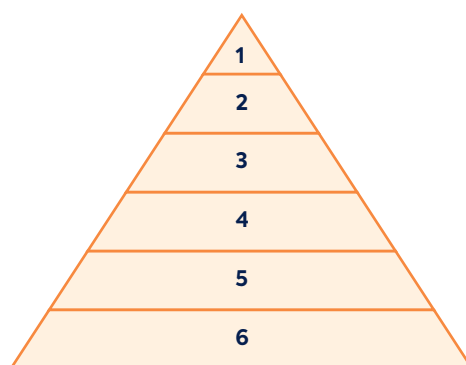


2 – Language analysis and awareness

4 Introduction to analysing language

A Warm-up

- 1 Imagine language as a pyramid, with its features in descending order from the smallest features to the largest. Map these aspects of language onto the pyramid:



- 2 Can you think of other features of language that could go onto the pyramid?

The answer to the question ‘What do I teach when I teach English?’ is, of course, ‘language’. As we have been saying all along – if you’re a language teacher, language should be your thing!

Tim Marr and Fiona English, 2019

B Basic concepts and terminology

- 1 Match the terms (1–10) with their definitions (a–j). For example: 10–h.

Terms used to talk about language	Definitions
1 vocabulary	a the rules that govern the way words are combined, adapted and sequenced in order to form sentences
2 grammar	b the purpose for which a language item is used, e.g. making requests; predicting
3 structure	c the place (in a text, or in the physical world) where an instance of language occurs
4 concept	d the way that language sounds when it is spoken

5 function	e the area of language learning that is concerned with word knowledge
6 register	f a continuous piece of speech or writing, having a communicative purpose and a distinctive organization
7 pronunciation	g a pattern that generates examples, such as the present perfect: I've seen ...; she's met ...; they've worked ...
8 context	h the way that words or sequences of words are spoken or written, e.g. /mi:t/ is written as meat or meet; the past of meet is met
9 text	i the way that spoken or written language is adapted to its particular situation of use, such as its degree of formality, e.g. Please remain seated v Sit down!
10 form	j the basic meaning of a word or grammar pattern, e.g. You can go now means You are free to go now.

2 Read the following short text and identify:

- what type of text it is
- the context in which it is typically found
- its function
- its register
- any sets of words that relate to the topic of the text
- any distinctive features of its grammar

For the perfect cup, use one teabag per person and add freshly drawn boiling water.
Leave standing for 3–5 minutes before stirring gently.
Can be served with or without milk and sugar.

3 What is the effect on meaning of making the following changes to the above text?

- For the perfect cup For a perfect cup
e.g. 'the perfect cup' suggests we know which perfect cup – perhaps because there is only one; this can have a significant effect on meaning, as in 'The dog bit me' v 'A dog bit me'.
- use one teabag use one bag of tea: Can you think of other examples that follow the same pattern?
- add freshly drawn boiling water add boiling water: What kind of effect is the writer trying to create?
- boiling water boiled water: Finished or unfinished?
- Leave standing Leave to stand: The same or different?
- Can be served It can be served: Why is 'it' not necessary in this text?
- Can be served Should be served: Which one suggests more choice?

Syllabus decisions

For teaching purposes, the different aspects of language are often separated out and organized into a sequence to form a syllabus. Here, for example, are the first two units of an intermediate level course:

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	Learning objectives	Grammar	Vocabulary	Pronunciation
Unit 1 And we're off!	- Talk about personal achievements - Discuss good employee qualities - Make and respond to introductions - Write a comment on a Blog post - Practice a job interview	- Tense review (simple and continuous) - Dynamic and stative verbs	- Describing accomplishments - Describing key qualities	Saying the letter y
Unit 2 The future of food	- Talk about trends - Talk about preparing food - Make offers in social situations - Write the results of a survey - Create a plan to improve a restaurant	- Real conditionals - Clauses with after, until, when	- Describing trends - Preparing food	- Saying the vowel sounds /a/, /i/, and /e/ - Listening for deleted /t/ sounds

Functional Language	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking
- Meet someone you don't know; introduce someone to others Real-world strategy - Respond to an introduction		Flipping your job interview An article on interview skills	A comment - A comment on an article - Agreeing and disagreeing	- Talk about a new activity - Talk about personal achievements - Describe your personal qualities - Play an introduction game Time to speak - Ask and answer interview questions
- Make, accept, and refuse offers in social situations Real-world strategy - Acknowledge an acceptance	Cool Food A conversation between friends		A report - The results of a survey about eating habits - Reporting research results	- Talk about fusion foods - Discuss ideas to avoid food waste - Explain a favorite recipe - Offer food and drink to others Time to speak - Present a restaurant rescue plan

Evolve Level 4

1 Work in pairs. Here are some more items from the same coursebook syllabus. Decide which column they go into: Grammar, Vocabulary, Pronunciation, or Functional language.

- present and past passive
- make an apology and explain what happened
- saying /s/ or /z/ at the end of a word
- reported questions
- talking about time and money
- was / were going to*
- stressing long words
- keep your listener engaged
- I wish*
- saying long or short vowel sounds

2 Work in pairs. What factors might determine the choice of items to put into a syllabus?

D Parts of speech

In English there are at least eight parts of speech (also called word classes). These are:

- nouns**, such as *cup, teabag, minutes*
- pronouns**, i.e. words that take the place of nouns, such as *it, they, ours*
- verbs**, such as *use, be, leave, stirring*
- adjectives**, such as *perfect, boiling*
- adverbs**, such as *freshly, gently*

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- **prepositions**, such as *for*, *with*, *without*
- **determiners**, such as the definite article *the*, the indefinite article *a/an*, and words like *one*, *some*, *this*, when they go in front of nouns, as *one teabag*
- **conjunctions**, i.e. words that join parts of sentences, such as *and*, *or*, *that*

Many common words can function as different parts of speech, depending on their context. Water, for example, can be a noun (a cup of water) or a verb (water the garden). One can be a determiner (one teabag) or a pronoun (would you like one?)

Work in pairs. Identify the part of speech of each word in this text.

*In the empty doorway many petals are scattered;
As they fall they blend with the song of the birds.
Slowly, the bright spring sun appears in the window
And a thin line of smoke drifts from the incense burner.*

John Stevens, 1977

<i>In</i>	<i>the</i>	<i>empty</i>	<i>doorway</i>	<i>many</i>	<i>petals</i>	<i>are</i>	<i>scattered</i>
<i>preposition</i>	<i>determiner</i>	<i>adjective</i>					

<i>As</i>	<i>they</i>	<i>fall</i>	<i>they</i>	<i>blend</i>	<i>with</i>	<i>the</i>	<i>song</i>	<i>of</i>	<i>the</i>	<i>birds</i>
<i>conjunction</i>	<i>pronoun</i>									

<i>Slowly</i>	<i>the</i>	<i>bright</i>	<i>spring</i>	<i>sun</i>	<i>appears</i>	<i>in</i>	<i>the</i>	<i>window</i>
			<i>noun</i>					

<i>And</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>thin</i>	<i>line</i>	<i>of</i>	<i>smoke</i>	<i>drifts</i>	<i>from</i>	<i>the</i>	<i>incense</i>	<i>burner</i>

E Content words v grammar words

Unlike some languages, English doesn't have a lot of grammar in the form of verb endings (as in Russian) or noun cases (as in German). Instead, a lot of grammatical meaning is carried by the 'grammar' words. These act as the 'glue' that connects the 'content' words, i.e. those words that carry the main meaning.

1 Work in pairs. Look at the poem from the last activity.

- 1 Identify the content words. These are typically nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs. The 1st line has been done for you: the content words are underlined.

In the empty doorway many petals are scattered;
As they fall they blend with the song of the birds.
Slowly, the bright spring sun appears in the window
And a thin line of smoke drifts from the incense burner

- 2 What is the proportion of content words to grammar words? (There are 39 words altogether).
- 3 Do you think this would be the same for most texts? Choose a text at random and check.

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- 2 What do you notice about the grammar words? Here are some clues to help you: frequency, length, repetition, stress, novelty.
- 3 A very important sub-group of grammar words are auxiliary verbs (sometimes called ‘helping verbs’). Look at this summary – from a coursebook – of the main uses of auxiliary verbs:

Look at this summary – from a coursebook – of the main uses of auxiliary verbs:

1.2 Uses of auxiliaries (1): auxiliaries in verb forms 1B 4 p11

- We make continuous verb forms with be + verb+ing: I’m **doing** a Master’s. (Present Continuous) She **was hoping** to do her first degree in four years. (Past Continuous)
- We make perfect verb forms with have + past participle: It’s something I’ve (= have) **wanted** to do for ages. (Present Perfect Simple)
- We make all passive verb forms with be + past participle: I **was told** you were really enjoying it. (Past Simple Passive)
- In the Present Simple and Past Simple we use a form of do to make questions and negatives: **Does** she **know** this guy? I **didn’t think** you were coming

MODAL VERBS

- We also use modal verbs as auxiliaries. The modal verbs are: will, would, can, could, may, might, shall, should, ought to, must and have to.
- Modal verbs are different from the auxiliaries be, do and have because they have their own meanings. Most modal verbs also have more than one meaning:
- I’ll see you at six. (a promise)
I think we’ll win. (a prediction)
Can you pick me up? (a request)
He **can** play the piano. (ability)
You **must** be here at nine. (obligation)
You **must** see that film. (strong recommendation)

Face2face Upper Intermediate

Work in pairs or small groups.

- a Think of the learners you are teaching now. Rate this explanation in terms of its clarity, economy and usefulness, from those learners’ point of view.
- b Assuming this is a review, at what stages in the learners’ progress would they have likely met these points for the first time? (You might want to check with the coursebook you are currently using.)

KEY WORDS FOR TEACHERS

Check you know the meanings of these terms.

- *form, concept*
- *structure, function, register*
- *phrase*
- *part of speech (or word class)*
- *syllable*
- *noun, verb, adjective, adverb, determiner, article, pronoun, preposition, conjunction*
- *content words, grammar words*
- *auxiliary verbs*
- *modal verbs*
- *text*

REFLECTION

This unit has introduced you to some key elements of language analysis – and a lot of terminology!

Reflect on your language analysis skills at this point in time:

1 How would you rate yourself, on a scale of 1 to 10, in terms of the following?

- 1 Your current understanding of the main concepts introduced in this unit.
- 2 Your grasp of the terminology that has been used.
- 3 Your familiarity with the resources available for self-development in this area.
- 4 Your motivation to improve your language analysis skills.

2 Can you identify any specific language areas on which you would appreciate more clarification right now?

Reference

Marr, T. and English, F. (2019). Rethinking TESOL in Diverse Global Settings. London: Bloomsbury Academic, p.230.

Ryokan, trans. Stevens, J. (1977). One Robe, One Bowl: The Zen Poetry of Ryokan. New York: Weatherhill, p.37.