours a·day
   or
   _____ hours a week
   How would you like to spend this time?
   1. Preparing for the next class? — YES / NO
   2. Reviewing the day's work? — YES / NO
   3. Doing some kind of activity based on your personal experience, work experience, or interests? — YES / NO

c) Do you want to
   1. spend all your learning time in the classroom? — YES / NO
   or . . .
   2. spend some time in the classroom and some time practising your English with people outside? — YES / NO
   3. spend some time in the classroom and some time getting to know your city and the Australian way of life, e.g., by visiting Parliament, government offices, migrant resource centres, places of interest, work, entertainment, and so on? — YES / NO

d) Do you like learning
   1. by memory? — YES / NO
   2. by problem solving? — YES / NO
   3. by getting information for yourself? — YES / NO
   4. by listening? — YES / NO
   5. by reading? — YES / NO
   6. by copying off the board? — YES / NO
   7. by listening and taking notes? — YES/ NO

Questionnaire reprinted with permission from G. Brindley, *Needs Analysis and Objective Setting in the Adult Migrant Education Program*, NSW Adult Migrant Education Service, Canberra, Australia, © 1984.

8. by reading and making notes? YES / NO
9. by repeating what you hear? YES / NO
Put a cross next to the three things that you find most useful.

e) When you speak do you want to be corrected
1. immediately, in front of everyone? YES / NO
or . . .
2. later, at the end of the activity, in front of everyone? YES / NO
or . . .
3. later, in private? YES / NO

f) Do you mind if other students sometimes correct your written work? YES / NO
Do you mind if the teacher sometimes asks you to correct your own work? YES / NO

g) Do you like learning from
1. television/video/films? YES / NO
2. radio? YES / NO

Appendix 2: Communicative needs analysis

The questionnaire from which this excerpt comes was formulated to "obtain a valid description of the kinds of writing tasks that are required of students . . . during 'typical' coursework" at the university level (Bridgman and Carlson 1983; App. A).

For each of the following writing tasks, indicate how frequently each task might be assigned to students *per semester*. (Circle one number for each task.)

Writing tasks	*Not at all*	*1–2 times per semester*	*3–6 times per semester*	*7 or more times per semester*
1. Lab reports or descriptions of experiments conducted by the student or in class	0	1	2	3
2. Brief summaries of articles read (1–2 pages)	0	1	2	3
3. Brief research papers (5 pages or less)	0	1	2	3
4. Longer research papers (6 pages or more)	0	1	2	3
5. Creative writing (fiction, poetry, or drama)	0	1	2	3
6. Expository or critical writing unrelated to lab or library research	0	1	2	3
7. Exams with essay questions	0	1	2	3
8. Group writing projects	0	1	2	3
9. Case studies	0	1	2	3
10. Other (specify) ____________	0	1	2	3
11. Other (specify) ____________	0	1	2	3

Survey of Academic Writing Tasks Required of Graduate and Undergraduate Foreign Students by Brent Bridgeman and Sybil Carlson. Reprinted by permission of Educational Testing Service.

Appendix 3: Syllabus specifying activities

AREA FIVE

Required product: Oral/Written
Gathering of information, comments and ideas

Stimulus	*Situation*	*Notes*
1. Mode: Oral	(a) The host at a party suggests the game "Twenty Questions" and instructs guests on how it is played. As part of the game, ask your host pertinent questions so as to arrive at the answer he has in mind.	
	(b) As a father, you are worried about financial security for your famiy. You contact an insurance agent. In your conversation with him, find out which insurance scheme would best suit you.	
	(c) The manager of your insurance firm informs you that a client's car has been damaged in an accident and that he wants you to look into the matter immediately. Contact your client and ask him about the details and circumstances of the accident.	
	(d) A famous boxer has just arrived in this country. At the press conference at the airport, question him on his background and experiences.	
	(e) You want to buy a new car, and apart from setting your mind on a certain make, you have no idea of the attributes of the various models. Contact the sales representative of the nearest outlet and ask him about the various models available and details of them.	
	(f) You are in Hong Kong and would like to stay there for an extended period. Contact the manager of a suitable hotel and enquire about discounts for a long stay.	
	(g) You work in the survey department and have been assigned the task of finding out the spending habits of various households. Interview the heads of households and ask questions on their monthly expenditure.	
	(h) As an employee in an oil firm, you would like to find out how people react to increases in the price of petrol. Interview several consumers and ask them in what ways the cost of petrol affects their travelling habits.	

Appendix 4: Syllabus specifying content

Topic. HOUSE and HOME

Level. POST-ELEMENTARY

SITUATION	FUNCTION	ACTUAL LANGUAGE	LANGUAGE PATTERNS and TENSES
Getting things connected e.g. gas, phone, TV Rent – payment, contract Buying furniture – second-hand, markets, auctions, small ads Paying bills – when and how At the door. milkman, postman, dustman, meter men, salesmen Repairs – plumber, electrician Making appointments Electoral Register	Understanding and asking for information Understanding directions and local information Expressing intentions Declining Giving information Making requests to	I'm looking for a large wardrobe. What sort of price did you have in mind? Have you got anything cheaper? I am moving to . . . Can I have the gas/electricity connected, please? What's your address? It's £70 deposit. Hello, I'm the . . . . I've come to read the meter. Could I see your identification, please? Where can I get a . . .? Are you interested in . . .? No, not today, thank you.	I'm looking for . . . . Have you got . . .? Could I have . . .? Can I . . .? Can you tell me . . .? Would you like . . .? Sorry, I . . . . Comparatives/adjectives Where can I . . .? (+ infinitive without to)
LEXIS	**LITERACY**	**SYSTEM**	**AIDS and MATERIALS**
Names of household items, including plugs, etc. Equipment Names of local institutions e.g. clinic, library	Reading bills, final demands, meters and filling in estimated bills, checking meter readings Library – Section headings Form-filling Reading contracts	Types of shops best for certain items Where to buy what Use of telephone for buying, inquiring Filing bills and receipts Guarantees What is delivered – milk, etc. How and when to pay bills Where to get local information – library, rent officer, Citizen's Advice Bureau, Legal Centre Asking for identification from strangers at the door Meaning of deposit Meaning of electoral register	Simplified maps of locality – grading up to actual maps Simplified and graded gas bills and meter readings '7 Days a Week' Pack Tapes – of dialogues in the situations

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Appendix 5: Syllabus specifying topics and competencies

TOPIC: TIME AND DATES – INSTRUCTIONAL UNIT 4 Level 1 – Survival ESL

COMPETENCIES: 8. Name, read and write months and their abbreviations. 9. Read and write dates in both words and numbers. 10. Ask about and give dates when asked. 11. Use a calendar.

SITUATION: Talking to co-worker or answering questions at Public Aid office, etc.

Listening ↔	*Speaking*	*Reading*	*Writing*	*Grammatical structure focus*	*Vocabulary*	*Culture notes*	*Possible materials*
What's the date (today)? What's your birthdate? When's your birthday? What date is/was this/next/last *Friday*? Other questions requiring a date as answer (*When*	(It's) *X*. (mo./day/yr.) (It's) *X* (mo./day/yr.) (It's) *X*. (mo./day) The *3rd*. (ordinal number)	Months and their abbreviations day date month (mo.) year (yr.) birthdate	date and birthdate in word and number form (*August 10, 1984* = *8/10/84*)	Wh-questions (what, when?) Numbers, cardinal and ordinal	Months and their abbreviations day date month (mo.) year (yr.) birthdate birthday calendar this next last	Month precedes day in U.S. usage. On forms "date" means today's date. For bureaucratic purposes, knowledge of one's own birthdate and one's family's birthdates is essential.	*ANS* pp. 13–14, 69 *ANS1* pp. 41, 47–53 *ANS2* pp. 30–32, 58 *EAC* p. 19

Appendix 5 (continued)

TOPIC: TIME AND DATES – INSTRUCTIONAL UNIT 4 — Level 1 – Survival ESL

COMPETENCIES: 8. Name, read and write months and their abbreviations. 9. Read and write dates in both words and numbers. 10. Ask about and give dates when asked. 11. Use a calendar.

SITUATION: Talking to co-worker or answering questions at Public Aid office, etc.

Listening ↔	*Speaking*	*Reading*	*Writing*	*Grammatical structure focus*	*Vocabulary*	*Culture notes*	*Possible materials*
did you come to the U.S.?, etc.).						Socially, birthdays are important in the U.S., and are usually celebrated with family and friends.	

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2 Beyond methods

In Chapter 1, methodology in teaching was described as the activities, tasks, and learning experiences used by the teacher within the teaching and learning process. Methodology was seen to have a theoretical basis in the teacher's assumptions about (a) language and second language learning, (b) teacher and learner roles, and (c) learning activities and instructional materials. These assumptions and beliefs provide the basis for the conscious or unconscious decision making that underlies the moment-to-moment processes of teaching. Methodology is not therefore something fixed, a set of rigid principles and procedures that the teacher must conform to. Rather it is a dynamic, creative, and exploratory process that begins anew each time the teacher encounters a group of learners. Teaching as an exploratory process is different from the approach to teaching seen in many teacher preparation programs or language teaching programs, where particular instructional methods, such as the Silent Way, Total Physical Response, or the Natural Approach, are presented as models to be imitated and internalized. In this chapter, these two approaches to teaching will be explored in more depth. The use of methods as the basis for instructional processes in a second language program will be compared with one that moves beyond methods and focuses on exploring the nature of effective classroom teaching and learning.

Approaching teaching in terms of methods

For many centuries the goal of language teachers has been to find the right method (Kelly 1969). The history of language teaching in the last hundred years has done much to support the impression that improvements in language teaching will result from improvements in the quality of methods, and that ultimately an effective language teaching method will be developed. Some breakthrough in linguistic theory or in second language acquisition research, it is assumed, will eventually unlock the secrets of second and foreign language learning. These will then be incorporated into a new supermethod that will solve the language teaching problem once and for all. Some believe that the supermethod has already been found, and that adoption of a method such as the Silent Way, Suggestopedia, or the Natural Approach will bring about dramatic improvements in language learning.

Common to all methods is a set of specifications for how teaching should be accomplished, derived from a particular theory of the nature of language and second language learning. Differences in the instructional specifications reflect differences in the theories underlying the methods. Some methods advocate an early emphasis on speaking as a basis for establishing basic language patterns. Others recommend that speaking be delayed until the learner has built up a receptive competence in the language. Some make use of memorized dialogues and texts; others require that learners attempt to communicate with each other as soon as possible using their own language resources. Common to all methods is a set of prescriptions on what teachers and learners should do in the language classroom. Prescriptions for the teacher include what material should be presented and when it should be taught and how, and prescriptions for learners include what approach they should take toward learning. Specific roles for teachers, learners, and instructional materials are hence established (Richards and Rodgers 1986). The teacher's job is to match his or her teaching style as well as the learners' learning styles to the method. Special training packages and programs are available for some methods to ensure that teachers do what they are supposed to do and teach according to the method.

Despite the appeal of methods, their past history is somewhat of an embarrassment. Studies of the effectiveness of specific methods have had a hard time demonstrating that the method itself, rather than other factors, such as the teacher's enthusiasm or the novelty of the new method, was the crucial variable. Likewise, observers of teachers using specific methods have reported that teachers seldom conform to the methods they are supposed to be following. Swaffar, Arens, and Morgan (1982), for example, investigated differences between what they termed rationalist and empiricist approaches to foreign language instruction. By a rationalist approach they refer to process-oriented approaches in which language is seen as an interrelated whole, where language learning is a function of comprehension preceding production, and where it involves critical thinking and the desire to communicate. Empiricist approaches focus on the four discrete language skills. Would classroom practices reflect such differences? "One consistent problem is whether or not teachers involved in presenting materials created for a particular method are actually reflecting the underlying philosophies of these methods in their classroom practices" (Swaffar et al. 1982: 25). Swaffar et al. found that many of the distinctions used to contrast methods, particularly those based on classroom activities, did not exist in actual practice:

> Methodological labels assigned to teaching activities are, in themselves, not informative, because they refer to a pool of classroom practices which are used uniformly. The differences among major methodologies are to be found in the ordered hierarchy, the priorities assigned to tasks. (1982: 31)

Methods hence make assumptions about the nature of teaching that are not based on study of the process of teaching. The findings of Swaffar et al. account for the difficulty teacher supervisors often have in recognizing which method a teacher is following. Nevertheless, the future for methods continues to look good. Several new ones have appeared in recent years, and at conferences where salespersons for the new methods are present, teachers flock to hear presentations on the current supermethods. Yet there are serious limitations in conceptualizing teaching in terms of methods.

The basic problem is that methods present a predetermined, packaged deal for teachers that incorporates a static view of teaching. In this view specific teacher roles, learner roles, and teaching/learning activities and processes are imposed on teachers and learners. Studies of classroom events, however, have demonstrated that teaching is not static or fixed in time but is a dynamic, interactional process in which the teacher's "method" results from the processes of interaction between the teacher, the learners, and the instructional tasks and activities over time (Chall 1967; Dunkin and Biddle 1974; Swaffar et al. 1982). Attempts to find general methods that are suitable for all teachers and all teaching situations reflect an essentially negative view of teachers, one which implies that since the quality of teachers cannot be guaranteed, the contribution of the individual teacher should be minimized by designing teacher-proof methods. The assumption that underlies general, all-purpose methods is hence essentially this: Teachers cannot be trusted to teach well. Left to their own devices, teachers will invariably make a mess of things. A method, because it imposes a uniform set of teaching roles, teaching styles, teaching strategies, and teaching techniques on the teacher, will not be affected by the variations that are found in individual teaching skill and teaching style in the real world.

Researchers who have investigated the nature of teaching, however, have proposed a different view of teaching (Good 1979; Elliot 1980; Tikunoff 1985). They begin with the assumption that teachers (rather than methods) do make a difference; that teachers work in ways that are, to an extent, independent of methods; and that the characteristics of effective teaching can be determined. Other researchers have turned their attention to learners and sought to determine what characterizes effective learning. This requires a different approach to teaching, one in which teachers are involved in observing and reflecting upon their own teaching as well as the learning behaviors of their students.

The nature of effective teaching

Teacher strategies

Every teacher aims to be an effective teacher. The concept of effective teaching is a somewhat elusive one, however. Can it be determined from the teacher's behavior, the learner's behavior, classroom interaction, or the results of learning? Researchers have attempted to operationalize the notion of effective teaching by describing it as teaching that produces higher-than-predicted gains on standardized achievement tests (Good 1979). Studies of teacher effectiveness have dealt mainly with first language classrooms and with the teaching of reading and math. One major study has dealt with effective teachers in bilingual programs (Tikunoff et al. 1980; see also Chapter 8). These studies are characterized by detailed observation of teachers performing instructional activities in the classroom in an attempt to isolate the qualities and skills of effective teachers.

In a comprehensive survey of the research on effective schooling, Blum (1984: 3–6) summarizes effective classroom practices as follows:

1. Instruction is guided by a preplanned curriculum.
2. There are high expectations for student learning.
3. Students are carefully oriented to lessons.
4. Instruction is clear and focused.
5. Learning progress is monitored closely.
6. When students don't understand, they are retaught.
7. Class time is used for learning.
8. There are smooth and efficient classroom routines.
9. Instructional groups formed in the classroom fit instructional needs.
10. Standards for classroom behavior are high.
11. Personal interactions between teachers and students are positive.
12. Incentives and rewards for students are used to promote excellence.

Several dimensions of teaching have been found to account for differences between effective and ineffective instruction (Doyle 1977; Good 1979). These include classroom management, structuring, tasks, and grouping.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Classroom management refers to the ways in which student behavior, movement, and interaction during a lesson are organized and controlled by the teacher to enable teaching to take place most effectively. Good managerial skills on the part of the teacher are an essential component

of good teaching. In a well-managed class, discipline problems are few, and learners are actively engaged in learning tasks and activities; this contributes to high motivation and expectations for success. Evertson, Anderson, and Brophy (1978) found that it was possible to identify teachers with managerial problems in the first few days of the school year, that such problems continued throughout the year, and that managerial skills in the classroom were related to levels of student involvement.

STRUCTURING

A lesson reflects the concept of *structuring* when the teacher's intentions are clear and instructional activities are sequenced according to a logic that students can perceive. Classroom observations and studies of lesson protocols indicate that sometimes neither the teacher nor the learners understood what the intentions of an activity were, why an activity occurred when it did, what directions they were supposed to follow, or what the relationship between one activity and another was. Hence, it may not have been clear what students needed to focus on to complete a task successfully. Fisher et al. (1980) conclude that students "pay attention more when the teacher spends time discussing the goals or structures of the lesson and/or giving directions about what the students are to do" (p. 26). Berliner (1984) likewise suggests that "structuring affects attention rate: it is sometimes not done at all, sometimes it is done only minimally, and sometimes it is overdone" (p. 63).

TASKS

Tasks, or activity structures, refer to activities that teachers assign to attain particular learning objectives. For any given subject at any given level, a teacher uses a limited repertoire of tasks that essentially define that teacher's methodology of teaching. These might include completing worksheets, reading aloud, dictation, quickwriting, and practicing dialogues. According to Tikunoff (1985), class tasks vary according to three types of demands they make on learners: *response mode demands* (the kind of skills they demand, such as knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis/synthesis, evaluation); *interactional mode demands* (the rules governing how classroom tasks are accomplished, such as individually, in a group, or with the help of the teacher); and *task complexity demands* (how difficult the learner perceives the task to be).

Teachers have to make decisions not only about the appropriate kinds of tasks to assign to learners, but also about the *order of tasks* (the sequence in which tasks should be introduced); *pacing* (how much time learners should spend on tasks); *products* (whether the product or result of a task is expected to be the same for all students); *learning strategies* (what learning strategies will be recommended for particular tasks); and *materials* (what sources and materials to use in completing a task) (Tikunoff 1985).

The concept of tasks has been central to studies of effective teaching. The amount of time students spend actively engaged on learning tasks is directly related to learning (Good and Beckerman 1978). For example, Teacher A and Teacher B are both teaching the same reading lesson. In Teacher A's class, learners are actively engaged in reading tasks for 75% of the lesson, the remaining time being occupied with noninstructional activities such as taking breaks, lining up, distributing books, homework, and making arrangements for future events. Students in Teacher B's class, however, are actively involved in reading for only 55% of the lesson. Not surprisingly, studies of time-on-task have found that the more time students spend studying content, the better they learn it. In one study (Stallings and Kaskowitz 1974), the students with the highest levels of achievement in a reading program were spending about 50% more time actively engaged in reading activities than the children with the lowest achievement gains. Good teaching is hence said to be task oriented. Effective teachers also monitor performance on tasks, providing feedback on how well tasks have been completed.

GROUPING

A related dimension of effective teaching is the *grouping* of learners to carry out instructional tasks, and the relation between grouping arrangement and achievement. An effective teacher understands how different kinds of grouping (such as seat work, pair work, discussion, reading circle, or lecture) can impede or promote learning. Webb (1980) found that the middle-ability child suffers a loss of achievement, while the low-ability child shows some gains in achievement in mixed-ability groups, compared with what would be expected if both were in uniform-ability groups. Tikunoff (1985) cites Good and Marshall's findings on groupings.

> Good and Marshall (1984) found that students in low-ability reading groups in the early grades received very little challenge, thus perceiving of themselves as unable to read. In addition, a long-range result of interacting most frequently with only other students of low-ability in such groups was an inability to respond to the demands of more complex instructional activities. Ironically, Good pointed out that the very strategy used to presumably help low-ability youngsters with their reading problems – pull-out programs in which teachers worked with small groups of these students outside the regular classroom – exacerbated the problem. Demands in the special reading groups were very different from those in the regular classroom and at a much lower level of complexity, so low-ability students were not learning to respond to high level demands that would help them participate competently in their regular classrooms. (p. 56)

The research findings suggest therefore that effective teaching depends on such factors as time-on-task, feedback, grouping and task decisions, classroom management, and structuring. Although the concept of effective teaching evolved from studies of content teaching, Tikunoff's (1983) major study of effective teaching in bilingual education programs has examined the extent to which it also applies to other contexts, such as bilingual and ESL classrooms.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING IN BILINGUAL CLASSROOMS

Tikunoff (1983) suggests that three kinds of competence are needed for the student of limited English proficiency (LEP): *participative competence*, the ability "to respond appropriately to class demands and the procedural rules for accomplishing them" (p. 4); *interactional competence*, the ability "to respond both to classroom rules of discourse and social rules of discourse, interacting appropriately with peers and adults while accomplishing class tasks" (p. 4); and *academic competence*, the ability "to acquire new skills, assimilate new information, and construct new concepts" (p. 4). Furthermore, to be functionally proficient in the classroom, the student must be able to utilize these competences to perform three major functions: (a) to decode and understand both task expectations and new information; (b) to engage appropriately in completing tasks, with high accuracy; and (c) to obtain accurate feedback with relation to completing tasks accurately (p. 5).

In his Significant Bilingual Instructional Features (SBIF) descriptive study, Tikunoff (1983) collected data to find out how effective teachers in bilingual education programs organize instruction, structure teaching activities, and enhance student performance on tasks. Teachers were interviewed to determine their instructional philosophies, goals, and the demands they would structure into class tasks. Teachers were clearly able to specify class task demands and intended outcomes and to indicate what LEP students had to do to be functionally proficient. Case studies of teachers were undertaken in which teachers were observed during instruction, with three observers collecting data for the teacher and for four target LEP students. Teachers were interviewed again after instruction.

> An analysis of data across the case studies revealed a clear linkage between (1) teachers' ability to clearly specify the intent of instruction, and a belief that students could achieve accuracy in instructional tasks, (2) the organization and delivery of instruction such that tasks and institutional demands reflected this intent, requiring intended student responses, and (3) the fidelity of

> student consequences with intended outcomes. In other words, teachers were able to describe clearly what instruction would entail, to operationalize these specifications, and to produce the desired results in terms of student performance. (p. 9)

This approach to teaching is one in which methodological principles are developed from studying the classroom practices and processes actually employed by effective teachers. Good teaching is not viewed as something that results from using Method X or Method Y, or something that results from the teacher modifying teaching behaviors to match some external set of rules and principles. Rather, it results from the teacher's active control and management of the processes of teaching, learning, and communication within the classroom and from an understanding of these processes. The classroom is seen as a place where there is ongoing and dynamic interaction between the teacher's instructional goals, learners' purposes, classroom tasks and activities, the teacher's instructional activities and behaviors, student behaviors in completing assigned tasks, and learning outcomes.

In the bilingual classrooms observed in Tikunoff's study, effective teaching was found to reflect the degree to which the teacher is able to successfully communicate his or her intentions, maintain students' engagement in instructional tasks, and monitor students' performance on tasks. In classrooms where different instructional goals are present and different aspects of second language proficiency are being addressed, the characteristics of effective teaching in those settings cannot be inferred merely from reading about the theoretical principles underlying the method or approach the teacher is supposed to be following. Rather, classroom observation of teachers who are achieving higher-than-predicted levels of achievement in their learners, or who are assessed as performing at high levels of effectiveness according to other criteria, provides the data from which profiles of effective teachers in listening, reading, writing, speaking, and other kinds of classes can be developed. An example of this approach is given in Chapter 5, where a case study is presented of an effective teacher in a second language reading class.

Learner strategies

The approach to teaching in which methodology is developed from study of classroom practices attributes a primary role to the teacher in the teaching/learning process. Successful learning is viewed as dependent upon the teacher's control and management of what takes place in the classroom. However, what the teacher does is only half of the picture. The other half concerns what learners do to achieve successful learning, or *learner strategies*. Prompted by the awareness that learners may succeed despite the teacher's methods and techniques rather than because

of them, researchers as well as teachers have begun to look more closely at learners themselves in an attempt to discover how successful learners achieve their results (O'Malley et al. 1985a, b; Willing 1985).

Studies of learner strategies attempt to identify the specific techniques and strategies learners use to facilitate their own learning (Oxford 1985b). The focus is on the particular cognitive operations, processes, procedures, and heuristics that learners apply to the task of learning a second language. Given any language learning task, such as understanding a lecture, reading a text, writing a composition, understanding the meaning of a new grammatical or lexical item, or preparing a written summary of a text, a number of strategies are available to a learner to help carry out the task. But what is the practical value of knowing which particular strategies a learner employed?

Just as research on effective teaching has identified the kinds of teaching behaviors that appear to account for superior teaching, so research on effective learning seeks to identify the kinds of learning behaviors that can best facilitate learning. Good language learners seem to be successful because they have a better understanding of and control over their own learning than less successful learners. Use of inappropriate learning strategies has been found to account for the poor performance of learners on many classroom learning tasks (Hosenfeld 1979). It should therefore be possible to improve student performance on learning tasks by identifying successful approaches to learning and by directing learners toward these kinds of strategies. Research on learner strategies in second language learning hence seeks to identify the strategies employed by successful learners and then to teach those strategies to other learners in order to improve their language learning capacities (Hosenfeld 1977; Cohen and Aphek 1980; Chamot and O'Malley 1984). The premises underlying Cohen and Aphek's work, for example, are:

Some language learners are more successful than others.
Some aspects of the learning process are conscious and others are not.
Less successful learners can use successful strategies consciously to accelerate learning.
Teachers can promote the use of learning strategies.
Learners can become the best judges of how they learn most effectively, both in and out of classes.

The field of learner strategy research in second language learning is hence now an important domain of classroom research, and differs substantially from previous research in this area. Earlier work on learning strategies lacked a sound theoretical basis and consisted largely of lists of features that good language learners were assumed to possess. These lists were developed from interviews with successful language learners (e.g., Rubin 1975, 1981; Stern 1975; Naiman et al. 1978). Willing (1987:

275) points out that "while such generalizations have their usefulness as a help in understanding the process of language learning from the point of view of the learner, they do not immediately yield prescriptions for teaching."

More recent work on learner strategies has attempted to yield more usable results by making use of data obtained from a broader range of sources, such as classroom observation, "think-aloud" procedures (in which learners record their thoughts and observations as they perform different tasks), interviews, self-reports employing note-taking and diaries, questionnaires, as well as controlled experimental studies designed to investigate specific cognitive processes (e.g., Heuring 1984). These kinds of approaches are yielding information of greater practical value. For example, Cohen (cited in Oxford 1985a) lists six strategies used by successful language learners:

1. Attention-enhancing strategies, such as responding silently to tasks asked of other students in class
2. Use of a variety of background sources, including knowledge of the world, knowledge of the given topic, awareness of stress and tone of voice of the speaker, perception of the speaker's body language, and cues from earlier parts of the conversation in the effort to decode communicative meaning
3. Oral production tricks, such as avoiding unfamiliar topics, paraphrasing, and asking for help
4. Vocabulary learning techniques, such as making associations, attending to the meaning of parts of the word, noting the structure of the word, placing the word in a topical group with similar words, visualizing or contextualizing it, linking it to the situation in which it appears, creating a mental image of it, and associating some physical sensation to it
5. Reading or text-processing strategies, such as clarifying the communicative purpose of the text, distinguishing important points from trivia, skipping around to get an overall conceptual picture, using substantive and linguistic background knowledge, reading in broad phrases rather than word for word, relying on contextual clues, making ongoing summaries, and looking for emphasis and cohesion markers in the text
6. Writing techniques such as focusing on simply getting ideas down on paper instead of trying for perfection right away; purposefully using parallel structures and other means of enhancing cohesion; and writing multiple drafts.

Willing (1987: 278–9) notes that strategies are essentially "methods employed by the person for processing input language information in such a way as to gain control of it, thus enabling the assimilation of

that information by the self." Strategies are hence viewed as ways of managing the complex information that the learner is receiving about the target language.

Wenden (1983) interviewed adult language learners about how they organized their language learning experiences and found that they asked themselves eight kinds of questions.

Question	*Decision*
1. How does this language work?	Learners make judgments about the linguistic and sociolinguistic codes.
2. What's it like to learn a language?	Learners make judgments about how to learn a language and about what language learning is like.
3. What should I learn and how?	Learners decide upon linguistic objectives, resources, and use of resources.
4. What should I emphasize?	Learners decide to give priority to special linguistic items.
5. How should I change?	Learners decide to change their approach to language learning.
6. How am I doing?	Learners determine how well they use the language and diagnose their needs.
7. What am I getting out of this?	Learners determine if an activity or strategy is useful.
8. How am I responsible for learning? How is language learning affecting me?	Learners make judgments about how to learn a language and about what language learning is like.

O'Malley et al. have investigated the use of strategies by ESL learners both in and out of classrooms (O'Malley et al. 1985a, b; O'Malley and Chamot 1989). ESL students and their teachers were interviewed about the strategies learners used on specific language learning tasks, and the learners were observed in ESL classrooms. They were also asked about their use of English in communicative situations outside the classroom. A total of twenty-six different kinds of learning strategies were identified.

In a follow-up study, high school ESL students were given training in the use of particular strategies in order to determine if it would improve their effectiveness as language learners and their performance on vocabulary, listening, and speaking tasks. Strategies were compared across proficiency levels and with learners of different language backgrounds. Students were given training in the use of specific strategies for particular language learning tasks. Results supported the notion that learners can be taught to use more effective learning strategies (O'Malley et al. 1985a, b):

> Strategies training was successfully demonstrated in a natural teaching environment with second language listening and speaking tasks. This indicates that classroom instruction on learning strategies with integrative language skills can facilitate learning. (O'Malley et al. 1985a: 577)

Phillips (1975) investigated how learners approach reading tasks and identified strategies employed by good and poor readers. She employed a "think-aloud" procedure to investigate readers' strategies in dealing with unknown vocabulary. From her students' descriptions Phillips found that strategies used by efficient readers included categorizing words grammatically, interpreting grammatical operations, and recognizing cognates and root words. Hosenfeld (1977, 1984) used similar techniques in studying processes employed by foreign language readers when encountering unfamiliar words. In one study (Hosenfeld 1977), some of the differences between those with high and low scores on a reading proficiency test were these: High scorers tended to keep the meaning of the passage in mind, read in broad phrases, skip unessential words, and guess meanings of unknown words from context; low scorers tended to lose the meaning of sentences as soon as they decoded them, read word by word or in short phrases, rarely skip words, and turn to the glossary when they encountered new words. In addition successful readers tended to identify the grammatical categories of words, could detect word-order differences in the foreign language, recognized cognates, and used the glossary only as a last resort (Hosenfeld 1984: 233). Hosenfeld found that unsuccessful readers could be taught the lexical strategies of successful readers, confirming Wenden's observation that "ineffective learners are inactive learners. Their apparent inability to learn is, in fact, due to their not having an appropriate repertoire of learning strategies" (1985: 7).

Studies of how learners approach writing tasks have also focused on the effectiveness of the processes learners employ (Raimes 1985). Lapp (1984) summarizes some of the research findings on differences between skilled and unskilled writers with respect to rehearsing and prewriting behaviors (what a writer does before beginning writing), drafting and writing processes (how the writer actually composes a piece of writing), and revising behaviors (revisions and corrections the writer makes). (See Chapter 6, Appendix, for a list of differences between unskilled and skilled writers.)

Research findings on learner strategies in reading and writing classes (e.g., Heuring 1984) suggest that teachers need to evaluate their teaching strategies on an ongoing basis, to determine if they are promoting ef-

fective or ineffective learning strategies in learners. (Ways in which teachers can gather information of this kind are discussed in Chapter 7.) As is suggested in Chapter 6, many commonly employed techniques in the teaching of writing, such as outlining or writing from a rhetorical model, might well inhibit rather than encourage the development of effective writing skills, because they direct the learner's attention to the form and mechanics of writing too early in the writing process.

In order to present information about learning strategies to students, strategies need to be operationalized in the form of specific techniques (see Fraser and Skibicki 1987); however, there is no consensus yet concerning how to approach the teaching of learning strategies. As with other aspects of language teaching, the issue of whether strategies are best "learned" or "acquired" is a central one. Some researchers advocate a direct approach. This involves explicit training in the use of specific strategies and teaching students to consciously monitor their own strategies (e.g., O'Malley et al. 1985a, b; Russo and Stewner-Manzanares 1985). Others favor a more indirect approach in which strategies are incorpororated into other kinds of learning content. Fraser and Skibicki (1987) describe the development of self-directed learning materials for adult migrant learners in Australia, which focus on specific strategies in different skill areas. A related issue concerns whether the focus of teacher intervention should be to provide additional strategies to learners or merely to help the learner develop a better awareness of and control over existing strategies. Willing (1987: 277) observes that despite the recent amount of attention to learning strategies, some serious issues still await resolution:

1. Current notions of learning strategies lack conceptual coherence...
2. Learning strategies as currently described have been identified more or less in isolation and on a purely empirical and arbitrary basis and have not been related to an overall view of learning...
3. There has been little systematic work on placing learning strategies within a broader description of the nature and meaning of learning itself...
4. There has been little effort to relate the notion of learning strategies (within a general learning theory) to current ideas about second language acquisition.

In addition, there has been little attempt to relate theories of learning strategies to more general theories of teaching, such as the one discussed previously.

Summary

Two approaches to language teaching have been discussed and contrasted. One conceptualizes teaching as application of a teaching method, in which both the teacher and the learner are approached on the terms of the method promoter, educational theorist, or applied linguist. The assumptions or theory underlying the method provide the starting point for an instructional design that is subsequently imposed on teachers and learners. An attempt is then made to make the teacher's and learner's classroom behaviors match the specifications of the method. This can be contrasted with an approach that starts with the observable processes of classroom teaching and learning, from which methodological principles and practices in language teaching are derived. Observation can yield two categories of information:

1. The study of effective teaching provides information about how effective teachers organize and deliver instruction. This relates to classroom management skills, and to the strategies teachers use to present instructional goals, structure learning tasks and activities, monitor learning, and provide feedback on it.
2. The study of effective learning provides information about the learning strategies effective learners apply to the process of using and learning a second and foreign language.

However, a word of caution is in order, since the goal of this approach is not simply to arrive at a set of general principles that can be taught to teachers and learners. This of course would be to come full circle, and would simply replace one "method" with another. The approach advocated here starts with the assumption that the investigation of effective teaching and learning strategies is a central and ongoing component of the process of teaching. This is the core of a process-oriented methodology of teaching.

This approach implies a redefinition of the role of the teacher. Teachers are not viewed merely as "performers," who carry out the role prescribed by the method or apply an externally derived set of principles to their teaching. Teachers are seen rather as investigators of both their own classroom practices and those of the learners. Much of the effort to determine what constitutes effective teaching and learning is initiated by the teacher. Through regular observation of their own classes and through analysis and reflection, teachers can obtain valuable feedback about the effectiveness of their own teaching. At the same time they can develop a better understanding of the principles that account for effective teaching and learning in their own classrooms. (Procedures for carrying out teacher self-monitoring are discussed in Chapter 7.) In the domain of learning strategies, the teacher also has an important role to play. The teacher is initially an observer and investigator of the learners' learning behaviors and subsequently provides feedback on the kind of strategies that are most successful for carrying out specific learning tasks. Relevant concerns for the teacher thus focus not on the search for the

best method, but rather on the circumstances and conditions under which more effective teaching and learning are accomplished.

Discussion topics and activities

1. Compare two language teaching methods you are familiar with. How do they differ with respect to:
   a) assumptions about second language learning?
   b) teacher and learner roles?
   c) role of instructional materials?
   d) kinds of instructional activities employed?
   To what extent do the two methods prescribe roles and behaviors for teachers and learners?
2. Why do you think name-brand methods seem to be an attraction for many teachers? Do you think methods help or hinder teachers?
3. If possible, find a class where a teacher is using a particular method and observe the teacher in action. To what extent is the teacher "following" the method? In what ways does the teacher depart from the method? Can you suggest why?
4. Have you experienced an effective teacher in any of your classes? Prepare a list of reasons that you think account for the teacher's effectiveness. Then compare your list with the list quoted from Blum, on page 38.
5. Observe a class and notice how the teacher deals with classroom management and grouping. Were there any aspects of the teacher's treatment of these issues that you would have handled differently?
6. Prepare a set of questions you could use to interview a teacher in order to explore the teacher's philosophy of teaching and how the teacher achieves his or her goals. Then use your questions to interview a teacher. Compare the information with information obtained by other students. How similar or different is the information you obtained?
7. In groups, compare your experiences in studying foreign languages and consider the questions cited from Wenden on page 45. Did you ask yourself similar questions? Can you provide examples of how questions like these affected your approach to learning?
8. Do you think it is possible to teach strategies to learners? Select a strategy, operationalize it, and suggest how it could be taught.

3 Designing instructional materials for teaching listening comprehension

In Chapter 1 the role of instructional materials in the language curriculum was discussed, and it was argued that effective instructional materials in language teaching are based on theoretically sound learning principles, are appropriate to the learners' needs, provide examples of how language is used, and provide opportunities for communicative and authentic language use. In this chapter, some of the theoretical principles underlying the design of listening materials will be examined. Any approach to the design of listening comprehension materials and classroom activities reflects a view of the nature of listening and the processes it involves. An understanding of the role of bottom-up and top-down processes in listening is central to any theory of listening comprehension, as well as recognition of the differences between the interactional and transactional dimensions of language use and how these affect listening. In this chapter, these views of listening are first elaborated and then applied to the design of instructional materials and activities for the teaching of listening comprehension.

Listening processes: bottom-up and top-down processing

Two distinct kinds of processes are involved in listening comprehension, which are sometimes referred to as "bottom-up" and "top-down" processing (Chaudron and Richards 1986). Bottom-up processing refers to the use of incoming data as a source of information about the meaning of a message. From this perspective, the process of comprehension begins with the message received, which is analyzed at successive levels of organization – sounds, words, clauses, and sentences – until the intended meaning is arrived at. Comprehension is thus viewed as a process of decoding. Examples of bottom-up processes in listening include the following:

1. scanning the input to identify familiar lexical items
2. segmenting the stream of speech into constituents – for example, in order to recognize that "abookofmine" consists of four words

3. using phonological cues to identify the information focus in an utterance
4. using grammatical cues to organize the input into constituents – for example, in order to recognize that in "the book which I lent you" [the book] and [which I lent you] are the major constituents rather than [the book which I] and [lent you].

The listener's lexical and grammatical competence in a language provides the basis for bottom-up processing. A person's lexical competence serves as a mental dictionary to which incoming words are referred for meaning assignment. Grammatical competence can be thought of as a set of strategies that are applied to the analysis of incoming data. Clark and Clark (1977: 49) summarize this view of listening comprehension in the following way:

1. They [listeners] take in raw speech and retain a phonological representation of it in "working memory."
2. They immediately attempt to organize the phonological representation into constituents, identifying their content and function.
3. As they identify each constituent, they use it to construct underlying propositions, building continually onto a hierarchical representation of propositions.
4. Once they have identified the propositions for a constituent, they retain them in working memory and at some point purge memory of the phonological representation. In doing this, they forget the exact wording and retain the meaning.

Top-down processing, on the other hand, refers to the use of background knowledge in understanding the meaning of a message. Background knowledge may take several forms. It may be previous knowledge about the topic of discourse, it may be situational or contextual knowledge, or it may be knowledge stored in long-term memory in the form of "schemata" and "scripts" – plans about the overall structure of events and the relationships between them.

For example, if an adult was seated on a park bench reading aloud from a book to a group of enthralled young children, an observer would probably assume that the adult was reading a story – rather than, say, a recipe or a set of instructions on how to assemble a computer. This set of expectations for a particular kind of discourse is generated from the situation, from knowledge of a world populated by adults and children and typical interactions between them. On moving closer, the observer is able to confirm that the children are indeed listening to a story. Now the observer activates his or her "schema" for stories. This can be thought of as a set of expectations as to how the content of the discourse will develop:

Where does the story take place?
Who are the characters?
Around what event or events does the story turn?
What will the outcome be?

Much of people's knowledge of the world consists of knowledge about specific situations, the people one might expect to encounter in such situations, what those people's goals and purposes are, and how they typically accomplish them. In applying this prior knowledge about people and events to a particular situation, comprehension proceeds from the top down. The actual discourse that is heard is used to confirm expectations and to fill out the specific details. Examples of top-down processing in listening include:

assigning an interaction to part of a particular event, such as storytelling, joking, praying, complaining;
assigning places, persons, or things to categories;
inferring cause-and-effect relationships;
anticipating outcomes;
inferring the topic of a discourse;
inferring the sequence between events;
inferring missing details.

If the listener is unable to make use of top-down processing, an utterance or discourse may be incomprehensible. Bottom-up processing alone often provides an insufficient basis for comprehension. Consider the following narrative, for example. What is the topic?

Sally first tried setting loose a team of gophers. The plan backfired when a dog chased them away. She then entertained a group of teenagers and was delighted when they brought their motorcycles. Unfortunately, she failed to find a Peeping Tom listed in the Yellow Pages. Furthermore, her stereo system was not loud enough. The crab grass might have worked but she didn't have a fan that was sufficiently powerful. The obscene phone calls gave her hope until the number was changed. She thought about calling a door-to-door salesman but decided to hang up a clothesline instead. It was the installation of blinking neon lights across the street that did the trick. She eventually framed the ad from the classified section. (Stein and Albridge 1978)

At first the narrative is virtually incomprehensible. However, once a schema is provided to apply to the narrative – "Getting rid of a troublesome neighbor" – the reader can make use of top-down processing, and the elements of the story begin to fit into place.

When learners first encounter a foreign language, they depend heavily upon top-down processing. For example, imagine a foreigner who has taken up residence in Japan. The first time she joins a group of Japanese friends for a meal, she hears them utter something that sounds like

"Itadakemasu" before they begin eating. She has no idea if this is one word or three, or whether it refers to the food or to the participants. After repeated experiences of this kind, however, and observation of the position and function the utterance occupies within the speech event of "meal talk," she infers that it is some kind of pre-eating ritual, probably the equivalent of "Bon apetit." If she subsequently goes on to learn some Japanese, she will be able to apply her knowledge of Japanese words and grammar to the phrase to arrive at its literal meaning, which is "eat – going to." Initially, then, she is entirely dependent upon top-down processing – that is, the use of background knowledge – in working out the meaning of the utterance, and only later, when her linguistic competence has developed, can she analyze it from the bottom up.

This is how listening comprehension often takes place at the initial stages in second language learning. For example the Australian Adult Migrant Education Listening Proficiency Descriptions, which are derived from analysis of the listening difficulties of on-arrival migrants to Australia and which characterize listening skills across seven levels of proficiency, include the following information concerning listeners at the lowest levels of proficiency:

Level 0.5
No idea of syntactic relationships between words. Responds to isolated items and has to rely almost entirely on context to guess meaning.

Here the listener is unable to use bottom-up processing. Gradually, as language learning proceeds, the ability to use bottom-up processing emerges, as we see in the following descriptions of Levels 1, 2, and 3 in the Australian proficiency descriptions:

Level 1
Little understanding of syntax. Meaning deduced from juxtaposition of words and context. Still responds to isolated words in connected speech... Speaker frequently forced to expand or paraphrase when listener's unfamiliarity with syntactic conventions causes misunderstanding.

Level 2
Beginning awareness of grammar but still relies heavily on stressed words and context to deduce meaning... Can follow very simple, slowly-spoken verbal instructions only if supported by context. Certain areas of English grammar tend to cause severe comprehension problems (e.g. tense marking, pronoun reference, subordination).

Level 3
Can understand some syntactic clues to meaning, but understanding of grammar very incomplete. In conversation, needs much more redundancy than

native speaker. Sometimes has to ask for clarification where syntax would make meaning clear to native speaker.

(Brindley, personal communication)

By the time the learner is at Level 4 or 5 on the proficiency scale, there is less dependence on context. Context is now used in association with the ability to process the message itself to work out unfamiliar meanings.

Fluent listening thus depends on the use of both top-down and bottom-up processing. The extent to which one or the other dominates reflects the degree of familiarity the listener has with the topic of discourse, the kind of background knowledge he or she can apply to the task, and the purposes for which he or she is listening. An experienced cook, for example, might listen to a radio chef describing a recipe for coq au vin merely to compare the chef's recipe with her own. She has a precise schema to apply to the task of listening and listens in order to register similarities or differences. She makes heavy use of top-down processes in listening to the radio program. A novice cook however, with little previous cooking experience and who is unfamiliar with coq au vin, will be required to listen with much greater attention, perhaps in order to write the recipe down. Here, far more bottom-up processing is required.

Listening purposes: interpersonal and transactional functions of language

As well as recognizing the fundamental difference between top-down and bottom-up processing in comprehending language, it is also necessary to recognize the very different purposes that listeners may have in different situations, and how these differences in purpose affect the way they go about listening. Numerous classifications exist of the different functions and purposes for which people use language; a simple but useful distinction made by Brown and Yule (1983) between interactional and transactional functions of language is used here.

Interactional functions of language

Interactional uses of language are those in which the primary purposes for communication are social. The emphasis is on creating harmonious interactions between participants rather than on communicating information. The goal for the participants is to make social interaction comfortable and nonthreatening and to communicate good will. Although information may be communicated in the process, the accurate and orderly presentation of information is not the primary purpose. Examples of interactional uses of language are greetings, making small talk,

telling jokes, giving compliments, making casual "chat" of the kind used to pass time with friends or to make encounters with strangers comfortable. Brown and Yule suggest that language used in the interactional mode is *listener oriented.* Questions of "face" are central; hence interactional conversation is a kind of "work" that is done in order for speaker and hearer to maintain face and to respect the face put forward by others. This is what the sociologist Goffman (1976) referred to as "face work." For example, a foreman who sees a worker sweating profusely as he works on a difficult job remarks sympathetically, "It's hard work." Or a person waiting at a bus stop in a heavy downpour remarks to another person waiting, "Will it ever stop?" In both cases the speaker's primary purpose is not to inform the listener of the obvious but to be *identified* with the concerns of the other person (Wardhaugh 1985).

One of the rules of "face work" is that it should elicit agreement, hence the importance of small talk on "safe" topics, such as the weather, the beauty of gardens, the incompetence of politicians, and so on (Brown and Levinson 1978). Agreement creates harmony and diminishes the threat to the participants' face. Brown and Yule add that constant shifts of topic are also characteristic of this mode of talk, and illustrate this with an extract from a conversation between some people who have been talking about a couple who visit the area in the summer. (The + signs represent a short pause.)

A: you know but erm + they used to go out in erm August + they used to come + you know the lovely sunsets you get + at that time and
B: oh yes
C: there's a nice new postcard a nice – well I don't know how new it is + it's been a while since I've been here + of a sunset + a new one +
A: oh that's a lovely one isn't it
D: yes yes it was in one of the + calendars
A: yes that was last year's calendar it was on
D: was it last year's it was on + it was John Forgan who took that one
A: yes it's really lovely + this year's erm + the Anderson's house at Lenimore's in it + at em Thunderguy I should say +
D: they've sold their house
A: yes + the Andersons
B: oh have they
A: yes yes + erm + they weren't down last year at all +

(Brown and Yule 1983: 11–12)

This extract also demonstrates another aspect of interactional discourse – that since the conversation exists largely to satisfy the social needs of the participants at that time, it is extremely boring for an outsider to listen to.

Most conversations are appallingly boring. It is the *participation* in such conversations which makes us such avid talkers, the "need to know" or the "need to tell" or the "need to be friendly." You can listen to hours and hours of recorded conversation without finding anything that interests you from the point of view of what the speakers are talking about or what they are saying about it. After all, their conversation was not intended for the overhearer. It was intended for them as participants. (Brown and Yule 1983: 82)

Likewise because such discourse is frequently between people who know each other and who share background knowledge about the topics introduced, a great deal is left unsaid. Conversations are embedded in context. Since the participants are able to fill out the details using top-down comprehension, it is not necessary to specify things very clearly. Interactional discourse is hence characterized by a high frequency of words for which a precise reference is not specified.

Transactional functions of language

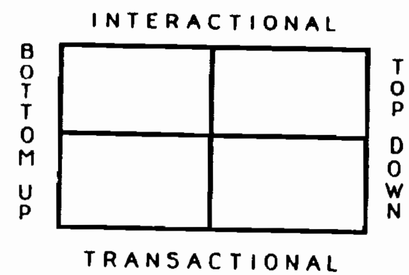
Transactional uses of language are those in which language is being used primarily for communicating information. They are "message" oriented rather than "listener" oriented. Accurate and coherent communication of the message is important, as well as confirmation that the message has been understood. Explicitness and directness of meaning is essential, in comparison with the vagueness of interactional language. With transactional uses of language, coherence, content, and clarity are crucial. Brown and Yule observe that completion of some kind of real-world task often accompanies transactional uses of language, such as writing down a message or carrying out an instruction. Examples of language being used primarily for a transactional purpose include news broadcasts, lectures, descriptions, and instructions. Brown et al. (1984) suggest that this is the kind of talk that dominates classroom life:

Teacher: now + here we have a substance in which heat is moving along the rod from a hot end to a cold end + + can anybody tell me the name we give to such a substance – a substance in which heat can flow + + nobody can tell me that + well + it's called a conductor + + anybody ever heard of that word before? + good well + I'll put it on the blackboard for you + + it's called a conductor + what we are going to do today is have a look at some conductors. (Brown et al. 1984: 9)

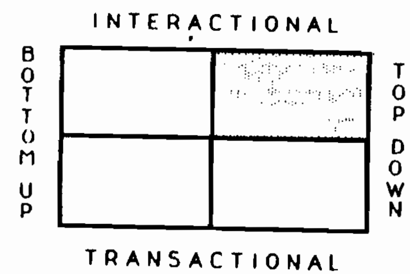
Tikunoff (1985) suggests that effective pupil classroom participation requires command of language in both its interactional and transactional functions (see Chapter 8). Language in its interactional functions is needed in order to interact with the teacher and peers while accomplish-

ing class tasks, and language in its transactional functions is needed in order to acquire new skills, assimilate new information, and construct new concepts. In many situations, both interactional and transactional functions are involved. At the doctor's, for example, the doctor may first use small talk to put the patient at ease, then switch to the transactional mode while asking for a description of the patient's medical problem.

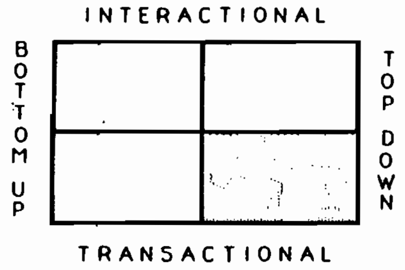
The four-part classification of listening processes and listening purposes established previously can be used as a framework for comparing the different demands of different listening activities. Listening activities may be located at different positions within the following quadrant:



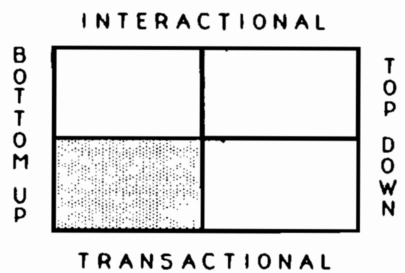
Consider a person listening to cocktail party banter, for example, during which friends greet each other, exchange compliments and other customary rituals, and engage in small talk on fleeting topics of no import to anyone present. Such an activity would be located in the following position on the quadrant:



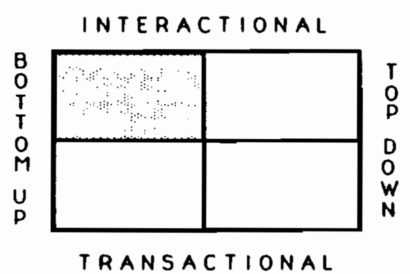
Now consider an experienced air traveler on an airplane listening to a flight attendant reading the air safety instructions before takeoff. This language would be located in the following position on the quadrant:



An activity that is transactional but that requires more use of bottom-up processing, such as a student driver receiving his or her first driving lesson from a driving instructor, would look like this on the quadrant:



An example of bottom-up processing within an interactional situation would be a partygoer listening intently to someone telling a bad joke and trying to identify where to laugh:



Applications to the design of classroom materials

The kinds of exercises and listening activities used in teaching listening comprehension should reflect the different processes and purposes involved in listening: bottom-up, top-down, interactional, and transactional.

Exercises that involve bottom-up listening

Exercises that require bottom-up processes develop the learner's ability to do the following:

- retain input while it is being processed
- recognize word divisions
- recognize key words in utterances
- recognize key transitions in a discourse
- use knowledge of word-order patterns to identify constituents in utterances
- recognize grammatical relations between key elements in sentences
- recognize the function of word stress in sentences
- recognize the function of intonation in sentences

Such exercises might require the learner to do the following tasks:

- identify the referents of pronouns used in a conversation
- recognize if a sentence is active or passive
- distinguish between sentences containing causative and noncausative verbs
- identify major constituents in a sentence, such as subject and object, verb and adverb
- distinguish between sentences with and without auxiliary verbs
- recognize the use of word stress to mark the information focus of a sentence
- distinguish between sentences containing similar-sounding tenses
- recognize the time reference of a sentence
- distinguish between positive and negative statements
- identify prepositions in rapid speech
- recognize sequence markers
- distinguish between Yes/No and Wh-questions

(Gore 1979; McLean 1981; Richards, Gordon, and Harper 1987)

These kinds of activities are often more appropriate for learners at a basic level of language proficiency, although the ability to use bottom-up listening strategies is required at all levels of listening. For example, a simple exercise that promotes bottom-up listening might require students to listen to positive and negative statements and choose an appropriate form of agreement.

Students hear:	*Students choose an appropriate response:*	
That's a nice apartment.	Yes	No
That's not a very nice place to live.	Yes	No
This coffee isn't hot.	Yes	No
This meal is really tasty.	Yes	No

The following exercise practices listening for word stress as a marker of the information focus of a sentence. Students listen to questions that have two possible information focuses and use stress to identify the appropriate focus. For example,

Students hear:	*Students check if the person is asking about where or when something is happening:*	
Is your *downtown* office open on Saturday?	Where	When
Are the banks open on *Sunday?*	Where	When
Are you going to the ***museum*** on Tuesday?	Where	When

Exercises that involve top-down listening

Exercises that require top-down processes develop the learner's ability to do the following:

– use key words to construct the schema of a discourse
– construct plans and schema from elements of a discourse
– infer the role of the participants in a situation
– infer the topic of a discourse
– infer the outcome of an event
– infer the cause or effect of an event
– infer unstated details of a situation
– infer the sequence of a series of events
– infer comparisons
– distinguish between literal and figurative meanings
– distinguish between facts and opinions

Exercises that address these goals might require the learner to do tasks like the following:

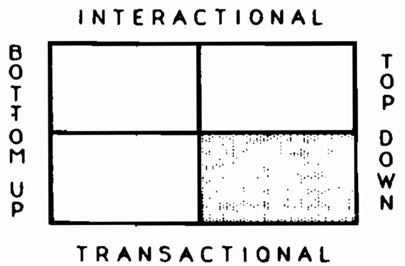
– listen to part of a conversation and infer the topic of the conversation
– look at pictures and then listen to conversations about the pictures and match them with the pictures
– listen to conversations and identify the setting
– read a list of key points to be covered in a talk and then number them in sequence while listening to the talk
– read information about a topic, then listen to a talk on the topic and check whether the information was mentioned or not
– read one side of a telephone conversation and guess the other speaker's responses; then listen to the telephone conversation
– look at pictures of people speaking and guess what they might be saying or doing; then listen to their actual conversations
– complete a story, then listen to how the story really ended
– guess what news headlines might refer to, then listen to news broadcasts about the events referred to

(Fassman and Tavares 1985; Rost 1986; Bode and Lee 1987; Richards et al. 1987)

Let us consider listening to news broadcasts and how top-down listening strategies can be the focus of this kind of task. Research on accounts of news events shows that readers and listeners apply specific schemata or scripts to the task. The script "is the catalyst between reader and text that allows a top down approach" (Zuck and Zuck 1984: 147). The script is "a predetermined, stereotyped sequence of actions that defines a well-known situation" (Schank and Abelson 1977: 41) or "a set of stereotypic expectations about content in a given text" (Zuck and Zuck 1984: 148). On reading about or listening to a news broadcast about a political event, such as a change in political leadership, Zuck and Zuck report that some of the obligatory concepts anticipated are:

Who is the new leader?
How did the new leader come to power?
Was the ascension to power anticipated?
What is the reaction of others to this change?
What do we know about the new leader?
What problems will the new leader be facing?

This kind of listening is both top-down and transactional, and can hence be represented as:



Two quite different approaches to teaching students to listen to news broadcasts are seen in recently published listening materials. In one text, students listen to news items while completing cloze versions of the news transcript. No prelistening activities are included, and no attempt is made to activate or make use of scripts related to the topic of each news item; hence the task focuses primarily on bottom-up processing.

In another text, however, students read headlines and beginnings of stories about news events before they listen to news items. They are asked to guess what the headlines and stories are about. Both of these prelistening tasks help develop a script or schema that students can apply to a subsequent listening task. On first listening to each news item, students complete a simple task in which they identify where each event took place. On a second listening, they indicate whether statements that summarize key information in the news stories are true or false. The tasks focus on identifying key information – students are not required to identify specific words used in the news items. The tasks hence reflect valid purposes in listening to news broadcasts – identifying what happened and where it happened – and allow students to use a top-down rather than a bottom-up approach to listening.

Exercises that involve listening for interactional purposes

Exercises involving interactional purposes seek to develop the learner's ability to do the following:

- recognize when language is being used for interactional purposes
- recognize appropriate moments to make phatic responses in a conversation
- recognize such illocutionary intentions as jokes, compliments, praise
- recognize differences between topics used in small talk and those used as real topics in conversations
- recognize markers of familiarity and social distance between speakers

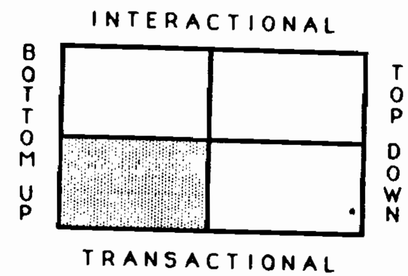
Exercises that address these goals might require the learner to do tasks such as the following:

- distinguish between conversations that have an interactional and a transactional purpose
- listen to conversations and select suitable polite comments and other phatic responses
- listen to utterances containing compliments or praise and choose suitable responses
- listen to conversations containing small talk and recognize when the speaker is preparing to introduce a real topic
- identify the degree of familiarity between speakers
- distinguish between real invitations and invitations being used to close a conversation

(Lougheed 1985; Richards et al. 1987)

For example, recently a group of teachers who wanted to develop listening activities focusing on listening for interactional purposes collected examples of semiauthentic interactional discourse for use with a group of foreign businessmen planning to visit Canada and the United States. The teachers role-played and recorded social small talk of the kind encountered at cocktail parties. The question then arose of how to use the data obtained as a component in a listening program.

The teachers next examined a commercial text that contained similar kinds of listening samples. This was not particularly helpful, for the text treated casual conversation as if it were an example of transactional discourse – as if the content of such conversation were crucial and every item of the conversation had to be identified:



The text required students to listen and complete partial transcripts of conversations, and to answer multiple-choice comprehension questions that tested the content of the conversations in great detail. Such a strong focus on the accurate identification of every word, phrase, and sentence used by the speakers is inappropriate for interactional discourse.

The teachers thus opted for a different approach: They developed exercises that first required students to make predictions. For example, the students were given a setting for a social interaction and a description of the kind of people they would meet. They then had to think of the kinds of questions they might like to ask each person and the kinds of topics they might like to discuss. Following this, they listened to the conversation samples and compared their predictions with what was actually talked about, focusing only on the gist of what was said rather than on specific details. Other tasks were developed that focused on how topics were introduced into conversations and how people opened and closed conversations. One exercise type focused on distinguishing invitations from conversational closings. Students heard closing sequences of conversations and had to identify whether the sequence led to a real invitation or was just a closing sequence. For example:

(1) A: Well, it's been good to see you. I guess I'd better be going now.
B: Nice seeing you again, too. We really should get together sometime.
A: Let's do that. Well, see you soon.
B: Bye.

(2) A: What a surprise it's been seeing you like this!
B: Yeah, I'm glad I ran into you. Why don't we have dinner together sometime? How about this weekend?
A: That would be nice. I'd like that.

Exercises that involve listening for transactional purposes

Exercises involving transactional functions seek to develop the learner's ability to do the following:

- extract key information from a discourse
- identify specific facts and details in a discourse
- recognize and act on the illocutionary intent of a discourse, such as requests, advice, commands, instructions
- identify the sequence in which a series of events occurred
- carry out tasks as a response to listening

Exercises that address these goals might require the learner to do tasks like the following:

- label the parts of an object from a description of it
- identify the key ideas in a discourse
- follow instructions to assemble an item
- complete a map or picture from an aural description
- write a summary of a talk or conversation
- write down a message delivered aurally
- identify a picture from a description of it
- listen to an advertisement for a job and note down the job requirements

(Blundell and Stokes 1981; Rost 1986; Richards et al. 1987)

An example of an exercise that involves a transactional purpose for listening would be listening to job announcements on a radio program. To prepare for this task, students might first predict what they expect the requirements for specific jobs to be. Then the students listen to radio announcements about each job and take brief notes. Another example would be listening for information about a travel itinerary. Before listening, students work in groups on planning which cities they would like to visit on a two-week visit to the United States and Canada, and what they would like to do and see in each place. Then they listen to a conversation between a client and a travel agent, during which a visit to North America is planned for the client. Students listen and complete the details of the visit on a form. These kinds of tasks do not require students to attempt to identify every word in what they hear. Rather, the students must attempt to identify key information, a task for which the prelistening activity has given them a script. Both activities are transactional and also involve top-down processing.

An example of a transactional listening purpose involving bottom-up listening would be listening to a description of an event (e.g., a traffic accident) and comparing the information given with a written account of the same event, in order to find out how many differences there were between the two accounts.

Conclusions

In developing classroom activities and materials for teaching listening comprehension, a clear understanding is needed of the nature of top-down and bottom-up approaches to listening and how these processes relate to different kinds of listening purposes. Too often, listening texts require students to adopt a single approach in listening, one that demands a detailed understanding of the content of a discourse and the recognition of every word and structure that occurred in a text. Students should not be required to respond to interactional discourse as if it were being used for a transactional purpose, nor should they be expected to use a bottom-up approach to an aural text if a top-down approach is more appropriate. Ways of using listening passages should be explored that help students employ appropriate listening strategies for particular listening purposes.

Discussion topics and activities

1. Give examples of contexts for listening where bottom-up processing is more important than top-down processing, and vice versa.
2. On page 52 a schema for stories is presented in the form of a set of questions a listener might use in listening to a story. Prepare similar schemas by developing specific questions that someone might use in listening to a report of:
   a) a visit to the dentist
   b) a domestic argument
   c) a traffic accident
   d) a political crisis
3. Can you expand the list of examples of top-down processes given on page 52?
4. Give examples of situations where language use is primarily:
   a) transactional
   b) interactional
   c) a mixture of both
5. Critique the list of exercise types dealing with the four dimensions of listening (pp. 59–65). Can you suggest other exercise types that would address these listening processes?
6. Record an example of language being used for (a) transactional purposes and (b) interactional purposes. Examine each example and consider the kinds of demands it makes on a listener in terms of bottom-up and top-down processing.
7. Examine a second or foreign language listening text. What is its focus? What kinds of listening situations, purposes, and skills does it address? What kinds of exercise types and activities does it use? How appropriate are they to the focus?
8. Choose a sample of authentic listening material (either the material you recorded in question 6 or something else) that would be appropriate for use in a second language listening class. Plan a lesson around the tape or video material, and develop suitable listening exercises and activities for use with it.

4 Conversationally speaking: approaches to the teaching of conversation

The "conversation class" is something of an enigma in language teaching. In some language programs it is an opportunity for untrained native speakers to get students to talk for the duration of a class period, using whatever resources and techniques the teacher can think of. In language programs where trained language teachers are available, they are often left to their own resources and encouraged to dip into whatever materials they choose in order to provide practice in both "accuracy" and "fluency." Consequently the content of conversation classes varies widely. In one class, the teacher's primary emphasis might be on problem solving. Students work on communication games and tasks in pairs or small groups with relatively little direct teacher input. In another class, the teacher might have a more active role, employing grammar and pronunciation drills and structured oral tasks. A third teacher may use the conversation class as an opportunity for unstructured free discussion, while in another class the teacher might have students work on situational dialogues such as "At the bank" and "At the supermarket."

Part of the difficulty in deciding what to do in the conversation class is due to the nature of conversation itself. What is conversation and what is involved in producing fluent, appropriate, and intelligible conversation? Can conversation be taught or is it something that is acquired simply by doing it? What principles can be used in planning a conversation program and in developing classroom activities and materials? These questions are addressed in this chapter by first examining the nature of conversation, and then considering the implications for planning an approach to the teaching of conversation.

The nature of conversation

Conversation is a multifaceted activity. In order to appreciate the complex nature of conversation and conversational fluency, some of the most important dimensions of conversation are examined here: the purposes of conversation, turn-taking, topics, repair, formal features of conversation, and the notion of fluency.

Purposes of conversation

Conversations serve a variety of purposes. As was illustrated in Chapter 3, two different kinds of conversational interaction can be distinguished – those in which the primary focus is on the exchange of information (the transactional function of conversation), and those in which the primary purpose is to establish and maintain social relations (the interactional function of conversation) (Brown and Yule 1983). In transactional uses of conversation the primary focus is on the message, whereas interactional uses of conversation focus primarily on the social needs of the participants. Approaches to the teaching of both conversation and listening comprehension are fundamentally affected by whether the primary purposes involved are transactional or interactional.

Conversation also reflects the rules and procedures that govern face-to-face encounters, as well as the constraints that derive from the use of spoken language. This is seen in the nature of turns, the role of topics, how speakers repair trouble spots, as well as the syntax and register of conversational discourse.

Turn-taking

Conversation is a collaborative process. A speaker does not say everything he or she wants to say in a single utterance. Conversations progress as a series of "turns"; at any moment, the speaker may become the listener. Basic to the management of the collaborative process in conversation is the turn-taking system.

A basic rule of conversation is that only one person speaks at a time, and in North American settings participants work to ensure that talk is continuous. Silence or long pauses are considered awkward and embarrassing, even though in other cultures this is not the case. Successful management and control of the turn-taking system in conversation involves control of a number of strategies (Wardhaugh 1985).

Strategies for taking a turn. These involve ways of entering into a conversation or taking over the role of speaker, and include

- using interjections to signal a request for a turn, such as "Mm-hmm," "Yeah," and rising intonation
- using facial or other gestures to indicate a wish to take a turn
- accepting a turn offered by another speaker by responding to a question or by providing the second part of an adjacency pair (e.g., expressing thanks in response to a compliment)
- completing or adding to something said by the speaker

Strategies for holding a turn. These involve indicating that one has more to say – for example, through intonation or by using expressions to suggest continuity, such as "First," "Another thing," "Then."

Strategies for relinquishing the turn. These are devices used to bring the other person(s) into the conversation, and include

- using adjacency pairs, requiring the other person to provide the sequence, such as with the adjacency pair challenge–denial:
  A: You look tired.
  B: I feel fine.
- using phonological signals, such as slowing down the final syllables of an utterance and increasing the pitch change to signal completion of the turn
- pausing to provide an opportunity for someone to take up the turn
- using a facial or bodily gesture to signal that a turn is finished

Participants in conversation are involved in ongoing evaluation of each other's utterances to judge appropriate places to take up the turn to talk. As Slade (1986: 79) observes:

> Turntaking and turn assignment in conversation can be difficult for a second language speaker. A learner who mistimes his entry into conversation or who is unfamiliar with the correct formulae can give the impression of being "pushy" or, conversely, over-reticent.

In addition to use of turn-taking strategies, speakers are required to use both short and long turns (Brown and Yule 1983). A short turn consists of one or two utterances:

A: Did you like the movie?
B: It was all right.
A: Who was in it?
B: Shelley Long.

A long turn might be required for a speaker to explain an opinion, describe something, or tell a joke or a story. For example, the following speaker is recounting an encounter with a cockroach during an examination.

> We were sitting for our analytical chemistry exam and it was the final exam. And they have sort of like bench desks where there's three to a bench normally and they had the middle seat empty – and two sat either side, and I was sitting there and I thought, "Geez I can feel something on my foot." And I thought, "No, no, don't worry about it," you know, "What on earth is this chemical equation?" and I'm trying to think. But there's something on my foot and I looked down and there was this cockroach like – and I just screamed and jumped up on the chair. (Slade 1986: 86)

The inability to take up long turns in conversation is a feature of many second language speakers, who keep to short turns and appear to be less than collaborative conversational partners.

The role of topics[1]

The way topics are selected for discussion within conversation and the strategies speakers use to introduce, develop, or change topics within conversations constitute another important dimension of conversational management. For example, coherent conversation respects norms concerning the choice of topics. Questions concerning one's age, salary, and marital status may be appropriate on first encounters in some cultures, but not in others. Coulthard (1977: 75–6) comments:

> An initial question is what sort of things can and do form topics in conversation? Some topics are not relevant to particular conversations... and the suitability of other topics depends on the person one is talking to. We experience, see, hear about events all the time... Some are tellable to everyone, some have a restricted audience, some must be told immediately, and some can wait and still retain their interest.

Part of the structure of conversational openings has to do with the positioning of topics within the conversation, as Schegloff and Sacks (1973) point out. The participants select a topic as first topic through a process of negotiation. The first topic, however, may be held back until the conversation develops to a point where it can be appropriately introduced. For example, a conversation may open:

A: What's up?
B: Not much. What's up with you?
A: Nothing.

Later, after possible preambles, one of the participants may go on to introduce a topic such as a job offer, which could have been given as a direct response to "What's up?". As Goffman points out, conversationalists might want to "talk past" some topics initially, waiting until a much later time to introduce a sensitive issue, "all of which management requires some understanding of issues such as delicacy"(Goffman 1976: 268). Schegloff and Sacks have also pointed out that in telephone conversations there is often a preamble to the first topic that offers the possibility of closing the conversation, should the other speaker so desire, such as "Did I wake you up?" or "Are you busy?", which if declined becomes a presequence for topic talk.

Winskowski (1977, 1978) refers to topicalizing behavior, by which is meant bringing up topics, responding to other people's topics, mentioning something, avoiding the mention of something, carrying the discussion one step further, and so on – the creating of topic in the activity. With this focus on topic as process, topic behavior can often be seen to consist of rounds of topical turns that are reciprocally addressed and replied to, as in the following example:

1 This section is adapted from Richards and Schmidt (1983).

A: Oh nothing, we're just cleaning up. We had dinner. What's new?
B: Nothing much. I still got a cold.
A: Oh, has it improved at all, hopefully?
B: Yeah, it's gotten better, it's gotten better. It'll be all right tomorrow. It better because I'm going out tomorrow.
(Winskowski 1977: 86)

Hatch (1978) emphasizes that second language learners need a wide range of topics at their disposal. Initially, learners may depend on "canned topics." Although they may get by with their ability to answer questions about recurring topics, such as how long they have been in the country, their occupation, and family, learners need practice in introducing new topics into conversation in order to move beyond this stage.

> They should practice nominating topics about which they are prepared to speak. They should do lots of listening comprehension for topic nominations of native speakers. They should practice predicting questions for a large number of topics... They should be taught... elicitation devices... to get topic clarification. That is, they should practice saying "huh," echoing parts of sentences they do not understand in order to get the rest of it recycled again, "pardon me, excuse me, I didn't understand etc." Nothing stops the opportunity to carry on a conversation quicker than silence or the use of "yes" and head-nodding when the learner does not understand. (Hatch 1978: 434)

Learners also need to be able to follow the flow of a topic through conversation. Knowledge of the real world in the form of schema knowledge is one source of information the learner can make use of, predicting and anticipating questions and the direction of conversation for certain topics.

Repair

Repair refers to efforts by both parties in conversation to correct problems that arise. Van Lier (1988: 180–2) emphasizes that discourse involves

> continuous adjustment between speakers and hearers obliged to operate in a code which gives them problems. This adjustment-in-interaction may be crucial to language development, for it leads to noticing discrepancies between what is said and what is heard, and to a resolution of these discrepancies...

> Repairing, as one of the mechanisms of feedback . . . is likely to be an important variable in language learning. Although it is not a sufficient condition, we may safely assume that it is a necessary condition.

Repairs may be initiated by either the speaker (*self-repairs*) or the hearer (*other repairs*). The second language learner may also request clarification from a native speaker (NS) when misunderstanding occurs. *Echoing* is one technique that is used, when the nonnative speaker (NNS) repeats a word or phrase that is not understood and the conversational partner explains it or replaces it with an easier item.

NS: We're going mountaineering tomorrow.
NNS: Mountain . . . ee . . . ?
NS: Mountaineering. You know, to climb up the mountain.

Another response to a request for repair involves topic fronting, as in the following example:

NS: Do you come from a big family?
NNS: Uhh?
NS: Your family. Is it big? Do you have lots of brothers and sisters?

Formal features of conversation

Conversational discourse is also recognized by formal features, which distinguish it from written discourse (see Chapter 6).

SYNTAX

Written language exhibits a different syntax from spoken discourse. In the written mode, clauses are linked in complex ways, with a main clause often followed by or linked to subordinate clauses. Rules of intra- and intersentential relations serve to link repeated and coreferential constituents. This is not possible in spoken discourse. Brown and Yule (1983: 4) observe:

> Most spoken language consists of paratactic (unsubordinated) phrases which are marked as related to each other, not so much by the syntax as by the way the speaker says them. The speaker uses the resources of pausing and rhythm and, to a lesser extent, intonation, to mark out for the listener which parts of his speech need to be co-interpreted.

Similarly, Syder (1983: 32) notes:

> Normal procedure in spontaneous connected discourse is for the speaker to package his thoughts into a series of relatively complete and independent clauses. All the syntactic and semantic elements needed to understand the clause are present in the clause, and there is minimal cross referencing to other clauses required of the hearer.

Bygate concludes (1987: 62–3):

> The learner engaged in oral communication is more likely to be working with small chunks than any other user of language. This is because, in addition to the fragmentary nature of oral discourse, the learner's processing capacity is limited.

Bygate notes that in conversation, speakers tend to avoid complex noun groups containing a series of adjectives (e.g., "an elegant new red two-door Italian sports car") and instead spread adjectives out over several clauses. As a result, spoken language is less dense than written language. Bygate gives an example of a second language learner describing a picture:

> OK – in this picture in picture – er – number 1 – I can see er a little girl – who probably – is inside – her house – er who is playing – with a bear – this bear – it has a brown colour and – the little girl is sitting – in the – in the stairs of her house – this house is very nice – it has rugs – it has brown rugs – mm – it has waste basket. (Bygate 1987: 16)

STYLES OF SPEAKING

An important dimension of conversation is using a style of speaking that is appropriate to the particular circumstances. Different styles of speaking reflect the roles, age, sex, and status of participants in interactions. Consider the various ways in which it is possible to ask someone the time, and the different social meanings that are communicated by these differences:

Got the time?
I guess it must be quite late now – is it?
What's the time?
Do you have the time?
Would you know what time it is?
Could I trouble you for the time?

Lexical, phonological, and grammatical changes may be involved in producing a suitable style of speaking, as the following alternatives illustrate:

Have you seen the boss? / Have you seen the manager? (lexical)
Whachadoin'? / What are you doing? (phonological)
Seen Joe lately? / Have you seen Joe lately? (grammatical)

Different speech styles reflect perceptions of the social roles of the participants in a speech event. However, if the speaker and hearer are judged to be of more or less equal status, a casual speech style is appropriate that stresses affiliation and solidarity. If the participants are perceived as being of uneven power or status, a more formal speech style is appropriate, one that marks the dominance of one speaker over the other. Successful management of speech styles creates the sense of politeness that is essential for harmonious social relations (Brown and Levinson 1978).

Brown and Yule (1983) point out that speech in a casual conversational style is peppered with general nonspecific words and phrases (e.g., the *thing* is, it's *sort* of . . . , the *kind of thing, you know,* it's a *bit* like . . . ,) and with interactive expressions (*well, oh, mm; really, actually, yes, geez*). This is well illustrated in an extract from Svartik and Quirk's *A Corpus of English Conversation* (cited in Wardaugh 1985: 202–3). The two speakers are male academics discussing the use of diaries in language research.

A: I don't know whether you have talked with Hilary about the diary situation
B: Well she has been explaining to me rather in more general terms, what you are sort of doing and
A: What it was all about, yes.
B: I gather you've been at it for nine years.
A: By golly that's true. Yes, yes, it's not a long time of course, in this sort of work, you know.
B: Well no, but it's quite a long time by any standards.
A: Yes, suppose so.
B: She told me what you did, and we decided we were both a bit out of date compared with the present day students and
A: Well I suppose that that's true

The ability to produce this kind of casual conversational language as well as to produce language appropriate for more formal encounters is an essential skill for second language learners.

CONVERSATIONAL ROUTINES

Another characteristic of conversational discourse is the use of fixed expressions or "routines," which often have specific functions in conversation. Wardhaugh (1985: 74) observes:

> There are routines to help people establish themselves in certain positions: routines for taking off and hanging up coats; arrangements concerning where one is to sit or stand at a party or in a meeting; offers of hospitality; and so on. There are routines for beginnings and endings of conversations, for leading into topics, and for moving away from one topic to another. And there are routines for breaking up conversations, for leaving a party, and for dissolving a gathering . . . It is difficult . . . to imagine how life could be lived without some routines.

Consider the following routines. Where might they occur? What might be their function within those situations?

This one's on me.	Guess I'll be making a move.
I don't believe a word of it.	I see what you mean.
I don't get the point.	Let me think about it.
You look great today.	Just looking, thanks.
What will you have to drink?	I'll be with you in a minute.
Nearly time. Got everything?	It doesn't matter.
Check please!	No harm done.
After you.	

Pawley and Syder (1983) suggest that native speakers have a repertoire of thousands of routines like these, and their use in appropriate situations creates conversational discourse that sounds natural and nativelike. Conversational routines typically have to be learned and used as fixed expressions, but at the same time, speakers must be aware that they cannot be used indiscriminately, to avoid exchanges such as the following:

A: Thanks for the meal.	A: Terry's father died.
B: It doesn't matter.	B: What a nuisance.

The concept of fluency

The overall goal of a second language learner is to produce fluent speech; however, the notion of fluency is difficult to pin down. The European Threshold Level Project (Van Ek 1977; Van Ek and Alexander 1980), for example, describes oral fluency in terms of "reasonable speech: with sufficient precision: with reasonable correctness (grammatically, lexically, phonologically)." Fillmore (1979: 93) describes fluency in terms of "the ability to fill time with talk . . . the ability to talk in coherent, reasoned and 'semantically dense' sentences" showing "a mastery of the semantic and syntactic resources of the language"; "the ability to have appropriate things to say in a wide range of contexts"; and the ability to "be creative and imaginative . . . in language use." Hieke (1985: 140) states that "fluent speech is the cumulative result of dozens of different kinds of processes" with both quantitative and qualitative dimensions. Although fluency is a fuzzy concept, it is not an unimportant one.

The concept of fluency reflects the assumption that speakers set out to produce discourse that is comprehensible, easy to follow, and free from errors and breakdowns in communication, though this goal is often not met due to processing and production demands. "The prime objective of the speaker is the generation of maximally acceptable speech in both content and form and a concomitant minimization of errors by the time an utterance has been articulated" (Hieke 1981: 150). Hieke proposes three conversational "maxims" that motivate the speaker:

1. Be Error-Free (phonology and syntax)
2. Be Intelligible (semantics, lexicon, logic, stylistics, and rhetoric)
3. Be in Control of the Communication Channel (fluency, and in dyadic speech, also turn taking).

(1981: 151)

Accuracy (including control of grammar and pronunciation) is here seen as a *component* of fluency, rather than as an independent dimension of conversational skill. The kind of discourse speakers produce and the degree of fluency they achieve, however, depend upon the task the speaker is attempting and the context for communication (i.e., whether the speech situation involves face-to-face conversation, whether the speaker is taking part in an interview or a discussion, or whether the speaker is involved in telling a story, giving a description, or replying to a question).

For some tasks, such as telling a story, the speaker may have access to available plans or schemas that reduce planning time and effort. The result may be that the discourse produced is qualitatively different from discourse produced during spontaneous interaction. It may be less hesitant, and the speaker may be able to plan larger units of discourse than are found in unplanned conversational interaction. Holmes (1984) found that the types of clauses and pauses occurring in storytelling tasks differed from those found in spontaneous interaction. Storytelling tasks "allowed subjects to construct more integrated utterances, which have been largely thought out and organized prior to their expression. The utterances are more *planned*, compared with the relatively unplanned discourse of spontaneous speech, which lacks much forethought and preparation" (Holmes 1984: 129).

Within a particular task type, however, such as storytelling, there may be variation between a hesitant cycle and a more fluent cycle, the latter marked by a faster rate of speech and fewer hesitations. Clark and Clark suggest that as the speaker begins a new idea, more detailed planning is required, resulting in more hesitant speech. Once the speaker gets further into the idea or topic, however, planning and execution require less effort. "Each new section in discourse takes special global planning in the beginning, and this reveals itself in a hesitant output. As the section proceeds, the global plan becomes complete, there is less need to hesitate, and the result is a fluent output" (Clark and Clark 1977: 272).

Approaches to the teaching of conversation

Currently there are two major approaches to the teaching of conversation in second language programs. One is an indirect approach, in which conversational competence.is seen as the product of engaging learners

in conversational interaction. The second, a more direct approach, involves planning a conversation program around the specific microskills, strategies, and processes that are involved in fluent conversation.

The indirect approach: teaching conversation through interactive tasks

The justification for a task-based approach to the teaching of conversation comes from second language acquisition (SLA) research. SLA researchers (e.g., Hatch 1978) have argued that learners acquire language through conversation. In using conversation to interact with others, learners gradually acquire the competence that underlies the ability to use language. Hatch (1978: 404) puts the position in this way: "One learns how to do conversation, one learns how to interact verbally, and out of this interaction syntactic structures are developed."

Studies of conversational interaction have revealed a great deal about the nature of nonnative speaker-to-native speaker conversational interaction, clarifying its role in second language learning. For example, the discourse found in conversation between nonnative speakers and native speakers is usually syntactically less complex than NS–NS discourse, with a higher frequency of more regular grammatical structures and vocabulary. This should make comprehension easier for the nonnative speaker. There are characteristic patterns of question use. Questions are more frequent than statements, drawing the nonnative speaker into conversation and allowing the native speaker to check comprehension at the same time. Native speakers ask more Yes/No questions than Wh-questions, presumably because Yes/No questions are easier to answer. Questions may also contain their own answers (e.g., "Are you working or are you on vacation?"), providing the nonnative speaker with a model for the expected answer. These kinds of conversational modifications are believed to assist the second language learner's language development. Pica comments,

> In sum, what enables learners to move beyond their current interlanguage receptive and expressive capacities when they need to understand unfamiliar linguistic input or when required to produce a comprehensible message are opportunities to modify and restructure their interaction with their interlocutor until mutual comprehension is reached. (1987: 8)

Through the kinds of linguistic and interactional modifications and adjustments learners receive when engaged in conversation, the grammatical structure of the language is displayed more clearly and made more accessible. Comprehension is assisted and the learner is able to experiment with the internal mechanisms of the language. As a direct result of this process, SLA researchers argue, linguistic competence gradually emerges.