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Post-Graduate Certificate in the  
Teaching of English

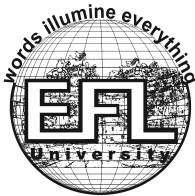
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# METHODS OF TEACHING ENGLISH

BLOCK

I

Aspects of ELT



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# **METHODS OF TEACHING ENGLISH**

## **BLOCK I**

### **ASPECTS OF ELT**

#### **Contents**

Introduction to the course	i
Introduction to the block	iii
Unit 1	
Introduction to methods	1
Unit 2	
The classroom	17
Unit 3	
The teacher	27
Unit 4	
The learner	44



## INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

This course introduces you to the activity of theorising about the classroom. This means that principles of language teaching are arrived at through an analysis of teaching practice. Some of this analysis will be made by you, the learner, on your own teaching practice, but much of this analysis will be made by you on conclusions arrived at by theorists in the field. The **Methods** course is really the theoretical part of the *English Language Teaching* (ELT) component - it is the theory of the practice of teaching. Indeed this course has as much potential for abstract thought as the theory of Linguistics, Phonetics and Grammar, but it has a practical orientation or a direct relationship to action involving the English classroom -- i.e. involving the behaviours of the participants of the teaching- learning process in the curriculum.

### Objectives of the Course

The **Methods** course is meant for the teacher, who is not familiar with the language of the English Language Teaching area of study. So you will be introduced to basic terms in Block I. This course, moreover, has an orientation to the discussion of basic issues in the field of English Language Teaching to improve teaching practices, rather than an orientation to the discussion of *academic* issues for the academic purposes of *research* in the area.

This does not mean that research is not a possible outcome of this course. It very definitely could be an outcome of the course which will be developed through all the components of the ELT area: **Materials, Practice Teaching and Methods**. This aspect of research however, is more overtly picked up in the Diploma course through the **Principles of Language Teaching** course and through **Project Work**. This is where the research spin-offs get focussed attention. It would be good if this course starts you on the road to research in ELT but it would be even better if the **Methods** course helps you to be a better practitioner in the classroom. This is a goal that this course seeks to meet.

### How to study this course

It would be advisable to study this course block by block and unit by unit, initially in a chronological order. This is important because many concepts and ideas are not exhaustively discussed in one unit. Sometimes, one unit introduces you to a concept, which is developed in two or three other places through the course. Often concepts are developed in other courses; references are made to the **Practice Teaching** and **Materials** courses. Often, one idea looks different when focussed on in a different way. This difference in orientation makes the same concept look different. You yourself can, however, with the application of your practical experience, *change* the structure of concepts -- you can in fact start shaping new concepts into moulds more recognizable and acceptable for yourself.

You are embarking on a learning experience, which involves a great deal from you, cognitively speaking. Treat **Methods** not just as a subject, with **content** or a knowledge component that you have to learn as facts, but also as a learning experience where you develop *skills* for teaching practice -- by reflecting on what teachers and researchers report in terms of their own contextualised experience.

The **Methods** course is not, then, just knowledge -- though it does have a *knowledge* component, and also a historical orientation. This is knowledge, if you like. But it is trying to capture for reflection the subtle nuances of a sort of social action combined with a kind of private cogitation. Teaching can be both social and private, as is learning. This is perhaps what makes the field of methodology so dynamic, so interesting, and often so frustrating. In **Methods**, often *the obvious* has deep structures that are mind-boggling in terms of complexity. You could see

the obvious as surface structures only -- or you could get involved enough to look below the surface. Basically, the study of methods involves the *attitude* of the learner. How inclined are you, how relevant is it to you to look below surface actions? Ask yourself this question; much of your growth in learning and benefiting from this course will depend on your answer.

As in the other courses, this course, **The Methods of Teaching English**, is divided into *blocks* which are in turn made up of two or more *units*. This course has 5 blocks. Each block has two or more units.

*Block I* serves as an introduction to the whole area of English Language Teaching (ELT) and to the course. It discusses basic assumptions in ELT, common terms in the area, and also research concerns. The discussion is organised specifically in terms of the perspectives of the classroom, the teacher, and the learner. This is to initiate thinking on the classroom in organised ways.

*Block II* is a fairly "heavy" block in theoretical terms. It introduces you to the historical, psychological, linguistic and sociolinguistic perspectives on language teaching. You will have to return to this block often in order to grasp the matter in it comprehensively. This is because much of this block will be new to you. So if you find it difficult don't get discouraged, but go back to it. It is expected that you will have to struggle with this block initially.

*Block III* discusses the individual skills of language use. It discusses the definitions of these skills, the sub-skills or components of each skill, and ways pertaining to the learning and teaching of the skills in the classroom. This block is related in very specific ways to the **Materials Course** (Block 3) and to the **Practice Teaching Course** (Block 5). Please remember to cross-reference to these two courses when you study this block.

*Block IV* discusses issues dear to the heart of the English teacher: How do you teach grammar and vocabulary, and study skills? How do you teach and test literature? These issues are very real to the English teacher.

Finally *Block V* looks at the whole problem of testing. Again this is a difficult but absolutely essential part of our teaching practice. And testing does have fundamental principles that we cannot ignore. In fact there are principles in this area which, if we are not aware of, would prove to be detrimental to our professional abilities.

## References

Most units carry a list of books you could read if you wanted to improve your understanding of specific areas. These books are available in the CIEFL Library, British Council Libraries, and some University/College libraries. It is possible that all of you, however, would not have access to libraries. In such cases you need not despair. Try to get the books when you come for the contact programmes. But remember -- your materials should be adequate right now for your current purposes.

## Assignments

When you write your assignments, try to do some thinking first, on the specific topics. If you do this, you will find that your assignments will be substantially better. Thinking helps in the consolidation and application of new ideas. Besides this, please apply much of the material/discussion on writing skills in Unit 2, Block III. It is relevant for you.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE BLOCK

Block I of the **Methods** course is an introductory section, which exposes you to the basic components of the ELT classroom, and issues pertaining to the specific areas of the classroom, the learner and the teacher. A research orientation in terms of each of these components is posited; *self-evaluation, reflection* on teaching practices, and other important debatable issues are focussed upon in the block.

Assumptions of teaching and learning inherent in the ESL classroom, are introduced, so that a *mind-set* or focus, necessary for the study of the principles of methodology is encouraged. Some terms and acronyms common to ELT are discussed, since these will be taken as *givens* through the course. Assumptions, terms and acronyms are clearly stated in order to prepare you for the process of *self-evaluation* and evaluation of your own teaching practices and consequently for constructive learning.

*Block I* has a separate unit devoted to each *major* component of the teaching-learning process: the classroom, the learner and the teacher. This is not to say that these three components are all that there is to the teaching-learning process. As we go along, we will see that there are many other aspects -- but a discussion of the classroom, the learner and the teacher is as good a starting place as any other. It is an organisation of ideas and issues as valid as any other kind of categorisation, carrying with it familiar contexts that should help you to start grasping the often slippery area called the *methods* of teaching English.

The movement from the familiar to the new, from the old to the new is the basic definition of learning adopted in the course. *Block I*, therefore, asks you to think of, and describe, your classroom, your learner and your own professional attitudes.





## Unit 1

### INTRODUCTION TO METHODS

#### Contents

1.0	Introduction	2
1.1	The scope of the course: Methods of teaching English	4
1.2	The theory of language teaching	4
1.3	Teaching and learning	6
1.4	Common terms used in the course	7
1.5	The status of English in India	8
1.6	The formal system of learning: instruction in the curriculum	11
1.7	Teaching objectives	13
1.7.1	<i>Why</i> do we teach English?	13
1.7.2	The " <i>what</i> " of teaching English	14
1.7.3	<i>How</i> do we teach English?	15
1.8	Summary	16
1.9	Sources	16
1.10	Answers to review questions	16

# Unit 1

## INTRODUCTION TO METHODS

### 1.0 Introduction

This section introduces you to the scope of the **Methods** course, vis-a-vis the other two courses in the English language teaching (ELT) component. You probably have certain expectations as you start this course; some more consciously felt and stated than others. We would like you to first search your mind and find out for yourself what your expectations are. Having done this, *our* objectives and claims for the course will be understood by you, so that you will be sufficiently able to modify your expectations.

Modifying your expectations, or re-stating your own learning objectives is a process of learning that should help you to understand for yourself, what we mean by learning. The term *objectives* needs a brief clarification here. What do we mean by objectives? Objectives stand for what you or we are trying to achieve at the end of the course. Objectives can be teaching objectives or learning objectives.

What are your learning objectives? To begin with, let's start with an activity. We have indicated below, a list of possible objectives you might have, regarding the **Methods course**. Tick the objectives that might be what you hold, add your own objectives and then contrast your objectives with what we claim are our objectives. How much modification do you need to make?

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#### Activity A

*What do I expect from this course?*

- a. to know how to become a better teacher of language
- b. to understand the basic concepts in the area
- c. to become familiar with what other teachers have been doing, and why they have been doing this
- d. to get a grounding in a new area to conduct further research
- e. to improve my professional qualifications
- f. to get to know and practice the best teaching method for English language
- g. any other?

#### Discussion

Well, most of the objectives in the above list, are valid in themselves. But we need to, at the outset, make two clarifications:

1. Objective (f) is *not* one of our objectives. That is we do not claim *to teach you the best method* of teaching your class, as is stated in objective (f). Rather, we claim to help you to think of the best methods for teaching your class, at different times, and in terms of different problems and teaching objectives. What are the implications here? If you are expecting us to solve all your problems, you will be disappointed. *But* if you expect us to empower you to find your own solutions to your own problems you won't be disappointed. I hope you understand the vital difference between these two positions. One puts the onus on *us*, the experts, as the source of all knowledge, and the other gives *you* the initiative to make your own decisions. This means that we will present to you a range of options in methodology, from which you can choose in order to teach in systematic

and informed ways.

2. Taken more largely, and in general terms, we would like to tell you that we will try not to be merely dogmatic and prescriptive in this course. That is, we will not be advocating methods and techniques without accompanying rationales and theoretical explanations. Rather, all methods advocated by us, will have accompanying theoretical explanations. This should encourage you, because explanations help you to *understand* your subject better.

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## Activity B

Why is it important to *understand* something? Make a list of reasons why *understanding* is important.

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### Discussion

Understanding why something is done, is important because:

- a. it involves the learner in a cognitive, or intellectual way
- b. it helps you to diagnose a problem (in this case in teaching)
- c. it helps you to address the problem
- d. it empowers you to operate more flexibly by giving you skills and strategies which you can *adapt* and *use* in different circumstances.

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Perhaps it will be appropriate at this stage, to state the objectives of this course, and to make one or two clarifications about this course, the **Methods of English**, vis-a-vis the **Materials for Language Teaching**, and **Practice Teaching**.

First, here are the General Objectives of the Methods course.

### **General Course Objectives**

The general aim of this course is to present the approaches, methods and techniques in English Language Teaching (ELT) in order to help you to:

1. gain perspectives on approaches, methods and techniques in ELT; and
2. relate these approaches, methods and techniques to your own teaching situation.

These general objectives subsume the smaller, more specific objectives listed in **Activity A**. In that sense, these larger objectives, just stated, can be described as the *aims* of the course, or the *goals* of the course. *Objectives*, on the other hand, are more specific, and narrower in scope. A more detailed discussion will show you, that objectives, in turn, can be of several kinds: *behavioural* and *expressive*. Behavioural objectives list the learning outcomes in terms of overt, observable behaviours while *expressive* objectives, talk more of learning by the learner, in terms of cognitive processes which are less easily observable. We will discuss objectives later in 1.7.

## 1.1 The scope of the course: Methods of teaching English

Well now, we have come to an understanding of the objectives of the course. We need to also see however what the scope is, of this course. What are the boundaries of this course in curriculum terms and how does it fit in with the other two courses in the ELT component?

These three courses, **Methods**, **Materials** and **Practice Teaching** deal with the essentials of teaching:

- a. The *how* and *why* of teaching - **Methods**
- b. The *what* of teaching, the *content* of teaching; appropriateness of content - theoretical issues - **Materials**
- c. Actual teaching practice - **Practice Teaching**

The *how* and *why* of teaching.

As you can see, **Methods** and **Materials** are more theoretically oriented than **Practice Teaching**. This is *not* to say, though, that **Methods** and **Materials** are all theory and no practice, or that **Practice Teaching** is all action and no theory. We say simply that the orientation of **Methods** and **Materials** is more theoretical than that of **Practice Teaching**, and that the **Practice Teaching** course puts into implementation the theories discussed in **Methods** and **Materials**, but in an *informed* theory-oriented way.

### To put it briefly:

In **Methods** you will be introduced to the basic theories of learning and teaching English. You will see *why* certain teaching practices are better than others and *why* certain methods are more reflective of particular principles of teaching and learning. **Methods** in other words, is concerned with the theoretical issues and principles underlying teaching in the classroom.

In **Materials**, you will be introduced to how teaching materials are organised according to different principles of syllabus organisation, so that you can evaluate for yourselves what different teaching materials are aiming to do. You can then evaluate what you would need for your use, and how to adapt materials for different purposes.

In **Practice Teaching** we ask you to examine your teaching plans, evaluate their implementation and your own teaching practice, and be prepared to systematically examine your classroom in order to arrive at solutions to classroom problems.

In brief, **Methods** is a more theoretically oriented course than **Practice Teaching**, though both deal with the same questions of the *how* and *why* of language teaching. **Materials**, on the other hand, discusses the *what* of language teaching but more theoretically than in **Practice Teaching**, which looks at the practicalities of using and adapting materials in the classroom.

## 1.2 The theory of language teaching

We have said that **Methods** is a theoretically oriented course, or a course which examines the theories underlying language learning and teaching. But what is theory in language teaching?

This is the first question we need to address.

Theory in language teaching and learning can be defined simply as "the thought underlying language teaching" (Stern, 1983). This definition should serve us at this early stage of discussions. The thought underlying language teaching can be the

thoughts of the individual teacher *and* the thoughts of theorists, towering personalities in education and researchers, representing different frameworks and schools of thought.

We can perceive *thought*, then, at two levels:

- a. at the level of the practising teacher, and
- b. at the level of the informed researcher and theorist.

Let us elaborate these two levels:

a. *Thoughts or the thinking of the teacher*

The practising teacher reflects on his or her teaching experiences. This *reflection* can be expressed in diary entries, in group discussions etc., and can range from the anecdotal variety to the more objective kind of classroom data analysis. Today, we have the concept of the *teacher as researcher* that is well documented and discussed in ELT.

This is the general goal of the entire PGCTE course, to make *you* a more reflective teacher. We want you to be able to crystallise your perceptions on teaching more and more coherently, within developed frameworks and to *evaluate* yourself more and more systematically.

b. *Thoughts underlining theories of researchers and specialists*

This evaluation of your teaching practice in more systematic ways brings us to frameworks already developed by major schools of thought, by theorists and by researchers. The thoughts underlying theories can be categorised according to the perceptions or points of view with which they are made by like-minded people. So some assumptions on language teaching focus on the form of language, while others take on the perspective of sociological organisation or psychological learning processes. We can say that language teaching is informed by supporting disciplines like linguistics, psychology, education, literature, curriculum theory, sociology and so on. This brings us therefore to the second level at which we perceive theory where the evaluation of your own teaching is to be made against the theories held by major thinkers in the fields of study relevant to language teaching. Thought, here, seen in relation to a specific body of knowledge or of a subject, is to be perceived as *theory*. Theory is defined as "the analysis of a set of facts in their relation to one another, or the general or abstract principles of a body of fact, a science or an art" (Webster's dictionary) This means that we are talking about more than a personalised kind of thinking: we are looking at a body of thought held by a group of people. In short we are speaking of theory.

We will, therefore, be discussing the perspectives on practice that reach us through the linguistic, sociological, psychological, and curriculum angles. But since this is a first-level course we will not go beyond the basics in these areas. We will concentrate on these areas only to the extent that they are necessary for us to understand and expose what is actually *implicit* in the practice of language teaching. We will discuss these theories in separate units in this course.

These two types of theory will be presented to you in an interesting way. To prevent rote learning (and boredom and therefore no learning), we will be using the following two techniques in this course:

- a. We will be showing how the theories of even major thinkers are rooted in action, and take off from practice.
- b. We will be asking you to make sense of new knowledge against the knowledge *you already have*. We will, as much as possible, try to introduce you to new thinking through familiar ideas and thoughts.

#### To elaborate:

Our focus on learning includes your existing knowledge in a big way. What we are also saying, is that new *knowledge* will be assimilated by you, in terms of *what you already know, what you want to know, what you are willing to learn and work for*. New learning depends greatly on what is already known. This would account for the fact that students learn what they can, and not always what the teacher teaches. We make a point of saying this right at the beginning, in order to orient you to getting into a mind-set that is receptive to new learning, to new attitudes and to the questioning of attitudes. In short, without a *readiness* for learning, there will not *be* much learning.

### 1.3 Teaching and learning

It might be appropriate at this stage to draw your attention to a fundamental distinction between teaching and learning that we make in this course.

*Teaching* involves the *curriculum* and the way in which teaching is organised in schools for instructional purposes. Teaching is what we do in schools, in an organised way for predetermined learning outcomes.

*Learning*, on the other hand, is something that happens inside the mind of the learner. This could be the result of planned instruction in schools i.e. of teaching, *or* it could happen through experience *inside* or *outside* the school. Learning in other words can occur even without systematic instructional planning. Often this kind of informal learning could be even more effective than learning through planned instruction. You can think of numerous examples in language learning, especially if you consider how a child learns the mother tongue. Why then, do we concentrate on *teaching* and learning through teaching? Why do we need to think of developing language teaching in school? Perhaps the answer is that in terms of the second language, English, systematic exposure is only given in school to a majority of our learners. This question will be discussed in more detail in the next section of this block - when we discuss formal and informal learning contexts.

What do we have in common between teaching and learning?

1. In *teaching* the individual teacher, is involved. Methodology does not lie outside the individual.
2. *Learning* involves *individual* learning processes. In this course, for instance, the learner is *you*.

Both points put the stress on *the individual, on you*, on your cognitive readiness to learn, and your *involvement* in cognitive activity.

It also stresses the fact that *learning* involves the interaction of existing knowledge (be it attitudes, content, world views, languages etc.) with incoming *new* knowledge. This activity naturally differs from person to person. Each learner brings different skills into the classroom. This definition, will be picked up again, when we discuss learning strategies.

This brings us to *the* most important problem of the classroom, which is that each student in one class has to bring to the language learning process a *different* personal *agenda*. What does this term *agenda* mean? Webster's dictionary defines agenda as "a list or plan of things to be considered or done." Each person has a different list or plan that can be held consciously or unconsciously. Even children have agendas which would partly explain why they do not pay attention in class or why they sometimes refuse to work, or even to play the game. For the teacher, who has to manage a class for 30-40 - or 60 minutes, the presence of different and multiple personal agendas is a challenge to put it in positive terms, or perhaps a trial if we want to perceive it from the dispirited or tired teachers' points of view (these moods, alas, go with the job!). But however difficult or insoluble the problem

may be, it needs to be addressed; finally, and in the last analysis, it is the *extent* to which we are able to accommodate *multiple personal agendas* in a classroom that would reflect our teaching abilities. OR, to put it more simply, *teaching* involves dealing with different individuals in one class which is often quite large, and for specific periods -- of 35, 45, 50 or even 60 to 90 minutes. And this is the challenge of teaching.

This course in **Methods** discusses the implications of the above problem. It seeks to describe *principles* of teaching and learning, and then, it helps you to *make* decisions about appropriate teaching behaviour in different learning situations.

### Review question I

What have we discussed so far? Try to list the points covered.

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We will examine, then, different issues in language teaching and learning and different perspectives on these in order to:

- i. give you *information* on what people are saying (i.e. knowledge) on language teaching and learning;
- ii. give you a battery of strategies from which *you* can choose in an informed way for effective teaching practice in your teaching situations.

This means that a *knowledge* of new ideas is to be followed by thinking of an *application* of these ideas in your situations.

To conclude, the general aim of this course is:

To enable the participant-teachers to gain theoretical perspectives on approaches, methods and techniques in ELT and to relate these to their own teaching situations.

### 1.4 Common terms used in the course

It will be necessary to clarify some basic acronyms used in this course. Perhaps you have already come across some of them in your other courses, and maybe some of you might have then wondered what terms like *ELT, ESL, EFL, L1 & L2* etc might mean. Here are some clarifications.

1. **ELT**: This has already been introduced to you. ELT stands for English Language Teaching. Your **Methods, Materials and Practice Teaching** are part of this component. However, this is not to say that **Linguistics, Phonetics, Grammar and Interpretation of Literature** are not part of

ELT. Although they stand as disciplines on their own, they are also discussed in this course with a basic orientation to English Language Teaching. Our general aim is to make you more prepared for good English teaching. You need to have a knowledge of, and perspectives on, English language and its grammar and sounds and also a basic knowledge of how to read and teach literature, if you want to be an *informed* teacher of English. The term "ELT" carries with it, further, the notion of a formal instructional system. When we speak of ELT, we are speaking of English Language Teaching - i.e. how learning can be organised in a curriculum system for learners. This is different from learning a language in informal situations of a home environment i.e. where babies learn to speak through exposure. We are speaking of *school*, of classes, of teachers, learners, syllabi, examinations etc. The implications of *schooling* will be discussed in later units.

2. *ESL*: This brings us to the next acronym: ESL. What does this term mean? Basically ESL stands for *English as a Second Language*. For us in India, English is used as a medium of instruction, or it is taught as another language, perhaps as the second or third language. Indeed, some people would say that this is the term that most closely resembles what English means to us in India because it is a language which is commonly used in India for communication in a multi-lingual setting. It is certainly more of a second than a first language (L1). Indeed, everyone in India, except for a small minority, has a mother tongue (MT) other than English. This is true even of those who speak, read and write English very well, or even of those who are more fluent in English than in their mother tongue. Also it is true of people living in Bahrain, Yemen, Africa, or whenever English is not the mother tongue. On the other hand, is English a second language in the state of UP? In Rajasthan?
3. *EFL*: The acronym *EFL* stands for *English as a Foreign Language*. English is a foreign language to many *individuals*, although it is not considered so in the Constitution of India. We consider a language a foreign language when it is not used at all, in day to day communication. In other words, it is used in very restricted domains. There are many countries where English is a foreign language. Can you think of some countries which give this status to English?
4. *L1*: What is L1? Generally, L1 means the first language. It could also mean the mother tongue (MT) to many, but the L1 is not always the MT. In our country, some of us have some difficulty deciding what our L1 is. Is it the language of our forefathers (which in many cases we understand and speak only), or is it English or Hindi (which we read, write, speak, understand and use on a daily basis)? According to sociolinguists, however, L1 is the most *effective* language being used. What is your L1? What is your L2 or second language? So even if your mother tongue is not English, English could still be your L1 according to the definition of the sociolinguists.

## 1.5 The status of English in India

According to the Constitution of India, English is a second language. But what is it in fact? Do we have a choice? It is fixed as an L2? For teaching purposes, however, States debate even this issue which is often politically motivated.

Is English a second language (L2) in India? or a third language? How important is English *to people* in different states? What does English mean in UP or Bihar? What does it mean in Madras or Kerala? Where does it stand in relation to Hindi? Would this situation be different in Kerala, Madras, UP, the North East of India, Gujarat? What about Bihar and Orissa? West Bengal? Goa?



The answers to these questions will help us to understand what the status of English is in India.

I would like you to think about how English is used in your state. Does it have the status of a second language or a foreign language? (You have to think not of dictionary definitions or of policy statements about the difference between a second and foreign language but about how it is *actually* used. Refer to the linguistics course for more information on this. You should think about the purposes for which you and people you know use English).

Some of the areas of language use you could consider are the following:-

1. What language is most commonly used in offices?
2. What percentage of people (approximately) read newspapers in English and in the regional languages?
3. Which language do people generally use in restaurants, at railway booking counters, when shopping etc.?
4. When people meet people from other states do they use English/Hindi/ some other language?
5. What is the language you find used most often in advertisements and hoardings?
6. What are some of the most popular TV programmes? Which languages are they in? Has Star TV become popular among people? If yes, what are the most popular channels? Zee TV, DD Metro, Star Plus, BBC? If they watch programmes in English, do they have any difficulty in understanding the language?
7. To what extent does the man in the street use and understand English? For example, if you asked an autorickshaw driver or a shopkeeper in your town a question in English would he be able to understand it easily/ with difficulty/not at all? Would he be able to answer in English? generally/ occasionally/ not at all?

Answers to these questions will help you to build up a picture of what the status of English is in your state, its importance, and normally, then, the extent to which its development is possible.

The question of the status of English in India is important for you, if you want to think about your teaching situation *effectively* because your language teaching situation cannot be separated from the language learning environment outside the classroom. We must consider the language environment *if we are serious about making a change in the classroom*.

We have given below, examples of how this activity has been attempted by two groups. Read what has been said by teachers about Goa and Maharashtra. You may not agree with all of the given opinions, but do remember that these are the opinions of some individuals and groups of individuals.

*Extracts from teachers' scripts*

#### **Example I. The Use of English in Goa**

Goa is a multilingual state and the languages mostly spoken in Goa are English, Marathi, Portuguese and Hindi. Konkani is the *mother tongue* of most people of Goa all over the state. 70% of the people read English and 30% read *Marathi*.

English is commonly used in offices and is a means of *communication* between the states.

People generally use English and Konkani in restaurants and railway booking counters and shopping centres. Portuguese is also spoken in certain areas and among certain classes. English is used as the first language in schools and Hindi, Marathi, and Konkani as the second language.

When people meet people from other states they use English, Portuguese, Marathi and also Hindi and Konkani. Some are very fluent in English regardless of their mother tongue. English is found in urban areas as well as in rural areas.

In advertisements and hoardings, English and Marathi are most commonly used. Hindi to some extent and Konkani is also used in local Doordarshan programmes. Star TV has become popular in Goa. The most popular channels are Star Plus and BBC. Most people do not have any difficulty in understanding English.

The man in the street e.g. the autorickshaw driver or shop keeper, understands English and answers occasionally but not fluently. The English medium schools are popular because the majority of people have to use English, for social purposes, for education and for labour.

The people's attitude towards English is very positive. Even the people from rural areas send their children to English medium schools by paying heavy fees and by by-passing the Marathi medium schools and Konkani medium schools which are Government free schools. They feel that the English schools have a good status in society.

#### **Example II: The Use of English in Maharashtra**

English is used differently by different people in Maharashtra though it has got the status of a second language.

Maharashtra can chiefly be divided into three categories -- the rural, the urban and the cosmopolitan areas. The language commonly used in offices is Marathi but Hindi and English are freely used in urban and cosmopolitan cities.

Nearly 60% of the people read newspapers in Marathi while 40% read English papers; 40% in the cosmopolitan areas are bilingual.

In restaurants located in the rural areas Marathi is used, in the urban areas Marathi and Hindi are used but in the cosmopolitan cities especially in big hotels, it is English and there even the waiters can take orders in English. At the railway booking counters, (leaving aside big cities like Bombay), ration shops, post offices etc. Marathi is used. When people meet other people from southern states they use English; and they use Hindi when they meet people from other states.

In advertisements, English is generally used but Hindi and Marathi are also used in the remote areas.

The popularity of T.V. programmes varies from the rural to the urban setting. In the rural areas it's Zee T.V. which is popular since it is in Hindi as people do not understand spoken English. In cities like Bombay the youngsters like "V" Channel and Star Plus. They do not have any difficulty in understanding the language.

A man in the street uses English rarely and understands it with difficulty. In the Marathwada region the autorickshaw driver would never use it but in big cities he may answer questions in English. This is also the case with the shopkeepers.

English is widely used for educational purposes in public schools and institutions providing higher education, at conferences, meetings, private offices and big hotels.

English is sometimes used by the educated people for communicating with an "outsider" but it is never used at political meetings, social and cultural meetings and in day-to-day business or religious discourses.

There are English medium schools in towns and they are very popular. Even a rickshaw puller wants to send his child to a convent because he feels that the child will have better opportunities in life if s/he knows English.

People from villages and the rural setting have a negative attitude towards English. They just do not want this language. Hindi is accepted. It is, in fact, preferred to English, but in the urban setting we find a mixed attitude. Hindi is preferred while talking, not in the field of Education or for writing purposes.

People use basic Marathi and Hindi in conversation, but in big cities we also encounter people using Bengali, Gujarati, Tamil etc. For example, in Bombay, at Matunga or Churchgate people use Tamil and in Parsi regions like Tardeo or Dadar they use Gujarati.

[End of extracts]

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### Activity C

Read the two reviews of the status of English in Goa and Maharashtra, then think about your own state. Make a similar description according to the questions given on page 9.

#### Discussion

Be realistic about the general English learning environment faced by your learners, and then you will find that the teaching of English will be much more effective. You should think of using *all* your resources, and supplementing resources if necessary. But more of that later.

In thinking about the status of English in your state, you will be able to arrive at a description of whether English is an L2, an FL or L1. You will also be able to make out whether there is a difference between policy (claims) and actual practice. Are there differences?

If you do not agree with any of the statements made in the two reviews, say why you disagree and what your opinion is.

Many of these statements are opinions, held in general by many people-perceptions of different people. Why do you think they might have these perceptions that you *don't* agree with?

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## 1.6 The formal system of learning: instruction in the curriculum

We started off with a look at the term *English Language Teaching*, which we said is basically set within an instructional system. We need to analyse this system or curriculum further, to examine our resources. Well, what is the formal language learning situation? To answer this, perhaps we should look at the *informal* language learning situation.

An informal language learning situation is one when language is not taught or learnt for grammar but for communication. A child growing up, learns to use

language functionally i.e., *to get things done*, or to express himself/herself. This expression could be transactional or self-expressive in nature. A small child spends time in prattle but even prattle has a purpose in itself -- as play has. For it is really through easy, anxiety-free tryouts -- like prattle and play -- that the child is developing language skills. How is this done? The child when it uses language in different contexts, finds out that appropriate language behaviour can cause results and obtain responses. Thus, by using language, the child develops language skills. We can say that, when a learner uses language the language used becomes his/her own. *Use* implies *assimilation*, and *consolidation* of what is learnt.

The *formal* instructional system is, however, very different. Here, we are referring to organised learning on a large scale, with the instructional system providing certification at the end of a learning programme. But we need to look at these differences more carefully.

In what ways are informal learning and formal learning situations different? It would be useful to try to analyse the differences.

The differences between teaching and learning in formal and informal situations can be tabulated in the following way:

Early language learning involves learning of the mother tongue (MT) or L1 (first language). Learning English for most Indians involves learning an L2 (second language) or an FL (Foreign Language)

	Informal Learning	Formal Teaching/Learning
1. Language taught	MT, L1	L2,MT,L3 etc. from class I (English Medium)
2. Age	from birth onwards normal conditions of language learning situation	from class III, IV, V, VIII (vernacular language medium)
3. Use of language	functional	more formal language descriptions, formal grammar learnt
4. Errors treated	parents repeat, encourage and correct.	teacher reprimands/ comments/focusses on error
5. Exposure	oral	predominantly the written form

Well this description - which we have briefly tabulated for you brings us to what it means *to teach English*. Can you think of more differences?

#### Activity D

*What is the status given to English in your State - in formal situations? Answer some of the questions below and see if you can get a picture.*

A. What is the pass mark in your school, college? Is English medium compulsory at college? Do you need to pass in English to get a degree?

B. What is more likely to happen in your class?

Do you *teach* English? or do your students *learn* English?

C. *What* do you teach? Grammar? Or the use of language? Or something else?

D. How do you expect students to learn? What is your understanding of learning?

E. Do you let your students make mistakes? How do you deal with mistakes?

### **Discussion**

These questions should be answered by you, one by one, so that you are able to get an understanding of what ELT is like in your State. However, if you are not able to answer them just yet, come back to them later and see if you can answer them, after further reading. Right now, it will suffice if you try to put down as many answers as you can.

If children are given the message that it is not necessary to pass in English, then they may get the message that English is not important or necessary.

Structured instruction need not lead to learning. Teaching grammar need not lead to the use of language either.

If experimentation, and trial and error are not seen as essential to learning, valuable learning opportunities are lost.

## **1.7 Teaching objectives**

In the last section, we made a distinction between objectives, goals, and aims. When we talk of objectives in terms of the learner and learning we speak of behavioural and expressive objectives. If we look at objectives in terms of teacher behaviour, however, we have *teaching objectives*.

So now we come to an important question: "what are our teaching objectives"?

We need to know first *what* we teach, *whom* we teach, *why* we teach and then *how* we teach. That is, we need to first establish our priorities in teaching. What are they?

*Let us try this little test:*

(1) Are we teaching English so that students can pass examinations on the *content* of the readers? That is, do we see English as a "portion" to be "covered"?  
or (2) Do we see English as language *skills* to be mastered?

Well, what was your answer?

Most of you will say (2), but still, secretly, you might believe that (1) is most essential. After all youngsters have to cope with examinations in a competitive world.

We might feel justified in choosing either of these objectives, but you will see that your choice of our teaching objectives -- (1) for exams or (2) for developing learning skills in the learner, will influence your teaching practice. It will influence your responses to the questions:

1. "*Why*" do we teach English?

2. "*What*" do we teach in English?

3. "*How*" do we teach English?

### **1.7.1 Why do we teach English?**

If you are going to try to fulfill objective 1 and not objective 2, (saying that you have no time), your goal is:

- short-term in learning terms and therefore unfair to the student
- less learner centred and more teacher centred.

If you say, your objective is (1) to help students pass the examinations, you are responding to the short-term and immediate *needs* of the student and the organisation which employs you. A focus on this objective alone, however, will not be fulfilling for you, in your function as a teacher even though you might satisfy all the requirements of your school administration. You are not, in the long run, helping your students become autonomous learners. Being autonomous or standing on your own feet is in the last analysis, the long-term goal of any educational enterprise. This is specially true when we consider *language* learning, where language skills are totally related to the individual. Often, we forget this, and think that good teaching can substitute for language use and acquisition of language by the learner. We will discuss this point later on in the course.

We take the role of a teacher very seriously. We say that an informed teacher can influence teaching practices of a nation, if s/he has some principles of teaching put into a perspective that is conducive for teaching and learning growth.

So we say, concentrate on objective (2) i.e. -- help your learners *acquire* the skills of language. Teach language as a *medium* not as a subject. What does this mean? Well, you need to know what the language skills are, what the sub-skills of these skills are, and how these could be best developed in your learners *in your situation*. How can this be done? To put it simply, you need to give your learners the opportunity to use language to read, write, listen and speak. Not an easy task - but that is your task. And wait a minute -- objective (2) includes objective (1) also -- i.e. if your learners develop language skills, they will pass exams with flying colours. So why don't you try changing your objectives? If your objective has been objective (1) all along, change to objective (2) which focusses on language learning and see how objective (2) *includes* objective (1) automatically. If objective (2) is what you uphold, you will be true to yourselves, your school administration *and* most importantly to your students.

Most teachers are quick to see the importance of this change. But change does not happen quickly. Some of you will hang on to your favourite techniques, because of success stories (99% pass etc.), but remember that in the long run you are not helping your learners to become independent and autonomous if you focus entirely on examinations.

We hope that "die-hards" who refuse to change to objective (2) will get convinced gradually, at least after they finish this course, and after they meet us face-to-face or after 1-2 years of teaching experience and try-outs. But TRY and keep an open mind. Don't discard ideas without a FAIR trial. And *fair* means *fair*. Thanks. You'll see how important this is.

### 1.7.2 The "*what*" of teaching English

You could say language is a system which is used as a means of communication. As a system language is made up of some basic units such as words, phrases, sentences; it has a particular structure. And to learn to use this system or to know how this system functions we need to acquire certain language skills. The basic language skills are: reading, writing, listening and speaking.

You will find that each of these aspects of language will be discussed later on. You will see that while the whole focus on language teaching had at one time been on vocabulary development and sentence development primarily, today the focus in language teaching has shifted to skills development. Why does language

teaching focus on different aspects at different times? And what brings about a shift in focus? These questions will be discussed later in Block II (2.4), where we look at historical perspectives and current trends. You will see in 2.4 again, that at one time, grammar was taught as a subject, and that sentence analysis was most important. The focus, first and foremost was on the forms of language. Today, the *functional use* of language has acquired importance. That is, we have started looking at language teaching in socio-cultural settings, and not only at language form and grammar. Also we focus on language primarily as a *medium* for communication.

Well, we have answered the questions: *Why* do we teach English? *what* do we teach and *when* do we teach English? All these aspects will have to be developed later on.

### 1.7.3 How do we teach English?

There is a third question "*How* do we teach English?" which needs some introduction. This question, again, is answered all through this course in very specific terms - in fact that is what methodology is all about. But what needs some highlighting here is this dichotomy that we have in current ELT theorizing viz: Does methodology focus on what the learner does, or what the teacher does? Well, what do you think? It is not an easy question to answer, because it is not a question of either the teacher following a pre-ordained plan, at the cost of the learners, or of a teacher abdicating totally from the classroom so that the class can be *learner-centred*. Both are extreme positions, which need to be considered with qualifications, especially if we are *focussing* on one aspect over another. Is our focus primarily on teacher activity *all the time*? If so, we will do splendid teaching and - *cover* the portions. Don't be surprised, though, if students give you negative feedback. On the other hand, is our focus *on learner activity*, and how we, as teachers, can best promote, organise and give opportunities for learners' use of language? You will see that there is a big difference here. Again this question needs thinking about and is discussed in Block III of this course. It is also discussed in more practical terms in the *Practice Teaching* course.

#### Review question II

- (1) List the main ideas presented so far in this unit. Mark a tick ( / ) against what were some new ideas/perspectives/orientation and think about them. (How many new ideas have you come across?)

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- (2) What do these terms mean?:

FL	ESL
L1	ELT
L2	

## 1.8 Summary

In this unit, you have been introduced to the main issues related to the major components of the teaching-learning instructional setting: the classroom, the teacher and the learner.

The basic terms and acronyms used in the field are also introduced, as are the assumptions made for the course on what learning means, what language learning means, what the content of ELT is, why ELT is taught.

Many issues are picked up again through the course.

## 1.9 Sources

Littlewood, W.T. 1984 *Foreign and Second Language Learning* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Stern, H H. 1983 *Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching* London: Oxford University Press.

## 1.10 Answers to review questions

### Review question I

We have discussed these ideas so far:

- a. the scope of the Methods course
- b. the two levels of theory, and
- c. the distinction between teaching and learning.

### Review question II

1. The following main ideas have been presented in this unit:
  - a. The objectives and the scope of the course
  - b. The difference between teaching and learning
  - c. The difference between learning and language learning
  - d. The basic terms/acronyms used in this course
  - e. The status of English in India
  - f. Differences between formal and informal learning
  - g. The *what*, *why* and *how* of teaching English
2. *FL* - Foreign Language  
*L1* - First Language  
*L2* - Second Language  
*ESL* - English as Second Language  
*ELT* - English Language Teaching