USE OF ENGLISH
Methodology Course

Language and background to language learning and teaching

Describing language and language skills

Unit 1: Grammar

What is grammar?

Grammar describes how we combine, organize and change words and parts of words to make meaning. We use rules for this description.

Key concepts

What are parts of speech, grammatical structures and word formation?

We can use grammar to describe parts of speech, grammatical structures and how words are formed.

There are nine parts of speech: nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, determiners, prepositions, pronouns, conjunctions and exclamations. A **part of speech** or word class describes the function a word or phrase has in a sentence. This controls how the word or phrase can operate and combine grammatically with other words. For example, in English:

• A noun can act as the subject of a verb but an adjective cannot e.g. *The tall girl ran very fast* (✓) but not *Tall ran very fast* (X)

• An adverb can combine with an adjective but an adjective cannot combine with another adjective. e.g. well organized (✓), good organized (X)

• A noun can combine with another noun e.g. a car park.

The table below shows the functions of the different parts of speech:

Part of speech	Examples	Function(s)
Nouns **(e.g. countable, uncountable)**	*children* *sugar*	**• to name people, places, things, qualities, ideas, or activities**
Verbs **(e.g. transitive, intransitive)**	*see* *run*	**• to show an action, state or experience**

Part of speech	Examples	Function
Adjectives (e.g. comparative)	*easier*	• **to describe or give more information about a noun, pronoun or part of a sentence**
Adverbs (e.g. of degree, manner, time)	*completely quickly yesterday*	• **to describe or give more information about how, when or where something happens** • **to add information to adjectives, verbs, other adverbs or sentences**
Determiners (e.g. possessive adjectives, articles, demonstrative adjectives,**	*my the this both*	• **to make clear which noun is referred to or to give information about quantity**
Prepositions (e.g. of time, place, direction)	*after at towards*	• **to connect a noun, noun phrase or pronoun to another word or phrase**
Pronouns (e.g. personal, possessive, relative, reflexive)	*she mine who myself*	• **to replace or refer to a noun or noun phrase just mentioned**
Conjunctions (e.g. of reason, addition, contrast)	*as and but*	• **to join words, sentences or parts of sentences**
Exclamations (e.g. of doubt, pain)	*Er Ow*	• **to show a (strong) feeling - especially in informal spoken language**

We can divide the parts of speech into further categories, e.g. countable and uncountable nouns and transitive and intransitive verbs.

Grammar rules also describe **grammatical structures**, i.e. the arrangement of words into patterns which have meaning. The rules for grammatical structures use grammatical terms to describe forms and uses. 'Form' refers to the specific grammatical parts that make up the structure and the order they occur in. 'Use' refers to the meaning that the structure is used to express. Look at these examples:

Term	Form	Use
Past Continuous	**subject + past tense of verb to** *be + -ing* **form of verb** **e.g.** *he was running*	• **to describe a temporary or background situation or action in the past**
Passive voice	**subject + to** *be* **+ past participle (+** *by* **+ agent)**	• **to show what happens to people or things**
Comparative of 'long' adjectives	*more* **+ long adjective (+** *than***)** **e.g.** *he was more embarrassed than his friend.*	• **generally used with adjectives of two syllables or more to compare separate things or people**

We also use grammar to describe how words are formed. English uses **prefixes** (a group of letters added at the beginning of a word) and **suffixes** (a group of letters added at the end of a word) to create new words. The prefixes and suffixes are added to base words (e.g. stop, book) to make new grammatical units such as tenses, parts of verbs, the plural of nouns, and possessives (e.g. talked, goes, going, books, girl's). Many other prefixes (e.g. un-, il-, pre-, dis-) and suffixes (e.g. -tion, -est, -ly, -able) are also used in English to make new words (e.g. disappear, careful, friendly). Some languages, e.g. Turkish and German, make a lot of use of prefixes and suffixes to create new words. Other languages make little or no use of them.

Key concepts and the language teaching classroom

- Grammar rules describe the way that language works, but language changes over time, so grammar rules are not fixed. They change too. Unfortunately, grammar rules and grammar books don't always change as quickly as the language, so they are not always up to date. For example, some grammar books say that we should use whom rather than who after prepositions, but, in fact, except in some situations, who is generally used, with a different word order, e.g. 'I've just met the girl who I talked to on Friday' is much more common and accepted than 'I've just met the girl to whom I talked on Friday'.
- Teachers need to keep up to date with what parts of the language are changing and how.
- Grammar rules traditionally describe written language rather than spoken language. For example, repetition, exclamations and contractions (two words that are pronounced or written as one, e.g. don't from do not, isn't from is not, won't from will not) are common features of spoken language, but they are not always described in grammar books. Some grammar books are now available which describe spoken language too.
- Very often, speakers of a language can speak and write it well without consciously knowing any grammatical rules or terms.
- Learning some grammatical rules and terms makes language learning easier for some learners. Other learners - e.g. young children - may not find them useful at all.
- Just learning grammatical rules and structures doesn't give learners enough help with learning how to communicate, which is the main purpose of language. So, much language teaching has moved away from teaching only grammar, and now teaches, e.g. functions, language skills and fluency as well as grammar.

Unit 2: Lexis

What is lexis?

Lexis is individual words or sets of words, i.e. vocabulary items that have a specific meaning, for example: tree, get up, first of all.

Key concepts

What meanings does the word *tree* have?

Vocabulary items have different kinds of meaning. Firstly, there is the meaning that describes the thing or idea behind the vocabulary item, e.g. a tree is a large plant with a wooden trunk, branches and leaves. This meaning is called **'denotation'**. Then there is **figurative meaning**. We speak, for example, of 'the tree of life' or 'a family tree'. This imaginative meaning comes from, but is different from, denotation. There is also the meaning that a vocabulary item has in the **context** (situation) in which it is used, e.g. in the sentence 'We couldn't see the house because of the tall trees in front of it' we understand how tall the trees were partly from knowing the meaning of tall and partly from knowing how tall a house is, so the meaning of tall in this sentence is partly defined by the context.

The meaning of some vocabulary items is created by adding **prefixes** or **suffixes** to base words (e.g. nationality, unprofessional), or by making **compound words** (two or more words together that have meaning as a set, e.g. telephone number, bookshop) or by **collocation** (words that often occur together, e.g. to take a holiday, heavy rain).

To help distinguish the meaning of words from other related words, vocabulary items can be grouped into **synonyms** (words with the same or similar meanings), **antonyms** (words with opposite meanings), and **lexical sets** (groups of words that belong to the same topic area, e.g. members of the family, furniture, types of food). The table below shows some examples.

Vocabulary items	**Clear** (adjective)	**Paper (noun)**
Denotations	**1** easy to understand **2** not covered or blocked **3** having no doubt	**1** material used to write on or wrap things in **2** a newspaper **3** a document containing information
Synonyms	simple (for meaning l); certain (for meaning 3)	(none)
Antonyms/ Opposites	confusing (meaning 1); untidy, covered (meaning 2); unsure (meaning 3)	(none)
Lexical sets	(none)	stone, plastic, cloth, etc.

Vocabulary items	Clear (adjective)	Paper (noun)
Prefixes + base word	unclear	(none)
Base word + suffixes	clearly, a clearing	paperless
Compounds	clear-headed	paper knife, paper shop, paperback
Collocations	clear skin, a clear day	to put pen to paper
Figurative meanings	a clear head	on paper (e.g. It seemed a good idea on paper.)

We can see from this table that words sometimes have several denotations. The context in which we are writing or speaking makes it clear which meaning we are using. Words can also change their denotations according to what part of speech they are, e.g. the adjective clear vs. the verb to clear. We can also see that not all words have all the kinds of forms, and that it is not always possible to find synonyms for words, as few words are very similar in meaning.

Key concepts and the language teaching classroom

- Really knowing a word means knowing all its different kinds of meanings.
- Knowing a word also involves understanding its form, i.e. what part of speech it is, how it works grammatically, and how it is pronounced and spelled.
- Whether we are learning our first or our second language, it takes a long time before we fully know a word. We often recognize a word before we can use it.
- Teachers need to introduce vocabulary items again and again to learners, expanding gradually on their meaning and their forms. This also increases the chances of learners remembering the item.
- We can introduce vocabulary items in reading and listening before we ask learners to use the items.

Unit 3: Phonology

What is phonology?

Phonology is the study of the sound features used in a language to communicate meaning. In English these features include phonemes, word stress, sentence stress and intonation.

Key concepts

Do you know what the signs and symbols in this word mean?

/'stju:d ənt/

A **phoneme** is the smallest unit of sound that has meaning in a language. For example, the **s** in books in English shows that something is plural, so the sound /s/ has meaning. Different languages use a different range of sounds and not all of them have meaning in other languages. For example, the distinction between /s/ and /sh/ is an important one in English, where it helps distinguish between words such as so and show, sock and shock, sore and shore.

The phonemes of a language can be represented by **phonemic symbols**, such as /i:/, /ai/ and /ɜ/. Each phonemic symbol represents only one phoneme, unlike the letters of the alphabet in English where, for example, the letter **a** in written English represents the / æ/ sound in hat, the /ei/ sound in made and the /ə/ sound in usually. **Phonemic symbols** help the reader know exactly what the correct pronunciation is. A **phonemic script** is a set of phonemic symbols which show (in writing) how words are pronounced, e.g. beautiful is written /bju:tifl/, television is /telivi ʒn/ and yellow is /jel əʊ/.

Dictionaries use phonemic script to show the pronunciation of words. They usually have a list of all the phonemic symbols at the beginning of the book, together with an example of the sound each symbol represents. The symbols are often grouped into consonants and vowels, and the vowels are sometimes divided into **monophthongs** (single vowel sounds as in put /p ʊt/ or dock /d ɒk/), and **diphthongs** (a combination of two vowel sounds, e.g. the vowel sound in make /meik/ or in so /s əʊ /). There are several phonemic scripts and some small differences in the symbols they use.

In dictionary entries for words another symbol usually accompanies the phonemic script. This can be **'**, as in /'bju:tifl/, or _ , e.g. /bju̲:tifl/ or °, e.g. /bj ů :tifl/. These signs are used to show **word stress.** This is the part of the word which we say with greater energy, i.e. with more length and sound on its vowel sound. Compare the stress (the pronunciation with greater energy) in the vowel sounds in the stressed syllables and the other syllables in: pencil, children, important. (The stressed syllables are underlined.) We pronounce the other syllables with less energy, especially the unstressed or weak syllables, whose vowels get shortened or sometimes even disappear, e.g. the vowel sound in the last syllable of important, which is pronounced as a schwa / ə/.

In English, stress also influences how sentences and incomplete sentences are pronounced. We say different parts of the sentence with more or less stress, i.e. slower and louder, or quicker and more softly. This is called **sentence stress**. One word in the sentence has **main stress**. This is the word which

the speaker thinks is most important to the meaning of the sentence. Other words can have **secondary stress**. This is not as strong as main stress and falls on words which are not as important to the meaning as the word with main stress. Other words in the sentence are **unstressed**. For example, in 'She came home late last night' or 'I can't understand a word he says', the words with the main stress are the underlined ones, the words with secondary stress would probably be came, home, last, night and can't, understand, says, and the unstressed words she and I, a, he.

Main and secondary stress are usually on **content words** rather than structural words. Content words are nouns, verbs, adverbs or adjectives, i.e. words that give more information. **Structural words** are usually prepositions, articles, pronouns or determiners, i.e. words we use to build the grammar of the sentence. For example, in the sentence 'The girl ran to the sea and jumped in quickly' the content words are: girl, ran, sea, jumped, quickly. The others are structural words. You can see that normally these would not be stressed. Of course, there are exceptions to this. It is possible to stress any word in a sentence if the speaker thinks it is important. For example, 'The girl ran to the sea and jumped in quickly.' This stresses that she ran towards the sea and not, for example, away from it. Changing the stress of a sentence changes its meaning. Look at these examples:

The *girl* ran to the sea and jumped in quickly, (i.e. not another person)

The girl ran to the *sea* and jumped in quickly, (i.e. not to any other place)

The girl ran to the sea and jumped in *quickly*, (i.e. not in any other way)

Sentence stress is a characteristic of **connected speech**, i.e. spoken language in which all the words join to make a connected stream of sounds. Some other characteristics of connected speech are contractions and vowel shortening in unstressed words and syllables, e.g. the schwa sound / ə/ in potato /pəteitəʊ / or London /Lʌndən/. These characteristics help to keep the rhythm (pattern of stress) of speech regular. The regular beat falls on the main stress, while the weaker syllables and words are made shorter to keep to the rhythm. Try saying the sentences above and beating out a regular rhythm on your hand as you say them.

Intonation is another important part of pronunciation. It is the movement of the level of the voice, i.e. the tune of a sentence or a group of words. We use intonation to express emotions and attitudes, to emphasize or make less important particular things we are saying, and to signal to others the function of what we are saying, e.g. to show we are starting or stopping speaking, or whether we are asking a question or making a statement.

To hear these uses, try saying 'School's just finished' with these meanings: as a statement of fact, with surprise, with happiness, as a question, to emphasize 'just'. You should hear the level of your voice rising and falling in different patterns. For example, when you say the sentence as a statement of fact, your intonation should follow a falling tone as follows: 'school's just finished'. When you say it as a question, it has a rising tone, as follows: '/school's just finished', and when you say it with surprise, you will probably say it with a fall-rise tone, as 'Vschool's just finished'. Different intonation patterns can show many

different meanings, but there is no short and simple way of describing how the patterns relate to meanings.

Phonemic transcription alphabet.

/iː/	sleep sheep free	/æ/	sat hat flab	/ɪə/	here beer mere	/p/ʳ	pin pat pop	/f/	fan fear huff	/h/	hat hop hip
/ɪ/	kid slid blip	/ʌ/	blood cup shut	/ʊə/	sure pour poor	/b/	big bad dib	/v/	van veer cover	/m/	man came mix
/ʊ/	put foot suit	/ɑː/	part large heart	/ɔɪ/	boy deploy toy	/t/ʳ	tip tap pot	/θ/	thin think path	/n/	know near pan
/uː/	goose loose spruce	/ɒ/	hot cot shod	/eə/	lair share prayer	/d/	dig dog pad	/ð/	this then breathe	/ŋ/	ring thing manure
/e/	set dead said	/i/	happy navvy sally	/eɪ/	lace day betray	/k/ʳ	cake kick cot	/s/	sit kiss some	/l/†	love lull little
/ə/	about father across			/aɪ/	price wine shine	/g/	got bag hug	/z/	zoo houses maze	/r/	rear ran rob
/ɜː/	verse hearse curse			/əʊ/	boat coat note	/tʃ/	chair batch choice	/ʃ/	shut push shave	/j/	yet yacht yell
/ɔː/	fought caught brought			/aʊ/	south house louse	/dʒ/	judge badge jerk	/ʒ/	pleasure leisure measure	/w/	went win water

Unit 4 Functions

What is a function?

A function is a reason why we communicate. Every time we speak or write, we do so for a purpose or function. Here are some examples of functions:

apologizing   greeting   clarifying   inviting

advising   agreeing   disagreeing   refusing

thanking   interrupting   expressing obligation   expressing preferences

Functions are a way of describing language use. We can also describe language grammatically or lexically (through vocabulary). When we describe language through functions we emphasize the use of the language and its meaning for the people who are in the **context** where it is used.

Key concepts.

Look at this table. What do you think an 'exponent' is?

Context	Exponent (in speech marks)	Function
A boy wants to go to the cinema with his friend tonight.	The boy says to his friend: 'Let's go to the cinema tonight.'	Suggesting/making a suggestion about going to the cinema
A girl meets some people for the first time. She wants to get to know them.	The girl says to the group: 'Hello. My name's Emilia.'	Introducing yourself
A customer doesn't understand what a shop assistant has just said.	The customer says to the shop assistant: 'Sorry, what do you mean?'	Asking for clarification (i.e. asking someone to explain something)
A girl writes a letter to a relative thanking her for a birthday present.	The girl writes 'Thank you so much for my lovely...'	Thanking someone for a present

The language we use to express a function is called an **exponent**. The pieces of direct speech in the middle column in the table above are all examples of exponents. In the third column, the functions are underlined. You can see from the table that we use the ing forms of verbs (e.g. suggesting, asking) to name functions. The words after the function in the third column are not the function. They are the specific topics that the functions refer to in these contexts.

An exponent can express several different functions. It all depends on the context it is used in. For example, think of the exponent 'I'm so tired'. This could be an exponent of the function of describing

feelings. But who is saying it? Who is he/she saying it to? Where is he/she saying it? i.e. what is the context in which it is being said? Imagine saying 'I'm so tired' in these two different contexts:

Context	Function
A boy talking to his mother while he does his homework	Requesting to stop doing homework
A patient talking to her doctor	Describing feelings

One exponent can express several different functions because its function depends on the context. One function can also be expressed through different exponents.

Here are five different exponents of inviting someone to lunch. How are they different from one another?

Coming for lunch?

Come for lunch with us?

Would you like to come to lunch with us?

Why don't you come for lunch with us?

We would be very pleased if you could join us for lunch.

These exponents express different **levels of formality,** i.e. more or less relaxed ways of saying things. Generally speaking, **formal** (serious and careful) exponents are used in formal situations, **informal** (relaxed) exponents in informal situations and **neutral** (between formal and informal) exponents in neutral situations. It is important to use the level of formality that suits a situation. This is called **appropriacy.** A teacher who greets a class by saying 'I'd like to wish you all a very good morning' is probably using an exponent of the function of greeting that is too formal. A teacher who greets a class by saying 'Hi, guys!' might be using language that is too informal. Both of these could be examples of **inappropriate** use of language. It would probably be **appropriate** for the teacher to say 'Good morning, everyone' or something similar.

Key concepts and the language teaching classroom.

- In language teaching, course books are often organized around functions. For example, the map of the book in a course book could list functions and language like this:

Functions	Language
Expressing likes	First and third person present simple affirmative: *I like.... he/she likes...*
Expressing dislikes	First and third person present simple negative: **I *don't like*.... *he/she doesn't like...***

- Functions are often taught in coursebooks together with the grammar of their main exponents. There is an example of this in the map of the book above. You can see that the language in the second column includes 'present simple affirmative', which is a grammatical term, while I *like* ..., *he/she likes* ...' are exponents of the function 'Expressing likes'.
- Combining functions and grammar helps to give grammar a meaning for learners and helps them to learn functions with **grammatical structures** that they can then use in other contexts.
- A functional approach to teaching language helps teachers find real-world contexts in which to present and practice grammar, and helps learners to see the real-world uses of the grammar they learn.

Unit 5 Reading

What is reading?

Reading is one of the four language **skills:** reading, writing, listening and speaking, it is a **receptive skill,** like listening. This means it involves responding to text, rather than producing it. Very simply we can say that reading involves making sense of text. To do this we need to understand the language of the text at word level, sentence level and whole-text level. We also need to connect the message of the text to our knowledge of the world.

Key concepts

Can you think of reasons why learners may find reading difficult?

A text is usually longer than just a word or a sentence. It often contains a series of sentences, as in a letter or even a postcard. These sentences are connected to one another by grammar and vocabulary and/or knowledge of the world. Reading also involves understanding the connection between sentences. For example:

The boy was surprised because the girl was much faster at running than he was. Then he found out that her mother had won a medal for running at the Olympic Games.

The second sentence gives us a possible reason why the girl was so good at running. But we can only understand that this is a reason if we know that Olympic runners are very good. This means we need to use our knowledge of the world to see the connection between these two sentences **(coherence).** The grammatical links between the sentences **(cohesion)** also help us see the connection between them. For example, in the second example sentence 'he' refers to 'the boy' in the first sentence, and 'her' refers to 'the girl'.

When we read we do not necessarily read everything in a text. What we read depends on why and how we are reading. For example, we may read a travel website to find a single piece of information about prices. But we may read a novel in great detail because we like the story and the characters and want to know as much as we can about them.

These examples show us that we read different text types and we read for different reasons. Some examples of written text types are letters, articles, postcards, stories, information brochures, leaflets and poems. All these kinds of text types are different from one another. They have different lengths, layouts (the ways in which text is placed on the page), topics and kinds of language. Learning to read also involves learning how to handle these different text types.

Our reasons for reading influence how we read, i.e. which reading **subskill** (a skill that is part of a main skill) we use. For example, if we read a text just to find a specific piece or pieces of information in it, we usually use a subskill called **reading for specific information** or **scanning.** When we scan, we don't read the whole text. We hurry over most of it until we find the information we are interested in, e.g. when we look for a number in a telephone directory.

Another reading subskill is **reading for gist** or **skimming,** i.e. reading quickly through a text to get a general idea of what it is about. For example, you skim when you look quickly through a book in a bookshop to decide if you want to buy it, or when you go quickly through a reference book to decide which part will help you write an essay.

A third reading subskill is **reading for detail.** If you read a letter from someone you love who you haven't heard from for a long time, you probably read like this, getting the meaning out of every word.

Another way of reading is **extensive reading.** Extensive reading involves reading long pieces of text, for example a story or an article. As you read, your attention and interest vary - you may read some parts of the text in detail while you may skim through others.

Sometimes, especially in language classrooms, we use texts to examine language. For example, we might ask learners to look for all the words in a text related to a particular topic, or work out the grammar of a particular sentence. The aim of these activities is to make learners more aware of how language is used. These activities are sometimes called **intensive reading.** They are not a reading skill, but a language learning activity.

We can see that reading is a complicated process. It involves understanding letters, words and sentences, understanding the connections between sentences (coherence and cohesion), understanding different text types, making sense of the text through our knowledge of the world and using the appropriate reading subskill. Reading may be a receptive skill but it certainly isn't a passive one!

Key concepts and the language teaching classroom

- If learners know how to read in their own language, they can transfer their reading skills to reading in English. Sometimes though, they find this difficult, especially when their language level is not high, and they need help to transfer these skills. Teachers need to check which reading subskills their learners are good at, then focus on practicing the subskills they are not yet using well, and, if necessary, on teaching them language which will help them do this.
- Giving learners lots of opportunities for extensive reading, in or out of class, helps them to develop their fluency in reading.
- The reading subskills that we need to teach also depend on the age and first language of the learners. Some learners of English, e.g. young children, may not yet know how to read in their own language. They need to learn how letters join to make words and how written words relate to spoken words both in their language and in English. Other learners may not understand the script used in English as their own script is different, e.g. Chinese, Arabic. These learners need to learn the script of English, and maybe also how to read a page from left to right.
- We need to choose the right texts for our learners. Texts should be interesting for learners in order to motivate them. Texts should also be at the right level of difficulty. A text may be difficult because it contains complex language and/or because it is about a topic that learners don't know much about.

- We can make a difficult text easier for learners to read by giving them an easy comprehension task. Similarly, we can make an easier text more difficult by giving a hard comprehension task. This means that the difficulty of a text depends partly on the level of the comprehension task that we give to learners.
- Sometimes we may ask learners to read texts that are specially written or simplified for language learners. At other times they may read articles, brochures, story books, etc. that are what a first language speaker would read. This is called **authentic material.** The language in authentic material is sometimes more varied and richer than the language in simplified texts. Experts believe that learners learn to read best by reading both simplified and authentic materials.
- Different reading comprehension tasks and exercises focus on different reading subskills. Teachers need to recognize which subskill a task focuses on.
- Teachers need to choose comprehension tasks very carefully. They need to be of an appropriate level of difficulty and practice relevant reading subskills.
- The activities in a reading lesson often follow this pattern:
    1- **Introductory activities**: an introduction to the topic of the text and activities focusing on the language of the text
    2- **Main activities**: a series of comprehension activities developing different reading subskills
    3- **Post-activities**: activities which ask learners to talk about how a topic in the text relates to their own lives or give their opinions on parts of the text. These activities also require learners to use some of the language they have met in the text.

Unit 6 Listening

What is listening?

Listening is one of the four language **skills:** reading, writing, listening and speaking. Like reading, listening is a **receptive skill,** as it involves responding to language rather than producing it. Listening involves making sense of the **meaningful** (having meaning) sounds of language. We do this by using **context** and our knowledge of language and the world.

Key concepts.

Listening involves understanding spoken language, which is different from written language.
What differences can you think of between the spoken and written language of English?
List some before reading this table.

Written language in English	*Spoken language in English*
Stays on the page and doesn't disappear.	Disappears as soon as it is spoken. Sometimes it is spoken fast and sometimes slowly, with or without pauses.
Uses punctuation and capital letters to show sentences.	Shows sentences and meaningful groups of words through stress and intonation.
Consists of letters, words, sentences and punctuation joined together into text.	Consists of connected speech, sentences, incomplete sentences or single words.
Has no visual support - except photos or pictures sometimes.	The speaker uses body language to support his/her communication; for example, gestures (movements of hands or arms to help people understand us), and facial expressions (the looks on our face). This helps the listener to understand what the speaker is saying.
Is usually quite well organized: sentences follow one another in logical sequences and are joined to previous or following sentences.	Is not so well organized; e.g. it contains interruptions, hesitations, repetitions and frequent changes of topic.
Usually uses quite exact vocabulary and more complex grammar.	Often uses rather general vocabulary and simple grammar.

To understand spoken language we need to be able to deal with all the characteristics of spoken language listed in the table. Here is an example of spoken language. You can see that it can be less well organized and less exact than written language:

Father: How's your homework? You know, your history?

Son: Easy.

Father: You sure?

Son: It's just... I mean all we need to do is, well, just read some stuff.

Father: But d'you understand it?

Son: Yeah. Can I go and play with Tom?

To help us understand spoken language we need to use the context the language is spoken in and our knowledge of the world. In this example, our knowledge of relationships between fathers and sons, and of children's attitudes to homework helps us understand, but if we knew the context of the conversation (e.g. the place where it took place, the father's and son's body language, their attitudes towards homework), we would understand more.

When we listen, we also need to be able to understand different kinds of spoken text types such as conversations, stories, announcements, songs, instructions, lectures and advertisements. They contain different ways of organizing language and different language features, and some consist of just one voice while others consist of more.

We also need to understand different speeds of speech. Some people speak more slowly and with more pauses. Others speak fast and/or with few pauses. This makes them more difficult to understand. We need to understand different accents too (e.g. Scottish or Australian English).

But we do not listen to everything in the same way. How we listen depends on our reason for listening. We might **listen for gist, specific information, detail, attitude** (listening to see what attitude a speaker is expressing), or do **extensive listening.** See page 22 about reading for an explanation of these terms.

We can see that listening involves doing many things: dealing with the characteristics of spoken language; using the context and our knowledge of the world; understanding different text types; understanding different speeds of speech and accents; using different listening **subskills.** Look at this extract from a listening syllabus for lower secondary students of English. It shows many of these different aspects of listening:

- Hearing the differences between common sounds

- Identifying important words in what someone has just said

- Understanding and responding to simple instructions and commands

- Recognizing basic differences in information (e.g. commands vs. questions)

- Following a simple narrative spoken by the teacher with the help of pictures

- Recognizing the sound patterns of simple rhyming words

- Understanding the development of simple stories

- Understanding and responding to simple requests and classroom instructions.

- Identifying main ideas.

Key concepts and the language teaching classroom

- In the classroom, learners can listen to many sources of spoken language, e.g. the teacher, other learners, visitors, video, DVDs.
- When we listen to audio CDs we can't see the speaker's body language or the context he/she is speaking in. And we can't ask the speaker to repeat or explain. These factors make listening to recordings more difficult than listening to live speakers.
- Some listening texts in coursebooks are **authentic,** i.e. they contain all the features of real spoken language. Other texts are written especially for language learners. Many experts think that learners need to listen to both kinds of text to develop their listening skills.
- Understanding and showing you have understood are not the same thing. For example, maybe you can understand all of a story, but you can't tell the story. So, comprehension activities should be in easier language than the language in the listening text.
- Children learn well from listening to stories that interest them.
- We can develop learners' listening skills by focusing regularly on particular aspects of listening, e.g. problem sounds, features of connected speech, subskills, and, if necessary, on any new language.
- The activities in a listening lesson often follow this pattern:
  1- Introductory activities: an introduction to the topic of the text and activities focusing on the language of the text.
  2- Main activities: a series of comprehension activities developing different listening subskills.
  3- Post-activities: activities which ask learners to talk about how a topic in the text relates to their own lives or give their opinions on parts of the text. These activities also require learners to use some of the language they have met in the text.

Unit 7 Writing

What is writing?

Writing is one of the four language **skills:** reading, writing, listening and speaking. Writing and speaking are **productive skills.** That means they involve producing language rather than receiving it. Very simply, we can say that writing involves communicating a message (something to say) by making signs on a page. To write we need a message and someone to communicate it to. We also need to be able to form letters and words, and to join these together to make words, sentences or a series of sentences that link together to communicate that message.

Key concepts.

What have you written in your language in the past week?

Maybe you have not written anything in the past week! It is true that we do not write very much these days. But possibly you have written a shopping list, a birthday card, some emails, text messages, maybe a story. If you are studying, perhaps you have written an essay. All of these are examples of written text types. You can see from this list that text types involve different kinds of writing, e.g. single words only, short sentences or long sentences; use (or not) of note form, addresses or paragraphs, special layouts; different ways of ordering information. When we learn to write, we need to learn how to deal with these different features.

All written text types have two things in common. Firstly, they are written to communicate a particular message, and secondly, they are written to communicate to somebody. Our message and who we are writing to influence what we write and how we write. For example, if you write a note to yourself to remind yourself to do something, you may write in terrible handwriting, and use note form or single words that other people would not understand. If you write a note for your friend to remind him/her of something, your note will probably be clearer and a bit more polite.

Writing involves several **subskills.** Some of these are related to **accuracy,** i.e. using the correct forms of language. Writing accurately involves spelling correctly, forming letters correctly, writing legibly, punctuating correctly, using correct layouts, choosing the right vocabulary, using grammar correctly, joining sentences correctly and using paragraphs correctly.

But writing isn't just about accuracy. It is also about having a message and communicating it successfully to other people. To do this, we need to have enough ideas, organize them well and express them in an appropriate style.

Writing also often involves going through a number of stages. When we write outside the classroom we often go through these stages:

• **Brainstorming** (thinking of everything we can about the topic)

• Making **notes**

• Planning (organizing our ideas)

• Writing a **draft** (a piece of writing that is not yet finished, and may be changed)

• **Editing** (correcting and improving the text)

• Producing another draft

• **Proof-reading** (checking for mistakes in accuracy) or editing again.

These are the stages of the writing process.

Key concepts and the language teaching classroom

- The subskills of writing that we teach will vary a lot, depending on the age and needs of our learners. At primary level we may spend a lot of time teaching learners how to form letters and words and write short texts of a few words or sentences, often by copying models. At secondary level we may need to focus more on the skills required to write longer texts such as letters, emails or compositions.
- When we teach writing we need to focus on both accuracy and on building up and communicating a message.
- Sometimes in the classroom learners write by, for example, completing gaps in sentences with the correct word, taking notes for listening comprehension, writing one-word answers to reading comprehension questions. These activities are very useful for teaching grammar, and checking listening and reading, but they do not teach the skills of writing. To teach the writing subskills we need to focus on accuracy in writing, on communicating a message and on the writing process.
- By encouraging learners to use the writing process in the classroom we help them to be creative and to develop their message, i.e. what they want to say.

Unit 8 Speaking

What is speaking?

Speaking is a **productive skill,** like writing. It involves using speech to express meanings to other people.

Key concepts.

Tick the things on this list which people often do when they speak.

1	pronounce words	10	smile
2	answer questions	11	ask for and give information
3	use intonation	12	respond appropriately
4	ask for clarification and/or explanation	13	persuade
5	correct themselves	14	start speaking when someone else stops
6	take part in discussions	15	tell stories
7	change the content and/or style of their speech according to how their listener responds	16	use fully accurate grammar and vocabulary
8	greet people	17	use tenses
9	plan what they will say	18	take part in conversations

We usually do all these things when we speak except 9 and 16. Speaking does not allow us time to do these except in formal speaking such as making speeches. Here is a list of the categories that the other points are examples of:

• Grammar and vocabulary (17)

• Appropriacy (12)

• Functions (2, 4, 6, 8, 11, 12, 13, 15)

• Body language (10)

• Features of connected speech (1,3)

• Interaction (5, 7, 14, 18).

Interaction is two-way communication that involves using language and body language to keep our listener involved in what we are saying and to check that they understand our meaning. Examples of these **interactive strategies** are: making eye contact, using **facial expressions**, asking check questions (e.g. 'Do you understand?), clarifying your meaning (e.g. 'I mean ...', 'What I'm trying to say is ...'), confirming understanding (e.g. 'mm', 'right').

We speak with **fluency** and **accuracy**. Fluency is speaking at a normal speed, without hesitation, repetition or self-correction, and with smooth use of connected speech. Accuracy in speaking is the use

of correct forms of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. When we speak, we use different aspects of speaking depending on the type of speaking we are involved in. If you go to a shop to buy some sweets and ask the shopkeeper 'How much-?' then leave after he/she replies, you don't use many of them. If you go to the bank to ask the bank manager to lend you $500,000, you will probably need to use many more. If you eat a meal with all your relatives, you will also use many in conversation with them. As you can see speaking is a complex activity

Key concepts and the language teaching classroom

- We can develop learners' speaking skills by focusing regularly on particular aspects of speaking, e.g. fluency, pronunciation, grammatical accuracy, body language.
- In many classes learners do controlled practice activities (activities in which they can use only language that has just been taught). These are a very limited kind of speaking because they just focus on accuracy in speaking and not on communication, interaction or fluency. Controlled practice activities can provide useful, if limited, preparation for speaking, as cs and less controlled practice activities give more opportunity than controlled activities tor learners to practice communication, interaction and fluency
- Sometimes learners speak more willingly in class when they have a reason for communicating, e.g. to solve a problem or to give other classmates some information they
- Because speaking is such a complex skill, learners in the classroom may need a lot of help to prepare for speaking, e.g. practice of necessary vocabulary, time to organize their ideas and what they want to say, practice in pronouncing new words and expressions, practice in carrying out a task, before they speak freely.
- Learners, especially beginners and children, may need time to take in and process all the new language they hear before they produce it in speaking.
- Activities in a speaking lesson often follow this pattern:
1. Lead-in: an introduction to the topic of the lesson pluss, sometimes, activities focusing on the new language
2. Practice activities or tasks in which learners have opportunities to use the new language
3. Post-task activities: activities in which learners discuss the topic freely and/or ask the teacher questions about the language used.