Myanmar teacher takeaways toolkit

**The British Council
Myanmar**

Contents

1. Introduction to the toolkit
Background

At such a critical juncture in Myanmar's modern history, we remain committed to our people-to-people engagement and our corporate vision for 'a more peaceful and prosperous world built on trust'. All our work supports peace and prosperity by building connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and Myanmar. Through this toolkit we seek to find a way to continue engagement with English teachers and teacher educators in Myanmar and support their professional development. In 2023-24 we supported the professional development of over 80,000 individual teachers and teacher educators via our Teaching English platform and Teachers Takeaway webinar series.

This Myanmar 'Teacher Takeaways' Toolkit has been compiled from a series of webinars for teachers and teacher educators held in 2023-24 on important themes and developments in the teaching, learning and assessment of English, especially among teachers of school-aged learners. The webinars were extremely well-received, with audience figures reflecting the great dedication and professionalism of teachers and teacher educators in Myanmar.

Our Teaching English *https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk* platform is home to thousands of resources to support teachers and teacher educators. There are regular webinars and self-study courses which can support professional development and teacher networking. These resources are essential tools for helping to ensure teachers and teacher educators are well-prepared and knowledgeable as they go on to have a real and long-lasting impact on the learning outcomes of their students.

It is with great pleasure that I introduce this accompanying toolkit which follows the structure of our webinars from 2023, all of which have been recorded, enabling you to watch them before, during, or after reading this toolkit. I am especially pleased to give my thanks again to the presenters who brought their expertise to a wider audience as well as – of course – to those who attended the webinars, either live or via recordings.

We hope that the Myanmar Teacher Takeaway webinar series videos and this complementary toolkit will equip teachers and teacher educators with a recap and revision of existing approaches and methods as well as introducing new skills and ideas to enliven and enhance the teaching of English and help our learners develop their knowledge of the English language.

While this toolkit is just a taste of what is available on TeachingEnglish, we believe it contains a lot of engaging and inspiring content which can help you in the classroom and, importantly, help students enhance their proficiency in English.

Practical

To get the most out of this toolkit and the accompanying webinars, we have a few practical suggestions. However, do feel free to dip in and out of whatever takes your fancy first! Amie and Fraser are joined by a host of presenters from Myanmar and this is the approach we suggest:

1. Use this resource as a 'pre-task'. Start by reading the relevant toolkit section that interests you most before watching the accompanying webinar. This will allow you to 'set the scene' and give you an introduction to the theme/topic before watching the fabulous presenters for the first time, or again!

2. Before you watch the webinars, pause and reflect for a moment. What is it that you want to get from the next hour? New activities to try with students, or a better understanding of the principles and practice of the topic? Perhaps both. It all depends on your context.

3. Watch the relevant webinar and take some brief notes on your main 'takeaways'. Sometimes these will align with the toolkit, and other times you'll find new information from the webinar (and vice versa). Try to create one action point for something you want to do next. Perhaps try something new with your learners or teachers. Or do some searching on TeachingEnglish for a specific activity or term that you heard. It all depends on what is important to you.

4. Make sure you visit the TeachingEnglish site. There are thousands of accessible resources which can make a real difference to teaching, learning and assessment. They are all free and you'll also find out about upcoming webinars and self-study courses for you to explore on new and exciting topics.

5. Watch this space! We'll be running even more webinars this year and beyond and we'll be a part of the ASEAN TeachingEnglish conference again. Keep visiting our website and social media pages pages. We value your support and attendance and we're delighted that teachers and teacher educators in Myanmar are so active in TeachingEnglish!

2. Teaching in low-resource contexts

Background

Low resource does not mean no resource.

Learning resources are things that teachers use to help them with the teaching, learning and assessment process. If teachers manage their available resources well and get creative, even in challenging environments, they can achieve learning outcomes more effectively and make the learning experience more motivating and engaging for the learners.

Find the article here: What are learning resources for teachers?

Scan the QR code for the article

So, what do we mean by 'low resource'?

This can mean a limitation in:

- Teachers, assistants or leaders
- Space and buildings
- Money and finances
- Technology and connectivity
- Resources or materials, such as pencils/pens, paper
- Workbooks, textbooks or graded readers
- Teaching aids
- Access to the curriculum
- Support from caregivers
- Basic needs, such as access to school and food supply

When we lack some of these resources, **what can we do?**

The main solution presented is trying to be **creative, collaborative, flexible, adaptable** and have an **open mind.**

Some of the solutions will be surrounding you in the environment.

Some of the solutions will be found in the people in your local community.

Some of the solutions will be implementing new techniques into your teaching practice to adapt to the changing world.

Watch the Webinar

Practical

Here are some suggestions to try in your classroom when you have limited access to materials:

1. The greatest resources in any classroom are the teacher and students. There are many ways we can make language learning engaging and interactive using just our voice and bodies, without the need for fancy and expensive materials.

2. Plan and **deliver theme-based lessons** – learner-centred, locally-relevant and connecting across subjects. For example, **using objects from nature** for counting and making shapes (maths), drawing and describing scenes outside your classroom (English), questioning how things around you work (science).

3. Use resource-free interactive games to give learners more time to practise new language: guessing games, miming, ball games, matching activities or using actions such as Total Physical Response (TPR). Students are more alert when they're active and are more likely to retain new language if it's accompanied by actions.

4. A language lesson is more interactive when students interact with each other. For example, get your students to ask and answer questions with each other. You can use a variety of question types, like closed or open, to practise different skills. Think-Pair-Share is a great technique that doesn't require any resources.

To explore more ideas on using open questions and interactive techniques in your classroom, visit the following resource: TeachingEnglish: Open Questions

Scan the QR code for TeachingEnglish resource

Here is a toolkit from teachers who work in low-resource settings and their ideas: Teaching in low-resource classrooms: voices of experience

Scan the QR code to access the toolkit

3. Collaborative CPD practices through NFE

Background

What is non-formal education (NFE)?

According to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED, 2011), non-formal education (NFE) is defined as an addition, alternative and/or a complement to formal education within the process of the lifelong learning of individuals. It caters for people of all ages, but does not necessarily apply a continuous pathway structure. It includes adult and youth literacy and education for out-of-school children, life skills, work skills and social or cultural development.

Other characteristics of NFE:

- It is institutionalised, intentional and planned by an education provider
- It is often provided to guarantee the right of access to education for all
- It may be short in duration and/or low in intensity; and it is typically provided in the form of short courses, workshops or seminars
- It leads to qualifications that may or may not be recognised or accepted by the qualifications authority in the country (or) may not provide qualifications

Source: (ISCED, 2011:12)

Providing regular and relevant continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities for teachers of NFE is important. While each context might be different, there are some common themes in NFE that would benefit most teachers, such as inclusive education, life skills and lifelong learning.

TeachingEnglish is a comprehensive platform for research, resources, webinars and self-study courses that can support teachers and teacher educators in NFE to provide quality English instruction flexibly to learners on different pathways.

https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/

Watch the Webinar:

Practical

There are many resources available on TeachingEnglish. For example, teachers can use the UN's sustainable development goals (SDGs) as a guide to explore globally and locally relevant issues (see the link below). SDG 6 is about Clean Water and Sanitation.

Lesson plan: Vocabulary

[pre-stage]

Start with a snapshot/section of a larger picture or photo:

    (1)   Elicit some words from learners (e.g. happy, girl, t-shirt, yellow, blue sky) to activate thinking and to assess their ability (teach at the right level)

    (2)   Ask students to guess/predict what she is doing (feeding animals?)

    (3)   Zoom out to show the whole picture. Repeat 1 and 2 (water/washing hands?)
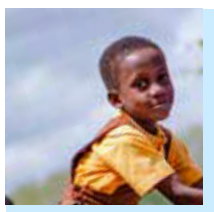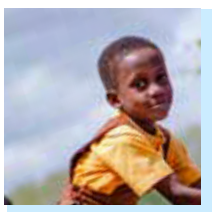
[While-stage]

Listening: *True or False. Read a description of the photo to the students and ask them to stand up when they think it is 'false', for example:*

There is a girl with a yellow t-shirt. The sky is very blue. There are trees behind her. There is a bird in the sky [FALSE]. There is water coming from a pipe. She is drinking the water [FALSE]. She is cupping her hands. The water is going into her hands. She is sad [FALSE]. She is happy. She is wearing a necklace…

[Post-stage]

Speaking: *What can you do with water? How many activities can you think of in pairs? (cooking, washing a bicycle, drinking, bathing). Which of these activities need clean water? Where does our water come from?*

More resources on global issues are available here

Scan the QR code for more resources

4. Community-based inclusive education

Background

What is inclusion and why should we implement inclusive practices?

Inclusion means providing equitable opportunities for all students, regardless of their abilities, backgrounds or differences, to learn together in the same classroom. Inclusive practices can reduce stigma and discrimination, build confidence, create advocates of disability and support better academic achievement for all learners.

What is UDL and how can it help teaching to include all learners?

Universal Design for Learning is an approach to teaching and learning that helps teachers remove barriers to learning and gives all students equal opportunity to succeed. There are guidelines that can help teachers **include** all students and make learning more **accessible. Take a look at this information from the British Council.** When planning and delivering, you should consider:

1. The **'what'** of learning. Learners have different preferences to **how they receive** information. Teachers should consider **meanings**, different visuals, alternative audios, text size or animation to **promote** understanding. **Multiple means of representations.**

2. The **'why'** of learning. The teacher should try to engage students by offering multiple **ways** for them to **become** interested and motivated. Help them **understand** their **goals** and how they are **interacting,** reducing distractions. **Multiple means of engagement.**

3. The **'how'** of learning. The teacher should provide **options** of **engagement** to help students stay **interested** with a variety of methods for responses. Relating themes and topics to tap into individual interests and using appropriate technologies. **Multiple means of action and expression.**

For additional insights on inclusion and Universal Design for Learning (UDL), visit this resource: **Looking for inclusion? UDL is your thing**

Scan the QR code for more resources on inclusion and UDL

Practical

Tips for teaching more inclusively

1. **Focus on progress, not just attainment.** There are many variables and factors that can promote or hinder learning and achievement.

2. **Make inclusive materials:** As well as disabilities, consider other ways people live in society, like rural living, ethnicity, socio-economic status religion, gender, sexuality, family-types like orphans or step-families and include their stories and images.

3. **Use more positive, inclusive language.** Language is important: it can empower people but also discriminate. Choose wisely: UCL Teaching & Learning

Scan QR code to access the portal

4. **Flexible grouping:** Create groups in different ways every lesson to keep the interaction varied. For example, sometimes you can group stronger students with struggling students, or other times keep stronger students together and give them extra activities with a higher level of challenge.

5. **Foster an inclusive learning environment:** This is essential for helping your learners accept each other: Creating an inclusive school environment

Scan the QR code for the report

Watch the Webinar:

5. Materials development in the gender context

Background

Look at this image. What do you think is the difference between equality and equity?

Equality   Equity

Gender equality is: equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. 'All persons are equal before and under the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law.' *(UN Women)*

Gender equity is: the process of being fair to men and women. To ensure fairness, measures must often be put in place to compensate for the historical and social disadvantages that prevent women and men from operating on a level playing field. Equity is the means. Equality is the result.

(UNESCO Gender Mainstreaming Implementation Framework – 2003)

When we talk about providing **equal opportunities,** especially in terms of the **gender context,** we should be thinking about 'equity' and considering what every learner needs to help **fulfil** their **potential.**

Watch the Webinar:

Practical

Creating classroom materials for the gender context: Teachers can use activities to raise awareness of gender empowerment or inequality by studying girls' and women's stories of success and struggle through a variety of mediums.

## Idea 1: Gender norms

Here is a short lesson plan idea:

1. Ask students to brainstorm different occupations (doctor, nurse, fire fighter, footballer, CEO, teacher, engineer, chef, politician) and to draw a basic profile picture of each.

2. Ask them to count how many males/females they have drawn. Why have they drawn different genders for different roles? Were any unisex/difficult to choose?

3. Where did that choice come from? (elicit 'from textbooks', 'from interactions in village/city', 'from expectations').

4. Use 'Teaching' (more female dominated) and 'Engineering' (more male dominated) as two career examples. Why is it important to have better gender equality in these occupations? What might be some equitable approaches to improving gender equality?

5. Teach the word 'fair' and the structure 'Is it fair that usually (men/women) are (occupation(s*))?'. Why/Why not?

- Try to patiently elicit and use generative questioning techniques rather than be directive and binary

- Try to use peer-to-peer learning to develop more pro-social, inclusive and fairer and more just positions

- Avoid any calling out or embarrassing of individuals and use the group to arrive at improved positions through dialogue and discussion

- Try and ensure a fair representation of gender voices when nominating students.

*general noun
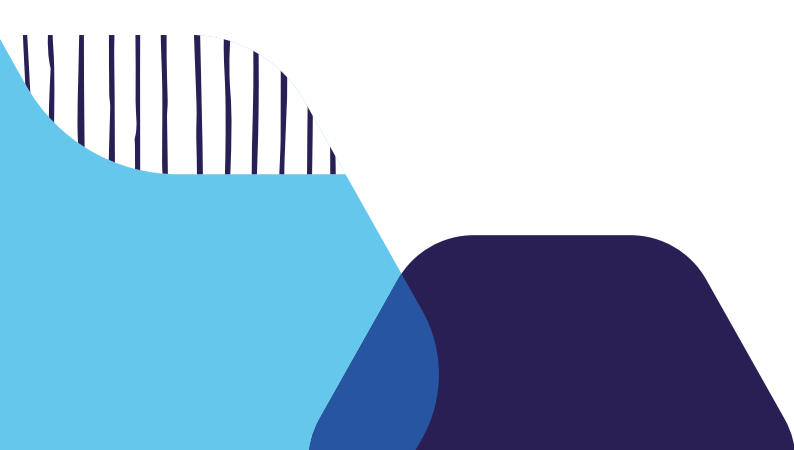
6. English in a multilingual world

Background

How many official languages are said to be spoken in Myanmar?

a)   2?   **b) 120?**   **c) 700?**

Source: *Zein (2022) English as a Subject in Basic Education (ESBE) in ASEAN*

With this in mind, teachers have an important job to encourage positive attitudes and be inclusive of minority ethnic groups' languages, as well as the dominant language or the language of instruction.

What does 'multilingualism' mean?
The ability of societies, institutions, groups and individuals to engage, on a regular basis, with more than one language in their day-to-day lives.

What does 'multilingual education' mean?

According to UNESCO, multilingual education refers to the use of two or more languages as mediums of instruction.

What does 'translanguaging' mean?

An act of integrating multiple languages from your linguistic repertoire when expressing yourself. For example, in a multilingual classroom, a teacher may encourage students to use whatever language(s) they feel comfortable with to engage in learning materials.

What does 'code-switching' mean?

Code-switching is the act of changing between two or more languages, dialects or accents when you are speaking in a single conversation or situation. For example, a teacher may ask a question in Burmese and students answer in English. Or students might use English and Burmese in one sentence.

What is a 'lingua franca'?

Lingua franca means the chosen language of communication between a group of people who speak different languages. In today's world, (The British Council, 2023) "English is often the lingua franca and sometimes the official language of business as chosen by organisations." ASEAN is an example of an organisation that uses English as a lingua franca (ELF).

The correct answer is (b).

Practical

Using more than one language in the classroom

The **Multilingual Education Learn-Choose-Use Teacher Toolkit** provides over 80 MLE teaching methodologies. It is available in English and Burmese.

There are lots of resources available at: the inclusive education foundation

Scan the QR code for more resources

There is a big advantage for those learners who are being taught in a language they use at home or in their community.

When English is a medium of instruction, this may be a big obstacle for many learners because it is often not used in many learners' households.

Here are some important principles to keep in mind:

• English should not be used as the school language unless learners are proficient in English.

• The most natural and effective way of learning in class involves being able to use more than one language.

• Many teachers do not feel confident using only English in lessons. We recommend that language mixing in classrooms should be accepted, developed and adopted.

• Teachers should be trained to integrate multilingual methods of teaching by preparing, organising and structuring teaching materials so that languages will be switched at particular points of lesson delivery and classroom activities.

• Multilingual lesson delivery requires organisation, lesson planning and scaffolding so that language use will be associated with specific activities and teacher–learner or peer interaction.

• Educating learners in a language they do not understand will negatively affect learning outcomes.

Watch the Webinar:

7. Differentiation in action: adapting to learners' levels

Background

Knowledge of learners and their interests, abilities and feelings is one of the key areas of professional knowledge. Think about your learners. Think about how each learner is different to one another. How many differences can you think of?

Here are some possible answers:

- Home language and background

- Previous learning experience and learning level

- Motivations and ambitions

Here are six very short videos of a teacher talking about adult learners who are studying English in the UK. The teacher states they differ by their English language proficiency, from beginner to advanced. What does she do?

Watch the Webinar:

Video

1 Understanding differentiation

2 Creating a positive learning experience

3 Pair and group work

4 Differentiation when teaching from the front

5 Differentiation in skills work: reading and listening

6 Differentiation in skills work: speaking and writing

Practical

In the first video, the teacher says:

"… teaching is about understanding our students and what they need as well as you possibly can. That means we can support and challenge them in just the right ways."

Read how to use the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach to accelerate learning and help children catch up with their peers.
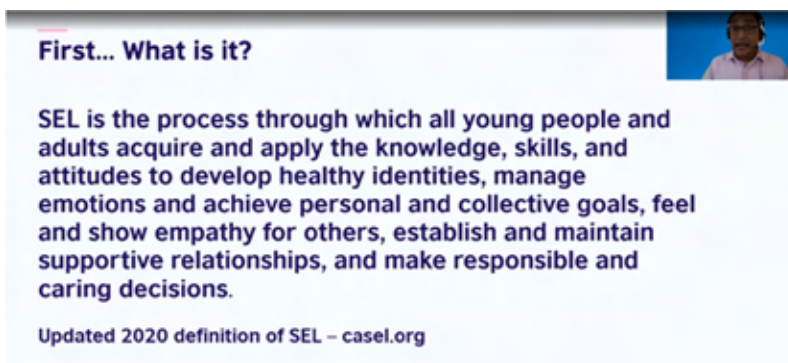
Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL)

- Conduct one-on-one assessments (e.g. use quick oral tests to sort learners into groups that match their learning levels, rather than their age).

- Determine each of your student's current learning level and allocate them to a level-appropriate group.

- Ask these groups to gather for one hour of each school day to practise English (or provide intensive catch-up sessions less regularly if every day is not possible).

- Tailor and target your instruction by their learning level – rather than just following a grade-based curriculum.

- Tailor their learning assignments accordingly.

8. Social-emotional learning

Background

Look at a screenshot from a webinar on socio-emotional learning (SEL). The presenter starts with a definition:

First... What is it?

SEL is the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions.

Updated 2020 definition of SEL – casel.org

Building rapport and social emotional competence

Scan the QR code to access

Let's look again at the list:

Acquire and apply the knowledge, skills and attitudes to:

• Develop healthy identities

• Manage emotions

• Achieve personal and collective goals

• Feel and show empathy for others

• Establish and maintain supportive relationships

• Make responsible and caring decisions

How confident do you feel about teaching English
as a subject and developing your students'
Social-emotional learning OR socio-emotional learning?

Practical

Social and emotional capacity is important in a child's development to prepare them for an ever-changing world. The focus on academic knowledge and technical skills in a traditional classroom might produce high-grade-attaining students, but not necessarily well-regulated members of society.

Here is one idea for an activity inspired by the SEL for Teachers Organisation. You can find hundreds of lessons plans and teaching practices here

Scan QR code to access Hub.

Captain Kindness

- Ask students to make a list of kind things their peers do, such as: 'say "hello" in the morning', 'include quiet students in group work,' etc.

- Ask students to make a list of unkind things, such as: 'make fun of someone' or 'exclude someone from a game'.

- Appoint a 'Captain Kindness' for the first day to review the list of kind things.

- At the end of the day, nominate the next day's Captain Kindness by stating something that the nominated student did that was kind: 'Mi Pu picked up my pencil case when I dropped it'.

- Add any new kind activities to the list (if not already on it).

Think about ways you already embed SEL in your teaching day. You might have a sports day, play a game or do an activity that requires cooperation, a task which has turn taking, writing a diary …

There is also a self-study course, SEL Training For Teachers, from UNESCO that can help you develop your skills

Scan QR code access to the training

Watch the Webinar:

9. Student-centred approaches/reducing teacher talk

Background

Some learners might have **high fluency** (speak at pace) but **low accuracy** (make many grammatical or lexical errors).

Some learners might have high accuracy (make few grammatical or lexical errors) but **low fluency** (take a long time to speak up and/or finish speaking).

- Which of these situations is typical in your context?
- Which of the two situations do you feel is more of an issue? Why?

Which of these are the elements of an effective fluency-based speaking task?

- There's a specific task outcome
- There is some input of functional language checking prior to or during the task
- The focus is on the meaning, not using the specific grammatical forms
- The teacher models what they expect of the learners
- The learners have sufficient preparation time before the task
- There is space for the learners to experiment
- It is learner-centred
- The teacher gives feedback on the language they used

Practical

How to play: "Find someone who …" speaking activity

The "Find someone who …" is probably one of the most commonly used communicative speaking activities around the world. It benefits learners' speaking skills by giving them a chance to communicate with a balance of fluency and accuracy and to practise speaking again and again with different students. Here's how you do it:

Provide a written list, such as this one, for each learner:

1. Likes pickled tea leaf salad.......................................

2. Has been to Bagan ....

3. Likes noodles...

4. Doesn't like noodles..

5. Has an older sister ....

6. Has been to Mandalay...

7. Has a younger brother...

8. Doesn't have any siblings ....

Instructions for "Find someone who …" speaking activity:

Provide students with a list, such as in the example to the left (you can change the statements to any target language you want). Practise changing the statements to question forms with students, No.1 changes to "Do you like pickled tea leaf salad?" but No. 2 changes to "Have you (ever) been to Bagan?" Practise the correct responses, "Yes, I do/No, I don't" (1, 3, 4, 8) and Yes, I have/No, I haven't" (2, 5, 6, and 7). In an open space, have students mingle and use 'rock, paper, scissors' with the winner getting to ask the question (and fill in their sheet). The student answering (the student who did not win 'rock, paper, scissors' does not fill in their sheet, so winning 'rock, paper scissors' is important!) Set a time limit and monitor carefully to address any grammatical or lexical issues after the activity has finished.

Answer: All of the above. And there's more. .

10. Strategies and activities to enhance learner autonomy

Background

Cognitive strategies include repetition, organising new language, summarising meaning, guessing meaning from context, using imagery for memorisation (making mind maps), visualisation, association, mnemonics, using clues in reading comprehension, underlining key words, scanning and self-testing and monitoring.

Metacognitive strategies are different and sometimes are said to be "thinking about learning". In teaching and learning, we might also call this learner training.

Often, these are strategies our learners can use to make them more aware of their learning journey, especially successes and failures, and to help them take more responsibility for their own learning over time.

This also reduces the reliance on the teacher, which helps them to study even when the teacher is not in the room. This is important when we think about learning continuing outside the classroom and lifelong learning.

The aim of learner training is to produce effective, independent language learners. Here are some examples:

- Learners think about what time of day they are most productive and then produce a diagram showing their peaks and troughs. Together they discuss how to plan study with this in mind.

- After class, write a journal entry about the pros and cons of class and action points.

Watch the Webinar:

Practical

Let's try to differentiate between cognitive and metacognitive strategies. If you think it is cognitive, tick **"C"**. On the other hand, if you think it is metacognitive, tick **"M"**. Use the background section to help you (the answers are at the bottom).

Cognitive or metacognitive: that is the question!	C	M
1. Highlighting all nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs in a text		
2. Set aside an hour of the day which is best for you to self-study		
3. Read a 500-word paragraph and write a 50-word summary of it		
4. Read a text from start to finish very quickly to find the key points		
5. Write a 'revision promise' in the inside of your books		
6. In a test or quiz, focus on progress, not on a specific grade mark		
7. In a listening test, don't focus on auxiliaries, prepositions, conjunctions		

Why not try to find some quotes or sayings from your context to help students. For example:

"Success is 10 per cent inspiration and 90 per cent perspiration." (Thomas Edison)

"I never dreamt of success. I worked for it." (Estee Lauder)

Answer: 1, 3, 4 & 7 are cognitive because they focus on your knowledge of the English language. 2, 5, 6 are metacognitive because they are "thinking about thinking" and not strictly knowledge-based

11. Developing receptive skills through innovative strategies

Background

There are four macro skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing. There are also sub-skills that are smaller skills that help the development of the macro skills. For example, vocabulary, spelling, grammar, pronunciation. When we talk about the 'receptive skills', we mean reading and listening.

In language classes, reading and listening skills are often practised in a repetitive, routine and passive manner, using past exam papers that 'test' learners' skills but might not actually develop them. Students might only find out if they were right or wrong, but not learn why or how they can improve next time.

How can we teach reading and listening so that students are not just passively taking test after test and both students and teachers can see a real development of skills during class?

We can use cognitive approaches to reading. Thinking aloud while reading can avoid 'mindless reading' (something we are all guilty of now and again).

The integrated skills approach is important here. In terms of reading, we can use **writing** – summary writing – as a great way to check if students have comprehended a **reading** text fully and we can use speaking – jigsaw reading – to foster greater reading comprehension skills.

Listening can also be taught innovatively by placing a greater emphasis on the actual process of listening. There are so many activities to make receptive skills enjoyable. The Language Teacher toolkit and Breaking the sound barrier have many activities, see here

Scan QR code to access

Have a look at these innovative approaches and take steps to make listening and reading skills something enjoyable and motivating. There's also a webinar for you to watch to hear how others are developing their learners' receptive skills in new and exciting ways.

There are many videos to watch on how to teach the receptive skills here:

Teaching reading and writing

Scan QR code to access

Practical

Jigsaw reading

1. Start with a longer text that can be divided into smaller chunks of text (cut the text into five slips of paper, with one short paragraph on each slip).

2. Make 'home' groups of five students. Give them each a slip of paper, with a differently numbered paragraph (1-5).

3. You can put all the 1s together to form a new group, all the 2s together, all the 3s together and so on. These are their 'expert' groups' (they will return to their original 'home' groups later).

4. In their expert groups, they can read silently for five minutes, make a pair and a three, discuss the reading and obtain peer support for any unfamiliar words or structures. Then they can discuss as a group of five.

5. They return to their home groups and present what their slip (paragraph) is about, one by one.

Listening bingo

1. Choose an audio or video sample that contains level-appropriate vocabulary, which you would like learners to acquire/revise.

2. Make a list of about 20 such words* and write them on the board (don't give the list to students).

3. Ask students to only choose six or seven of these words (ask them to write them down).

4. Ask students to stand up and tell them to sit down once they have heard and crossed off their six words.

Train learners to focus on content words, such as nouns, main verbs, adjectives, adverbs (don't choose prepositions, auxiliary verbs, articles or conjunctions for the bingo).

Watch the Webinar:

12. Deploying formative assessment in language classes effectively

Background

We often hear the terms 'Assessment for Learning (AfL)' and 'formative assessment'. Sometimes these are used interchangeably, but there is a difference.

Formative assessment is what teachers do in the classroom. They use observational data (from a low-stakes quiz or a task) and then take 'formative action'. In other words, their teaching changes to meet the learning need. It is a contingent approach (as opposed to a linear approach, following a lesson plan or syllabus regardless of student progress or mastery).

AfL is more macro and institutional. It could be seen as diagnostic testing (entry tests) by a school for the baseline (the 'here and now') to measure progress (pre-test, post-test), set pupils by ability, divert resources or select the appropriate textbooks or teachers for the level of the pupils. Sometimes, only the entry test is conducted, with no changes made based on its results.

This toolkit section will focus on formative assessment (and **formative action**).

Formative assessment is one of the most effective ways to drive student progress. It is at the core of what it means to be a teacher. It is also something teachers can do easily and probably already do.

For example, on a Monday you ask students to take a short quiz on last week's vocabulary (formative assessment). You notice, however, that very few of the students can recall more than two or three of the words from the ten words taught last week.

You decide to change your teaching by including the seven words that proved most difficult from last week, and before Tuesday you prepare a new picture-matching exercise. Formative assessment and formative action!

Watch the Webinar:
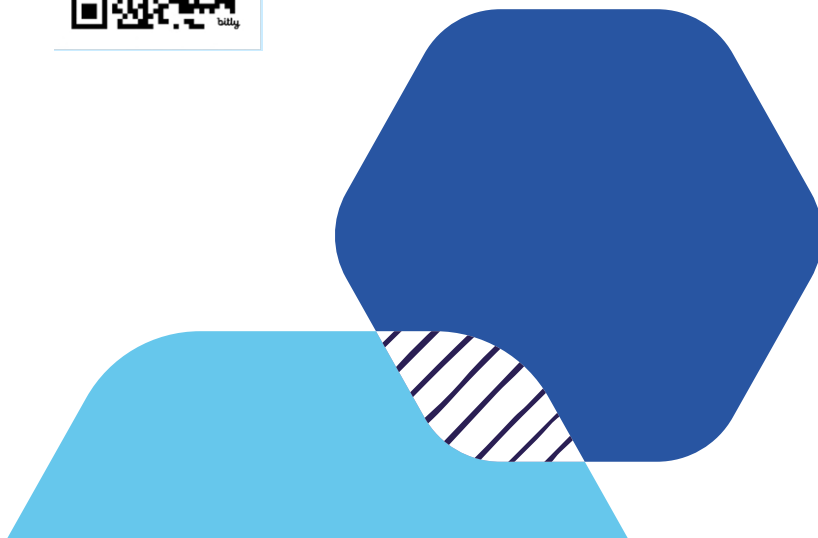
Practical

There are so many ways you can obtain data in a low-stakes, informal way that can help you formatively assess whole classes, with some resources.

Traffic lights: Give students a red cup, a yellow cup and a green cup. Have them turn them upside down and stack them on top of each other. As they work on a task, you can ask them to change the top cup to the appropriate colour: Red = I'm struggling. Yellow = It's difficult, but I'm managing so far. Green = This is easy (and formative action may be needed if the cups are all red … or all green!).

Mini-whiteboards: Each student gets a mini-whiteboard. You write "moo" on the blackboard. All the students write "cow" on their own mini-whiteboard. You write "quack". Students are slow to write and only a handful write "duck" on their boards (you take formative action and write "duck" into your notebook to re-teach later).

Choose sides: You make one side of the classroom "True" and the opposite side of the classroom "False". You ask a student to read out pre-prepared statements, such as "Water vapour is a gas" (true); "Ice is a liquid" (false). You watch how many students seem certain, how long it takes and how many are in the correct side of the room. Then you take formative action (move on or study more).

Eyes down, hands up: You ask students to sit at the desk, close their eyes and lower their heads. You say statements, such as "I feel confident about the days of the week in English". If they agree with the statement, they raise their hand. If they do not feel confident, they don't raise their hand. You repeat statements from the competency-based descriptors. You notice very few hands go up. You adapt your teaching (formative action) by slowing down the pace of your teaching.

13. Using tasks in English language teaching

Background

PPP stands for presentation, practice and production and is a very popular and common way to structure an English language learning lesson.

Increasingly, however, many teachers are moving away from PPP and towards TBLT, which stands for task-based language teaching (or simply task-based learning, TBL).

Some believe PPP does not produce good results in the last 'production' stage. Some feel that trying to manipulate and control phrases or structures introduced in the first 'presentation' stage and rehearsed in the second 'practice' stage to be used by learners in the last 'production' stage is artificial and does not reflect authentic interaction or respect learners (to use the full range of their own language resource, or navigate the situation based on what they have currently).

Source: PPP

Scan QR code to access

Task-teach-task

Task-teach-task is a (very) simple way to look at TBLT in action. It may seem slightly strange to teach after a task, but it has some benefits:

- It allows learners to use their existing language resource (through meaningful interaction and a context-rich approach)
- It allows for teachers to take formative action (in the middle 'teach' part) through formative assessment of the first 'task'
- Having two tasks allows learners to repair ('a second chance') in the second 'task'

NB: TBLT requires a foundation of English and should be designed/tailored/respectful of learners' level (A1 learners would likely struggle with this).

Watch the Webinar:

Practical

There are certain conditions to design a task:

- It should be context rich. A familiar task based on a likely need.

- Learners should be trying to achieve something from the encounter (buy a ticket for a train).

- There should be a gap for one student (e.g. as passenger: doesn't know when the trains depart, if there are seats available, how much it costs).

- A paired student should also face a gap (e.g. as train operator staff: does the passenger have a credit/debit card [as no cash is allowed], do they want to sit in first class, premium economy, or economy basic, how many tickets do they need, do they have a frequent traveller card?).

- There should be a focus on achieving the task, not grammatical accuracy.

- There should be reflection on the quality of the exchange, transaction and/or interaction.

Sample flow of task-teach-task:

Task	Teach	Task
Choose a task such as the one above and focus on setting the scene and providing necessary resources (e.g. information needed) with minimal prompts, without dictating the target language. Refrain from getting involved unless absolutely necessary (e.g. there is a major issue/no production).	Using notes from monitoring and observing the first 'task', address major errors or mistakes that impeded understanding and achievement of the task. This is purely contingent on learner issues and requires a contingent approach (as opposed to the linear approach in PPP).	Re-run the task, with some minor changes (e.g. country/city destination, type of ticket, number of passengers) and assess whether repair was made possible. Encourage reflection after on the quality of transaction/interaction.

More information on creating a gap

Scan QR code to access

14. Enhancing learners' productive skills and implementing feedback mechanisms

Background

There are four macro skills: speaking, listening, reading and writing. There are also sub-skills (vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation). When we talk about the 'productive skills', we mean speaking and writing.

Often, speaking and writing are said to be the most challenging – both for the teacher and the learner.

Sometimes, students only receive indirect instruction in these skills (gap fill of a spoken dialogue text on paper, or finding and correcting errors in an email, letter or other passage). This is opposed to direct instruction of speaking and writing, where students actually produce monologues or dialogues and actually write an email, letter or essay.

Teachers also find teaching and assessing speaking and writing a challenge. Mostly, feedback is challenging because it is time consuming to provide feedback.

However, there are many useful strategies that can be used for productive skills, especially to encourage confidence, sustained production and fluency over accuracy (meaning and comprehension).

In speaking, we can choose between **immediate feedback** (prompts or recasts) and **delayed feedback** after the task has finished. It may not be appropriate to provide immediate feedback if the aim is fluency (unless the error is affecting task achievement substantially).

In writing, we can choose between **indirect feedback** (i.e. error correction codes to indicate there are specific, discrete issues which require the student's attention and own amendment) or **direct feedback** (changing the words or sentences for the students so they can see the correct form).

Watch the Webinar:

Practical

TeachingEnglish has some great videos of teachers teaching the skill of speaking:

Teaching speaking

Scan QR code to access

In immediate feedback of speaking, which situation do you think makes the student think more deeply about the language and encourages self-repair (i.e. stimulates learning)?
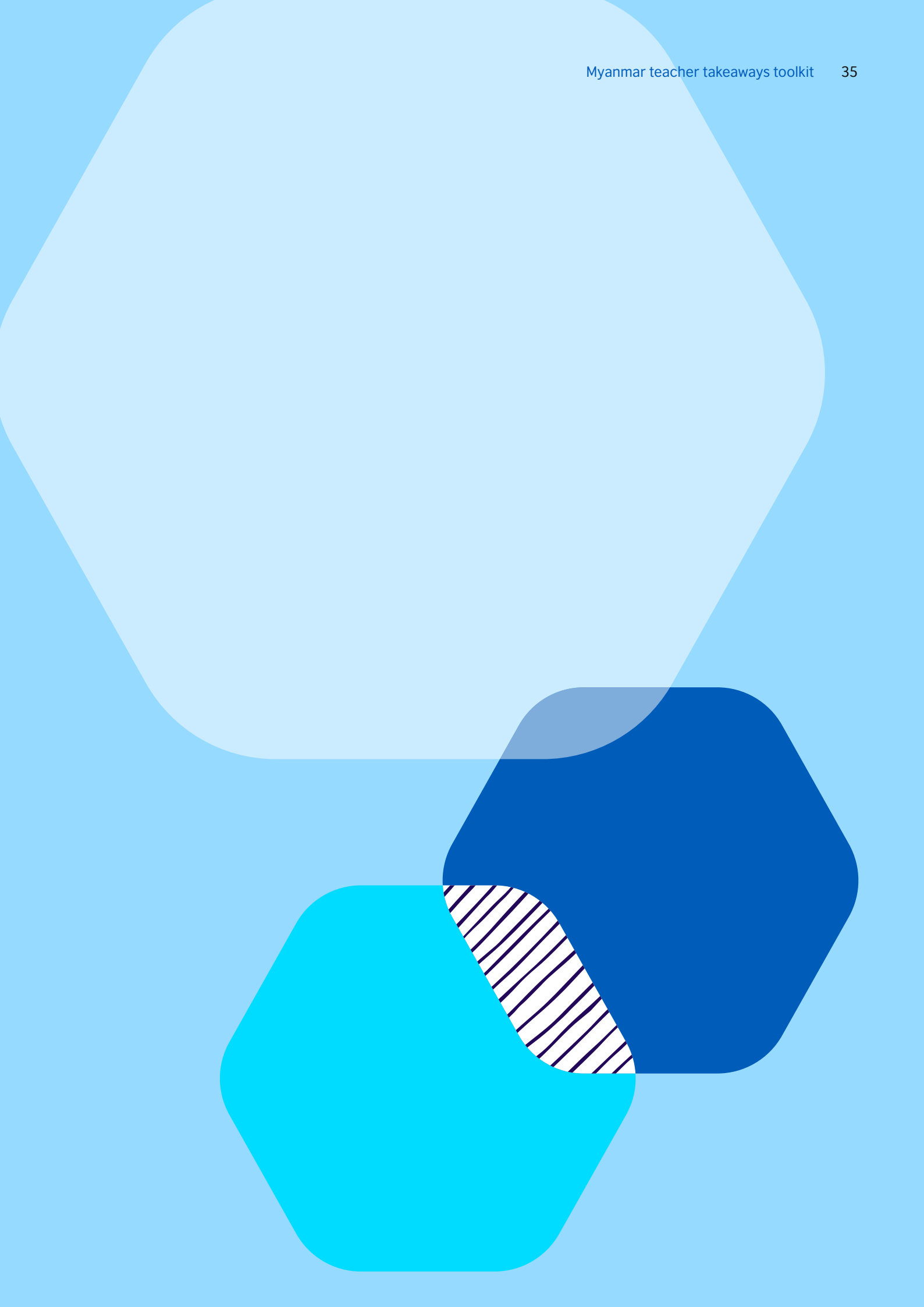
Situation 1: Recast	Situation 2: Prompt
Student A: What time will you leave school today?	Student A: What time will you leave school today?
Student B: I will leave school **on** 4pm	Student B: I will leave school **on** 4pm
Teacher: No! "I will leave school **at** 4pm." Again!	Teacher: (makes a confused face … and says 'on' very uncertainly)
Student B: I will leave school **at** 4pm	Student B: I will leave school **at** 4pm

In feedback on writing, which situation do you think makes the student think more deeply about the language and encourages self-repair (i.e. *stimulates* learning)?

I go [T] to the yesterday park [Wo] with my fiend [Sp]	I ~~go~~ **went** to the ~~yesterday park~~ **park yesterday** with my ~~fiend~~ **friend**

T= tense/wo = word order/Sp = spelling

Highlighting to students that repair is needed, rather than doing the repair for them, is much more beneficial for their learning.