

A Glossary of Basic EFL Terms

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This glossary is written for people who have little training or experience in teaching English as a foreign language but who want an understanding of the basic terminology of this field in order to help them in their work or in their studies.

Each term is defined briefly and in some cases reference is then made to specific short sections of books which could help the reader to gain a fuller understanding of the uses of the term. Details of books referred to are given in the bibliography on pages 103-4.

Abbreviations

cf. = compare

∴ = therefore

X = contains an error

Achievement tests

Language tests which test what the learner has been taught.

cf. Attainment tests

Acquisition

The process of picking up a language without formal instruction and without a sustained conscious effort to learn the language. Acquisition usually occurs as a result of highly motivated exposure to the language in use plus the need and opportunity to communicate in the language. Children acquire their first language in this way and are capable of picking up any language anywhere without tuition. Adults are capable of acquiring the ability to communicate in a foreign language in this informal way too but most seem to need some conscious, formal learning as well in order to achieve accuracy.

See Krashen (1981, pp.1-3)

See Learning

Analytical

An analytical approach is one which gets the learners first of all to respond to and use chunks of language which include a variety of structures etc. and then to focus on those structures etc. with which they have problems.

cf. Synthetic

Anaphoric reference

The use of a word or phrase to refer back to a word or group of words previously mentioned. In the following examples, the words with anaphoric reference are in *italics*:

My mother is Hungarian but *she* speaks fluent English.

Mary knows the beer is in the fridge because *she* put *it* there.

Appropriacy

Language use is only really correct if the utterances are appropriate to the situations in which they are used. The roles and status of the language users, the roles and relationships of any other participants, the topic and the setting are some of the situational factors that determine appropriacy of language use. Thus 'That's rubbish', could be appropriate as a matter of disagreement in a discussion in a pub between friends about a football match, but would be inappropriate if used by someone being interviewed by the manager of a company he has applied to join.

Attainment tests

Language tests which seek to discover information about the language abilities of the learner(s). Unlike achievement tests they are not restricted to testing what learners have been taught.

Audio aids

Aids such as radios, record players, tape recorders and language laboratories which help the learners by exposing them to the spoken language.

Audio-lingual approach

An approach to language teaching based on listening and then speaking. It relies heavily on oral imitation, memorization and drills designed to produce correct language habits.

See Behaviourist theories

Audio-visual aids

Aids such as televisions, films and video equipment which allow the learners to see a situation as well as listen to the language used in it.

Aural comprehension

Activities which involve the learners listening to and responding to spoken language.

Authentic materials

Materials such as newspaper articles, brochures, train tickets, letters, advertisements, recordings of the news, airport announcements, etc. which were originally used in real situations and were not designed for use in language teaching. Such materials are used in the classroom to expose the learners to language in real use.

Authentic tasks

Responses to written or spoken material which would be natural to real participants in a real situation. For example, learners in a classroom who read a text telling them what is on at the theatres in a city and then decide which theatre to go to.

Auxiliary verbs

Verbs which help the main verb in an utterance. They either perform a function for the main verb (as in the examples under (a)) or they add to the meaning of the main verb (as in the examples under (b)).

- (a) (i) He *has* gone (i.e. tense formation)
- (ii) *Did* you win? (i.e. question formation)
- (iii) She is coming, *isn't* she? (i.e. question-tag formation)
- (iv) Do you love me?
Of course I *do*. (representing the main verb)
- (b) (i) You *should* work harder.
- (ii) I *must* go now.
- (iii) She *ought* to be ready.

The verbs in italics in (b) are usually referred to as modal verbs.

See Modal verbs

Backwash effect

The effect that the nature of the final examination has on the teaching and learning during a course. An examination which focuses on tests of grammatical knowledge is likely to lead to the teaching and learning of grammatical knowledge in courses preparing candidates for the examination, whereas a communicative examination is likely to encourage communicative approaches and activities in the classroom.

Behaviourist theories

Theories based on the assumption that language learning is a process of habit formation relying on correct imitation and frequent repetition.

cf. Cognitive approaches

Bilingual

A person able to speak a second language as well as if it was his or her first language, or a person with two first languages.

Cf. Multilingual

See First language Second language

Cloze test

A test of language proficiency in which the learner has to fill in blanks in a continuous passage. There are many variations on the cloze test but the basic type involves the setter selecting a passage and then deleting every *n*th word. Most EFL cloze tests require learners to complete a passage from which every seventh or eighth word has been deleted but an advanced level test might be based on a deletion rate of five or six.

See Heaton (1975, pp. 122-124)

Cognitive approaches

Approaches to language teaching which involve the learners thinking about the language and working out rules from examples or instances.

See Examples Instances

Coherence

The linking together of consecutive utterances in accordance with the function of the utterances. Thus an invitation followed by an acceptance or a generalisation followed by an example would be coherent whereas a factual enquiry followed by an anecdote would not be coherent.

A Would you like to come to dinner tomorrow?

B I'd love to. Thanks.

(coherent)

A Could you tell me which platform the London train leaves from, please?

B I went to London last week to see my daughter Alice. She lives in Chelsea, you know.

(not coherent)

See Widdowson (1978, pp. 27-29, pp. 38-44)

Cohesion

The logical linking of consecutive or related utterances.

Example (1)

My father is always tired in the evenings. He goes to work at six in the morning and doesn't get home till seven.

Example (2)

I agree that he's a very experienced player. He's played for Yugoslavia many times and he's played in a European Cup Final. However, I don't think the club should pay all that money for him.

See Widdowson (1978, pp. 24-27 and pp. 32-38)

Collocation

Words which are frequently used together are said to be collocates. Thus 'pillow', 'bed', 'sleep', and 'sheet' are collocates but 'cushion' and 'bed' are not; 'pick' and 'flowers' are collocates but 'pick' and 'grass' are not.

Communication gap

The disparity in knowledge and experience that exists between people involved in

communication with each other. The wife who asks her husband, 'Who won?', the doctor who asks his patient, 'How do you feel today?' and the policeman who directs a motorist to, 'Turn right at the cinema', are doing so because of a 'communication gap'.

Much of the interaction between the teacher and the learners in the classroom is extremely artificial because there is no 'communication gap' between the participants. For example:

Teacher I'm drawing on the board. What am I doing?

Learners You're drawing on the board.

Teacher Am I writing on the floor?

Learners No, you're not writing on the floor.

In order to give a group of learners opportunities to use language in a meaningful way, it is important to make sure that there are communication gaps in the situations in which the learners are asked to perform (e.g. the learners do not know the answers to questions a situation encourages them to ask.)

Note Some books use the term 'information gap' instead of 'communication gap'.

Communicative activities

Activities designed to get learners to use the language for communication rather than for language practice. The main aims of these activities are to help the learners to gain confidence, to become more fluent and to acquire language through exposure and use. They are not designed to provide practice and correction of specific language items.

See Acquisition Fluency Use

Communicative approaches

Approaches to teaching EFL which stress the importance of learning through using the language and which give the learners frequent opportunities to interact with each other and with the teacher in 'natural' situations.

See Acquisition Interaction Use

Communicative competence

A measure of a learner's ability to achieve successful communication in the language he is learning.

Communicative effect

Whenever we use language we do so to achieve a purpose. The communicative effect of an utterance is a measure of the extent to which the purpose of the utterance is achieved.

For example:

A Why don't you use sand?

B That's a good idea. I think I will.

A has achieved his purpose in getting a suggestion accepted.

Communicative tests

Tests designed to discover the learners' abilities to communicate in English rather than to test their knowledge of particular language items or aspects of the language.

cf. Discrete point tests

Community language learning

A method of language learning which relies upon the learners to provide their own syllabus. The learners form a circle with their chairs and start a conversation. The teacher (referred to as a 'knower' or 'resource person') stays outside the circle and waits for a learner to ask for help. When this happens he whispers an English translation or a corrected English version for the learner to then use in the conversation. The group conversation is recorded and transcribed and is later analysed by the

learners and the teacher. This analysis then provides the basis for the teaching of particular language points.

See Stevick (1976, pp. 125-133)

See Learner centred approaches

Competence

A confusing term because it is used with different meanings by different writers.

It was used to refer to an idealised grammar which was supposed to underlie the ideal user's language performance but is nowadays mainly used to refer to knowledge about a language as opposed to the ability to use the language in real situations.

See Communicative competence

Connotation

The associations which a word or group of words has for a particular language user or community of language users. Thus 'rebel' and 'freedom fighter' could be used by two different speakers to refer to the same person. The two phrases have the same referent but different connotations. In the same way 'conservative' might have the same referent but different connotations for different people.

cf. Denotation

See Ellis and Tomlinson (1980, 'Implied Meaning' pp. 70-71)

Context

The situation in which an utterance is used. To understand the context you need to have information about the setting, the topic and the roles and relationships of the participants in the interaction. Thus if you wanted information about the context of this utterance: 'There is a two year guarantee but most of our clients find they don't need it', you would need to know where the interaction was taking place (e.g. car showroom), what was being discussed (e.g. an Alfa Romeo Sprint Veloce) and what the roles (e.g. salesman/potential customer), relationship (e.g. strangers) and purposes (e.g. sell a car/find out information) of the participants were.

The context is often referred to as the situational context to differentiate it from the linguistic context (or cotext). However some writers use 'context' to refer to both the situational environment and the linguistic environment (i.e. the other utterances used before and after the one being referred to).

See Cotext

Contracted forms

Verb forms which are shortened in informal speech, for example

- 'I've, she's, they'd etc.

Contrastive analysis

Comparing two different languages to discover in what ways they are the same, similar and different in order to predict likely learner errors or explain discovered errors.

See Abbot and Wingard (1981, pp. 229-30)

See Interference and Transfer

Controlled exercise

A practice exercise in which the learners are told exactly what to do and how to do it. It is hoped that nearly all the learners will get nearly all the exercise right and will therefore develop correct habits and gain useful knowledge about the language.

See Ellis and Tomlinson (1980, pp. 14-15 and pp. 203-206)

(Note Mechanical exercise may be used to mean the same as Controlled exercise)

Correction

The putting right of a particular instance of language use which is considered faulty. For example,

Peter his records are many. X
Peter has a lot of records. ✓

See Instance and Generalisation
cf. Remediation

Cotext

The language which is used before and after a particular utterance being referred to. This is often known as the linguistic environment or the linguistic context of the utterance.

In the example below, the cotext of the utterance, 'If only I'd known,' is in italics

A. *Why the hell did you tell the Director?*

B. *If only I'd known. Nobody told me who he was. I'd have kept quiet if I'd known.*

cf. Context

Creation

The ability of a language learner to produce utterances which he has never heard or read and therefore cannot possibly have remembered and reproduced. The learner creates by making use of subconscious generalisations based upon his exposure to the language in use.

See Generalisation

Creole

A language which has developed as a result of a combination between local languages and an outside language and which has become the native language of a community of its speakers.

cf. Pidgin

Cue cards

- (1) Cards shown to learners to guide their responses in a drill.
- (2) Cards given to participants in a role-play or simulation to tell them who they are and what they are going to do. Note These are sometimes called role cards.

Example:

Salesman

You are a car salesman and you have not sold a car all week. Try to persuade the next person who comes into the showroom to test drive the new XY car...

Cyclical syllabus

A syllabus in which each particular aspect of the language occurs many times. Thus suggestions might be introduced with the pattern 'How about verb + ing' then four weeks later 'Why don't you + verb' is presented and then four weeks later both patterns are revised and 'You could try verb + ing' is presented.

cf. Linear syllabus

Declarative

A declarative sentence is one in which the subject precedes its verb. For example:
Peter collapsed with only a few hundred yards to go.

(subject) (verb)

One of the main functions of declarative sentences is to make a statement containing

information. However they are also used for such functions as criticism, warning, disagreement, requesting etc. For example:

Excuse me, I'm trying to get to the station.
(request for directions)

cf. Interrogative and Imperative.

Deductive

Referring to the process of consciously working out rules of the language from an analysis of samples of the language.

See Cognitive approaches

cf. Inductive

Denotation

The actual thing referred to by a word or group of words as opposed to ideas or feelings associated with the word. Thus the denotive meaning of *bow-tie* includes only the normal shape, size, materials etc. of the actual item but does not include its association with formal dress and formal occasions.

Diagnostic test

A test designed to discover what a learner or group of learners can do and cannot do in the language. Such a test would be used at the beginning of a course to provide information on which schemes of work could be based or during a course to provide information relating to a particular area of language scheduled to be taught to the learners.

See Ellis and Tomlinson (1980, pp. 270-274)

Dialect

A variety of a language which differs from its standard form(s) in pronunciation (i.e. accent), in grammar and in vocabulary. Dialects can be regional (e.g. Cockney in the East End of London) or social (e.g. 'Black English' in New York).

See Varieties

Dialogue

A conversation presented to the learners to exemplify certain aspects of the spoken language and then used as the basis of practice activities.

See Rivers and Temperley (1978, pp. 24-40)

Dictation

An exercise or test involving the learners writing down the language which is spoken to them. It is claimed that what the learners write reveals evidence about many aspects of their language ability.

See Rivers and Temperley (1978, pp. 269-70)

See Global tests

Direct method

An approach to language learning based on induction rather than on deduction and thus on learning the grammar of a language through practice of it rather than through being taught about it.

See Inductive and Deductive

Discourse

Language used in a real situation for real purposes. In other words language as social behaviour. Such a use of language invariably involves interaction (e.g. between participants in a conversation; between reader and writer in a newspaper article; between lecturer and listeners) and the combining and relating of utterances.

See Coherence

Fluency

The ability to use a language spontaneously and confidently and without undue pauses and hesitations.

Form

An analysis of form would be concerned with such features of expression as pronunciation, spelling, word order, tense formation, grammatical agreement, gender, plurality, etc. It would not be concerned with the meanings these forms are used to convey. For example:

Has he finished his dinner yet?

An analysis of the *form* of the above sentence would describe the subject-verb inversion, the agreement between *he* and *has*, the form of the past participle (*finished*), the form of the present perfect tense, the form of the possessive pronoun (*his*) the position in the sentence of the object (*dinner*) and the position of the adverb (*yet*).

cf. Function**Formulaic expressions**

Expressions which are learned as whole utterances (for example, How do you do?) or as patterns which the learner can use by inserting a relevant word in a vacant slot (for example, What does _____ mean?).

Fossilization

Fossilization occurs when a learner's use of the target language ceases to develop and therefore his *errors* become permanent. This usually happens when the learner has attained his or her inner goal (e.g. easy communication in everyday face to face situations) and there is no longer any real motivation for further development.

See Interlanguage Target language

Function

An analysis of the functions of an utterance would be concerned with its meanings and with the purpose it is being used to achieve. For example:

Don't worry, I go there on Tuesday afternoon.

In the above example the simple present tense (*go*) is used with the function of definite future arrangement and the main *function* of the utterance is probably to reassure somebody that a visit they are suggesting has already been included in an itinerary.

cf. Form**Functional approach**

An approach to language teaching which stresses the purposes for which expressions are used. Thus, instead of teaching the structures of English (e.g. the tenses, types of clauses, the passive, etc.) a course based on a functional approach would teach how to express agreement, how to decline an invitation, how to give directions, how to ask for information etc.

See Exponents

Functional syllabus

A syllabus listing which functions and which of their exponents are to be taught. For example:

Disagreement

I'm not sure I agree.

I don't go along with you there.

That's not completely true. etc.

See Function Exponents

Generalisations

Assumptions about patterns of the language made by the learner as a result of his exposure to it. For example, many elementary learners make the false generalisation that the past simple tense is always formed by adding -ed to the verb (e.g. *showed*) and thus make such errors as *X buyed X*.

These generalisations are made unconsciously as a result of the brain processing a number of similar utterances.

Making such generalisations is an important part of language learning and is the basis of first language acquisition. The learner revises his generalisations as he receives more 'information' from the language he is exposed to and from reactions to the language he uses himself.

Genuine text

A continuous 'passage' of written or spoken language originally used to achieve real communication but subsequently used in the classroom as a source of exposure to language in use for the learners. Many books use the term *authentic material* with this same meaning.

See Authentic materials Authentic tasks and Text

Global tests

Tests designed to assess learners' overall language ability rather than to assess particular skills. Cloze tests and dictation tests are the most frequently used global tests.

See Cloze tests

Dictation

Graded readers

Books written or simplified so as to be suitable for use as extensive reading material for particular levels of learners.

See Extensive reading

Grading

Deciding on the particular order in which you are going to deal with selected teaching points.

Grammar - translation method

A method in which the learner is taught the grammar of the target language and is asked to use the rules he has learned to help him translate from the target language into his native language and vice-versa.

Guided exercises

Practice exercises in which the learners are told what to do and then are given advice on how to do it. The learners have to make some decisions of their own and to create some of their own expressions. For example:

Write a paragraph saying which towns you have visited since coming to Britain. Remember to use the present perfect when you do not refer to a particular time and the simple past when you do refer to a particular time. e.g. I have been to Stratford twice. I went there during my first weekend in England and I went there again last weekend.

See Ellis and Tomlinson (1980, p. 204 and pp. 206-10).
cf. Controlled exercise

Humanistic approaches

Approaches to language teaching which stress the importance of treating the learners as individual human beings and require the teacher to be a sympathetic counsellor/guide/friend rather than an authority and instructor.

Illocutionary act

The purpose(s) for which an utterance is made. Thus in the following example John is performing the illocutionary act of inviting and Mary is performing the illocutionary acts of politely declining and justifying.

John: Would you like to go to the cinema with me tonight?

Mary: I'm sorry, I can't. I've got a lot of work to do tonight.

See Widdowson (1978, pp. 22-24)

See Function and Discourse

Imperative

The form of the verb used to give orders, warnings, suggestions, instructions and directions. For example:

Sit down.

Look out.

Do it in rough first.

Boil for three minutes.

Turn left.

The Imperative is the same form of the verb as the infinitive without *to*.

i.e. infinitive = to stop

imperative = stop

Inductive

Referring to the process of 'gaining' generalisations about the language as a result of practising sentences which exemplify them.

See Generalisations and Examples

cf. Deductive

Information gap

See Communication gap

Input

The language gained from exposure which is available to the brain for language processing.

See Exposure and Intake

Instances

Utterances used in real discourse.

See Utterance and Discourse

cf. Examples

Intake

The language which the learner unconsciously selects for acquisition from all the language in use he is exposed to.

See Acquisition and Input

Intensive reading/listening

Reading or listening to a short text with as much concentration and understanding as possible.

See Ellis and Tomlinson (1980, p. 169)

cf. Extensive reading/listening

Interaction

Communication between people involving the use of language (e.g. between two people having a conversation, between writer and readers, between speaker and listeners etc.)

See Discourse

Interference

The negative influence of one language whilst learning another language. Approximately ten to fifteen percent of L2 errors are caused by such interference – usually as a result of the learner either assuming that similar L1 and L2 patterns are identical or of using familiar (i.e. L1) generalisations when (s)he has not yet formed a relevant L2 generalisation. Most L1 interference errors are either pronunciation or vocabulary errors; very few errors of grammar or syntax are attributable to L1 interference.

See Generalisations L1 and L2 and Transfer

Interlanguage

The language spoken by a learner of a second or foreign language. It is called an interlanguage because it is felt to be in between the learner's first language and the language he is learning. As the learner progresses his interlanguage moves further away from the first language and closer to the language that is being learned. However, the learner still retains features which are peculiar to the interlanguage and which have no apparent connection with the first language or the language he is learning.

See Richards (1978, pp. 72–78)

See Errors

Interrogative

The interrogative is used to ask questions seeking information and for such other functions as replying to criticism, (*Have I ever let you down?*); expressing annoyance (*Haven't you finished yet?*); and expressing regret (*Why didn't I listen to him?*).

The form of the interrogative is usually: Auxiliary verb + Subject + Verb?

e.g.

| | | |
|---------|------|---------|
| Has | he | gone? |
| Did | Mary | finish? |
| Are | they | coming? |
| Why did | you | do it? |

cf. Declarative and Imperative

Intonation

The rise and fall of the voice used to indicate the function(s) of an utterance. Thus, 'A drink', said with the voice falling at the end could be the answer to a question whereas if it was said with the voice rising at the end it could be an invitation.

See Function

L1

The learner's first language, e.g. English for an Englishman.

See EFL Mother tongue and Native language

L2

A language being learned which is not the learner's first language, i.e. a second or foreign language, e.g. English for a Frenchman.

See EFL ESL

Language laboratory

A room where learners can listen to and respond to spoken language on tape. Each learner has his or her own tape recorder and earphones and works at his or her own speed.

Language shock

The fear of making errors when using a foreign language. Some learners are so afraid of being humiliated that they are reluctant to use the language at all. Such learners need confidence rather than correction. Role-play, simulation and other communication activities can help by focusing their attention on content and communication rather than expression.

See Communication activities Role-play Simulation :

Learner-centred approaches

Approaches to language teaching based on the needs and interests of the learners rather than on a fixed syllabus or coursebook and the dictates of a teacher. Such approaches would ideally involve the learners in decisions about what and how they learn and would require the teacher to be an organiser and guide rather than an instructor.

Learning

The process of gaining knowledge about a language as a result of formal instruction by a teacher, conscious effort by the learner and the practice of selected and specific language items and structures.

of Acquisition

Lexical item

A word or group of words used in a particular utterance with a specific meaning, for example *wonderful* and *piece of music* in:
That's a wonderful piece of music.

Lexis

Another name for vocabulary (i.e. the words in a language which communicate meaning).

Linear syllabus

A syllabus which is organised and ordered on the principle of adding teaching points to each other one at a time. Most such syllabuses are also progressive syllabuses i.e. learning the first teaching point helps in learning the second teaching point which helps in learning the third, etc.

(For example (1) Personal pronouns; (2) present tense of the verb *to be*; (3) present continuous tense.)

See Synthetic

Lingua franca

A language which is used in an area to facilitate communication between speakers of different languages. For example, in Vanuatu in the south-west Pacific the 100 000 indigenous inhabitants speak 112 different mother tongues and have to use Bislama (a pidgin combining Melanesian structure with English syntax) as a lingua franca to achieve communication with people from different areas of the country.

See Pidgin

Meaningful drills

Practice exercises designed to help the learner to repeat a particular pattern or item many times but which nevertheless require the learner to make choices relating to the meaning of the sentence he produces.

See Dakin (1973, Chapter 5)

See Substitution table and Drills

Meaningless drills

Practice exercises which require no choice and therefore are almost impossible for

the learner to get wrong. In many cases the learner produces correct sentences without having any idea what they mean.

See Dakin (1973, Chapter 4)

See Substitution table and Drills

cf. Meaningful drills

Medium of communication

Speech and writing are the basic media of communication.

Medium of instruction

The language in which subjects in an educational institution are taught. For example, English is the medium of instruction in Nigerian secondary schools.

Mistakes

Deviations from the norms of a language caused by such non-linguistic factors as carelessness, tiredness, boredom, excitement, tension etc.

cf. Errors

Modal verbs

Verbs which add to the meaning of the main verb. They usually indicate the attitude of the speaker or writer. For example:

They should win.

He ought to visit his father.

She will pass the exam.

See Auxiliary verbs

Monitoring

The process of assessing the accuracy, appropriateness and effectiveness of your own utterances. In learning a second language it is very important to achieve the right amount of monitoring. Those learners who under-monitor usually achieve communication without correctness and those who over-monitor produce very correct utterances but are too worried about making errors to be fluent.

See Krashen (1981, pp. 12-13)

See Fluency

Morphology

When we talk about the morphology of a word we are referring to the bits which make up the word. Thus we might divide up the word *postponement* into three bits as follows:

1 *post* = a prefix meaning after

2 *pone* = the root of the word meaning *putting, placing or arranging*

3 *ment* = a suffix indicating that the word is a noun.

Mother tongue

The language learned by the child from his parents and peers.

See First language and Native language

Multilingual

A person who can use many languages.

Multiple choice

Exercises and tests requiring the learners to select the correct answer from a number of possible answers. For example:

— Last week they _____ to Paris and then went by train to Nice.

(a) have flown

(b) fly

(c) flew

(d) had flown

(e) were flying

Native language

The language learned as a child because it is the one used in the child's environment.

See First language and Mother tongue

Native speaker

A person who speaks a language as his first language (i.e. as the language he first learned as a child).

Notion

A concept (or area of meaning) such as time, duration, quantity or space.

See Wilkins (1976, p. 24 and pp. 25-55)

Notional approach

An approach to language teaching which concentrates on teaching the learners how to express different aspects of the main concepts represented by the language (e.g. ways of referring to the future, to quantity, to time, to duration, to space, to quality, etc.)

See Notional syllabus

Notional syllabus

A language teaching syllabus which concentrates on teaching points which are ways of expressing different aspects of the main concepts communicated by the language.

e.g. *Quantity*

| | |
|------|----------|
| some | a few |
| any | a little |
| all | half |
| both | a lot |
| etc. | etc. |

See Wilkins (1976, pp. 18-20) Van Ek (1977, pp. 39-42)

See Notional approach

Objective test

A test which has a limited, predictable and definite number of possible answers and therefore only requires the marker(s) to follow a marking key.

See Heston (1975, pp. 11-14)

Objectives

Statements of what the learners should be able to do in the language by a certain point. For example:

By the end of the course the learners should be able to note down the main points of a first year university lecture on Economics.

By the end of Week Four the learners should be able to order a meal in a restaurant and get what they want without causing problems for the waiter or themselves.

Ideally objectives should be measurable and stated in terms of target-language behaviour.

Ostensive definition

A way of demonstrating the meaning of a word or group of words by getting the learners to experience the meaning through their senses. For example:

feeling material which is rough,
hearing a scream,
smelling something which is fragrant,
tasting something sour,
seeing a picture of a helicopter.

See Ellis and Tomlinson (1980, pp. 67-68).

Output

The learner's output is the language he uses himself.

cf. Input Intake

Overgeneralisation

A generalisation made by the learner which fails to take account of exceptions and which therefore covers too large an area of the language. For example:

- (a) the overgeneralisation that the verb in the present simple tense is always the same as the infinitive without to (∴ X 'He live in London' X)
- (b) the overgeneralisation that the present continuous tense is always used when you want to refer to 'now' (∴ X 'I am seeing a mountain' X)

See Bolitho and Tomlinson (1980)

See Generalisation

Paradigmatic

This refers to the vertical choices speakers of a language have in every utterance they make. For example:

| 1 | 2 | | 3 |
|-----------|----------|-------|---------------|
| She | hates | | interrogated. |
| Mary | dislikes | being | questioned. |
| My sister | loathes | | asked. |

The speaker selects the most appropriate item to fill the slots 1, 2 and 3.

Cf. Syntagmatic

Participants

People taking part in an interaction (e.g. a speaker and the audience; people having a conversation, a writer and readers).

See Interaction and Discourse.

Pidgin

A language evolved as a result of contact between two different languages (or language families) usually to facilitate trade (e.g. Pidgin English in Papua New Guinea), the spreading of religion or ideas (e.g. Pidgin English in Nigeria and Vanuatu) or the carrying out of a particular project (e.g. Pidgin American in Vietnam).

Usually the new language bases its structure on the 'host' language(s) and its vocabulary on the 'visiting' language, but then very often develops features peculiar to itself.

See Todd (1974)

cf. Creole

Pidginization

The process of two or more languages mixing together to form one language capable of achieving communication.

Practice

Exercises, activities, drills, etc. designed to give the learners opportunities to produce correct sentences which include particular language items or structures they have recently been taught.

Presentation

The stage of a lesson when the teacher actively teaches particular language points through demonstration, exemplification, explanation, description, definition, etc.

designed to achieve the situational purposes specified (e.g. writing a letter to a particular personality asking him to attend a particular function at the school).

See Ellis and Tomlinson (1980)

See Tomlinson (1981)

Situational syllabus

An EFL syllabus based on lists of situations the learners are likely to have to use English in (e.g. the Restaurant, the Station, Hotels, the Bank, the Hospital, etc.).

Situational teaching

Approaches to teaching EFL which use the creation of 'real' situations in the classroom (e.g. a doctor examining a patient) in order to exemplify particular aspects of language use and to provide meaningful opportunities for the practice and use of language items.

Speech act

Doing something through language (e.g. getting something repaired, getting help, arranging a meeting).

See Wilkins (1976, pp. 40-45).

See Discourse Functions and Illocutionary act.

Stress

The saying of particular sounds with greater force than others. For example:

quickly

walking

He gave the book to her.

I wanted a red one.

See Ellis and Tomlinson (1980, pp. 103-104).

Structural approach

An approach to EFL teaching based on the presentation and practice of the basic structures of the language. In other words, the learners are taught the grammar of the language.

Structural syllabus

A syllabus based on a list of structures to be taught (e.g. the Present Perfect Tense, Reported Speech, Question Tags).

Style

(1) The particular way an author expresses himself.

(2) The type of expression appropriate to particular purposes and situations.

Subjective test

A test which requires the markers to evaluate and not just to follow a mark sheet (e.g. a test involving essay answers).

See Heaton (1975, p. 11).

cf. Objective test

Substitution table

A means of providing practice of correct structures. The learner selects from columns and then combines the elements he has chosen in order to make a sentence.

Example (1)

| | | |
|------|----------|-------------------|
| Mary | likes | eating ice-cream. |
| She | loves | drinking beer. |
| He | hates | reading books. |
| Bill | dislikes | doing homework. |

e.g. *She hates drinking beer.*

Example (2)

| | | |
|--------------|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| Bill | were pleased | that a few people helped |
| They | was angry | that little work was done. |
| Mary | was delighted | that few pupils passed the exam. |
| The teachers | were disappointed | that a little profit was made: |

e.g. *Bill was delighted that a little profit was made.*

Note In (1) the learner can combine any of the elements and make a correct and sensible sentence. However, in (2) the learner must decide which elements combine correctly and sensibly. (1) is a meaningless drill whereas (2) is a meaningful drill.

See Meaningful drills and Meaningless drills

Suggestopedia

A humanistic teaching method which tries to make the learning as relaxed and comfortable as possible (e.g. armchairs, soft music, pleasant colours, etc.) and to make maximum use of the brain's capacity to combine the conscious and the unconscious for learning.

Survival English

The English needed by overseas visitors to an English-speaking area in order to manage such everyday activities as buying goods, ordering meals, cashing cheques, booking accommodation, travelling by public transport etc.

Syllabus

A document outlining the main teaching points to be taught to a particular type of group of learners in a particular institution or group of institutions. Many syllabuses also order the teaching points, many specify objectives and some suggest activities, materials and methods.

cf. Scheme of work

Syntagmatic

Relating to the choices a user of a language has to make in order to relate one item in an utterance to the other items already selected. For example:

| | | | |
|----------------|---|------------|---|
| I spoke to the | { | woman. | ✓ |
| | | her. | x |
| | | Mary. | x |
| | | boys. | ✓ |
| | | telephone. | x |

cf. Paradigmatic

Syntax

The grammatical arrangement of words in an utterance. Rules of syntax thus deal with permissible combinations, word orders and obligatory agreements.

Synthetic

A synthetic approach is one which teaches items one by one and which restricts the learner to those items he has already been taught plus a few new item(s) in each lesson.

Cf. Analytical

Target language (TL)

The language the learner is trying to learn. Thus English is the target language for any overseas student learning English as a second or foreign language.

Teaching points

Particular aspects of the language selected by the teacher for presentation to a particular class of learners.

TEFL

Teaching English as a foreign language.

See EFL

Text

A continuous 'piece' of written or spoken language.

See Discourse

Theme

A particular subject used as the basis of a unit of teaching. (e.g. Famous People, Justice, Music).

See Topic

Topic

(1) What is being talked about in a particular situation.

(2) A particular theme used as the basis of a unit of teaching (e.g. Sport, Hotels, Medicine).

See Theme

Transfer

(1) The influence of one language during the acquisition of another language.

(2) The use of skills, etc. developed in association with one language whilst using another language.

See Interference

Usage

Language performance in artificial practice situations such as drills, exercises, multiple choice tests, etc. In such situations the learner is really producing evidence of his knowledge of the language rather than of his ability to use it in situations outside the classroom.

See Widdowson (1978, Chapter 1)

cf. Use

Use

Language performance in situations which have genuine communicative purposes and are not designed just to practise particular language items or structures. Thus a learner who is having a discussion in a pub or is asking a classmate to lend him a pen is actually using the language.

See Widdowson (1978, Chapter 1)

See Acquisition

cf. Usage

Utterance

Any complete unit of language used for communicative purpose. An utterance can be either written or spoken. Examples:

Put the (not an utterance because not complete)

Smoke? (an utterance)

I like roses, don't you? (an utterance)

I'm going...going there...to London that is...tomor...on Tuesday (an utterance)

The dog bit the man. The man was bitten by the dog. (not an utterance because not used for a communicative purpose).

Varieties

- (1) Different types of language used in different types of situations.
- (2) Different regional versions of a language (e.g. American English, Nigerian English, Irish English, Indian English etc.).

Visual Aid

Teaching aid designed to give a visual stimulus, act as a visual prompt or provide visual reinforcement for language items being learned. Photos, cartoons, film strips, blackboard drawings, puppets and wall pictures can be used as visual aids.

See Audio-visual aids

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