

Learning English:

A Textbook for English Teachers

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To The Teacher

Main goals of Learning English.

The main goals of the Learning English textbook are:

Encourage students (Chinese English teachers) to think about English from a learner's perspective.

Expose students to new ideas about language learning and study, in part through their reading of the text, in part through discussion with each other and with you.

Build student's language skills, especially their ability to discuss in English about issues related to their profession.

These goals should be explained to students at the beginning of the course, and students should also be reminded of these goals as appropriate at various points during the course.

The Teacher's Role in Learning English.

The teacher's main roles are to:

Make sure students understand the ideas and language in the text.

Lead practice and activities.

Share and discuss with students.

While it is obviously helpful if those who teach Learning English have language learning experience themselves, it is not necessary that they be experts in this field because the teacher's role is not to teach language learning skills per se. Rather it is to help students understand the texts in the book and digest the ideas therein through discussion.

The Timing of Teaching a Unit.

1) There are 16 units in Learning English, so if you want to cover all or most of the book you would want to cover approximately one unit per class day.

It is certainly all right not to attempt to cover the whole book, especially if you have lower level students who find the book somewhat difficult. In this case, you might select several units - or have students select the units they are most interested in -and then cover these at a slower pace. (The book is intended to have more material than you can cover, because it is better to have too much material than too little.)

You may find that for intermediate or advanced students, one class period is enough to cover a unit quite adequately.

While students may want to cover the whole book - and there would be nothing wrong with doing so - the most important thing is to use the materials in a way that will produce a good learning experience for your students; covering the book is secondary.

2) If you do decide to cover one unit per class day (more or less), you might consider using a general pattern like the following:

At the end of class on the day before you will teach a particular unit, have students spend a few minutes doing the "Before You Read" activity.

Then as homework have students do some or all of the following:

Read "Reading."

Study the "Word and Phrase List," paying special attention to usage.

Read "English Hotline."

Look over the "Teaching Ideas."

In class, focus your time mainly on:

Going over "Reading" and "English Hotline" with students, to make sure they understand the texts.

Doing "Discussion Activities."

Discussing or even demonstrating "Teaching Ideas."

How to Teach a Unit (Step by Step).

What follows below is a detailed step-by-step discussion of how to teach the various parts of a unit. This introduction is intended to provide you with a basic approach suitable to each unit. However, there are several assumptions that should be made explicit:

You should adapt this basic approach to the needs of your class and teaching situation.

For example:

If your students find the material difficult, slow down and cover less.

If your students don't find one part of the units particularly useful, consider skipping it and focusing the extra time elsewhere.

If students get really involved in a particular topic or unit, slow down to make time for a thorough discussion. Likewise, if a certain unit doesn't seem to be getting much response, move through it more quickly.

If your students are especially interested in the "Teaching Ideas," make more time for that in class.

And so forth.

You should deviate from this basic formula from time to time as necessary to prevent the class from becoming too monotonous.

It is certainly not necessary that each day's lesson be completely different. Novelty makes a class period more lively and interesting, but over a whole course a relatively structured learning experience generally results in students' learning more.

However, excessive uniformity in each day's lessons can result in boredom, so it is a good idea to liven things up from time to time by experimenting with new order of activities, a new approach, or simply putting the textbook aside and doing something different for a day.

Step 1: Doing the "Before You Read" activity.

1) This is intended as a pre-reading activity to get students thinking - and talking - about a topic before they read about it. It can be done at one of two possible times:

If you plan to have students do the "Reading" at home, do the "Before You Read" activity at the end of class on the day you assign the unit as homework.

If you plan to have students do the "Reading" in class, do the "Before You Read" activity right before they read.

2) To conduct the "Before You Read" activity:

Have students quickly discuss the question as suggested by the instructions.

Have a few volunteers tell you what they came up with as a result of their discussion (survey, etc.) This should be brief, but should not be omitted entirely lest the previous discussion seem to lack closure.

Lead into the "Reading" by inviting students to read and see what the book has to say about the issue. (If possible, draw on something one of the students said to raise a question that they should be paying attention to as they read.)

3) Before the "Reading," you may also wish to go over the "Word and Phrase List" if you feel students may have difficulty understanding some of the terms.

Step 2: Doing the "Reading".

- 1) This introduces the day's topic by raising a question which will (hopefully) be of interest to students, and also putting forth ideas for discussion.
By design, the questions touch on basic aspects of language learning (speaking, listening, and so forth.)
Naturally, the passage also introduces vocabulary and phrases which may be useful in discussing the topic.
- 2) You can either have students do the "Reading" as homework, or read it in class.
Having students do the "Reading" as homework will allow you to cover more units during the course, and also gives students more time to carefully study the passage.
Having students read the "Reading" passage in class allows you to require students to read "extensively" - i.e. quickly for main ideas - rather than reading more slowly and intensively, as they probably will at home.
One possibility is to have students read some "Reading" passages at home, and others in class. Another is to assign the "Reading" passages for homework, but do the "English Hotline" as in-class readings.
- 3) Suggested procedure for reading - whether at home or in class:
Have students first read through the text fairly quickly, marking words or sentences that they find hard to understand.
After they finish reading, they should:
 - check their comprehension using the "Comprehension Questions."
 - look at the "Word and Phrase List" to make sure they can properly use (not just understand) the words and phrases listed there.
 - go back and study any words or sentences they underlined.Finally, have students read the passage a second time in order to:
 - clear up anything they didn't understand the first time;
 - pay attention to the usage of new words or phrases.If you have students read some of the "Readings" in class to help them build more rapid "extensive" reading skills, set time limits and call out time as they read in class. (For more on this, see "Speed Reading" at the end of Unit 8.)

Step 3: Debriefing the "Reading" in class.

- 1) Discussing the "Reading" in class allows students to make sure they understood the text; it also serves as a springboard for class discussion.
- 2) Suggested procedure for reviewing the content of the "Reading":
One option is to go over the Comprehension Questions with the class, either asking for volunteers or calling on students to answer questions.
If your class finds the "Readings" quite difficult, you can first put them in groups to come up with answers to the Comprehension Questions. This allows them to share ideas and prepare their answers; it also allows you to circulate and help students before they have to answer questions in public.
Another option is to simply ask students to report the main ideas of the text.
Have each student report just one of the main ideas of the text; then move on to someone else. (If one student summarizes the whole passage, the other students may feel left out and become bored.)
You may wish to note these ideas on the board as they are reported.
Students may not report ideas in any particular order, so you may wish to close by summarizing the main points in order yourself.
- 3) Suggested procedure for answering questions on troublesome words, phrases, or sentences:

If you simply ask "Does anyone have any questions?" it is very unlikely that students will ask anything.

An alternative approach is to say something like: "When you read the Reading, you should all have marked some words or sentences you found difficult. What were some of these?" Then call on a few students and ask what they marked.

4) Once you have gone over the content and language of the Reading, you might suggest that students re-read the passage for review.

Step 4: Going over "Words and Phrases."

1) If you have not yet done so, go over the "Words and Phrases" to ensure students understand them. The purpose of this section is to make sure students know not only what these words and phrases mean (students may comprehend many of these already); rather it is to make sure students know how to use these properly in a sentence.

2) This portion of the unit may be quite easy for some students. If this seems to be quite easy, and if your time is limited, you may want to deal with this part of the unit very quickly, perhaps just asking if students have any questions.

3) If it seems like this part of the unit is useful to your students, a suggested procedure for dealing with it in class would be as follows:

Either individually or working in pairs, ask students to make sentences with the words and phrases.

When everyone is ready, you call out a word/phrase, and call on a student/pair to give a sentence.

If their sentence is right, they get a point (a cheer, etc).

If not, reward them with a "Good try!" Then suggest a correction.

Step 5: Doing "Discussion Activities".

1) The purpose of the "Discussion Activities" is to give students opportunity to discuss the topic and explore it further. Obviously, this also provides a chance to practice talking about the issue in English.

2) Specific procedures vary according to the kind of activity. However, most activities have the same basic underlying formula:

Present the issue or question, and make sure students understand it.

Give students clear instructions as to what you want them to do, including a clear task.

(Not just "Talk about.....") (For more on assigning discussion tasks, see "Pair and Small Group Tasks" in the Teaching Ideas section of Unit 5.)

Allow ample time for students to work in pairs or groups. This is the portion of the activity that provides the most language practice.

Remind students as necessary that they should be speaking in English.

Provide closure by having students report on their discussions.

Step 6: Covering "English Hotline".

This brief Dear Abbey-like section discusses an issue related to the topic of the unit. It is intended mainly as a "spare tire," providing extra ideas and material that you can use as desired. It can also be skipped if you are pressed for time. It can be handy in a variety of ways:

1) As a short passage for in-class practice in rapid reading.

Give students a time limit that will force them to read rapidly.

Have them read the text while you call out time.

Have students report on the main ideas in the passage.

Perhaps re-read the passage more slowly to clear up any remaining difficulties.

- 2) As an informal warm-up exercise, break, or an extra activity to finish out the lesson.
Chat informally with students about the question, then have them read the passage, and then chat further to see what they thought of the response.
- 3) As a springboard for a discussion activity. This can be done in a variety of ways:
Have students survey each other on the question; then have them read the passage.
Have students read the question and response. Then, in groups, have them discuss whether or not they agree with the response given in the text, and how they would have responded.
- 4) As a passage to be read aloud to the class for listening comprehension practice.
If "English Hotline" is to be used in this way, do not have students read the text before they hear it.
- 5) As additional reading students can do for their own interest.

Step 7: Covering "Teaching Ideas".

1) Learning English is intended to focus students' attention mainly on language learning issues, so this section on teaching has intentionally been left until the end of the book. However, discussion of language teaching naturally follows from discussion of language learning, so this section has been included as a way to introduce some teaching ideas that may be new to students.

This part of the unit may be treated as essentially optional, and one choice is just to assign it to students as reading for their own interest. (If you attempt to cover all the units, there might not be adequate time to cover teaching ideas in any depth.)

However, you might wish to cover this material to the extent that time allows, not least because this will help students address students' desire to discuss teaching issues.

2) One way to cover this section is to demonstrate one or more of the teaching ideas. (Not all lend themselves easily to demonstration, but many do.) A basic procedure includes:

Have students read the introduction to the idea.

Demonstrate the idea by walking students through the activity.

Discuss with students whether the idea could be applied in any way to their teaching situation.

3) An alternative approach would be:

Have students read the introduction to the idea.

Answer any questions they have about the language and content of the text (not necessarily about the idea in general).

Based on what students read in the text, have them discuss whether or not this idea could be applied in any way to their teaching situation.

Unit 1

Why should language teachers be language learners?

I. Before You Read

In pairs or small groups, quickly discuss the following question: *Why is it important for language teachers to have experience as language learners?* List as many reasons as you can think of.

II. Reading

Why should language teachers be language learners?

There are a number of reasons why it is good for an English teacher to have as much language learning experience as possible.

One reason is that the more experience English teachers have learning languages, the more they will know about how to learn languages. They will learn what study methods are most effective - and which ones are not very effective. They will also learn how to plan and use their time for language study. And they will learn how to discipline themselves for the long and sometimes difficult task of language learning. One of the most precious gifts a language teacher can give students is a good understanding of how to successfully study and learn a foreign language, and the best way to gain this is by studying language themselves.

English teachers who have lots of experience as language learners can also better understand the difficulties students face as students try to learn a foreign language. Teachers who have struggled to learn a language themselves remember how it feels to struggle to learn the language, and they know what is most difficult for students.

Thirdly, language teachers who learn a foreign language well are good role models for their students. In other words, language teachers who have done a good job of learning a foreign language encourage students by showing them that it is possible to learn a foreign language well.

But perhaps the most important reason that language teachers should be language learners has to do with self-respect. English teachers who have learned English well will have more confidence as they teach. They will also have more pride in their skills, and this will encourage them and make them feel better about their teaching.

Word and phrase list

to discipline yourself (to do something): to make yourself do something you don't want to do, but that is good for you. Ex: *If you want to be a good runner, you need to discipline yourself to run every morning.*

precious: valuable

a role model: someone students should try to be like. Ex: *Prof. Wang is an excellent role model. She not only tells her students to study hard; she also studies hard herself.*

to have to do with: to have a relationship to. Ex: *Practice has a lot to do with how quickly students improve their English.*

III. Comprehension Questions

According to the passage, what are some reason why English teachers should have as much experience as possible as language learners?

Which of these reasons does the passage say is most important? Do you agree?

Can you think of other reasons the passage doesn't mention?

IV. Discussion Activities

Survey: "A role model"

Survey one or more classmates. Ask them to tell you about one very good teacher they had in the past, a teacher who served as a role model for them. Take notes, and be ready to report on at least one of the teachers you heard about, explaining what made her/him a good role model.

Survey: "What have you learned about language learning?"

Think for a minute about what you have learned about English study from your own English learning experience. Then survey one or more classmates, asking them what they have learned about how to study English - or how not to study English. Write down the answers you hear, and be ready to report.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Ten rules for learning English"

Imagine that a young Chinese student comes to you and asks for advice about how to learn English. Based on your experience learning English, what would you tell him/her?

In pairs or groups: 1) Make a list of ten "golden rules" for learning English. State each as a rule. (Ex: "Regularly review vocabulary words.") 2) Decide which three are the most important. 3) Be ready to present your rules to the class, and explain why you felt the top three were most important.

Pair/ Small Group Task: "What are the characteristics of a good language learner?"

Based on your experience as a student and teacher, do the following: 1) List characteristics of good language learners. 2) State these as sentence completions such as "Good language learners _____." 3) After you have a list, discuss and decide which three characteristics are most important.

Other Discussion Questions

What experiences do you remember of success in language learning? Of failure or difficulty?

What habits do good language learners have?

If you could learn one language that you don't already know (excluding English), what would it be?

Which do you think is more important for an English teacher - good English skills or extensive English teaching experience?

(Foreign teacher question)¹ What languages have you had to learn, and how did you go about learning them?

V. English Hotline

If my English is good, should I still keep studying? When have I learned enough?

Ideally, a language teacher should always continue to be a language learner. Running coaches should keep running in order to stay in shape. Violinists should keep practicing in order to maintain their skill. Likewise, language teachers should keep studying foreign

¹ A "foreign teacher question" is one intended for foreign teachers to ask Chinese students in order to learn more about them and their lives.

languages in order to keep learning more about how to learn languages, and also so they don't forget what the experience of being a language learner is like. Even a little bit of language study each week is better than none.

Obviously, the most important language to keep studying is English, but when you reach the point that your English is very good, you might start learning another foreign language. This helps remind you of what it is like to study a language that is unfamiliar and new to you (as English is to many of your students).

VI. Teaching Ideas

(**Note:** Each unit in this book will end with some idea or activities that you might want to use in your teaching. Some of these ideas can be applied directly to your teaching. Other ideas may not be appropriate for the classes you teach; however, thinking about them may still help you think of other ideas that will be useful for you.)

Idea Bazaar - Ways to Study English: One of the most valuable things an English teacher can teach students is how to study English more effectively. Therefore, English classes should include discussion of study methods. Having students exchange tricks for effective English study is one way to bring the issue of language learning strategies into the classroom.

Procedure:

Ask students to think about how they study English, and have them write down one or more tricks (methods, etc.) that have been helpful to them in their language study.

Students should especially try to think of things they do that are not the same as what all their classmates do.

They should also be ready to describe what they do in as much detail as possible.

This could be done either in class or assigned as homework.

Have students survey several other classmates, asking for English study suggestions. As they interview each other, they should take notes and be ready to report.

Have several students report one or more good English study ideas they heard during their survey.

The teacher closes the activity by sharing one or more good ideas she/he heard - or perhaps by suggesting other ideas from her/his own experience.

Unit 2

Why do students fail to learn English?

I. Before You Read

Survey several of your classmates, asking the following question: *Why do you think it is that many students in China have studied English for many years, but still don't speak it very well?* Be ready to report your findings to the class.

II. Reading

Why do students fail to learn English?

Even after studying English for many years, many people in China feel their English is still not very good. So a frequently asked question is: Why?

Part of the problem is that it simply takes a long time to learn any foreign language. You have to learn a new grammar system, and thousands of new words. It also takes a lot of practice to develop speaking, listening, reading and writing skills in a new language. So learning any foreign language generally takes years.

This is especially true if you are learning a language that is very different from your own. German people can learn English relatively quickly because German grammar is similar to English grammar in some ways, and also because the two languages share much of the same vocabulary. However, the grammar and vocabulary of Chinese is quite different from that of English, and this makes it harder for Chinese people to learn English.

However, the bigger problem lies more in the way Chinese students study English. Actually the real goal of many students in China is not to learn English - instead, their real goal is to pass English examinations. So most of their time and attention is focused on doing well on exams rather than on learning. When the examination is over, students often promptly forget what they learned, and then they ignore their English study until the next test comes along. (Students in Western countries who study Chinese or other foreign languages often have exactly the same problem.)

While studying for tests may help students learn English, passing tests is not the same thing as learning English. In fact, it is possible to get good test scores without ever actually developing many usable skills in English. If students are to actually learn English well, their focus needs to be on building English language skills (such as the ability to speak or read English), not just on passing tests.

Perhaps even more important, students who actually want to learn English need to take charge of their own language learning, instead of just passively doing what their teachers tell them to do. They must decide for themselves what skills they want to master, and then actively carry out a plan for developing those skills - whether there is any test or not.

Word and phrase list

the problem lies in: the problem is related to. Ex: *The problem with his English lies mainly in his bad study habits.*

promptly: quickly

to come along: to appear, to arrive

usable: can be used

to focus on: to pay attention to. Ex: *Many students focus on passing tests more than on learning.*

to master (something): to learn (something) well

to take charge of: to actively control something or take responsibility for something

III. Comprehension Questions

What is one reason why English is difficult for Chinese students to learn?

According to the passage, what is the main reason why Chinese students often fail to learn English well?

Do you agree with the passage? Can you think of other reasons?

IV. Discussion Activities

Survey: "What do you like/dislike most about learning English?"

Survey several classmates, asking them what they like most about English study and what they dislike most about English study. Take notes and be ready to report what you learn.

Pair/Small Group Activity: "Learning English - cost-benefit analysis"

Imagine that you have a friend who is a 25-year old college graduate. She is a low-level official working in a state-owned company that produces electronic appliances. She studied English in university, but didn't learn very much. Now she is thinking about her future, so she comes to ask you whether you think it is worthwhile to go back to studying English.

In pairs or groups: 1) List reasons why she should try to improve her English. 2) Also list reasons why it would not be worthwhile for her to study English. 3) Decide what advice you would give her.

Debate: "Should all Chinese students be required to study English?"

An enormous amount of time and energy is spent in China teaching all middle school and university students English, but many students never actually develop functional skills in the language. Should all students in China be required to study English?

In groups or pairs: 1) Discuss this question, and decide whether your answer is yes or no. 2) Be ready to give your answer, and give at least one good reason for your answer.

Other Discussion Questions

Why are you studying English now?

(Foreign teacher question)² What are the English tests in China that students usually need to pass? What are these tests like?

V. English Hotline

Does studying for tests help improve my English?

In some ways, studying for tests does help you improve your English. Obviously one benefit of tests is that they encourage you to study - or force you to study. Even more important, tests encourage you to review what you have previously studied. Review is a very important part of language learning, and students often don't review very much unless they are forced to by tests.

However, one problem with tests is that it is generally easier to test language knowledge (vocabulary and grammar) than to test English skills, so tests often encourage

² A "foreign teacher question" is one intended for foreign teachers to ask Chinese students in order to learn more about them and their lives.

students to pay too much attention to studying language knowledge rather than building language skills.

The greater problem is that passing tests often becomes the goal for students, rather than a step toward the goal. If this happens too much, students may actually be distracted from activities that would help them build useful language skills.

So it is important to study for tests, and to try to do well on them. But you should never lose sight of the fact that the ultimate goal is to learn English.

VI. Teaching Ideas

Personal Study Plans: In order for students to get used to the idea that they should study to learn English instead of just to do well on examinations, they need to get in the habit of making and carrying out their own study plans - even when there is no test at the end.

Procedure:

Have students pick an area of English - either knowledge or skill - that they wish to improve in, and have them set a clear (and realistic) goal.

Then have them choose a study or practice method that they will use to reach the goal.

Finally, have them write out a simple study plan saying what their goal is and how they plan to reach it.

You may want to set a time for the plan; for example, a month or a semester.

Have students carry out the plan. Also tell them that they will not be tested, but that you will ask them to give you a short report on how their study plan went.

At the end of the time period, have each student give you a short written or oral report on how their study plan went.

If you want to require this personal study plan - and make it part of your grade for the course - you may choose to grade students on a pass/fail basis. However, it is important that you do not give a test or specific grades because the whole idea of this activity is to get students used to the idea of studying in order to improve their skills rather than just to get a grade.

Some students will take advantage of this and not do much work - this cannot be avoided entirely. However, unless students have real freedom to choose how much - or little - they will work, they won't develop the habit of working on their own.

Unit 3

What is the best way to learn English?

I. Before You Read

Survey several of your classmates asking the following question: *If a student were to ask you "What is the best way to learn English?" what would your answer be?* Be ready to report your findings.

II. Reading

What is the best way to learn English?

Students in China often ask, "What is the best way to learn English?" This is an important question, but there is no single answer because "English" is not just one thing - it is a combination of different things.

In part, "English" consists of knowledge. For example, learning English requires knowing vocabulary words and grammar rules. Even more important, "English" also consists of a variety of different skills, such as the ability to speak in English or to understand a book written in English. So, there is no single best way to learn English. Instead, there are different ways to develop each of the English skills students need.

While there is no single best way to learn English, there are two basic rules that will help students decide what the best way is to develop each of the English language skills:

Rule #1: Skills are built through practice. Mastering a skill requires learning to do several different things smoothly and fluently, often within a limited time. For example, in order to read in English, you need to do several different things at once:

- recognize English vocabulary words
- understand English grammar
- use background knowledge; for example, things you know about Western culture
- understand and remember the ideas of the text.

Learning to read certainly requires knowledge of English grammar, vocabulary, and even knowledge of Western culture. But the skill of reading requires being able to put all of this together at the same time, and this can only be learned through practice.

Rule #2: You learn to do what you do. In other words, students who spend a lot of time reading newspaper articles will get better at reading newspaper articles. Students who practice speaking English will get better at speaking English. (And students who practice answering multiple choice questions on tests will get better at answering multiple choice test questions.) So the best way to develop a skill is to practice in a way that is as similar as possible to the skill you want to develop.

Word and phrase list

a combination of things: a mix of things, many different things all together
(something) requires (something): (something) is necessary for (something). Ex:
Learning a language requires a lot of study and practice.

to consist of: to be made up of. Ex: *A computer consists of many different parts.*

to master: to learn well. Ex: *It takes a lot of work to master a foreign language.*

fluently: quickly, without stopping frequently

multiple choice test questions: test questions where you choose from several possible answers, usually marked A, B, C, and D

III. Comprehension Questions

According to the passage, why is there no single best way to learn English?

The passage gives two rules for how to study English - what are they?

What other rules for studying English can you think of?

IV. Discussion Activities

Pair/Small Group Task: "Reading aloud in the morning"

Most study methods are good for some things and not for others. Learners need to be able to analyze a study method to know what kinds of knowledge and skills the study method helps them gain - and what it does not help them gain.

In pairs or groups, analyze the following study methods. For each: 1) List the kinds of English knowledge and skills you think this study method would help students gain. 2) List kinds of English knowledge and skills you think this study method would probably not help students gain (but that students might think they were gaining).

Study method #1: Reading textbook passages aloud (*zao du*).

Study method #2: Memorizing reading passages from a textbook.

Study method #3: "Crazy English." (Foreign teachers may need to ask students to explain this learning method that has recently become popular in China.)

Survey: "What are you good at?"

All students are different, and a study method that works well for one student may not work so well for another one.

Think for a minute about what you are good at in language learning, and what is hard for you. Then survey several classmates, asking two questions: 1) What is easiest for you in learning English? 2) What is hardest for you? Write down the answers you hear.

Pair/Small Group Task: "How do Chinese students study English?"

In pairs or groups: 1) List several of the most common methods Chinese students use in order to study English. 2) Prepare to describe to your foreign teacher exactly how students study using one or more of the methods you listed. Be as specific as possible, including when, where, and how the students study. 3) Describe each method as a process. Ex: "First the students _____. Then they _____." 4) Analyze what you think is good and what you think is not good about these methods, and how they could be improved.

Other Discussion Questions

(Foreign teacher question to students) What do Chinese students usually believe are the best methods for learning English?

V. English Hotline

If I want to learn a language skill, should I just practice that skill? For example, if I want to learn to read, should I just practice reading?

Practice is certainly a very important part of developing any language skill, but other kinds of study are also sometimes necessary. For example, in order to read well it is important to have a large vocabulary, so if you want to build your reading skills you should also study vocabulary regularly.

However, just having a large vocabulary isn't enough to make you a good reader. You also need to practice reading as much as possible. You will find that if you combine

vocabulary study with reading practice, the reading practice helps you review and learn the vocabulary you study. Likewise, knowing more vocabulary will make it easier for you to read.

VI. Teaching Ideas

The Study Method Doctor: To learn any skill, students need to practice in a way that is as much as possible like the skill they want to learn. This means students need to first analyze and understand the skill they want to learn. One way to help develop this analysis skill - and to encourage students to think more about study methods - is the "Study Method Doctor" activity.

Procedure:

- 1) Have students imagine they are having a conversation with a foreigner at an English corner. Then, in pairs or groups, have students list the steps involved in saying something to the foreigner in English, and be ready to report.
- 2) Have students report the steps while the teacher lists them on the board.
- 3) Then have students list three different methods for practicing their oral English, and be ready to report which of the speaking steps on the board the method practices - and which (if any) it does not help students practice.

The Study Method Scientist: One good way for students to learn more about how to learn a foreign language well is to experiment with new study methods to see how they work.

Procedure:

- 1) Have students choose a specific area in which they want to improve their English. (Example: increase my reading vocabulary, improve my pronunciation, etc.)
- 2) For that area, have students choose a new study method that they haven't tried before. To find a new method, have students:
 - a. get an idea from another student;
 - b. get an idea from a book or from the teacher;
 - c. think of an idea on their own.
- 3) Have them try out the new method for a week or so. (Most study methods need to be used for a longer period of time before the results are clear, but using a method for even a week or so should allow students to get some idea of how well it works for them.)
- 4) At the end of the experiment, they should be ready to report how well the method worked for them, including:
 - d. how much it helped them achieve their goal;
 - e. what worked well in the method;
 - f. what problems they encountered, and how the study method could be improved.

Unit 4

Why is listening in English so hard?

I. Before You Read

In groups, discuss the following: *What are some reasons why listening comprehension in English is difficult for many Chinese students?* Make a list of reasons.

II. Reading

Why is listening in English so hard?

For beginning students of English, the main reason listening comprehension is difficult is that there are simply too many new and unfamiliar words. However, this isn't the only problem Chinese students of English face, and often it isn't the main one. Even students who have studied for years - and who know hundreds or thousands of English words - often still find listening comprehension quite difficult. Why?

For Chinese students, the problem is often that "knowing" words means they recognize them when they read them, or can remember what they mean - if they have enough time to think. The problem with listening comprehension is that when you listen to an English speaker, you not only have to recognize words by hearing them instead of by reading them, you also have to recognize the words very quickly. Unlike reading, where you can pause to think about what a word means, listening usually doesn't allow you to pause at all. You must be able to recognize and understand words very quickly because, if you pause to think, the English speaker will keep right on going and you will miss much of what he/she says.

So it is very important to build "listening fluency," in other words, the ability to recognize and understand English words and phrases very quickly when you hear them - without pausing to try to remember. Obviously, this is a skill that is built mainly through practice - lots and lots of practice.

What is the best kind of listening practice? There are many good ways to practice - listening to the radio, to tapes, to native English speakers, and even to non-native speakers of English. The most important thing is to find listening practice material that has the right level of difficulty. If you listen to something that is very easy to understand, it will not challenge your listening skills to improve, and you will probably also become bored. But if you listen to material that is too difficult, you will not be able to understand it even if you listen many times, and you will become discouraged or frustrated.

Here are two suggestions for choosing material for listening practice:

Choose material you can understand at least part of, but which also challenges you to listen hard. For example, if you practice by using English language tapes, try to find tapes that you can understand partly even the first time you listen. They should be easy enough that you can get the main ideas after listening two or three times.

If you can't find material that is at just the right level of difficulty, it is usually better to choose material that is a little bit too easy rather than too hard - but not so easy that you can't learn anything new from it.

Word and phrase list

listening comprehension: the skill of listening and understanding. Ex: *Xiao Wang's English listening comprehension is very good.*

to face a problem: to need to deal with a problem. Ex: *Students with poor listening comprehension face many problems in using English.*

to find (something) difficult: to feel that something is difficult. Ex: *Xiao Wang finds speaking English very difficult.*

doesn't allow you to: doesn't give you opportunity to. Ex: *His busy schedule doesn't allow him to relax very often.*

to keep right on going: to continue without stopping. Ex: *I waved at the taxi, but the driver kept right on going, he didn't even slow down.*

in other words: (This phrase is used to introduce another way of saying the same thing.) Ex: *He's a loafer; in other words, he's someone who is lazy.*

to build (something) through (something): to improve (something) by doing (something). Ex: *The best way to build listening skills is through practice.*

to challenge (something): to make something difficult for. Ex: *This difficult problem challenged her creativity.*

to become bored: to get bored. Ex: *If you sit in class too long, it is easy to become bored.*

to get the main idea: to understand the most important idea. Ex: *I didn't understand everything in this article, but I got the main idea.*

III. Comprehension Questions

According to the passage, what is one of the main problems Chinese students face in English listening comprehension?

To "know" an English word can mean different things. If a student says "I know this English word," what are at least two different possible meanings of this sentence?

According to the passage, what is the best kind of material to use for practicing your English listening comprehension?

IV. Discussion Activities

Pair/Small Group Task: "What makes listening to English hard?"

The reading passage above mentions several reasons why listening comprehension is often challenging to students. In pairs or groups, make a list of some of the other obstacles to listening comprehension. (Example: new vocabulary) After completing your list, decide which of these is the biggest challenge for you, which is the second biggest challenge, and so forth.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Radio news"

One of the best opportunities for practicing English listening comprehension in China is through listening to radio news in English. However, the radio news is also often quite challenging to understand.

In pairs or groups: 1) Make a list of reasons why radio news reports in English are relatively difficult to understand (in other words, why radio news is more difficult than English language tapes). 2) Make a list of strategies students can use so that listening to radio news in English is less difficult and more effective.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Dictation"

Dictation is one of the most common kinds of listening practice exercises. However, like any kind of activity, it is useful for teaching some things, and not so useful for teaching others.

In pairs or groups: 1) First, make a list of the kinds of knowledge or skills dictation is useful for teaching. Be as specific as possible. (Don't just say "listening" - be more specific.)

2) Then make a list of tips for teachers on the best way to conduct a dictation exercise. Write each point as a piece of advice. (Ex: Don't make sentences too long.)

Pair/Small Group Task: "What opportunities are there in China for practicing listening?"

Imagine that a student came to you and said: "I want to practice my English listening, but there aren't many opportunities to listen to English in China. What should I do?"

Make a list of suggestions for this student. (Ex: Try listening to the radio news in English.) After you have completed your list, choose the ideas you think are most realistic and effective.

Other Discussion Questions:

What is the best way for you to improve your listening?

(Foreign teacher question to students) What do Chinese students usually do to try to improve their listening skills?

V. English Hotline

Which is more important to practice - speaking or listening?

Obviously both are important. However, there are several good reasons for arguing that students in China especially need to focus on their listening skills:

1) Some students in China are weaker in listening than in speaking. For example, at English corners with native speakers of English, they can often ask questions more easily than they can understand the answers.

2) It is easier for students with relatively good listening skills to keep a conversation going. For example, at an English corner, a student who can understand what a foreigner says can stay in the conversation even if the student has trouble asking questions or expressing ideas. (If you can't say what you want to say, you can always say something else you know how to say.) In contrast, a student who can't understand what a foreigner said will often become embarrassed or frustrated, and is likely to leave the conversation.

3) In China, there are simply more opportunities to listen to English than to speak. This means that students with relatively good listening skills will find more opportunities to use their English - for example, by listening to the radio - so their English is more likely to keep getting better.

4) Last but not least, when students' listening skills are good, their speaking is likely to improve also. Listening is one of the main ways students learn more English and become comfortable with the language, so students who listen a lot generally find that their speaking also improves.

VI. Teaching Ideas

Focused Listening activities are listening tasks in which you help students predict what they might hear by first giving them clues. These clues can be in the form of 1) outlines; 2) questions to answer; or 3) forms or graphs to fill in. These clues help students focus their listening, and make listening practice easier (especially for lower level students).

Procedure:

Prepare a little talk of some kind. This can be a story, a lecture, etc.

Decide what kind of clues you will provide. These might consist of:

a set of questions to answer;

a form to fill out;

- a graph to fill in;
- a partial outline to fill in, etc.

Write the clues on the board, or give students a handout. Ask students to look this over so that they know what they should listen for. You might also ask them to predict what your talk will be about -- this enhances motivation and encourages active listening.

Tell students to listen to your talk and quickly note down information that will help them complete the task. (If you want them to write out full answers to your questions, tell them you will give them time to write after the talk.)

Give your talk.

Check student comprehension (see "Talks and Lectures" below).

Talks and Lectures are useful for helping students improve their listening and note-taking skills, especially for improving their ability to guess when listening for a longer time and when it is not possible to catch every word.

Procedure:

Prepare the talk.

Tell students what you are going to talk about, and ask them to take notes. (Taking notes forces them to listen more carefully.) Students may need some instruction on how to take notes.

You might also give them some clues in the form of questions to answer, an outline, or so forth. (See "Focused Listening" above.)

Visual aids are also often very helpful.

Give the talk. If students' listening skills are not strong, it is very easy to lose your audience, so keep an eye out for the glazed-over look that says your audience has been left behind.

After the talk there are a number of ways to check comprehension:

- ask questions;
- have students write a summary of your talk;
- give a short quiz;
- have students write (and ask) follow-up questions based on your talk.

Total Physical Response (TPR) is a "Simon Says" type of activity in which the teacher gives students instructions, and they respond by doing what the teacher asks (rather than by speaking). Because students respond with action rather than speech, they can focus their attention more fully on listening to what the teacher says (rather than having at the same time to worry about constructing an oral response). This method is good for building listening skills, especially for students at lower levels, and can also be used to introduce or review vocabulary and even grammar structures. This activity can be especially useful for teaching basic classroom instructions to students with very low listening skills.

Procedure:

Before the activity, make a list of the instructions you wish to use. (Ex: "Open your books." "Turn to page six." "Touch your nose with your friend's pen." Etc.)

Conduct the activity in a game-like manner, repeating instructions and building for faster student responses.

If you want to make it more like a game, add the "Simon Says" element; i.e. tell students they should only carry out instructions if prefaced by "Simon Says."

Unit 5

Is it useful to practice speaking English with other students?

I. Before You Read

Survey several of your classmates asking: *How do you feel about practicing your English with other Chinese people? Why?* Be ready to report your findings.

II. Reading

Is it useful to practice speaking English with other students?

Chinese students often believe that the best way to improve their spoken English is to speak with native English speakers. They think this is best because they will hear "pure" English, and because they believe native speakers will correct their mistakes. For these reasons, Chinese students are sometimes reluctant to practice speaking English with other Chinese students.

Of course, it is good to practice speaking English with native speakers of English when the opportunity arises. However, there are several good reasons why Chinese students should also practice speaking to each other as often as possible.

First, the idea that native English speakers will correct students' errors is generally mistaken. Westerners consider it impolite to correct other people's language mistakes, so usually as long as Westerners understand what students are trying to say, they won't correct any mistakes. Students should not expect every speaker of English to be a language teacher.

Second, there are relatively few foreigners in China, so students who only practice with foreigners are likely not to have much practice at all. Students who wait until they have a foreigner to practice with will generally not be able to express their ideas very quickly or fluently, so when they do meet a foreigner they may not be able to carry on a conversation in English.

However, the most important reason students should practice speaking to each other is that such practice helps them learn to express their ideas in English more fluently. In speaking English, the most difficult thing is figuring out how to express ideas in English - before the person you are talking to loses patience and leaves. And this is something that students can practice by talking to each other.

No doubt, it is good to practice speaking English with people who speak English well. But practicing with each other is still a good way for students to build their fluency. Students who practice speaking English with each other will be better prepared to converse with foreigners when the opportunity arises.

Word and phrase list

native speakers (of a language): people who have spoken that language since childhood, those who regard it as their mother tongue.

reluctant to (do something): not want to (do something), not be very willing (to do something). Ex: *Even though Sam needs money, he is reluctant to ask his friends for a loan.*

to arise: to happen, to occur.

to express ideas: to put ideas into words.

to carry on a conversation: to have a conversation, to talk.

to figure out how to: to think of a way to (do something). Ex: *I can't figure out how to solve this mystery.*

to lose patience: to become impatient. Ex: *The third time Sally forgot to turn in her homework, her teacher began to lose patience with her.*

to build fluency: to become more fluent, to become able to use English more easily and smoothly. Ex: *The best way to build fluency in English speaking is to practice a lot.*

to converse with: to talk with

III. Comprehension Questions

According to the passage, why are Chinese students often reluctant to practice speaking English with each other?

Can you think of other reasons?

According to the passage, what are some reasons why is it good for students to practice speaking English with each other?

What other reasons can you think of?

IV. Discussion Activities

Pair/Small Group Task: "Finding opportunities to speak"

In China it is sometimes difficult for students to find opportunities to practice speaking English, so you need to be creative and actively make opportunities. In pairs or groups: 1) Make a list of ways to practice speaking English. Be as creative as possible, and list as many as possible. 2) Write these as completions to the sentence: I can practice speaking English by _____. (Ex: starting an English corner, chatting with my colleagues, etc.). 3) At the end, count up the number of ideas on your list.

Survey: "How should I run an English corner?"

Survey one or more classmates, asking them for advice on the best way to run an English corner. Take notes and be ready to report on the tips you are given. Write down each tip as a piece of advice. Ex: "You should _____ (always have a topic, etc.)."

Pair/Small Group Task: "Striking up a conversation"

Imagine you are walking in a park and you see a foreign tourist. You want to practice your English, so you need to strike up a conversation. In pairs or groups: 1) List one or more strategies for striking up a conversation with the foreign tourist. 2) State each strategy as a series of steps. Ex: "First you should _____. Then you should _____. 3) Be ready to explain your strategy to your teacher, and ask her (him) whether or not she (he) thinks it is a good one.

Other Discussion Questions:

- Do middle school students really need to improve their speaking? If so, why?
- What should the goals of English corners be?
- What is the best way to improve your speaking?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of having foreigners at English corners?
- Is it useful to practice by talking to yourself?
- (Foreign teacher question to students) In China, how important is it for people to develop the ability to speak English?

V. English Hotline

Is it useful to practice English by talking to myself?

Yes, this is a very useful way to practice. The hardest part of speaking in English is organizing your ideas and putting them into English quickly, and any kind of practice that makes you put ideas into English helps you build this fluency. So it is useful to practice speaking in English to walls, cats, trees, or anything else - even to yourself!

VI. Teaching Ideas

Cocktail Parties are a free form of speaking practice in which students get out of their seats and converse with different partners in a style similar to that of a Western cocktail party.

Procedure:

Explain the basic "rules" of a cocktail party to students:

Rule #1: You should talk to more than one person rather than talking to the same person the whole time.

Rule #2: After talking with someone for awhile, you should close your conversation and move on to someone else.

Tell students whether or not you want them to practice specific material (from a model dialogue, for example), how long they have to talk, and how many people you expect them to talk to.

Start the cocktail party, and join in.

When time is up, call students back to their seats.

Close by asking a few students about their conversations. This is generally more fun -- and other students will pay more attention -- if you ask a specific question appropriate to the activity (Ex: "Tell me a little about the most interesting conversation you had." "What new things did you learn?") rather than having students summarize all their conversations.

Pair/Small Group Tasks are good for speaking practice because many students have a chance to speak. Shy or nervous students are under less pressure in small groups because they can choose not to speak, but still find it relatively easy to speak up when they choose to.

Procedure:

Place students in pairs or groups of three or four. (Larger groups give fewer people chances to speak.)

Give groups a clear task, so that they know exactly what they are supposed to do. (It is harder for groups to get started if you only tell them to "talk about" something.) Good examples of tasks include:

"Make a list": (Ex: List the most beautiful places in your country.)

"List reasons why _____": (Ex: List ten reasons why middle school children should -- or shouldn't -- study a foreign language.)

"List advantages and disadvantages of _____": (Ex: List the advantages and disadvantages of using standardized examinations to determine who should have the opportunity to enter university.)

"Prepare directions": (Ex: Prepare a list of directions for how your foreign teacher should bargain at the market. Or: Make a list of suggestions on how to choose a good bicycle).

"Decide whether or not ____": (Ex: Decide whether or not middle school students should be allowed to date.)

"Decide whether you agree or disagree with (a statement)" (Such as "It should be against the law to not wear a seatbelt when riding in a car.")

"Rank/prioritize": (Ex: In order of importance, rank China's ten greatest heroes.)

"Make a plan": (Ex: Plan the ideal three-day local vacation trip for your English teacher.)

"Solve a problem": (Ex: A foreign teacher is interested in world news but can't understand TV news programs in China. What suggestions do you have as to how she/he can find out about world news while in China?).

Make sure every group appoints one recorder to write down what the group decides. (It is generally very helpful if one person in each group takes notes for the group. This tends to bring the group together - they all tend to look at the same piece of paper. It also makes it easier for you to see how groups are doing, and makes it easier for you to join in by commenting on a good point they have made, making a suggestion, or offering a correction. In a noisy room, looking at the notes is often also the only way you can know what is going on in each small group.

While groups discuss, the teacher should wander from group to group, listening in and looking at what they have written. As you look at their lists, help with language difficulties or just comment on their ideas.

To close, have each group briefly report their conclusions as you take notes on the board. When it comes time for groups to report, it is better to ask each group to report just one comment/idea at a time rather than having one group give a long report while others sit and wait. (If one group reports everything first, the others are often left with not much to say.) Make several rounds of the class if necessary.

Surveys: For a survey, each student asks the same questions to several different classmates. This is a good way for students to repeatedly practice questions and answers in a format which encourages genuine communication. For lower level students, this is one of the easiest formats for relatively free communicative interaction.

Procedure:

- 1) Decide on a topic or list of questions, especially topics or questions that you are genuinely interested in. This activity works better when you are genuinely curious about the results of the survey, and when students are too.
- 2) Tell students what the purpose/topic of the survey is. Either list the questions you want them to ask or give them a general topic and have them write down their own questions. If you want them to generate their own questions (either individually or in groups) give them time to do this. Variation: Have students work in groups to prepare questions, and then each member of the group asks the same questions. Later they can then get back together to compare notes and report results.
- 3) Tell students how many classmates they are expected to survey, and approximately how long they have to do it in. Alternatively, assign a time limit for each short interview.
- 4) Have them conduct the survey. Having students move around the class as they conduct their interviews makes things more lively and keeps everyone awake. You may need to occasionally encourage them to move on to a new partner. You can either join in or wander and eavesdrop.
- 5) Close the activity by having a few students (or groups) report their findings.

Unit 6

Should I try to pronounce English like a native speaker?

I. Before You Read

- Survey your classmates asking the following question: *Do you think Chinese students should try to pronounce English like native speakers? Why or why not?* Be ready to report your findings.

II. Reading

Should I try to pronounce English like a native speaker?

Most teachers of English would agree that good pronunciation is important for students of English. However, many teachers would question the idea that all students should try to sound like native speakers.

First, the goal of native pronunciation is not very realistic. Some students can learn to pronounce English very well, and a few may even become so good that they could pass for native speakers. However, most Chinese students will inevitably have at least some Chinese accent. This is because once students' English pronunciation habits are formed, these habits are not easy to change. Through hard work, students can improve their pronunciation and achieve English pronunciation that is quite clear and accurate. However, no matter how hard they work, most students find it impossible to erase their Chinese accents completely.

Second, it generally isn't a good idea for Chinese students to have perfect pronunciation. This may sound strange, but it is true. In many ways, speaking English with a Chinese accent - even a slight one - is useful for Chinese students because it protects them from misunderstandings. We need to remember that there are many Chinese-Americans (Chinese-Canadians and so forth) who look Chinese but have a native understanding of Western culture. If a Chinese student has a native English accent, Westerners may mistakenly assume the student also has a native understanding of Western culture. The problem is that if the student does or says something that is not acceptable in Western culture, Westerners may assume this person is rude or stupid. On the other hand, if Westerners can tell from a student's accent that he/she is not a native Westerner, they won't expect the student to understand all the rules of Western culture. So a Chinese accent actually helps students by serving as a warning label that says "This person is Chinese, not Western!"

Students should learn to speak English with clear, standard English pronunciation. However, there is nothing wrong with having a bit of a Chinese accent.

Word and phrase list

to question (an idea): to think something may possibly not be true. Ex: *Some parents now question the idea that children should study hard all day.*

realistic: to be possible, something that can actually happen. Ex: *We can hope to live a long time, but it is not realistic to hope to live forever.*

to pass for: to be mistaken for; to have people think someone is something they are not. Ex: *When Hua Mulan dressed as a soldier, she could pass for a man.*

once _____, (then) _____: after _____ happens, then _____ happens. Ex: *Once I learn English, I will be able to talk with many foreigners.*

to speak with (an accent): to have (an accent). Ex: *Peter speaks English with a German accent.*

to have an understanding of: to understand. Ex: *Xiao Wang has a very good understanding of Chinese history.*

to assume: to think something is true without finding out if it is actually true or not. Ex: *We shouldn't just assume John knows what time our meeting is; we should call him and make sure.*

to serve as: to act as, to be used as. Ex: *If it starts raining suddenly, my big English textbook can serve as an umbrella.*

III. Comprehension Questions

- According to the passage, why is native English pronunciation not a realistic goal for most Chinese students?
- Why is it not a good idea for Chinese students to sound like native English speakers?
- Do you agree with the ideas in this passage?

IV. Discussion Activities

Activity: "Being a mimic"

One of the most important ways to improve your pronunciation is by learning to be a good mimic; in other words, learning to listen carefully and copy the way your teachers pronounce English. (The way children learn to pronounce their native language is by listening to their parents and then mimicking what they hear.)

Have your teacher read a passage (perhaps the one above) line by line while you try to mimic her/his pronunciation and intonation. Listen as carefully as possible before repeating - repeat what you hear your teacher say, not what you read from the passage. Try to sound as much like your teacher as possible.

Activity: "Pronunciation clinic"

It is important, especially for English teachers, to pronounce the sounds of English as accurately as possible.

In pairs or groups, list the sounds of English that you find most difficult. For each sound, list one or more example words. Be ready to report these to your teacher so you can work on improving your pronunciation of these sounds.

WARNING! Some of the sounds of standard British English (the standard used in Chinese middle schools) are quite different from those used in American English, especially some vowels and final "r" sounds.

Activity: "The stress game."

One way English conveys meaning is through the way different words are emphasized (stressed) in a sentence. Take, for example, the two sentences below:

- 1) Is that YOUR coat?
- 2) Is that your COAT?

In sentence #1, the question being asked is who the coat belongs to - you or someone else. In sentence #2, the question is whether the thing is a coat or something else.

To practice word stress in sentences, first have your teacher say the following sentence three different ways, and mimic her/his word stress:

- FRANK'S book is on the table. (Not Helen's.)
- Frank's BOOK is on the table. (Not his magazine.)
- Frank's book is on the TABLE. (Not on the chair.)

To practice further, do the following little dialogue with your teacher (and/or classmates):

- 1) Ask your teacher: "What did you want to know?"
- 2) Your teacher will answer one of the following:
 - a. "Whose book is on the table."
 - b. "What is on the table." Or
 - c. "Where Frank's book is."
- 3) Then you respond "Oh, Frank's book is on the table," stressing the right word.

Other Discussion Questions:

- What are some good ways you have found to help you improve your pronunciation?
- Why do you think some students have much better pronunciation than others?
- (Foreign teacher question to students) How do Chinese students usually go about trying to improve their English pronunciation? How about their Putonghua pronunciation?

V. English Hotline

Should I try to have a British accent or an American one?

The accent taught in most English textbooks in China is a standard British accent called "received pronunciation" or "RP" It is called this because this is the pronunciation traditionally received - in other words, considered acceptable - in the British court. This accent is also called the Queen's English (or King's English), or BBC English. This accent is widely known and respected throughout the world, so it is a good accent to have. However, because it is mainly an accent of the upper class, it is not actually the accent that most British people use.

There is no formal standard English accent in the United States, but the accents used by most people in the north, middle, and Western parts of America is often taken as an unofficial standard. This accent - or something close to it - is used by a very large number of Americans (and Canadians). Furthermore, the differences between accents in different parts of North America are not as great as those in Britain, so it is easier to find teachers who speak relatively "standard" North American English.

Which accent is better for Chinese students to learn? The standard British accent is officially recognized in China, but the American standard is used increasingly around the world, so either one is good. Often the most important question is which accent students have better access to. If students have more access to teachers and materials that use a British standard, they should probably learn that accent. Likewise, if they have more access to teachers and materials who use an American standard, they should probably learn an American accent. (Of course, for Chinese English teachers in China it is especially important to know and be able to use a standard British accent because this is the accent required in the materials used in most Chinese schools.)

VI. Teaching Ideas

Reverse Sentence Drill: One good way to practice pronunciation is to repeat sentences after your teacher, mimicking her/his pronunciation. However, if you are using sentences that are long and need to be broken up into parts, it is best to build them up from the end because this better preserves natural English sentence intonation.

Procedure:

- 1) Choose a dialog from a textbook, read it aloud line by line, and have students repeat after each line, trying to mimic your pronunciation and intonation.

- a. Students will pay more attention to pronunciation and intonation if they repeat after listening to you rather than reading aloud from a dialog in their textbook, so if the dialog is from one of their textbooks, have them close the book.
- 2) Each line students repeat in this way needs to be fairly short so as not to overload their short-term memory, so you may have to break long sentences into shorter parts. When repeating longer sentences, have students build it up from the end (to preserve normal intonation). Ex:

had ever eaten?
the best she had ever eaten?
my cooking is the best she had ever eaten?
Did she really say my cooking is the best she had ever eaten?

Jazz Chants are short dialogues which are chanted rather than spoken, with the natural rhythm of the sentence emphasized - even exaggerated - so that it comes out sounding like a chant from a basketball game. Students often find jazz chants more fun than traditional choral drill, and they help students get used to the natural rhythm of English.

Procedure:

- 1) Before class, choose a dialogue and practice chanting it. Find and emphasize the natural rhythm of each sentence.
- 2) In class, chant out the dialogue one line at a time, having students chant after you.
- 3) Close by chanting through the entire dialogue.

Unit 7

Which is more important - communication or correct grammar?

I. Before You Read

- In groups, discuss the following question: *If a student were to ask you which is more important, grammar or communication, what would you answer? Why?*

II. Reading

Which is more important - communication or correct grammar?

One question Chinese students often ask is: Which is more important - grammar or communication? For spoken English, the simple answer is that, on the whole, communicating is more important than correct grammar. After all, the main goal of speaking English is to communicate ideas, not just to avoid making grammar mistakes. However, this certainly does not mean that grammatical accuracy is not important. In fact, whether or not a student can communicate sometimes depends on whether they get their grammar right.

All languages use grammar to some degree as a way to convey meaning, but some languages rely on grammar more than others. English is one language in which grammar makes a big difference in meaning. Consider, for example, the two following sentences:

- 1) I like dogs.
- 2) I like dog.

Both of these sentences are grammatically correct, but the meaning of the two sentences is quite different. Sentence #1 means "I like the kind of animal called dogs." (When countable nouns are referred to in general, the plural form should be used.) On the other hand, sentence #2 means "I like dog meat." (The singular form of some countable nouns may be used as mass nouns, and for many animals - such as chicken, turkey, snake, or even monkey - this means their meat.) Even though there is only one small grammatical difference between these two sentences, it makes a big difference in meaning.

Mistakes in grammar do not always result in communication problems, and English speakers are often able to understand sentences that have grammatical errors. However, grammar mistakes can sometimes make a sentence difficult to understand, or may change its meaning completely, so this is one reason why students should try to be as grammatically accurate as possible.

A second reason grammatical accuracy is important is that poor grammar may give people the impression that students aren't very smart. To a large extent, people judge how intelligent other people are by how well they speak and use language. Students who make many serious grammar errors simply don't sound as intelligent as students whose English is more accurate. Of course, students don't need to worry too much about making grammar errors; English speakers know that it is not easy to learn English, and they generally don't have a bad impression of a student just because he/she makes a few grammar mistakes. However, if students want to be taken seriously and respected by English speakers, it helps if their English is as accurate as possible.

Word and phrase list

on the whole: in general. Ex: *There are some parts of this book that are boring, but on the whole it is quite interesting.*

to convey: to communicate, to carry. Ex: *He didn't say that he was happy, but the smile on his face conveyed his joy.*

to result in: to cause, to make something happen. Ex: *Her long hours of English study resulted in good test scores.*

to give the impression that: to cause (someone) to think that something is true. Ex: *The bored look on his face gave me the impression that he didn't like the movie.*

to judge (A) by (B): to use B as a way to decide whether or not A is good. Ex: *You can't always judge a book by its cover.*

to be taken seriously: to be respected and paid attention to. Ex: *If you want your employer to take you seriously, you will have to work harder.*

III. Comprehension Questions

- According to the passage, which is more important in spoken English - grammatical accuracy or communication?
- Do you agree?
- What is the first reason the passage gives for why it is important for students to learn grammar?
- What is the second reason?

IV. Discussion Activities

Pair/Small Group Task: "What is the best way to learn English grammar?"

Many Chinese students study English grammar for years, but still make many grammar mistakes when they speak English. If a student asked you for advice on how to learn English - and how to use it accurately - what would you say?

In pairs or groups, list five pieces of good advice you could give. (Try to think of tips that the student wouldn't already know.)

Survey: "What is the hardest thing in English grammar?"

Survey several of your classmates, asking them what they think the hardest thing in English grammar is. Ask them to give you specific examples for each point they make. Be ready to report your findings to the class.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Explaining grammar"

Pick one (or more) of the English grammar points that came up in the "What is the hardest thing in English grammar?" activity above. Then prepare an English explanation of that grammar point, and be prepared to explain the point to the class. (Try to keep your explanation clear and simple, and provide examples.)

Survey: "Learning grammar"

Survey several of your classmates asking the following: Which do you find more helpful as you try to understand English grammar - explanation of grammar rules or examples? See if your classmates tend to agree in their responses, or if they have different views.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Making grammar lessons interesting."

Imagine that a new teacher has come to you for advice. She complains that her students find grammar too boring, and she doesn't know what to do.

In pairs or groups, make a list of tips for this new teacher on how to make teaching of grammar points more interesting for both students and her. Each tip should be written as a piece of advice. Be ready to present your advice, and to explain why each tip is important.

Other Discussion Questions:

How can you learn from grammar mistakes you make?

What is the best way to learn grammar?

How important do you think grammatical accuracy is in writing?

How important is a knowledge of English grammar for listening or reading in English?

(Foreign teacher question to students) How important do you think it is to study grammar?

V. English Hotline

Who decides what is grammatically correct and incorrect?

Students sometimes seem to think that English grammar rules originated in grammar books, and that they stay the same forever. Of course, however, grammar "rules" actually come first from people. In fact, we might say that grammar rules are the shared language customs of a group of people, shared ways of using the form and order of words to convey different meanings. And, just as the customs of a culture tend to change over time, grammar rules also tend to change.

If you look at an English book from 500 years ago, you can clearly see that English grammar has changed since that time. For example, 500 years ago an English speaker would have said "thou shalt" instead of today's "you shall" or "you should." And even today English grammar continues to change. For example, 20 years ago an English speaker would probably have said "Did anyone forget his coat?" However, today many English speakers would say "Did anyone forget their coat?" This particular change is caused largely by the fact that many people are not comfortable using the word "his" to describe both women and men, but it is still a good example of grammatical change.

So who decides what is grammatically correct? Of course, grammar books and language experts can sometimes tell users of a language what is right and wrong. But in the long run, popular consensus tends to be more powerful, and when most of the people change the way they use language, the grammar books and experts will eventually also change too.

VI. Teaching Ideas

Dictogloss is a listening exercise in which you read a short passage to students and have them write down what you say. Unlike Dictation, however, in Dictogloss you read the whole passage to students several times at a fairly natural pace rather than stopping after each sentence. Students then work together in groups to reconstruct the passage. Because they cannot copy down every word, as they would in Dictation, Dictogloss forces students to use their knowledge of grammar as they reconstruct the passage.

Procedure:

Choose a short passage or dialogue. The passage might only be 5-10 sentences long.

Before reading a passage to students, provide context by telling them a little about who wrote the passage, why it was written, or what it is about.

Before reading a dialogue to students, it is very important that you help students know who is speaking when -- otherwise, it is easy for them to be confused as to who is saying which sentence.

One way to do this is changing voices and body position for the different characters, acting each one out.

Another is putting an outline on the board of who speaks and how many times.

Example:

Jim: _____.

Judy: _____.

Jim _____.

For the first two times you read the passage to students, first instruct students to listen and try to remember. Then read the passage twice at fairly normal speed, not pausing between sentences.

Before the third reading, tell students they may jot down key words and phrases (not every word). Then read the dialogue a third time, somewhat more slowly.

Have students try to reconstruct and write down the passage as best they remember it. Tell students they need not use exactly the same words as the original, but the meaning should not be different and the English should be grammatically correct. (This can be done either individually or in groups. Working individually takes less time; working in groups provide opportunity for speaking practice and mutual assistance.)

To check students' work, one option is to write the original on the board and have students check their own work. As they check the teacher can circulate and answer questions, particularly on the grammatical accuracy of what they wrote. A general question-and-answer time may also be helpful. Another option for checking is to have groups write their passages on the board, but this can be slow.

A Dictogloss exercise can be made more or less difficult by altering the length and difficulty of the passage or dialogue, by reading the passage fewer or more times, by reading more quickly or slowly, and by adding or eliminating pauses between sentences. The right level of difficulty is that most students are able to write down the gist of the passage after the third hearing. If they get most of it after the first reading, it is too easy.

Unit 8

Is intensive reading really reading?

I. Before You Read

- In groups, prepare an answer to the following question: *If a student asked you to explain what "reading" is, how would you define it?*

II. Reading

Is intensive reading really reading?

This question may seem a bit strange. Obviously, intensive reading is at least one kind of reading, a slow, careful reading style that is appropriate for very difficult texts. However, in many ways, intensive reading is really more of a language study method than a form of reading. Intensive reading is useful for English study because its slow speed allows students to stop and look new words up in the dictionary; it also allows students to pause and carefully study long or difficult sentences to get a better understanding of their grammar.

However, intensive reading alone will not make students good readers. In fact, too much intensive reading may actually cause students to develop bad reading habits. For example, because intensive reading requires students to pay attention to every detail, it often encourages the habit of paying more attention to the vocabulary and grammar of a text than to its overall meaning. It also encourages the habit of reading English very slowly, and students who become accustomed to reading English in this way often never learn to read any faster. Finally, intensive reading tends to be relatively boring, so students who fall into the habit of reading everything intensively often come to dislike reading in English.

The main purpose of most reading is to understand the meaning of the text, usually as quickly as possible, so extensive reading is more like "real" reading than intensive reading is. In order to become good readers, students need to practice reading extensively as well as intensively. It is good for students to read intensively sometimes so they can study a text's grammar and vocabulary. They also need to read intensively if a text is very difficult. But it is equally important for them to spend time reading texts in an extensive style, focusing mainly on the meaning of the text, not stopping to look up every new word.

Furthermore, to become good readers, students need to read a lot - entire books or magazines - instead of just short articles or passages from English textbooks. Just as a runner must run a lot every day in order to build muscles for running, good readers need to read frequently and extensively to build good reading skills.

Word and phrase list

is appropriate for: is good for, suits. Ex: *Sweaters are too hot to wear in the winter, but they are appropriate for winter.*

to look up (words): to find words (in the dictionary). Ex: *If you want to know what this word means, look it up in the dictionary.*

_____ alone: just, only. Ex: *Exercise alone won't make you slim; you also need to eat less.*

to encourage (a habit): to cause someone to develop (a habit). Ex: *Watching too much television encourages laziness.*

tends to be: usually is, often is. Ex: *For some reason, girls tend to be better at learning language than boys are.*

to fall into (a habit): to develop a (bad) habit. Ex: *People who always stay up late often fall into the habit of getting up very late.*

to come to dislike: to begin to not like. Ex: *At first I thought Albert was a nice person, but later I came to dislike him.*

just as _____, _____: (Used for comparing two similar things.) Ex: *Just as flowers need sunshine on order to grow, children need sunshine in order to be happy.*

III. Comprehension Questions

- According to the passage, what are the main purposes of intensive reading?
- What are some things students can learn through intensive reading?
- What are some bad habits intensive reading may encourage?
- What is the main purpose of extensive reading?
- How do students become good readers?

IV. Discussion Activities

Survey: "What I like to read"

It is much easier to develop the habit of reading in English if you can find things in English that you enjoy reading. Talking with friends and classmates is one good way to get new suggestions for things to read.

Survey several of your classmates. First ask what kinds of things they enjoy reading most in Chinese. Then ask what kinds of things in English they have found and enjoy reading.

Pair/Small group Task: "The best way to read"

Imagine that you meet a young office clerk at an English corner. She has a textbook that has many short articles in English, about 1-2 pages each, but no vocabulary list. She asks your advice on the best way for her to study English with this textbook.

In pairs or groups, decide what advice you would give here. List your advice as a series of steps she should follow in working with each article. (Ex: "First you should _____. Next _____. Then _____. Finally _____.") Be ready to explain why you would have her study the articles in this way.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Should I read intensively or extensively?"

Imagine that you are going to carry out a self-study English program this coming semester, studying English 30 minutes each morning before work. You are trying to decide whether you should spend this time doing intensive reading or extensive reading.

In pairs or groups, first list all the advantages and disadvantages of spending the time reading intensively; then do the same for extensive reading. (Some advantages and disadvantages of intensive and extensive reading are suggested in the reading passage above, but try to think of others as well.) Then decide your final plan for how you will spend your time.

Pair/Small Group Task: "When should I use the dictionary?"

Imagine that a university student comes up to you at an English corner, and he wants to improve his extensive reading skills in English. He knows he shouldn't stop to look up every new word in the dictionary, but he doesn't know how much he should use his dictionary and when.

Make a list of "rules" for when he should look up words in his dictionary. (Write these to complete the following sentence: "You should look words up in the dictionary if _____.") Then make a similar list for when he should just try to guess what an unfamiliar word means instead of looking it up.

Other Discussion Questions:

- What is the best way to improve your reading speed in English?
- What is the best way to improve your reading comprehension in English?
- (Foreign teacher question to students) What kinds of English reading materials are available in China in the areas where you live?

V. English Hotline

To build reading skills in English, is it better to practice reading texts that are relatively difficult or relatively easy?

Obviously it is best to practice by reading material that is just right - not so hard that you always have to stop and use a dictionary, but also not so easy that it isn't challenging at all. But if you can't find something that is just right, is it better to practice reading things that are a little too hard or a little too easy?

For most Chinese students of English, it is probably better to spend more time reading material that is relatively easy. This is because most Chinese have had years of practice reading relatively difficult texts. Just as a balanced diet requires different kinds of foods, building good reading skills requires different kinds of practice, and most Chinese students of English get too much intensive reading practice and not enough extensive reading. For extensive reading, it is best to use material that is relatively easy - easy enough that you can understand most of the content even if you don't understand every word.

When choosing extensive reading material, one trick students can use is to find an English textbook they have not studied before that is one level easier than the book they are studying for intensive reading. For example, middle school students in Senior 2 might find a Senior 1 level textbook they have not studied before. Then they read the texts in the Senior 1 book extensively - in other words, read each text as quickly as possible, focusing on meaning and trying to guess the meanings of unfamiliar words instead of always stopping to look them up in the dictionary.

VI. Teaching Ideas

Skimming is a way of quickly looking over an article or book to get a rough idea of what it is about. Skimming is not the same thing as fast reading; instead, it is selective reading of a few parts of a text. In real life, people often skim to decide whether or not they want to read something. In class this is a useful pre-reading exercise before reading an article or a book.

Procedure:

- 1) Choose a passage for students to skim. (You can often have them skim whatever reading text they will study next in their textbook.)
- 2) Tell students their goal is to very quickly get a rough idea of what the text is about. Then give them the following instructions:
 - a. Read any titles of sub-titles.
 - b. Read the first few lines of the first paragraph.
 - c. Read the first line of one or two paragraphs on each page.
 - d. Read a few lines from the conclusion.
 - e. Look at any pictures or illustrations.

- 3) Give students a time limit.
 - a. This depends on the length of the text, but usually one or two minutes is enough.
 - b. Be sure you don't give students enough time to actually read the text.
- 4) Have students read.

While they read, you should count down the time, perhaps calling it out every minute. Also check to make sure students aren't trying to read.
- 5) To end the exercise, have students tell you as much as they can about the contents of the article. Good questions include:
 - What is it about?
 - What else can you tell me about it?
 - Does it look interesting?

Speed Reading is an exercise you can use in class to help students break the habit of reading slowly and intensively all the time. This exercise involves having students read a text as quickly as possible while you time them. This kind of practice should be used regularly. The goal is for students to gradually increase their reading speeds.

Procedure:

- 1) Before class:
 - a. Choose a text for reading practice. Ideally this should be relatively short (1-4 pages), and not extremely difficult.
 - b. Estimate or count the number of words in the text.
 - c. Set the time limit you will give students for reading the text. (One way to estimate a reasonable time limit is to time yourself while you read the text; then give students that amount of time or a little more.)
- 2) In class, give the students the following instructions:
 - a. Read the text as quickly as you can. Try to finish before the time is up.
 - b. Don't use a dictionary.
 - c. It is better to read the whole text quickly than to read the first part carefully.
- 3) Then tell students the time limit, give students the text, and start timing.
 - a. You can either call out the time each minute or so, or mark the time on the board.
 - b. Be sure to tell students a minute or so before time is up.
- 4) After the time is up, check by either using comprehension questions or having students summarize the main points of what they read.

Be sure you don't reward students for focusing on details, especially at the beginning of the reading. Your goal is to encourage them to get all the main ideas quickly, not to pay attention to details.
- 5) At the end of the exercise, have students calculate their word-per-minute score and make a note of it. Over time, they should try to improve this score.

Unit 9

What is involved in learning vocabulary?

I. Before You Read

- What does it really mean to "learn" new vocabulary? In groups, list the different things you need to learn when learning new vocabulary words.

II. Reading

What is involved in learning vocabulary?

Sometimes students think that "learning vocabulary" simply means memorizing the English equivalents of Chinese words; "dog" = "gou" and so forth. However, English words are often not exact equivalents of Chinese words, and the way English words are used is often different from their Chinese equivalents. So in order to really learn a new word, students need to learn several things:

- What a word's other meanings are. Many words have more than one meaning; for example, "to dog (someone)" means "to follow (someone) persistently." Also, "dogs" can even mean "feet."
- How it is used grammatically. For example, as noted in an earlier lesson, "dogs" refers to a kind of animal; but "dog" refers to a kind of meat.
- Whether it has a good or bad connotation. Many words either have a good meaning or a bad meaning. For example, the word "dog" often has a bad connotation, and if you call someone a dog, he/she will not be very happy.
- What words it often goes together with. Some words often go together with other words; for example, "dogs" is often found with the word "cats." ("It's raining cats and dogs." "They fight like cats and dogs.")
- Whether a word is formal or informal. For example, usually the word "dog" is neutral, neither formal nor informal. However, using "dogs" to mean someone's "feet" is very informal.
- How common a word is. Some words are very common, while others are very rare. For example, the word "dog" is much more common than the word "canine."

How can students learn so many things about a word? A good dictionary will help, but the best way to learn all these things about many words is by reading a lot. Just as the best way to get to know a person is to see her in many different situations, the best way to get to know a word is to encounter it over and over again, and this only happens if you read frequently and extensively.

Word and phrase list

equivalent: equal to something else, have the same value as something else. Ex: *One US dollar is equivalent to approximately 8 Chinese yuan.*

persistently: without stopping. Ex: *He persistently asked her to marry him until she finally agreed.*

connotation: a good or bad feeling associated with a word. Ex: *Americans consider independence very important, so for Americans the word "reliance" has a bad connotation.*

III. Comprehension Questions

- In order to really learn a new English word, what are some of the things students need to learn about the word?
- How can students learn these things?

IV. Discussion Activities

Survey: "How do you learn new words?"

Quickly survey several other students, asking them how they study new vocabulary. Have them be as specific as possible. See if you can get any new ideas that would be useful to you.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Brainstorming - Ways to memorize vocabulary"

Imagine that your English teacher has given you a list of 50 new English words to memorize tonight, so you need to think of ways to memorize all these words. (For most people, simply looking at a new word on a vocabulary list is not enough to memorize it.)

In groups, list as many ways as you can think of to memorize English vocabulary words. You should "brainstorm." (In brainstorming, the goal is to list as many ideas as possible -- it doesn't matter if the ideas are good or not.) After you brainstorm a long list, go back and pick out the best or most interesting ideas, and be ready to share them with the class.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Teaching vocabulary"

Imagine that a new (inexperienced) English teacher asks you about how to teach vocabulary. In groups, decide on the five most important pieces of advice that you would give to him/her. State each as a sentence completion: "You should (not) _____." Be ready to explain why each piece of advice is important.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Memorizing the dictionary"

In an effort to build their English vocabulary, some students try to memorize a dictionary of English words.

In groups, list all the advantages of this strategy, and all the disadvantages. Be as specific as possible, and be ready to explain each to the class.

Other Discussion Questions:

What is the best way to study vocabulary?

What is the best way to learn the proper usage of new vocabulary?

(Foreign teacher question to students) How do students in China usually go about studying vocabulary?

V. English Hotline

How important is it to learn English slang?

The simple answer is that it isn't very important for most Chinese students to learn English slang. In particular, it is usually not a good idea to study slang expressions in books and then try to use them. In order to understand why, we need to understand what "slang" really is.

Slang isn't just informal English. Real "slang" consists of fashionable words and expressions that are used by people to show that they are part of a certain group. For

example, many Americans in the 1960s used the word "groovy" (good) to show that they were modern and "cool." However, once everybody started using the word "groovy," it wasn't special anymore, so most people stopped using it. (Now people would probably laugh at anyone who used the word "groovy.")

One reason why it is not a good idea to learn slang from books is that real slang changes too quickly. Most slang expressions don't last very long, so by the time someone collects slang expressions, puts them in a book, and publishes the book, many slang expressions are already out of date. (A few slang expressions survive and become a regular part of the language, but not very many.)

Another reason not to learn slang from books is that proper use of slang is also closely related to culture, and when students use slang in ways that aren't culturally appropriate, it often sounds quite funny. When students learn a slang expression from a book, they often don't learn the right social context for using the expression. So when they actually try to use the expression, they often use it in a way that is socially inappropriate, and they are likely to be laughed at.

The only really good way to learn slang is to spend lots of time with English speakers who use slang, and to learn to use it the same way they do. This way, students not only learn the slang expressions, they also learn the right social context for using them. Otherwise, it is probably best only to try to understand slang expressions, not to use them very often.

VI. Teaching Ideas

(**Note:** Building vocabulary is a long-term effort that students should work on regularly. The methods suggested below are mainly intended as ways to teach students how to study vocabulary regularly.)

Memorizing vocabulary lists: One good way to learn the basic meaning of new words is by memorizing vocabulary lists. This generally requires concentration and repetition.

Procedure:

- 1) Give students a list of new vocabulary words, and also a list that has explanations of their meaning (either in English or in Chinese).
- 2) Give students a time limit, and ask them to memorize the list. (Giving them a strict time limit will encourage them to concentrate.)
- 3) When time is up, take the explanations away. Then ask students to test themselves, seeing how many of the new words they still know.
- 4) After the self-test, return the explanation sheet and have students check their work. Then collect the sheets.
- 5) The next day, do the same thing, using the same sheet. Students will probably discover that they have already forgotten the meaning of some of the words they "learned" the day before. (Within 24 hours, students will normally forget much of what they learn. This is why students need to regularly and repeatedly review new words in order to really memorize them.)
- 6) Conclude by telling students that they should keep a vocabulary notebook, and study it regularly. They should review new words until they can remember the meaning quickly and accurately, even if they haven't seen the word for a day or more.

Reading passages and vocabulary: Intensive reading is one of the best ways to learn both the meaning and usage of new vocabulary.

Procedure:

- 1) Choose a reading passage that contains vocabulary students don't know. (You can often just use a passage from whatever textbook students are using.)
- 2) Have students read the passage, and mark any words they don't know.
- 3) After they finish reading, have students go back and study the words. They should:
 - a. List the words, either in a notebook or even right in the margins of the book.
 - b. Find out each what each word means (as used in the passage) and make a note of the meaning.
 - c. Pay attention to how the word is used grammatically in the context of the passage.
- 4) It is often a good idea to have students memorize a short simple phrase or sentence that correctly uses the new word. (For learning usage, it is better to memorize phrases or even sentences instead of just individual words.)
- 5) Students should review their new word list day after day until they can quickly and accurately remember what the new words mean and how to use them, even after not having seen the word for a day or more.

Unit 10

How important is it to be able to write in English?

I. Before You Read

- Conduct a survey of your classmates, asking: *Do you think it is very important for students in China to learn to write well in English? Why or why not?* Be ready to report your findings.

II. Reading

How important is it to be able to write in English?

For Chinese students who intend to study abroad or work in a multi-national company, it is obviously important to learn how to write well in English. But what about other Chinese students? Many Chinese middle school and university students assume that they will never have much opportunity to write in English. Learning how to write well in a foreign language takes a significant amount of time and effort, so would it be better if they spent their time learning something more useful?

The answer to this question may be "yes," at least for some students. English reading or speaking skills are more likely to be useful in China than the ability to write in English, so if students only have limited time to spend studying English they might be better off if they invested that time in reading or speaking practice.

However, students shouldn't give up on English writing too quickly - it offers some benefits students might not be aware of:

- For one thing, writing practice helps students memorize vocabulary. Students often can't really memorize a word until they have a chance to use it, and writing practice gives students the opportunity to use new words they have learned. (Of course, students can also use new words in speaking, but writing is slower, so it allows students to think more before they try a new word.)
- For another, writing provides a good chance to experiment with the usage of new words. When students use a new word in speaking, they are not likely to be corrected if they make a mistake, so they won't know if they have used the new word correctly or not. When writing, they are much more likely to be corrected, so they can see whether they have used the new word correctly or not.
- Finally, writing provides a good opportunity for students to improve their grammar. It is easier for English teachers to give students feedback about the grammar in their written English than in their spoken English.

However, there is one more reason why students should seriously consider learning to write in English: students who learn to write English well will probably find an opportunity to use their written English skills. Naturally, students who don't learn to write well in English are not likely to have the chance use their written English skills. But it is quite likely that students whose English writing is good will find opportunities to use that skill. (After all, not many Chinese people become good at English writing, so there is plenty of opportunity for students who do learn to write well in English.) Most opportunities don't just fall from the sky; rather they are often created by people through hard work.

Word and phrase list

to intend to: to plan to. Ex: *I intend to study French as my second foreign language.*

(to be) better off: to be in a better condition. Ex: *I think you would be better off if you got more sleep each night.*

to give up on: to stop having hope for (someone, something); to stop trying to do something. Ex: *Xiao Wang's English still isn't very good, but don't give up on him; he has been studying especially hard recently, so his English may improve.*

For one thing, _____ . For another, _____ : (Used for a list or series of reasons.)
Ex: *There are several reasons you should get more sleep. For one thing, you will feel better. For another, you will be able to study better.*

to allow: to create an opportunity. Ex: *Getting up early allows me to study before breakfast.*

to give (someone) feedback: to give (someone) information about whether something is good or not. Ex: *My teacher didn't give me any feedback after my speech yesterday, so I don't know if she thought it was good or not.*

III. Comprehension Questions

According to the passage, is it always good for Chinese students to invest a lot of time in improving their English writing?

What are some reasons why practicing English writing may benefit Chinese students?

What does the passage say about "opportunity" in general? Do you agree?

IV. Discussion Activities

Survey: "What's so hard about writing in English?"

Survey several of your classmates, asking them what they find most difficult about writing in English. Take notes and be ready to report on what you learn from your survey.

Survey: "Do you make outlines?"

Survey several classmates, asking them how they prepare before writing a paper (either in English or in Chinese). Do they make notes first? Write an outline? Be ready to report your findings to the class.

Pair/Small Group Activity: "Learning from corrections"

One thing writing teachers all know is that even when they correct errors on students' compositions, the students often make the same mistakes again next time.

In pairs or groups, make a list of things students should do so that they learn from grammar corrections teachers make. (Or, make a list of things writing teachers should do to ensure that students learn from grammar corrections.)

Pair/Small Group Activity: "Should teachers correct every error?"

When correcting students English compositions, some English teachers feel it is best to correct every mistake they find; other teachers feel this is not necessary.

In pairs or groups, first list all the advantages of correcting every error; then list the disadvantages. Finally, decide what your group thinks English teachers should do, and be prepared to explain your opinion to the class.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Rules for good writing"

Imagine that you have been asked to give a short talk to middle school students on how to be a good writer in English. You have been asked to make five points.

In pairs or groups, decide which five points you would make, and write each one down as a recommendation. (Ex: "You should always remember to check your spelling.") Be ready to explain why each is important.

Teacher Interview: "Resumés"

One thing many Chinese students are interested in learning to write in English is a resumé. Before class, write a draft resumé in English and then give it to your English teacher for feedback.

In class, interview your teacher, asking questions about the best way to write English resumés. (This could be done "press conference" style, with different students or groups taking turns asking questions.) Based on what you learn, and on feedback from your teacher about your resumé, revise and improve your English resumé.

Other Discussion Questions:

- How important is it for students in China to learn to write in English?
- What is the best way for students to improve their English writing?
- Is it a good idea to have students edit each others' papers before the teacher reads them? (This is called "peer editing.") What are the advantages and disadvantages of doing this?
- If students don't have the opportunity to take an English writing class, what other ways can they find to practice their English writing?
- (Foreign teacher question to students) What kinds of English writing tests do students in China have to take? What are the requirements of each?

V. English Hotline

If I don't have an English teacher to correct what I write, how can I find my own mistakes?

Obviously you won't always have an English teacher around to edit what you write or correct any mistakes you make, so it is important to learn to edit and correct your own work. While you may not be able to find all your errors, there are several things you can do to help you find and correct many of them.

The first trick is that you shouldn't try to correct your composition just after you finish writing it. For one thing, you will probably be too tired to notice any mistakes. For another, you will probably be too tired to care very much. It is better to put your composition away for awhile, at least overnight, and then look at it again the next day. By the next day, your mind will be fresher, so you will be more able to find problems. You will probably also have more energy, so you will be willing to try harder to correct and improve the composition.

Of course, even after a night's rest, you won't always be able to tell whether what you have written is right. But you can find the places where you are not sure whether what you wrote is correct or not. Then check these in a dictionary or grammar book.

Another trick is to use the spell-check and grammar-check programs on a computer. Many English word processing programs have a spell-check and even grammar-check program that will find spelling and grammar problems and make suggestions for correcting them. These programs won't find all your mistakes, and even when they do find a problem you won't always know which of the suggested changes is the correct one. However, spell-check and grammar-check will help you find many problems, and if you pay attention they can often help you learn how to correct them.

VI. Teaching Ideas

Speed writing is a simple exercise where you have students write as much as they can about a topic in a very short amount of time. This is often fun, and it helps students break the bad habit of always writing slowly - and painfully. (Surprisingly, you will find that students often don't make any more mistakes writing fast than they do writing more slowly.)

Procedure:

- 1) Give students a topic (or even let them choose their own).
- 2) Tell them to write as much as they can in five minutes. Tell them not to worry too much about organization or grammar; they should just write as much as possible as fast as possible.
- 3) After time is up, have students count the number of words they wrote to see who wrote most.
- 4) After the exercise, these compositions can be thrown away. However, you can also use them in various ways in writing class:
 - a. You can have students use them for practice finding and correcting grammar mistakes.
 - b. They can be used for editing practice if you have students re-write and improve them.
 - c. You can have students look back at them to see if there are any good ideas they might want to use for a composition.

Delayed revision: No matter what you tell students to do, most students don't revise compositions before they turn them in to the teacher. If they revise at all, they usually do it right after they finish writing the paper, when they are too tired to notice any mistakes or problems. "Delayed revision" is a simple trick where you make students wait before they try to revise a composition.

Procedure:

- 1) Have students write and turn in a composition.
- 2) Put the compositions in a drawer. Then, a week later, give them back to students and ask students to correct and revise them (either in class or as a homework assignment.)

This ensures that:

- a. students do revise.
- b. they don't revise right after they finish writing a composition.

Peer editing: "Peer editing" is having students exchange papers with each other and help each other by looking for mistakes and making suggestions.

Many Chinese students think it is a waste of time to have their classmates read over their compositions and make suggestions. However, it is very common even for native speakers to have other people read and make suggestions about things they write, so this should benefit Chinese students as well.

Peer editing often doesn't work very well the first time you try it, but as students get more used to it, it becomes more effective.

Procedure:

- 1) Have students write compositions and bring them to class.
- 2) In class, have students exchange papers with a classmate. Each student should then read the paper he/she is given and do the following three things:
 - a. Mark anything they think might be incorrect. (The writer can then check these.)

- b. Make one or more suggestions as to how to improve the paper. (Students should make constructive suggestions rather than criticisms.)
 - c. Compliment the writer on one good thing about the composition.
- 3) Then, either in class or for homework, have students revise and improve their compositions.

Story Bazaar: This is an activity where students write stories for each other instead of for the teacher. This helps students get used to the idea of writing to share ideas and experiences with an audience (other than just the teacher).

Procedure:

- 1) Ask students to write true stories about themselves and their experiences. Good topics include:
 - a. The funniest thing that ever happened to me.
 - b. The most dangerous (or frightening) experience I ever had.
 - c. The most interesting person I have ever met. And so forth.
- 2) In class, instead of having students turn their compositions to you, have them just exchange compositions with each other and read. After they read another student's composition, they can ask more questions about it, talk about it, or share a story of their own (in English).
- 3) Then they exchange papers with another student, and so on.

Unit 11

Why is it important to study culture?

I. Before You Read

- In groups, discuss the following: *Most people in China say it is important to study Western culture along with English. What are some of the reasons why it would be important?* Make a list of reasons and be ready to share with the class.

II. Reading

Why is it important to study culture?

Most teachers and students of English agree that knowing about Western cultures makes it easier for students to communicate effectively with Westerners. Some reasons for this are quite obvious. For one thing, knowing about Western culture helps students better understand English. For example, it can be hard to understand Americans if you don't know anything about baseball because you may not understand what expressions like "strike out" and "throw a curve ball" mean. For another, understanding Western culture helps students avoid doing or saying things that would be offensive to a Westerner. For example, students are less likely to offend Westerners if they know that Westerners don't consider it polite to ask a woman's age or to ask people how much money they make.

However there are also other less obvious reasons why it is important to learn about Western culture. The first of these is that, in order to explain things effectively to Western people, it helps to have some idea of what they are likely to already know. Imagine the following conversation between a Western tourist and a Chinese tour guide, and ask yourself whether or not the tour guide's explanation is effective:

Tourist: Who was "Zhuge Liang"?

Tour guide: He was one of Liu Bei's generals during the Three Kingdoms period.

If the Westerner has heard of Liu Bei, or knows roughly when the Three Kingdoms period was, the guide's explanation will help. But if the Western tourist has no idea who Liu Bei was or when the Three Kingdoms period was, the explanation doesn't help at all.

A good explanation needs to be based on what the listener already knows. For example, in the situation above, the tour guide's explanation should start with things the tourist already knows; otherwise, the listener won't understand the explanation and will quickly lose interest. Also, however, an explanation shouldn't repeat too much of what the listener already knows; otherwise, it will be boring. For example, if the tour guide starts by explaining that China is a large country with a long history and so forth, the tourist may soon lose interest. So one reason Chinese students need to know about Westerners and their culture is that it helps Chinese students know how to give better explanations to Westerners.

A second reason it is good for students to know about Western culture has to do with persuasion. In order to effectively persuade a person to believe something, you need to base your argument on what they already believe. For example, imagine a student who is trying to persuade a Western tourist that Chinese medicine is good. If the student argues that Chinese medicine must be good because many old Chinese doctors say so, the argument isn't likely to be very effective. (The Westerners may not believe in old Chinese doctors.) However, if the student says many of these medicines have been scientifically tested, Westerners are more

likely to be persuaded. (Most Westerners trust scientific testing.) So students who know what most Westerners believe are more likely to be effective in persuading them.

For the reasons above - and many more - students who know as much as possible about Western culture will be able to communicate with Westerners more effectively.

Word and phrase list

to have some idea (of, about): to know something about. Ex: *Before students apply to study in Britain, they should have some idea of what studying in a British school is like.*

has to do with: is related to. Ex: *You said you were late to class because it was a sunny day, but I don't see what sunny weather has to do with being late to class.*

to base (A) on (B): to use B as a starting point for explaining or proving A. Ex: *We shouldn't base our teaching methods on theories that haven't been tested.*

to persuade (someone) that: to make someone believe something is true. Ex: *I talked to Frank for an hour, but I couldn't persuade him that he should study harder.*

to believe in: to trust that someone or something is true or reliable. Ex: *Students who believe in their teachers are more likely to do what their teachers ask them to.*

to be effective in (doing something): to do something well. Ex: *Alice is very effective in getting students' attention because she has a loud, clear voice.*

III. Comprehension Questions

- According to the passage, what are some reasons why students should study Western culture?
- When trying to explain something, what are two problems you should try to avoid?
- What is one characteristic of effective persuasion?

IV. Discussion Activities

Survey: "My culture"

Survey several classmates asking the following question: *Imagine that you have been invited to give a talk on "Chinese culture" to a group of foreigners who have never been to China before. What are the main things you would talk to them about?*

Pair/Small Group Task: "What is 'culture'?"

In pairs or small groups, discuss the question: What is "culture"? First list the things that are included under the word "culture." Then write a definition of the word.

Pair/Small Group Task: "The ten most famous people"

In pairs or small groups, list the ten most famous people (places, events) in Chinese history. List them in order of importance. Be prepared to explain why each is important, and what this person symbolizes to Chinese people today.

Pair/Small Group Task: "The tour"

Imagine you are a tour guide, and tomorrow you need to show a group of Western tourists the tomb of some famous ancient Chinese person. In order to be a good guide, you need to prepare to briefly but clearly tell the story of this person's life, and explain what he/she means to Chinese people today.

In pairs or groups, do the following: 1) First list the things you think Westerners would probably already know about the famous person. 2) Then list things you think

Westerners would be interested in about this famous person. 3) Finally, make an outline of your introduction, and be prepared to give it in class.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Why should you try Chinese medicine?"

Imagine that you work in a joint venture company, and many of your colleagues are Westerners. They are all curious about Chinese medicine, but don't believe in it, and aren't willing to try it when they get sick.

In pairs or groups, prepare one or more arguments to persuade your colleagues that Chinese medicine is good and that they should try it. As much as possible, try to base your argument on things you think they are likely to believe already.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Learning Western culture from movies"

One way people in China can learn about Western culture is by watching Western films. However, this approach to learning about culture has both advantages and disadvantages.

In pairs or groups, do the following: 1) First list the advantages of using films as a way to learn about Western culture. 2) Then list the disadvantages. 3) Finally, list tips you would give to Chinese students who are learning about Western culture by watching Western films.

Other Discussion Questions:

- What do you think are the most important things students should learn about foreign cultures?
- What is the best way to learn about a foreign culture?
- How would you explain who Zhuge Liang is to a Westerner?
- (Foreign teacher question to students) What are the main things you know about American or British culture (or whatever culture the foreign teacher is from)?

V. English Hotline

Should Chinese students only study British and American culture, or should they study the cultures of other Western countries also?

Ideally, students should study about the cultures of many Western countries. However, this may not be realistic. There are several countries where English is spoken as a first language, and many more where English is used widely even though it is not the first language. Because it is not possible to study the cultures of all of these countries, it may be most realistic to focus mainly on British and American culture.

One advantage of focusing on the British and American cultures is that these are both good representatives of Western culture in general, and students who know one or both of these cultures well will also learn quite a bit about other Western cultures. Also, by studying both of these cultures, students will see that even though British and American culture have much in common, there are also important differences. This will help students better understand that all Western countries and cultures are not completely the same.

Both British and American culture are important for students to understand, so there is nothing wrong with focusing students' study on these two cultures. However, when students have an opportunity to learn about another foreign culture, perhaps because they have a teacher from that culture, they should take advantage of that opportunity. The ultimate goal is not just to learn about one particular foreign culture - British or American. The goal is also to gain a better understanding of culture - both foreign and Chinese - and to become more skilled at learning about cultures.

VI. Teaching Ideas

The Magazine Article: There is much students can learn about Western cultures by reading Western newspaper or magazine articles. However students also need to learn to be careful about over-generalizing from what they read. This activity both encourages students to learn about culture from Western articles, but also helps them build the habit of being careful in drawing conclusions.

Procedure:

- 1) Choose an article from a Western newspaper or magazine that has something to do with Western culture. (Almost all Western articles have at least something to do with Western culture, but some would be richer than others. Books, films, and television programs could also be used.)
- 2) Have students read the article, either in class or at home, and make notes of what they learn about Western culture from the article.
- 3) In class, first have students report what they learned about Western culture from the article. As students report, their ideas could be written on the board and then discussed.
- 4) Then, have students look at the lessons on the board and try to decide how typical these lessons are of Western culture. In other words, are these things common and normal, or unusual? (While much of what is written in the Western press is more or less accurate, it is not necessarily typical or representative.) Discuss.

Culture Talks: One way to teach various aspects - and to give students listening practice - is by giving short talks in English about various aspects of Western culture.

Procedure:

- 1) Choose an aspect of Western culture you want to talk about in class and find enough information to prepare a talk.
- 2) As you prepare your talk, first consider what your students are already likely to know or believe about the topic. For many topics, students will already have at least a simple picture. Your goal is to start from the simple picture they already have, and make it more detailed and accurate.
- 3) (For more information on giving the talk, see "Talks and Lectures" in Unit 4.)

A Visit from Abraham Lincoln: A variation on Culture Talks involves studying about an important person, then pretending to be that person and having students interview you in class. This requires students to be more active than they are when just listening to a talk.

Procedure:

- 1) Pick an important person you wish to teach students about, then learn as much as you can about his/her life.
- 2) Before the lesson, tell students that they will have an opportunity to interview a famous person. Then have them prepare questions.
- 3) During the interview, as much as possible try to really play the role of the person you are acting. You may even want to dress up (as much as possible) like the famous person you are playing.
- 4) Have students conduct the interview.

Unit 12

Why should students of English study intercultural communication?

I. Before You Read

- Why would it be harder for people from different cultures to communicate with each other than for people from the same culture to do so? In groups, make a list of reasons and be ready to share with the class.

II. Reading

Why should students of English study "intercultural communication"?

"Intercultural communication" is communication between people from different cultural backgrounds; for example, communication between Chinese and Americans. When people in China use English, it is usually for intercultural communication of some kind, either to talk with foreigners, to read things written in foreign countries, to watch movies made in foreign countries, and so forth. So it is helpful if Chinese students learn something about the special skills needed for intercultural communication.

Intercultural communication tends to be more difficult than communication between people who share the same culture, and learning to communicate well with foreigners is not an easy thing to do. However, there are a few basic rules that will help students be good intercultural communicators:

Rule #1: Be careful, and don't jump to conclusions too quickly. One of the most common problems in intercultural communication is misunderstanding. People from different cultures often think and act in very different ways, and an action that means one thing to a Chinese person might mean something very different to an American. So the first thing good intercultural communicators need to learn is not to jump to conclusions if a foreigner does or says something that seems strange or even bad. Instead, they need to be cautious about how they try to understand what foreigners do and say.

Rule #2: Try to see things from the foreigner's perspective. This is not easy to do, especially if you don't know the foreigner or the foreigner's culture very well. But at least you can stop and ask yourself: Is it possible that this foreigner means something different than what I think? If so, what could it be? You may not always be able to answer this question, but even just asking yourself this question helps prevent you from jumping to conclusions.

Rule #3: Always keep trying to learn more and understand better. People who come from very different cultural backgrounds tend not to understand each other very well, so the best long-term solution is to always keep trying to learn more. Good intercultural communicators are not satisfied with understanding just a little about a foreign culture - they keep learning more until they are able to see things from a foreigner's perspective. This does not mean that good intercultural communicators always agree with the foreigners they meet; in fact, they often disagree. But the better they understand foreigners' and their perspectives, the more effectively they will be able to communicate with them.

Word and phrase list

to jump to conclusions: to form an opinion too quickly (often an incorrect one). Ex: *The weather is cloudy, and it looks like it might rain tomorrow. But let's not jump to any conclusions, instead, let's watch the weather report.*

to see from (someone's) perspective: to look at things the same way someone else does, to see them from the same viewpoint. Ex: *I don't agree with what you did, but I can see things from your perspective so I think I understand why you did it.*

to prevent (someone) from (doing something): to stop someone from doing something before they do it. Ex: *I tried to prevent Hal from eating all the cake, but I failed. He was too fast and he ate it all before I could stop him.*

long-term solution: a way to solve a problem permanently. Ex: *Staying up all night to study the night before the test may prevent you from failing, but it isn't a good long-term solution to the problem of learning English.*

III. Comprehension Questions

- What is "intercultural communication"?
- Why is it important for students of English to study intercultural communication?
- What are some basic rules for being a good intercultural communicator?

IV. Discussion Activities

Survey: "That strange Western culture"

Survey several classmates, asking them to name several things that they find strange or difficult to understand about Western culture. Be ready to report your findings - and be sure you can explain what your classmates told you.

Survey: "That strange Chinese culture"

Survey several classmates, asking them to name several things they think foreigners (Westerners) would find difficult to understand or accept about Chinese culture. Be ready to report your findings.

Teacher Interview: "Plagiarism"

Both Chinese and Western teachers feel that it is wrong for students to plagiarize - to copy what other people write and then turn it in as their own work. However, Western teachers sometimes have a stricter view of what constitutes plagiarism, and may also feel more strongly about it.

First interview your (foreign) teacher to get a very clear idea of what a Westerner would consider to be plagiarism. (You may need to give specific examples to get a clear enough understanding.)

Then, in groups or pairs, list as many reasons as you can think of for why Westerners would feel so strongly about this issue. Rank these reasons in order of importance, according to what you think Westerners would think.

Finally, share your ideas with your (foreign) teacher and see if she/he agrees with the reasons you give and their ranking.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Why didn't she want my help?"

Imagine the following situation: *This summer at your school there is a short-term English training course being offered by several Western teachers, and you have been assigned to be one of the assistants for the program. The Western teachers have not been in China before, and don't speak any Chinese, so your duty is to help them with daily life issues, and to generally serve as a host while they are in China. It is also your duty to make sure that they remain safe and well while they are in China.*

During a break between classes, you overhear Janet, one of the older Western teachers, say that she needs to buy some T-shirts. You offer to go out shopping with her this afternoon, but Janet says, "No thank you" and then rushes off to class.

The next day, you overhear the students talking about how Janet got lost yesterday when she went off alone to a market on the other side of the city to shop for T-shirts.

In pairs or groups, do the following: 1) First, decide how you would feel when you heard the students talking about Janet. 2) Then think of several possible explanations for why Janet turned down your offer to take her shopping. (There is no single right answer, but there are a number of likely possibilities.) 3) Talk with your teacher about this situation, and see what she/he thinks of the explanations you suggest.

Other Discussion Questions:

- Why do you think Westerners feel it is impolite to ask how much money someone makes?
- Why do you think Westerners feel privacy is so important?
- Why do you think Westerners place so much emphasis on the idea of intellectual property rights?
- (Foreign teacher question to students) Have you ever heard of "intercultural communication" before? If so, where? What did you hear about it?

V. English Hotline

Is communication between people of different cultures really different from communication between people of the same culture?

In one sense, yes. People who share the same culture can usually understand each other much better than people who are from different cultures, so the "gap of understanding" is usually much greater in intercultural communication. This makes it especially important for people to be careful in how they communicate.

On the other hand, however, even two people from the same culture never understand each other completely. They have different personalities, experiences, knowledge, and viewpoints, and they still have at least some "gap of understanding" - often a rather large one. So, the same rules that make someone a good intercultural communicator also apply to communication between any two people.

VI. Teaching Ideas

The Perspective Exercise: This activity is based on some aspect of Western culture that students find difficult to understand or accept. The goal is to help them build the habit of trying to look at an issue from someone else's perspective.

Procedure:

- Choose an issue, some aspect of Western culture that is different from Chinese culture, perhaps one that Chinese students are likely to find hard to understand or accept. (For example, one of the issues from "Other Discussion Questions" above.)
- In pairs or groups, have students list one or more possible explanations for this aspect of Western culture. As much as possible, they should try to explain it in a way that would make sense from a Western perspective.
- Have each group share their explanation.
- Based on your knowledge and experience, share your view.

The Critical Incident Exercise: A "critical incident exercise" is an activity like the "Why didn't she want my help?" activity above. It starts with a little story in which there is something puzzling that happens in a relationship between two people from different cultures, for example, between a Chinese and an American. Then students are asked to discuss the story and think of possible explanations. This exercise is useful for helping students build the habit of thinking more carefully and deeply about why foreigners might act or think in ways that seem unusual to Chinese.

Procedure:

- Write a critical incident story, perhaps based on a real incident that occurred between Chinese and foreigners. (In some critical incident exercises, there is one correct explanation of the situation, and students' task is to try to figure out what that is. In other exercises, such as the one above, there are several possible explanations, so students practice brainstorming a variety of possible explanations.)
- Tell the story to students, or have them read it.
- In groups, have them discuss and list possible explanations for the situation.
- Have groups report their ideas. (It is generally best to have each group suggest just one possible explanation, and then to move on to the next group, instead of letting one group report everything on its list.) As groups report, make notes on the board.
- After groups report their ideas, ask the class to decide which of the explanations they think are very likely, and which they think are unlikely. (During this part of the exercise, the teacher only asks questions, and does not state any opinions.)
- Go over the explanations and comment based on your perspective and knowledge.

Unit 13

What is the best way to study for tests?

I. Before You Read

- In groups, discuss the following question: *If you could give just one piece of advice to students who are preparing for tests, what advice would you give?* Try to reach consensus on an answer. Be ready to share your answer with the class, and explain why you think this particular piece of advice is most important.

II. Reading

What's the best way to study for tests?

Many students prepare for tests by "cramming," in other words, by studying very intensively immediately before the test. If the main goal is simply to pass the test, this strategy is not entirely bad; in fact, it has real advantages. Students who study hard the night before a test will usually remember much what they study for at least a few hours, and this means that they will still remember much of it when they take the test.

However, relying heavily on a strategy of cramming right before tests also has several serious disadvantages:

1) The first problem is that if students don't study much during the semester, but then try to catch up right before the test, they will have to study very hard. This means they will probably be quite exhausted when they take the test. If they are tired when they take the test, they may do poorly.

2) The second problem is that cramming doesn't allow students adequate time for "digesting" what they learn, so what they study doesn't become firmly rooted in their memories. As a result, students who cram tend to quickly forget much of what they learn.

3) The third problem is related to the second. Because students who cram usually forget most of what they study, they often have to re-learn many of the same things again later for the next test. This wastes time. Furthermore, if students haven't really mastered English skills and knowledge from the first semester, they won't have a good foundation for building their skills and knowledge further the second semester. Like a house built on sand, their command of English will be very shaky, and this makes further progress very difficult.

So, what is a better way to study? In the long run, the best strategy for learning English is regular study and review, not intensive study right before the test. It is better for two reasons:

1) It is more efficient. Students who study and review regularly don't forget so much of what they learn. This means that they don't have to re-learn so much of the same material later.

2) It is also more effective in helping students really learn English. Students who study and practice gradually have adequate time to digest the material they study and to build the skills they need. Regular review also means that English knowledge becomes firmly rooted in their memories and is not quickly forgotten. So a strategy of regular study and review helps students build a firm foundation for further English study.

Word and phrase usage

to cram: to study very intensively right before a test. Ex: *Ellen hasn't studied much recently, but there's a test tomorrow, so tonight she is cramming for it.*

in other words: (introduces a clearer way of saying the same thing or expressing a point).

Ex: *When I asked my boss for a vacation next month, he said that there will be a lot of work to do. In other words, he said no.*

to rely heavily on: to use something a lot. Ex: *When Xiao Wang was traveling in Japan, he didn't find many people who could speak Chinese, so he had to rely heavily on his English.*

to allow adequate time for: to give enough time for. Ex: *I need to buy a lot of souvenirs, so when we plan our trip we need to allow adequate time for shopping.*

to digest: to absorb food into the body. Ex: *You shouldn't go running immediately after you eat; instead, you should allow yourself some time to digest your food.*

to become firmly rooted in: to sink roots deeply into. Ex: *She has studied Confucianism for many years, so her own beliefs have become firmly rooted in the Confucian tradition.*

shaky: not stable, likely to fall down. Ex: *That chair is too shaky; it would be safer if you sat in another one.*

in the long run: over a long period of time; in the end. Ex: *In the long run, students who study more often are likely to learn more.*

III. Comprehension Questions

- According to the passage, what is the real problem Chinese students have with English tests?
- What are some strategies students can use to ensure that they actually learn English?

IV. Discussion Activities

Survey: "My worst exam"

Survey several of your classmates, asking them to tell you about their worst (funniest, most interesting) examination experience. Listen carefully and be ready to report to the class.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Getting ready for the university entrance examination"

Imagine you meet a student at an English corner who says she is going to take the TOEFL examination next week. She wants advice on how she can best use this week to be better prepared for the test.

In pair or groups, discuss what advice you would give this student, then make a list of your tips and be ready to share it with the class.

Pair/Small Group Task: "I have a test tomorrow!"

Imagine you meet a student who is going to take the university entrance examination tomorrow. He is very nervous - so nervous that you worry it may negatively affect his performance on the test. What advice would you give him? What should he do between now and the test tomorrow?

Pair/Small Group Task: "Tests in China"

In pairs or small groups, prepare to explain three things to your (foreign) teacher: 1) What are the most important English tests Chinese students face? 2) Why is each of these important? 3) What kinds of things are on each of these tests?

Pair/Small Group Task: "Preparing students for the big test."

Imagine you are giving advice to an inexperienced English teacher in China about how to prepare students for an important English test (such as the university entrance

examination).

In pairs or groups, list several pieces of advice as sentence completions: (Ex: "To prepare students well for the test you should _____.") Be ready to share your advice with the class, and explain why each piece of advice is important.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Should the *gao kao* go?"

It has been suggested that it would be best for students' English if China eliminated the university entrance examination completely, perhaps replacing it with something else.

In pairs or groups, decide what you think China should do about the English portion of the university entrance examination. Should China:

- keep the examination as it is now? If so, be ready to explain why.
- eliminate the English portion of the examination completely? If so, be ready to explain why, and also to explain what it should be replaced with.
- revise the examination? If so, be ready to explain how you would revise it and why.

Other Discussion Questions:

- What is the best way to study for a test?
- What is the best way to test oral English?
- (Foreign teacher question to students) How do teachers in Junior 3 and Senior 3 prepare students for China's standardized examinations?

V. English Hotline

What is the most important difference between a good test and a bad one?

Obviously a good test should be fair, and also fairly easy to administer. Additionally, it should do a good job of distinguishing between students who have learned English well and those who have not. But the most important characteristic of a good test is that it should have good "backwash." In other words, it should encourage students to study and practice in ways that are beneficial to their English study.

Because most students want to score well on tests, they will spend most of their time doing whatever is necessary in order to get good grades. For example, if students know they will be tested on their listening skills, they will practice listening. And if they know they won't be tested on speaking, they won't practice speaking very much. A well-designed test will encourage students to study and practice in useful ways; this is called "positive backwash." However, tests can also have "negative backwash"; in other words, some tests encourage students to spend doing things that don't help their English very much - and don't reward students for doing things that they should do.

Tests have a huge influence on what students study and how they study. As is often said in China, tests are the "conductor's baton" (*zhihui bang*) that direct what students do - and also what teachers do. So the most important characteristic of a good test is that it guides students toward ways of studying and practicing that will genuinely help their English.

VI. Teaching Ideas

(**Note:** Many of the activities suggested in the "Teaching Ideas" section of earlier units can also be used as tests. Below are a few examples of test activities that have good backwash effects.)

Talks are a good kind of listening test because they encourage students to practice a useful skill - listening for meaning.

Procedure:

Prepare and give the talk.

Have students take notes.

Check students comprehension by:

having them write a summary of your talk;

having them answer questions about your talk.

Pair/Small Group Tasks are one way to test the speaking skills of students, especially if you have too many students to interview them individually. While this kind of test is not very precise, it has a good backwash effect by encouraging students to take in-class discussion seriously.

Procedure:

Before the test, prepare discussion topics to give to students.

Also prepare a scoring system.

You can increase positive backwash by designing a scoring system that rewards students for doing what you want them to do.

Give two kinds of scores - individual scores for each student, and also a general score for the group. (To prevent one or two students from doing all the talking, tell students that groups where everyone talks will get a higher overall score.)

It is very important to let students know in advance how they will be scored.

For the test, have students come to you in groups.

Give groups instructions and a time limit (probably 5-10 minutes). Groups should also be given a clear task (see Unit 5, "Pair/Small Group Tasks" for examples).

As the group discusses, listen and make notes. Then, immediately after the group finishes, give scores.

Dictogloss is useful as a listening, writing, and grammar test, but should only be used if you have practiced doing Dictogloss exercises in class.

Procedure:

To make Dictogloss a test, you only need to have each student individually write her/his own summary.

(For Dictogloss procedure, see Unit 7, Teaching Idea, Dictogloss.)

Speed Reading tests or quizzes will encourage students to work on reading more rapidly.

Procedure:

To make a Speed Reading exercise a test, have students either answer a few comprehension questions or briefly summarize the main ideas of the passage.

(For Speed Reading procedure, see Unit 8, Teaching Ideas, Speed Reading.)

Critical Incident Exercises can be used to test listening and speaking, following a format similar to that suggested in "Pair/Small Group Tasks" above. Alternatively, they can be used as listening-plus-writing tests if you have students individually write out their explanations.

Unit 14

Whose language is English?

I. Before You Read

- Survey several of your classmates asking the following question: *Do you think English should be considered a British-American language, or an international language?* Be ready to report your findings.

II. Reading

Whose language is English?

People often assume that each language belongs to a certain country. For example, Japanese is the language of Japanese people, Chinese is the language of Chinese people, and so forth. But who does English belong to?

Sometimes students seem to think that English is primarily the language of the United Kingdom and the United States. The United Kingdom is where English first developed, and the rise of the British Empire is one of the main reasons English is such an important language today. And the United States has the largest population in the world which speaks English as its first language. So in many ways it seems natural to associate English with these two countries.

However, as any student knows, there are other countries where English is the native tongue of most people. Ireland, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand are the largest and best known of these, but there are others as well, such as Bermuda and the Cayman Islands. There are also countries such as South Africa where English is not the mother tongue of most people, but it is the native language of a substantial minority.

Furthermore, there are many countries like India and Singapore where English plays an important official role even though it is not the first language of most people. For example, in Singapore, English is the main language of government, education, and the media, even though it is usually not the first language children learn.

Finally, in many countries around the world, English is studied by many people as a foreign language. For example, in China all middle school and university students - and even many primary school students - study English, and a large and growing number of people know English quite well.

So who does English belong to? To some extent, it still belongs most to the nations where it is spoken as a native language by many or most people. However, it has also become an international lingua franca that is widely used by people of many different nations and cultures. Ultimately, English belongs to anyone who knows and uses it.

Word and phrase usage

the rise of: the increase in power of. Ex: *The rise of a unified Chinese nation began with the first Qin Emperor.*

to associate (A) with (B): to place A and B together. Ex: *Many Chinese people associate Shanghai with modern life.*

a substantial minority: a large group of people, but not a majority. Ex: *Most Americans speak English at home, but a substantial minority speak Spanish.*

to play an important role: to be an important part of something; to be one of the main reasons for something. Ex: *Television plays an important role in modern life.*

the language of: the language used by. Ex: *In Hong Kong, Cantonese is the main language of daily life, but English is the main language of university education.*

to some extent: partly; to a certain degree. Ex: *To some extent, how well students learn English depends on how good their teachers are.*

lingua franca: a language used widely for communication between people of different countries (often for business). Ex: *In many parts of eastern Africa, Swahili is the lingua franca used by traders.*

III. Comprehension Questions

- For some countries, English is the native language. What are some other roles English plays in countries where it is not the native language?
- Who does English belong to?

IV. Discussion Activities

Pair/Small Group Task: "Advantages of having a world language"

Do you think there should be a world language, in other words, a language that everybody in the world could speak and understand?

In pairs or groups: 1) First list the advantages and disadvantages of having a world language. 2) Then decide whether or not you think this is a good idea, and be ready to explain your position to the class.

Debate: "A world language?"

In groups, decide what your position is on this question: Should the UN promote English as a world language?

In groups, prepare to present a case either for or against the idea of the UN promoting English as a world language. Be ready to 1) state your option, 2) provide reasons, and 3) provide evidence.

Debate: "To borrow or not?"

Consider the following question: Is it a good or bad thing for Chinese to borrow words from English or other languages?

Be prepared to state your position for a debate, give reasons, and provide evidence.

Other Discussion Questions:

- What would the advantages and disadvantages be of promoting Chinese as a world language?
- Should students in China learn British English or American English?
- Is Indian English really English?
- (Foreign teacher question to students) How do people in China feel about the Chinese writing system? Would it be better if Chinese were written using *pinyin* instead of Chinese characters?

V. English Hotline

Where did English come from?

Like all languages, English didn't appear out of thin air; rather, it belongs to a family of languages. However, the question of who its ancestors were is somewhat complicated - more so than for many languages.

Basically, English is a member of the Germanic language family, and it gets much of its grammar and its most basic vocabulary from that side of the family tree. This means that English is related to German, Dutch, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, and several other north European languages. (Because of grammar and some vocabulary similarities, speakers of these languages tend to find English easier to learn than speakers of other languages do.)

However, many of the words in English actually come from the Romance language family, the family that includes French, Spanish, Italian, and several other languages. This is because about a thousand years ago, England was conquered by French-speaking Norman people, and during the years that the Normans ruled England, many French words entered the English language. So it can be said that English really has two parents - one Germanic and one Romance.

Additionally, English has also borrowed a great deal of vocabulary from other languages. Many words related to science and scholarship have been created from ancient Greek or Latin roots. In fact, so many English words have Greek or Latin roots that students who know these basic roots can often guess the meaning of unfamiliar English words. Finally, English has borrowed many words from other modern languages - and keeps borrowing new words all the time. So, English is an international language not only in the sense that it is used all over the world; it has also borrowed words from all over the world, so to some degree many of the world's languages are represented in English.

VI. Teaching Ideas

Debate: Debates are good for generating excitement and interest in a topic. However, they only allow one person to speak at a time, so in order to provide lots of speaking practice for all students, it is best if students spend a lot of time preparing in small groups - and speaking English - before a debate.

Procedure:

- Choose a topic for the debate. (For debate topic ideas related to this unit, see "Other Discussion Questions" above.) A good topic has the following characteristics:
 - Students should have some knowledge about the topic and interest in it.
 - Class opinion should be divided. No matter how "good" a topic is, if students all agree there won't be much debate.
 - The topic is not too politically or culturally sensitive.
- Introduce the issue to be debated. The issue may be presented either as:
 - A statement (Ex: Adolescents should be encouraged to take jobs);
 - A question (Ex: Should adolescents be encouraged to take jobs?)
- You may wish to supply background information or relevant vocabulary.
- Put students into small groups (teams), and either assign or allow them to choose an affirmative or negative position on the topic.
- Have each team prepare a case. This should consist of one or more reasons why they hold the opinion they do, and also include an explanation and examples or other evidence that support their view. (This is the phase of the activity that provides most of the speaking practice, so allow ample time.)
- For the debate itself use a "ping-pong" approach that follows one line of argument at a time. The procedure for each line of argument is as follows:
 - First, one affirmative team states one of its arguments (with explanation and support).
 - One negative team then responds to the affirmative team's argument with either questions or a counter-argument. They must respond directly to the

argument raised by the affirmative team - they cannot begin a new line of argument.

- Either the original affirmative team or another affirmative team is allowed to respond to the negative team. And so on, following the line of argument until development ceases and repetition sets in.
- Then one negative team begins a new line of argument, and so on.
- As the teams develop a line of argument, the teacher should keep a flow chart on the board, roughly keeping track of the flow of the arguments.
- At the end, the teacher can close the debate by praising especially good points made by various teams.

Unit 15

How should I continue studying English?

I. Before You Read

- Interview one of your classmates, asking the following: *How do you plan to continue studying English after you finish this book or English course?* Be ready to report one interesting idea you gain from your interview.

II. Reading

How should I continue studying English?

In order to learn English well, students usually need to continue studying even after their formal language courses end. There are three main problems students encounter when they continue to study English on their own, and a good English study plan needs to take all three of these problems into consideration:

- **No pressure to study.** When students don't have an English course, they don't have a teacher who will make them study, and they don't need to worry about tests and grades. This makes it easier to put off studying English, or to stop completely.
- **Limited study time.** People who aren't full-time students often have jobs or other responsibilities that take up most of their time, so it is hard for them to find time to study English. Often they can only make time to study a little each day.
- **Discouragement.** The main reason students fail to learn English is that they become discouraged and stop studying. Learning English (or any other language) takes quite a long time, so people who study English on their own need to find ways to encourage and motivate themselves.

Keeping these problems in mind, how do you make a good plan for continuing your English study after your course ends? Here are several suggestions:

1) Focus your study effort on one or two things at a time. Students who study English full-time have enough time to work on everything: reading, writing, speaking, listening, vocabulary, grammar, and culture. But if you only have a little time each week and you still try to study everything, you will have to divide your time into very small pieces; a few minutes for listening, a few minutes for writing, and so forth. If you do this, your progress in each area will be very slow - so slow that you probably won't feel like you are making any progress at all. This will make you discouraged, and you will be more likely to give up.

If you only have limited time, it is better to focus your study time in one or two areas; for example, just working on vocabulary and reading. This way you will still see progress in your vocabulary and reading, so you will feel more motivated to keep going. (After a few months, you can switch to studying something else.)

2) Set a study goal that you are really interested in. It will be easier to keep studying if you study something interesting or useful. For example, if you like reading novels, it will be easier to keep studying English if you practice by reading novels in English. Or if you need to speak to foreigners as part of your work, you may be more motivated to work on improving your listening comprehension.

3) Choose a study method that fits your goal. The most basic rule of language study is: You learn to do what you practice doing. In other words, if you practice reading slowly and looking up every word in the dictionary, you will learn to read slowly while looking up

every word in the dictionary. If you practice English by chatting at an English corner, you will learn how to chat with people in English. And so forth. Make sure your study and practice methods are as much as possible like the skill you want to learn.

4) Work hard for a long time. There is no magic approach that will make learning English fast or easy. But if you focus your efforts, you should be able to make progress - and see your progress - even if you only study and practice a few hours a week. As long as you keep studying and practicing, your English will keep improving.

The best English study plan is one that stays alive.

Word and phrase usage

to take (A) into consideration: to think about how A affects something else. Ex: *When we plan where to go on our trip, we should take the weather into consideration.*

to put off (doing something): to not do something now, to delay doing something. Ex: *Some students put off studying until the night before the test.*

to take up (time): to use (time) so that it can't be used for something else. Ex: *I would like to spend more time with my family, but my work takes up all of my time.*

to make time (to do something): to actively plan to keep time free for something. Ex: *If you just wait until you have free time, you will never have time to study English. If you want to study English, you need to make time for it.*

to keep (A) in mind: to remember how A will affect (what you are thinking about). Ex: *When you plan your trip, please keep the weather in mind.*

to focus on (something): to concentrate your attention on something. Ex: *During his second year in middle school he focused on studying English a lot, so now his English is quite good.*

to switch to: to change to. Ex: *If you don't like this kind of tea, switch to another kind.*

to work toward (a goal): to focus your efforts on reaching a goal. Ex: *If you keep working toward your goal, you are likely to reach it.*

III. Comprehension Questions

- According to the passage, what are some of the main problems students face when they try to study English on their own?
- Can you think of other problems students face when studying English on their own?
- According to the passage, what are some things you can do to help keep your English study plan alive if you are studying on your own?

IV. Discussion Activities

Survey: "Motivation for English study"

Survey several classmates, asking them to 1) tell you one or two things they sometimes find discouraging in their English study 2) tell you one or two things they find encouraging when they study English. Be ready to report what you discover.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Language learning: Time and opportunity"

In pairs or groups, discuss three questions:

- 1) Realistically, how much time do you have on the average day to study English, especially time when you are not exhausted?
- 2) Realistically, which opportunities can you create to use English outside teaching?
- 3) Realistically, which kinds of English study do you like enough that you will do them even when you are tired and busy?

Be prepared to report your answers to these questions.

Pair/Small Group Task: "English learning plans"

First make a plan for how you hope to continue studying English after the program ends. Include both goals and methods. Then, in pairs or groups, share your plans with each other and discuss how realistic they are.

Other Discussion Questions:

- What is the best way to schedule language class periods during a week? (Either for an intensive summer program or normal classes during the year.)
- What are some different strategies for effective language learning?
- What is the best kind of homework for language study?
- What is the best way to learn a language?
- (Foreign teacher question to students) What problems do Chinese English teachers encounter in trying to keep up or improve their English skills?

V. English Hotline

How long does it take to learn English well?

It is impossible to give a specific answer to this question, but for Chinese students it will normally take at least several years.

Of course, this does not mean that after several years of study all students will have mastered English. If students don't study hard, or if they only focus on passing tests, it is quite possible to study hard for several years and still have relatively poor English skills.

However, students who make the effort to learn more English, and to practice using their English skills, will find that as long as they keep studying and practicing, their skills will continue to improve. There are many success stories in China - people whose English skills have become very advanced - and each of these people is a reminder that it is possible for Chinese students to become very good in English. For some people this is easier than others, but virtually all students are able to become quite competent in English if they continue to study wisely and hard.

VI. Teaching Ideas

Future Study Plans. One way to encourage students to continue their English study after a course ends is to spend class time talking about how to study English on one's own, and even making plans - realistic plans - for future English study.

Procedure:

- 1) Near the end of your English course, spend part of a class period having students talk about making future English study plans.
- 2) Each student should:
 - a. Choose one or two goals for the study plan.
 - b. Decide how they will study or practice to reach the goal.
- 3) Have students show the plan to you.
 - a. You may wish to read these over and make suggestions.
 - b. You could have students share and discuss these in groups.

Independent Extensive Reading: One of the most important things in teaching English is helping students take charge of their own learning. The more that students become accustomed to making their own choices in English study, the more likely they are to keep

studying once they no longer have English courses. One simple but effective way to give students some choice in English study is to let them choose books to read for outside reading.

Procedure:

- 1) Find a selection of books for students. These books should be appropriate in length and level of difficulty. These might be either from a library or a collection you gather.
- 2) Tell students how much you expect them to read outside class during the course, either how many books or how many pages.
- 3) Have students choose books they want to read, and then tell you what books they have chosen.
- 4) Check by having the students:
 - a. Write a book report.
 - b. Give an oral book report to the whole class.
 - c. In "reading club" groups, have each student introduce the book she/he read to the other students.

Unit 16

What is the most important role of the English teacher?

I. Before You Read

- In groups, discuss the following question: *What do you think the most important role of an English teacher is?* Try to agree on one role you all think is most important.

II. Reading

What is the most important role of the English teachers?

Often students think of English teachers mainly as people who know everything about English and explain it all to students. In this way of thinking, the English teacher is a "sage" - more or less like Confucius - and the main role of the teacher is to give her/his knowledge to students.

This view of English teachers is not entirely wrong; after all, English teachers do know more about English than their students do, and part of the job of English teachers is to teach students what they know about English. However, in many ways, an English teacher is more like a "coach" or a "piano teacher" than a "sage." Why?

The main reason is that learning English doesn't just involve gaining knowledge. An equally important part of learning English is developing skills, and skills can only be developed by practice. Just as a coach can't make someone a good runner just by explaining how to run, an English teacher can't make students good speakers (readers, writers, etc.) of English just by explaining English to them. Instead, like a coach, a teacher must help students learn how to practice effectively, and also encourage them to practice a lot - even when the teacher is not around.

Sometimes people criticize the traditional teaching method in China, saying it is too much like "stuffing ducks" (*tian ya*) (teachers stuff students with knowledge). Perhaps this metaphor can help us better understand the role of an English teacher. It is possible for a cook to stuff a duck quite nicely as long as 1) there are not too many ducks; 2) stuffing a duck doesn't take very long. However, if there are lots of ducks and not enough time, the cook can't stuff them all one by one. Instead, the cook has to provide the ducks with attractive food and train them all to feed themselves. (Of course, the ducks also still need to be alive.)

Likewise, English teachers can't just stuff students with English, one student at a time, one word at a time, one grammar structure at a time, and so forth. They also need to do three things:

- They need to make English study as interesting and attractive as possible - so that students will want to "feed" themselves.
- They need to teach students how to study English effectively - so that students will know how to feed themselves.
- They need to help students' develop their own plan for studying English, and help students keep their plans - and their interest - alive. Students need to know it is up to them to feed themselves - and not always wait for a teacher to stuff them.

Word and phrase usage

to think of (A) as (a kind of person): to consider A (a certain kind of person). Ex: *Many British people think of Winston Churchill as a hero.*

sage: a very knowledgeable and wise person.

as long as: if and only if. (Used for stating conditions). Ex: *You can borrow my book as long as you return it tomorrow.*

one at a time: one by one. Ex: *The gate was too narrow for more than one person, so we had to pass through it one at a time.*

III. Comprehension Questions

- What is the first possible model for the role of the English teacher mentioned in the passage?
- According to the passage, why is an English teacher like a coach?
- How does the passage say teaching English is like stuffing ducks?

IV. Discussion Activities

Pair/Small Group Task: "What makes a good language teacher?"

In pairs or groups: 1) First list characteristics of a good language teacher. (These could be written as sentence completions: Ex: "A good teacher _____.") Brainstorm and make a long list. 2) Then decide which five of these characteristics are most important. Be prepared to share this list with the class, and explain why you feel these five characteristics are the most important.

Pair/Small Group Task: "Principles of good language teaching."

Imagine that a young (inexperienced) English teacher has come to you asking for advice on how to be a good English teacher. What would you say?

In pairs or groups: 1) First make a list of tips for this young teacher. State each as a piece of advice. Ex: "You should (or should not) _____." 2) Pick the three most important, and be ready to explain to the class why you think these three are most important.

Pair/Small Group Task: "The headaches we face."

What are the main problems you face in teaching English? In pairs or groups: 1) List the problems you face. 2) Decide which three problems are most important, and be ready to explain why you picked these.

Pair/Small Group Task: "New ideas about teaching"

Many of the methods foreign teachers use are somewhat different from the methods Chinese teachers normally use. While some of these methods might not be very effective in a Chinese classroom, others might be.

In pairs or groups, consider the following question: As a result of being in this course, have you gained any new ideas that might be useful in your teaching in China? (These ideas do not need to be from suggestions in the book.) List any new ideas you got, and also ways in which the ideas might need to be modified for your classroom.

Other Discussion Questions:

- In English classes, should only English be used?
- What should be done to improve English teaching in China (especially in middle schools)?
- How should language teachers be trained?
- How should teaching practice for future language teachers be conducted?
- How should discipline problems in class be handled?
- What can teachers do to continually improve their teaching?

- What is the best way to motivate students?
- Should songs be used in English teaching? If so, how?
- Should games be used in English teaching? If so, how?
- In English teaching, which is more important - good English or teaching experience?
- (Foreign teacher question) How are language teachers trained in China?
- (Foreign teacher question) What is a traditional English lesson usually like in China?
- What are the strong points and weak points of this approach to language teaching?

V. English Hotline

Does my English have to be really good for me to be a good role model for my students?

Obviously, for a number of reasons, it is best if English teachers have a good command of English. Teachers who have a good command of English will have more confidence to use English in class, and also have more confidence when answering students' questions. Students will also tend to have more confidence in teachers whose English is obviously good, and will tend to look up to them as role models.

However, sometimes students find it difficult to identify with teachers whose English is extremely good. While students will respect such teachers because their English is so good, students may also feel that they can never be as good as such teachers. In fact, sometimes students believe that teachers whose English is very good must have a "gift" for languages; in other words, they must have some special language learning ability that other people don't have. If students believe this, they may think that success in English learning depends mainly on having such a gift. However, a good command of English is generally achieved more through hard work than through some mysterious "gift."

So the best kind of role model for students is often a teacher who has worked hard - and continues to work hard - to learn English as well as possible. It is not essential that the teacher's English be perfect; in fact, sometimes the best role model is a teacher who has obviously had to struggle to learn English, but who has persisted and made real progress. This is the kind of role model many students can identify with, and that will encourage them to work hard in their own English study.

VI. Teaching Ideas

Show and Tell. One of the most valuable gifts English teachers can share with students is their experience in language learning, and they should spend some class time sharing their experience with students.

"Show and Tell" is a simple activity in which teachers bring something to class and then tell their students about it. Show And Tell is good for providing listening practice and arousing interest in a topic; it also serves as a good informal warm-up or as a break from "real" class. It can also be used as a way to share in class about English learning experience.

Procedure:

- 1) Find something you can take to class to show students as you talk about some aspect of your English study. This might be a textbook, language tapes, vocabulary flash cards, and so forth. (Of course, you can also talk about a language study method without showing students anything, but they will generally be more interested if there is something they can see.)
- 2) In class, show students the thing and demonstrate how you use it.