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ABSTRACT

This booklet describes key principles of and research on teaching additional languages. The 10 chapters focus on the following: (1) "Comprehensible Input" (learners need exposure to meaningful, understandable language); (2) "Language Opportunities" (classroom activities should let students use natural and meaningful language with their classmates); (3) "Language Practice" (classroom activities should encourage students to use the additional languages for genuine communication); (4) "Learning Strategies" (students should be taught strategies that enable them to increasingly learn language on their own and from the classmates and others without their teacher's help); (5) "Listening" (students need practice in understanding naturally spoken additional languages); (6) "Speaking" (students need practice speaking in language comprehensible to others); (7) "Reading" (students need practice in comprehending natural texts); (8) "Writing" (students need practice creating effective, natural language that communicates their intended message); (9) "Grammar" (formal grammar instruction may be beneficial in some situations but not in others); and (10) "Comprehensible Pronunciation" (pronunciation instruction should make students understandable to other users of an additional language). Each section presents research findings, strategies for use in the classroom, and references. (Contains 33 references.) (SM)

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# Teaching additional languages

*By Elliot L. Judd, Lihua Tan and Herbert J. Walberg*


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# The International Academy of Education

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# Series preface

Teaching additional languages means teaching a second, third or further language within students' countries of origin or in countries to which they have migrated. Because there are so many languages in the world and so many reasons why students should learn them, the teaching of additional languages is a great challenge and opportunity for educators.

Though we originally conceived this booklet concentrating on English as an alternative language, we recast the work to apply to *any additional language* for several reasons. Although many people want to learn English, many would also like to learn French, Japanese, Swahili, and other languages. This might have suggested commissioning not several but dozens of booklets to cover the major world languages and their variants, which would be far beyond the present scope of the series.

Second, much of the research on teaching and learning of additional languages is published in English and concerns English-language learning. But there is little reason to restrict unnecessarily the general principles that can be drawn. Consider this booklet's first principle: 'Learners need exposure to lots of meaningful and understandable language'. This applies to Arabic and Korean, as well as to English.

Even so, as series editor, I have been thinking of other ways to appropriately meet the needs for evidence-based practices for educators of many language and cultural groups around the world. Making available booklet translations in Chinese and Spanish on the worldwide Internet, as we have begun, is a beginning.

This booklet is part of the Educational Practices Series developed by the International Academy of Education and distributed by the International Bureau of Education and the Academy. As part of its mission, the Academy provides timely syntheses of research on educational topics of international importance. Like the others in the series, this booklet focuses on evidence-based practices that improve learning.

I am grateful to my two co-authors for initial drafts and continuing work on the material in this booklet. Elliot L. Judd is an associate professor and the director of the masters degree programme in the teaching of English to speakers of other languages (TESOL) programme at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He was the founding editor of *TESOL journal*, and has

written articles and books and presented papers on TESOL methods, curriculum and materials design, and language policy. Professor Lihua Tan teaches in the Department of English at Guizhou University of Technology in the People's Republic of China. She has carried out advanced study at the University of Illinois at Chicago and continues to translate IAE-IBE booklets into Chinese. For suggestions on an earlier draft of this booklet, the authors thank Professor Erik De Corte of the Centre for Instructional Psychology and Technology at the University of Leuven in Belgium and president of the International Academy of Education, and Dr. Santiago Cueto, research director of the Group of Analysis for Development in Lima, Peru.

The officers of the International Academy of Education are aware that the booklets in this series are based on research carried out primarily in economically advanced countries. The booklet, however, focuses on aspects of learning that appear to be universal in much formal schooling. The principles seem likely to be generally applicable throughout the world. Even so, practices based on the principles should be assessed with reference to local conditions, and adapted accordingly. In any educational setting, suggestions or guidelines for practice require sensitive and sensible application and continuing evaluation.

HERBERT J. WALBERG
Editor, IAE Educational Practices Series
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# Introduction

For several reasons, we have chosen the last two words in this booklet's title 'Teaching additional languages' rather than commonly used terms 'second languages' or 'foreign languages'. Students may actually be learning not a second but a third or fourth language. 'Additional' applies to all, except, of course, the first language learned. An additional language, moreover, may not be foreign since many people in their country may ordinarily speak it. The term 'foreign' can, moreover, suggest strange, exotic or, perhaps, alien—all undesirable connotations. Our choice of the term 'additional' underscores our belief that additional languages are not necessarily inferior nor superior nor a replacement for a student's first language.

Our view is that students should be taught how to use an additional language clearly, accurately and effectively for *genuine* communication. They should read and listen to live language; they should speak and write it in ways that can be understood by native and non-native speakers. Learners, moreover, should eventually be able to produce and comprehend additional languages independently without the aid of a teacher

We begin by presenting some key general principles of such 'communicative language' teaching and follow with principles about particular kinds of teaching. In each case, we briefly summarize the research, and then discuss classroom practices that follow from it. At the end of each section is a list of suggested readings that expand on what has been presented, and provide additional principles, research and classroom activities.

**References:** Celce-Murcia, 1991; Hadley, 1993; Nunan, 1999.

# 1. Comprehensible input

**Learners need exposure to lots of meaningful and understandable language.**

### Research findings

Comprehensible input refers to meaningful oral and written language somewhat above the learners' current level of mastery. Such input allows for the acquisition of grammar and vocabulary, which, in turn, makes exposure to additional input more comprehensible. Mere exposure to language is insufficient. Learners must take notice of key features in order for comprehensible input to be beneficial. Although such input is necessary, it is insufficient, as discussed in the next section on opportunities for interaction.

### In the classroom

Several classroom-teaching strategies derive from the idea of comprehensible input:

- Teachers should expose their students to listening and reading materials that are somewhat above their current language proficiency levels.
- Students should be asked to understand the material, not merely to reproduce it.
- Teachers should focus the students' attention on key grammar and vocabulary items.
- Students should be asked to guess the meaning of the input based on their prior knowledge of the topic, and on other known words and concepts within the text.
- Teachers should try to create situations within and outside the classroom that expose students to sources of comprehensible input.

**References:** Ellis, 1988; Krashen, 1982; Lightbown & Spada, 1993.

# 2. Language opportunities

**Classroom activities should allow students to use natural and meaningful language with their classmates.**

### Research findings

Learners need opportunities to practice language with one another. Conversations are important since they require attentiveness and involvement on the part of learners. By conversing, they can practise adapting vocabulary and grammar to a particular situation and making their own contributions to the conversation comprehensible.

The best conversations for such learning exchange real information, ideas and feelings among the participants. By engaging in such activities, learners have opportunities to try to make themselves understood. They receive immediate feedback as to whether they were successful and where alternative language is needed. As they engage in such exchanges, learners also receive additional comprehensible input, which further aids language acquisition.

### In the classroom

Several classroom-teaching strategies derive from these research findings:

- Teachers should go beyond simple language drills to create opportunities for meaningful interaction in the classroom by using activities in which students employ natural language examples in real language situations.
- Students should be encouraged to work in pairs or small groups, with the teacher serving as an occasionally helpful observer rather than a controlling force.
- Teachers should employ activities in which students have to solve problems in which each party must contribute information that others do not possess and which challenge students' minds.
- When feasible, the tasks should relate to students' needs and interests so as to motivate them.

- Teachers should usually avoid intervening in these activities while they are occurring, but should provide feedback after they conclude.

**References:** Doughty & Pica, 1986; Ellis, 1990; Long & Porter, 1985.

# 3. Language practice

**Classroom activities should encourage students to use the additional language for genuine communication.**

### Research findings

Communicative-language teaching employs activities that prepare students for natural, appropriate additional-language use outside the classroom. Language is viewed as more than grammar drills and word memorization. The goal is to train students in language skills that enable them to function easily by themselves without their teachers. Students need to learn what language is effective and culturally appropriate in natural discourse. Errors in additional-language learning are a natural part of learning, but they should be detected and corrected early. Supervised by their teachers, students can practice with one another and detect and correct each other's errors.

The teacher's role is not to control and dominate the classroom. Instead, the teacher can present real-language models to the students (comprehensible input), provide information and focus to the language forms being studied, use a limited amount of controlled exercises so that students gain confidence, and then allow students to interact with each other by using language for natural communicative functions. Thus, the classroom should be neither completely learner-centred nor completely teacher-controlled; rather both contribute to learning. In addition to the general classroom implications below, we have included more specific teaching strategies in the sections that follow.

### In the classroom

Teachers should not only use traditional language drills in the classroom; they should also:

- Employ freer, open-ended activities (with more than one possible solution) that allow students to experiment with language to develop oral and written fluency.
- Use materials that represent real, natural language, not artificially constructed textbook language that presents patterns

that no speaker would ever use in natural situations. The learning tasks presented by the instructor should mirror real-life language use.

- Provide meaningful feedback to students on how they performed the communicative activities and provide suggestions for improvement. Feedback should first focus on how well the students did on the communicative aspects of the task and then on the forms used by the student.

**References:** Brumfit, 1984; Nunan, 1991; Savignon, 1991.

# 4. Learning strategies

**Students should be taught strategies that enable them to increasingly learn language on their own and from their classmates and others without their teacher's help.**

### Research findings

Classes cannot allow enough time to teach everything about additional languages. If students are taught how to learn on their own, they can acquire vocabulary and language skills by themselves without their teachers. Successful strategies include taking a slow breath to reduce anxiety, raising pertinent questions about difficult points, and being sensitive to the difficulties of others. Other strategies are tricks to memorize words, guessing and then checking meanings, and maximizing opportunities for language practice.

### In the classroom

Teachers can employ several techniques for encouraging language-learning strategies:

- Observe students to see which learning strategies lead to better learning.
- Instruct students in strategies that can help them successfully learn and which allow them to become independent.
- Be aware of learners' emotions and use techniques to reduce their anxiety.
- Encourage students to share successful strategies with each other.
- Teach students strategies that can help them compensate when they do not understand or cannot think of a word or phrase

**References:** O'Malley & Chamot, 1990; Oxford, 1990; Wendon, 1991.

# 5. Listening

**Students should be given practice in understanding naturally spoken additional languages.**

### Research findings

Students need to comprehend natural spoken language—in lectures, the media (radio, cinema and television), and in face-to-face conversations. Many students have a greater need to understand than to speak an additional language. Listening is crucial for language acquisition because it provides 'comprehensible input' (previously discussed).

How do we comprehend spoken language? One model is called 'bottom-up' processing. According to this view, we piece together a message by first understanding the smallest units of language—sounds. Then, we connect the sounds together to form words. Our knowledge of words enables us to understand phrases, then sentences, and finally entire passages. An alternative view is known as a 'top-down' approach. In this model, based on our knowledge of the topic and situation, we can figure out the specific meaning of a passage; and the sentences, phrases and words that form the message.

Current theory suggests an 'interactive' model, in which listeners simultaneously use both top-down and bottom-up strategies. One strategy compensates for gaps in the other, until the entire message is understood.

There are many types of listening. Sometimes we listen for the general meaning of a message, sometimes for specific information. At times listening is a one-way process (e.g. a lecture or a movie), and at other times it is two-way and involves both listening and speaking as in a conversation. Some listening entails mainly information exchange; other listening may be more social or emotional in which feelings are more prominent.

### In the classroom

For listening comprehension, the following teaching strategies can be recommended:

- Before listening to a passage, ask students what they know about the topic in order to remind them of their prior knowledge. A teacher may also preview difficult vocabulary and ideas prior to listening.
- Following the listening, ask students about the general points of the passage.
- If details are to be recalled, allow students to take notes.
- Use natural language for listening passages. It is better to use short pieces of real language at the beginning levels than artificial teacher-made language.
- Use a variety of different listening activities such as one-way and two-way, and informational and emotional.

**References:** Brown, 1992; Mendelsohn, 1994; Rust, 1990.

# 6. Speaking

**Students should be given practice speaking in language comprehensible to others.**

### Research finding

Additional language instruction formerly consisted of students' memorizing dialogues and practising grammar drills. Current research supports a model known as 'communicative competence'. Although students must learn the grammar and vocabulary, these alone do not lead to fluency. Since natural language is unpredictable and speakers arrive at meaning through active communication, students must be taught how to manage real conversation—how to start and end conversations, how to respond appropriately, and how to express their beliefs, opinions and feelings. Students need to learn what is culturally appropriate and how language varies depending on the situations; they may need to learn about people involved, their moods, and other social and cultural factors. A fluent speaker needs to know how to link utterances together to create clear and effective discourse.

Students must also learn how to manage conversations when there are communication breakdowns. These modern views caused changes in the teaching of speaking. Students should engage in 'unscripted' or spontaneous language since that is the nature of usual speaking practices. The teacher's role is to provide language patterns that are needed, guide students in how to form natural language, and then to create opportunities for practice. Teachers must provide judicious coaching and encouragement so that students will actively practice speaking.

### In the classroom

When teaching speaking, the following instructional strategies are recommended:

- Present to students the linguistic and vocabulary patterns and make sure they understand how they are formed, when they are used, and their cultural implications.

- Teach students speech acts (to agree/disagree, apologize, make excuses, etc.), forms to manage conversations (openings, interruptions, closings, etc.), and strategies for roundabout speaking when they don't know a specific word.
- Provide controlled practice so students can feel comfortable with the patterns.
- Have students use the patterns in natural language situations that are relevant to their speaking needs. Pretending they are asking for directions or requesting a hotel room are examples.
- Allow the students to make errors, but also provide feedback on what is successful and unsuccessful.

**References:** Brown & Yule, 1983; Bygate, 1987; McCarthy & Carter, 1994.

# 7. Reading

**Students should be given practice in comprehending natural texts.**

### Research findings

The ability to read ordinary texts in an additional language is a crucial skill that students should master. Reading, like listening, is an interactive process. Students need to master bottom-up skills: recognizing letters, understanding words and phrases, and comprehending sentences (see Principle 5). At the same time, top-down knowledge is important in reading comprehension. Background knowledge enables readers to understand a passage, and to make a sensible guess when a word or phrase is not understood. Efficient readers make use of both top-down and bottom-up strategies; they use one to compensate for lack of knowledge of the other. Therefore, teachers need to provide instruction in both types of strategies in a comprehensive reading programme.

Skilled readers can also adapt their speed to their purpose and the text. Sometimes they read an entire passage carefully and slowly seeking the main ideas, detailed information, and inferences and implications. Sometimes they quickly scan a text to find out the major points or to answer a single question. Such tasks need to be taught. To acquire them, students need to read a wide variety of naturally occurring texts: both literary and non-literary, academic and non-academic, formal and informal. Thus, a reading programme should not only use traditional reading passages, but also contain such things as maps, schedules, menus and signs. Finally, a course in reading should include both intensive reading, which is done in classroom situations and emphasizes specific reading skills, and more extensive reading done by students outside of class, which provides additional reading opportunities.

### In the classroom

Following from these research findings are several general teaching strategies:

- Teach bottom-up reading skills, such as rapidly processing common words and phrases, and call attention to rhetorical markers such as 'however' and 'therefore'.
- Refresh background knowledge before reading a passage.
- Use natural language texts and select material that corresponds to the various types of readings that students will encounter.
- Teach appropriate reading strategies that correspond to the texts and real-life tasks: reading for general meaning, recalling specific information, understanding inferences and implications, skimming, scanning, etc.
- Provide numerous opportunities for reading, both inside and outside of classes.

**References:** Aebersold & Field, 1997; Anderson, 1999; Day & Bamford, 1998.

# 8. Writing

**Students should be given practice in creating effective, natural language that communicates their intended message.**

### Research findings

Two major approaches to the teaching of writing have been under discussion for some time. The first, known as the 'product approach', focuses on the final outcome of writing, which is a logical, error-free essay. Students are given a model text, which they study, analyse and then reproduce. Different models are presented for different types of writing.

In contrast is the 'process approach' to writing, which emphasizes the steps a writer goes through when creating a well-written text. Among the stages taught are: *brainstorming* or writing down many ideas that may come to an individual's mind; *outlining*, which organizes the ideas into a logical sequence; *drafting*, in which the writer concentrates on the content of the message rather than the form; *revisions* in response to the writer's second thoughts or feedback provided by peers or teachers; *proof-reading* with an emphasis on form; and the *final draft*. All of the processes should be explained, taught and practised by the students.

Some recent research suggests the value of focusing on various writing 'genres' in an effort to identify, compare and contrast writings in different fields, such as science and literature. Rather than three incompatible approaches, a writing programme should integrate product, process and genre writing into a coherent whole. In addition, many students may need special practice in non-academic materials—letters, forms, resumés, lists, etc. These, too, might be appropriately included in writing classes.

### In the classroom

The following are some suggestions for teaching writing:

- Teach students the stages necessary to writing: brainstorming, writing a first draft, revising, editing, etc.

- Provide models of successful writing samples and discuss the features that make them effective.
- Discuss audience expectations of acceptable writing and how different genres use different writing styles.
- Select writing topics that are of interest to the students and represent tasks that students will need to master in future writing.
- Teach students real-life writing tasks like filling out forms, letters, charts, etc.

**References:** Campbell, 1999; Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; Reid, 1993.

# 9. Grammar

**Formal grammar instruction may have some benefits in certain situations, but may be of limited benefit in others.**

### Research findings

In traditional additional language courses, teachers spent much time concentrating on formal grammar. Yet, mere presentation of grammatical forms in isolation, followed by drills may not lead to correct use and students may continue making grammatical errors when trying to communicate. Current research suggests that language teaching needs to be more than grammar instruction. Learners need to understand the meaning of the form, as well as the discourse in which the form appears. Students, moreover, may need to practise and master some vocabulary before they can appreciate and benefit from explicit instruction in grammar. It is then, after an error occurs, that the teacher's corrective feedback may be most beneficial.

### In the classroom

The following are basic procedures for teaching a grammatical pattern:

- Present the grammar form in natural discourse, explaining how the form is made, any irregular forms, and any spelling or pronunciation issues.
- Provide numerous examples of natural language in which the form can be studied and provide any contextual information on how to use the form appropriately.
- Make sure the students can recognize the form and its functions, before asking the students to produce the form.
- Provide activities that allow students to use the form in natural communicative ways, not just in simple drills.
- If errors occur, provide meaningful feedback on what forms should be used and why, but remember it often takes time for students to master a form completely.

**References:** Celce-Murcia, 1991; Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Williams, 1995.

# 10. Comprehensible pronunciation

**Pronunciation instruction should make students understandable to other users of an additional language.**

### Research findings

Researchers have debated whether it is possible for older additional-language learners to obtain a native-like accent. Most agree that few such students can achieve a native-like accent. For most communication purposes, it is generally unimportant to do so. Students need to develop the ability to be understood by other speakers, not to sound like a native. Pronunciation must be comprehensible and not detract from the understanding of a message. Thus, teachers must work on the pronunciation of individual sounds, both vowels and consonants and on the various sound combinations.

Of equal importance is teaching the intonation, stress and rhythm patterns of the additional language, which often block effective communication. Inability in these areas causes more communication problems than the inaccurate pronunciation of individual sounds.

In teaching pronunciation, students need practice in natural contexts. Feedback is an essential part of pronunciation instruction, since students may not be able to evaluate how successful they are in creating the pattern. When selecting a pronunciation feature, the instructor should illustrate how native language patterns may facilitate or hinder communication in the additional language.

### In the classroom

Several teaching strategies should be helpful in teaching pronunciation:

- Teach students to listen carefully to pronunciation. Often contrasting it with another pattern will enable them to recognize the important differences.

- Encourage students to use the pattern in isolation and then in natural sentence contexts.
- Students should also use the pattern in sentences of their own making.
- Teach students to produce correct intonation, stress and rhythm.
- Learning pronunciation is difficult and takes time. Difficult patterns may need re-teaching.

**References:** Celce-Murcia, Brinton & Goodwin, 1996; Kenworthy, 1987; Morley, 1994.

# Conclusion

In closing this brief account of effective additional language teaching, three points deserve emphasis:

- The various language skills discussed above should be integrated in realistic language situations. In preparing a report, for example, students may need to read and write. They may also need to discuss their ideas with their peers, which entails listening and speaking. Imagining particular language situations may make it clear how to integrate the various language skills.
- Since useful language facility requires comprehension and fluency in ordinary, non-academic settings, paper-and-pencil tests will ordinarily be insufficient by themselves. A broader approach would include assessment of students' comprehension of a variety of naturally spoken language passages and ability to respond fluently in conversations.
- In designing and teaching courses for additional languages, educators should assess students' prior language abilities and cultural experience, their specific language needs, the situations in which they will use the additional language, and the proficiency level expected. From this assessment, they can select appropriate course material and activities that are authentic, motivating and challenging.

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NOTES

EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES SERIES–6

# The International Bureau of Education—IBE

An international centre for the content of education, the IBE was founded in Geneva in 1925 as a private institution. In 1929, it became the first intergovernmental organization in the field of education. In 1969, the IBE joined UNESCO as an integral, yet autonomous, institution.

It has three main lines of action: (a) organizing the sessions of the International Conference on Education; (b) collecting, analysing and disseminating educational documentation and information, in particular on innovations concerning curricula and teaching methods; and (c) undertaking surveys and studies in the field of comparative education. At the present time, the IBE: (a) manages *World data on education*, a databank presenting on a comparative basis the profiles of national education systems; (b) organizes regional courses on curriculum development; (c) collects and disseminates through its databank INNODATA notable innovations on education; (d) co-ordinates preparation of national reports on the development of education; (e) administers the Comenius Medal awarded to outstanding teachers and educational researchers; and (f) publishes a quarterly review of education—*Prospects*, a quarterly newsletter—*Educational innovation and information*, as well as other publications.

In the context of its training courses on curriculum development, the Bureau is establishing regional and sub-regional networks on the management of curriculum change and developing a new information service—a platform for the exchange of information on content.

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