Unit 1:

Everyone can learn English: using activities beyond the textbook to practise listening and speaking Unit content
The TESS-India project (Teacher Education through School-based Support) aims to improve the classroom practices of elementary and secondary teachers in India through student-centred and activity-based approaches. This has been realised through 105 teacher development units (TDUs) available online and downloaded in printed form.

Teachers are encouraged to read the whole TDU and try out the activities in their classroom in order to maximise their learning and enhance their practice. The TDUs are written in a supportive manner, with a narrative that helps to establish the context and principles that underpin the activities. The activities are written for the teacher rather than the student, acting as a companion to textbooks.

TESS-India TDUs were co-written by Indian authors and UK subject leads to address Indian curriculum and pedagogic targets and contexts. Originally written in English, the TDUs have then been localised to ensure that they have relevance and resonance in each participating Indian state’s context.

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Introduction

Every classroom is different. You may teach students who come from homes where people know and speak some English, or read and write in English; or you may teach students who come from homes where people do not read or write much and may not know any English at all. You may teach some students who are learning English as a second, third or even fourth additional language.

Teaching English is a challenging task, especially when learners do not have much exposure to English in their homes or communities. You may be the main source of English for students when you teach them to speak and listen, and to read and write, in this language.

You have this big responsibility, but you may not always feel confident in your own English. Sometimes, for instance, we can feel embarrassed or unsure about our pronunciation, or about our understanding. But English is spoken everywhere in the world and understood in a very wide range of accents and with different levels of competence. So, everyone can learn English – if we lose the fear of trying.
Learning outcomes

By the end of this unit, you should have developed:

- knowledge of how students use their first language to learn an additional language
- understanding of how to use the English textbook imaginatively as a ‘bank’ of language activities
- skills in developing activities and tasks to use English in the classroom
- skills in assessing the process of language learning.
1 Everyone can learn English

Students in your classroom may not know English, but they are confident and competent language users. Even the youngest students know enough of their first or home language to do many things with words in their everyday lives. They can ask people to do things (wake up, wash, eat, give or take something), suggest activities (go out, play a game, help at home), and speak of the world around them (people, animals, events, feelings). Students use language to play and to create the magical world of stories, speaking about things that are not real such as ‘an ant as big as an elephant’ or ‘an elephant that can fly’.

When babies learn language, they are learning about the world at the same time. But a student between the ages of five to ten has thoughts that are very different to a baby’s, even though he or she may be a ‘baby’ – that is, at a very early stage of learning – in English. Your job as a teacher is to use English to talk of things that are suitable to the age of the students in your classroom. The following conversation between two teachers illustrates this:

Class VII teacher: I am going to give my students an assignment to write in English about their favourite toy.

Class III teacher: Why did you choose this topic?

Class VII teacher: Well, because the students’ English is not well-developed, I thought it would be easy for them to write about a very simple topic.

Class III teacher: But I think students in your class may be too old to play with toys. Perhaps ‘toys’ is a topic for younger students, such as six- or seven-year-olds? If you think about older students, between 12 and 14 years old, they like to play games with rules – such as board games, word games or team games outside.

Class VII teacher: Yes, I think you are right. I have seen my students create their own team games with very complex rules. Sometimes they play these games for days and weeks! I have also seen them make their own card games, based on Mendikot.

Class III teacher: So although your students are at an early stage of learning English, they are not babies in their thinking.

Class VII teacher: Yes, I think now that I will give them an assignment to create rules for a board game in English – that will get them thinking as well as writing in English.

You can bring English into your classroom by speaking to students and playing with them, by using books and other reading materials in English, and by listening to English on the radio or television. When you listen, speak and read along with the students your own confidence in teaching English will improve.
You can use English at different times during the school day, not just during the English lesson. The activities in this unit are designed to help you to do this. In this unit you are given some sentences and words that you can use routinely with students to build up a habit of speaking English in the classroom.

**Activity 1: Using your own experience of learning English**

Think back to your own experiences, when you were a young student at school. How did you learn English? Did you learn in school or outside school, or a mixture of both?

What were the factors, do you think, that made it possible for you to learn English – or the factors that prevented you from learning it?

What would make you feel more confident now, as a teacher, about using English?

**Discussion**

Your memories of learning English might have included some of these experiences that teachers have shared with us:

- I learned English from my grandfather. He made me memorise five words every day from the dictionary. Then one day, when he wouldn’t give me some money, I said to him: ‘You are a miser!’ He was so surprised, but he also laughed.

- I learned English from my older sister. She drew words in the dirt with a stick and explained them to me.

- I learned English from looking at newspapers every day, and by listening to tourists speaking English and interacting with them.

- I learned English at home. Every night we listened to the news in English, and then the same news in Hindi and in Urdu.

- I learned English in school. I lived in a village where there was no English. The first word I learned in English was ‘father’. I was so excited, I ran home and shouted the word at my own father!

- My grandmother taught me to read my first word in English. It was embroidered on a hat and it said ‘DELHI’. I remember this so well because it was the first moment that I understood that these funny shapes [letters] made up words.

- I did not learn English until I was an adult. The English teachers in my school used one textbook and I never really understood it. We did exercises from the textbook but I was always very bored with that. The English I heard and saw around me in the street and in the cinema was much more interesting. Now I use English a lot for my work.
As you can see, there are many pathways to learning English; there is no single way to learn it. As a teacher, you can use different methods and activities to inspire your learners to speak and use English.
2 Words and variations

Begin with the idea that all the students you teach already know and communicate in their own language, and then use this knowledge to help them to do things in English. If students use English to learn or do things they find interesting, they will learn it better. ‘Doing’ includes not only speaking, reading or writing, but also listening – listening for information, listening and responding to instructions, or listening to a story and imagining what will happen, or why something happens.

Students will be motivated to use English when it is interesting, relevant and fun. They will try and use words they already know in English and ask to learn new words to express their thoughts, as the following example shows.

In Class I, the teacher and the students were talking about the theme of ‘a busy road’. The teacher was writing vocabulary about this topic on the board and asking students for words. Students were giving words like ‘traffic’, ‘traffic police’, ‘policeman’, ‘cars’, ‘bicycle’, ‘traffic jam’, ‘rush’ and ‘zebra crossing’. A student said ‘shor’ and asked, ‘Ma’am, what is “shor” in English?’ Then the teacher added a new English word to the class vocabulary: ‘noise’. The teacher reinforced this new word in English by using it at different times of the school day, for example:

- Can you hear the noise from the street?
- What a lot of noise!
- Please stop this noise!
- I don’t want to hear any noise.
- Please close the window so we are not bothered by the noise.

It is good practice to try out new English vocabulary in different ways so that students begin to learn that there are many variations they can use. For instance, the Class I teacher who used the word ‘noise’ from the theme of ‘a busy road’ went on to introduce the word ‘noisy’ to students (as in ‘It’s too noisy – I can’t hear you’), as well as the opposite word:

- You are very noisy! Please be quiet.
- Please sit quietly.
- You are good students for reading so quietly.

Can you think of English words and their variations, and opposite words, that you could use with your students? We have suggested how you might vary the use of ‘sit’ and ‘stand’ in Table 1.
Table 1  Varying the use of ‘sit’ and ‘stand’.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Please sit down.</th>
<th>Please stand up.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>She sits with her brother.</td>
<td>He stands up straight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They are sitting outside.</td>
<td>They are standing up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I sat outside.</td>
<td>I stood up quickly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Activity 2: Words and variations

Now think of two words (e.g. ‘bring’ and ‘take’ or ‘quick’ and ‘slow’) you might use in class and list some phrases you might use to repeat and vary the words over the course of the week.

Case Study 1: Vijaya listens to students and uses prompts

When students learn any language, they first say the names of things (nouns) and speak in sentences much later. Older students learning English in school seem to do the same thing when they begin to speak in English: they say the names of things, and form sentences later.

Vijaya is a university teacher educator who wanted to find out more about how students learn English. She explains here how she went did some research into this process.

I first looked for children’s books with full-page colour pictures, but with no words. I found such books at the Children’s Book Trust and the National Book Trust. Some books had individual pictures, and some had stories that were told only through pictures. I took the picture books to schools and sat with students, one at a time, for about 15 minutes each. I let them choose a picture, and I asked them to ‘tell the story’.

I sat with a student in a large urban school who had been in Class I for about eight months. The student spoke in English while looking at a picture of a market. He said mostly the names of things. I noticed that he used verbs and sentences only when I insisted that the people in the pictures were doing something:

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Student  Chicks.
Vijaya   Chicks, OK.
Student  Hens, girl, basket, mother, father, boy, aunty, bag, books, buckets.
Vijaya   And what are they doing?
Student  They are taking some things.
Vijaya   What is he doing? What is the boy doing?
Student  He is seeing that.
Vijaya   And look at them. What are they doing? What are they doing?
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Student They are walking.

I prompted the boy with the question ‘What are they doing?’ and instructed him to look at particular parts of the picture (‘What is the boy doing?’, ‘And look at them.’). I helped him to speak in sentences, using verbs.

Working with students in other cities, I found that at first young students could only name things in English and used Hindi to speak in sentences about what was happening. Some students could say only formulaic sentences in English (‘This is a father, this is a mother …’). Older learners could speak two-word or incomplete sentences in English, such as ‘Park going’ (meaning that someone was going to the park) or ‘Boy is flower’ (to say that the boy was holding or smelling a flower). They struggled to put longer sentences together in English, but they could still show that they understood the pictures.

I talked to teachers in schools about what I had observed. I advised them not to focus on students’ grammatical errors when they first start speaking English. I explained that students learning English are doing what they did when they learned their first language as babies – starting with nouns and adding other parts of speech later. I encouraged teachers to listen to students first, and then prompt them to form sentences in English when they are ready and confident.

Think of the students you teach

Your students may know some English names for familiar things, such as pen, pencil, paper; bat, ball; bed, chair, table; shop, house, gate; car, bus, road; ticket, picture ...

Find out if they know (through their first or home language, action games, play, guessing games, giving instructions, their drawings, etc.) any of the following in English:

- action words: run, walk, sit, stand, touch ...
- feeling words: like, fear, happy, sad ...
- describing words: small, big, green, blue, round ...
- question words: why, when, who, how, where ...
- requesting words: please, let’s, shall we, can I …?
- relational words: up, down, on, around, in ...

Continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE)

Make time to listen to individual students talking. Compare what students can say on their own and what they can say when you help or prompt them. What differences do you see?
You can also compare students’ spontaneous speech with the speech they memorise (such as poems and answers to questions in the textbook). What differences do you see?

Students will be at different levels of ability to express themselves in English. If you ask a student to describe a picture, they may only name the things in it (such as a cat, tree or house) or may describe the picture in a few action words, describing words or naming words (such as ‘cooking’, ‘washing clothes’ or ‘big trees’). You can use your individual assessments to plan ahead for the next stage in their language learning.

Remember that with help from a peer, a student can reach a higher level of thinking or language that they may not be able to express when they work alone. When students work in small groups, they help each other to accomplish the activity by contributing whatever they are good at: rhyming, reading or saying new words, writing a sentence, or describing the pictures.

See Resource 4 for ideas about assessing the process of students’ English language learning.
3 Classroom routines: ‘teacher talk’

You may have seen little students play ‘Teacher Teacher’ when they come home, where they say and do whatever they have heard or seen their teacher say and do. Maybe you even played this game yourself as a child. Students everywhere learn ‘teacher talk’, or the language of ‘classroom management’, although no one has taught them that language.

You should make it a habit to greet the students in English, and to give instructions in English for things that you do every day so that students will automatically acquire this language.

Read through the words and phrases below, ticking the ones you already use every day. Try to add new words and phrases and use them consistently.

- Good morning/good afternoon/good evening, students/class.
- Please sit down./Yes, you may sit down now.
- Please stand up. Thank you!
- Please stand up when you speak.
- Who knows this word?
- Put your hands up, please! Those who know the answer!/Those who have finished their work!
- Yes, come in, please.
- Please wait a little.
- Let the others speak!
- One at a time, please.
- Please come to the board and write the date.
- Thank you. Please go back to your place now.
- Open your books/notebooks.

Try this in the classroom

Teach students to say ‘Thank you’, ‘Please’ and other polite words for requests by using these words yourself when you speak to them. Teach students to say ‘good morning’, ‘sorry’, ‘excuse me’, etc. to you and to each other; and to use the appropriate expressions for permission to enter, go out or speak – for example, ‘May I …?’ and ‘Can I …?’ Remind students of words and sentences they already know in English.

Use English to find things out, and use materials and resources available in the classroom to talk about them. Allow students to talk in English or in Hindi, and then say and practise the words in English. For instance, when you hold up a pen, a book or an object, you can ask:

- What is this?
- What is it called in English?
- What is its name in English?
When you show pictures of actions or objects, such as pictures in the textbook, you can ask:

- What is he/she doing?
- What is the name for this in English?
- What do you call this in English?

Vary your use of English by saying things in different ways, for instance:

- I don’t understand.
- I’m not sure I got that.
- Sorry, but it is not clear to me.
- I am not following you.
- Do you mean …?
- What do you mean?
- I don’t know what you mean.
- Perhaps I have misunderstood.

You can extend students vocabulary by giving examples of words that mean the same thing in English by using formal and informal words, for instance:

- Please stop talking.
- Please stop chatting.
- Please stop speaking.
- Please stop conversing.
- Please stop discussing.

Continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE)

Focus on spoken English. Note down in your diary which students speak easily and confidently, and which students are still too shy to speak. Give the shy ones more opportunities and encouragement to say something, and praise them for doing so.

Create portfolios for students to show the process of their English language learning. See Resource 4 for ideas.
Case Study 2: Amina tells a familiar story in English

Students understand a lot more than we think they do, and they can make active guesses about what they hear – after all, this is how they have learnt the languages of their homes. Amina was a student teacher in a rural school in Maharashtra, where there were no English signboards or newspapers in the community, and no one spoke English. Here she gives an account of how she told a story in class.

I told students in Class I the story of ‘The Thirsty Crow’ in English, using actions and gestures and my voice to convey as much of my meaning as possible.

The students sat through my narration without saying anything or showing any feeling, and I was sure that they had not understood anything. At the end I asked the students in Marathi: ‘What story did I tell?’ To my surprise, the students were able to identify the story quite well, and they then began to tell the story in their own words in Marathi!

I realised that the students had not understood all the English words that had been spoken, but were able to make a number of good guesses. Because I used actions and gestures, they knew that I was telling a story and they guessed that it was a story they knew.

I now wrote on the board the key words from the story: ‘crow’, ‘drink’, ‘water’, ‘stones’, ‘pot’ and ‘thirsty’; I read the words out and the students repeated them after me. I let them draw pictures for these words and label them.

The next time, before I told a story, I spoke out the key words in it, and wrote them on the board. I found out if the students knew the words and I helped them to make guesses about the story from the words.

Try this in your classroom

Tell a story the students already know (e.g. ‘The Thirsty Crow’) in simple English. Use pictures and gestures to mime the story as you speak, so that students can guess at the meaning of your words; or you can let the students mime and draw pictures to show what they understand. You can also use word cards for key vocabulary in the story (see TDU 5, English storytelling: using questions, adapting texts, extracting learning).
Case Study 3: Sanjay uses pictures to check understanding

Sanjay was teaching Wordsworth’s poem ‘The Daffodils’ to students in Class IX in a village in Karnataka because it was in their textbook. The students knew very little English; they could not speak it, and there was very little English spoken or read in that village. Read Sanjay’s account of how he established students’ understanding of the poem.

I read the poem out, speaking slowly and with expression, more than once, while the students looked at the written words in their textbook. Then I asked the students in Kannada to ‘draw a picture about the poem’. To my surprise, the students drew:

- one cloud (‘I wandered lonely as a cloud’)
- many flowers (‘A host of golden daffodils’).

The students had not understood each word of the poem, or understood it ‘perfectly’, but they had got a good idea about some of the central images in the poem.

I realised that students’ understanding of English can be checked in many ways – by drawing pictures or talking about it in their own language. I saw that they need not understand every word or sentence in a poem to get an idea of what the poem is about. I now use pictures wherever I can when I teach poems and stories. I also use the illustrations given in the textbook, taking time in class to speak with the students about these illustrations.
4 Active listening with games

To develop your own confidence in English, try these games in the classroom – you can have fun and practise English at the same time. Practise the words and phrases before you do the activity with students, with a fellow teacher or with someone at home. You may want to keep one day of the week for a game, or play a game twice a month. Keep introducing new games to practise English. If students like the game, they will play it outside class themselves.

Case Study 4: Miss Shyamala plays games in English

Miss Shyamala was a new teacher who was not very confident in English. She decided to start a daily listening activity with her Class II students.

I began with a game: ‘Suman Says’, using simple commands [see Resource 2]. With this game, I reinforced my role as teacher (giving instructions) and the students’ attention was on following my instructions and listening carefully. They learned the names of simple actions and parts of the body, and they enjoyed the game. I could also feel my own English confidence improving as I added new words and instructions.

One day after school, I was walking through the village and was amazed to see a group of my students playing ‘Suman Says’ in English.

I decided to develop more games in English.

A month later, I tried out the game ‘Twenty Questions’ [see Resource 2]. I made two groups in the class: Group 1 would ask the questions and Group 2 would choose the object or the subject. Group 1 whispered questions to me in Hindi that I translated into English and had the students repeat and practise. I helped Group 2 to understand the questions in English, using as much Hindi as necessary. I sometimes wrote words and questions on the board to help students remember and practise. As the students played this game, they learned words and phrases in English and different kinds of question structures such as: ‘Is it in the home?’, ‘Does she help people?’ and ‘Can we cook with it?’

I realised that I could use the classroom routine of ‘Show and Tell’ as a form of ‘Twenty Questions’. I asked one student every day to bring something to show the class and be ready to speak about it. It could be a picture, a photograph, a toy, a household object or anything that interested the student. It could also be something that the student was studying about or using in another class, for example, in a games, art, science, mathematics or environmental sciences class. I asked the student to hide the object and helped the other students to ask questions about it in Hindi and in English. I would sometimes change the game, asking the student to hide the object and then help them describe it in Hindi and in English; for instance: ‘It is round, it is red and it bounces up and down’, or ‘It flies, it has a tail and it is made of paper.’
This gave me opportunities for brief one-to-one English work with individual students throughout the year.

I also taught and encouraged students to play games like ‘Be Quick’ and ‘Name, Place, Animal, Thing’ on their own. These games let the students listen to each other while they speak to a rhythm [see Resource 2].

Continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE)

Note down which students are careful listeners, and which ones act at random. Make a note too of students who ask good questions and make good guesses, and who can ask questions well in English.

Games are useful in developing ‘learner portfolios’. Use a large notebook with a page or two for each student. After a ‘Show and Tell’ or other language game, note down your comments about a student’s ideas, language and confidence level (see Resource 4).
5 Unpacking the English textbook

Case Study 5: Aman unpacks the English textbook

Unit 1 in Aman’s Class I textbook was about a child and her family. It had 18 pages of colour pictures and words, to be taught over a month. The words and sentences were about parents and grandparents, and brothers and sisters; there were related activities (i.e. ‘How many people live in your home?’, ‘Circle the “she” words and the “he” words in this picture’ and ‘Write your name here.’) Aman realised that this unit used the student’s existing knowledge about their family to teach English. He decided that students could learn new words, and new ways of making sentences, using these familiar ideas. Read Aman’s account of how he stimulated his student’s learning.

I asked the students to draw or bring pictures of their own grandparents, parents and other close family members.

I pointed to the pictures of the people in the family in the textbook, and asked students to name their positions in the family in any language. They readily did so in their home language. I said the English names for these positions (mother, uncle, brother, etc.) and wrote them on the board.

I then asked the students to identify their father, mother, grandfather, grandmother and so on from their own pictures that they had brought. The students put these pictures in their notebooks and labelled them. They began to ask me questions such as:

- ‘Does English not have different names for the father’s mother and the mother’s mother?’
- ‘Is the word for elder sister the same as for younger sister?’
- ‘How do I say “elder sister” in English?’

I had guessed they would ask such questions. So I had the answers ready; I taught them to say ‘elder sister’ and ‘younger sister’, and ‘mother’s mother’ and ‘father’s mother’, even though these expressions were not in the textbook.

In a following lesson, I asked the students to circle the ‘he’ and ‘she’ words for the members of the family in the textbook. The students were taught to use ‘it’ for things. I had the students look in newspapers and magazines to find and cut out pictures of people and things, and then use ‘he,’ ‘she’ or ‘it’ for them as appropriate. I first demonstrated how to form sentences writing on the board, using some simple formats and helped students make short sentences in English using ‘he’, ‘she’ and ‘it’ with their own ideas:

- This is ________. She is an actor.
- This is ________. He is a minister.
- This is a house. It is very big.
The students then made up similar sentences about their own families using the vocabulary from the previous lesson. They enjoyed reading these sentences out loud to each other in pairs:

- This is my sister. She is pretty.
- This is my grandfather. He is funny.
- This is my uncle. He is a fisherman.

The work on families made me realise that the students needed to know their number words to answer a question like ‘How many people live in your home?’ or ‘How many sisters do you have?’ I decided to develop the students’ familiarity with English numbers by playing guessing games like ‘How many things are in this bag?’ to help them use number words in English and make sentences such as ‘Ten people live in my house’ or ‘I have four sisters’.

Case Study 6: Sheela unpacks the English textbook

*Sheela’s book for Class I begins with a story about a baby elephant that likes fruit, and takes away different kinds of fruit from a shop. In the story, he is taught to say ‘please’, ‘thank you’ and ‘sorry’. Read Sheela’s account of how she supported the students’ comprehension of English and extended other textbook lessons to include additional activities in her class.*

I helped students to understand the story using the pictures, and by letting them guess about what might happen next, or speak about how the people (and the elephant) felt. I rephrased and repeated in English the students’ ideas that they had expressed in their own language and in broken English.

The words ‘please’, ‘thank you’ and ‘sorry’ were important in the story, and we discussed this. From that point on I made sure that they were used regularly in the class as part of our everyday interactions, encouraging the students to use them with ease. The story became the way to introduce these words and make them real.

The textbook had a poem about the days of the week that I was going to teach the following week. To support the learning of key vocabulary ahead of this lesson, I brought a calendar to class and hung it on the wall. I encouraged students to bring their own pocket calendars or diaries, and they talked about where the names of the months and days of the week were listed. I taught them the poem from the textbook and then introduced a daily routine where the students took it in turns to speak the day, date and month at the start of each class: ‘Good morning, class. Today is Monday October the twelfth, two thousand and thirteen.’ With time, some students were able to add ‘Today is a good day because …’, giving them the opportunity to speak a little more English.

I often use the pictures in the textbook to prompt other activities in the class, such as asking and answering questions about the names of
things and animals (‘Is this a hen? Is that a dog?’). I find I can use this technique to engage students who are less competent in English by asking them simpler questions that only require simple answers.

I sometimes use ‘Twenty Questions’ (see Resource 2) with the students after teaching a new set of vocabulary. This helps students to apply their vocabulary and extends their questioning skills. I may put suggestions and vocabulary on the board to help less confident students ask questions (e.g. ‘Is it big?’, ‘Can you push it?’ or ‘Does it make a noise?’).
Activity 3: Unpacking your English textbook

Your job as a teacher is to bring the English textbook to the world of your students. Use the textbook like a ‘magic box’ for games, stories and activities.

Remember, there is no law or requirement that you must do all your English language teaching from one textbook starting from page one to the end of the book. When you adapt and modify textbook activities, stories or exercises to your own classroom, you encourage students to use English for many different purposes (see Resource 1, ‘A reading on language learning’).

Look at the next lesson or unit in your English textbook that you plan to teach.

- What is this lesson or unit? What is it about? How much does it relate to the students in your classroom?
- What ideas and what language does it try to teach?
- Based on the examples in the case studies and Resource 2, is there a language game you could play using key words or phrases from the textbook lesson? See also Resource 3, Activities to encourage speaking and listening in English, for more ideas.

Discussion

You could do the following:

- Make a list of the key words that the students can learn from this lesson. Are they names for things or actions, or describing words, or relation words such as ‘up’ and ‘down’? What words or concepts do your pupils already know?
- Make a list of the sentences in which these key words are used in the textbook. What do the sentences say – do they describe things or are there also questions, requests or commands? How do the students express these meanings in their own language?
- Make your own list of where these key words might be used in everyday sentences or familiar contexts. Which of these key words and sentences might your students already know? Think how you can use this language in classroom routines.

Look for stories, poems and pictures where you can use the words from the textbook (for example in action songs with the class, such as ‘The Wheels on the Bus Go Round and Round’ or ‘If You’re Happy and You Know It’).
Make a note for yourself

Based on reading Case Studies 5 and 6, and Activity 3, write briefly about some classroom activities you might introduce to a lesson that support the learning from the textbook but relate specifically to the students you teach in your classroom.

Continuous and comprehensive evaluation (CCE)

Write down in your diary the names of students who are active in responding to your questions about the words they know in English, and those who could not give any words at all. This will help you to keep track of the students’ progress and to pair the stronger with the weaker student, where necessary.

Using English to answer questions

What begins in Class I as a language game can develop into problem solving activities for older students, where they talk in English together about how to solve a problem or answer a question. Students may also talk in their home language as well as English, and they might ask you how to express a particular meaning in English. Alternatively, they may express their meaning partly in English and partly in their home language.

Now watch the video below about how the teacher helps the students to use written information to form oral sentences in English. You may also find it useful to read the video’s transcript.

Now watch the video clip. If it is unavailable or has not been provided separately, you can find it at the TESS-India YouTube channel. You will find the transcript at the end of this unit.
The teacher has written on the board a sample schedule of a child’s day:

7 a.m.: get up
7:15 a.m.: eat breakfast
7:30 a.m.: brush teeth
7:45 a.m.: go to school
8 a.m.: arrive at school (etc.)

The teacher then asks the students to talk together and write a schedule for a day when they are not in school, such as a Sunday. As you watch, notice how the teacher introduces the task and encourages students to use the written information to form their own sentences orally in English. Notice how she uses gestures to encourage understanding, and how she sometimes does not correct students (when, for instance, one of them says ‘I see TV’) in order to build their confidence.

The words on the board are simple, but students will use different strategies to understand the information and any questions about it, such as: ‘Where are you at 8 a.m.?’ or ‘How long does it take you to travel to school?’ They can guess that words like ‘when’ and ‘how long’ can be used for time, from the meaning of the question. They hear the first person singular verb used correctly and they hear the use of prepositions such as ‘at’ and ‘to’, even though they may not identify them as such. They unconsciously learn these pieces of language without anyone teaching it to them: their attention is on the task and the learning is in engaging with the task.

This task can be added to or changed by asking to compare who takes the longest to travel to school, who stays the nearest and who stays the farthest, and so on. This change allows for discussion and the language needed is also likely to have more variety.
7 Summary

The readings and practical activities in this unit should have developed your understanding of how English is learned and how you can teach English creatively. We hope you have been able to think of ways to include English in your classroom routines and how to go beyond the English textbook to create language learning opportunities for the students in your classroom.

Now reflect and make some notes on the following:

- Identify three key ideas or skills you have learned in this unit.
- Identify your strengths in English language teaching.
- What skills for teaching and using English in the classroom would you like to develop further?
8 Resources

Resource 1: A reading on language learning

Krishna Kumar (1986, 2000) discusses the functions that ‘any language performs in the lives of students’ as a tool to make sense of the world. Students use language to direct: to direct others to do something (‘Not like that, like this!’), or direct their attention to something (‘Look, big water!’ – on first seeing the sea); and to direct themselves (they often speak aloud as they act: ‘I’m going to put this here …’). Students use language to explain what happened and how; this is how stories and narratives evolve. A five-year-old who saw an adult chase goats away from a garden said, ‘They don’t understand English, so they don’t go away when you tell them – you have to chase them!’ Another five-year-old who had seen a snake in her playground excitedly said in Hindi, ‘It had big, big eyes! It had a big mouth! It was right here! We ran away!’

This student was using language to represent life – to talk about the past, to remember. Students who have been frightened by something may talk about it many times until they adjust to it. Students also use language to anticipate the future, expressing their plans, fears and expectations. They associate themselves with characters and events in a story, imagining how it feels to be someone else or someplace else. They use language to enquire and reason about things. And most importantly, they use language to play. They love magic spells, secret languages, riddles, rhymes, and puns.

Krishna Kumar suggests that students bring a variety of objects into school (such as leaves, stones, feathers, twigs, broken things) and that teachers can encourage students to talk about these things, read about them and write about them; and that students go out of the classroom ‘so that they can inspect ordinary objects carefully (… a broken bridge, a muddy pit, a dead insect …) and talk about them’.

Observe the students you teach. Can you see how they use language to think and to get things done, in Hindi and in English?

Another way of looking at language (Cummins 1996, 2000) is to think of the pre-school student as having ‘Basic Interpersonal Communicational Skills’ – spoken language used within a context, with people who are right there. By the time a student leaves school, they must have ‘Cognitive Academic Linguistic Proficiency’, meaning that they must use language for getting knowledge from textbooks, lectures, demonstrations, etc., and show knowledge in impersonal situations such as tests and examinations.

How do we go from BICS to CALP in English at school? If we teach only reading and writing in order to pass examinations, we are aiming at CALP in the absence of BICS – in the absence, that is, of the language that a student can use to speak and think about everyday things, in the way described
above by Krishna Kumar. This leads to rote learning without understanding. On the other hand, a purely communicative, interpersonal approach that does not go beyond everyday conversation in English remains at the BICS level; it is inadequate for developing English as a tool for thinking and academic success.

The student must get both BICS and CALP in English in order to achieve well in English academically. One way to do this is through ‘scaffolding,’ or providing a support structure for students to express their ideas using English (just as when workers stand on scaffolding, a structure of poles and boards joined together, to work outside a building.)

In your classroom, you can create ‘scaffolding’ for thinking and for language through games and supported tasks for speaking, listening, reading and writing in English. The activities in this unit are designed to help you do this.

Resource 2: English language games

‘Suman Says’

The language used in this game is simple instructions given by the teacher. The challenge for the students is to listen carefully, to see if the instruction begins with ‘Suman says’. If it does, they should follow the instruction; if not, they should ignore the instruction. The teacher does not make any gesture or movement.

Suman says: sit down, stand up, walk a step forward/back, jump once, turn around, look at your friend, open/close your eyes/book, touch your nose/head, shake hands, shake your head, nod your head …

‘Twenty Questions’

Divide the class into two groups. Group 1 has to secretly think of a thing or a person; Group 2 has to ask questions to guess what or who it was. Group 1 can only answer only ‘yes’ or ‘no’. As the teacher you must help Group 2 to ask their questions. Prepare for the game in the following way:

Think of six things and people that Group 1 can choose as their secret – these can be familiar to the students, such as a chair, a table, a spoon, a tiffin box, a water bottle or a book. For people, think of professions like postman, driver, cook, teacher, doctor, nurse or policeman/woman. Then think of all the words that could be used to describe these things and people. Next, think of how questions could be asked using these words. Most importantly, make time to practise the words in English – play ‘Twenty Questions’ with a fellow teacher as partner.
Let Group 1 choose one of the six things or people as their secret. Remind the students in Group 1 that women as well as men could be found in all the occupations. Here are some examples:

- For people (postman, driver, cook, teacher, doctor, nurse or policeman/woman):
  - Is it a man or a woman?
  - Does the person wear a uniform?
  - Is the uniform white?
  - Does the person use chalk/a stethoscope/a thermometer/a bicycle ...?
  - Does the person work in a hospital/school/kitchen/police station?

- For things (a chair, a table, a spoon, a tiffin box, a water bottle, and a book):
  - Size words: Is it big? Is it small? ...
  - Shape words: Is it round? Is it square? Is it long? ...
  - Colour words: Is it white? Is it black? Is it coloured?
  - Material words: Is it made of plastic/paper/wood/leather/steel ...?
  - Used-for words: Is it used for writing/reading/cutting/keeping things ...?
  - Location words: Is it here in your bag/ in this room/ in school/ is it in every house ...?

**‘Be Quick’**

Students decide on a ‘category’ of naming words (such as flowers, fruit, cities, actors, movies ...), sit in a circle and alternately snap their fingers and clap their hands (twice, quickly) to a rhythm. First, get the rhythm going in the group. Then each person in the circle has to name a word in turn in the chosen category, while snapping their fingers, without missing a gap in the rhythm while everyone continues to clap and click.

Teachers can vary the game by adding describing words (adjectives) or doing words (verbs) to the game e.g. The category could be ‘things brothers and sisters do’ with the following suggestions:


**‘Name, Place, Animal, Thing’**

This can also be a pen-and-paper game, or it can be played orally to the same rhythm as ‘Be Quick’, as individuals or in teams. One student chooses a letter of the alphabet, and the others name a person’s name that begins with that letter, followed by the name of a place (a city or a country), an animal, and a thing. For example, if the first student chose ‘R’, the others might choose ‘Ramesh’ – ‘Raipur’ – ‘Rat’ – ‘Ruler’.
You can vary this game to fit the focus of your lesson, so you may want to restrict the letters to be chosen and then play ‘Colour, Number, Furniture, Food’, for example.

Resource 3: Activities to encourage speaking and listening in English

We have reproduced below some of the activities suggested in Krishna Kumar’s book *The Child’s Language and the Teacher* (published in 1986). To read the full list of activities, go to Chapter 2 (titled ‘Some activities’) in an online copy of the book.

These are easy language games to encourage speaking and listening in English. They can easily be applied to the topics and vocabulary of English textbook lessons:

- What Did You See?
- Asking the Explorers
- Guess What I Saw
- Doing What Was Said
- Comparing
- How Did You Make That?
- Acting Out
- Analysing a Picture
- Guessing the Right Picture
- Making a Story
- Where Do You Live?

Here is the extract from *The Child’s Language and the Teacher*:

These are just some of the dozens of activities any teacher can organise in any ordinary classroom. Each time an activity is repeated with some little change, it will be received with even greater enthusiasm by the children than it got last time. So do each activity any number of times, adding something new each time. Keep a record of the variations so that you can introduce your innovations to a new colleague. Nearly each activity described here can become the starting point of a dozen variations.

1 What Did You See?

Stage 1: Ask one child to go out of the room, see what is happening outside, and tell the class what he saw. For instance, he might report that he saw a truck, two shops and a bicycle.

Stage 2: Now the rest of the children, preferably sitting in a circle, will ask him questions, one by one, and one question per child. For instance, a child may ask: ‘What was hanging from the bicycle’s handle?’ The reply may be: ‘A basket.’ The next question may be, ‘What colour was the basket?’
Stage 3: When one round of questioning is complete, the teacher will ask the child who has gone out: ‘Who asked the best question?’ Supposing he says, ‘Shashi asked the best question; the teacher will ask: ‘What was the question?’

Stage 4: The next round starts with Shashi. Ask her to see something that the earlier child had not seen. When she comes back, ask children to come up with new questions – not the ones they have already asked.

2 Asking the Explorers

Send a small group of children, no more than five or six, to study some specific object or place near the school or even inside the school building. For example, they may be sent to examine a cluster of trees, a tea stall, a broken bridge, or a nest. Ask them to explore it carefully and discuss among themselves everything they notice.

While the explorer group is away, tell the rest of the class about the object in some detail. For example, if the explorers have gone to examine a tea stall, tell the class about the things available at the stall, who runs it, where do the things available there come from, etc.

When the explorer group comes back, it will face questions from the class. The teacher can also have her turn.

Next time, send a different group.

3 Guess What I Saw

One child goes out, stands at the door or at some distance from the class, and selects one of the hundreds of things she sees around (it could be anything – tree, leaf, squirrel, bird, wires, pole, grass, stones). When she comes back, she says just one sentence about the thing she has in mind. For example, she might say, ‘What I saw is brown.’

Now every child in the class gets one chance to ask more about the thing and guess what it was. For example, questioning may go like this:

Child 1: ‘Is it thin?’
Answer: ‘No.’
Child 2: ‘How big is it?’
Answer: ‘It’s quite big’.
Child 3: ‘Is it as big as a chair?’
Answer: ‘No, it’s smaller than a chair.’
Child 4: ‘Can it turn?’ …

Finally when the thing has been guessed correctly, some children may object to the answers they got for their questions. For instance, someone may point out that the colour was not brown but clay-like. In such situations, the
teacher’s role is very important, as someone who can help children establish subtle distinctions between meanings.

4 Doing What Was Said

Ask children to listen and do what you tell them to do. Start with simple things to do, and ask the whole class to do them together. Examples:

‘Touch your head’.
‘Close your right eye.’
‘Clap on your head.’

Divide the class in two groups. The teacher will give instructions to the first group, and the children of this group will now give similar instructions to the second group. Gradually make your instructions more complicated, for example:

‘Touch your head with both hands, then touch your right ear with your right hand.’

‘Close both eyes, touch your neighbour, ask him to give you his left hand.’

When children of one group give instructions to the other group, they need not repeat everything they have heard. Encourage them to make up new instructions.

5 Comparing

Make sets of similar-looking things, such as leaves of two or more trees, flowers of different plants, stones, pieces of paper cut in different shapes etc.

Ask children to listen to the description you give of one of the things in a set, and on the basis of the description they must decide which one you are thinking of. Example:

‘I’m thinking of a leaf that is smooth and long, and it has even edges.’

After doing this activity a few times, ask children to take turns to choose and describe. Change things each time you do this activity. Identify more subtle features each time.

Resource 4: English assessment and learner portfolios

To improve language assessment, we need to assess not only language competency but also the process of language learning. Language evaluation should not be limited to ‘achievement’ in the syllabus, but should be an ongoing process. In day-to-day classroom activities, evaluations of language can be done through:

- oral presentations
- peer assessment
- projects
- individual tasks
- group work
- discussions
- portfolios.

Portfolios can be defined as a purposeful collection of a student’s work that exhibits their efforts, progress and achievement. A portfolio is a selection of pieces chosen by the student or by the student and the teacher together. Portfolios can measure a student’s development in specific areas such as linguistic accuracy or the ability to organise and develop an argument; they can also evaluate the range and extent of a student’s work in English.

Portfolios will have one or more of these characteristics:

- a collection of writing, not a single writing sample
- a range of writing in different styles, for different purposes
- books read, short reviews of books
- reading and writing in other contexts such as art, science or history
- feedback from the teacher or from peers
- notes or drafts for oral presentations
- drawings or photographs of projects that involve language.

**Pause for thought**

- If you were to have a portfolio of your own English language learning, what would you put in it?
- Do you use portfolios for students’ work in English?
- Do the portfolios you use have any of the above characteristics? Are there other characteristics of portfolios that you have experience of?
- If you would like to start using portfolios with students, what kinds of evidence do you think should go into them?

When you use portfolios with students, keep the assessment purposes in mind. Portfolios can be evaluated by peers, self-evaluation or the teacher. Portfolios should:

- demonstrate what the student has accomplished over a period of time
- give the student the opportunity to revise or replace work before a final evaluation
- give the student the opportunity to reflect on their development.

Portfolios can provide a meaningful view of a student’s progress in English. The evaluation of the process of learning is as important as evaluating the end product. The concept of portfolio collection and preparation should be thoroughly discussed with the students, so that they understand the purpose of the portfolio.
Pause for thought

- How do you assess portfolios in your class?
- If you are going to start using portfolios, how will you assess their contents?
9 Related units

- TDU 7, *Using activities alongside teaching an English text: the importance of planning and preparation.*
References


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Transcript

Narrator: Before the lesson begins, the teacher should write a typical diary on the blackboard with times linked to activities.

Teacher: On the board I have written one day’s activity okay, from 7:00 a.m. till 2:20 p.m. So, what do we do at 7:00 a.m.

Students: [murmur]

Teacher: Yes we get up. We get up in the morning, okay then 7:30 a.m., now only I will ask one child okay? Priya … 7:30 a.m. brush what, this action is what, brush.

Student: Brush. I brush my teeth.

Teacher: I brush my teeth, very good, my teeth, yes. So this is what we are going to discuss in groups. We will form groups and we will discuss in groups. Is it clear everyone?

Student: Yes ma’am.

Teacher: So now three tables, here first row three tables, second row three tables, third row. Everyone is seated in their groups. You have your notebook and your pencil ready everyone. We have discussed a timetable. Now, what I want you to do is, these timings what do you do on a holiday that is a Sunday? Yes, make a leader, one leader in your group, who will write down what everyone is discussing. They will be only one timetable to say. Start your work now. Okay.

Students: 7:30 a.m. ब्रेकफास्ट तक तो हो गया. I see TV, I see TV.

Teacher: The captain has to write.

Student: I am playing.

Teacher: I am playing very good, very good. Then, yes

Student: I am playing with my friends.

Teacher: With my friends okay, very good. Everyone is ready with their ideas now.

Students: Yes ma’am.

Teacher: Everyone sit down, come here Saloni, Shreya from that group, okay now everyone will pay attention here. So, Saloni is going to talk about the ideas that her group has given okay 5:00 a.m. What do you do?

Student: I get up.

Teacher: What did she say, I get up. Anything other than get up, what can we use 5:30 a.m.

Student: I do brush.
Teacher: She said I do brush okay Saloni, how can you change this sentence into something else make it better. What do you brush?

Students: I brush my teeth.

Teacher: Let, only Saloni will answer. Okay, Saloni what do you do?

Saloni: I am brush my teeth.

Teacher: Very good, I brush my teeth. See, instead of I do brush, it is now I brush my teeth. Let's ask Manish Kasana, what he does now. Okay Manish, come forward everyone, clap for him.

Students: [claps]

Teacher: Yes, tell me your routine. Tell the whole class what you do on Sunday okay.

Manish Kasana: I get up in the morning.


Manish Kasana: I brush my teeth.

Teacher: Very good, clap for him everyone.

Students: [claps]