1 Who are the learners?

A Warm-up

Answer these questions about your second-language learning experience. Then work in groups and compare your answers.

1 What was the language that you learned? Did you have a choice of language? If so, why did you choose that particular language?
2 What was your purpose for learning? Was it, for example, for travel or business, or simply curiosity? Or did you have no real purpose?
3 Did you teach yourself, have a private teacher, go to classes or study online? Or did you simply pick it up by using it?
4 If you attended classes, what were your expectations? Were they met?
5 How motivated were you? What factors either raised or lowered your motivation?
6 What level of proficiency did you hope to achieve? Did you achieve it?
7 All in all, were you satisfied with the experience? If not, what would you have done differently?

B Learners' purposes

Read these learners' profiles. Identify their reasons for learning English and answer the questions.

- Ning Wang is a Chinese Mandarin speaker who is at a further education college in Manchester, UK, doing a course as preparation for the IELTS examination, a requirement for entry into a British university.
- Lucia is a 16-year-old Italian speaker who is studying English as one of her school subjects in Bologna. She also attends an English class twice a week in a local language school.
- Kazankiran is an asylum-seeker in Canada. She speaks Kurdish and Arabic and is attending English classes with a view to settling in Canada permanently.
- Maxim (45) is of Russian origin. He lives and works in Australia and is learning English through contact with his workmates.
- Soni Kim is from South Korea. She is enrolled on an online course in order to prepare for a trip to the USA with her husband in the near future.
- Carmen, who is Brazilian, is the head of marketing in a large exporting company. She attends a one-to-one English class in São Paulo to help her in her business dealings, which are mainly with Middle Eastern clients.
- Mies is a Dutch student of economics. Nearly all of his classes at Utrecht University are conducted in English, a language he started learning when he was six.
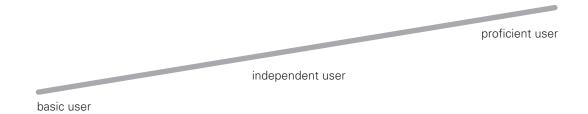
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1 What are their reasons for learning English? Use these abbreviations:
  EFL = English as a foreign language
  ESL = English as a second language
  EIL = English as an international language
  ESP = English for special (or specific) purposes
  EAP = English for academic purposes
2 Which of the above learners is probably *bilingual* in English and another language? Who is – or may one day be – *multilingual*?
3 Whose first language is likely to contribute positively to their learning of English? Whose is not? Why?
4 Who is *learning* English, as opposed to simply picking it up (or *acquiring* it)? What is the difference?
5 Who is probably getting the most *exposure* to English, and who is getting the least? Who are already *users* of English, as opposed to simply *learners*?
6 Who is likely to be the most motivated? Who the least?
7 Which of the above learners (if any) most closely fits the profile of the kind of learner you are expecting to teach, and the kind of situation you are expecting to teach in?

C Learners' goals

1 Match these statements with four of the learners in section B.

  a I know I make many mistakes when I speak. But people understand me, and, look, I'm too old to learn to speak English perfectly. Maybe I would like to lose my strong accent, though.
  b My dream would be to speak English like a native speaker, fluently, and with a native speaker accent, so I can forget my old life and begin a new life here.
  c I just need the basics: a few useful phrases to get by, and practice in understanding people, but I don't need to read or write. Besides, I don't have much time.
  d I need not only specialised English but also social English for chatting, and I need to be able to write correctly the kinds of things I do in my work.

2 Plot the four learners on this cline, depending on their language learning goals.

proficient user

independent user

basic user

A The learners and their contexts

D Learners' expectations

Read what Ning Wang and Lucia said about their English classes, and answer the questions.

1 What expectations did Ning Wang have?
2 Where did his expectations originate?
3 How realistic were his expectations?
4 Why is Lucia happier than Ning Wang with an informal, group-centred approach?
5 How appropriate are the teaching methods in each case?

Ning Wang:

'At first I was very surprised that the teacher told us we should call him by his first name, Alan. Also, we didn't sit in rows, but in a half circle. I was not happy because we didn't use the book very much, and we didn't study many grammar rules. Alan made us work in groups, but I didn't enjoy this because I was making mistakes and no one corrected them. Alan explained that it was important to speak and not to worry about making mistakes. But I do worry. I need to get a good mark in the exam.'

Lucia:

'I like my evening class because it is not as big as the class at school, and it's more fun. Sometimes we play games and listen to songs. At school we do mainly grammar exercises, and there's no chance to speak. In the evening class we have discussions in groups, or we write a story together. Another difference is that the teacher speaks to us only in English, but at school the teacher often explains things in Italian. The only bad thing in the evening class is that some of the boys misbehave and the teacher doesn't know how to control them.'

REFLECTION

1 Work in pairs. Write questions for a diagnostic interview with the learners in your teaching practice class. (If this is not possible, write questions that your trainer may be able to answer.) Find out about their *purposes*, *goals* and *expectations*, and their previous language learning experiences.
2 Hold interviews with your learners.
3 Compare your learners' responses. What are the implications for the way you teach this group?

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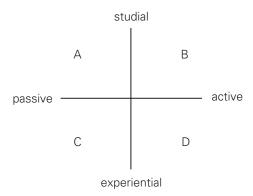# 2 Learners as individuals

A Warm-up

Work in groups. Describe two very different learners. Compare their:

- personality
- previous educational background
- motivation

What was the effect of these differences in the classroom?

B Learning style

There are a variety of ways of describing learning style. One is to imagine two intersecting axes or clines: a *studial–experiential* axis, and a *passive–active* axis, as in the following diagram:

A *studial* learner is one who prefers more formal study (such as in classrooms) over learning by experience (such as through chatting with native speakers). But, at the same time, a studial learner may be either active or passive in the way they study. An *active studial* learner (Type B), for example, would be self-directed, actively working out rules from examples and capable of working alone. A *passive studial* learner (Type A), on the other hand, relies more on the teacher, likes to be told the rules, and is less confident about taking initiative.

1 Describe the characteristics of Type C and D learners. What kind of activities might they enjoy?

2 Write eight questions to use as a diagnostic test of learning style. Follow the example below.

1 *Do you like learning and memorising rules from grammar books? (Yes = Type B learner).*

C Multiple intelligences

Another way of viewing learning style is in terms of different kinds of *intelligence*. Some intelligences that have been proposed are:

- verbal: the ability to use language in creative ways
- logical/mathematical: the ability for rational, analytic thinking

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A The learners and their contexts

- visual: the ability to form mental models and use mental imagery
- kinesthetic: the ability to express oneself through body movement
- musical: musical and rhythmic ability
- interpersonal: the ability to understand other people's feelings and wishes
- intrapersonal: the ability to understand oneself

According to this view, the best learning opportunities are those that match the learner's most developed intelligence. Thus, learners with a strong logical/mathematical intelligence would benefit from problem-solving activities such as ones involving sorting sentences into different categories and then working out rules.

1 Read this activity and decide which intelligence it favours.

> **in class**
>
> **1** Ask for one student to volunteer to be interviewed about a topic of her choice, and ask for a volunteer interviewer.
>
> **2** Tell the group that any time anyone wants to take over as interviewer, they just go up and touch the current interviewer on the shoulder; they then take over as interviewer.
>
> Students can also replace the interviewee in the same way.
>
> A group member can do this at any time.
>
> **3** Explain that the idea is to do it in a harmonious way, so that the interview proceeds smoothly.

Multiple Intelligences in EFL Puchta and Rinvolucri

2 Suggest language learning activities that would favour these intelligences:

- visual intelligence
- kinesthetic intelligence
- musical intelligence

D Learning strategies and learner training

1 Read what four learners say about their learning strategies, and answer the questions.

Learner A

> When I'm watching a TV programme or a film in English, I try to echo what the speakers are saying under my breath, almost at the same time they are saying it.

Learner C

> I always try to sit next to those students in class who I know like to do pairwork.

Learner B

> I write new words on to Post-it notes and I stick them on a big map of the world I have in my study. I try to make an association with the word and the place on the map.

Learner D

> When I'm reading in English and I come across a word I don't know, I try to read on a bit, to see if the meaning comes clearer.

1 What aspects of language learning (such as grammar, vocabulary, etc.) does each strategy target?
2 What learning principle does each one seem to exemplify? For example, Learner A: *repetition aids memory*; *production helps pronunciation*.

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2 *Learner training* refers to training learners to make the most of their individual learning *style*, and to adopt effective learning *strategies*. Learner training ideas are often integrated into course book materials.
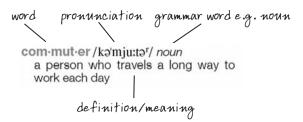
Identify the learner training purposes of these three activities.

Over to us! Palencia and Thornbury

Using a dictionary

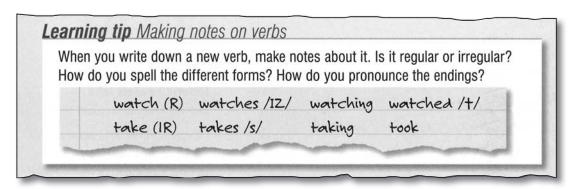**1 Read this dictionary definition of the word *commuter* and answer the questions below.**

1 Who is the commuter in these sentences, Joao or Rose?
   a Joao lives in London and works in London.
   b Rose lives in Canterbury and works in London.
2 Where is the stress on the word *commuter*?
3 How is it marked in the dictionary?

2 Check the meaning and pronunciation of new words in the poem. Use a dictionary or the wordlist on page 138.

3 🔲 **Listen to the poem. Is your pronunciation correct?**

4 Say the poem to another student.

The Beginners' Choice Mohamed and Acklam
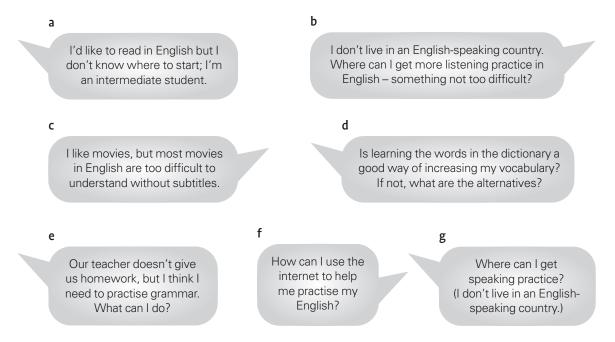
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A The learners and their contexts

Touchstone McCarthy, McCarten, Sandiford

3   Suggest ways to help learners make the most of the advice in the activities.

E   Learner autonomy

Good learners generally take responsibility for their own learning, both inside and outside the class. That is, they take steps to become autonomous.

Advise the following learners on how to continue their language learning outside the classroom.

a
> I'd like to read in English but I don't know where to start; I'm an intermediate student.

b
> I don't live in an English-speaking country. Where can I get more listening practice in English – something not too difficult?

c
> I like movies, but most movies in English are too difficult to understand without subtitles.

d
> Is learning the words in the dictionary a good way of increasing my vocabulary? If not, what are the alternatives?

e
> Our teacher doesn't give us homework, but I think I need to practise grammar. What can I do?

f
> How can I use the internet to help me practise my English?

g
> Where can I get speaking practice? (I don't live in an English-speaking country.)

REFLECTION

Work in groups of three. Prepare a poster or overhead transparency entitled *Dealing with classroom diversity: dos and don'ts.*
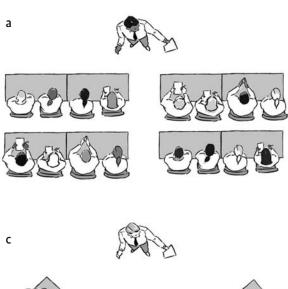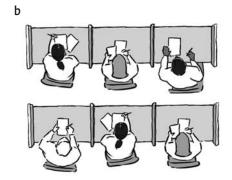
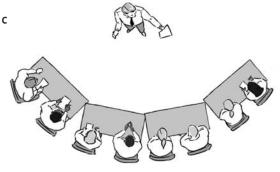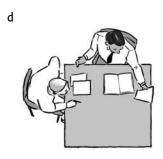**12**

3 Foreign language lesson

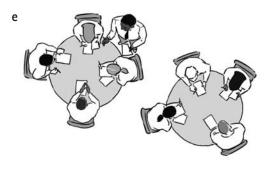## A Warm-up

Work in groups of three or four. Tell your group:

- which languages you can speak
- what your first language class was like
- which picture looks most like your language classroom

a

b

c

d

e

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B Classroom teaching

B A foreign language lesson

A teacher will give you a short lesson in a foreign language.

C After your lesson

Work in pairs or groups of three. Try to remember as much as you can of the lesson.

1 Write down the order in which things happened in the lesson.
2 Divide what happened into stages ('chunks' of the lesson).
3 Describe how you felt during each stage of the lesson.
4 Say how the teacher:
  - set up activities
  - involved the learners
  - made meanings clear
  - presented new words or expressions
  - dealt with errors

D Comparing languages

Work in pairs. Tell your partner about any differences you noticed between the language you learned and English. Think about:

- word order
- unfamiliar sounds
- the way sounds combined
- pieces of grammar or vocabulary (such as how plurals are signalled).

REFLECTION

Think about the questions. When you are ready, compare your ideas with a partner's.
1 Do you think you'll be able to remember what you learned in seven days' time?
2 What have you learned from this experience about learning a new language?
3 What have you learned from this experience about teaching a new language?

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