

Block

3

Materials and Resources for Language Teaching

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BLOCK INTRODUCTION

BLOCK 3: Materials and Resources for Language Teaching

The task of a teacher is not merely to “cover” a text book, but s/he is often involved in the selection of it. This selection is generally based on the principles underlying its creation, the coverage of syllabus and the needs and levels of the learners.

Once this process of text book ‘adoption’ is complete, the teacher may find that it needs modification, adaptation – items may require to be added or deleted in order to suit a given teaching-learning context.

These are decisions that a teacher makes on a daily basis albeit subconsciously. Our attempt in these units is to bring this process to a conscious level, so that a teacher may use sound principles in making these decisions.

The first two units of this Block will provide the teacher with an up-to-date account of the major trends in ELT materials, so that s/he may understand the common design principles underlying teaching material, to critically evaluate the principles upon which they are based, and assess their relevance to his/her own teaching-learning context.

In today’s world ICT is essential for any teaching-learning. The web-based resources to be used by English teachers are enormous and often very useful. Unit 3 with ICT and the web.

Assessment is an important part of the teaching-learning process and it tells us as much of our teaching-learning approach and technique as it does of the “learning” of the learners. A teacher has to keep “reporting” about the learners – to the school authorities, to the parents and to the learners themselves. To make these “judgements”, the teacher must be extra careful, as it involves young and adolescent children who must be informed of their strengths and weaknesses, but as encouragingly as possible so that they remain motivated. In Unit 4 we discuss the types and purposes of language tests and their historical background

The Units are:

Unit 1 Teaching-learning Materials - Their Need and Significance

Unit 2 Evaluating and Adapting Instructional Material

Unit 3 Use of Information Technology and Web-based Resources

Unit 4 Basics of Assessment

UNIT 1 TEACHING-LEARNING MATERIALS - THEIR NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE

Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Why Do We Use materials
- 1.3 Materials Development
- 1.4 Selection of Materials: The Course Book
- 1.5 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.6 Hints to Check Your Progress
- 1.7 Suggested Readings and References

1.0 OBJECTIVES

Any teaching learning programme would always have material to support the objectives of the learning programme. This is important to ensure that the expected learning outcomes are achieved. What are these materials? How are they developed? What are the implications of course books?

After going through this Unit, you should be able to:

- understand the concept of materials in language teaching;
- explain the processes involved in material development;
- discuss the features of course books;
- discuss the implications of different materials for the language learning process; and
- select appropriate teaching-learning materials for your ESL learners.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In any course of study, we would have a curriculum designed with a structured syllabus and the syllabus supported by textbooks that would take the learner through the course. The course would subsequently be evaluated through various approaches. As a learner our first step when we join a course of studies would be to find out which textbooks/materials would help us to tackle the course laid down for the subject. An adult learner may take the help of different text books to approach the course. Recommended books from the library would also be of great use. However, if we were to teach a course, we would at the outset identify the book(s) selected for the course of study. Textbooks, course books, teaching/instructional materials are the most tangible materials for use by the teacher and the student. These give direction to the teacher, help in the completion of the course, and are a strong guideline for examination preparation. While they are not acceptable in all contexts, textbooks also help the students in being successful in examinations as very often examinations are textbook-based. Materials, thus are without doubt an important part of our formal educational system.

1.2 WHY DO WE USE MATERIALS?

Language instruction has five important components - learners, a teacher, materials, teaching methods, and evaluation. Why are materials important in language instruction? What do materials do in language instruction? Can we teach English without a textbook?

There are many views on whether text books are the right materials for use in a classroom. Here are two views:

The school of thought led by Allwright (1981) argues

- 1) Text books are too inflexible to be used directly as instructional material. They control the content, methods, and procedures of learning and teaching. The way the textbook presents material is the way students learn it.
- 2) On the other hand materials should teach students to learn. They should be resource books for ideas and activities for instruction/learning.

O'Neill (1982), argues

- Textbooks make it possible for students to review and prepare their lessons. They are efficient in terms of time and money.
- Textbooks can and should allow for adaptation and improvisation.
- They help the learning and teaching process. The educational philosophy of the textbook will influence the class and the learning process.

Teachers who are experienced may be able to produce material for teaching but by and large in spite of all the criticism against text books, most classroom teaching rely heavily on prescribed materials. Today it is a recognised fact that the learner is the most important aspect of any learning process. Curriculum, materials, teaching methods and evaluation is therefore designed to suit the learners' needs. The teacher is responsible to ensure how the said needs are addressed. They may adapt, supplement, and elaborate on those materials and also monitor the progress and needs of the students and finally evaluate students.

Though students should be the centre of instruction, in many cases the materials become the centre of instruction. Since many teachers are busy and do not have the time or inclination to prepare extra materials, textbooks and other commercially produced materials are very important in language instruction. Therefore, it is important for teachers to know how to choose the best material for instruction, how to make supplementary materials for the class, and how to adapt materials.

Materials include textbooks, video and audio tapes, computer software, and visual aids. They influence the content and often the process of learning. The choice of deductive vs. inductive learning, the role of memorization, the use of creativity and problem-solving ability, production vs. reception, and the order in which materials are presented are all influenced by materials.

Technology, such as OHP, slides, video and audio tape recorders, video cameras, computers, and mobiles support instruction/learning.

Very often the material selected could also have a hidden curriculum. This could include attitude towards:

- Knowledge
- Teaching and learning
- The role and relationship of the teacher and student
- The values and attitude towards society and of society
- The approach to learning a language
- The linguistic and cultural information that the writer considers important.

Language should as far as possible be based on standard accepted forms of English. Vocabulary should be familiar to the students and if new words are introduced, they should be done gradually. Grammar also needs to be functional. A variety of literary forms is advisable in the preparation of material like newspaper articles, poems, letters etc. so that students are introduced to authentic texts which they are likely to encounter in real life.

A text book should as far as possible be related contextually to the cultural background of the students. It should have the following characteristics:

- **Content:** The content should be interesting and motivating and cover a wide range of subjects.
- **Difficulty:** The difficulty level should ensure that the text is challenging and introduces new levels of proficiency. However, it should not be too hard that the student feels frustrated.
- **Instructional issues:** The teachers and students should be very clear about the task set and the expectations from them.
- **Support for learning:** This can take the form of vocabulary lists, exercises which cover or expand on the content, visual aids, technology, etc.

Some Concerns

Companies use all sorts of means to promote their text books/materials. One must be careful not to be led astray by promotional talk. When selecting material from other sources, copyright issues must be kept in mind.

To conclude, let us remember that all materials control instruction at least in the present Indian context. So, in the choice of materials it must be emphasised that they must be appropriate to the level, fulfil learner needs and must be based on correct, natural and current English.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Why are textbooks important for learners and teachers alike?

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2) In your opinion should examinations be based entirely on textbooks prescribed for the course? Justify your answer.

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3) How do you think the teacher and the learner can deal with inadequacies in the textbooks?

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4) Why are textbooks said to be limiting instruction?

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5) Textbooks are said to be necessary in spite of some weaknesses. Why?

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6) Discuss the importance of the learner when designing materials.

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7) What are the materials today that are included in any instruction?

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8) What are the characteristics on which materials are based?

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9) What aspects of the learner should be kept in mind when selecting material?

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1.3 MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT

Materials development involves understanding how materials are developed, designed and customized for language teaching-learning. The process involves both teachers and materials writers. The teacher evaluates the material for use in the classroom while the writers conceive and prepare the material based on the teacher /learner needs.

Current Trends

The publishing trade certainly dominates material developments. While they do claim that it is supported by research on what teachers and children need, this may not be entirely true, as the trade is often driven by economic and commercial pressures. Unfortunately, teachers and true language experts are unable to compete with the publishing trade and so tend to eventually give in to them. However, some positive trends with regard to the production of material are:

- Materials requiring investment by learner where they discover for themselves the intricacies of the language and content,
- Interactive learning packages which use different media to provide richer experiences of the language.

Materials and Resources for Language Teaching

- Extensive reader series that do not rely just on language activities but provoke the reader to think as well.
- Personalized texts that refer the learner to actual life and the use of language in such situations.
- Increased use of internet sources for language learning.
- Introduction of functional grammar rather than rules of grammar.
- More and more government research institutions like the NCERT etc. are involved in preparing materials where there is no commercial angle to these materials.

Some negative trends exhibited in material production are:

- A rising emphasis on grammar driven texts.
- The texts used are often very short and do not take the reader through the language experience.
- Literature tends to get neglected in the course books.
- Most of the activities are language stimulated and do not focus on critical and analytical thinking.
- Most of the books and the activities underestimate the learner linguistically, intellectually and emotionally.

Areas of focus in developing materials should be :

- localization and personalization of materials
- emphasis on creativity and flexibility
- more learner centred
- more content that is meaningful to the learner
- global and multicultural content
- content that engages the learner and challenges him/her
- more involvement of other sources like media, internet, technology etc.
- more workshops to train teachers to write materials.

It is always advisable in the interest of the language learner that these books are developed by professionals who are experienced and competent in the area of language learning and teaching and who are not led by commercial needs of publishing houses. Teachers, very often do not make good material writers, but if given the right training and exposure there is no reason to believe that this is not possible. Experiments in many parts of the world where national institutes have involved teachers in writing materials have proved that teachers can make great contributions to text book writing.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Why is it said that materials development must involve both teachers and material writers?

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2) What are some of the positive trends in materials production?

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3) What are some of the negative trends in materials production?

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4) What are the three things to be kept in mind when preparing or choosing materials?

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1.4 SELECTION OF MATERIALS: THE COURSE BOOK

Any language learning course is supported by materials often referred to as the Course Book. The Course book has become to most learners and teachers ‘the heart of the programme’. The plethora of material available in the market makes it a challenging task to select the right course book.

In the early days, ELT course books usually had a number of reading texts with comprehension questions and a few grammar and vocabulary exercises. Today course books are offered as packages for language teaching and learning. It includes workbooks, teacher guides, audio and video support. Selection of the course book is therefore a very important decision to be made by the teacher. The success or failure of the course book is dependent on a number of variables.

These relate to the learner goals and needs and many more criteria. It is important to keep in mind the theoretical and pedagogical assumptions underlying the creation of these course books. While conventional wisdom will help prioritize the potential of the material, it is important to look at the materials from the point of flexibility, adaptability and relevance to the changing needs, goals and interests of modern day language learners.

Course books- Controversies

There are different schools of thought with regard to the utility of course books. In recent years some schools have expressed the view that published materials do not provide all the input that a teacher is seeking to engage with the students in the classroom. They tend to restrict the teacher and the learner by pre determining the content and teaching procedures. Since course books are usually produced centrally by a group, driven sometimes by government policy they could be viewed as some form of institutional control and could be disempowering for the teacher.

There is a great deal of advocacy today for teacher generated materials. This is more aligned to the concept of learner centred classrooms and makes the material more relevant and motivating for the learner. Yet there are issues in this approach because it is too time-consuming, it is dependent on teacher quality and may not be standardized. Course books on the other hand have the following advantages (Bell and Gower, 1998)

Course books:

- are very practical in a non-English speaking environment where teacher may not be adequately trained.
- provide a route map for the teacher and learner to remain in touch with what has been taught and what will be taught.
- provide structure and predictability.
- free the teacher to attend to more important tasks like lesson planning, and using their creative skills to create more tasks.
- support the teachers who lack experience and training.
- are usually developed by experts who follow a theoretical and methodological approach and this could be superior to teacher developed material.
- can be agents of change and help introduce new concepts into teaching-learning.

So, course books are here with us to stay. We only need to ensure that in their usage they do not take away creativity and responsibility from teachers and learners. They need to support the dynamic and interactive process of learning. They should be flexible enough for teachers to use them for the individual learner and above all they must be motivating, interesting and lively for both the teacher and the learner. They should encourage the learners to think critically and analytically.

Check Your Progress 3

1) What does the term course book imply?

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2) How are course books different today?

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3) What are the points to keep in mind in the selection of course books?

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4) What is the controversy regarding course books?

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5) What are the advantages of course books?

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1.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have tried to introduce you to the concept of learning materials in English language teaching. The positive and negative effects of prescribed materials have been discussed at length. While course books play an important part in any teaching learning scenario, we have tried to bring out the importance of using other materials like audio, visuals etc. The teachers' role and significance in the selection of material, in identifying the needs of the learner and in providing the writers with the necessary expertise has been brought out throughout the unit. The course writer's role today has also been seen as a theoretical and pedagogical expert. Materials must be above all flexible and adaptable so that the teacher and the learner who are the ultimate users can really use them to support the teaching learning scenario in the classroom. We hope this unit has been a learning experience.

1.6 HINTS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Textbooks give direction to the teacher and student about the course to be covered. They also provide direction when preparing for an examination.
- 2) No, examinations must go beyond the course books. This would help the learner expose himself/herself to much more than just the text books. It would also prevent rote learning from a text.
- 3) Inadequacies in textbooks can be dealt with by using other recommended reading material, and using the library to enrich the language skills. Teachers can look at authentic material. They can also create their own material.
- 4) Textbooks are said to limit learning if we depend only on them because:
 - textbooks are too inflexible.
 - they control the content, methods, and procedures of learning and teaching.
 - the way the textbook present material is the way students learn it.
 - they control the assessment process.
- 5) Textbooks are said to be necessary because:
 - they make it possible for students to review and prepare their lessons
 - they are efficient in terms of time and money
 - they allow for adaptation and improvisation
 - the educational philosophy of the textbook will influence the students and the learning process.
 - they can be resources for ideas and activities.
- 6) Today the learner is the most important factor in any teaching learning scenario. The curriculum, materials and the teaching must be adapted to the learner who is being addressed. The textbook must be flexible so that activities can be added or modified to suit the learner and the learning context.

- 7) Besides textbooks, audio tapes, videos, computer software, visual aids, teaching and learning aids are used. Materials used will influence the methodology used in teaching to a large extent.
- 8) The characteristics on which material is based are:
 - world knowledge
 - teaching and learning context and process
 - the role and relationship of the teacher and student
 - the values and attitude towards society
 - the approach to learning a language
 - the linguistic and cultural information that the writer considers important
- 9) The aspects of the learner to be kept in mind are:
 - Language should be simple
 - Grammar and vocabulary should be age specific
 - Material should be learner friendly
 - A variety of literary forms should be used
 - It should suit the learner culturally

Some other points include:

- **Content:** The content should be interesting and motivating and cover a range of subjects.
- **Difficulty:** The difficulty level should ensure that the text is challenging and introduces new levels of proficiency.
- **Instructional issues:** The teachers and students should be very clear about the task set and the expectations from them
- **Support for learning:** This can take the form of vocabulary lists, exercises which cover or expand on the content, visual aids

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) The teacher is able to evaluate the needs of the learner and convey it to the material writer. This helps the writer conceive the text book more appropriately and make it learner centred and learner partnered.
- 2) Some of the positive trends are:
 - Materials requiring investment by learner where they discover for themselves the intricacies of the language
 - Interactive learning packages which use different media to provide richer experiences in language
 - Extensive reader series that do not rely just on language but provoke the reader to think critically as well
 - Personalized texts that relate to the learners to actual life and the use of language in such situations

- Increased use of internet sources for language learning.
 - Introduction of functional grammar rather than rules of grammar
 - More and more government research institutions like the NCERT etc. are involved in preparing materials and there is no commercial angle to these materials
- 3) Some of the negative trends are:
- A rising emphasis on grammar driven texts with exercises to drill in different aspects of grammar
 - The texts used are often very short and do not take the reader through the language experience.
 - Literature tends to get neglected in the course books.
 - Most of the activities are language stimulated and do not focus on critical and analytical thinking
 - Most of the books and the activities underestimate the learner linguistically, intellectually and emotionally
- 4) The needs of the learner, the teacher's needs and the language policies of the government should be kept in mind when choosing materials. The materials should offer flexibility so that the teacher can adapt the material to her student needs. They should also focus on current social issues in society so that the students can be critically engaged with the text.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Course books refer to the books prescribed for a particular course of study.
- 2) In the past course books were merely reading texts with comprehension questions, grammar and vocabulary practice. Today it is offered as a package for language teaching and learning and includes work books, teacher guides, audio and video support.
- 3) Besides keeping the theoretical and pedagogical assumptions in mind, it is important that the materials are flexible, adaptable and relevant to the changing trends, goals and interests of the learners.
- 4) It is said that they restrict the teacher by being too policy driven and enforcing a predetermined content. This could be disempowering to the teacher.
- 5) Advantages of course books:
 - are practical in a non-English speaking environment where teachers may not be adequately trained
 - provide a route map for the teacher and learner to remain in touch with what has been taught and what will be taught.
 - provide structure and predictability
 - frees the teacher to attend to more important tasks like lesson planning, and using their creative skills

- support the teachers who lack experience and training
- are usually developed by experts who follow a theoretical and methodological approach and this could be superior to teacher developed material
- can be agents of change and help introduce new concepts into the teaching-learning process.

1.7 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

Allwright, R.L. 1981. What do we want teaching materials for? *ELT Journal* 36/1

O'Neill, R. (1982) 'Why use textbooks? *ELT Journal*. Vol. 36/2

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UNIT 2 EVALUATING AND ADAPTING INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIAL

Structure

- 2.0 Objectives
- 2.1 Introduction
- 2.2 Evaluating Textbooks of ELT
- 2.3 Importance of Evaluating Textbooks
- 2.4 Text Book Evaluation Procedures
- 2.5 Predictive and Retrospective Evaluation
- 2.6 Empirical Evaluation
- 2.7 Features of a Language Text Book
- 2.8 Adapting Materials
 - 2.8.1 Steps in Adaptation
 - 2.8.2 Material Adaptation Procedures
- 2.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 2.10 Hints to Check Your Progress
- 2.11 Suggested Readings and References

2.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you should be able to:

- Understand the importance of evaluating teaching materials in language learning;
- critically analyse and evaluate language learning materials;
- discuss the different types of material evaluation and its implications for teachers; and
- adapt learning materials to suit the needs of your learners.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In most language programmes textbooks are a key component. They provide the basis for content, balance the skills taught, and the kinds of language practice the student can participate in. In some cases the textbook may be used only to supplement the teacher's teaching. For the learner it is an important source of additional input besides the teacher. Much of the language learning that takes place today would not have been possible without the language text book. Learning how to use and adapt textbooks is therefore an important part of a teacher's professional duty.

Evaluation of materials is primarily seen in relation to the user and analysis of the material is seen in the context of the actual material and tends to be very objective. For example, does the material incorporate listening texts? Does it provide sufficient number of comprehension tasks? Is the reading text motivating and interesting? Do the tasks relate to the learner levels? The subjective component

is high in evaluation as compared to analysis. Analysis of materials is very useful in ensuring that the text addresses all the issues in language learning it is expected to address and is in tune with the course objectives. There is at times an overlap between evaluation (which is primarily subjective) and analysis which is objective.

2.2 EVALUATING TEXTBOOKS OF ELT

There has been a great deal of controversy on whether we need text books for students, whether they serve any purpose, whether they are often outdated or whether we just cannot do without them. Sheldon (1988) claims that textbooks “merely grow from and imitate other textbooks and do not admit the winds of change from research, methodological experimentation, or classroom feedback”. The pre-packaged text book cannot really cater to the day to day complexities of language learning. There is, however, another school of thought. Hutchinson & Torres(1994) argue that textbooks will survive, and prosper primarily because they are the most convenient means of providing the structure that the teaching learning system requires. Problems do exist with the available teaching materials, yet we need to accept that the textbook is a necessity in our classes today. This situation also implies that the teacher must be competent to evaluate textbooks .They need to be aware of what should be the process for evaluating and selecting material, and also adapting material to meet the changing teaching learning needs today.

Some of the negative aspects of textbooks could be:

- They contain inauthentic language. The language may have been manipulated to achieve certain learning outcomes and so it may not represent language in use.
- They may distort content .The content is often distorted to represent accepted middle class views and no controversial issues are dealt with.
- They may not reflect students’ needs.
- They may result in deskilling the teacher. When teachers become too dependent on the textbook and the accompanying teacher’s manual, then the teacher’s role gets reduced to a technical role of just presenting materials.
- They may also be expensive for the students.

Measuring the potential value of the material for the user can be termed as evaluation of the material. Some of the areas that need to be evaluated when looking at material are:

- appeal to the learner
- credibility of the material vis-a-vis the stakeholders
- validity and reliability of the material
- The ability of the material to motivate.
- The value of the materials in academic performance and in enhancing communicative skills.
- the flexibility of the materials

- the internal ability of the material to move the learner and the teacher to higher levels of learning, i.e. critical and analytical thinking.
- The appropriacy of the material vis-a-vis the syllabus, standards required and benchmarks.

The local context of the materials in use is one of the most important criteria for evaluation of material and this must always be kept in mind. We must at this stage also differentiate between the terms evaluation and analysis.

Check Your Progress 1

1) Why is the textbook said to be a key component in language learning?

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2) How is evaluation different from analysis of the materials?

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3) What are the two views regarding textbooks?

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4) List the negative aspects of textbooks.

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5) What are the areas we need to look at when evaluating textbooks?

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2.3 IMPORTANCE OF EVALUATING TEXTBOOKS

Evaluation helps in the selection of the text book which is important for the language classroom. When a particular text is selected it reflects an executive decision and sometimes even apolitical decision. It is an important precursor to teaching and has great potential in influencing how the teacher handles the class. Cunningsworth (1984) states that “professional judgement, founded on understanding of the rationale of language teaching and learning backed up by practical experience, lies at the base of evaluation”. So evaluating textbooks or teaching materials is important because it helps us to:

- Make decisions in the selection of books
- Form professional judgements
- Raise awareness of our teaching and learning experiences

In fact by undertaking the process of evaluation some important aspects have emerged:

Firstly, by evaluating teaching materials teachers can learn more about language learning and teaching. The new concepts they come across will eventually help in improving their own teaching.

Secondly, by studying the various criteria for evaluation, the teacher actually tends to evaluate the particular context within which the material is to be used.

Thirdly, the teacher develops the right attitudes towards textbooks. They begin to understand that a textbook is not an absolute authority and one should not depend on it entirely. In fact the teacher should adapt, complement and modify what is not satisfactory.

2.4 TEXTBOOK EVALUATION PROCEDURES

Let us now make a study of the various processes or methods used in evaluating textbooks, their advantages and demerits.

Using Checklists and questions

One method of assessing textbooks is to use checklists which consist of a list of factors

- Rationale
- Availability
- Layout

These factors are again placed against rating scales of poor, fair, good, excellent. It is very difficult in this case to be totally objective. Hutchinson and Waters (1987) emphasise the importance of objectivity and say that if evaluation is to be objective it should involve a matching process where needs are matched to solutions. So they divide the process of evaluation into four steps:

- 1) Defining criteria
- 2) Subjective analysis
- 3) Objective analysis
- 4) Matching

Williams (1983) in his article "Developing Criteria for Textbook Evaluation" presents a scheme for evaluation which can be used to draw up a checklist of items relevant to language teaching. These he identifies as

1) Up-to-date Methodology

The textbook should incorporate current psychological and linguistic principles. It does not mean that innovation is included just for the sake of sounding new. It must be based on sound principles of language learning.

2) Guidance for non-native teachers

The textbook should be supportive to the untrained or partially trained teacher who may not have a native-like control of the language.

3) Needs of second language learners.

It is important to distinguish between the class where English is taught as a subject and a class where English is the medium of instruction.

4) Relevance to the socio cultural context.

The socio cultural norms must also be kept in mind when reviewing the text book.

In using questions, Breen (1987) suggest that questions be used in two phases:

The first stage is the posing of some initial questions on the usefulness of the teaching materials;

The second stage is using more searching questions to ascertain the effectiveness of the material with particular learners. The questions could relate to:

- Comparison with other textbooks available
- The approach adopted in the textbook
- The emphasis given to all the four skills
- The balance between linguistic competence and communicative competence
- The methodology of transacting the material
- The language structures dealt with and the approach used
- Logical sequencing of the content
- Selection of content-authenticity

- Meeting learning needs
- Balance between visual material and text
- Design of the layout

Some of the questions one needs to ask when evaluating materials have been listed by Griffiths (1995) in her article on ‘Evaluating materials for Teaching English to Adult Speakers of other languages’ They are:

- Does the material match learner objectives?
- Is the material learner centred?
- Does the material facilitate interactive learning?
- Is the material socio-culturally appropriate?
- Is the material gender sensitive?
- Is the material up-to-date?
- Are vocabulary and comprehensible input levels well graded?
- Is the material age appropriate?
- Is the material interesting and visually appropriate?
- Is the material relevant to real life?
- Is the material easy to use?
- How ethnocentric is the material?

Check Your Progress 2

1) Why is it important to evaluate textbooks?

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2) Why is this task of evaluating textbooks very important for the teacher?

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3) List the criteria for assessment of textbooks drawn up by Williams.

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- 4) What are the ‘searching questions’ suggested by Breen to ascertain the effectiveness of materials with particular learners?

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- 5) List some of the questions that could be asked when evaluating textbooks.

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2.5 PREDICTIVE AND RETROSPECTIVE EVALUATION

Predictive Evaluation

When choosing a book best suited for their purpose, teachers use predictive evaluation. This can be done in two different ways:

They could rely on evaluations by expert reviewers like ELT journals. However this may not always be helpful as journals do not generally review the actual suitability in a specific classroom.

Teachers could also rely on the checklists and questions suggested by Breen (1987) and other such scholars. This could help them in evaluating materials more systematically as it deals with both usefulness and analysis of its effectiveness. There are however limits to how scientific such evaluation can be, for as Sheldon (1988) observes ‘it is clear that course book assessment is fundamentally a subjective, rule of the thumb activity, and that no neat formula, grid or system will ever provide a definite yardstick”

Retrospective Evaluation

As the name suggests, this is the process of evaluating the usefulness of the material once it has been used in order to decide whether it is to be used again. It is looking at the content and evaluating what works, what does not work and how it can be adapted to make it more workable. It actually means testing the validity of the predictive evaluation and it is also a feedback on the predictive approach itself.

This evaluation can be carried out impressionistically or in a systematic manner. While they are using the materials, teachers assess whether it works, and at the end of the course they make summative judgements of the materials. Empirical

evaluations are also often a part of retrospective evaluation, however we shall deal with it separately in order to understand it better.

2.6 EMPIRICAL EVALUATION

Empirical evaluation can be done at both a macro level and a micro level. However, it is advisable to attempt such an evaluation at the micro level because the macro level evaluation is often too time consuming.

In the case of micro evaluation a teacher only looks at one aspect of the teaching materials and another teacher would look at another aspect. This is then submitted as a basis for macro evaluation. Sometimes a micro evaluation can stand on its own for evaluating materials. Micro evaluation is very effective when analysing tasks. Evaluating a task has a series of steps:

Choosing a task to evaluate

Teachers may like to evaluate a new task in order to check how innovative it is, or they may like to evaluate a familiar task to see if it works the way it should. They may also want to experiment with a known task in order to see if it has any visible effects on learning outcomes.

Describing the task

It is necessary to describe the task in terms of its objectives, the input and ultimately the intended outcomes.

Planning the evaluation

When doing an evaluation it must be carefully planned. Some of the steps involved in planning are:

- Purpose (Why?)
- Audience (Who is it for?)
- Evaluator (Who? is it the teacher teaching or is it an outsider)
- Content (What?)
- Method (How?)
- Timing (When?)

One of the most important aspects of planning an evaluation is the type of evaluation. **Student based evaluation** looks at the attitude to the task. The task is said to have worked if the student finds it enjoyable and motivating.

Response based evaluation mandates the teacher to look at the actual outcomes to see if they match the predicted outcomes. This evaluation is at times time consuming but they provide valuable information as to whether what has been planned has been achieved.

Learning based evaluation attempts to determine if the task has resulted in any new learning. It is difficult to carry out because the teacher has to determine if the students can do the task in advance which implies that the teacher must be aware of the students' prior knowledge.

Steps in evaluating a task:

Collecting the information

This can be done before, during and after the task is attempted by the students.

Analysing the information

This involves quantifying the information which can be presented in a tabular form. It can also be presented qualitatively where student's responses are elicited in the form of quotes.

Reaching conclusions and making recommendations

Conclusions are general statements and recommendations are the evaluator's ideas regarding future actions.

Writing the report

When the evaluator writes a report she has to clarify the procedures followed and in doing so is more likely to understand the strength and weakness of the study.

Micro evaluation of a task is difficult but it is advocated as one of the best forms of evaluation.

Firstly, it gets teachers to evaluate as they plan the lesson.

Secondly, the procedure makes teachers more objective in their assessments.

Thirdly, it involves the teacher in some type of action research.

Fourthly, it actually leads to professional empowerment.

While this type of evaluation is best for evaluating tasks, but can be very useful in evaluating materials.

Check Your Progress 3

1) What is meant by predictive evaluation?

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2) What is meant by retrospective evaluation?

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3) What are the two ways of doing empirical evaluation?

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4) What is Micro evaluation? Why is it said to be one of the best forms of evaluation?

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5) Why would a teacher want to evaluate a task?

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6) What are the steps involved in planning an evaluation?

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7) What are the various types of evaluation?

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8) What are the steps in evaluating a task?

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2.7 FEATURES OF A LANGUAGE TEXT BOOK

In conclusion it may be said that there are some features that must be there in all books and this must be kept in mind by the evaluator. Tomlinson (1998) has drawn up a series of suggestions that he believes should be part of any material for language teaching-learning. They are:

- Language learning must be a positive and an enjoyable experience.
- The learner and the teacher must value the materials that are in use.
- The material must address the needs of diverse learners who differ in their personality, motivation, attitude, prior experience, interests, needs, wants and learning styles.
- While cultural contexts differ, there are strong universal determinants of successful language teaching.
- Good material can raise energy levels of the teacher and the taught, so there must be special efforts to incorporate this into the material.
- Learners must get the opportunity to use the language in the form of responses, opinions, interests etc.
- The material should help the learner to connect his learning to life outside the classrooms.
- The material must engage the learner emotionally as well.

Any textbook must be used judiciously, since it cannot cater to all types of classrooms. Common approaches and problems are reflected in most books, but the teacher has to ultimately take decisions keeping in mind the class that is being taught. The teacher takes over where the textbook leaves off. The textbook is ultimately a tool not a crutch. The teacher must not only know how to use it, but be aware how useful it can be. The textbook will continue to be important, but it is not the be all and end all of teaching. Most teachers use both original and commercially prepared material.

2.8 ADAPTING MATERIALS

The importance of evaluating materials before using them has already been discussed. We know and understand that teachers need to have some experience in doing this and they need to also understand that it is not always possible to have what we may term as the textbook. This is why it becomes important to

understand the importance of teacher made materials and / or adapting materials for the class in question. Those who deal with the materials, teachers and students are the most knowledgeable people to see how the selected materials fit in with the learning needs of the learner and achieve the desired learning outcomes. They can accordingly take a decision as to whether the material needs adaptation or not. Adaptation involves consideration of possible changes that have to be made in the materials so that they can be used for the maximum benefit of the teachers and students. This change can be visualised in the form of deleting or adding portions, modifying, simplifying or reordering parts so that the materials match expectations and proficiency of the learners.

Adaptation need not necessarily be a formal activity. It could be part of a teacher's daily classroom activity where the teacher consciously sees that the material provided matches the needs of the particular group of learners. Whether pre-planned or spontaneous, if the teacher knows her students well she will adapt the materials available.

What is materials adaptation?

Adaptation of materials can be defined as changing the level, context or additions of an activity in order to cover the needs of the learners in an improved way. It is a process of equalisation of materials keeping the learner and the objectives of language teaching learning in mind.

The teacher's concern for the learner is reflected in the process of adaptation. However each teacher may also have his or her own reason for adaptation. It is of interest for us to analyse some of the so called reasons for adaptation.

Objectives for material adaptation

Personalization: Some of the objectives for material adaptation are:

- The teacher may want to make the lessons very personal to suit the learners she is addressing.
- The activities could be modified to suit the motivation and interest levels of the learners.

Localization: Bringing in the social context of the particular group would go a long way in understanding and learning.

Modernization: The method, the authenticity, the context, the order and the balance of skills may need to be adapted according to the learners. Modernization may also involve technology support like power point presentations, web and podcasts etc.

Reasons for adaptation

Some of the reasons for adaption of material are:

- **Not enough grammatical content**

For some learners grammar is required for competitive examinations so it is important to have grammar covered. Moreover, knowledge of grammar helps in editing written work, so it must be judiciously included in any course.

- **Not Communicative enough**
Many books though they claim to be communicative are not communicative enough, so extra material is required.
- **Not of appropriate level**
The book may be of a higher or lower level.
- **Not appealing to diverse learning styles**
It may not have addressed different types of learners.
- **Lessons may be too long or too short**
The class timings and the lesson length must have some correlation for it to be a successful lesson.
- **Skills focus not balanced**
There may be too much emphasis on a particular skill thus ignoring or reducing the emphasis on the other skills. Sometimes skill wise it may be adequately balanced but the teacher may feel that for the particular class she needs to focus on a particular skill.
- **Sequence or grading may be inappropriate**
In this case the teacher may need to reorder the lessons.
- **Inappropriate Methods**
The activities designed may not be really interactive or there may be an overemphasis on drills.
- **Cultural content**
The cultural context of the learner may be missing, so it may be essential to add materials pertaining to the local context of the learner.
- **Audio Visual back up may be inadequate**
In this case the teacher will have to supplement with adequate material to strengthen the understanding.
- **Uninteresting topics**
Selected content may not be very interesting. Different related content may be added.
- **Lexical Items**
Difficult words and phrases have to be dealt with in the adaptation process. Related words may need to be added.

2.8.1 Steps in Adaptation

Evaluating material helps the teacher to decide if the material is adequate for the learning needs of the group. In the process of evaluating the teacher also looks at the need and the process of adapting. A successful process leads to superior levels of adaptation. Some steps suggested are:

- Identify needs of the learners
- Be clear about the goals for your learners
- Review the communicative activities
- Check the balance of skills
- Clarify the inclusion of audio visual materials
- Study the time lines
- Review the socio cultural references
- Check authenticity of materials
- Check the appropriateness to the age level/competency level
- Decide what will be adapted and what will not be adapted.

2.8.2 Material Adaptation Procedures

Let us look at some of the procedures for material adaptation.

- 1) **Addition:** Addition is an adaptation procedure which involves supplementation of extra linguistic items and activities to make up for the inadequacy/ insufficiency of materials. Addition of extra materials is necessary/applicable/appropriate when the following situations are faced:
 - Areas are not covered sufficiently.
 - Texts/pictures/tasks are not provided.
 - Texts/pictures/tasks are fewer than needed.
 - Tasks are limited in scope.
 - Tasks are of limited range.
- 2) **Deletion/omission:** Deletion is an adaptation procedure which involves removal of some of the linguistic items and activities which are found to be extra and unnecessary. So, deletion is a process in which materials are taken out rather than added. Materials should be reduced through omission when the following situations are faced:
 - Learners are clear about a language point.
 - Learners are competent in a skill.
 - There are too many tasks on a particular area/point.
 - The item/area concerned is not a priority.
 - The item/task is not well designed.
 - The item/task is not well-suited to its aim(s).
 - The topic is not appropriate for learners.
- 3) **Modification/changing:** Modification means changes in different aspects of materials, such as linguistic level, exercises, assessment system and so on. Modification of materials is applicable/ appropriate in the following situations:
 - Texts are of inappropriate length.

- Materials are inappropriate to the aim
 - Materials are inappropriate to the learners' age/ experience.
 - Materials are unclear, confusing or misleading.
 - Tasks are badly designed.
- 4) **Simplification:** This procedure is employed to make materials less complicated or easier to understand. If the language teaching material is found to be difficult or mechanical for the target learner, it (material) can be made suitable for the learner through the process of simplification.
- 5) **Rearrangement/re-ordering:** Rearrangement is a procedure of materials adaptation through which different parts of a course book are arranged in a different order or sequence. Rearrangement of materials helps to make them comparatively more interesting and appropriate for the learner as well as the teacher.

Check Your Progress 4

1) What is materials adaptation?

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2) What are the objectives for adaptation?

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3) What are the five adaptation procedures?

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2.9 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have discussed at length the importance of evaluating teaching materials and all the procedures involved in doing it. The teacher's role in the whole process of evaluation has been discussed at length. By being involved in the process of evaluation and adaptation, the teacher would definitely grow professionally. The teacher has a moral responsibility towards the students in her care and so any material used must be reviewed and adapted to address the diversity of language learners.

2.10 HINTS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) It provides the basis for content and skills required to be taught.
- 2) Evaluation is viewing the materials in relation to the students needs and analysis is looking at the actual material included in the text.
- 3) Some people believe that textbooks are of no value as they do not include any changes arising out of research, experimentation and classroom feedback. There is another school of thought that says that textbooks provide structure to the teaching learning situation. Textbooks are a necessity and the teacher needs to know how to evaluate it.
- 4) Some of the negative aspects of textbooks could be:
 - They contain inauthentic language. The language may have been manipulated to achieve certain learning outcomes and so it does not represent language in use.
 - They may distort content .The content is often distorted to represent accepted middle class views and no controversial issues are dealt with.
 - They may not reflect students' needs.
 - They may result in deskilling the teacher. When teachers become too dependent on the textbook and the accompanying teacher's manual, then the teacher's role gets reduced to a technical one of just presenting materials.
 - They may also be expensive for the students.
- 5) Areas we need to look into when evaluating textbooks are:
 - appeal to learner
 - credibility of the material vis-a-vis the stakeholders
 - validity and reliability of the material
 - The ability of the materials to motivate.
 - The value of the materials in academic performance and in enhancing communication skills.
 - the flexibility of the materials
 - the internal ability of the material to move the learner and the teacher

to higher levels of learning

- The appropriacy of the material vis-a-vis the syllabus, standards to be maintained and benchmarks.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) It helps in the selection of the textbook. It is a reflection of both an executive and sometimes a political decision. It influences how the teacher teaches in the classroom.
- 2) Teachers learn more about the new concepts in language teaching-learning. The process of evaluating the textbook helps the teacher look at the book in the particular context in which it is to be used. Teachers also develop the right attitude towards textbooks as they understand that they should not depend on them entirely. They need to adapt and modify it in order to put the textbook to better use.
- 3) Williams presents a scheme for evaluation which can be used to draw up a checklist of items relevant to language teaching. These he identifies as
 - a) **Up-to-date Methodology:** The textbook should incorporate current psychological and linguistic principles. It does not mean that innovation is included just for the sake of sounding new. It must be based on sound principles of language learning.
 - b) **Guidance for non-native teachers:** The textbook should be supportive to the untrained or partially trained teacher who may not have a native like control on the language.
 - c) **Needs of second language learners:** It is important to distinguish between the class where English is taught as a subject and the class where English is the medium of instruction.
 - d) **Relevance to the socio cultural context:** The socio cultural norms must also be kept in mind when reviewing the text book.
- 4) The questions could relate to:
 - Comparison with other textbooks available
 - The approach adopted in the textbook.
 - The emphasis given to all the four skills.
 - The balance between linguistic competence and communicative competence.
 - The methodology in transacting the textbook.
 - The language structures dealt with and the approach used.
 - Logical sequencing of the content
 - Selection of content-authenticity.
 - Meeting learning needs
 - Balance between visual material and text.
 - Design of the layout

- 5) Some of the questions could relate to:
- Does the material match learner objectives?
 - Is the material learner centred?
 - Does the material facilitate interactive learning?
 - Is the material socio-culturally appropriate?
 - Is the material gender sensitive?
 - Is the material up-to-date?
 - Are vocabulary and comprehensible input levels well graded?
 - Is the material age appropriate?
 - Is the material interesting and visually appropriate?
 - Is the material relevant to real life?
 - Is the material easy to use?
 - How ethnocentric is the material?

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Predictive evaluation is done when choosing a book for use and it could be based on evaluation by expert reviews of journals. However these reviews may not be useful for actual use in the particular classrooms as the learning context is different.
- 2) Retrospective evaluation implies evaluation of a book i.e. it has been used in order to decide whether it can be used again. It actually means verifying the predictive evaluation. While using the materials teachers assess whether it works and at the end they make summative judgements. This is used as feedback in evaluating the materials.
- 3) We can do an empirical evaluation by undertaking a macro or a micro evaluation.
- 4) A micro evaluation involves evaluating different tasks incorporated in the textbook. Micro evaluation of a task is difficult but it is advocated as one of the best forms of evaluation.
 - Firstly, it gets teachers to evaluate as they plan the lesson,
 - Secondly, the procedure makes teachers more objective in their assessments,
 - Thirdly, it involves the teacher in some type of action research,
 - Fourthly, it actually leads to professional empowerment.
- 5) Teachers may like to evaluate a task to check the following:
Innovation of the task
Whether the task works the way it should
Whether a task is able to achieve the learning outcomes planned.
- 6) When doing an evaluation it must be carefully planned. Some of the steps involved in planning are:
 - Purpose (why?)

- Audience(Who is it for?)
- Evaluator (Who? is it the teacher teaching or is it an outsider)
- Content (What?)
- Method (How?)
- Timing (When?)

7) There are three types of evaluation. They are:

Student based evaluation which looks at the attitude to the task. The task is said to have worked if the student finds it enjoyable and motivating.

Response based evaluation which mandates the teacher to look at the actual outcomes to see if they match the predicted outcomes. This evaluation is at times time-consuming but provides valuable information as to whether what has been planned has been achieved.

Learning based evaluation

This evaluation attempts to determine if the task has resulted in any new learning. This is difficult to carry out because the teacher has to determine if the student can do the task in advance which implies that the teacher must be aware of the student's prior knowledge.

8) The steps in evaluating a task are:

Collecting the information: This can be done before, during and after the task has been attempted.

Analysing the information: This involves quantifying the information which can be presented as tables. It can also be presented qualitatively where student's responses are elicited in the form of quotes.

Reaching conclusions and making recommendations: Conclusions are general statements and recommendations are the evaluator's ideas regarding future actions.

Writing the report: When the evaluator writes a report she has to clarify the procedures followed and in doing so, is more likely to understand the strength and weakness of the task/material.

Check Your Progress 4

1) Adaptation is a process by which existing materials are reviewed keeping the learner and the objectives of teaching-learning the language in mind.

2) The objectives of adapting are:

Personalization: The teacher may wish to make the lessons very personal to suit the learners she is addressing. The activities could be modified to suit the motivation and interest levels of the learners.

Localization: Bringing in the social context of the particular group would go along way in understanding and learning.

Modernization: The method, the authenticity, the context, the order and the balance of skills may need to be adapted according to the learners. Modernization may also involve technology support like power point presentations, web and pod casts etc.

3) The five adaptation procedures are:

- 1) **Addition:** Addition is an adaptation procedure which involves supplementation of extra linguistic items and activities to make up for the inadequacy/ insufficiency of materials.
- 1) **Deletion/omission:** Deletion is an adaptation procedure which involves removal of some of the linguistic items and activities which are found to be extra and unnecessary. So, deletion is a process in which materials are taken out rather than added.
- 2) **Modification/changing:** Modification means changes in different aspects of materials, such as linguistic level, exercises, assessment system and so on.
- 3) **Simplification:** This procedure is employed to make materials less complicated or easier to understand. If the language teaching material is found to be difficult or mechanical for the target learner, it (material) can be made suitable for the learner through the process of simplification.
- 4) **Rearrangement/re-ordering:** Rearrangement is a procedure of materials adaptation through which different parts of a course book are arranged in a different order or sequence. Rearrangement of materials helps to make them comparatively more interesting and appropriate for the learner as well as the teacher.

2.11 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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UNIT 3 USE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND WEB-BASED RESOURCES

Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Tools and Services on the Internet
- 3.3 Authoring Tools
- 3.4 Research Tools
- 3.5 Web 2.0 Tools
- 3.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.7 Hints to Check Your Progress
- 3.8 Suggested Readings and References

3.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you should be able to:

- understand and appreciate the potential of various web-based resources for teaching-learning process;
- explore for more resources that may be available on the web but are not discussed in the text; and
- use these resources for enhancing teaching-learning inside and outside in the classroom context.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The present scenario is characterized by a fluid movement between the print and the digital texts in the world of young professionals and children. They are not only at home with digital technologies but also enjoy using them for work. Keeping this aspect in view, teachers can also think of ways of using the web-based tools for teaching their students using synchronous or asynchronous communication. Synchronous communication allows for real time communication, while asynchronous communication allows people to communicate at her/his convenience. As discussed in the unit, synchronous communication includes forums, chats, whiteboards, and voice over IPs (VoIPs). Asynchronous communication tools include emails, websites, and audio and video streams. However, for this to have a successful run, one needs to have a stable Internet connection. If in certain parts, the Internet is not reliable, teachers can depend more on asynchronous tasks and where it is reliable, they may depend more on synchronous tools. This unit will acquaint you with various web-based resources available for teachers and learners. We will also discuss the use of these resources in class room context and outside the class context for making learning an interesting process. It will describe how teachers may exploit the

ubiquity of digital technologies to promote learning. This unit will also show how digital texts can be used for teaching in the classroom.

3.2 TOOLS AND SERVICES ON THE INTERNET

Internet is a global collection of interconnected network of computers. The internet is made up of millions of computers linked together around the world in such a way that information can be sent from any computer to any other 24 hours a day. These computers can be in homes, schools, universities, government departments, or businesses small and large. There can be any type of computer i.e. single personal computers or workstations on a school or a company network. The internet is often described as “*a network of networks*” because all the smaller networks of organizations are linked together into the one giant network called the internet. All computers are pretty much equal once connected to the Internet; the only difference will be the speed of the connection which is dependent on your Internet Service Provider and your own modem.

There are so many things you can do and participate in, if connected to the Internet. They include using a range of services to communicate and share information and things quickly and inexpensively with tens of millions of people, both young and old and from diverse cultures around the world.

For example,

- You'll be able to keep in touch, chat, and send messages, electronic files to colleagues and friends using Electronic Mail (Email), Internet telephony, Internet Relay Chat (IRC), File Transfer and Video conferencing.
- You can also tap into thousands of databases, libraries, and newsgroups around the world to gather information on any topics of interest for work or recreation. The information can be in the form of text, pictures or even video material.
- You can enroll for a course and attend as per your convenience and pace, offered through online (e-learning).
- You can do Research.
- You can meet your peer groups with similar interests and share ideas (interactive collaboration).
- You can stay up-to-date with news, sports, weather and any other current affairs around the world with information updated daily, hourly or instantly.
- You can also locate and download computer software and programs that are available in cyberspace.
- You can listen to music, do online shopping and even watch movies.
- There are also a growing number of digital libraries, Interactive multimedia games and educational tools.

To work with internet and to utilize the information and resources available on it, we use certain tools. In the following sections we have discussed some of the tools and services on the internet.

World Wide Web (WWW)

There are millions of sites on the **World Wide Web** (www) which are called **websites**. For each query that we put on the search engines, hundreds of website links are given. Generally, the most relevant to our immediate needs are the ones which are on the first page. To access these materials, one needs to take care of a few things.

Use correct spelling to reach the exact information.

- Use double quotation marks to search for words that come together. It is very useful when looking for a quotation. The search engine will return only those links where the words one is looking for come together and help you to narrow down your search.
- Use the + symbol if you want to add something to your search. For example, putting a + symbol between the words 'travel' and 'London' will restrict your search to travelling to London only.
- Search within a range of numbers: Put .. between two numbers. For example, camera Rs.5000..Rs.10000
- Compare foods using "vs": Type in "rice vs. quinoa," for example, and you'll receive side-by-side comparisons of the nutritional facts.

Search Engines

A search engine is a web server that searches for information on the Internet. There are a number of search engines available to Web surfers.

Sweet Search is a Search Engine for Students. Sweet Search has a limited number of sites for students. It has only 35,000 Websites which have been evaluated and approved by staff of research experts, librarians and teachers. Educators across the globe consider it to be a site with lots of information to help with instruction and have labelled it as the librarian of the Internet. Sweet Search allows students to choose the most relevant result from a list of reliable results, without the distraction of untrustworthy sites.

Some other popular search engines that we generally use are:

Google
Yahoo
Eureka
Web Crawler
Ask
Bing



Check Your Progress 1

1) Define the term Internet.

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2) Mention some of the uses of the Internet.

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3) What are web sites? Give examples.

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4) What are search engines? Give examples.

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Digital Libraries

The emergence of the Internet and the wide availability of affordable computing equipment have created tremendous interest in digital libraries and electronic publishing. The term “digital libraries” covers the creation and distribution of all types of information over networks, ranging from converted historical materials to kinds of information that have no analogues in the physical world. In some ways digital libraries and traditional libraries are very different, yet in other ways they are remarkably similar.

Encyclopedias <http://www.encyclopedia.com/>

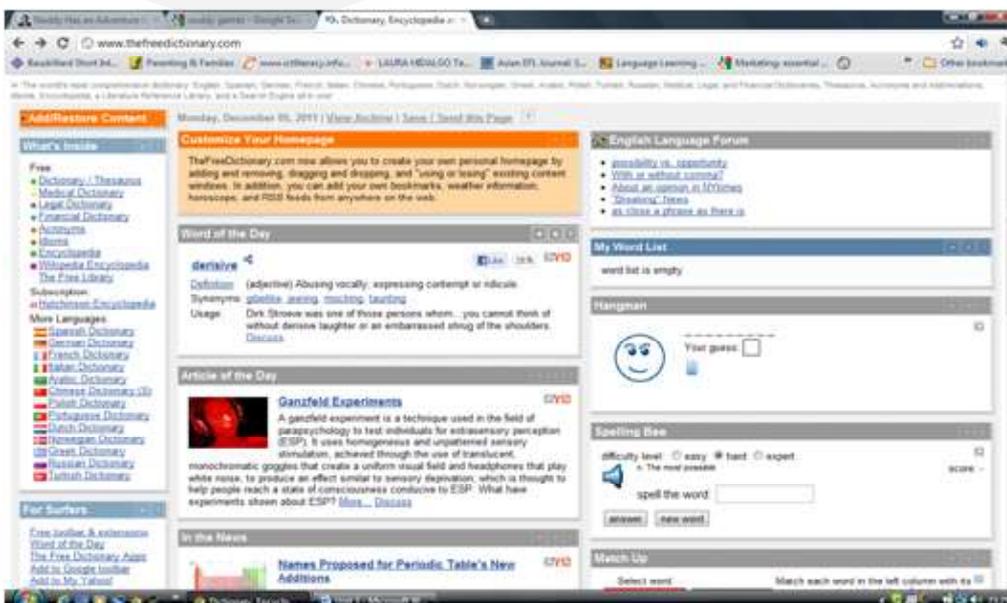
An Internet encyclopedia is a huge database of information that is available on the Internet and can be accessed via the World Wide Web. A number of such information reservoirs are available on the internet. Generally, the web pages can be viewed through software applications called Web browsers or high-quality search engines. Some useful links to encyclopedias available on the net are given below.

- Encyclopedia Britannica - www.britannica.com
- Animal facts encyclopedia - www.animalfactsencyclopedia.com
- An overview of countries of the world - www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/List_of_countries
- Encyclopedia with diverse categories- www.academickids.com
- www.encyclopedia.com/

Online dictionaries

- <http://www.yourdictionary.com/>
- <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>
- <http://www.thefreedictionary.com/>
- <http://www.merriam-webster.com/>

Online dictionaries, generally, give you the facilities of browsing dictionaries, thesaurus, encyclopedia, vocabulary building activities, quizzes, word of the day, most popular words of the day and the week, new words, slang, pronunciation, topic words that are related to particular topics such as art, travel, medical, and favorite words which lets you store your favorite word and evolve your own dictionary. These dictionaries may also allow you to create your own personal homepage by adding and removing, dragging and dropping, and “using or losing” existing content windows. In addition, you can add your own bookmarks, weather information, horoscope, and RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds from anywhere on the web. Two screen shots are given to illustrate the point.





Wikipedia

Wikipedia is a multilingual, web-based, free-content encyclopedia project supported by the Wikimedia Foundation and based on a model of openly editable content. The name “Wikipedia” is a portmanteau of the words wiki (a technology for creating collaborative websites, from the Hawaiian word wiki, meaning “quick”) and encyclopedia. Wikipedia’s articles provide links designed to guide the user to related pages with additional information.

Wikipedia is written collaboratively by largely anonymous volunteers who write without pay. Anyone with Internet access can write and make changes to Wikipedia articles, except in limited cases where editing is restricted to prevent disruption or vandalism. Users can contribute anonymously, under a pseudonym, or, if they choose to, with their real identity. The fundamental principles by which Wikipedia operates are the five pillars. The Wikipedia community has developed many policies and guidelines to improve the encyclopedia; however, it is not a formal requirement to be familiar with them before contributing.

Concordancers

A concordancer is a piece of software which can be installed on a computer and also accessed on the Internet. They are extremely important if one wants to check language currency and authenticity because it can search, access and analyze language from a large database called the corpus. They are particularly of use for examining the collocational relationships between words and for exploring precise information about how language is used by the native speakers.

Most teachers generally rely on how they use the language when they teach rather than on a reliable source. They do not have the knowledge about the existence of such resources and they prefer to go by their instinct which may or may not be correct. Having access to a corpora of ‘real use’ language can be of great help in validating our assumptions about how a particular word or a phrase can be used and in what environments.

To search a word in a concordancer, one has to enter a word or phrase in the query section to search for examples of how and where the word or phrase has

been used. **British National Corpus** is one such concordancer to search for British English usage. **Coca** is a corpus of contemporary American English and the concordancer can be used to search for everyday usage of American English in speech or writing. A query of 'taking tea' was entered in both the corpuses and the result has been given below.

<http://sara.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/lookup.html>

140 Even the wicked guardians prosper, and end up taking tea with the gentry.

2621 My beautiful villa — when it has been built I shall take my holidays there, no airport delays and no traffic jams, just taking tea with my little finger up and Dorothy Wordsworth on my lap.

2342 Taking tea at the Royal Show was a chatty affair for FWC members.

204 Lady after lady breathed heavier when Pen dashed in and out, and on the days when Wilson was a little late with the supper — which she now undertook to provide — on account of having been ed taking tea with Mrs Browning there was not a word of complaint but only a diffident enquiry as to how the venerable poetess had seemed.

384 The butler had left the dining room quietly, taking care to close the doors behind him, and proceeded calmly to the drawing room where his employer was taking tea with a number of visitors.

743 Chain-drunk with three heaped spoons of sugar in each cup and spent longer in the lavatory than anyone else, taking tea, cigarettes and the newspaper with him.

3234 And Preston trying to catch William's eye to share the wonder of it, for it was not the least of sensations to find Mrs Flaherty of Flaherty's Famous Furfair in William's nan's front room, taking tea.

849 hello, taking tea some time this afternoon.

327 Fifty people (the other thirty had disengaged themselves at the first mention of Dickens) were now taking tea in the gardens of the Albion Hotel under the shelter of parasols.

1098 of taking tea at Howards End.

3783 These included such classics as, bow stringing, shouting at the wolf, doing the Rapids City roll, French whispering, taking tea with the person and grooving on the inner plane.

3886 So it was that he escorted Betty there in 1986, taking tea in the Tiffin Room and enjoying a plate of fish and chips.

1	2011	ACAD	Commentary	A B C	resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute. His contributions to Commentary include " Taking Tea with the Taliban " (February 2010). # Over three
2	2010	SPOK	Fox_Beck	A B C	They're taking data points. They're taking my show. They're taking tea parties. They're taking all the nonsense said by the administration and putting it
3	2009	FIC	Bk:TreasureKeeper	A B C	tried to close my eyes and picture him in the cottage with me, taking tea with me every day for the rest of our lives. Our sons and daughters
4	2007	SPOK	ABC_Nightline	A B C	best reaction. " At Fort Riley, they even simulate Iraqi customs like taking tea and talking family for a long time before every business meeting. Afterwards,
5	2005	FIC	Bk:AmericanGirls	A B C	to the pubs in Scotland, clopping around Piccadilly Circus in high heels and taking tea every afternoon with attractive male journalists who flirt back and have
6	2005	MAG	NatGeog	A B C	wear pillbox hats and the operatic lobby buzzes with both new and old money taking tea . Recent visitors include Queen Elizabeth. Closer to Museum Island, t
7	2005	ACAD	AfricanHist	A B C	sites of dissent and disinterest. The inmate of the Mombasa detention camp found taking tea with his family was as representative of the colonial penal syste
8	2002	MAG	CountryLiving	A B C	radios aboard-passengers fall into a mellow rhythm, playing cribbage or writing postcards, taking tea in their cabins or sipping Champagne in the observato
9	2001	SPOK	CBS_Morning	A B C	: This is what's called a tea table. We're used to taking tea today, but that was something new in 18th-century America. Tea was expensive,
10	2000	NEWS	Chicago	A B C	banks of the River Cam, where students leisurely pole their flat-bottomed punts before taking tea and Chelsea buns at Fitzbillies cake shop. # Some 3 million
11	1998	FIC	Ms	A B C	room; I wanted to record the insights I had had while relaxing and taking tea . " Good afternoon, " Wallis said. His manner seemed to soften.
12	1995	FIC	Bk:FriendsLife	A B C	a resounding thwang next time she strolled into Albert Hall Mansions and found Eleanor taking tea with Duncan, the vet. He was leaning back in a tiny, uncon
13	1995	MAG	Horticulture	A B C	two-story affair from which you could gaze down and appreciate the overall pattern while taking tea or a light meal. No one knows who designed Colchester'
14	1994	FIC	etCetera	A B C	. SPOON: You wonder, perhaps, why I've come. While taking tea and Oreos, about a year ago, I caught a talk show hostess on
15	1994	FIC	Bk:Juv:MillersCrossing	A B C	what a garden it would be come spring! I could see Peggy Shippen taking tea there with this Captain Andre. A great sense of peace washed over me as
16	1993	FIC	SouthernRev	A B C	protect her prerogatives. Never once, in all the Sundays Mary had been taking tea at the house, had Agnes let Mary pour from the china teapot -- nor
17	1993	FIC	Bk:FarriersLane	A B C	And in the afternoons you would call upon acquaintances, or receive them, taking tea and cucumber sandwiches cut by your cook, and doing good works for
18	1991	FIC	Commentary	A B C	how to deal with a three-year-old. Tavy, Oscar, and Teddy were taking tea in the living room. With each day that passed, Oscar had become a
19	1991	FIC	Bk:Scarlett	A B C	to be doing something, making a difference, running things -- instead of taking tea from dainty cups with washedout, dainty old ladies. Scarlett heard barely
20	1991	NEWS	Atlanta	A B C	of place himself. His Oxfordian diction and faultless manners are better suited for taking tea with the British peerage - which he occasionally does - than for I
21	1990	FIC	Bk:NightsSummer	A B C	Name's Bob. " There was a message at Reception from Annabel: Taking tea with Mr. Quarle at the Ritz at four. Please join us if you can
22	1990	FIC	Bk:BethlehemRoad	A B C	or receiving calls, other than those of sympathy, so I shall be taking tea alone. If you care to join me, you are welcome. " The
23	1990	FIC	Bk:JtterbugPerfume	A B C	picked them and steeped a strong, green beverage in his bowl. After taking tea , they went to sleep again. This sequence was repeated numerous times, until

Email

Electronic mail, commonly known as **email** is an asynchronous form of computer-mediated communication. It may be considered as the most important of all Internet applications. It is a method of exchanging digital messages from one person to another. Simultaneously, it can be sent to one or more recipients. Email servers are used to accept, forward, deliver and store messages for the users. The users can access email whenever they have time for it. To access and use any Internet application, one needs to register, and have a username and password to browse that site. Having a valid email account becomes important as it is a required field while filling up the registration form.

Email may be used as a language teaching tool as it provides an extension to what one is able to do in a classroom to a venue outside the classroom. Email facilitates composing, sending and receiving real authentic communication in the target language both with other students in the classroom and across the world. Because of the storage capacity of e-mail, learners do not have to be in a synchronous classroom. The exchange of messages can take place at any time of day.

Users just have to log in to read, reply or compose new e-mail from anywhere they have access to the Internet. It is these spatial possibilities that help learners to spend as much time as they want to read and write in the target language in a real communicative context rather than learning only in the confines of classroom time and place. It helps in providing learners with additional input and output in the target language resulting in more interaction than was ever possible in the traditional language learning classroom. The activities that can be done using email are immense, provided teachers use their imagination. Real tasks woven around one to one email interaction, group email exchanges, and email with the class or between other classes or with independent learners outside the school whether in the same city/country or any other are possible as language learning activities. Some possible activities could be weekly email essay/ letter/ story writing assignments which are closely integrated into language teaching without losing sight of the content of the curriculum. However, in the context of large classes, sending individual feedback to learners would mean sending hundred odd emails which becomes difficult for teachers. To solve such problems collaborative or group projects would be more useful, as feedback would be limited to the group rather than to individual students.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Define a digital library.

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2) What are the uses of online dictionaries?

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3) What is a concordancer?

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4) What is an electronic mail?

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3.3 AUTHORIZING TOOLS

Authoring tools are also known as authorware. An authoring tool is a program that helps you write hypertext or multimedia applications. Authoring tools facilitate the users to create an application by bringing different media such as a text, a picture or a diagram, or an audio or a video file together. Materials from other electronic resources such as the Internet, and CD-ROM databases, can also easily be incorporated into an authoring package. Authoring generally helps in creating highly interactive applications in which the message is provided to the user and then the user responds by acting or commenting on the information. Authors who may not have much expertise are able to produce high quality smart and useful applications using multimedia authoring tools and incorporating audio and video content in their applications. Authoring does not require knowledge of programming. Content specialists need no programming experience to learn and use the authoring tools. Teachers with a basic level of computer literacy and some imagination can produce materials tailored to the specific needs of their students using authoring tools. Teacher-authored programs have an added

advantage because the teacher can control the content, keep the program focused and monitor the level of the exercises as well. Further these programmes have facility of immediate feedback to the learners.

Wida Authoring Suite <http://www.wida.co.uk/noframes/auth.htm>

Wida Authoring Suite is an easy-to-use authoring program specially written for language teachers. It enables them to create their own computer assisted language learning materials using multimedia features. The suite has the following facilities:

Gapmaster: It is a gap filling programme in which teachers delete some items (words/ phrases) from texts and the students are required to fill the gaps.

Matchmaster: It is an on-screen activity in which jumbled up matching pairs of words or sentences are given which learners have to match.

Storyboard: It is a CALL program that may be embedded with sound, pictures and videos and students are required to reconstruct the text and build up a story using the application objects.

Choicemaster: It is a multiple choice creating program in which students are provided with feedback on each distractor.

Testmaster: It is a test making ‘question and answer’ program that has flexibility of allowing for alternative correct answers and students can type in their answers.

Pinpoint: It is a program where learners are expected to match a short text up with its correct title. It helps learners to develop inferential reading skills.

Vocab: can help develop six language games and activities for vocabulary building from a list of keywords, definitions and example sentences entered by the teacher.

Hot Potatoes Web Authoring Tools <http://www.web.uvic.ca/hrd/halfbaked>

Hot Potatoes is a set of six simple authoring tools which is free for teachers who are using it for non-commercial purposes. It helps users to produce web-based exercises of six different types which are interactive in nature. It enables users to create multiple-choice, short-answer, jumbled-sentence, crossword, matching/ordering and gap-fill exercises and can be published on the World Wide Web. They are called

- JMatch
- JCross
- JQuiz
- JMix
- JCloze
- JMash

JMatch and JMix can also produce DHTML-based drag-and-drop exercises. Teachers need to enter their data – texts, questions, answers etc. – and the programs

create the web pages for them. The users can post these activities on their website. People taking those activities are given immediate feedback on the correctness of an answer. It is also programmed to give hints and clues.

3.4 RESEARCH TOOLS

Some very useful research tools sites are:

- <http://www.monkeysurvey.com>
- <http://www.advancedsurvey.com>
- <http://www.freesurveysonline.com/>

These research tools allow you to create web based online surveys or questionnaires that can be displayed to your learners / respondents. These surveys can be sent to the people willing to participate in your research by either e-mailing the survey link or entering it into your own website and the participants can be requested to follow the link to fill in the questionnaire. Generally, on these sites it is also possible to customize the survey pages. It is possible to change the colour scheme, put your logo on every page, insert hyperlinks, and much more! One can also save old surveys and create new ones. Generally, you can:

- create new surveys.
- edit unpublished surveys.
- delete old surveys.
- copy surveys (use them as the starting point for a new survey).
- publish surveys to the internet.
- allow or prevent users from taking your survey more than once.
- get the result of the survey that saves you the trouble of collating the responses yourself.
- make electronic forms for various purposes like gathering personal information or an opinion.

Your control panel lets you have a view of all your surveys, published status, the number of questions, and how many participants have completed each survey. You can customize it to send you an email, every time a participant takes the survey.

Check Your Progress 3

1) What is an authoring tool?

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2) Mention the uses of research tools.

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3.5 WEB 2.0 TOOLS

Web 2.0 is an umbrella term for developing social network applications which facilitates creativity, collaboration and sharing between users. With Web 2.0, it has now become easy for anyone to create, upload and share information than ever before. It has real time and live connection between the users. Now teachers have started exploring the potential of Web 2.0 applications such as blogs, media-sharing services and other social network software in education to empower students and create exciting new learning opportunities.

In the following sections, let us examine some Web 2.0 tools and their use in education.

Social Networking

Social networking has become rooted in many people’s lives across the world. Users learn to use these sites without much difficulty which implies their intrinsic interest in using these sites. This intrinsic motivation can be usefully exploited by the teachers. It may be observed that this motivation of learning to use these sites stems from a desire to socialize with friends and the facilities these sites provide for sharing and collaborating on various aspects of life. These virtual spaces are friendship arenas where users connect with each other willingly and are in an environment that is neither a one-sided teacher to student affair nor face threatening for learners. They get into the habit of expressing themselves voluntarily rather than being pushed by the teacher to express themselves. For these reasons social networking sites can be pretty useful for teachers as they enter a class of willing learners when they sign in a social networking site.

Facebook <http://www.facebook.com/>

Facebook is one of the most popular social networking sites and has more than 800 million active users. Users are required to register before using and must sign in to use any application in it. On joining FB, as it is popularly known, users need to create a personal profile and then connect to other users by adding them as friends and by accepting friend requests. They exchange messages, ideas, pictures, videos by inserting hyperlinks to various resources. They are also able to create special groups where they can have threaded comments and discussions. Additionally, users may also join common-interest user groups that are created by friends, school /college employers. For joining FB users have to declare themselves to be at least 13 years old. FB can be used in many ways as an

educational tool as it is an engaging platform that meets the needs of teachers/ students to a great extent. FB being a popular site, we find most of our students there. We may say that students are already there, the teacher has to reach them. The first thing that a user does after registering is to create a profile. Teachers can use these profiles as information to write a passage to describe a person both in speech and writing. Teachers can also use comments, pictures and videos on FB for teaching to write meaningful slogans, comments, stories, dialogues and for teaching them to understand and notice genuine, real-life spoken language.

Twitter <http://twitter.com/>

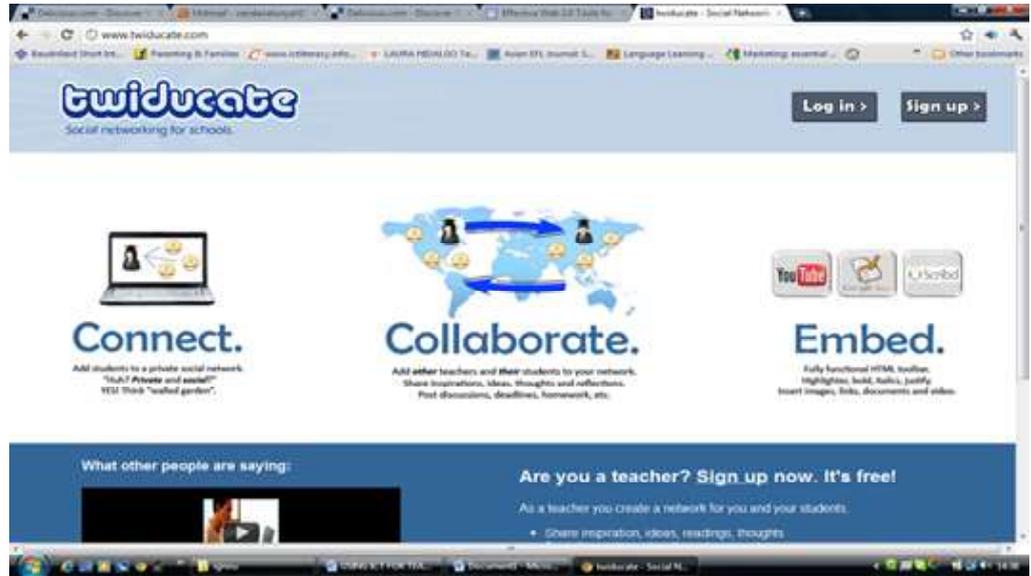
Twitter is a short message service of 280 characters or less for friends, family, and co-workers to communicate and stay connected. Twitter is an exchange of quick, frequent messages. It is like writing your status on Facebook. But twitter updates are more meaningful and contain more information which may be relevant to the followers. People write short updates which are called “tweets.” These tweets are posted to user profile and sent to the followers. Following someone means you are willing to receive their Twitter updates. Every time they post a new message, it appears in the follower’s Twitter home page and they get the updates in real time. Every time the user logs in, s/he can see latest updates. Signing up for Twitter is as simple as signing up for any other social networking site and one needs a functional email account that can be accessed from anywhere with an internet connection. Teachers may use twitter by asking learners to follow them and they can post what they think would be good for their learners. For example, teachers can post URLs of important websites which students can follow to do a certain task. Teachers can devise writing tasks for students to write something in less than 280 characters and other students may be asked to comment on it in less than 50 characters. It can teach students to say meaningful things in limited words and also to think critically about what the others are saying.

Some Other Web 2.0 Resources

Twiducate - <http://www.twiducate.com/>

Twiducate is a website developed by teachers for teachers and is a free resource for teachers to use. The objective of the site is to construct a platform for teachers and students where they can carry on with what they started to learn in the classroom. It aims at creating a safe venue which is more educationally focused in a social networking environment for learners, teachers and schools. Teachers can create an educational network for their students where they can:

- Share inspiration, ideas, readings, thoughts.
- Post discussions, deadlines, homework.
- Embed pictures, links and video.
- Keep parents informed.
- Collaborate on work by providing feedback.
- Connect with students outside the classroom in a secure manner.

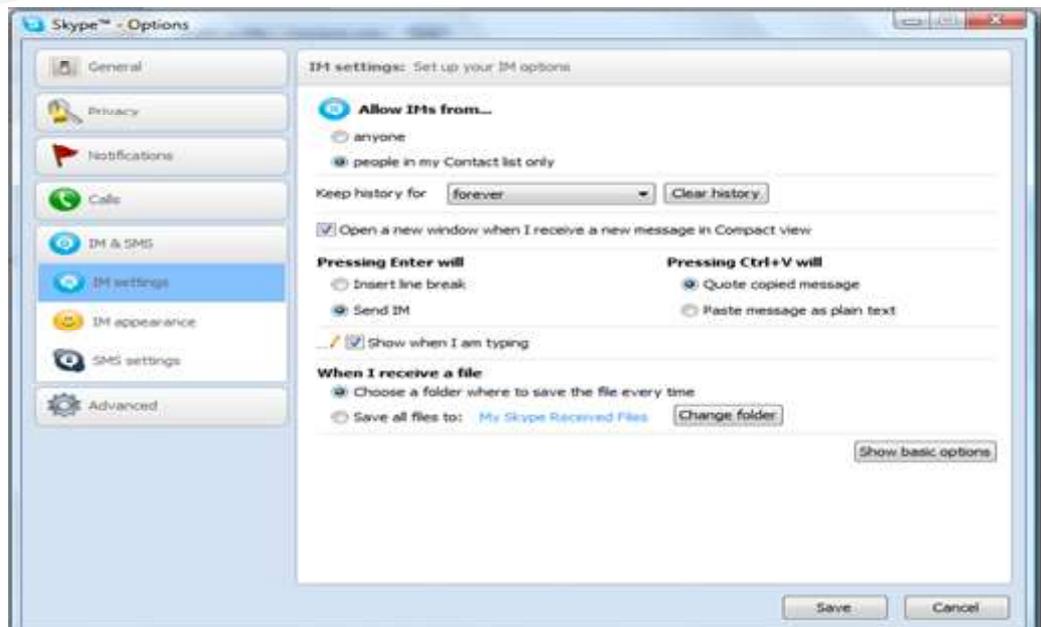


Skype <https://login.skype.com/account/login-form>

Skype is a digital communications tool that allows users to make voice calls to landline phones, cell phones on a small fee using a debit-based user account system and also make voice and video calls from one computer to the other over the Internet. It also has provision for instant messaging, file transfer and video calling, group video calling or video conferencing between more than two people and Screen sharing that matches the features of a whiteboard used in the classroom. It can be used with or without video and provides telephone access for people who may not have access to long-distance calling. Skype is a cheaper alternative to regular subscriber dialing for international calls.

Skype has also launched **Skype in the Classroom**, which is a dedicated teacher network. Using the Skype platform, teachers can:

- create profiles that describe their classes and teaching interests.
- search a directory of teachers from all over the world by student age range, language and subject.



- use the teacher search facility to find partner classes for a task on a selected topic and coordinate with them for synchronous activities using Skype calling, video calling, and video conferencing.
- use the “project” tab in the latest version of Skype when teaching using Skype. It allows users to post and search for projects that require collaboration.

Glogster

A glog is short for **graphical blog**. It is an interactive multimedia image. Glogster is based on Adobe flash elements. It allows users to create free interactive posters, or glogs. It provides an environment to design interactive glogs that look like posters, but readers can interact with the content. The user can embed text, images, audio (MP3), videos, special effects and other multimedia elements into their glogs and create multimedia online posters. These posters can be shared with other users on the Glogster site. They can be inserted in wikis or blogs, and shared via many social networks such as Facebook and Twitter. Glogs can also be exported and saved to computer-compatible formats. Glogster EDU is an educational community that allows teachers and learners to use glogs as material for classroom instruction just as other audio-visual aids and also share these graphic posters in a safe environment of a virtual classroom. Glogster EDU Premium is a collaborative online learning platform where in learners have the liberty to express themselves creatively.

YouTube

YouTube is a very popular video-sharing website on which users can upload, view and share videos. YouTube has brought a wide variety of user-generated video content/clips from films, television and music videos. YouTube also has amateur content where they upload short original videos to the site and encourage people to put themselves up on the tube and indulge in a lot of video blogging. Unregistered users are allowed to watch videos, and registered users are allowed to upload an unlimited number of videos. Teachers can use this site for learning as videos engage students successfully if it is relevant to their lives. Video clips can bring in different perspectives or force students to consider a new viewpoint, helping to spark a discussion. It not only helps improving communication skills but also raises their thinking skills. On this site teachers may also organize their playlist according to some theme so that when one video ends, the playlist plays the next video without offering ‘related videos’, thus creating a curated environment for the students. Another important aspect is its storing and sharing capacity as a video can be viewed by anyone and can be used for various purposes such as language teaching, observing culture and cultural differences and concept teaching/learning as is being done in many smart schools in India. For language teaching a lot of *sound off-vision on* or *sound on-vision off* activities can encourage students to notice things and to use language for filling in the gaps of information, writing or speaking missing dialogues, listening to tone and accent activities.

Wikis

A Wiki is an online collection of Web Pages that allow the users to easily create, edit, link, and even track changes to the selected pages on the web. It is a tool that allows a multiple number of users to add and edit pages of a website with no

knowledge of HTML. Wikis also have a versioning capability that makes it possible for members to retrieve earlier versions of the material. Wikis in the hands of educators are tools that promote collaborative learning. Wikis are a loosely structured set of pages, linked to each other in a variety of ways and also to Web resources. They have an open-editing system to allow people to edit any page which makes wikis a suitable collaborative tool with people editing the content from anywhere in the world. The most popularly known wiki is the Wikipedia which is open to editing from anywhere in the world. Teachers can design tasks such as collaborative story writing in which learners could be asked to make changes to the story posted by the teacher. A time limit of one hour/ day or week can be given to the project and after that the wiki page can be locked for editing. Teacher can make the task both synchronous and asynchronous and give time accordingly to learners to edit. Teachers can also ask learners to write a story of their own on the similar theme to the one posted by the teacher. A speaking cum reading comprehension activity may be designed by the teacher which encourages students to prepare a speech on the topic they have read to be made the following day. Such activities will help students to acquire life skills of speaking in public and putting forward their viewpoint with confidence.

Flickr

Flickr is a free, well-structured space on the web. It is regularly monitored and is available only to people who have completed 13 years. The members on this site get an online space where they can upload their photos and other images. These are shown chronologically with provision for titles, descriptions and tags such as wedding, travel, shopping, etc. Anyone who searches the site with these tags get to view the uploaded images. It is a wonderful resource for teachers as they can use the pictures to illustrate what words generally cannot. The 'travel' tag pictures, for example can be a wonderful resource for the geography teacher to show to the students the locales, describe weather and also the terrain of a place. It is equally good for language teachers who may use travel images to teach adjectives, description of objects, people and places. The teachers and students can also be the members and manage their own 'photostream' and share with others for their comments. Teachers can also set some tasks for learners using the shared images.

SlideShare

SlideShare is an interactive Web 2.0 slide hosting service. Users can share their documents or presentations by uploading them either for themselves only or publicly in the PowerPoint, PDF, Keynote or OpenOffice file formats. These presentations can then be viewed on the SlideShare site itself, or be downloaded to laptops, tablets, palmtops etc. or can be embedded on other sites. SlideShare is a good way to share presentations, documents and professional videos. Teachers can design tasks where in learners find some relevant slides and embed them in their blogs, wikis, WebQuests, etc. Other such document sharing sites are Scribd.com, Issuu and Docstoc some of which can also be opened through Facebook.

Blogs

Blogs are again an important teachers' resource available on the web. They offer a range of interactive and collaborative possibilities to members. In the hands of an innovative teacher, blogs have benefit for both teachers and the students.

Blogging may involve users to unique kind of learning through what Richardson (2006) describes as ‘read-write-think-and-link’ activities. Teachers can involve their students in some kind of ‘collective writing’ in which learners read, add, comment and insert related hyperlinks to their creation and users support the task to construct the meaning together. Various collaborative class projects/tasks that involve pre-teaching, while teaching and post teaching, can be designed by the teacher in an individual blogging, group blogging or even class blogging activities. In pre teaching, learners can write their comments of what they think of the topic they are going to read; while-teaching may involve blogging on various topics i.e. by writing their comments, searching, evaluating related material (text as well as pictures) on the net and either embedding it in the blog or inserting the hyperlinks; and post teaching may involve a field trip to a related location and clicking pictures, studying related material and putting it on the blog. Teachers may also send the blog link to the parents of learners for them to see or even participate by writing their own comments.

Podcasts

The term podcast implies the ability to deliver specific content like other broadcast media. Podcasting is a technology that teachers can use for students to access the required course materials they can freely use at any time and place. To use a podcast, they do not need to be connected to a computer or the Internet all the time. Once the podcast is downloaded to the ipod or the mp3 player, it becomes any sound or video file that is stored and can be listened to at the convenience of the user. Through podcasting, the course content can easily be delivered in audio, video, and/or graphic formats. Podcasting has its own significant differences and advantages.

The advantages include convenience of time and place once the podcast is downloaded. Secondly, users can subscribe to a particular category of podcasts to get a regular and automatic download of new episodes. Teachers also have the facility to limit the podcasts to a particular kind of audience only i.e. only to students in their course. They can produce their own podcasts according to their requirement, level and culture. Once satisfied with the content’s appropriacy and usefulness, they can publish it. For teaching, a podcast could be anything in audio or video files. For teaching primary students, teachers can record birds and animal sounds for students to listen to and recognize. For older students, it can be short lessons embedded with audio and visuals, e.g., glossaries with sound and images, slides with voice-over explanations, audio or video case studies containing interview with experts or other speakers, multimedia presentations created by students.

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) What is Web 2.0?

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- 2) What are the uses of **Skype in the classroom** for teachers?

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- 3) What is a Wiki? How is it useful to teachers?

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3.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have studied a variety of web-based resources that can be used in the classroom for teaching. In the hands of a tech savvy teacher these resources prove to be very useful but it is also to be kept in mind that technology may also fail due to various factors. Therefore, a teacher should always have a backup plan up his/her sleeve and it is not advisable to depend totally on technology. Further, technology should be treated more as a resource, the teacher being more important and how technology is tackled will depend on teachers. However, this note of caution should not discourage us from using technology in the class as children are very motivated when it comes to learning from web resources as they are using the web in every field in the current scenario. The web resources mentioned in this unit are very useful but the teacher should always remember that in such a scenario, she needs to work harder outside the class, prepare before she enters the class as it is important for her to be well acquainted with the tools to be used in the class. The authoring tools such as WIDA and Hot Potatoes to be used to create digital content will also require time from the teachers to create activities. However, once these are created, they might be handy for a long time to come.

3.7 HINTS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Internet is a global collection of interconnected networks of computers. The internet is made up of millions of computers linked together around the world in such a way that information can be sent from any computer to others 24 hours a day. The internet is often described as “*a network of networks*” because all the smaller networks of organizations are linked together into the one giant network called the internet.

- 2) You'll be able to keep in touch, chat, and send messages, electronic files to colleagues and friends using Electronic Mail (Email), Internet telephony, Internet Relay Chat (IRC), File Transfer and Video conferencing.

You can also tap into thousands of databases, libraries, and newsgroups around the world to gather information on any topics of interest for work or recreation. The information can be in the form of text, pictures or even video material.

You can enroll for a course and attend as per your convenience and pace, offered through online (eLearning).

You can do Research.

You can meet peer groups with similar interests and share the ideas (interactive collaboration).

You can stay up-to-date with news, sports, weather and any other current affairs around the world with information updated daily, hourly or instantly.

You can also locate and download computer software and programs that are available in cyberspace.

You can listen to music, do online shopping and even watch movies.

There are also a growing number of digital libraries, Interactive multimedia games and educational tools.

- 3) There are millions of sites on the **World Wide Web** (www) which are called **websites**. For each query that we put on the search engines, hundreds of website links are given.
- 4) A search engine is a web server that searches for information on the Internet. There are a number of search engines available to Web surfers. Some examples are:

Sweet Search

Google

Yahoo

Eureka

Web Crawler

Ask

Bing

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) The term "digital libraries" covers the creation and distribution of all types of information over networks, ranging from converted historical materials to kinds of information that have no analogues in the physical world.
- 2) Online dictionaries, generally, give you the facilities of browsing dictionaries, thesaurus, encyclopedia, vocabulary building activities, quizzes, word of the day, most popular words of the day and the week, new

words, slang, pronunciation, topic words that are related to particular topics such as art, travel, medical, and favorite words which lets you store your favorite word and evolve your own dictionary. These dictionaries may also allow you to create your own personal homepage by adding and removing, dragging and dropping, and “using or losing” existing content windows. In addition, you can add your own bookmarks, weather information, horoscope, and RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds from anywhere on the web.

- 3) A concordancer is a piece of software which can be installed on a computer and also accessed on the Internet. They are extremely important if one wants to check language currency and authenticity because it can search, access and analyze language from a large database called the corpus. They are particularly of use for examining the collocational relationships between words and for exploring precise information about how language is used by the native speakers.
- 4) **Electronic mail**, commonly known as **email** is an asynchronous form of computer-mediated communication. It may be considered as the most important of all Internet applications. It is a method of exchanging digital messages from one person to another. Simultaneously, it can be sent to one or more recipients. Email servers are used to accept, forward, deliver and store messages for the users. The users can access email whenever they want though they should have internet access to receive new emails.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Authoring tools are also known as authorware. An authoring tool is a program that helps you write hypertext or multimedia applications. Authoring tools facilitate the users to create an application by bringing different media such as a text, a picture or a diagram, or an audio or a video file together. Materials from other electronic resources such as the Internet, and CD-ROM databases, can also easily be incorporated into an authoring package.
- 2) Research tools allow you to create web based online surveys or questionnaires that can be displayed to your learners / respondents. These surveys can be sent to the people willing to participate in your research by either e-mailing the survey link or entering it into your own web site and the participants can be requested to follow the link to fill in the questionnaire.

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) Web 2.0 is an umbrella term for developing social network applications which facilitates creativity, collaboration and sharing between users. With Web 2.0, it has now become easy for anyone to create, upload and share information than ever before. It has real time and live connection between the users.
- 2) Teachers can:

create profiles that describe their classes and teaching interests.

search a directory of teachers from all over the world by student age range, language and subject.

use the teacher search facility to find partner classes for a task on a selected topic and coordinate with them for synchronous activities using Skype calling, video calling, and video conferencing.

use the “project” tab in the latest version of Skype when teaching using Skype. It allows users to post and search for projects that require collaboration.

- 3) A Wiki is an online collection of WebPages that allow the users to easily create, edit, link, and even track changes to the selected pages on the web. It is a tool that allows a multiple number of users to add and edit pages of a website with no knowledge of HTML. Teachers can design tasks such as collaborative story writing in which learners could be asked to make changes to the story posted by the teacher. A time limit of one hour/ day or week can be given to the project and after that the wiki page can be locked for editing. Teacher can make the task both synchronous and asynchronous and give time accordingly to learners to edit. Teachers can also ask learners to write a story of their own on the similar theme to the one posted by the teacher.

3.8 SUGGESTED READINGS AND REFERENCES

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Dudney, Gavin, Hockly Nicky, Pegrum, Mark. *Digital Literacies (Research and Resources in Language Teaching)* London: Routledge, 2013.

Sharma, Pete and Barrett, Barney. *Blended Learning: Using Technology in and Beyond the Language Classroom*. Oxford: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 2007

Subrahmanyam, V.V. and Swathi, K. *Role of Web 2.0 in the Future of Education*. Paper presented in XVI IDEA Annual Conference 2011, Kakatiya University.

Some Useful Language Tools and Websites

Learn English Online – Within this free English learning resource, beginners will find 11 useful language units. Each unit features five lessons complete with text, picture examples, practice assignments, and tests.

VerbaLearn – VerbaLearn is a free online vocabulary studying site that works perfectly for learning English vocabulary words and phrases. Site visitors can

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learn and study words through audio, video, and printable flashcards and games.

MES English – Although MES English is designed mostly for teachers, this site features a lot of good resources that home learners may find helpful. Resources include flashcards, worksheets, videos, games, and more.

Word2Word – Word2Word is a huge database of resources that home learners can use to learn the English language. The site contains courses, translations, chat sites, language communities, forums, and much more—all for free.

English as a Second Language – English as a Second Language offers listening, speaking, writing, grammar, and vocabulary practice for English learners of all levels.

Activities for ESL Students – This site provides English learners with quizzes, tests, and puzzles for learning and studying beginner to intermediate grammar and vocabulary. Other resources that can be found on this site include podcasts, videos, and games.

ESL Monkeys – The ESL Monkeys site provides a list of free online resources and tools that can be used on the web for learning the English language. Some of the most useful resources include lessons, books, flashcards, quizzes, videos, and forums.

www.sweetsearch.com

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<http://blog.findingdulcinea.com/2012/03/teaching-web-research-skills.html>

<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/blogs/gavin-dudenev/gavin-dudenev-biography>

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<http://sara.natcorp.ox.ac.uk/lookup.html>

<http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/>

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<http://www.wida.co.uk/noframes/auth.htm>

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<http://www.onestopenglish.com/>

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<http://www.kn.att.com/wired/fil/pages/listteacherde1.html>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:About>

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UNIT 4 BASICS OF ASSESSMENT

Structure

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Role of Language Tests
- 4.3 Key Terms: Tests, Assessments, Measurements, Evaluation
- 4.4 Test Types and Purposes
 - 4.4.1 *Aptitude, Achievement, Diagnostic, Proficiency, Placement tests*
 - 4.4.2 *Summative Assessment & Formative Assessment*
 - 4.4.3 *Standardized Tests & Classroom Based Tests*
- 4.5 Tests for ESL Classroom Use
- 4.6 Unit Based Questions
- 4.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.8 Hints to Check Your Progress
- 4.9 Suggested Readings

4.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit you will

- learn about the key terms in language testing and assessment;
- compare and contrast test types and their purposes;
- understand the role of language tests and assessments in the English classroom;
- decide which tests can be used for classroom purposes.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

We come across numerous occasions in life when we judge things that we see, hear, touch or people that we interact with. Whenever we meet a stranger, we form some impression about that person—it could be good, bad, interesting, strange, attractive and a host of other attributes. Likewise, when we taste new food or come across a new gadget in the market, we form an opinion about that new item. Every time we form an opinion or judge a thing by its properties or qualities, how do we do so? We are inherently guided by ‘how good’ we think the qualities of an item or a person is.

In the same manner a language teacher in class is confronted with this huge task of assessing her learners. She can express opinions about each learner based on ‘how good’ she thinks they are. This is an informal judgment. But she also needs to report systematically about the learners, based on which a further significant decision like to promote learners to the next higher level is taken. This is formal assessment. Hence just as we assess everything around our environment and then take decisions based on such judgment, teachers also assess learners on an everyday basis and take decisions based on their judgments. This is an inherent part of the teaching-learning cycle.

However, we as teachers need to be extra careful about such judgments since they involve learners and their future prospects. The judgments need to be formalized and done in a systematic manner. In this unit you will learn how to design and conduct language assessments in a systematic, ethical and humane manner and use the findings from such assessments in ways that are meaningful for ESL learners. You may note that the principles and approaches of language assessment discussed here not only apply to English as a second language(ESL) but any language that is formally taught in schools or in higher academia.

4.2 ROLE OF LANGUAGE TESTS

In our most common experience, a test is seen as an event that occurs mostly at the end of a course and is conducted to assess what has been learnt. It is also quite common to see tests as a stick that rules or disciplines learners. Language tests mostly look like a product that has a series of questions or items to which learners are expected to provide correct answers. Quite often the answers are dictated to them prior to the exams. This is quite a common scenario in the Indian ESL classrooms. But if we consider the role of language teachers and what they do in class, it would make us realize that they do much more of testing than what is seen as formal tests that take the form of a question paper and are conducted as quarterly, half-yearly and annual tests.

In class a teacher not only delivers the lesson that she is supposed to, she also observes the learners and the manner in which her lesson is received. If she figures out that some of the learners are not able to follow her, then she judiciously changes her strategies or provides further help on the topic. While engaging her learners in language tasks if she goes around and finds a learner who has difficulty in following instruction or is not able to do a certain task, she finds ways to help that learner. To check for understanding, the teacher also asks questions and often provides cue statements, or uses questions to help learners communicate orally in class. Thus, her classroom activities are intertwined with instruction, teaching, observing, providing feedback or solutions or cues to help learners get on with class work as well as fine-tune their knowledge of the target language. Even after the class gets over, a discerning teacher prepares for her next set of activities based on the informal assessment she has done of her learners' levels of achievements in the previous classes. And all of this goes on a daily basis, unobserved and unrecorded. Most of the times the teacher is also not aware that she is teaching and testing simultaneously because one is related to the other so closely that testing cannot happen as an isolated activity in the classroom space.

Hence the ongoing presence of instruction and assessment can be represented as in Figure 1.1 below:

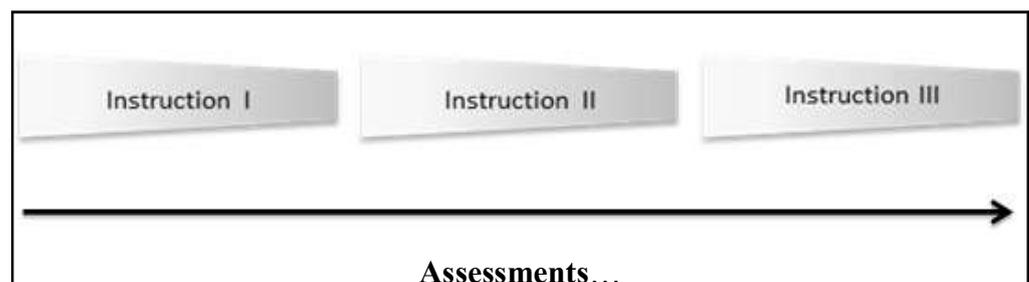


Figure 1.1: Links between instruction and assessment in ESL classroom

In this course we aim to sensitize teachers of their dual role as language teachers and assessors and ways in which they can systematically perform the role of an assessor both in formal and informal manner. It is only the language teacher who can get evidence of gradual developmental changes in learners and help them move to their next higher level of learning by providing them that bit of extra help and feedback, which is required for a learner at that moment of learning. This is well explicated in the Vygotskian theory of zone of proximal development, where a child can move from their zone of current development to proximal development with help or scaffolding from an adult or the language teacher.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Can you think of any instance of classroom assessment that you have done (or you can do) while teaching a lesson/concept in the English classroom? List your ideas. If you are not teaching, think of any assessment that your teacher might have done.

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4.3 KEY TERMS: TESTS, ASSESSMENTS, MEASUREMENTS, EVALUATION

Now let us look at the three key terms that are integral to our understanding of language tests. To use the terms assessments and tests interchangeably is quite common. But there are finer distinctions between the terms and as language teachers or teacher aspirants you should be aware of those differences.

TESTS

The concept of test implies a designed procedure with which to measure learners' abilities or outcomes of learning at different points of time in the curriculum. The learners are aware that they are being tested and prepare themselves to give their best performance. So, tests are designed to get formal estimates of learning. Here learning is viewed as a product and the test performance is a timed performance.

As tests are instruments with which we measure learners' language capabilities, they are designed based on a pre-taught syllabus or a notion of learners' abilities at the point of testing them. Quite often tests have sets of items to measure language capabilities in the four skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing and the two elements - grammar and vocabulary. Some examples of item types are multiple-choice questions (MCQs), fill in the blanks, short answer and long answer questions and essay –type questions.

Tests are typically designed to capture language performances in the target language by getting instances of knowledge of the target language by choosing the correct answer. This is test of competence or inherent knowledge of the

language. But tests can also measure production or language use in real time. Both language competence and performance then are captured through language tests and may be taken together as a measure of learners' ability in the target language at one point of time. But the measurement is static and provides no opportunity to learners to show growth in language use over a period of time.

ASSESSMENTS

Assessments, in contrast, are methods of estimating learner performances in a variety of ways. So, a learner responding to a teacher's questions in class or participating in pair/ group work or solving a test or a quiz that is timed are all examples of assessment. Assessment is an umbrella term that includes a variety of measurements and estimates of learner performances. Language tests are only one example of assessments. Again, assessments can be done in a formal manner when learners know that their performance is being assessed and will be awarded with a grade or score at the end of the assessment. Alternatively, assessments can also be done in an informal manner when teachers observe learners working in pairs to solve a language activity. Assessments can be done directly – like assess reading through a set of comprehension questions; assessments can also be done indirectly – like assess reading through writing a summary. In the next section when we discuss types of tests and assessments, we will discuss a few more examples of assessments.

MEASUREMENTS

As both tests and assessments are ways to obtain estimates of learners' abilities through performances, we need to consider how to systematically form such estimates. A formal way to make estimates is to give weight to the performances by using raw scores and letter grades or scales. These are different units of measurement. Let us look at each of these terms briefly:

Raw scores: Score is a numerical index that indicates a learner's overall performance on a measure that can be based on the number of objective test items being correct. Learners can obtain scores from a test. When scores are not yet transformed statistically, it is called raw score. Raw scores can be used for further statistical analysis like calculate the mean score of performance of a group.

Scales: When measurements of learner performances are put on a scale, they are no longer discrete points of measurement. The performances become linked with one score in relation to the others. The scores may be represented as different points on a scale or a continuum. There are four types of scales that are used in standard forms of measurements.

Table 1.1: Types and purposes of measurements

Scales	Description
Nominal	When mutually exclusive properties are assigned a numerical value, then it is nominal scale. This scale represents the frequency of occurrence of a property rather than 'how much' of that property is present. For example, frequency counts of learners' L1 backgrounds or levels of language abilities (beginner, intermediate)

Ordinal	When individuals are presented on the basis of their performance set against each other. This is not a discrete scale like the nominal but interconnected. For instance, rank order learners on a language test of hundred marks. The rank order indicates ‘how much’ of a property (or language ability) one learner has in relation to others in a group.
Interval	An index of performance like a test score or someone’s height when presented on a scale that is equally divided into intervals, when intervals are drawn at equal differences of scores or abilities.
Ratio	It is a scale that has equal intervals and starts at zero. This scale can be used to show group performance but not individual performance as language ability is typically constructed as a notion of behavior and not an absolute measure as represented through a numerical value.

In language testing we most often use ordinal and interval scales to measure learner performance.

Proficiency scale: In language assessments it is not always the case that the performance has to be assigned a numerical value such that it becomes a raw score. The performance can also be reported in a descriptive manner to capture one’s level of language proficiency, which is seen as a dynamic language behavior and not an absolute trait. The description can be systematically represented as bands or scales or levels. Each scale represents a specific quality of that behavior and a test is designed and is scaled up or down to match with levels of learner abilities at the point of testing. Language ability may range from knowledge of a few words to being highly proficient and fluent in the language.

For choosing an appropriate unit of measurement (or a scale), we can either score or grade language performances. Scoring can be item-wise: for MCQ items we use the binary form of scoring with one for correct answer and zero for incorrect answer; for short or long answers we can assign scores and award learners total scores based on the number of items they answer correctly. Alternatively, we can place them on proficiency scales or bands depending on which description their performance matches.

EVALUATION

While assessment focuses on a systematic method of collecting data about learners’ performances using a variety of tools of measurement and at different points of time, evaluation is the ‘decision’ taken based on such information. So, evaluation is the interpretation of information so that decisions can be taken about learners’ promotion to a higher grade or the effectiveness of a language programme itself. So, to evaluate is to ‘value’ the results and convey the decision to learners and different stakeholders like sponsors, parents, teachers, and assessment designers. Hence, evaluation has a broader spectrum in that it includes the method to gather information, ascertain value to the information obtained and take decisions based on that information. Thus, it has far-reaching impact rather than have immediate goals. The impact could be on – (a) shaping learners’ career, (b) making changes to improve the quality of teaching and assessment

procedures and (c) fulfilling broader goals like bring in teaching and curricular changes. So, in a language education programme for evaluation to take place, there is a need to design and use assessments, then measure performances on scales and finally take decisions based on how good or bad the performances have been.

As a snapshot we can represent the relationship between teaching, tests, assessments and evaluation in Figure 1.2 (as taken from Brown & Abeywickrama 2010: pp. 6)

Evaluation

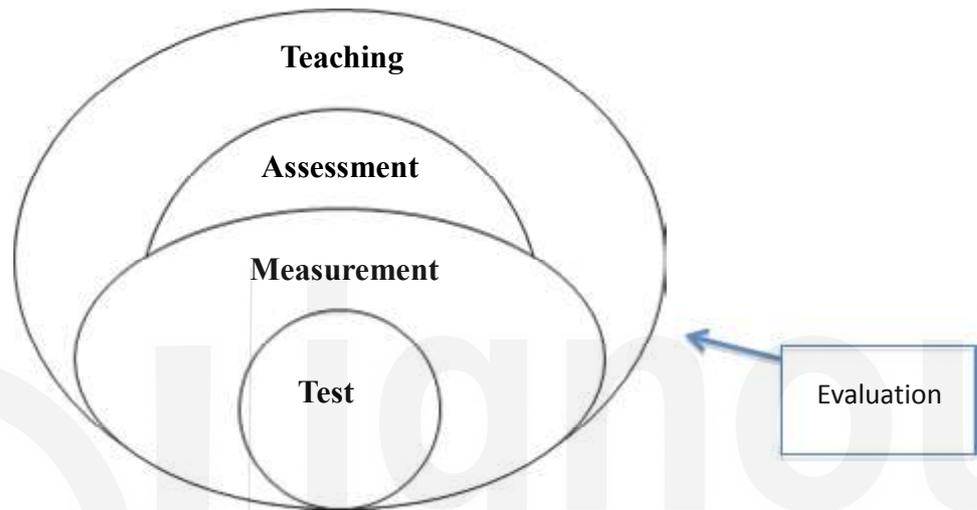


Figure 1.2: *Tests, Assessments and Evaluation*

Check Your Progress 2

An English teacher of grade VIII decides to give a surprise test to find out the learners' knowledge of subject-verb-agreement in present tense with help of a fill in the blanks exercise (e.g., The cat _____ the mouse (chase). The cat and the dog _____ with the ball. (play)).

Based on the performances, she decides to re-teach the concept to the learners who have problems by comparing the rule as it occurs in Hindi, the learners' mother tongue.

Identify aspects of testing, assessment, measurement, evaluation and teaching from this description. You can put your ideas down as a list.

4.4 TEST TYPES AND PURPOSES

Now let us consider the main sub-types of tests and assessments and the purposes they serve. Most tests and assessments can be used to serve multiple purposes.

4.4.1 *Aptitude, Achievement, Diagnostic, Proficiency, Placement Tests*

Tests that are administered a priori to learning a foreign language to understand if a learner has the ability to learn the language are **aptitude** tests. Typically, aptitude tests include items on ability to distinguish between pronunciation of

different phoneme strings and spelling of words with recognition of valid letter strings in the target language. An example of this type of test is MLAT, which used to be conducted several decades ago. But these types of tests have isolated items and scores and are no longer popular because of their structural nature. It is considered no longer fair to predict success or failure of learning a language based on just one performance that rewards an absolute score.

Tests and assessments that are administered to get estimates of learners of what has been learned of the course objectives and syllabus are **achievement** tests. These assessments are conducted at separate points of time – during the course and at the end of the course. Hence, achievement tests are tied to specific syllabus and helps teachers get estimates of learning or growth periodically and have the potential to provide feedback to the learners.

Tests that are conducted to get information about the learning process and aspects that are not yet learned are **diagnostic** tests. These tests are mostly conducted for research purposes to get evidences of theories of language learning. To identify problems in learning some specific aspects of the syllabus, teachers can also conduct these tests. Researchers and teachers can use information obtained from diagnostic tests to bring about changes in syllabus, teaching and assessment methods. Therefore, this test type has a lot of intrinsic pedagogic value.

Tests that are specifically designed to get estimates of learners' levels of language ability are **proficiency** tests. Such tests are not tied to any specific textbook-based syllabus unlike achievement tests but are designed to get samples of use of the target language at different levels of abilities. Proficiency is a construct that can be defined in several ways: researchers may conceptualize proficiency as a whole and design tests like dictation as a holistic measure of proficiency. But proficiency can also be defined as several components like the four skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing, and two elements – grammar and vocabulary and tests are designed to assess knowledge on each sub-component.

Because proficiency tests need to be carefully examined for levels, it is advisable that teachers do not design such tests if it has to be used for a larger population. Rather they can take a commercially standardized proficiency test and use it. Examples of proficiency tests are IELTS, TOEFL, and Cambridge tests.

At times proficiency tests can be used at the beginning of a course to place learners at differing levels of ability. It can help teachers provide course content matched with the current levels of learners' knowledge of the target language. Such tests are **placement** tests. Additionally, placement tests can also serve a diagnostic purpose if the performances of the learners are analyzed and it is found which areas are strong and which ones are weak and accordingly the course content is altered.

4.4.2 Summative Assessment & Formative Assessment

In order to assess knowledge of learners, assessments are conducted from time to time. The ones which are used to get an estimate of overall learning at the end of the course are **summative** assessment. These give a total estimate of learning achieved by learners. When tests and assessments are conducted to get estimates of learning acquired at different points of the course are **formative** assessments. The formative assessments help teachers to plan for teaching, while results from summative assessment help in taking decisions like promotion to a higher grade.

There is a misconception that summative assessments are mostly tests that are scored to get estimates of learners' overall learning in a course or an academic year while formative assessments may take other forms such as assignments, observations and so on and are mostly graded. However, we need to understand that apart from major decisions like school leaving certification exams, both summative and formative assessments can be tests, quizzes, assignments and each sub-type can serve the purpose of estimating overall achievement as required in summative assessments or can give opportunities to learn by giving notions of achievements during a course.

Tests and assessments can be measured using scores when values are assigned to each item and section of a test paper. When scored in this manner, tests become **formal** modes of assessment. But assessments can also be done when a teacher observes learner improvement through instances of classroom interaction and participation and gather estimates of learner growth. Such estimates are **informal** modes of assessments.

Formative assessments can have different sub-types: they can be objective, which can be scored like **short quizzes** and **tests**. They can also be open-ended and long answer type like **assignments** or **essay type responses**, **projects**, **reports**, **classroom observations**, **checklists**, **diaries**, **portfolios** and **self-assessment** notes. The latter are also called **alternative** assessments. The point to be noted is that formative assessments provide a range of learning opportunities to learners and they give teachers different ways to capture learner growth.

4.4.3 *Standardized Tests & Classroom Based Tests*

When a test measures a learner's ability according to a standard obtained as the middle score (mean/median/mode) by a population who has taken the test previously, it is a **standardized** test. This mode of measuring learners' capabilities against a fixed norm is often called **norm-referenced** testing. Examples of standardized tests are IELTS and TOEFL. Both the tests are used for taking up a job or higher academics: the former is used in the United Kingdom, and the latter in the United States and Canada.

This test follows a systematic measurement pattern. It also serves the purpose of taking a decision whether a candidate should get entry into the foreign country. But this test does not give any useful information to the candidate about the quality of their performance or feedback to improve. Hence, this test type does not have much value for the classroom teacher and need not be used in the classroom context.

In contrast some tests measure learner capabilities according to the achievement of course objectives, differing levels of performances and are linked to specific grades or descriptions of 'can-do' abilities. Such tests are called **criterion-referenced** tests. The measurements are carefully designed by teachers or curriculum designers according to descriptions of differing levels and may differ from one teacher to another. But such measurements allow teachers to give feedback to learners according to the degree of course objectives achieved and are useful to promote learning. Hence, these may be used for classroom-based assessments. Although the measurement is done to promote learning, the design of criterion has to be carefully done so that teacher bias in the design does not negatively impact the learners. Criterion-referenced testing can also be used to take decisions for promotion and certification.

In the ESL(English as a second language) classroom context a variety of tests can be used as **classroom based tests**, provided they can serve to test achievement and also be useful for learners to gain valuable feedback about their language behavior. The tests can be pencil and paper tests as well as other forms of assessments like assignments, classroom observations and so on that can give learners feedback and learning opportunities.

4.5 TESTS FOR ESL CLASSROOM USE

After having considered the test types and purposes of a variety of language tests and assessments, let us now look at which ones can be used for the ESL classroom and for what purposes.

Table 1.2: Test types and purposes for ESL classroom

Test types	Purposes	Time of administration
Proficiency tests	To identify current levels of proficiency and group homogeneity;For placement purposes: Divide a large heterogeneous group into smaller homogenous groups and prepare syllabus and teaching materials according to the need of every groupFor diagnostic purposes (e.g., teacher-as-researcher can find out learning difficulties in acquiring passivization and relativization)	Before the beginning of a course; At the end of a course
Formative assessments	To test achievement on specific modules/ units of a course taught.To give feedback on learning and problems encountered by the learners.For diagnostic purposes: the teacher can obtain information about learning difficulty and bring in changes in her teaching or method of assessment.	At different points during the course
Summative tests	To test achievement on the overall course.For certification and promotion of learners to the next higher grade.For course evaluation based on the patterns of group performance.	At the end of a course/academic year

4.6 UNIT BASED QUESTIONS

In this unit we have looked at several tests and assessments that are used for a variety of purposes. You have noticed from your reading of sections 1.4 and 1.5 that one test type can have several purposes.

- 1) Now read the following descriptions of tests. For each item write the following:

- a) test type
 - b) test purpose(s)
 - c) area tested (if it is a language test)
 - d) sub-area(s) tested
- P) Vasanti teaches English in grade six in an English medium school in Noida. She has conducted three English tests in one year. This is part of the school curriculum. From the results of tests one and two she had made some changes in the way she taught grammar, especially tense with use of modals to express future time (e.g., *Next week I might/could/should visit my parents.*).
- Q) A school in Kolkata sends a hundred students enrolled in grades IX and X to participate in the Science Olympiad English test. The students will be tested on the four skills and grammar and vocabulary.
- R) Utsa wants to learn swimming. So, she has to get into a pool of water four feet deep and remain in the water for five minutes and then try floating holding a side rod. If she can do this then her instructor will allow her to join swimming classes.
- S) Rana wants to go to Spain for studying Spanish history and architecture. So he has to clear the Test of Spanish as a Foreign Language and score a minimum of A band (or 70%) in the test to apply for the course.
- T) An ELT researcher gives a dictation task based on two paragraphs on ‘the benefits of good food habits’ to a group of 30 students in grade VI. She wants to examine spelling errors and errors in grammar from the scripts.
- U) One day a Geography teacher walks into a class of grade VIII learners in a school in Baroda and gives them a quiz on the unit she taught in the last week. She gives the quiz as a surprise and tells the learners that they have to score 60% and above. The teacher wants to look at learner performance and then decide if some of the concepts need to be taught again.
- 2) What measurements can the following tests use? Explain why.
- a) End-term tests in schools
 - b) Mid-term assignment to improve paragraph writing
 - c) Teacher observations of learner performance in class
 - d) Job-interview performance
 - e) Listening test section of a large-scale standardized test (e.g., IELTS)
- 3) Imagine that as an English teacher you want to find out information about the abilities of your learners to – (i) use subordinating clauses and (ii) coherence in writing. What kind of tests can you give them and at what points to get such information? Which test will also help you modify your teaching and give them feedback?

4.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have provided definitions of key terms in language testing and looked at the differences in the three related concepts –*tests*, *assessments* and *evaluation*. We have explained the different types of language tests and assessments, the purposes they are used for and the manner in which performance of learners are evaluated in each test type. It is to be noted that not every test need have one single purpose but can at times be used for several purposes. Lastly, we have considered the role of language tests for ESL classroom and the types of tests language teachers can use for several purposes such as:

- to assess whether what has been taught is learnt;
- to identify the levels of learning;
- to identify problems that learners might have faced in learning certain concepts and make changes in her teaching methodology; and
- to give feedback to learners regarding the problems they have faced and ways to overcome the problems.

4.8 HINTS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

Instances of classroom assessment that can be done while teaching a lesson/ concept in the English classroom:

- a) conduct a short quiz with a few fill-in-the-blanks items
- b) give an assignment (e.g., write a paragraph)
- c) do a question answer round with the learners orally as a game

Check Your Progress 2

In the example cited, the following are the instances of the five concepts dealt with in section 1.3

Testing: The surprise test is an example of a test.

Assessment: It can be used for assessment purposes as the teacher can modify her teaching based on the estimate she gets of learner performances.

Measurement: The test can have items with correct/incorrect responses scored on an ordinal scale.

Evaluation: The decision the teacher takes and uses L1 (first language) knowledge to compare L1-L2 similarities is an example of evaluation.

Teaching: To compare the present tense use rules in L1 to teach the concept in L2 (second language) is the teaching component in this example.

****Note that for these two answers from sections 1.2 and 1.3 there is no one right answer. Based on your understanding and group discussion you can come up with similar answers that justify your understanding of the concepts studied in this unit.**

Unit Based Questions

1) *Test types and purposes*

Items	Test Type	Test Purpose	Area tested	Sub-area(s) tested
P	Formative assessments (the last one could be summative)	To test achievement (or learning during the course); can also be used for diagnostic purposes	Grammar	Tense with modals – to express future time
Q	Proficiency test	To ascertain level of proficiency and rank-order performance for awarding prizes	All four skills and elements	Not given
R	Aptitude test	To assess whether Utsa can learn swimming	Swimming aptitude	Ability to float
S	Proficiency test	To gain entry to the course in Spain (for eligibility criteria)	Can infer that - all four skills and elements	Not given
T	Diagnostic test	For research purposes; also give feedback and plan an intervention study	Dictation	Spelling, grammar
U	Formative assessment	To check learning of the specific unit; can also use it for diagnostic purposes.	Content in Geography	Not given

2) *Measurement types*

- a) Can be scored and be on an ordinal scale where the performances can be rank-ordered; if some parts are criterion-referenced (e.g., essay type responses with individual responses) then those can also be converted to scores.

- b) Can be criterion referenced and with grades. This will help the teacher to provide feedback on sub-aspects of paragraph writing – language, content development, and links between ideas.
- c) Can be analysed on a qualitative scale without really scoring or grading as is done in formal assessments. So this is informal assessment and need not be on an ordinal scale.
- d) Can be scored or graded – but the scores will be based on descriptions of sub-parts of speaking. So the performances will be criterion-referenced, and on an ordinal scale as they will rank ordered.
- e) Scores and ordinal scale as the performances can be rank-ordered; so they need to be on a continuum. As it's a standardized test, the items will be objectively scored with correct/incorrect responses.

3) *A classroom test analysis*

To get information about my learners on use of subordinating clauses, I need to design a test with a few items that can have sentences that can be joined using subordinating conjunctions.

To test coherence in writing they can be given jumbled sentences to be reordered so that the sentences read as part of one paragraph. The tests will be achievement tests. They can also be formative assessments as they will be based on checking learning of a specific component of a syllabus. As formative assessments they can be given at several points of time during the course to get information about progress in learning.

The tests will further serve as diagnostic tests so that I can give more support to teaching the learners whose knowledge of these two aspects are yet not well formed. In all, the tests will help me give feedback to the learners and help me modify my teaching.

4.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

Brown, D., and Abeywickrama, P. (2010). *Language Assessment: Principles and classroom practices*. Chapter One. Second Edition. NY: Pearson Longman.

McNamara, T. (2000). *Language Testing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.