

An introduction to  
teacher development

Series 2



## An Introduction to Teacher Development

### Programme 1: Getting the most from your course book – teacher support worksheet

If you are a teacher of English, especially if you are working with large classes in difficult conditions, this series of twelve programmes is definitely for you. Our first topic is Getting the most from your course book. The teachers in the programme agree that a course book is a useful resource and can help teachers structure their lessons or even provide the English teaching syllabus.

**Meganathan**, from India, says that in some countries teachers do not get any other resources and have to rely on the text book to help their students. Emma, who teaches in Cameroon, agrees that when there are few resources teachers have to try to use the course book in many different ways including as a source of inspiration for ideas that can be expanded on.

**Jack**, who is based in Sri Lanka, explains how course books provide structure to a lesson:

***‘so you might have a double spread on a particular topic so it may start with a presentation of the language, and it will move on to some kind of practice activity’***

He goes on to say that the built in review sections and progress tests can help students recycle the language they have learned and check on how they are doing as they go along.

A typical course book is divided into units that will set out what language to introduce, teach, and practise. A good course book normally combines grammar practice with vocabulary, functional language, reading and writing tasks and perhaps even some speaking and listening activities. It also has built-in revision.

#### Over to you!

In your opinion, what makes a good course book?

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#### Ask a colleague!

Sometimes teachers only use parts of the course book, perhaps the language presentation or some practice exercises. What are the most useful parts of a text book? Discuss this with another teacher and make a list below:

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But what happens if there aren't enough books for all the students or if only the teacher has one?

Cameroonian teacher **Florence** explains the difficulty:

***‘So it is really impossible to handle things like reading comprehension when the text is from the text book and the students don't have that text book. So that's why teachers come in with their own creativity.’***

**Sebby**, a teacher from North Namibia uses his students to generate examples for language presentation and discovery. He also creates his own reading texts based on familiar stories or scenes so that they are more relevant to his students. The types of activities used with the texts are similar to those you can find in a course book and, as Emma says, the book can be seen as

***‘something you can just get a little inspiration from and then expand on.’***

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**Nerissa**, who teaches in the Philippines, suggests three solutions to the problem of not having enough course books. Some teachers copy the exercises out on the board – or perhaps a poster. Some schools get outside help to reproduce some of the exercises but not the whole book. She and her colleagues also get their students to help by working in groups. Each group copies out a section and if it goes onto big sheets of paper these can be used as posters, again and again.

Sebby and Narissa show how important it is to get their students working together. They use their creativity to make relevant materials or even just to make sure that materials are available to everyone.

Emma doesn't use the course book to present new language but the class goes back to the book later to see how the language is used and to do some practice exercises. Sebby can also do this to consolidate and revise the language they have looked at in the lesson.

Sebby tries to make his lessons come alive for his students. He creates his own reading texts so that they are more relevant and he also brings in extra materials:

***'Sometimes during lessons, or when I am preparing the lesson, I might not have enough resources... I can sometimes bring in a radio from home - my own radio - to work with at school, so I can make my class 'alive!'***

He also brings in newspapers for his students to use.

Jack brings together what many other teachers in the programme believe when he explains that course books are a great source of materials or as a resource to help you develop your own materials. However, he also says:

***'Like any resource though, before deciding whether to use them or not, you have to ask yourself whether they're right for your class and right for your students.'***

**Programme Summary:** Teachers agree that course books can provide an English teaching syllabus and give structure to a lesson. A book should give you grammar exercises, vocabulary, functions and reading and writing at the level of your students. It will also provide useful recycling and revision.

In areas where resources are in short supply, students may not have a course book. Even so, teachers can use the texts and exercises by copying them onto the board or onto posters.

Not all the materials in a book are relevant to students so teachers can adapt ideas from a book to use with their own materials. Teachers need not always be dependent on the course book and can try many different ways to present language and engage their students during the lesson.

### Ask a colleague!

Talk to other teachers about the ideas in this programme and keep a list of useful ideas.

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### Programme 2: Adapting the course book – teacher support worksheet

Many teachers of English around the world understand the reality of working in places where books, resources and training opportunities are in very short supply. TeachingEnglish Radio aims to promote the sharing of ideas among teachers to improve teaching and learning.

The topic for this second programme is Adapting the course book. Often course books don't include everything we need and they usually don't cover all the skills we want to practise. Above all, lessons can become very boring if the course book is used too much in class. By adapting materials and ideas from the book teachers can make lessons more interesting and effective for their students.

Some teachers, like Meganathan from India, supplement their course books with materials they bring in. These can be based around:

***'local culture, songs, stories, and also ask children to bring related stories or poems of the particular texts which the teacher deals with.'***

It is important to know how a course book is structured so that you can see what it is trying to teach. The index, headings and sub-heading can help us identify what language is being presented or the skills practised and if a teacher's book is available, this is also useful.

**Jack**, a British Council teacher who has worked in Egypt and Sri Lanka analyses a grammar lesson from a course book and explains that the pictures used to introduce lesson on 'a', 'an', 'any' and 'some' might not be appropriate with every class:

***'the champagne and beer would be a distraction, so it would be better to use examples of local foods that the students would be familiar with.'***

**Celso Manisa**, from Mozambique does that by bringing in realia. He brings in real objects – vegetables – to focus his students' attention on the topic of shopping. He explains one of the reasons why:

***'It helps to explain vocabulary and it is less time consuming for teaching vocabulary. For example one of the 'realia' in terms of products is cassava, it is a typically African, Mozambican one, and then they like it....'***

When Jack analyses his book he points out a good interactive exercise that can help get students talking. Celso prefers to get them talking about what they do in their lives and as he knows their world he is able to feed in the right vocabulary and prompts. He shows that students can benefit from a more personalised approach to a lesson without always using the examples or vocabulary from the text book.

#### Over to you!

Which parts of your course book use examples that may not be relevant to your students?

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#### Ask a colleague!

How can you personalise topics from the course book? Discuss this with another teacher and make some notes below:

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Although many course books nowadays are written by people who know the places they are being used in, there are still some that are out of date, don't have a variety of activities or that aren't relevant to the local culture. One Afghani teacher thinks that teachers need to introduce familiar topics and stories that their students will respond to. Students then read or discuss, these or maybe the teacher uses them for introducing and practising new language.

***'As we know our books are so old - maybe more than thirty-years old - so for making our class interesting we always give some topics and some stories to read and talk in the class, to make the class interesting.'***

Jack discusses a functions lesson about asking for directions.

***'Rather than using the map in the book, you can use a map of the town which the students are more familiar with and this will make it more realistic or more real for the students.'***

This could then lead onto a communicative exercise with students working in groups.

There seems to be plenty of opportunities to get students speaking, but what about listening? Many course books have listening materials but not every school has the ability to play them.

**Raul**, from Cuba, thinks that a creative teacher can bring in their own materials or equipment. He feels that supplementing the materials in a course book with your own materials can break up the monotony that may be caused by using the book too much.

**Programme Summary:** Teachers agree that course don't always provide a variety of activities or examples that are relevant to their students. We can bring in our own materials that are more familiar to students and more interesting. This could be examples of local stories or songs. We can use real objects (realia) such as vegetables and local maps to make the lessons more 'real'.

If our school is short of resources we may have to bring in our own equipment, such as a radio, or ask other people to come into class and talk. This can help to break up the monotony of using the course book too much

### **Ask a colleague!**

Talk to other teachers about the ideas in this programme and keep a list of useful ideas.

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### Programme 3: Managing different levels – teacher support worksheet

Many teachers of English around the world work with large classes in difficult conditions. TeachingEnglish Radio aims to promote the sharing of ideas among teachers to improve teaching and learning.

The topic for this third programme is ‘managing students of different levels in one large class’; a situation particularly familiar to those working in smaller schools in rural areas where there’s a shortage of teachers or school rooms.

**Meganathan** explains the situation where he works in India:

***‘You have three teachers, five classes, forty children!’***

This situation creates classes with multi-level learners. Emma from Cameroon explains why this can be difficult:

***‘When you actually know there are so many weak learners. And then the very very fast learners are so impatient that they don’t give you a chance to explain a concept which they have already grasped.’***

These teachers from Pakistan and Argentina point out that different levels of proficiency can arise because some students learn English elsewhere:

***‘some students have a social background where they learn English but others might not’ (Saba, Pakistan)***

***‘it is common for some students to attend language schools, apart from school, while some others can’t afford it. So what happens in an average class is that you have very proficient speakers or learners and some who just rely on what is taught in the class.’ (Laura, Argentina)***

#### Over to you!

In your opinion why are the students in your class at different levels of proficiency?

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#### Ask a colleague!

How can make sure that weaker students don’t get left behind or that more proficient students aren’t held back? Discuss this with another teacher and make some notes below:

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**Celso Manisa** works with a large class of secondary students in Mozambique. In this class there is a wide range of abilities. Celso’s students have been talking about shopping in pairs. At the start of the class students might sit with their friends but Celso points out that this can mean weaker students sit together and stronger students sit together. He moves them around so that weaker students are paired with stronger ones. This creates the opportunity for students to help each other.

Emma employs a similar strategy and puts students into mixed level groups:

***‘because when they are in groups, those very fast learners can pull up the slow learners.’***

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Celso also talks about monitoring the class as another aspect of class management.

***‘When I walk around the students will take the exercise seriously, if I leave them alone they won’t do it, they need me there to moderate, to facilitate their activities.’***

Laura, in Argentina, assigns stronger students as mentors to weaker students:

***‘It boosts students’ confidence, and at the same it is highly advantageous for poorer learners.’***

What happens if the stronger learners finish their work more quickly than the others? **Kondwani** a teacher in Malawi explains the problem:

***‘you must find something additional for them to do so that they don’t disturb these other slow learners.’***

**Nerissa** explains how teachers in the Philippines have pooled resources to come up with a creative solution. Teachers working with the same grades have a ‘study circle’.

***‘So one teacher, for example, specialises in working on the exercises for the fast learners. So she will make different exercises for the fast learners, then another teacher will be working on exercises for the slow learners’***

The teachers share these resources and keep them in a resource bank for future use.

**Florence** also describes how everyone working together in Cameroon can provide materials for fast finishers:

***‘We do create something like classroom libraries. What we do is we pool resources together, maybe from teachers’ contributions, students’ essays’***

Students also bring in materials from home such as newspapers or books, which they contribute to the library. These can be used over and over again.

**Programme Summary:** Teachers agree that multi-level classes can present a real challenge. Some students learn English in other places and so are far more proficient than some of the others. Many teachers use this to their advantage and pair stronger students with weaker ones. This can increase the confidence of the stronger ones, who have a sense of responsibility, and help ‘pull the weaker ones up’.

Teachers helping each other and pooling resources can provide creative solutions to challenges in multi-level classes. While getting contributions from students, friends and colleagues can relieve the problem of the shortage of materials.

### Ask a colleague!

Talk to other teachers about the ideas in this programme and keep a list of useful ideas.

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### Programme 4: A visit to a reading class – teacher support worksheet

TeachingEnglish Radio aims to promote the sharing of ideas among teachers to improve teaching and learning and in the fourth programme we are focussing on 'a visit to a reading class' in Namibia. The teacher is Hilya and she has a big group of grade 9 students.

Before finding out about Hilya's class let's remind ourselves what teachers said in an earlier programme about reading. We can help our students to become better readers by giving them activities before they read, while they are reading and after they have read a text.

The reading skills our students need to develop include 'predicting' - 'reading to get the main idea' or 'skimming' - and 'reading for specific details' or 'scanning'.

Hilya plans to get students to work out the meaning of new words that they come across in a reading text. However, she has a pre reading activity for the class:

***'before I give them a text to read I have to discuss the title first, so that they can have a picture of what the topic or the story is all about.'***

The text, a short personal account by a young man who has graduated from the Polytechnic, is from a newspaper article but before she gives her students the article she asks them to predict what words they will come across in it. After collecting these words on the board Hilya gets the students to use the words to make a few sentences. This activity focuses the students on the idea of a personal story prepares them to read the real one.

Hilya also focusses the students' attention by making deliberate mistakes as she writes their sentences on the board. Since they are paying close attention, they can correct her quickly.

Hilya isn't using the course book for the reading activity. As she explains, she is using an authentic text:

***'This is a free newspaper - we are not always using newspapers, it depends. You have to get material which is relevant'***

#### Over to you!

Where can you get a range of authentic texts?

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#### Ask a colleague!

What are the advantages and disadvantages of using authentic texts rather than material from the course book? Discuss this with another teacher and make a list below:

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Hilya reads out a short introduction to the text and checks for understanding so that students are prepared for the main text they use in the activity.

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She gives out the newspapers and gets the students to work in groups to identify words that are new to them. To find out the meaning of the words she uses different strategies. Firstly she tries to get the students to work out the meaning from the context.

***‘Can somebody read the sentence where this word appears...’***

The teacher only tells them the meaning, if the students can't work it out.

***‘Hmm... the word signifies in that sentence means ‘shows’ - or showing - do you understand? That is why the sentence says ‘the number of students signifies..’ it indicates or shows the number of people who graduated at the institution.’***

Another strategy she uses is to get students to identify the root of the word to help identify its meaning.

***‘The word ‘motivational’ comes from which word?’***

Some of her students know the verb ‘to motivate’ so she uses this knowledge to help them understand the adjective ‘motivational’.

Hilya avoids giving students the meaning of words because she wants them to work it out for themselves by looking carefully at the text they are reading.

As an ‘after reading activity’ Hilya asks more questions and the students discuss the story in small groups. Later they write their own version of this story using some of the new words.

**Programme Summary:** As a pre-reading activity the teacher puts the title on the board and invites students to guess words they might find in the story. She asks them to create a short account using those words before giving out the text.

Teacher Hilya uses a free resource – a text in a newspaper which matched her students’ interests. She has a large class so students share and work in small groups.

Building students confidence with reading means not worrying about every single word, so we often first read to get the general idea – skimming - and then for specific details - scanning.

An important skill in reading is guessing words from the context. In Hilya’s classroom this was a special focus. She encourages students to identify words they don’t know and then work out the meaning together by looking at how they were used in the story and thinking about the root of the word.

As an after reading activity the students discuss the topic in groups and then write about the young man’s life using some of the new words.

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### Ask a colleague!

Talk to other teachers about the ideas in this programme and keep a list of useful ideas.

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### Programme 5: Homework – teacher support worksheet

Programme five looks at homework, something we are familiar with from when we were learners and something which many teachers give to their students regularly.

However, **Kalian** from India, is absolutely opposed to giving homework to his students because they already spend long days at school:

***‘so I want them spend quality time in the classroom. And to learn interacting with their teachers and their peers, rather than going back to home and not to enjoy any time’***

He is also concerned that parents may help them with their homework.

**Abdul**, who teaches in Nigeria, feels that parents should take an interest in their children’s homework:

***‘it will show the parents what the manner of learning is taking place in the school.’***

Parents can also be encouraged to ensure that their children have time and a place to study, so homework can provide a useful link between school and home.

Abdul also considers that that the results of homework are useful to teachers and to the school itself:

***‘It gives feedback to the school administrators or to the teacher itself about the quality of work that he or she is doing.’***

**Natalia**, a teacher from Russia, and Abdul both think that homework gives students the opportunity for extra practice. Natalia, who teaches writing, also feels that the class time is too short to complete a piece of writing and uses this time to prepare her students for a homework writing task.

#### Over to you!

How often do you give homework to your students?

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#### Ask a colleague!

What are the main reasons for giving homework? Discuss this with another teacher and make a list below:

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In another programme teachers say that they don’t always use the course book in the class but they can use activities from them to help students consolidate what they have learned:

***‘So for now we go back to page 92 – that will be homework.’ (Tjara)***

Other teachers set other kinds of activities for homework. **Mrs Chitandra**, from Sri Lanka, has been teaching adjectival clauses and asks her students to write five sentences for homework using them. She sets up the task clearly in class making sure that the task is short and follows up the focus of the lesson.

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**Sister Theresia**, a teacher in southern Africa, asks students to go out and find real examples of English, and bring them back to the next lesson. She wants them to look and listen and make notes to become more aware of how English is used and also to notice any mistakes.

This type of information activity is something that appeals to Adrossi, an Afghani teacher, too:

***‘I always gave home work for students – for every student – to prepare some topic about news or about some other things. Then tomorrow they explain in the class and students give a lot of information.’***

Adrossi points out that by using English students are learning it. Short presentations with a lively topic can help this. Responses to the presentations can be done in groups with the teacher monitoring the discussions.

Abdul points out that simpler types of this activity can also be done by younger learners or beginners. He links a simple task such as making a list of objects at home that contain the letter ‘A’ to the skill of speaking by getting students to say what they have found in class.

Students become familiar with homework being set as they progress through school and can complete more open ended tasks as they develop.

***‘OK I want to give you something as a homework your homework is to write a letter to a friend, about.....’***  
***(Hilya, a secondary school teacher in Namibia)***

Hilya stresses that homework reminds learners of what they have done in class and her students appreciate this:

***‘the teacher is teaching you, and you go and do your homework, and try it out and the next day you know how to do it.’*** *(one of Hilya’s students)*

**Programme Summary:** Not everyone thinks homework is a good thing. However, those some of those teachers that do give homework agree that class time is often very short so it is needed to allow students reflect on what they’ve learnt.

Homework can reinforce what we have taught and is a chance for weaker students to catch up. The result of the homework will also tell you how your students are doing.

It can be a bridge between the school and the home. Parents can be encouraged to help students find time to study.

Homework tasks can vary enormously: the follow up exercise in the text book, some sentences written by students using a grammar point you’ve taught, a letter to a friend or a research task to find things out and bring back ideas or information to class.

It is important to make your instructions clear and, according to some teachers, give out homework regularly and for it to reflect what you have taught and practised in class.

### Ask a colleague!

Talk to other teachers about the ideas in this programme and keep a list of useful ideas.

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### Programme 6: Effective correction techniques in the English classroom – teacher support worksheet

In TeachingEnglish Radio teachers from around the world share their ideas on how to teach English, especially in situations with large classes and difficult conditions. Our topic today is ‘effective correction techniques in the English classroom’.

Teachers tell us that making mistakes is all part of learning, but how we deal with errors depends on our objective.

Laura from Argentina says there is a big difference between activities where the aim is ‘fluency’ and activities which are intended to improve ‘accuracy’.

***‘if it’s really a fluency activity, then I think it’s best for the teacher just to take notes while students express themselves, and try not to interfere with their fluency’***

Laura isn’t suggesting that we ignore mistakes but making notes allows us to deal with them later. Fluency activities, such as discussions, allow students to experiment with the English they’ve learnt and gain confidence at expressing themselves. We can point out one or two things:

***‘but only if it interferes with the meaning - that is to say - if it’s a communication problem.’ (Laura)***

When the objective is to be accurate then the teacher needs to ensure that everyone is using the grammar effectively. However, Laura also suggests making a note of mistakes and dealing with them later.

She suggests a few techniques for dealing with errors, such as using gestures to show that a verb should be in the past or pointing to an ‘S’ on the board to remind students of third person endings such as ‘he walks’. These techniques indicate that a student has made a mistake and gives them the opportunity to correct this themselves.

#### Over to you!

When do you correct errors that your students make while they are speaking?

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#### Ask a colleague!

What silent prompts e.g. gestures or drawings could you use to help students to think about their errors and quickly correct themselves.? Discuss this with another teacher and make a list below:

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Laura’s techniques help students identify and correct errors themselves. Sister Theresa, working in Northern Namibia, also uses this strategy. She gives her large class of intermediate students texts which contain a number of errors. They identify errors and compare what they find in pairs or groups of three. They then discuss how to correct them and share that in a larger group. Sister Theresa’s students appreciate what they learn about error correction:

***‘it is important that we all acknowledge that we all make mistakes in language and then we can start working on improving on them together.’ (one of Sister Theresa’s students)***

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It is important that students see error correction as a positive experience and not something to be embarrassed about. Teachers like Laura and Sister Theresia monitor and make a note as they go round. They can then compile a list of typical errors. This means that the class as a whole can think about the mistakes they make while learning to help each other and 'peer correct' in a positive way.

Nerissa, a teacher in the Philippines, also distinguishes between accuracy and fluency in her writing activities. A less controlled task that gives students a chance to express themselves in writing should not be treated in the same way as a grammar activity. Nerissa explains:

***'what our teachers do is come up with two different activities. The first writing activity will be for content ... the teacher will comment on the content itself. And then in a separate session, in a grammar session, she will be discussing those errors.'***

Kondwani, from Malawi, also points out that peer correction is possible with writing activities and if a mark isn't given initially, this is less threatening for students:

***'they can come together, look at each other's texts and perhaps assist each other through their writing – because no one will be shy about the lower mark that they got, anyway.'***

Laura reminds us that all error correction can be threatening and so we should be sensitive in the way we approach it in class.

**Programme Summary:** Teachers agree that errors are a natural part of the learning process and how we deal with them depends on whether we are focussed on accuracy or fluency.

When we are presenting and practising new language it is very important that all the students are using the correct model. So the teacher models and corrects any mistakes during this phase.

When we are focussed on fluency – and wish to make students feel confident about expressing themselves – we don't rush to correct, we make a note and take a look at the end, together with the students.

We can create materials based on our students' regular errors, for them to identify and correct.

We can make students aware of their mistake so they can correct it themselves. There are lots of ways to correct spoken errors with gestures or with prompts using drawings

When the content of written work is important don't correct it for grammar errors at the same time. Keep your students motivated by encouraging them. It's not always necessary to give a mark – especially when they've made an effort!

### Ask a colleague!

Talk to other teachers about the ideas in this programme and keep a list of useful ideas.

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### Programme 7: Marking written work – teacher support worksheet

TeachingEnglish Radio aims to promote the sharing of ideas among teachers to improve teaching and learning particularly if you are working with large classes in difficult conditions. The subject for this programme is how to encourage accuracy in written work and how to use a marking scheme.

**Hilya**, who works in Namibia, wants her class to do some homework based on what they have been studying:

***‘your homework is to go and write a letter to a friend about the story of Peter Aconja’***

Very often teachers collect all the homework, identify every single error, cross out all the wrong words, write in the correct form and a few comments and return the work with a grade. Is the most effective way to correct or the most efficient use of a teacher’s time?

**Emma**, from Cameroon, is worried that this can be demotivating to students:

***‘they just get angry when you’ve written all those red long sentences on their scripts. And generally, they don’t even read it.’***

**Nerissa** in the Philipines also thinks that red pen on students’ work affects the psychologically:

***‘So we use the green ink and the violet ink for marking the grammar errors on the writing activity.’***

Many teachers suggest that instead of putting in the corrections we should gradually introduce and teach a marking scheme which helps our students to work out their errors themselves. Brenda, a British Council teacher in Mozambique, explains:

***‘when we are marking, but just write the SP standing for spelling, and GR for grammar, and PREP for preposition and WO for word order and P for punctuation.’***

Brenda says that using the marking scheme is a tool to help them think consciously about the errors they make.

#### Over to you!

How do you correct errors that your students make in their writing?

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#### Ask a colleague!

What letters or symbols could you use to help students to think about their errors and work out how to correct themselves? Discuss this with another teacher and make a list below:

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**Candida** thinks that it is alright to correct lower levels by showing them the correct form or the correct punctuation but as they develop their writing you should make them think for themselves.

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Brenda also points out that students gain a lot from discussing their writing in groups and 'peer correcting' their work:

***'compare what each other has written and how best he was supposed to write it. It helps students to be open minded, have more ideas from others'***

This can also work starting as a whole class activity. A teacher in Afghanistan gives his students some sentences to write for homework. The next lesson he writes some typical errors on the board and invites students to identify the errors and correct them. From there the class can work in smaller groups and help correct each other's homework sentences. The teacher can then feedback to the class by writing some good examples on the board that he has collected from around the class.

Kondwani, a teacher from Malawi, thinks that having a marking scheme and using peer correction can help reduce the workload on teachers who have large classes and can help the learners to see where they went wrong.

Emma explains that she tries to write encouraging remarks on her students' work:

***'I try as much as possible to say, 'You have good ideas, but your problem is just with this'. So I can give it one general comment to avoid writing so many comments on the script.'***

**Programme Summary:** Many teachers think that covering our students' written work with red ink and corrections can be very demotivating.

Instead of writing in corrections, we can gradually introduce a marking scheme. This will help learners to think for themselves and become more aware of their mistakes.

One basic marking scheme, from a teaching centre in Mozambique, highlights errors using 'SP' for spelling, 'GR' for grammar, 'PREP' for preposition, 'P' for punctuation and 'WO' for word order.

The important thing is to introduce your scheme gradually and make sure your students understand it and have time in class to check their work.

Some teachers get their students to use 'peer correction' – they work in small groups and identify their errors together. This helps them become more responsible for their own learning, and in a large class it helps the teacher too!

And don't forget that compliments will encourage your students

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### Ask a colleague!

Talk to other teachers about the ideas in this programme and keep a list of useful ideas.

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### Programme 8: Students working together – teacher support worksheet

Our topic for this programme is about ‘students working together’ developing their English and becoming more independent of you - the teacher! Although teachers around the world may not all agree with each other on the different ways to encourage this, they do agree that students can learn to help each other:

**Kondwani** from Malawi explains one of the benefits of getting students to work more independently in his country:

***“I think it’s useful because it makes them not rely on the teacher only ... and I think in times when fewer and fewer teachers are being trained, I think it makes sense to let students learn from each other rather than relying only on the teacher.”***

Teachers like Kandwani want their students to realise that English exists in the real world not only in the classroom. They can use it to communicate with each other and take more responsibility for their learning. In order to do this, we need to introduce classroom activities such as pair work and group work where the focus is not always on listening to the teacher.

**Victoria**, who teaches in Zambia, thinks that even young learners can get involved in this type of activity. She points out that topics should be something that children are familiar with and can easily handle:

***“It is usually on something that has already been introduced, and the topic is written on the board”***

She then gets them to expand upon this initial work in small groups of four or five children.

***“I used a lot of presentations, it didn’t matter how old the children were, but I think they enjoy most when they share with their friends.”***

Afghan teacher Nadima, encourages students to think for themselves through using creative quizzes where the students come up with the questions.

#### Over to you!

How often do you get your students to work in pairs or small groups?

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#### Ask a colleague!

What ways can you encourage your students to work more independently of the teacher? Discuss this with another teacher and make some notes below:

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However, not all teachers agree on the best methods of encouraging students working independently.

**Abdul**, a teacher in Nigeria, asks groups of students to prepare and make a presentation and then the others in the class peer review it.

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**Natalia** from Russia, however, outlines a problem she faces with this technique:

***“they give everybody an excellent review just because they do not want to say ‘well, you are my friend, I am not running you down’.”***

Her students don't provide effective feedback because they feel it will have a negative effect on their friends' marks for the activity.

Abdul explains his solution to the problem:

***“I assure them that your criticism will not reflect the marks I give, but will help to improve the work your friends present. In that way they are confident to criticise.”***

He also says that once the ground rules are set for constructive criticism, focussed on the review, students don't use negative or damaging criticism. In response to the review he sets questions for his students to reflect upon and consider how they would improve their work.

Natalia does, however, ask her higher level students to review or edit each other's writing.

***“at the end of the course everybody said it was their favourite thing to do.”***

Kondwani feels that students can work together to produce written work. He gives them a topic and they work together to write something about that topic. he explains:

***“The teacher would just give them guidelines on what they can include in their composition ... they can start developing the paragraphs together.”***

This approach needs preparation by the teacher as the students will need help with both language and structure.

**Emma**, who works in Cameroon, introduces collaborative writing in different ways. In small groups her students write a sentence, perhaps about what they did yesterday, and then they pass the paper on and the next student in the group adds another sentence.

***“They get to write something and then it goes around the five members of that group and they will have written something.”***

She also introduces a situation for her students to produce longer pieces of imaginative writing, in this case the beginning of a story about two donkeys. The students continue discussing and writing together about how the situation develops.

**Programme Summary:** We can encourage our students to help each other by getting them to work collaboratively - in pairs and groups for at least some parts of each lesson. Even younger students can hold simple group discussions or give presentations to each other – you need to create the right atmosphere and help them by pre-teaching key language.

Students at higher levels can help each other by peer correction, peer reviewing and peer editing. Some writing activities can also be collaborative – from simple 'sentence by sentence' writing to planning a composition in a group on a chosen topic.

We need to set up and manage these activities up carefully but students share ideas and knowledge and enjoy the process of becoming more independent.

### Ask a colleague!

Talk to other teachers about the ideas in this programme and keep a list of useful ideas.

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### Programme 9: Pronunciation – teacher support worksheet

TeachingEnglish Radio focusses on large classrooms where books and resources may be limited, but teachers work hard to make their lessons effective. This programme looks at ‘teaching pronunciation’.

Pronunciation practice can include sounds and, as Helder from Brazil points out, rhythm, intonation and stress.

**Victoria**, a Zambian teacher, also explains that teaching pronunciation also identifies differences between English and the students’ native language and tries to overcome problems that this may cause.

**“children have got the problem of mother tongue interference, so they really need to start from grade one!”**

**Victoria** and Kazimierz, who has taught in Poland and other countries, think that it is important to model correct pronunciation from when new language is introduced and practised.

**“Modelling means saying the new language slowly and then isolating the sounds. So in that word ‘sounds’ you might want to say ‘S’ ‘S-sounds’.” (Kazimierz)**

He also uses the example of ‘have to’ when he talks about the importance of how sounds change when words are put together.

**“I will model ‘have to’ (həʔ to) and get students to repeat it ... it should be ‘haf to’ – an ‘f’ sound”**

He stresses that it is important this pronunciation is taught along with the use of the expression.

#### Over to you!

When do you practise pronunciation with your students, as new language is introduced or as special parts of a lesson?

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#### Ask a colleague!

What particular pronunciation problems do your students have when practising English? Discuss this with another teacher and make some notes below:

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Victoria uses songs, poems and rhymes to help her young learners with pronunciation. She also notices problems they are having when they make short presentations to the class and can then work on them later.

Helder runs a special pronunciation class and explains that the rhythm of English, as a stressed based language, is different to the students’ own Portuguese, which is a syllable-based language.

He starts by writing words that are stressed on the board and gets students to say them one after another like a chant. He then introduces more words between the stressed words and shows that the rhythm stays the same.

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***“You - me - him - her...”***

***You - and then me- and then him - and then her...***

***You - and then it’s me - and then it’s him - and then it’s her”***

Even though there are now more words English is stress-timed, which means they all fit into the same pattern *da-di-da-di-da-di-da*.

He does a similar exercise using sentences that have more syllables than the previous one.

***“... ‘Big blue house...’ ‘Pretty ancient house’... ‘Strangely... beautiful ...house.’”***

Students repeat the sentences and realize that the stress rather than the syllables are important in the rhythm or the sentence. Students then produce their own practice sentences each with longer words in than the previous one. Hedler walks around making sure his students have got the right idea.

Not all teachers want to do a special pronunciation lesson. Kazimierz feels that his students benefit more from him mixing pronunciation in with his other teaching, using short activities to help them.

Victoria and Kazimierz both recognize the problem of ‘mother tongue interference’. There are always sounds that are difficult to distinguish because we don’t have them in our first language. One popular way for students to work on this is to practise ‘minimal pairs’; pairs of words that are identical in sound except for one difference.

For example, Polish learners of English often can’t hear the difference between ‘w’ and ‘v’. Kazimierz suggests using pairs of words with these sounds in such as whale and vale, wet and vet, wow and vow. Each word can be written on a card or you can even use a drawing to represent the word.

***“your students repeat the words, you can pair the words up to see if they can hear the difference.”***

Minimal pairs can help your students first hear and then produce the sounds that are difficult for them. The teacher usually says each word and asks if the students can hear the difference, for example by holding up flash cards and asking if it is A or B. The teacher helps further by modelling the difference and showing how the sound is made with the tongue, lips and teeth.

***“after a production phase you they can then try it out with their partners. You can do some very nice games with minimal pairs.” (Kazimierz)***

**Programme Summary:** Pronunciation involves rhythm, intonation and stress as well as the sounds of English. We need to ensure that students hear and practise pronunciation of new language as we go along. We can model the sounds and get students to repeat until they are confident.

With young children we can start early by using songs, poems and repeating new words aloud.

To help distinguish between different sounds – particularly ones that are difficult because of students’ first language – we can introduce minimal pairs. The activity goes from recognising the difference to saying the sounds correctly.

### **Ask a colleague!**

Talk to other teachers about the ideas in this programme and keep a list of useful ideas.

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### Programme 10: A visit to a pronunciation class – teacher support worksheet

This is the second programme focussing on teaching pronunciation and in this one we visit a pronunciation class in Brazil.

From the first programme we know that rhythm, stress and intonation are all important aspects of pronunciation. We try to give our students a good model of spoken English from the very beginning. As there many different Englishes in the modern world, our model doesn't have to be British English. What's important is that the students can communicate clearly and naturally. It's also important while they are learning that when they see a word or sentence they should have a good idea how to say it.

**Helder**, a teacher in Brazil, is teaching a special demonstration class focussing on pronunciation. His students have been learning English for some time and know how to pronounce a lot of words now. However, in the first part of this class Helder teaches them some aspects of intonation which shows them that the way they use their voice can change the meaning of what someone says.

He asks them to say the sentence "It's one o' clock". He then gets them to imagine different reasons they are saying it and saying it to reflect the feelings they have about this:

***"Now this is the time that you are going to start a very difficult test...that you are afraid of, How would you say this sentence? ... OK what if your team is going to play in the finals of the world cup and the match starts at this time?"***

The students say the sentence very differently according to the meaning that they want to convey; they are worried about the test or they are really excited about the football match.

Helder gets his students to practise this principle in pairs using just one word, "Hello". As he walks around he gives them different situations so that they can show how they feel through the intonation of the word:

***Teacher: Good. Continue. People, you just won the lottery! What do you say?***

***Students: 'Hello!' (huge cries of amazement and pleasure)***

***Teacher: Now people...you are in a funeral, (sad voice)...what do you say? Students: 'Hello' (quiet and sad)***

***The teacher also shows that intonation can be used to give the opposite meaning of what is actually said:***

***"Oh, this is a very clean room, or you can say 'oh it's a very clean room! What do I mean?"***

#### Over to you!

What parts of pronunciation do you mostly teach, individual sounds or stress and intonation too?

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#### Ask a colleague!

How can you make pronunciation practice interesting and fun for students? Discuss this with another teacher and make some notes below:

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In the second part of Helder's special pronunciation class the students look at word stress. This means knowing which part of a word to emphasise when there are two syllables or more. This is something important to be aware of as we learn new words.

Helder introduces the idea by showing a picture of a policeman and someone that the policeman is questioning. He reads two sentences that the policeman says:

***"I'll have to record our conversation" . . . and then he says "We have to keep a record of all our interviews".***

The teacher writes the sentences on the board. Then he gets the students to notice that 'record' as a verb has stress on the last syllable – record. As a noun they notice that the stress is on the first syllable – record. He checks that they have spotted the general rule by doing something similar with 'suspect' in different sentences.

As pair work practice, Helder asks his students to make sentences with the words he puts on the board: increase, permit, combat, insult, and rebel. They use each word twice and put the stress in the correct place according to whether they use it as a noun or a verb. He walks around the class to check everything is going well and then asks some students to say their sentences.

***Student: "It's illegal to own a gun without a permit."***

***Teacher: Permit or Permit?***

***Student: Permit.***

***Teacher: Why permit?***

***Student: Because it's a noun.***

As he checks their understanding it seems clear that Helder's students have now got a good idea of whether a word in a sentence is a verb or a noun and where the stress goes when they say them.

**Programme Summary:** Pronunciation involves rhythm, intonation and stress as well as the sounds of English. We need to ensure that students hear and practise pronunciation of new language as we go along. We can model the sounds and get students to repeat until they are confident.

With young children we can start early by using songs, poems and repeating new words aloud.

To help distinguish between different sounds – particularly ones that are difficult because of students' first language – we can introduce minimal pairs. The activity goes from recognising the difference to saying the sounds correctly.

### **Ask a colleague!**

Talk to other teachers about the ideas in this programme and keep a list of useful ideas.

## An Introduction to Teacher Development

### Programme 11: Teachers' favourite activities – teacher support worksheet

In this programme primary school and secondary school teachers from and around the world share ideas about some of their favourite activities for engaging their students. All of the examples they give are easy to carry out, without special resources.

**Kuheli**, a teacher from India, uses stories to stimulate and encourage his students to use English:

***“it’s not stories from literature always, it might be something funny that happened in my life.”***

He sees this as a good way of creating a relaxed atmosphere and getting his students used to hearing how English is used.

In Sri Lanka students get involved in ‘story circles’ where each one adds a part to the story. They can be guided by links such as, ‘and then...’, ‘however..’, ‘later’ or ‘suddenly..’ which students use to give each stage of their story a new direction.

**Nerissa** from the Philippines also uses stories in both her speaking and writing classes. She puts her students into groups:

***“Each group will be given five different pictures. And each group will write a story based on the pictures.”***

The groups decide on an order for the pictures and then they tell the story as either a writing or a speaking activity. This is a very flexible activity which could be used at almost any level depending on the images you use and how it is set up and developed.

Many teachers collect pictures and prepare sets of ‘flash cards’ which they can use again and again or share them with their colleagues. Often the cards can be used for many different teaching activities.

#### Over to you!

What is your favourite activity? Why do your students like it?

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#### Ask a colleague!

What are some of the activities for different stages of a lesson that work well with your students? Discuss this with another teacher and make some notes below:

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Getting students to write in English usually means writing about things that are very familiar to them, their family and home, their friends or a day in their own life.

Laura, who teaches in Argentina, uses simple activities to get students writing from a very early stage. If students are learning about daily routines, she shows them pictures from a magazine and asks them to write about the person in the picture’s day.

***“they can write short paragraphs using the linking words that you have taught them, like ‘next, later, after that’ . . . and that will help them put the sentences together.” (Laura)***

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**Florence**, a teacher from Cameroon, and Helen, a teacher from Georgia, both use songs with their young learners. As Florence explains:

***“you get the students to sing the songs. And when they sing the songs then you can develop activities from them based on those songs.”***

Helen also uses acting and games with her young learners.

**Brenda** in Malawi says her older students also like using songs in their lessons:

***“it is a gap fill song, so all the places with the past tense are left out so they have to listen and fill in the gaps...and then the second time they check if they have all the words correct.”***

A lot of teachers want to get their students to express their ideas and opinions in English. Laura uses a kind of debate called ‘a balloon debate’. In this a group of people are travelling in the basket of a hot air balloon. Unfortunately it is too heavy and will crash unless one by one, someone jumps out, to save the others. The people in the balloon have to give a good argument to stay. But someone will be voted out.

Laura points out that it’s a very productive activity because her students use:

***“language communicatively, using persuasive language in order to save themselves and save their friends.”***

Oscar a teacher in Columbia has a creative use for dictation with his class. Pairs of students sit back to back, one facing the teacher the other facing away. The teacher reads out a passage and the student facing the teacher only listens while the other writes as much as he or she can. The students swap places and the teacher reads the passage again. Once again the student facing the teacher only listens while the other writes.

The students then compare their versions and discuss how to get the final version:

***“They have to discuss the words and ‘oh this is not the correct word’ or ‘I didn’t get that word’ or ‘which word did you get?’.”***

They can then compare their version with the teacher’s version. Oscar explains why he thinks it is such a useful activity:

***“It involves listening, it involves writing, it involves speaking, it involves pair work and it involves self-correction!”***

**Programme Summary:** Many teachers agree that telling stories is a great way to warm up a lesson and can also be used for speaking and writing activities. Students also enjoy telling stories in a circle, each one inventing the next part. We can also mix up some pictures and in groups students arrange them to create their own story which can lead to speaking and then writing.

Songs are popular with young and old in many parts of the world, and can be used for stress and intonation, vocabulary and even grammar.

You could also use a balloon debate and modern dictation methods.

### Ask a colleague!

Talk to other teachers about the ideas in this programme and keep a list of useful ideas.

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### Programme 11: Teachers' favourite activities – teacher support worksheet

In the final programme of the series, teachers from and around the world share ideas about why they became teachers and what makes teaching English such a rewarding experience for them, despite all the difficulties.

Meganathan from India believes his enjoyment as a teacher comes from being as professional as possible:

***“because every child deserves a good teacher.”***

Hilya, a teacher in Namibia, sees her role as an educator and playing a part in society.

***“education is everywhere in society not just at school; at home, in the streets, everywhere.”***

For Emma, from Cameroon and two teachers from China, Xu and Li, their enjoyment comes from their own enthusiasm for the language itself.

***“What I find most rewarding as a teacher of English is making the language available to someone else.”***  
(Emma)

***“I like to speak English because I think the speaking is very important for communication.”*** (Xu)

***“English is the bridge to know another country.”*** (Li)

Tjara puts lots of energy into her teaching and she clearly enjoys working with the students. This something appreciated by her students:

***“I enjoy our class, because most of the learners in our class, they are active.”***

Tjara explains her love of teaching further:

***“Teaching to me is a great pleasure because of the results, I love the outcome when you see the smiles on their faces when they have succeeded.”***

#### Over to you!

Why did you become an English teacher?

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#### Ask a colleague!

What are some of the most satisfying moments of being a teacher? Discuss this with another teacher and make some notes below:

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Meganathan stresses the importance of caring about our students and caring about their learning. A similar sentiment is shared by Laura, from Argentina, and Candida from Mozambique. As Laura says:

***“working with the language enables you to really touch the lives of many students...”***

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***so we really have the possibility to connect with our students as people”***

***“I think I like the whole environment and the relationship with the students.” (Candida)***

Teachers also feel a sense of pride when they see their students improving.

Kondwani, a teacher from Malawi, knows this feeling from personal experience

***“To see learners making progress with their learning, and excelling – to get selected to go to the university, for example. I think that makes teachers proud of their profession.”***

In South Africa, Sister Theresia realized that her expertise could help transform the lives of others:

***“I thought a little difference that I can make is to be involved myself in teaching the generation that is coming.”***

She also thinks that she couldn't do a job where she wasn't able to talk so much.

Nerissa, from the Philippines, also appreciates the social aspect of the profession. She has linked up with other teachers who support each other professionally and socialise with each other:

***“the relationship doesn't only rely on your work as a teacher but they also go out, they watch movies together, they read books together, so it's just a matter of belonging to a group.”***

Many teachers become teachers because that's what they have always wanted to be. However, some arrive in the profession by chance. This is just what happened to Hilya from Namibia.

***“I didn't think of being a teacher. I wanted to become someone else and suddenly I became a teacher.”***

However, this does not change her enthusiasm or love of teaching. It also gives her the opportunity to continue learning as she goes on.

**Programme Summary:** Many teachers enter the profession because of the human aspect. We all care for our students and enjoy seeing them progress and succeed. Others share a love of language and want to pass this on to their students in order to give them better opportunities in life.

Whatever your motivation, as long as you feel passionately about teaching English, your enthusiasm will undoubtedly rub off onto your students and make you a better teacher!

### **Ask a colleague!**

Talk to other teachers about the ideas in this programme and keep a list of useful ideas.

