



Useful terms for the English Teacher

Ability This refers to a learner's underlying capacity to do certain things. It is usually demonstrated in performance though any single instance does not necessarily reveal a learner's full ability.

Accuracy This refers to grammatically correct language in either speech or writing.

Activity A single exercise or game, etc.

Aims Things that you hope will be done or achieved during an activity or a lesson.

Attitude Positive or negative feelings, beliefs or behaviour towards a person, object or event.

Clarification and focus The part of a lesson in which learners become clearer about language system items, especially concerning how they are formed, what they mean and how they are used.

Classroom management The moment-by-moment decisions and actions concerning organisation of the classroom and activities, eg., seating and grouping arrangements, starting and stopping activities, etc.

Cloze procedure A gap-fill exercise which regularly-spaced gaps.

Communicative activity An activity that has communication as its main aim (as opposed to practice of particular language items). A communication activity will normally involve an 'information gap'.

Concept The general underlying idea or meaning which is associated with a word in people's heads. For example, when we think of *a dog*, we would probably agree on some basic criteria which characterize it, ie., it has four legs, a tail and it barks. However, each one of us will also have our own concept of *a dog* which will vary in some details from person to person.

Concept questions Questions that focus on the meaning of a language item.

Context Language items do not exist independently. They might be found in a text, a piece of classroom conversation, a tape recording, etc.. These are the contexts. Teachers often create example 'situations', perhaps using board pictures, in order to provide a context for a language item and give the students an illustration of a way that it would typically be used.

Cuisenaire rods Small coloured rods of wood or plastic.

Diphthong A phoneme containing two vowel sounds, one gliding into the second.

Drills A common restricted use activity, involving students in repetition or very controlled oral practice.

Eliciting A much-used technique for involving learners more in lessons. Eliciting involves drawing language from the students (rather than giving it to them).

Echo Repetition of what a student has just said. This may be 'aware' echo, with a purpose (eg., indicating that an error has been made), or 'unaware' echo (eg., the teacher feels the need to fill silences).

Exponent An item that is an example of a particular function. For example, *Could you make me a cup of tea, please?* is an exponent of the function of 'making polite requests'.

Exposure The opportunities for learners to hear, speak, read or write the language they are learning.

Extensive reading/listening Reading or listening in order to gain a general overview of the contents.

Feedback Information provided to someone on their performance.

Fluency The ease with which learners communicate either in speech or writing. In speaking, it usually refers to

a lack of hesitation and pausing, and ability to express one's message effectively using all the language available. In writing, it refers to the ease and effectiveness with which the message is expressed.

Function The purpose for which language is used in particular situations.

Grammar A set of rules which help to explain how words or parts of words are combined to produce meaningful and acceptable units/sentences within a language.

Groupwork Students working together with a number of other learners (rather than in pairs or as a whole class).

Icebreakers Activities to help learners and the teacher get to know each other at the beginning of a course.

Information gap One person knows something that the other doesn't. Such gaps of information between people give us a need and desire to communicate with each other.

Intensive reading/listening Careful and detailed reading of or listening to sections of text or speech.

Intonation The musical patterns of speech.

L1 Your first language or what is sometimes referred to as your mother tongue. It usually refers to the language you speak at home.

L2 The second language or other languages you speak, i.e., not your first language.

Language skills There are four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, writing. Listening and reading are 'receptive' skills; speaking and writing are 'productive' skills.

Language systems There are four language systems: grammar, lexis (vocabulary), phonology, function.

Lexical item A word or a number of words that could be considered to be a single item of vocabulary, e.g., *house*, *Wellington boot*, *solar system*, *put up with*.

Lexical set A set of words that are connected in some way (e.g., items found on a farm; words starting with 'head', words that describe human qualities, etc).

Lexis = Vocabulary

Logical line A type of lesson that has a clear, logical progression from one item to the next.

Model To demonstrate or provide an example of what is expected. For example, a teacher may show learners how to revise a piece of writing by doing an example on the blackboard for the whole class to observe. He/she may provide an example of the language they want learners to practise.

Monitoring When the learners are working on an activity where the teacher does not have an active role, the teacher can keep an active eye over what is going on, checking that instructions are being followed, collecting a list of language for use later in the lesson, etc.

Objectives Intended student achievements in a lesson.

Pairwork Students working with one other student. This may be to discuss something, to check answers, to do a communicative activity, etc.

Practice Giving the learners chances to *use* the language being studied.

Presentation The 'giving' of language to students.

PPP = Presentation, Practice, Production. An approach to grammar lessons based on the idea of giving (i.e., presenting) small items of language to students, providing them with the opportunity to use it in controlled ways (practice) and finally integrating it with other known language in order to communicate (production).

Rapport The quality of relationship within the classroom.

Recycle To use again or to provide further practice of the language or skills which have already been presented to learners.

Roleplay Learners take on a character or make use of given information or ideas in order to get speaking practice.

Scanning Reading with the aim of finding out items of specific information.

Sentence stress The main syllables emphasized in a sentence.

Skimming Reading, usually done quickly, with the aim of understanding the general meaning or 'gist' of a text.

Structure A particular aspect or item of grammar. Some examples of structures include: the past tense, articles, the comparison of adjectives. Different languages may have different structures. For example, French, Italian and Spanish differentiate between masculine, feminine and neuter nouns while English does not.

STT = Student Talking Time (the amount of time that students get to talk within a lesson).

Syllabus A list of course contents.

Task Something the student is asked to do. Many tasks are in the form of questions requiring answers, but a task may require a student to do things like draw a picture, choose an object from the table, etc.

Timetable The plan of work showing lessons as units and identifying what goes on in each one.

TTT = Teacher Talking Time (the amount of time the teacher talks within the lesson).

Weak form Vowel sounds in unstressed syllables tend to have a weak pronunciation. Compare *for* when you say it on its own (strong form) and when it comes in the middle of a sentence, eg., *I came back for my books*.

Word stress The emphasized syllable(s) in a word.