

1 Writing and reading approaches

What is English for Academic Purposes?

This book provides practical guidance and background theory for teachers of English for Academic Purposes (EAP). EAP is the English that is taught to second-/third-language students preparing to enter undergraduate and postgraduate courses at universities and other institutions of higher education. However, students may also be studying EAP at tertiary level, at high-school level, at technical colleges or at private language schools. Equally, they may already be studying an academic course in further/higher education and receiving additional language support.

The writing and reading you teach needs to fit the academic purposes of your students. You may, for example, find yourself:

- just starting a course in the new academic year;
- carrying out a needs-analysis to evaluate your students' competence in English;
- carrying out a needs-analysis to find out what students want/need to learn;
- easing students into the programme;
- demystifying academic writing/reading assignments, like reports and argument essays;
- teaching students to think, write and read critically, to read at speed and to do research.

It is this focus on preparing students for the specific academic requirements of English for higher education that distinguishes EAP from general English Language Teaching (ELT).

If you have come from an ELT background and have been thrown in at the deep end to teach EAP, the task ahead of you might seem daunting, if not impossible. The tips and guidance in this book, however, will help make the way clear for you, whether you follow the book through from beginning to end or dip into it at random.

Mastering writing and reading skills

In EAP, you may be teaching students who are preparing to study or who are already studying subjects like business, sociology, law, finance, science or the arts. As a language teacher, you will have to learn the types of writing and reading assignments that are common to the particular subject areas of your students. You need to familiarize yourself with the particular ways your students have to write and the particular texts they have to read. At the same time, however, the skills you already have as a more general language teacher are still highly relevant. Teaching

EAP is not about replacing the skills you already have, but about supplementing them so that you become a better all-round teacher.

In an EAP class, the language you are required to teach may be very varied, but it will change little over a short space of time. However, the various disciplines that your students study are subject to constant change. They are influenced by social developments, new laws, rules and regulations, and technology like the Internet. Part of your function as an EAP teacher is, therefore, to keep yourself up-to-date with any changes that affect your students.

For your EAP students, studying in English can seem complex, mysterious and fragmented. They may feel as if they are having to readjust their world and build completely new thinking processes and structures from scratch. And you may initially feel the same. However daunting and stifling all this may seem, mastery of the various systems can foster and develop freedom and creativity.

Within the discipline or specialist subject area

Whether you are working as a general EAP lecturer or within a particular department or subject like law or business, you may face greater demands both in terms of time and energy. You will need not only to gain knowledge and experience of the specific writing and reading assignments in EAP, but also to build knowledge of one or more subject areas, quite quickly.

The essential skills needed by the lecturer are the same as those for more general EAP, but with certain specific demands. A straw poll suggests that at the outset, a minimum of three hours of preparation time for a one-hour lesson would not be outrageous. It is also worth remembering that no matter how proficient you become, you cannot be a subject specialist. There is no harm therefore in admitting to your students that you do not know the answer to a problem. Equally, you need to remind your students that you are not a subject specialist and that they must check specialist conventions/procedures for validity, updates and changes to practice. For more on this, see Chapter 10.

Student expectations

To your students, and perhaps to you as an EAP teacher, the assignments your students are given in their field of study can seem vague, even obscure. As a first step, it is important to know what your students want from a language course, and for them to have an understanding of what skills they will need in order to operate efficiently and effectively.

If native speakers take time to acclimatize to their chosen subject, then is it not safe to assume that second-language speakers will face the same or even greater difficulties? This begs the question as to how effectively they can ever acclimatize.

A needs-analysis of your students is vital before any course as it can help you find out:

- what students need and what they want;
- where they are, from the point of view of language, eg, grammar, vocabulary, spelling and so on;
- what language skills they possess;
- what social/interactive skills they have;
- how emotionally mature they are as regards learning;
- if they have a capacity for independent learning;
- how motivated they are;
- how realistic their assessment of their own abilities is;
- whether they are open to change and development.

Students will also benefit from a needs-analysis in that it helps to focus them on their purpose for attending the EAP class. But most importantly their general effectiveness on your course will stem from their being able to see clearly the difference between what they want and what they actually need. A needs-analysis will also help narrow the language-learning path for your students and make it less ambiguous.

As your students learn and develop, their skills, needs and aspirations will change. A needs-analysis as an exercise is therefore not just essential at the beginning of a course. It needs to be revisited throughout any programme so that your students and you yourself can monitor progress.

With increasing student numbers and the time constraints faced by language tutors, a detailed needs-analysis is not always realistic. So you could make the analysis part of an interview with an assessment test, but it may have greater impact as a language exercise within the classroom, rather than as a bureaucratic exercise that can be kept in students' folders. See the needs-analysis questionnaire on page 12 and Activity 1.1 on page 21.

To make the needs-analysis into a reading exercise, give students a checklist syllabus for general English (see page 24), a skills audit for writing (see page 17) and a skills audit for reading (see page 18). Ask your students to complete the checklists before they start a course or as part of a homework exercise before a lecture/seminar.

To simplify the activity, ask them to tick only the most important items in each document. See Activity 1.3 to encourage students to become more involved from the outset in the syllabus and what they are learning.

Needs-analysis/assessment questionnaire

Name: _____ Date: _____

Use the appropriate skills audit to help you answer the questions.

- 1 Why do you want to study English/EAP?
- 2 Which general skills do you hope to develop:
writing/reading/speaking/listening?
- 3 Are there any particular skills that you want to learn or improve?
- 4 Are there any particular areas of language you want to improve?

Strengths and weaknesses

Tick and date the skills list.

- 5 What do you think are your main strengths in writing?
- 6 What do you think are your main strengths in reading?
- 7 What do you think are your main weaknesses in writing?
- 8 What do you think are your main weaknesses in reading?

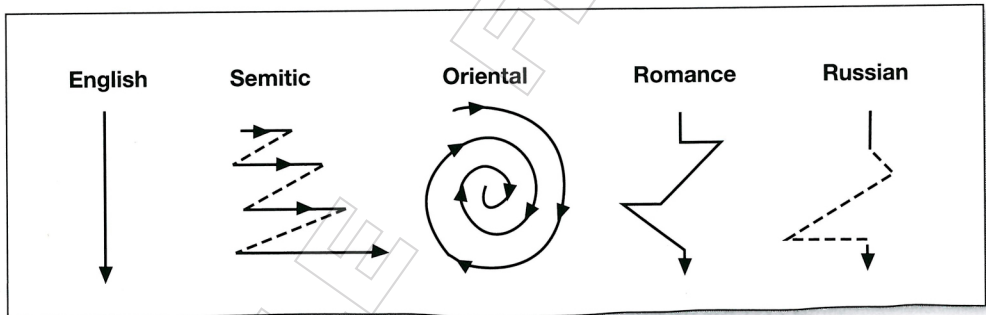
Past experience of learning English

- 9 How were you taught English initially?
- 10 How would you describe your learning style?
- 11 Where do you think you will be six months/one year from now?
- 12 Are you aware of any major differences in academic language in English
and your own language?

The needs-analysis can then be referred to and updated as students progress through any course. The checklists in the skills and audits act a record of where the students are. They also build confidence as it is easy for students to lose track of where they have journeyed from, especially when they feel weighed down by their studies or are immersed in the depths of a heavy assignment. The needs-analysis can also help you shape your lessons, which is why it needs to be an integral part of your planning.

Culture and text: Contrastive rhetoric

If we use a student-centred approach to writing and reading in EAP, contrasting the way texts in English are organized with that of other languages, eg, Arabic, Bantu, Bengali, Chinese, Japanese, Urdu, Yoruba, can provide you with some insight into your students' writing and reading. You may then over time be able to identify any problems that certain students may face. This area of study, known as contrastive rhetoric, compares texts or discourse across different languages/cultures to find differences or similarities. R. B. Kaplan (1966) represented the organization of paragraphs in a diagrammatic form, which is now not generally recognized – including by Kaplan himself – as being feasible:



The diagram suggests that English is vertical, Romance languages are indirect and oriental languages are circular. Some people find these diagrams useful as a means of interpreting generally how different languages organize text, but they do have serious flaws. Is it possible to put all oriental languages under one diagram? Speakers of Urdu, for example, may see the way ideas are organized in their own language as vertical, and English as circular.

It is probably *not* possible to reduce the organization of text to diagrams such as those above. But students and teachers may seek to represent the structure of text in their own languages visually. Awareness of differences and similarities in writing and reading texts between a student's own language and English at a word, paragraph and article level can only help your teaching. It is also about becoming more acquainted with where the students are coming from and not just about trying to 'convert' your students without thinking about their backgrounds. The following exchange between an Arab/Kurdish-speaking postgraduate student and an EAP teacher illustrates this point. The teacher was asking the student about how he approaches writing a basic argument paragraph:

Teacher: *How do you do this in your own language?*

Student: [looking puzzled, laughing] *We don't.*

On further questioning, the student revealed that as an undergraduate he had never written an argument essay in his own language, and that students did not organize or question information in this way. Instead, they reproduced facts. A discussion ensued about how things are done in different languages/cultures. Highlighting students' language/cultural background in this way is not just about motivating students – it is about using and developing a practical tool that helps you ascertain learning differences and similarities. In the end, it may just be that the teacher is explaining a type of task like a particular genre of writing (see Chapter 4) in a way which is counterintuitive to the student. Awareness makes students feel valued. As part of a needs-analysis exercise, you could ask your students in groups to identify what they see as the three main differences and similarities between writing and reading texts in English and in their own languages. If you are teaching a multilingual class, you can put all the speakers of the same language together, or have a random mix. This can also help make your students more tolerant of each other as they become aware of how things are dealt with in different languages. You could do this activity at various stages throughout a course, but especially at the end, to see if your students' views have changed.

If you have a multilingual group, a variation of the above activity is to ask your students to bring in an example of a short text – one page maximum – on a topical subject in their own language. You can arrange them in groups, then ask them to explain to each other what the text is about and how the information is organized. Then, as described above, ask them to describe similarities and differences between the texts. You could then ask your students to draw a diagrammatic representation of the text (see Activity 5.4 and the related worksheet in Chapter 5, pages 91 and 92). This visual approach can help not just those of your students who have a visual approach to learning, but may also benefit those with other learning styles.

Learning styles and methodology

The way your students have been taught previously will influence how they learn. Your students, like you, will have their own individual learning styles. Some may respond better to visual input, some to verbal, some will need to use grammar or vocabulary in some way in order to activate it, some will need to write everything down and others will need to learn it by heart. Some may like learning in groups and some may prefer to work on their own.

The teaching methods that your students are used to in other situations may be at variance with the styles in the modern EAP classroom. Students may come from educational traditions where information is presented not to be challenged but to be absorbed. There may then be a mismatch between what your students perceive as learning and your views and practice, which could result in conflict. Hence the importance of knowing even a little bit about your students' backgrounds.

Finding out about what approach(es) your students prefer to use or are used to in an initial assessment will help you to design your course and develop your teaching. This may challenge your own assumptions about how students learn and could help you to be more flexible and accommodating, while still maintaining control. For example, you may have to work on easing some students into groupwork or pairwork; or focus them on concentrating on the teacher. You may need to learn to vary the activities in a smooth way, and you may find that you have to develop new learning styles and/or challenge old ones.

Learning styles can form the basis of an ongoing discussion with students both during and at the end of a course. Your students could be asked to discuss whether their learning styles have changed, and how and whether they feel the change has helped them. A debriefing questionnaire can be used at the end of the course to evaluate the methodology and not just the content of your course.

Writing and reading approaches: Bottom-up and top-down

Some students may favour a bottom-up approach to writing and reading, manipulating discrete language items and small chunks of language to create the bigger picture. Others may be more comfortable with a top-down approach using meta-cognitive skills: predicting the content of a text, identifying the organization of a text and common text relationships like problem, cause, solution; or condition proposal, result and so on. Have you considered your own approach? Is it consistent? Or even should it be? You may find in your own teaching style that you favour a bottom-up approach to writing, but the reverse in reading, or vice versa. There may also be occasions where you move up and down the scale from bottom to top and top to bottom. For more on this, see Chapter 8.

The predominant approach in any institution may be bottom-up, but you may find that EAP is more inclined to the top-down approach, with the development of an ability to think critically. But the grammar must not be forgotten. See Good practice 1.2 and Activity 1.2.

Teacher expectations

How writing and reading fit into the students' subject areas needs to be made clear at the outset. Otherwise, fragmentation of what is demanded of them in terms of skills and knowledge, especially with regard to the various writing/reading tasks, will stop your students acquiring an overview of the course. The syllabus and skills audits mentioned above help in developing course design, determining what has been done, what is to be done and what needs to be revisited in order to address gaps in students' knowledge. More importantly, they set out for your students what is expected of them.

Treating the syllabus as a living, organic document and allowing it to be adapted means your students can 'own' the document along with you and your institution. See Activity 1.3. By involving the students, even just in analysing the syllabus, you

can find out how much importance they attach to discrete items. With the syllabus in their files/portfolios or saved electronically, students can use it to keep a record of what they have done by numbering each item in sequence as they master it, thus encouraging them to map the course they are following. By building their own picture of the language it will help foster independent learning, thereby strengthening study skills.

Skills for effective writing and reading

Student: *I can't write according to a model/template.*

Student: *I can't scan. I have to read.*

Your students will present with a jagged profile: they may be very good at speaking, but very poor at writing, or vice versa. This may also be the case across writing and reading genres and study skills. Assumptions about a student's competence in writing based on previous academic experience have to be treated with care. The student who excels in one genre, such as describing a process, may fail miserably in producing an argumentative essay. Similarly, the student who is good at writing a short analytical text may balk at a longer essay. Skills proficiency, like any ability, can atrophy if not utilized. The skills your students need have to be revisited, thought about and discussed – not merely listed.

A skills audit of your students at the beginning of the course and then at various stages throughout is useful not just to identify strengths and weaknesses, but also any developments.

At a later date when your students have mastered a number of the skills, you can ask them to classify the skills into macro and micro skills. This serves as revision and is also a confidence-building exercise.

Getting to know your students

Apart from carrying out a needs-analysis to find out how much our students know, as teachers we also need to show the students themselves how much they know and what is expected of them. One way of doing this is to throw them in at the deep end and give them a writing exercise or a reading task, without providing any help. This might work with some classes and/or students, but easing them in gently to your own way of doing things will help you and your students. For an activity to ease your students into a top-down approach to reading, see Activity 1.2.

You can also give your students a questionnaire on getting to know each other that can be found in many coursebooks, or you could ask them to prepare a short talk about their proposed future studies. This will give you an insight into your students, their expectations and ambitions. See Activity 1.4.

Many of the writing and reading activities in this book involve oral preparation and lots of discussion, which we strongly recommend as a means of reinforcing and expanding your students' skills in these two areas. The same applies to listening.

Writing skills audit

Name: _____

Date: _____

Tick the appropriate column.

	strength	weakness
1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

© Sam McCarter & Phil Jakes and Macmillan Publishers Limited, 2009.
 These pages may be photocopied for use in class.

Reading skills audit

Name: _____

Date: _____

Tick the appropriate column.

	strength	weakness
1 activating a schema/schemata*	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2 skimming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 scanning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4 predicting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 reading fast	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6 reading under pressure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7 understanding gist	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8 referring to several sources simultaneously	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9 understanding a whole text	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10 extracting meaning from a paragraph	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11 answering questions about a discrete part of a text	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12 reading for leisure/pleasure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13 juggling information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14 evaluating as you read	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15 reading without translating	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16 answering comprehension questions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17 drawing conclusions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18 making assumptions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19 drawing inferences	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20 evaluating critically	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

*a picture/image or sequence of images that are produced as you read, by drawing on previous knowledge/experience

Good practice 1.1

The importance of student background knowledge

Dmitri, in his mid-twenties, is currently applying to do a business course in economics, finance and management at a British university and has just received his first conditional offer.

He has a professional family background – both his parents are university graduates, one a mechanical engineer and the other a doctor. Following in his father's footsteps, Dmitri took a five-year degree course in mechanical engineering at a Moldovan university. He describes the course as being mainly factual and mathematical, with exams each term testing factual information by completing gaps and solving mathematical/statistical problems. Reading formed part of the course, but there was not much writing, except for a long essay towards the end. This essay required some basic critical thinking, comparing factual knowledge, but not much evaluation.

One term of the course was spent in the UK at an agricultural college. Dmitri enjoyed it tremendously, but as his English was not very good he could not follow the theory. However, he was able to cope with the more practical components, which took place mainly on a farm. This gave him a taste for life in the United Kingdom, where he is now living.

His change of direction from one subject to another – mechanical engineering to business management – does not daunt him. Instead, Dmitri feels that his former training as an engineer has equipped him with a solid grounding in statistical research, detailed planning, critical analysis and logical conclusions based on scientific observation rather than speculative theory.

Now studying and working in London, Dmitri appears to be very goal-orientated and does not seem easily distracted from his course of action. He has devoted himself to acquiring skills he perceives as relevant to his aims, investing a lot of time and energy.

He is currently working in restaurant management in London whilst following an English language course and taking additional private English lessons. He is also studying for the European Computer Driving Licence, hoping to pass all stages before commencing university in September. On top of this, Dmitri is taking a certificate in business administration at a local college. For this he has to write seven 300-word essays in English, each on different aspects of business management: working effectively with others, planning, setting out and meeting objectives, aspects of self-management, etc. The course is computer-based, involving Internet research.

As he has completed a degree in his own language, Dmitri feels that he should be able to obtain a degree provided he can achieve the right level of English. As a further step towards this aim he speaks only English with his flatmates, so that everything he does appears to be designed to build and activate a sequence of schemata in preparation for his studies.

Asked what approach he likes to take when studying, Dmitri stated that he preferred to see things globally and to understand the detail afterwards, rather than the other way round. He thinks writing is his weakness, and possibly also reading. When planning and studying, he likes to take a vertical approach, seeing things as a sequence of steps in an orderly fashion. Being highly motivated and goal-orientated with a very flexible and dynamic approach to learning, he has planned the best way of achieving a British degree.

Finding out about Dmitri's background, abilities and goals (see Activities 1.1 to 1.4)

helped Dmitri's teacher cater for his needs. The teacher was then able to steer him towards his new-found aims of studying economics and setting up his own business. It was obvious that Dmitri needed little help with approaching learning globally, or motivation. It meant that his not inconsiderable skills could be used to improve his writing skills. Activities 1.1 to 1.4 also helped Dmitri see what stage he was at language-wise and skills-wise. Within a normal class setting, the teacher could manipulate tasks so that an individual student's demands could be catered for: having one group focusing on grammar, another on spelling, another on linking, but all essentially involved in the same task. As regards time management, this assisted the teacher by allowing him to deal with a range of students and their needs. The secret was knowing even a little background information, which saved time all round.

Good practice 1.2

Using learning skills to help you as a teacher

Jane is an English teacher from the UK who has done an undergraduate degree in English and drama at an English university, followed by a conversion degree in psychology and then an MSc in forensic psychology.

She is a highly efficient learner who describes her learning style as kinesthetic, which on reflection she links to her drama course. Her method of preparing for exams is choosing the most likely subjects that she can do with ease and breaking them down into manageable chunks of no more than eight cards for each subject/topic, with the information written as bullet points. This stage of the process takes place in the library and once it is complete, Jane then has to rehearse the information aloud, walking around her flat until she knows the information completely.

Jane feels this learning process has changed over time, moving away from reliance on the physical rehearsing of the information she needs to learn to a more visual approach.

She noted that initially, the demands of an academic course were great, but with each subsequent course it became easier. She also pointed out that what was being demanded in writing from students changed over time. In her first degree, writing involved continuous text with few sub-headings, whereas on her latest course more sub-headings were required. Regarding task types, Jane felt she was better at writing longer essays than set assignments that were expected to be written according to a template.

Pre-university, Jane was assessed as not capable of achieving a high grade at university. In fact, she achieved a first-class honours for her first two degrees and a distinction for her MSc. Now a teacher herself, Jane puts the method of learning she used as a student to good use when preparing her lessons as an English language teacher, and in her presentations when working as a trainer. Her awareness of her own style of learning through a range of courses has given her additional insight into how her learners learn. It has also now led Jane into training teachers herself. Her teaching style is very much like that of Dmitri's teacher.

Activity 1.1

Reading, thinking and writing

Aims:

- to help students evaluate their own career and put it into perspective
- to help students organize information and identify elements of a particular type of writing

Materials:

- a copy of **Good practice 1.1**
- a copy of the needs-analysis questionnaire

Level: Intermediate/B1 to Advanced/C1

Time: 45 minutes

Methodology

- 1 Inform students that they are going to write up a case study about a partner.
- 2 Give students a copy of the materials above.
- 3 Ask students to read **Good practice 1.1**.
- 4 Ask students to identify a certain number of language features in the **Good practice**, eg, tenses, linking devices, organization, use of passives, type of vocabulary and structure of the text (ie, chronological, descriptive or argumentative). Choose no more than three of these features.
- 5 Ask students to look at the needs-analysis questionnaire. Ask them to decide which questions, if any, from the needs-analysis questionnaire were asked by the teacher to ascertain the information relating to the student in **Good practice 1.1**.
- 6 Ask each student to choose and mark between five and seven questions that they feel comfortable answering on the questionnaire. Ask them to give the questionnaire to a partner, who will ask the questions and follow up as necessary. While asking the questions, the partner should take clear notes.
- 7 When both members of the pair have made notes, they should write up their own case study about their partner, using the features they identified in step 5. This can be done in class or for homework. Before the case study is handed in for correction, each student should check that the information provided reflects what their partner said.
- 8 Ask students if you can keep copies of the texts as anonymous samples to create a bank of writing materials.

Follow-up 1: If acceptable to you, allow your students to interview you about your approach to learning and any difficulties you have faced. If you do not wish to give too much away, at least reveal the essentials – your educational background, for example. This process helps build trust.

Follow-up 2: Repeat the task using **Good practice 1.2**.

Activity 1.2

Raising awareness of what students know

Aims:

- to ease your students into prediction in reading
- to help students predict information and follow clearly the thread/development of a text

Materials:

- the title of a reading passage
- any sub-headings from the reading passage, or a list of jumbled or unjumbled paragraph headings from the passage
- comprehension questions
- the reading passage

Level: Intermediate/B1 to Advanced/C1

Time: 30 minutes

Methodology

- 1 Ask students to work in groups of three or four. Give students the title of the reading passage. Ask them to make a list of information they would expect to see in an article with this title. Then ask them to think about how the text might be organized: problem/solution, cause/effect, chronological development, etc. Give a time limit of five to ten minutes and ask for seven possible pieces of information.
- 2 Give students the sub-headings or paragraph headings. Ask them to refine their predictions about the text content and add any further information.
- 3 Give students the comprehension questions. Again, ask students to refine their predictions and add any further information to their original list. Point out how the questions themselves are a type of summary of the text – they guide the reader.
- 4 Give students the reading passage and ask them to answer the comprehension questions.
- 5 When you have checked the answers with the whole class, ask students to explain the importance of placing a reading text within a schema, and to explain the process of prediction.

Follow-up 1: Reading

In subsequent reading exercises, you can follow the same procedure or reduce the stages by giving the title, sub-headings and questions all together, until you think students are beginning to predict the passage contents unprompted.

Follow-up 2: Writing

Give students a writing exercise with a similar organizational principle (eg, cause/effect). Before they begin writing, ask them to mine the reading text for verbs, sentence structures, linking devices and general nouns. You can ask students to focus on one, two or more of these.

Activity 1.3

The syllabus, the skills audit, the students

Aim: to help students become more aware of what they are learning

Materials:

- a Writing or Reading skills audit questionnaire
- an extract from a language syllabus or for more advanced students the whole syllabus
- worksheet (see page 24)

Level: Intermediate/B1 to Advanced/C1

Time: 30 minutes

Methodology

- 1 Give students the materials above – either the skills audit photocopies on pages 17 and 18 or a whole syllabus.
- 2 Ask students to work either individually, in pairs or groups and decide what they think are the most important points that should be covered in the course. Ask them to limit their choices to seven or two or three per page.
- 3 Ask them to grade the items on the list in the skills audit or the syllabus 1–7, where 1 is the most important.
- 4 Allow variation within each pair/group, but encourage them to justify their choices for the benefit of themselves and language learning generally.
- 5 Ask students to give you feedback. If you have an interactive whiteboard, you can enter agreed choices on a master document.
- 6 You may want to do a repeat exercise at different stages during the course.
- 7 Give students your choices and discuss why you have chosen them.
- 8 Encourage students to ask you to cover items in the course and negotiate with them what should and should not be included in your teaching.

Activity 1.4

Finding out about each other

Aim: to help students organize information and gain an overview of their studies

Materials: a computer/interactive whiteboard

Level: Intermediate/B1 to Advanced/C1

Time: 45 minutes or more, depending on the number of students

Methodology

- 1 Ask students to work in groups of four and prepare a mini-presentation of their proposed course(s) of study. Tell them the presentation should last no longer than five minutes, with time for questions.
- 2 Ask students to plan a series of slides to present using PowerPoint™, or on the interactive whiteboard.
- 3 Tell students they are limited to between five and seven slides, so that they are encouraged to summarize their information.
- 4 Ask them to give information about the course content, types of writing assignment, and why they want to do the course.
- 5 Set a time limit for preparation of 20 to 30 minutes. You could also set this as a homework task.
- 6 Give the students 10 minutes to practise giving the presentation to each other.
- 7 Ask each group to make a presentation to the class, with each member of the group contributing.

Worksheet: Activity 1.3

Syllabus/Skills worksheet

Rank as many items as you can 1–7, where 1 is most important and 7 is not so important. Then choose at least three items below which you think need to be included in your course.

Writing

Reading

- 1 thinking critically
- 2 cohesion
- 3 coherence
- 4 pronouns
- 5 word order
- 6 simple connections
- 7 complex sentences
- 8 thesis statements
- 9 generalizations
- 10 purpose
- 11 referencing
- 12 addition
- 13 result
- 14 conclusion
- 15 concession
- 16 summary
- 17 exemplification
- 18 comparison
- 19 clarification
- 20 reservation
- 21 cause/effect
- 22 problem/solution
- 23 doubt
- 24 certainty