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Study Materials

for the

Minimum Core

of

Language and Literacy

in

Initial Teacher Training

University of

HUDDERSFIELD

The Consortium
for Post-Compulsory Education and Training

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Introduction

As part of the Department for Education and Skills' commitment to improving the skills of teachers working in post-14 education and training, changes have been made to endorsed initial teacher training programmes offered by Higher Education institutions and Awarding Bodies. Changes have been agreed which mean that all teachers should, as part of their initial training, have knowledge and understanding of literacy, language and numeracy issues as well as an adequate level of personal skills in these areas. The requirements are known as the 'minimum core' and will be included in all post-16 teacher education programmes from September 2004.

The aim of the minimum core is *not* to prepare trainee teachers of other curriculum areas to be literacy, language or numeracy specialists. It is rather to strengthen the focus within initial teacher training on literacy, language and numeracy as well as indicating the minimum personal skill requirements for any teacher working as a professional in the learning and skills sector. The knowledge and skills developed through the minimum core will enable trainee teachers to consider how to teach their own subject specialism in ways that meet the needs of learners whose levels of language, literacy or numeracy skills might otherwise jeopardise their chance of achieving their primary learning goal(s). The personal skills elements of the minimum core will be important in enabling teachers to fulfil effectively their roles both as a practitioner and as a professional in the workplace.

The requirements of the core are a *minimum*, and trainee teachers may want or need to investigate certain areas further in order both to meet the needs of individual learners they encounter, and as part of their continuing professional development.

The work pack of materials which follow will enable trainee teachers to:

- Become familiar with the requirements of the minimum core
- Engage in activities that will help develop personal skills in speaking and listening, reading and writing and produce action plans for further development
- Engage in activities that will help develop a knowledge of the personal, social and cultural factors influencing language and literacy learning and development

- Plan to develop inclusive approaches to teaching a subject specialism which support learners' literacy, language and numeracy needs.

………………………………………………………….

This pack contains materials which will help you to recognise and develop your skills, knowledge and understanding in addressing the Minimum Core elements. The table below identifies coverage of the Minimum Core elements.

Minimum Core Element	Mapping to materials
Personal, social and cultural factors influencing language and literacy learning and development	
The different factors affecting the acquisition and development of language and literacy	3.1
The importance of English language and literacy in enabling users to participate in and gain access to society and the modern economy	Section 3 Introduction
Understanding of the range of learners' cultural, linguistic and educational backgrounds	3.1 3.2 4.3
Awareness of the main learning disabilities and learning difficulties that hinder language learning and	3.1

skill development	
Multilingualism and the role of the first language in the acquisition of additional languages	3.2
Issues that arise when learning another language or translating from one language to another	
Awareness of issues related to varieties of English, including standard English, dialects and attitudes towards them	3.2 4.3
The importance of context in language use and the influence of the communicative situation	3.2 4.3
Listening	
The importance of prior knowledge and prediction in the processing of oral information	
Awareness of different approaches to listening depending on purpose	3.3

Importance of inference and background knowledge for interpretation and full understanding in listening to spoken language	2.3.3
Listening attentively and responding sensitively to contributions made by others	
Speaking	
Awareness of context and levels of formality in spoken discourse	2.3.2
An understanding of the concepts of fluency, accuracy and competence for ESOL learners	
Understanding of key features of spoken English and some of the ways spoken English differs from written English	2.3.1
Expressing yourself clearly, using communication techniques to help convey meaning and to enhance the delivery and accessibility of the message	4.3

Showing the ability to use language, style and tone in ways that suit the intended purpose and audience, and to recognise their use by others	4.3
Using appropriate techniques to reinforce oral communication, check how well the information is received and support the understanding of those listening	3.4
Using non-verbal communication to assist in conveying meaning and receiving information, and recognising its use by others	2.3.5
Reading	
Awareness of a variety of approaches to text depending on the purpose of reading	2.2.1
Importance of inference and background knowledge for interpretation and full understanding of texts	2.2.2
Range of discourse features, which convey meaning and indicate purpose and the intended audience of text	
Understanding of the roles of punctuation and of layout and typographical features in texts	4.2

An understanding of barriers to accessing texts	4.2
Find, and select from, a range of reference material and sources of information, including the Internet	
Use and reflect on a range of reading strategies to interpret texts and to locate information or meaning	2.2
Identify and record the key information or messages contained within reading material using note-taking techniques	2.2.2
Writing	
Have an understanding of the process of producing written text, from purpose or idea through planning and drafting to final editing	2.1.1 4.4
Understand some of the significant features of written texts for different contexts and purposes	2.1.1
Have an understanding of significant features of English spelling and of the contribution of punctuation to meaning in written texts	2.1.3 2.1.4

Write fluently, accurately and legibly on a range of topics. Select appropriate format and style of writing for different purposes and different readers	Section 2
Select appropriate format and style of writing for different purposes and different readers	
Use spelling and punctuation accurately in order to make meaning clear	2.1.3 2.1.4
Understand and use the conventions of grammar (the forms and structures of words, phrases, clauses, sentences and texts) consistently when producing written text	2.1.2 4.4

Contents

3.3 Personal, social and cultural factors affecting language and literacy learning and development

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4.3 Teaching and Learning

4.4 Assessment and Feedback

5. Meeting the requirements of the Minimum Core: Action Planning

Section 1

Auditing Literacy & Language Skills

You will already be studying and practising to teach on courses in subjects for which you are a specialist, such as engineering, social sciences, art and design.

Just as your own Initial Teacher Training course will focus on teaching and learning, the courses you teach on your teaching practice will focus predominantly on the skills, knowledge and understanding related to your (and the learners') specialism.

However, to achieve vocational or subject specialist qualifications, your learners will almost certainly be required to use and demonstrate a range of other skills such as literacy, language and IT which are perhaps not taught as part of the subject specialism.

Activity 1a

- Does your course require learners to investigate and research in the library?
- Perhaps learners are expected to take notes while you and others teach or lecture?
- Are essays or reports required as part of the course?
- Will learners be required to take part in discussion or give presentations?

How do learners acquire the skills of essay writing, note taking, library research, presentation or discussion?

In many cases, literacy and language skills are not formally taught as part of the subject or programme of learning. If learners do not possess these skills (or do not possess them sufficiently for the level of the course) then subject teachers will need to consider how and where these skills are going to be acquired by learners in order for them to achieve their qualifications successfully.

The report, *A Fresh Start* (DfEE 1999), suggests that it is highly likely that a significant number of the learners you will teach do not already have the right level of literacy, language and communications to be able to achieve their subject qualification.

Some organisations already have strategies in place to address these issues:

- For some learners, access to additional qualifications in Key Skills, Skills for Life and Study Skills may provide support in the processes required for them to achieve their subject or vocational qualifications. However, it should be taken into account that, for example, Key Skills qualifications were not intended to be taken in isolation from vocational and subject qualifications, or delivered exclusively by communications, English or literacy tutors. In order to provide relevance, context and meaning for subject learners, Key Skills are often integrated within the context of the programmes of study, or courses, or subjects learners undertake. This, in turn, requires subject and vocational tutors to have explicit knowledge of the language and literacy elements required by the Communication Key Skills themselves, along with personal skills in these areas.

- For some learners, it may be possible to access literacy and/or Key Skills support from specialist staff in other ways. These staff may have different titles in different institutions; you may come across learning mentors, learning support tutors, academic skills tutors. You will need to investigate the role of these staff in your workplace.

It should also be recognised, however, that for some learners, there may be no access to support for learning these skills. Whatever the arrangements, subject and vocational tutors will still need the skills to be able to support learners' literacy and language needs.

> **Example:**
>
> A learner is enrolled on a part time evening course in a vocational subject. Key/Basic Skills classes take place during the day when the learner is at work. Family commitments prevent the learner attending for an additional evening.

Activity 1b

Find out what support is provided in your teaching practice placement for learners with literacy and language needs? How are these needs identified? What procedures are in place?

In order not to disadvantage learners, it is important to recognise that all teachers will need to be not only competent in literacy and language skills themselves, but also be able to develop inclusive approaches to learners with literacy and language needs. In addition, they should be able to work with specialist colleagues to integrate the use of these literacy and language skills into the learners' programmes of study.

A useful starting point might be to consider which of these additional, non subject based literacy and language skills are necessary to achieve the qualification on which you are teaching or learning.

Activity 1c

Look at the list of communications/literacy skills in the table below. In *your current Initial Teacher Training course*, identify which ones will be necessary to achieve the qualification.

If an initial teacher training student was not at the right level of ability in these skills before the start of the course where would s/he learn them?

Do you?	✔	In which module/part of the programme?	Where/how is it taught?
Use strategies to locate information from a wide variety of sources			
Identify key information within a text			
Record information using appropriate note taking techniques			
Plan an structure pieces of writing			
Write substantial reports and essays			
Produce critical, analytical and reflective pieces of written work			

Select appropriate formats and styles of writing for different purposes and different audiences			
Spell accurately			
Use punctuation accurately			
Use grammar and syntax accurately			
Check work for errors			
Give presentations			
Use language, style and tone appropriate to the audience			
Participate in discussions			
Listen to others in discussion and be sensitive to point of view			

Now that you have done this for your own course, think about the level of other courses on which you might teach. Remember that your Initial Teacher Training is a University level programme. Different courses will require different levels of literacy and language skills.

Activity 1d

Jot down your initial thoughts on any literacy or language skills you think you will need to acquire or develop.

What steps might you take to do this?

As a self motivated, autonomous learner, you may well identify that you need to acquire, develop or brush up on certain skills which are required to successfully complete your Initial Teacher Training. You should use your Individual Learning Plan (ILP) to identify and record these learning needs and then seek out opportunities to address and develop them yourself.

Example:

You are aware that you need to improve your writing skills. Your initial Self Assessment confirms this, along with feedback from your assignments.

- You decide to use the Developing Personal Skills module to focus on learning strategies to improve your writing
- You access on line materials yourself
- You use opportunities within your teaching placement to investigate how similar problems are addressed by learners there
- You undertake an additional course of study leading to a Level 2 qualification
- You produce a package for your learners helping them to address their own writing skills, whilst at the same time investigating and addressing your own

A starting point might be to consider what kinds of skills are required of learners on the courses you teach. This will enable you to recognise the first personal skills you may need to develop yourself.

Just as you have done for your own Initial Teacher Training course in Activity 1c above, you now need to decide what literacy and language skills are required in each part of the course(s) you will be teaching and how these skills are developed and acquired by the learners. You may find that the learners you teach will need much more structure and support to identify and develop these literacy and language skills than you do yourself as trainee teacher.

Activity 1e

Select a course on which you teach. Find out what literacy/language/communications skills are required by the course and at what level. Make a list.

If learners do not already have these skills, how will they acquire them on your course?

Activities such as the one you have just carried out may form the preliminary stage of a course Skills Audit. Details of this are given in the example box below.

Example:

What is a Skills Audit?

A full skills audit is generally carried out by a course team with the support of specialist language, literacy or numeracy specialists.

An audit of literacy, numeracy and language skills pinpoints the specific level and type of skill needed to succeed on a particular programme. It looks at the ways learners have to use literacy, numeracy and language skills to follow the programme by examining:

• Course handouts and worksheets
• Textbooks and any standard reference books
• The use of specialist formats for presenting text or numbers, for example, reports, statistical tables, case studies, account ledgers etc.
• The use of specialist terminology
• Common teaching strategies, for example, lecture, practical demonstration, simulation
• The ways in which learners are expected to record learning points in class
• Private study tasks
• Group learning activities
• Assignment tasks, assignment criteria and feedback
• Other assessment asks, for example, portfolio management, multiple-choice exams.

An audit recognises that literacy, numeracy and language skills are needed to make good use of all these learning experiences. The skills demanded of learners during the programme may need to be:

• Demonstrated at entry before the learner joins the programme
• Taught to those with some skills gaps through additional support or
• Taught to the whole group before or alongside the vocational activity that requires the skill

The results of the audit should be used to map literacy, numeracy and language skills to relevant activities on the main programme:

• Identify naturally occurring opportunities for developing and assessing literacy, numeracy and language skills through vocational activities
• Plan integrated assignments that will allow learners to demonstrate achievement in vocational skills as well as literacy, numeracy and language
• Focus the additional support given in order to allow timely development of the skills needed for particular activities on the programme.

DfES (2004), *Including Language, Literacy and Numeracy Learning in all Post-16 Education: Guidance on Curriculum and Methodology for Generic Initial teacher Education Programmes*, London: DfES, p. 11.

As a result of this activity, you may find that there are further skills and knowledge that you need to develop to meet you learners' needs. You should identify these in your Individual Learning Plan.

You may also need explicit knowledge of how these skills are taught in order to develop inclusive teaching and learning strategies for learners on your courses whose literacy/language skills are below the level required.

It should be becoming apparent that subject and vocational teachers will need not only expertise in their own subject but also:

- personal skills in literacy and language including reading, writing, speaking and listening
- explicit knowledge of how these skills are learned in order to support learners who may not yet have these skills to achieve their qualification

Section 2

Personal Literacy & Language Skills

This section includes some basic information on how you can develop your own skills, support learners and develop inclusive teaching practice. It should be emphasised that this is just a starting point. There are many useful publications, websites and resources which can be accessed to support the development of these skills, some of which are listed at the end of this work pack.

Personal Language Use:

Writing

2.1.1 Writing Processes

Stage 1: Pre-writing

Starting points
Think about the information you need before you start any piece of writing. You would certainly need to know something about who the piece was being written for, which might give you some clues as to the level of formality and difficulty needed. You might also need to know why the piece was to be written, which might also give you some clues as to the type of writing needed.

Below is some terminology which might be useful in helping you to consider written language:

Example:

Audience: an individual or a group, whoever is intended to read what has been written. The word 'reader' may be used instead of audience for emphasis or variety.

Convention: a text that follows established conventions in terms of layout, language and level of formality and is easily assimilated and widely accepted. Lack of conformity or breaking conventions can lead to misunderstanding which can disconcert the reader. Some writers deliberately break certain conventions to achieve specific effects.

Genre: literally the 'type' of text into which writing is classified eg horror, science fiction, academic etc. Genre crosses media and has recognisable features that students can emulate when writing themselves in an identifiable genre.

Message: what the text is intended to convey, the meaning behind the actual words that are intended to be communicated

Purpose: what the text is intended to achieve in relation to its effect on the audience, eg persuasion, instructions, providing information

Register: the variations in language use according to the context of situation, eg the level of formality

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Style: the way in which textual elements (such as words, phrases, sentences, images) are organised in relation to one another. Different styles have different effects on readers and might serve different purposes.

Techniques: technical devices of language used by a writer within a text in order to create particular effects, eg alliteration, metaphor etc

Text: the actual words that have been written in order to be read. A text can be long or short. Its brevity or length does not change its status as text

Writer: the person or persons who engage in the writing process with a view to communicating a message

Analysing the task

Think about the task itself. What exactly is being asked for? For example, if you are being asked to write an essay, you would need to consider what you understand by the terms 'discuss', 'analyse', 'evaluate', 'list', 'explain' etc? What kinds of writing and what basic structures do these terms suggest? If you are asked to write a report, you would need to think about how this would differ in language and in layout from, for example, an essay. If you are writing for learners, you would need to think about what you intend them to do, know or understand as a result of reading your text.

Below is some terminology which might be useful in helping you to consider analysing writing tasks.

Example:

Account for or explain: examine and/or interpret the parts that make up the subject

Comment on: offer an opinion

Compare: show especially the similarities, but also point out the differences between two things. It would be good to use analogies and metaphors in answering this type of question.

Contrast: bring out the differences in

Criticise: analyse and judge the worth of something. It might be useful to refer to the opinion of experts in the field.

Define: give a concise, short statement of the specific meaning of a term or word. Look for the essential characteristics.

Describe: give a detailed account of the subject. Make it as clear and real as possible, as though you were telling a story. Move from a brief overview to a more detailed description.

Discuss: debate advantages and disadvantages, compare and argue merits

Evaluate: give your opinion on the subject. State the points for and against, quote supporting evidence from experts, studies or experiments.

Explain: what is the principle? How does it work?

Illustrate: give clear examples. You might wish to use analogies or similarities, perhaps a diagram.

Interpret: explain the meaning of and give an opinion

Justify: give good reason for your conclusions

Outline: give an overview of the main factors or important ideas. Summarise

Prove: support with facts, figures, evidence and examples

State: present in clear, short form

Summarise: give a brief account of the main points, with your own conclusions

Trace: describe the order in which events happened, and comment on causes and effects

Holmes, A., (2005) *Guidelines for Writing Essays*, available at: ONLINE: http://www.hull.ac.uk/foundationaward/formsforweb/STDYSKL.rtf

Existing knowledge

Note down quickly all you already know about the topic. You could collate a list of questions that you want to answer (who? when? how? where? why? what?). It could be useful to make some notes on possible sources of information (paper-based, electronic, personnel etc).

Collecting information

Make the best use of a wide range of sources, as this will help to give you the ability to complete the task effectively. For example, when writing an essay it would be unwise to choose all your material from one source – or one type of data source – as this could lead to bias within your work. Evaluate carefully information you use from the Internet in relation to its author, the purpose and the intended audience for the material. Keep full references for any material you consult. You may be required to have all this information in, for example, a bibliography; trying to locate books you may have consulted several weeks (or months!) ago is often a difficult – sometimes impossible task.

Organising and planning information

Prepare a spider diagram or mind map to help you identify the key pieces of information and to enable you to see links between the ideas. This may help you to structure your written work in a logical order and avoid repetition. At this stage you could prepare an outline for your written work which contains the major headings and bullet pointed notes on what you feel should be included in each sub-section.

Example: Spider diagram

Holmes, A., (2005) *Guidelines for Writing Essays*, available at: ONLINE:
http://www.hull.ac.uk/foundationaward/formsforweb/STDYSKL.rtf

Identifying a hypothesis, testing it out   Prediction

      Control

What is meant by "science"   Why is a scientific

                            approach important?

"The development of Psychology as a science"

Other approaches ?   How far back?

Philosophy / science   Greek   Renaissance

not separated?

                            Aristotle
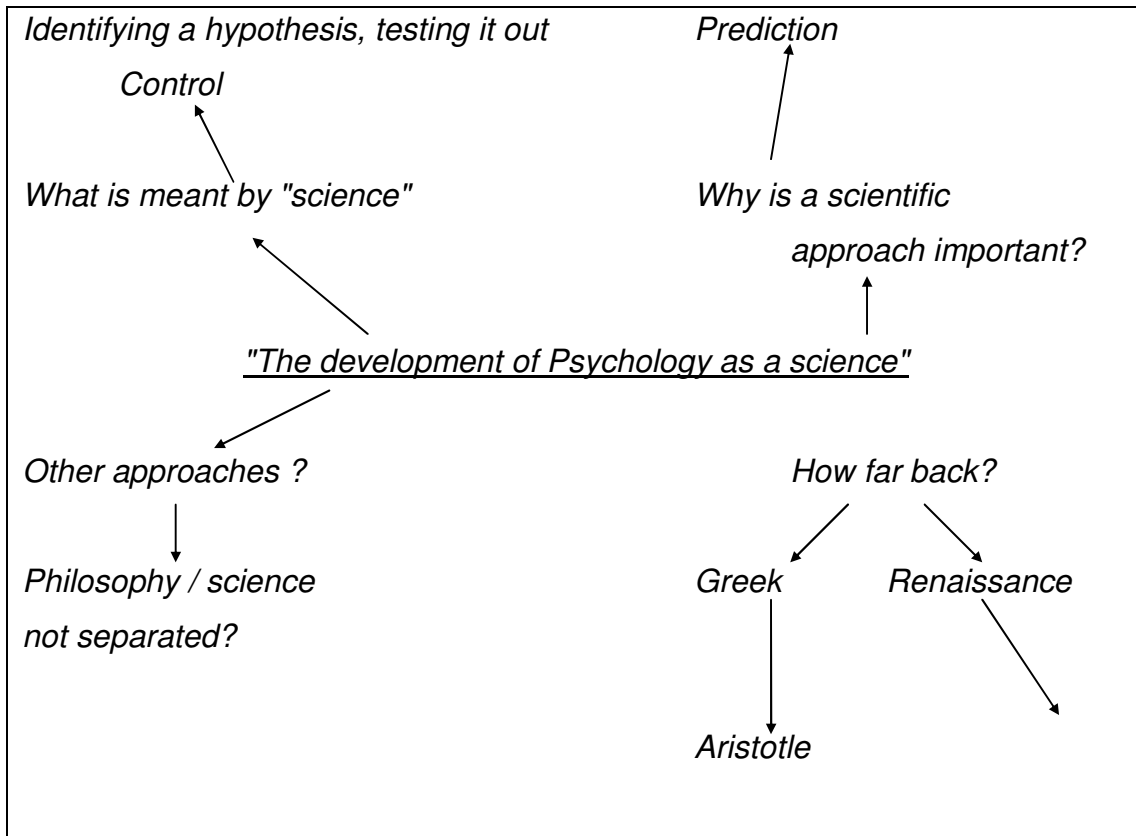
Example: Mind map

Anon, (2005), *Principles of Mind Mapping*, available at: ONLINE:
http://www.mind-mapping.co.uk/mind-maps-examples.htm
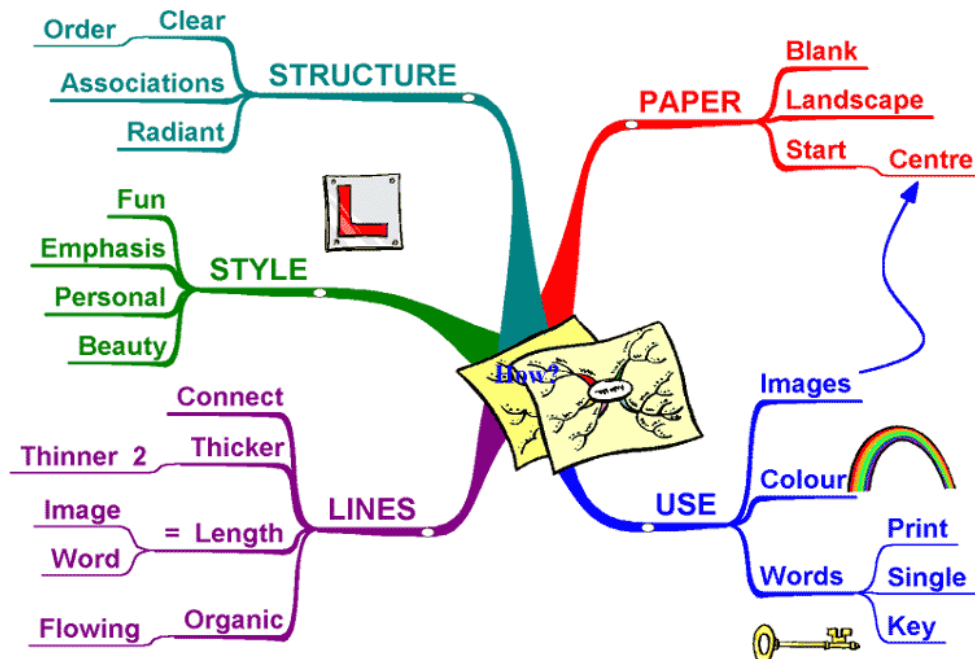
Stage 2: Writing

Write a first draft
It might be useful to consider the following questions:
Are the main sections of the work included and clear? Where relevant, are links between sections made? Have you made effective use of, for example, paragraphs, sub-headings, bullet points? Have you included main ideas and supporting details? Remember that this will all depend on the type of writing you have been asked to do.

Stage 3: Post-writing

Revise and re-write
Think about whether you have addressed the task. For example, if you are writing an essay, you might ask: Have I made broad generalisations? Have I provided sufficient evidence to support my own views? Does my

work present a range of opinions to inform my views? Have I included all the necessary citations?

If you are writing for learners, is the level appropriate? Have I used unnecessary or difficult terminology? Are any instructions clear?

Editing and re-writing

Make sure your writing is clear. For example, have you written in full sentences, where required? Are your arguments clear and developed? Where necessary, have you referenced all your sources accurately? Is the language and structure appropriate for the genre and purpose? Is the writing coherent and the spelling, grammar and punctuation accurate? **Remember that your writing is a model for your learners, whatever subject you teach.**

Final draft

Make sure the layout is appropriate e.g. title and contents page, page numbering. Have you included all appendices (as necessary)? Have you retained a copy of my work (paper based or electronic)?

Proof read carefully. Remember that computers may not pick up some spelling errors such as words which sound the same but are spelt differently such as there/their/they're or practice/practise. When checking work, people tend to read what they think should be there or what they intended to write and consequently miss errors which need to be corrected. To avoid this, try getting a friend or colleague to read your final draft. In order to check your meaning is clear, you could read your text aloud or tape it and play it back to yourself.

2.1.2   Sentence Structure

For most purposes and contexts for writing in English, sentences have to be written according to generally accepted conventions. The examples below will help you to strengthen your understanding of sentences which will help you to write clearly and effectively for yourself and your learners.

<u>What is a sentence?</u>

A sentence is a series of words that:
• make sense by themselves
• start with a capital letter and end with a full-stop
• usually have, in their simplest form, a subject, an object and a verb e.g. The student (subject) wrote (verb) the essay (object)

<u>Types of sentences</u>

Sentences can consist of either a:
• Statement
    Eg It is raining.
• Question
    Eg Is it raining?
• Instruction
    Eg Close the window.
• Exclamation
    Eg I'm freezing!

<u>Sentence structure</u>

Sentences can be simple, complex or compound. These do not refer to the type of content – how difficult or lengthy they are – but rather to their grammatical structure:

• The student wrote the essay. (simple sentence)

• The student wrote the essay and he handed it in. (compound sentence)

• The student handed in the essay although unfinished. (complex sentence)

Simple sentences

Simple sentences may consist of:

Subject , verb	He swore.
Subject, verb, object	The student wrote the essay
Subject, verb, object, object	The student gave the teacher the essay.
Subject, verb, complement	The teacher was happy.
Subject, verb, object, complement	The teacher found the essay worrying.
Subject, verb, adverbial	The student groaned audibly.
Subject, verb, object, adverbial	The student wrote the essay again.

Compound sentences

A compound sentence consists of two or more simple sentences joined together by a connective. Connectives are words such as: and, but, so, or Both parts of the sentence (clauses) make sense on their own.

Eg The student wrote the essay and she handed it in.

This consists of three parts:

The student wrote the essay.   (simple sentence)
and   (connective)
she handed it in.   (simple sentence)

Complex sentences

A complex sentence consists of two or more parts (clauses) where only one part makes sense on its own.

Eg The teacher marked the essay during her holidays.

This consists of two parts:

The teacher marked the essay.   (simple sentence, main clause)
during her holidays   (subordinate clause)

If in doubt.....it is best to stick to using simple sentences.

Common Faults in sentence structure

The following **ARE NOT** sentences:

And applying the knowledge to new situations.

For example women only classes.

Because research shows that this is not the case.

In checking your sentence structure, you might look for:

Sentence fragments
These are groups of words that do not express a complete thought and that do not make sense on their own.

Eg Research that is poorly conducted
In the example above, is there a verb and a subject?

Confusing word order
Eg The teacher was a substantial woman with a handbag weighing 30 stones.

In the example above, think what weighs 30 stones. How do you need to change the word order?

Think about the word 'totally' in the example below. Which bit of the sentence does it apply to? How could you make the meaning clearer?
The pools win that the syndicate thought would satisfy them totally disappointed them.

Consistency of language

What needs to be done to 'hear' and 'debate' in order to keep the language consistent?

I am looking forward to receiving your reply and to hear about your progress.

Students prefer to talk, discuss and debating.

Subject verb agreement

What needs to be done to the verb in the sentence below to make it agree with the subject?

The reading, as well as the essays, are difficult.

Either the student or the teacher were lying

When used as subjects, the words 'anybody', 'anyone', 'each', 'each one', 'either', 'everyone', 'neither', 'nobody', 'no-one' 'somebody', are singular and need a singular verb:

Eg Everybody is happy.

Words such as 'family', 'class', and 'team' are singular even though they represent a group. They therefore need a singular verb.

 Eg The family is well.

However, when the group is acting as individuals they require plural verbs.

Some members of the family are going on holiday.

2.1.3 Spelling Strategies

Syllabification (breaking words into syllables)

Syllables are like beats in words. Each separate sound is a syllable. Breaking up a word into separate sounds can make the word easier to learn.

Home	=	home	(one syllable)
Begin	=	be / gin	(two syllables)
Yesterday	=	yes / ter / day	(three syllables)

Altering the pronunciation to help spelling

Sometimes you can change the way you say a word in your head. This can help you to remember how to spell it. For example, Wednesday is easier to remember if you pronounce each syllable separately in your head:

Wed / nes / day

Look / say / cover / write / check (LSCWC method)

This is a multi-sensory way of learning and remembering spellings (ie it uses visual and auditory and kinaesthetic approaches).

- Select a word that needs to be learned. Use a dictionary, if necessary, to check the correct spelling.
- Write the word clearly in lower case.
- Look at the word and visualise its shape.
- Say it, preferably out loud, paying attention to the sounds.
- Try to imagine the word as a picture in your mind.
- Cover the word.
- Write the word again without a pause. Try to keep the picture of the word in your mind whilst you are writing.
- When you have written it, check to see if you are correct.

Mnemonics (using your memory)

Mnemonics are ways of helping you to remember something. For example many children learn the order of the colours of the rainbow by using the mnemonic: **R**ichard **o**f **Y**ork **g**ave **b**attle **i**n **v**ain. In this case, the first letter of each word is the same as the first letter of the colours (red, orange, yellow etc).

Eg To help remember the difference in spelling between:

'stationary'   (meaning standing still)

and

'stationery' (meaning paper, pens etc)

Think of the 'e' in the latter word as 'e' for envelope.

Eg The following mnemonic might help you to remember the spelling of 'because':

Big

Elephants

Cause

Accidents

Using

Small

Entrances

Spelling Patterns

Words with similar spelling patterns can be grouped together to make them easier to remember:

Eg receive, perceive, conceive, deceive

   house, grouse, louse, mouse

<u>Visual strategies</u>

Often it is only one part of a word that causes difficulty in spelling. One way of drawing your attention to this part when learning the spelling is to use visual strategies such as underlining or highlighting the specific part causing the problem:

Eg interesting

Underline: int<u>e</u>resting

Embolden: int**e**resting

Highlight: int<mark>e</mark>resting

Font size: int**e**resting

2.1.4 Punctuation

For most purposes and contexts of writing in English, punctuation is used according to generally accepted conventions. Punctuation can be used to help to show how the grammar of a sentence is intended to work. It can also help the reader to understand what is written as it divides groups of words into meaningful chunks.

<u>Capital letters</u>

Capital letters are used for:

The names of people:

Eg **J**ohn, **M**s **J**ones, **P**rofessor **A**vis.

The names of places, streets and parts of addresses:

Eg **A**ustralia, **H**uddersfield, **G**reater **M**anchester. 10 **D**owning **S**treet,

The names of rivers and mountains:

Eg **M**ount **E**verest, **R**iver **T**hames

The names of days of the week and months of the year (but not seasons):

Eg **S**aturday 4th **J**uly

For the names of companies and businesses:

Eg **B**urger **K**ing, **B**udweiser

The titles of specific organisations, people, events, subjects:

Eg **H**uddersfield **U**niversity, **T**he **V**ice-**C**hancellor, **R**ed **N**ose **D**ay.

For some abbreviations:

BBC, USA, NVQ

At the start of a sentence:

Eg **T**he teacher prepared to take the class.

Full stops

Full stops are generally used at the end of sentences. A sentence is a series of words that:

• make sense by themselves
• start with a capital letter and end with a full-stop
• usually have, in their simplest form, a subject, an object and a verb
Eg. The student (subject) wrote (verb) the essay (object)

Full stops can also used to show that a word has been abbreviated (eg Mr. for Mister, St. for Street). However, this convention is becoming less common. Full stops can also be used in between the letters in acronyms (eg M.P. for Member of Parliament or U.N. for United Nations). This usage is also declining.

Question marks

A question mark is used in place of a full stop to mark the end of a sentence which asks a question.

Eg Is it Friday yet**?**

Exclamation marks

An exclamation sentence is one which indicates emotion such as surprise, anger, incredulity, joy or happiness. An exclamation mark is used in place of a full stop to mark the end of a sentence. Exclamation marks can be used with single words or short phrases (eg Gosh!, What a day! , Help!)

This type of writing is not normally used in a formal context such as academic essays, but may be appropriate for personal, informal writing such as texts or e-mails.

Commas

There are some places in sentences where a comma is required. There are other places where comma usage is at the discretion of the writer. A comma sometimes relates to a natural pause in speech. Commas should never be used when a full stop is required.

Commas are used:

To separate items in a list:

Eg The teachers' specialist subjects included English, sociology, business studies and maths.

NB a comma is not required before the word 'and' in the list.

To show where extra information has been added in a sentence:

Eg Dr Jones, the Head of Department, addressed the conference.
NB Without the extra information sectioned off by commas, the sentence still makes sense.

After a subordinate clause which has been used to start a sentence:

Eg Although the class was noisy, the teacher made herself heard.

Before direct speech or quotations:

Eg According to Smith, 'Education is a political act' (2005, p.12).

<u>Colons</u>

Colons are used:

To preface lists:

Eg The scheme of work included: methods, resources, student activities, teacher inputs and assessment.

To introduce explanations:

Eg Dyslexia: 'a mismatch between intelligence and written or organisational ability'.

To introduce longer, indented quotations:

According to Thorne:

> Perhaps one of the first things to understand as you begin a study of the English language is that it is constantly changing.
>
> (Thorne 1997, p. 102)

Semi-colons

Semi-colons are used:

To combine two ideas in one sentence:

Eg Education is a political act; it is never a neutral activity.

To construct a list consisting of phrases rather than single words:

Eg The teacher's role includes: planning and designing for learning; curriculum development and assessment; reflection and evaluation.

The apostrophe

Apostrophes are used:

To create shortened forms (where one or more letters is omitted):

Eg I'm training to be a teacher (rather than 'I am training to be a teacher').

Eg Don't forget to cite references correctly.

To show that something belongs to someone or something (ie possession):

Eg The teacher's register (ie the register belonging to/of the teacher)

Eg The book's index (ie the index of the book)

Eg The students' work (ie the work belonging to the students)

To work out whether the apostrophe comes before or after the letter 's', ask yourself, who is the owner? The apostrophe is placed immediately after the last letter of the owner(s). For example, in the first sentence above, the owner of the register is the teacher – so the apostrophe is placed after the letter 'r'. However, in the last example sentence, the owners of the work are the students – the apostrophe is therefore placed immediately after the final letter 's'.

NB An apostrophe is never needed with plural nouns where no possession is indicated.

Eg The students (plural noun) are working hard.

Remember that '**it's**' ALWAYS means '**it is**' and follows the shortened form rule as described above. If you do not mean 'it is', use '**its**'.

Personal Language Use:

Reading

2.2   Reading

Reading is not just about decoding letters and words. It involves making meaning in a variety of ways. Fluent readers do not read every word but are able to predict meaning from context and from their own experience and expectations.

Successful reading requires the use of a range of strategies:

Grapho-phonic cues
This relates to the relationship between sounds and letters. Readers recognise letters and their sounds at the beginnings and endings of words, in clusters, or in other groups.

Syntactic cues
Knowledge of grammar enables learners to become familiar with the structure of language and how words are organised into sentences. This may be more problematic for learners whose first language is not English as these learners may use different word order, sentence structure or punctuation in their first language.

Semantic cues
The semantic cue involves applying knowledge about the context in order to read with understanding.

The cues are based on ideas about teaching reading and are known as 'The Searchlights Model' (DfEE, 2001).

Before reading any text, consider what information is already available to help you establish the context and purpose. Developing awareness of features of text (discourse) in this way may also help you to support your learners' reading.

For example, when looking at an unknown text you might start by considering features such as:
- Structure
- Layout
- Language

This may help in determining what type of text you are about to read.

Some types of text, such as letters or newspapers, may have very specific identifying features, although it should be remembered that these conventions may differ culturally. Others, such as persuasive or discursive writing, might be more difficult to recognise at first glance.

The table below identifies some features of different types of text:

Text type	Description	Features
Informative	Conveys information accurately and effectively	• Technical/specialist vocabulary • Present tense • Usually formal • Bullet points • Headings and subheadings • Tables, diagrams and boxes • Paragraphs likely to be organised by topic
Explanatory	Describes in detail how something works and the processes involved	• Impersonal • Technical/specialist vocabulary • Connectives indicate sequence, cause and effect and comparison • Uses third person ('it') • Mostly active voice • Diagrams and illustrations • Sequential logical order
Descriptive	Conveys in such a way that it is made real for the reader	• Adjectives to add detail • Adverbs to add effect • Figurative language • Likely to appeal to senses
Persuasive	Makes readers do or believe something	• Empathetic language reinforcing common position • Emotive language emphasising benefits or reasons • Uses second person ('you') to personalise • Uses first person plural

		• ('we') to suggest agreement • Rhetorical questions • Images • Headlines • Summaries
Instructional/ Advisory	Suggests how to do something best	• Imperative verbs (eg put, select) • Prepositional phrases (eg 'under your seat') • Active sentences • Use of colon prior to lists • Sequential connectives (eg first, secondly etc) • Bullet points • Clear layout • Diagrams and illustrations
Argument	Gives the case for a particular point of view	• Initial assertion followed by key sentences with supporting points • Logical cohesive development • Clear summary and emphatic final statement reinforcing position • Judgemental/emotive language • Use of oppositional words to create reaction or support position
Analysis	Considers different viewpoints about an issue and determines a personal perspective	• Present tense • Expressive verbs (eg implies, exemplifies, proves) • Uses passive verbs • Uses conjuncts eg moreover • Uses contrasts eg whereas • Uses cause and effect eg therefore, as a result • Statement of issues followed by systematic development • Concludes by reviewing overall perspective

Entertainment	Captures the interest of readers by amusing or intriguing them	- Direct speech eg in conversation between characters - Use of slang or colloquial language - Varied sentence length eg short sentences for pace, longer sentences for developmental effect

Complete the table below and consider features of text for different purposes:

Text	Purpose/Context	Structure	Layout	Language
Formal letters				
Informal letters				
Newspapers				
Magazine advertisements				
Reports				
Emails				

How might this activity help you to support your learners?

2.2.1 Pre reading: skimming and scanning

Skimming and scanning are reading techniques to help you locate the correct material to suit your purpose.

Skimming

Skimming involves getting the gist of a piece of text and can be done in a variety of different ways. Skimming can mean 'flicking through' a book taking particular note of:

- Chapter and section headings
- Key images, charts and diagrams
- Availability of indexes and glossaries
- Lists of contributors
- Reviews (on front or rear covers)

Skimming can also be undertaken on a particular page or pages of text within a book, journal or web page. This involves:

- Using your eyes to run down the page as quickly as possible whilst taking note of the gist of contents through the use of key words and phrases
- Using your finger, pencil or ruler as a guide to running down the page to identify the gist

Skimming **DOES NOT** mean reading every word or reading even some of the sentences; rather it means acquiring a global awareness of the text from a quick glance.

Speed reading can also be used in a similar way to skimming to gain the gist of text. You can find sources of further information in the additional information in Section 2.4.

Scanning

Scanning is a technique used to locate specific information within a text. It involves the search for key words, dates, names or vocabulary using the two strategies outlined in the section on skimming. It takes time to develop scanning skills, but, with regular practice, your eyes do become accustomed to searching for specific information.

2.2.2 Reading critically and note taking

In order to read and comprehend complex texts, a range of active, critical reading strategies will be required. Critical reading should not necessarily be equated with criticising the content of a piece of writing but should be understood as assessing the reliability and validity of the content through an active engagement with the text in question. Some of the more useful strategies are listed below:

- Identifying fact and opinion
- Asking questions of the text
- Applying critical reading strategies

Additional reading strategies:

- DARTS   (Direct Activities Related to Text)
- SQ3R   (Survey , Question, Read, Record, Review)

<u>Fact and opinion</u>

In reading any text, it is important to differentiate between statements which are facts and those which are the author's opinions. This will help you to evaluate arguments and therefore read more critically. Try using a coloured highlighter pen to differentiate stated facts and the author's opinions in an article from a journal or broadsheet newspaper.

<u>Asking questions of the text</u>

When reading a text, you can read at three different levels:

- Reading the text
- Reading between the text
- Reading beyond the text

When **reading the text**, you are only reading – and accepting – what is there on the page and what has been made explicit by the author. **Reading between the text** involves what is implied by the text but which has not been made explicit for the reader. It could involve asking the following questions of the text:

- What are the author's values?
- What are the assumptions the author has made?
- Is there evidence to support the author's assumptions?

Reading beyond the text involves the high order skill of combining the knowledge you had before coming to the text with what you have gained from reading it in order to synthesise the ideas.

A helpful strategy for critically evaluating text whilst reading is to make notes to identify the author's writing techniques and devices. You could try noting where the author is presenting material as a:

- Summary
- Question
- Reaction
- Definition
- Exaggeration
- Development
- Reflection
- Outline
- Assertion
- Evaluation

Noting the number of times a particular device is used may help you to evaluate the text more easily.

DARTS

DARTS is an acronym, which stands for **D**irect **A**ctivities **R**elated to **T**ext (Davies and Greene, 1984). DARTS are activities that will help engagement with and understanding summarising an re-presenting texts through the use of activities aimed at improving comprehension, analysis and recall skills. DARTS fall into two main categories:

- Analysis activities
- Reconstruction activities

Reconstruction activities involve:

Sequencing segments of text in a logical order or to producing a time line of events or re-arranging material into similar categories of information

Diagram completion / table completion to cement understanding of concepts or to present information in a form which aids recall

Prediction / cloze activities to ensure understanding of complex vocabulary and to aid recall

Analysis activities involve:

Text labelling / segmenting to identify specific sections of content or to link key ideas

Text marking to draw attention to specific information or areas for further research

Table construction to classify material from the text

Diagram construction to describe a process or to show the relationship or hierarchy of ideas

SQ3R

SQ3R is an acronym that describes a series of techniques to aid reading. The techniques are as follows:

- **survey** (a task similar to skimming to assess the suitability of the material for your purpose)
- **question** (generating questions that you need the text to answer)
- **read** (reading relevant sections of the text and note taking as appropriate)
- **recall** (isolating essential features of the text and checking understanding of key concepts)
- **review** (reviewing the reading material to identify areas for further research)

Note-taking techniques

Note-taking is an essential skill which needs to be used effectively for recording information from all types of text. There are three key issues to be borne in mind when taking notes of any kind:

- the need to filter information
- the need to classify information
- the need to organise information

The filtering of information is important as notes of any kind should be a summary of the information read rather than a detailed reproduction of the material. The aim is to retain the key information but in a manageable, condensed form. The classification and organisation of the material is a key feature of effective note-taking to aid recall for revision or other purposes.

Note-taking can take many forms:

- linear notes
- spider diagrams
- mind maps
- diagrammatic representations
- flow-charts

Linear notes are those where the individual reader writes in sentence - or in note form - as in a piece of prose writing. Such notes are easily recorded, but may prove difficult to return to due to the density of the text and the amount of information to be re-read. Linear notes are most effective when used in conjunction with other devices such as underlining or highlighting of key vocabulary, concepts and facts.

Spider diagrams utilise key phrases which radiate form a central concept and provide a more accessible visual representation of the recorded data.

Sprays are notes of key words and concepts which are read in a non-fiction text and are then later joined up, following a process of reflection, to show the links between the different pieces of information. One disadvantage of this method is that it can be difficult to revise from, but it does allow for a greater degree of reflection and analysis of the concepts prior to the notes being finalised.

Concept trees / pattern notes / flow charts are used to create a more diagrammatic representation of information taken from reading material. Concept trees organise information to show relationships whereas flow

charts may best indicate the hierarchical nature of data or illustrate a process effectively.

Mind maps are perhaps one of the best ways of showing the overall structure of information and the relationships between complex problems. Mind maps act as brain cues and, as such, are useful tools for revision purposes.

The Cornell system - devised by Dr Walter Paulk - uses a tabular system for taking notes as shown below:

Cue	Notes

Cornell's system uses 5 stages:

- **record**: the notes are made in the right hand column of the table during the reading activity (though this method can also be used when listening to a lecture or presentation).
- **reduce**: following the reading or listening activity, the notes are condensed into key words or phrases which are recorded in the left hand column.
- **recite**: the student uses the cue words to attempt recall of the detail in the right hand column.

- **reflect**: the student reflects on key issues, concepts or problems which the recall stimulated.
- **review**: the whole process of reciting and reflecting is regularly repeated.

Effective note-taking should also include the use of abbreviations, both standard and those developed for personal use. Abbreviations increase the speed with which notes can be taken, but also reduce the density of the notes thus aiding recall.

Personal Language Use:

Speaking and Listening

2.3   Speaking and Listening

2.3.1 Differences between Spoken and Written Language

Spoken language has the following features; it usually:

- Is spontaneous
- Is quite rapid
- Involves less planning
- Is constructed more loosely
- Is repetitive
- Uses filler phrases eg 'you know'
- Uses pauses
- Uses intonation
- Uses stress and emphasis
- Uses body language

These features are not usually found in writing. Speaking and writing are different skills. There are contexts where speaking may be formal and similar to writing but it is important to recognise the essential differences.

2.3.2 Speaking for different purposes

Starting points
You would certainly need to be able to recognise the level of formality required by the circumstances in any spoken interaction. For example, you would use language very differently if you were :

- Chatting to friends
- In a job interview
- Meeting somebody for the first time
- Giving a presentation
- Making a speech

Below is some terminology which might be useful in helping you to consider spoken language:

Example:

Audience: an individual or a group, whoever is intended to hear what is being spoken.

Intonation: the different tones of voice which affect the meaning of what is said.

Pitch: the high or low sound quality of the voice which is used to convey meaning. Rising and falling pitch is used to convey questions and statements.

Volume: the degree of loudness of the speech. Volume can affect the feeling behind the actual words used.

Stress: the degree of emphasis placed on particular words or syllables and which give meaning to the word spoken eg re**fuse** (say no)/**ref**use (rubbish). Stress can change according to accent.

Speed: the pace of the spoken words. Pace an be used to indicate emphasis.

2.3.3 Types of listening

Hearing is one of the five basic senses and involves sound waves being transformed into audible impulses. Listening, however, is different and involves considering what is heard with thoughtful attention.

Listening takes up a larger percentage of the average person's time than any other form of communication. Although it is sometimes characterised as a passive skill, it actually involves highly active processing on the part of the listener.

Listening takes place in a number of different ways and for different purposes. The way we listen for general understanding is different to the way we listen to find out specific information.

Listening for the gist of what is being said

Listening for the gist does not mean listening to every word. Effective listening tends to focus on picking up significant or relevant aspects of spoken discourse which give an overall sense of the meaning, rather than focusing in minute detail on what is said.

Listening for detail

However in spite of the importance of understanding the gist of what is being said, there are also many times when it is important to listen for specific detail. For example, listening to the questions learners ask about their learning requires a very intense focus on a specific detail.

Importance of Understanding Socio-Cultural Context of Spoken Language

In order to 'decode the message' given by a speaker, the listener needs to understand not just the words, but the meaning *behind* the words. The meaning is conveyed by the non verbal cues of the speaker and can only be interpreted in the socio-cultural context in which it is uttered. For example, how much sense does the following utterance make without knowledge of the context?: " *If you don't give me that, I won't do this.*"

When people speak, they convey more than the literal meanings of the words they utter. For example, if someone says "I'm tired", they may not just be stating a physical condition, but may be conveying a meaning such as "I always do all the washing up and it's about time that you did some too" or I want some sympathy from you, because you haven't been paying me much attention lately" or " This is the reason why I'm being so bad-tempered all the time". Hence the language has an underlying communicative function which is the message the sender is trying to achieve. For example, the English language uses irony quite frequently, which can produce a situation where the words used actually mean the opposite of what they appear. "She's so nice!" could be taken literally; it could also mean that she is anything but nice – it will depend on the stress and intonation used.

There are a number of implications for teaching here. Two of the main ones are, firstly, that in order to be competent in communication, more is required than a technical understanding of the English language. Learning should always be contextualised within meaningful contexts for the learner.

2.3.4 Questioning techniques and checking for understanding

Teachers use questions for many different purposes. Some of these are to:

- introduce or develop a subject by recalling previous knowledge
- establish the level of existing knowledge or attitudes
- assess learning - providing continuous feedback to teacher and learners
- involve students in the lesson - a signal to students that the session will not be a monologue on part of the teacher
- motivate students, arouse their curiosity
- provide a change of class activity
- convert difficulties or misunderstandings (e.g. wrong answers) into desired learning
- recall a student who has mentally 'left the lesson' - to control behaviour
- help students to combine previously learned concepts to generate new understandings
- enable students to become learning resources for one another (teachers are not the only ones with valid knowledge and experience!)
- test student comprehension
- promote discussion
- to cause students to observe something (e.g. in a tutor demonstration)
- encourage students (by example) to ask their own questions.

Types and Levels of Question

Questions are sometimes categorised into two types, 'open' and 'closed'. Closed questions require either a one or two word response or a single correct answer where no other will do. Open questions allow for opinion, speculation, extrapolation, the generation of hypotheses or the putting up of an argument. They invite the learner to think and the teacher to put further questions forward. Teachers should develop skill in asking open questions, though there is a place for both types. Just as learning can be classified into 'domains' (cognitive, affective and psycho-motor) - so questions can be designed to test or promote such learning. The 'level' a question can be related, say, to Bloom's taxonomy.

Examples might be as follows:

- **Knowledge** "What is the formula for the area of a circle?"
- **Comprehension** "What is the function of a fuse in a 3 pin plug?"
- **Application** "Remembering our lesson on basic colours, can you explain how secondary colours are made?"
- **Analysis** "Which of the statements in the article on social class are inconsistent?"
- **Synthesis** "What type of management plan is needed to integrate all the building enterprises in a new shopping centre?"
- **Evaluation** How would you judge and rank each of the ten designs?"

 Consider the importance of clarity and a lack of ambiguity in the questions you ask.
Make sure your questions are not vague, threatening or too complex.
Think about your vocabulary and level of expression. Try to avoid asking two or more questions in one.

Compare: "If y = 2x - 5, what is y when x = 7?" with: "Now, this symbolism we've been talking about, that Eliot has in mind in his play, what kind of role does it play in the totality of everyday life, in the existential 'now'?"

This is why planning some of your 'key' questions in advance is a good idea.

2.3.5 Non- verbal communications

Some major aspects of non verbal communication will differ between cultures and affects both listening and understanding and speaking for some learners. In particular:

- Posture
- Facial expression
- Hand and body gestures
- Spatial relationships

Below is some terminology which might be useful in helping you to consider non verbal communications:

Example:
Posture
In the UK, if we're nervous, we tend to bow our shoulders, lower our heads and make ourselves as small as possible. However in some other cultures e.g. Japan this will just be a normal posture of respect…

Gestures
Moving our hands helps us talk and most people carry out some hand gestures whilst talking. Also we use head movements to indicate or reinforce meaning. Different cultures use different gestures. For example, a nod of the head usually means 'yes'; however the head toss where the head is tilted back sharply back and returned to original position can mean 'no' in some countries such as Greece, Turkey and some Balkan countries. The two head movements can sometimes be confused.

Proxemics
The amount of space between strangers, friends, relatives and those in very close relationships differs in our culture. However different cultures have different conventions here.

Eye Contact
Our eyes and the contact we make with them form an important part of establishing rapport with other people. We use our eyes to show that we're listening, that we're interested, that we acknowledge the other person's presence. However, the length of eye contact considered acceptable varies between different cultures

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Activity 2a

Select one of the above areas for research. Prepare a presentation to your group on how you might integrate the teaching of this into your subject area.

Section 3

Learners: Literacy and Language

There has been a lot of research conducted into current levels of adult literacy (language and numeracy) as well as related causes and effects. The working group, chaired by Sir Claus Moser suggested in its report (DfEE 1999) that 1 in every 5 adults had literacy skills at a level below that expected of an 11 year old (ibid p. 8). There may be many causes of low levels of literacy, for example:

- Personal motivation
- Educational experiences
- Undiagnosed difficulties during statutory schooling
- Cultural expectations and attitudes to literacy

However, it is important to remember that the personal and social effects of low levels of literacy are equally complex (Parsons & Bynner 2002). For example:

- Poor employment and promotion prospects
- Difficulties supporting children's literacy and homework
- Decreased participation in public and political life
- Difficulty in accessing services eg opening a bank account, starting a training course

This section considers some of the literacy and language barriers faced by adult learners on courses which you might be teaching.

3.1 Barriers that can inhibit language and literacy development

The Oxford English Dictionary defines a barrier as follows:

> **barrier** *noun* something that prevents or controls advance, access or progress (Pollard, 1995, p.63)

Using the definition above, it becomes clear that a consideration of the barriers to literacy and language learning must analyse at least two factors:

- access to opportunities for language and literacy development

- personal, social and institutional factors that affect language and literacy learning

Having identified the scale of the problem with the level of basic literacy and numeracy skills amongst adults, Sir Claus Moser, the chair of the working group, listed elements of a national strategy which could help address some of the institutional factors which may have previously prevented adults from entering provision. Some of these are summarised as follows:

- poor publicity of, and guidance about, provision and lack of access to quality initial assessment procedures

- lack of credibility in respect of many basic skills qualifications

- inconsistent quality of provision and lack of clear national standards and curricula

- lack of access to intensive provision

- lack of access to community provision

- lack of access to opportunities for improving basic skills in the workplace

- un-coordinated approach to quality control in the sector

These findings confirm and give more detail to earlier work reported by Kennedy (Kennedy 1997). Here it was shown that gender, ethnicity, class, previous educational achievement, levels of income and geographical location all substantially affect access to further education, and can act as barriers. In addition, students entering further education with low levels of academic achievement are more likely to drop out of provision at an early stage (Kennedy, 1997, p.21).

Age

In January 1995, the Basic Skills Agency published a report (BSA 1995) with the following finding:

> Actual difficulties with basic skills, as measured by the assessment tasks were greater, on average, for older generations surveyed (aged 52 years or older) than for younger generations (aged 44 years or younger) (BSA 1995, p.5)

Despite the difficulties with generalising from the data gained for this report, it is clear that there are a large number of older adults who have limited levels of basic skills. The following, however, need to be considered as barriers to the older age group accessing education and training in traditional college or training provider settings:

- difficulty of access due to location or time of classes
- hearing / sight impairment
- memory / retention problems
- perception that providers cater exclusively for young adult school-leavers or provide only vocational courses
- an unfamiliar delivery mode
- worries over personal safety away from the home environment
- caring responsibilities for a partner in the home environment
- development of coping strategies which make learning new skills unattractive
- unfamiliarity with information technology
- lack of confidence in returning to a learning environment

Language and cultural background

Learners from a range of cultural backgrounds may face barriers in joining education and training or feeling comfortable with the ways of working within groups they may wish to join. Adkins *et al* discuss, as an example, the barrier that might be caused for learners by their joining a learning community where the culture is individualistic when they might be more familiar with a collectivist society (Adkins et al, 1999). Learners with a first language other than English as well as refugees and asylum seekers may well face the personal barrier of adjusting to new ways of

working, in an unfamiliar cultural as well as linguistic environment. An additional barrier to progress is faced by those who come to provision with histories of trauma through natural disaster, persecution or torture or war. Such learners may face severe and persistent mental stress. Tutors must be aware that some subjects which may be appropriate contexts for learning with most students may be extremely sensitive for refugees and asylum seekers; topics which are linked to the context of home, family and culture need to be carefully negotiated with individual learners.

Personal experience and circumstance

The reasons for poor retention rates within adult education programmes have been clearly documented in a number of studies. What is clear is that personal factors play a large part in a student's decision to leave a course of study. For many of these students, low self-esteem has affected progress which may then be compounded by a range of other issues:

- pressure of work for those learners in employment
- lack of access to affordable childcare
- the lack of transport to the point of provision, or the cost of such transport
- the importance of education in the family culture

The impact of poor basic skills on the lives of individuals is also clearly documented in the following reports:

- Bynner, J., and Parsons, S., (1998) *Use it or Lose it: The Impact of Time out of Work on Literacy and Numeracy Skills,* London, The Basic Skills Agency.

- Bynner, J., and Parsons, S., (1997) *It Doesn't Get Any Better: The Impact of Poor Basic Skills on the Lives of 37 Year Olds,* London, The Basic Skills Agency.

Previous educational experience

Kennedy (1997) showed that low levels of academic achievement on entering further education bore a strong relation to the level of motivation and retention of such students on courses.

The following is a case study of an adult learner attending a College of Further Education.

Activity 3a

Mohammed is an asylum seeker from Afghanistan. He arrived in the country in 2004 and is living in a city 12 miles from the College where he wants to attend classes to retrain in a vocational subject which will help him to find employment. Mohammed had just gained a degree in Afghanistan before he fled due to persecution. His wife and daughter remain in Afghanistan.

Mohammed attends classes for 6 hours a week in a mixed group of level 2 students who are working towards a qualification.

Mohammed needs to work in Britain, but must access a course at college to develop his vocational skills. He needs to pass an entry test to secure a place on the course.

What are the literacy/language barriers that Mohammed will face in achieving his educational goals?

3.2 Specific learning disabilities and learning difficulties that restrict language acquisition and development

In recent years there has been a move to make education accessible to those learners who, because of a learning difficulty or disability, may previously have felt excluded from education. A trigger for more recent changes was the publication in 1996 of an influential report (FEFC 1996) which recommended large scale changes to the teaching and learning process in order to include rather than exclude learners. The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (2001) gives learners the right to recourse if they are treated 'less favourably' in educational institutions

because of their particular difficulty. It is therefore essential that tutors are fully aware of a range of difficulties and disabilities that might face some learners in their classes. They must also have the skills to put into place teaching and learning strategies that build on learners' strengths and make use of specialist help where necessary to help learners achieve their primary learning goals.

Tutors need to beware of stereotyping learners with particular difficulties, and the following principles must be clearly understood:

- Specific difficulties and disabilities affect learners in a variety of ways. It is important not to generalise about conditions.

- Learners can be affected by their difficulties / disabilities in different ways during a given period of time. The effects of certain conditions fluctuate; this is particularly true for learners with mental health difficulties.

- The learner is the expert in the way that their particular difficulty affects them on a day to day basis, and on how it impacts on their development of their learning.

- Learners may have difficulties in accessing elements of their specific curriculum, but each learner has a variety of strengths which need to be recognised and built on.

Processing difficulties

Learners with a range of difficulties may encounter problems with processing in different situations. Deaf learners may struggle to process and understand abstract concepts. People who are blind or partially sighted and who are dependent on auditory input for their learning may have similar difficulties with processing certain concepts as they are less able to use visual images as a means of understanding (see section on auditory processing difficulties below). Some dyslexic adults may experience visual processing difficulties and this can lead to a number of problems in developing literacy skills:

- Learners may experience difficulty in tracking print across a page, or even following the letters in a multi-syllabic word. This could lead to

difficulties with work at sentence and text level as learners 'lose' comprehension of the reading material as a whole.

- Learners may be able to track print, but the speed of their processing ability in either written or graphical material might be affected.
- Learners may lose their place on a page when reading from one line to the next.
- Learners' comprehension of text and specific vocabulary might be impaired.
- Learners may experience visual distortions to print when reading.
- Over-reliance on the 'sounding out' of words will lead to severe difficulties with spelling irregular forms.
- Proof reading of work is affected if learners are not able to make full use of visual clues as to whether a spelling 'looks right'.

Some learners who have acquired brain injury or certain neurological problems may experience similar processing difficulties. The ways in which certain information is presented in reading material can cause processing difficulties for some students. Care should be taken to ensure that such students are able to extract meaning from data displayed in chart, table or grid forms which can cause problems.

Attention deficits

Some learners with mental health difficulties may find concentration difficult due to the effects of their medication. Participation in group work may also be affected.

The following strategies may be useful in supporting learners with attention deficits:

- keeping tasks short and manageable
- setting realistic targets
- providing plenty of opportunity to revise and reinforce previous learning
- allowing plenty of time for learners to develop, demonstrate and apply skills

<u>Visual-spatial deficits</u>

The following difficulties might arise:

- problems with the skimming and scanning of reading material and problems with locating specific information in a page of text
- problems with left-right directional concepts which could affect both reading and writing
- difficulties with higher order skills such as problem solving
- problems with way finding in a building
- difficulties with processing information in tabular / grid forms

<u>Auditory (sound) processing difficulties</u>

Students who are partially hearing do experience auditory processing difficulties in many cases. However, dyslexic learners may also experience similar problems in differing degrees. Learners will be able develop a good sight vocabulary which can aid reading, but may not have the necessary skills to read and understand unfamiliar words. Spelling can also be affected if students are unable to break words down into units of sound. Students may therefore encounter a range of problems in using literacy skills on their own course:

- difficulties with sound discrimination can lead to pronunciation problems when reading eg if asked to read aloud in class
- poor short term memory for information in auditory forms eg listening to a lecture or presentation

<u>Memory and sequence difficulties</u>

Memory difficulties can affect either the short or long term memory or both in some instances. Memory difficulties can relate to either visual or verbal input. Often the learning of spellings or times tables is severely affected, and rule learning is difficult. Gaining automaticity in the spelling of simple or personal words can often be affected. Some learners may have difficulty in retaining sets of instructions and in taking notes during lectures, when copying from a whiteboard or during a presentation or demonstration. Problems with sequencing may have an affect on a learner's success in the following ways:

- difficulties with portfolio organisation
- problems with structuring paragraphs
- problems with planning and structuring essays / assignments

Motor disabilities

Motor disabilities, as a term, can cover learners with a wide range of difficulties:

- learners with mobility problems
- learners with physical difficulties due to genetic condition, illness or accident
- learners whose gross or fine motor skills have been affected by a neurological condition

A learner with motor disabilities might be affected in the following ways:

- lack of fine motor control skills could affect handwriting or word processing
- the speed of writing could be affected

Unusually high anxiety

Learners with mental health difficulties may exhibit greater anxieties about the learning situation and process than other members of a group. Learners with such difficulties often have very low esteem which compounded with anxiety can have a detrimental impact on the acquisition of literacy or language skills. Not all learners who exhibit unusually high anxiety, however, have mental health difficulties.

For some learners – particularly those with mental health difficulties - anxiety can be increased by change. This could be a change in:

- time of class
- location of class
- physical environment such as seating arrangements
- learning activities
- ways of working
- expectation

The following techniques could be used to minimise the possible negative impacts of high anxiety on literacy / language acquisition:

- provide regular support and reinforcement
- ensure that tasks are manageable so that there is the possibility of achievement at every session

Activity 3b

The document *Access for All* (DfES 2002) relates specifically to teaching learners on Skills for Life programmes. However, there are some useful suggestions in it for working with learners in other curriculum areas.

What suggestions are given in the introduction for working with learners with learning difficulties/disabilities? How might these be adapted to your own curriculum area?

Complete the table below:

Learning difficulty/disability	Approaches
People who are deaf or partially hearing	
People who are blind or partially sighted	
People who have mental health problems	

People with dyslexia and related specific learning difficulties	73
People with physical disabilities	
People with learning difficulties	
People with autistic spectrum disorders	

3.3 Personal, social and cultural factors affecting language and literacy learning and development

As a trainee teacher, you need to consider your own and your learners' attitudes to language use. Try the activity below:

Activity 3c

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">Assumptions about language use

Here are some statements about language and literacy. Decide whether you think they are true or false. Discuss your responses with your group.</td></tr>
</table>

	True or False?
The use of slang and informal speech will put you at a disadvantage	
Accent and dialect is the same thing	
Local accents break grammatical rules	
Standard English is the correct form of the language	
Women use language differently from men	
Language use is male biased	
SMS messaging is undermining correct English usage	
People whose first language is not English are at a disadvantage	

You should always correct non standard English usage	75
People with limited literacy are less likely to vote	
Parents with poor literacy skills have children with poor literacy skills	

Suggested answers to Activity 3c

The use of slang and informal speech will put you at a disadvantage

This depends on the context in which the language is used. Slang is perfectly acceptable in many informal social situations and can often help to convey meaning. However, in more formal contexts such as the workplace, and in teaching situations, the use of slang would be inappropriate. A lot of slang expressions can be very difficult for a student whose first language is not English. The ability to recognise appropriate language for the context and to respond flexibly to different situations is all important.

Accent and dialect is the same thing

No. Accent refers to the way individuals pronounce the same word. For example, people can speak with a Scottish, West Country or Lancashire accent. Received Pronunciation, the accent associated with educated users of English, does not indicate a speaker's regional origin but may, for some people, have connotations of social class.

Dialect refers to the vocabulary and grammar of a particular geographical region. The grammar may differ from Standard English.   Standard English is the form of English generally considered to be 'correct' and used in most formal written texts.

Local accents break grammatical rules

Accent is to do with pronunciation and hence does not break grammatical rules. Dialect usage, however, may differ from Standard English.

Standard English is the correct form of the language

Again this all depends on context. Standard English is correct for many formal situations but the use of Standard English within certain groups or social situations would sound out of place. In other informal social settings, non standard English (grammar and vocabulary) is perfectly acceptable e.g. emails, casual conversations etc

Women use language differently from men

There is considerable research evidence to suggest that women:
- Use more 'ultra polite' forms of language such as 'Would you mind if I'
- Use more questions added to the end of statements such as 'That's right, isn't it?'
- Use more fillers such as 'sort of,' 'you know'
- Initiate topics of conversation
- Develop the ideas of previous speakers

Men, on the other hand, are more likely to:
- Not respond to changes of topic
- Deviate from Standard English such as' I don't know nothing'
- Interrupt
- Show disagreement

Language usage is male biased

There are many examples of male-specific vocabulary being used to include both genders, in words such as manmade, sportsmanship, master copy, man-in -the -street, chairman, brotherhood. Sometimes, the pronouns 'he' 'his' and 'him' are also used in relation to both men and women (eg A teacher should plan his lessons carefully). Job titles can also incorporate male specific references eg fireman, craftsman, headmaster. This would tend to suggest that language usage is male biased and implies that women are considered to be of less importance than men. Teachers

in particular should take care that they do not exclude learners by gender specific language use and should develop sensitivity to how such language can cause difficulties. Try turning some of the male specific words in this section into more neutral ones eg manmade (artificial), master copy (original) headmaster (headteacher) for practice!

SMS messaging is undermining correct English usage

Again, context is all important. There should be an understanding that in formal written documents, some of the features of SMS messaging (the @ symbol, emoticons or contracted forms such as l8r for later) are unacceptable. However, these are common and accepted features of language usage in informal contexts. This will only undermine the use of 'correct' English if there is no explicit teaching of conventions for different contexts.

People whose first language is not English are at a disadvantage

It depends. Second language speakers of English may be able to use the skills and knowledge developed from learning their first language to help them express themselves accurately in another language. This may be because of their explicit knowledge of grammar and the functions of language which native speakers may not necessarily have. However, people whose first language is substantially different in grammatical structure or script may have more difficulty in expressing themselves clearly in English. Cultural differences, such as non verbal communication or social conventions are much more difficult to learn and may put second language speakers at a disadvantage when judging the 'correct' usage for a specific context.

You should always correct non standard English usage.

This is a much contested area. Targeted correction is always useful, but depending on the stage of learning, there needs to be a balance between accuracy and fluency. Some errors become ingrained and difficult to correct in speaking or writing.   Teachers need to be able to distinguish whether the correction is appropriate for the context.

3.4 Multilingualism

The terms *multilingual* and *bilingual* are often used to refer to people who are equally competent in two or more languages. Multilingualism is rare in Britain; speakers see themselves as having a particular language first (L1) and other languages second (L2).

In many cases, particularly for those students who have recently arrived in the country, for whom English is very much an L2, the assumption of bilingual equal competence can be harmful and prejudicial.

 It is therefore useful to differentiate multilingual speakers from:

- speakers of English as a second language (ESL) and
- speakers of English as a foreign language (EFL).

This provides a gradation of competence in English relative to the other language being spoken.

Four broad categories of potential learners have been identified:

- People who work long or anti-social hours and so have difficulty accessing specialist English Language provision.

- Refugees, including both:
    Asylum seekers – many of whom are very keen to learn English but who face a wide range of problems including lack of money, problems with settlement & culture shock/trauma
    Settled refugees who have full refugee status or 'exceptional leave to remain' (ELR) but who need to improve their English to obtain employment or training

- Migrant workers, mainly from elsewhere in Europe, some of whom are in the United Kingdom to learn the language and pay for EFL training but also those who wish to settle in the UK permanently.

- Partners/spouses from all over the world who are settled here for some time and need to take part in community life but who have problems accessing provision because of family responsibilities or low income.

In your classes you might have:
- Learners who are literate in other languages including those who have different scripts and cultural approaches to texts

- Learners who have minimal experience of their writing in their first language or who come from an oral culture

- Bilingual learners whose other language is a creole or dialect of English

The term multilingualism is generally used in two senses:

- an individual can be said to be bilingual or multilingual if they are able to speak two or more languages reasonably fluently.
- the term multilingual is used of whole speech communities (or regions, areas or nations) in which two or more separate languages are used by the whole of the population in everyday life. eg Welsh and English in areas of Wales

In multilingual speech communities, all individuals who are members of that community will be multilingual; whereas an individual may be multilingual within a monolingual community. It is also often the case that the monolingual community will generally view the multi lingual individual in particular ways that may be prejudicial to that individual. It is therefore useful to keep the two senses of the term because there is a popular misconception in Western societies that the monolingual situation is the norm. In the monolingual outlook, the multilingual individual is often regarded with admiration (or suspicion). In fact, multilingualism is the norm rather than the exception throughout the world, and it is monolingual communities which occur less frequently.

Bilingual or multilingual language acquisition

A child may acquire two languages in one of two ways:

- In a small number of families, the parents may speak different languages and they may speak to their children from birth in their preferred language. Thus the children are exposed to two languages from the start, and they develop simultaneous or 'infant' bilingualism.

- Alternatively, and more commonly, the language of the home, spoken by both parents, may be different from the language of the community at large. In this case, the children acquire the home language for the first four years or so of life, and then, when they enter the education system – at nursery or infant school – they are exposed to the dominant language and begin to acquire this alongside their home language. This is the case for many children who speak one of the 100 plus minority languages spoken in the UK. Such children are exposed to two languages during childhood, but with one language substantially acquired before they are exposed to the second. They then develop consecutive or 'child' bilingualism.

Until the 1960s, the common opinion was that children who were exposed to more than one language were at a disadvantage in terms of their linguistic and general intellectual development. More recent studies support the view that there are certain distinct advantages to being brought up bilingually.

Initially, the impression may be given that a child brought up bilingually is linguistically confused. Crystal (1987, p.363) notes the following stages through which such a child may pass:

- In the first stage, a child's vocabulary consists of words from both languages, and the words are not usually translation equivalents.
- In the second stage, as the child moves into two-word utterances, words from both languages may be used within the same utterance, but the rate of mixing declines rapidly during the third year.
- In the third stage, translation equivalents begin to develop, as the vocabularies of the two languages grow, but the development of separate grammatical systems takes a little longer. By this stage, in the fourth year of life, children become aware that they are speaking two different languages.

One of the advantages of acquiring a language during childhood is that the speaker will have native pronunciation, something that is very hard to achieve if a language is learned later (from teenage years on).

Factors that affect second language learning

All children, given a 'normal' upbringing are successful in the acquisition of their first language. This contrasts with our experience of second language learners whose success varies greatly. It has been observed countless times that, in the same classroom setting, some students progress rapidly through the initial stages of learning a new language while other struggle along making very slow progress.

Research identifies five main categories that can impact on second language learning: motivation, aptitude, intelligence, personality and age of acquisition. It is obvious from this generalised categorisation that some of the characteristics cannot be assigned to one category.

Motivation in second language learning is very complex but is generally defined in terms of two factors:

- learners' communicative needs
- their attitudes towards the second language community.

If learners need to speak the second language in a wide range of social situations or to fulfil professional ambitions, they will perceive the communicative value of the second language and will therefore be motivated to acquire proficiency in it. Likewise, if learners have favourable attitudes towards the speakers of the language, they will desire more contact with them.

You should also remember that, although for many non-native English speakers becoming proficient in the English language is a conscious choice to help them to take a full part in English social and cultural life as well as accessing employment, for others the choice is not of their own making.

3.5 Barriers to literacy and language learning

It has also recently been recognised that the problems encountered by ESL and EFL speakers are not always strictly linguistic ones. Individuals from Asia, Africa, South America and the Caribbean, as well as from Eastern Europe, often find that the cultural differences that are encoded in language are so different that inferred or obscure meanings can easily elude them. Irony, idioms and jokes are particularly difficult. Clearly, other sorts of knowledge as well as grammar and vocabulary need

to be mastered. Learning the culture seems to be a necessary complement to learning the language.

Language and cultural background

Learners from a range of cultural backgrounds may face barriers in joining your class or feeling comfortable with the ways of working within groups they are in. Learners with a first language other than English, as well as refugees and asylum seekers, may well face the personal barrier of adjusting to new ways of working in an unfamiliar cultural as well as linguistic environment. An additional barrier to progress is faced by those who come to provision with histories of trauma through natural disaster, persecution or torture or war. Such learners may face severe and persistent mental stress. Tutors must be aware that some subjects which may be appropriate contexts for language and literacy learning with most students, may be extremely sensitive for refugees and asylum seekers; topics which are linked to the context of home, family and culture need to be carefully negotiated with individual learners.

For adult learners of English as a second language, patterns of learning may be very different. Learners may initially cope with what has been termed 'formulaic speech', that is survival phrases which are specific to certain social situations. However, the manipulation of the language and the ability to transfer language accurately and confidently to new situations takes a long time to develop.

Perhaps the hardest task for a bi-lingual or multi-lingual learner of English is the difficulty of ascertaining when the sounds and grammar systems of the target language are similar or the same as the mother tongue, and where there is a significant pattern of differences. This problem leads to the phenomenon of interference where inappropriate features of one language 'leak' into the expression of another. This can occur with grammatical features, stress and intonation which can affect pronunciation, and the use of a range of textual features for writing. Acquisition of literacy may be affected by:

- Difficulties with the use of capitalisation
- Inappropriate punctuation
- Difficulties with left to right orientation of writing
- Difficulties with spacing between words and paragraphing

Another feature of the use of English by second language learners is the use of code switching (Mercer and Swann, 1996, pp.133ff). Here the learner actively chooses to incorporate features of one language into another, often for specific purposes in social situations. The use of this device can be to express identities or to make use of the richness of vocabulary or idiom in a particular language. Code switching may also occur if there are comprehension difficulties in a conversation or to clarify meaning. There are difficulties that can arise from the use of code switching in a classroom situation:

Mono-lingual speakers may feel threatened that the code switching device is being used to make personal comments which they do not understand. This might be a false assumption, but can create tensions in the classroom. Errors, however, are not generally a negative sign; they show active engagement with the target language.

As with all learners, it is important to be able to balance your correction of either English usage or knowledge of subject content with the need to encourage learners to express themselves using spoken language.

Section 4:

Literacy and Language in the classroom

This section helps you to think about how you might apply some of the skill and knowledge defined in the Minimum Core to your role as a teacher/tutor/trainer.

The information in this section is structured as follows:

4.1 Planning

Many trainee and new teachers have a tendency to focus their planning on the delivery of content related to their subject area. Whilst this is an important part of the planning process, it may not take into account the varied and complex needs of the actual learners in the classroom.

Considering literacy and language issues as part of the planning process can help teachers to develop inclusive practice. This is not just good practice in meeting the needs of learners who have literacy and language needs, but is also helpful to all learners.

Activity 4.1

Here are some learners who have been recruited to a course you teach.

Helen, 21, has no formal qualifications.
Sue, 54, has never used IT before.
Riffat, 27, speaks English as a Second Language but has no formal qualifications in English.
Dale ,17, history of poor attendance and exclusion from school.
Amjit ,22, has had special schooling because he is partially sighted.

What might you need to consider in planning a Scheme of Work or Lesson Plans for a class with these students in it?

Whatever your answers to Activity 4.1, it would be very difficult to plan effectively without much more detailed information about the individuals in the group. The important thing to remember is not to make assumptions about any kind of needs learners might have. It may take several weeks for you to have a better understanding of learners' needs and in particular the ways in which you can best plan to teach in such a way that all learners can learn effectively. This will be as much a learning process for you as for the learners.

4.2 Resource Design

Resources are a key teaching and learning tool. It is therefore really important to ensure that all materials you use are designed to be accessible by all learners and that all language usage within them provides a clear model for learners. Where spelling, punctuation or grammar is used incorrectly by the teacher, learners are more likely to copy the errors in their own work.

You might think about a written resource at three levels:

Text level

This is where the document is considered as a finished whole. You may want to think about:

- **White space:** include as much white space as possible as it is easier on the eye.

- **Dense text:** page after page of dense text can be daunting for competent readers. Think about how you structure the material. Break it up by using sub headings and paragraphs.

- **Graphological features:** these are features such as bullet points, numbered sections, underlining, emboldening and use of different fonts. All these features, used appropriately and consistently, can help learners to navigate texts and understand the content more readily.

- **Overwriting:** this is where an image forms the background to a page or sections of text. This feature can distract some readers and is often unnecessary.

- **Placing of images:** images can be really useful in helping learners to understand text. They should always be placed near the text to which they refer and clearly labelled/numbered. However, 'busy' texts (such as some Internet pages) can be difficult for some learners to deal with.

- **Justification:** this refers to the way that dense text is organised on the page. The page you are reading now has a justified left margin but an unjustified or ragged right hand margin. Whilst fully justified text (where the text appears as a solid block) may look

tidy, some learners, especially those with dyslexic tendencies, find it hard to keep their place on the page when reading from line to line.

- **Font style and size:** generally a font size of 12 is readable by most people in books/handouts, although 18 is preferable for OHT and Powerpoint presentations. However, for some learners you may need to increase the font size substantially, or enlarge through photocopying. Whilst some people have personal preferences for a particular font style, Comic Sans or Arial are two of the clearer fonts to use. Fonts with serifs can be more difficult to read than those without. Some fonts create difficulties for learners who are not familiar with a Roman script. For example, consider the difference to a learner of:

garage   garage   **GARAGE**

Sentence level

This is where features of text are considered within sentences. You may want to think about:

- **Use of capitalisation:** try to avoid writing whole sentences (apart from short headings) in capitals(upper case). Generally, most people find text written entirely in capital letters much harder to read. Some teachers tend to write in capitals on the whiteboard as they mistakenly think it will be clearer. You may need to practise your handwriting on the whiteboard if this is an issue for you.

- **Simple and complex sentences:** you may want to think about the level of difficulty of the sentences you write in relation to the level of the course you teach. For example, if you teach on Entry, Foundation or Level 1 course, your learners will find it easier to access your resources if they are written mainly using simple sentences.

- **Passive verb forms:** Most learners will find it easier to understand text that is written using active verb forms (eg The student wrote the essay.) rather than passive verb forms (eg The essay was written by the student.) . This is because the word order is more familiar. Learners who speak English as a second language may find passive verb forms particularly difficult.

Word level

- **'Jargon':** Most subjects will have specialist language which is crucial to the course. It is important for learners to become familiar with the meanings and spellings of this terminology. You should try to get into the habit of recognising what might be seen as specialist language in your subject and both explaining the meaning and writing it down. This will model usage for learners.

- **Idiomatic usages:** These are words and phrases which are used in everyday speech, but whose origin has become obscure and which appear to make no sense (eg raining cats and dogs). The fact that these forms are used in everyday spoken language may make them unsuitable for writing in more formal contexts. Learners who speak English as a second language may find idiomatic usage particularly difficult.

Activity 4.2

Look at the extract from a handout from a pre-GCSE English/Communications class:

2.3.ii Novels

A novel is often an extended, fictional narrative that is a cohesive whole. Its structure comprises of sub-divisions, termed chapters, which are determined by the elapse of time, a new location or the perspective of the characters. Chapters should be distinguishable from collections of short stories. Books which comprise several short stories are not technically novels. Chapter divisions in works of non-fiction provide information on the subject matter therein. The table of contents at the start of a text indicates the relevant content.

What problems might a reader face in understanding the main points of this handout?
How might the resource be re-designed?

4.2.1 Readability

There are a number of ways of checking the level of difficulty of a text. One of these is to use the SMOG index which is a formula that you apply to a given piece of text:

1	Select a text
2	Count 10 sentences
3	Count number of words which have three or more syllables
4	Multiply this by 3
5	Circle the number closest to your answer 1 4 9 16 25 36 49 64 81 100 121 144 169
6	Find the square root of the number you circled 1 4 9 16 25 36 49 64 81 100 121 144 169 (number circled) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 (square root)

7	Add 8 to the square root		Readability level

Source - http://www.doh.gov.uk/nhsidentity/accessibility/

The lower the readability level the easier something is to read and understand. A readability level under about 10 will be able to be understood by most people.

This is only a rough guide to the level of difficulty of a text. The SMOG index might suggest that a text is difficult, but this may be because there is a lot of technical vocabulary within a relatively simple text.

4.2.2 Simplification

You may find that there are suitable resources that already exist but which are too difficult for the level of the course and the learners. You could use any of the techniques described in 4.2 to adapt the material. When you adapt material from a published resource, or which is subject to copyright, ensure that you acknowledge the original source, eg 'Adapted from Smith 2004, pp 7 – 12'.

Activity 4.3

Design or adapt a resource for use in your own subject area. It should be suitable for all learners in your group, including those with literacy needs.

Produce a rationale for its design.

4.3   Teaching and Learning

It is very important to think about the kind of language you use when working with learners in a teaching situation. Here are some points to consider:

- Try to imagine yourself in the learners' position; how do you think you sound? How easy are you to understand? Do you have a strong accent? Do you use dialect forms?
- Remember that you are modelling language use to your learners. What, for example, might be the impact on learners of using non-standard grammar or vocabulary? What about slang? How do you decide on the appropriate level of formality for each lesson?
- Your learners may come from a wide variety of backgrounds and have a range of experiences eg wide age range, cultural diversity.

Do you use inclusive language? Is your language usage culturally specific?

- You may need to use technical language or subject-specific 'jargon'. How do you consistently explain such vocabulary? Do you provide a glossary?

- When giving instructions for learning activities, think about the way you structure the instructions and the language you use. Are you clear? Do you give multiple instructions? What difficulties do these present for learners with memory or sequencing problems? Can learners follow and understand what you want them to do? How do you check this out?

- Learners with literacy and language difficulties may become de-motivated by teaching strategies which rely heavily on reading and writing. Do you sometimes use methods which don't require reading or writing? Do you use a range of teaching and learning strategies which will include all members of the group?

- Learners may use language very differently when talking about their subject and their learning. You will need to differentiate the kind and level of support you give to learners to help them talk about their subject. How do you decide whether to intervene and correct?

- Learning is not just about remembering content. Learners demonstrate and extend their understanding by using appropriate language. What opportunities do you provide for learners to discuss debate, argue, explain, evaluate? Do they do this collaboratively? Do they do it independently of the teacher?

- How do use questions? (You may want to refer back to section 2.3.4 to refresh your memory on questioning techniques.)

- What impressions do you think you give with your non-verbal communications?

A final thought:

If there are learners with specific learning disabilities and difficulties within your class, it is possible that you may find classroom assistants, support workers or teaching assistants in the classroom with you.

As the teacher it will be your job not only to plan learning to meet the needs of the individuals in your class, but also to plan how you will work collaboratively with other members of staff to support learning.

Activity 4.4

Review your practice in classroom communications.

It is often difficult to evaluate your own oral communication skills. To help you to do this, you might consider asking for specific feedback in a forthcoming observation. You could also tape or video one of your sessions and discuss it with a mentor, tutor or colleague.

Use your ILP to record any development points.

Activity 4.5

Using the extract below, what should Elaine consider when reviewing her oral communications skills?

Elaine is a teacher of Beauty Therapy teacher in a Further Education College in the north of England.

Below is an outline of a lesson on communications

Elaine: Right today we're doing communications. Did you remember to bring in the adverts I asked you to fetch last week?

Learners mutter

Elaine: That's enough. Has anyone brought in anything at all?

Learner 1:   You didn't tell us to.

Elaine: I might have known you lot wouldn't remember. OK. Here's a diagram and some information about communications on the worksheet. You've got ten minutes.

Writes 'Good Practise (sic) in communications' on the board

Learner 2: What are we doing?

Elaine: Try and pay attention. Look at the handout. It tells you what to do.

Elaine sets up the laptop and data projector for a Powerpoint presentation

Elaine: Right, what did you put for question 1?

There is no response.

Elaine: Michelle, read out question 1 to me.

Michelle reads out 'Give some examples of good communications.'

Elaine: Well? (*prompts*) Good communications is when…

There is no response.

Elaine: I can see we're in for one of them days. OK. I'm going to show you the Powerpoint and we'll come back to this when you're feeing more lively.

Elaine shows a Powerpoint presentation on presentation skills.

Elaine: Right here's some coloured paper. Choose a colour.

Some learners get up from their seats and move towards the pile of paper at the front.

Elaine: Did I tell you to get up? I'll pass it round.

A discussion breaks out at the back as the paper runs out.

Elaine: I've got some plain. Some of you will have to make do with that.
Now, I want you to use the notes you've made to make a poster on ….something to do with good communications.

Learner 1*(to learner next to her):*   What are we doing?

Elaine: I've told you what to do. Now get on with it quietly.

Elaine leaves the room in search of some felt tip pens. On her return, a latecomer has arrived but is unnoticed by Elaine.

Elaine: Right. I want everyone to stand up and explain what's in their poster……Can't you lot do anything right….I want you to stand up one at a time….Jane?

Jane holds up a poster.

Elaine: What's that meant to be when it's at home?

Jane: It's a picture of a fax machine.

Elaine: So let me get this right. You've spent half an hour drawing a picture of a fax machine?

Jane: It's an example of good communications.

Elaine: Give me strength…Why haven't you put any explanation on it?

Jane: You didn't tell us to.

Elaine: I shouldn't have to be telling you all the time. You all want to work in salons don't you? You're going to need to make notes when some old bid comes in with a list of contraindications as long as your arm.

> We're going to be looking at barriers next. Jane, explain to me how your picture of a fax machine is going to help you when we come to talk about barriers.
>
> Jane: Well, it would be a barrier if the company you wanted to fax didn't have a fax machine.
>
> Elaine: Moving on then…can anyone else tell me what might be a barrier to good communications or if you've ever been in a situation where communications didn't go well……….perhaps you could relate it to something you've got on your poster this time?

4.4   Assessment and Feedback

As part of your Initial Teacher Training you will undertake activities which facilitate your learning about assessment both in general terms and in your subject specialist area.

Learners may be able to produce good responses to assessment in terms of subject content, but find that they have difficulty in achieving a satisfactory level because their literacy or language skills are less developed.

 It is important that you can feed back appropriately, confidently and accurately to learners on the effectiveness of their literacy and language skills.

Activity

Read the extract below from an essay written by a learner. Rather than focus on subject content, mark the work for spelling. punctuation, grammar, sentence structure, paragraphing and organisation of ideas.

What feedback would you give to this learner?
What kind of support do you think this learner might need?
How might you provide it?

What constitutes effective communication in the service industries?

Communications are, when you send a message and it is recieved by some one a reciever. You have to make sure its clear or, the other person might not do or know what you say you want and the chain is broke. In too way communications their has to be feed back from the reciever. And checking for the message like asking questions or using body language. You have to make sure you matched your communications in the right places to what is going on, for example talk conversation or continuous text in linguistics with regard to logical flow and progression through choice of expression.

In my job we have to keep our customer's happy or they'll go some where else to get there repairs done. So you have to ask them what they've come for. And that at work you have to answer the phone after two rings.

Section 5:

Meeting the Requirements of the Minimum Core:

Action Planning

This section is intended to help you to reflect on what you have covered so far and to action plan for your won continuing professional development in relevant areas.

You may want to use evidence from this section to feed into your Individual Learning Plan. Details from your action plan could also form the basis of useful discussions with your tutor/mentor.

Using the checklist of Minimum Core Elements, produce a Person Action Plan for inclusion in your ILP. You may want to use feedback from assignments and observations, activities within these materials and reflections on your won personal experiences of literacy and language.

**Action Plan
Requirements of the Minimum Core**

Minimum Core Element	Knowledge & Understanding	Personal Skill	Action to be taken	Details of action completed
Personal, social and cultural factors affecting language and literacy learning and development				
The different factors affecting the acquisition and development of language and literacy				
The importance of English language and literacy in enabling users to participate in and gain access to society and the modern economy				
Understanding of the range of learners' cultural, linguistic and educational backgrounds				
Awareness of the main learning disabilities and learning difficulties that hinder language learning and skill development				
Multilingualism and the role of the first language in the acquisition of additional languages				
Issues that arise when learning another language or translating from one language to another				
Awareness of issues related to varieties of English, including standard English, dialects and attitudes towards them				

The importance of context in language use and the influence of the communicative situation.				
Listening				
The importance of prior knowledge and prediction in processing of oral information				
Awareness of different approaches to listening depending on purpose				
Importance of inference and background knowledge for interpretation and full understanding in listening to spoken language				
Listening attentively and responding sensitively to contributions made by others.				
Speaking				
Awareness of context and levels of formality in spoken discourse				
An understanding of the concepts of fluency, accuracy and competence for ESOL learners				
Understanding of key features of spoken English and some of the ways spoken English differs from				

written English				
Expressing yourself clearly, using communication techniques to help convey meaning and to enhance the delivery and accessibility of the message				
Showing the ability to use language, style and tone in ways that suit the intended purpose and audience, and to recognise their use by others				
Using appropriate techniques to reinforce oral communication, check how well the information is received and support the understanding of those listening				
Using non-verbal communication to assist in conveying meaning and receiving information, and recognising its use by others.				
Reading				
Awareness of a variety of approaches to text depending on the purpose of reading				
Importance of inference and background knowledge for interpretation and full understanding of texts				
Range of discourse features, which convey meaning and indicate purpose and the intended audience of				

text				
Understanding of the roles of punctuation and of layout and typographical features in texts				
An understanding of barriers to accessing texts				
Find, and select from, a range of reference material and sources of information, including the Internet				
Use and reflect on a range of reading strategies to interpret texts and to locate information or meaning				
Identify and record the key information or messages contained within reading material using note-taking techniques.				
Writing				
Have an understanding of the process of producing written text, from purpose or idea through planning and drafting to final editing				
Understand some of the significant features of written texts for different contexts and purposes				
Have an understanding of significant features of English spelling and of the contribution of punctuation to				

meaning in written texts				
Write fluently, accurately and legibly on a range of topics Select appropriate format and style of writing for different purposes and different readers				
Use spelling and punctuation accurately in order to make meaning clear				
Understand and use the conventions of grammar (the forms and structures of words, phrases, clauses, sentences and texts) consistently when producing written text.				

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Suggested further reading:

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Section 2: Personal Literacy and language Skills

Reading

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Section 3: Personal, social and cultural factors affecting language and literacy learning and development

Accent, Dialect and Standard English
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Barriers that inhibit language and literacy development
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www.rnib.org.uk   (website for the National Institute for the Blind)

www.rnid.org.uk   (website for the National Institute for the Deaf)

www.skill.org.uk   (website for the National Bureau for Students with Disabilities)

Gender and language
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Multilingualism
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