

Chapter 3 Managing resources: equipment and teaching aids

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In this chapter we look at how the teacher can use different resources to make lessons more interesting and effective. Teaching institutions vary enormously in the number and type of resources available to teachers. If you are doing TP in a well-resourced centre you should take the opportunity to try out the full range of resources. However, even in a relatively poorly-resourced school there are many ways that simple and 'home-made' resources can be used to good effect in lessons.

1 The board

It is unusual to find classrooms without a board of some kind, whether it is white, black or green. It is essential, then, to organize your use of it in order to obtain the maximum effect.

Four basic prerequisites:

- 1 Start with a clean board or with a board that only has on it what you have just put on. Don't start your lesson with the remains of someone else's still up.
- 2 Write legibly and neatly. If necessary, get some practice outside class time. (This includes writing in a straight line!) Try to print or at least be consistent in the letters you use – this will make your writing easier to read and is helpful for beginners and/or people who are having to learn a new script. Don't write in capitals. Learners need to know when capitals are necessary and when they are not. Even with European languages the rules that govern the use of capital letters vary.
- 3 Use the right implement. This doesn't apply so much to chalk boards (although some chalk is better than others) as it does to white boards. Don't make the mistake of using a pen which can't be wiped off!
- 4 Generally, try to keep the board as clear, as straightforward and as easy to read as possible. Clean it periodically to keep it neat and consider other ways of displaying more permanent information – a cork board or the walls of the classroom – in order to keep the board looking uncluttered.

What sort of things will be put on the board?

What you will want to put on your board will probably fall into one of the following categories:

Permanent or reference material

This may not go on the board at the beginning of the lesson but once it is up it will probably stay until the end. In low-level classes you may wish to put up the day and the date at the beginning of the lesson; it is a good way of helping the students learn the days of the week and the dates. It also encourages good study habits. You can put up reminders of items that students need constantly or persistently get wrong: for example, *What does ... mean?* The expression can then be pointed to when needed until all the students are familiar with it.

Other things that might come into this category are the main language items of the lesson: new vocabulary items and model sentences. You would expect most, if not all, the words in this section to be copied into the students' notebooks at some stage in the lesson. By putting such words into this section you are signifying their importance.

Material for the development of the lesson

This will be the material that relates to the stage of the lesson you have reached at any one moment. It could be pictures you are using to illustrate a story, an expression the students are practising saying, an outline of a grammar rule or even the score for a team game you are playing. Some of it may be transferred to the permanent section of the board.

Impromptu work

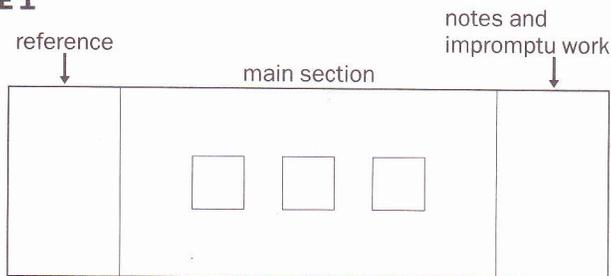
This is the work you use to illustrate or exemplify the answer to an unpredicted question or to back up an alternative explanation when the planned one doesn't work. It may be a drawing or it may be a written word. Space must always be left on the board for such work. You will usually want to erase work in this section as soon as the point has been understood and noted.

Notes and reminders

You may want to put daily class notices and announcements in this section. (See *Making announcements* on p55.) Also, questions you answer with *Ask me later* and things that you don't want to or can't answer on the spot are well worth noting in a corner. It shows that you are not just fobbing off the student and when you clean the board at the end of the lesson it will act as a reminder to you to prepare something for the next lesson.

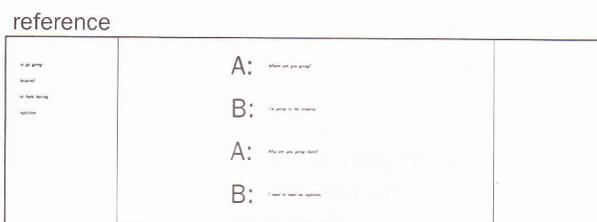
It is essential that you plan the board and decide which part you are going to allocate to which use. Include a plan of the board in your lesson plan and refer to use of the board in specific stages of the lesson. The 'development' area is likely to be the largest so that will probably command the central part. The 'permanent' area is the most predictable and should be easy to plan for. It might be helpful to separate the different parts of the board by drawing lines: it reduces confusion.

The three stages on p67 show one possible development of a board through a lesson

STAGE 1

ACTIVITY:
revising vocabulary

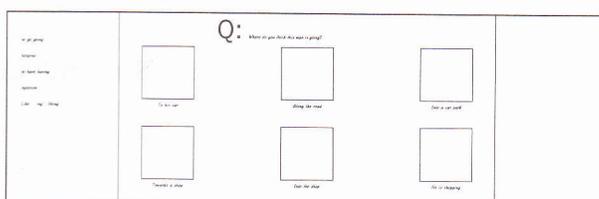
↑
Pictures used to revise vocabulary stuck in central section one by one. Words written underneath or put straight into 'reference' section

STAGE 2

ACTIVITY:
practising dialogue

↑
Vocabulary in
reference section

↑
Dialogue added to main section,
line by line, as it is practised

STAGE 3

ACTIVITY:
question and
answer practice

↑
Vocabulary plus
model sentence
from dialogue, or
simple rule (eg
like + -ing)

↑
Question form at top of board,
different prompts (words and
pictures) added one by one as
the activity develops

At what stage in the lesson should the board be used?

Exactly when the writing up is done depends on the type of lesson and your students' normal styles of learning. If you are specifically developing the writing skill, written work on the board can constitute a major part of the lesson. Often the writing stage is consolidation of oral work and comes after listening to and saying the language. If the students are impatient for you to write things down during oral practice it is sometimes better to write the words on the board for the students to copy them, rub the board clean and then tell them to close their books before returning to the oral practice.

How can you make the best use of the board?

- Use colour to make the board look attractive and its contents memorable. For example, you can reserve one colour for phonemic symbols so the students don't get confused between the spelling and the pronunciation of words. (See Chapter 6 Section 3: *Pronunciation*.)
- Use your board as a temporary display area. You can attach pictures, diagrams, etc with a product like 'Blu-Tack'. If you want to save the time it takes to write during the lesson you can write key words or sentences on card and stick them to the board at the appropriate time. Another advantage of using cards is that they can be quickly moved around on the board.
- Adjust the size of your writing to the size of the room and the size of the board.
- Don't put everything on the board – only the essential – and immediately rub off anything which is no longer needed.
- When writing up vocabulary include an indication of the part of speech, eg (*v*) after verbs, (*adj*) after adjectives, etc. Include the article *a* or *an* before nouns. Mark the word stress. (See Chapter 6 Section 3: *Pronunciation*.)
- Try and build up board work bit by bit after each activity rather than put it up in one go.
- Involve the students in the writing process by eliciting what you are going to put up, the spelling of difficult words, and so on. This will keep up their level of attention and concentration.
- Make it clear to students when they need to copy something from the board and when it isn't necessary. If you want them to write something down, allow enough time to do the job properly: write it up neatly, give the students time to read it (perhaps aloud) and then copy it down. You may wish to go round and check they have copied it correctly, particularly at the lower levels.
- When you transfer work from the main part of the board to the permanent part you provide students with a useful summary of the main stages of the lesson.
- Always clean the board at the end of a lesson.

For further ideas on this topic, see Chapter 2 Section 2: *Classroom arrangement*.

Task 1

Aim

To highlight stages in the use of the board as a lesson progresses.

Procedure

- 1 Look at the lesson plan on pp146–7.
- 2 Decide what you would need to put on the board and when.
- 3 Draw a diagram of each stage of the board.
- 4 Compare it with a colleague's diagram.

Task 2

Aim

To observe a colleague's use of the board and to give feedback.

Procedure

- 1 Observe a fellow trainee teaching a lesson and make a note of his or her use of the board. You can consider the following points: overall tidiness and attractiveness; legibility; helpfulness to the students.

- 2 Give feedback to your colleague. Try to find a number of positive points and make some suggestions for improvement.

2 The overhead projector

The overhead projector (OHP), while not replacing the board, is becoming increasingly popular.

What are the advantages?

- You can write on an OHP without turning your back on the class.
- You can prepare overhead transparencies (OHTs) in advance. This saves time during the lesson and ensures that the writing is neatly presented and the pictures clearly drawn.
- Students can write on OHTs and the results can be shown to the whole class. The results of groupwork can easily be shared using this technique.
- You can photocopy onto some special OHTs. In this way you can present complicated pictures or diagrams, pages from coursebooks, examples of students' work, etc.
- You can mask parts of OHTs, so revealing information step by step. This technique can be used to great effect when guessing the next line of a text, or the contents of a partly hidden picture.
- OHTs can be laid one over the other so that information is built up. An OHT containing the missing words can be laid over an OHT containing a gapped text, or pictures of characters in a story can be laid over the background scene, for example.

What are the disadvantages?

- OHPs are cumbersome and can be difficult to move around. As with all electrical equipment they can go wrong – in OHPs there is a tendency for the bulbs to blow.
- There may be too much light in the room, no screen or no suitable wall space.
- OHTs are relatively expensive, especially those that can be used in a photocopier. However, if you use erasable or washable pens the OHTs can be washed and re-used.
- Quite a lot of practice is needed to ensure efficient use of the OHP.
- OHTs can only be used one after the other: one OHT cannot be kept on permanent display while the next OHT is being shown; nor can they be used effectively afterwards as part of a wall display.

How can you make the best use of the OHP?

- Practise using the machine before trying it out with a class.
- Make sure you are using the correct OHTs (if you put an ordinary OHT through a photocopier it will melt), and the correct pens (some OHP pens are indelible and some are washable).
- Before the class make sure the OHP is working, try out your OHTs and check that they are focused and can be clearly seen at the back of the room. You may need to change the distance of the machine from the screen or wall and/or adjust the focus.

3 Visuals

Visuals can take many forms but the most common are real objects (sometimes called *realia*) and pictures or photographs. A number of teachers also make very effective use of Cuisenaire rods – small blocks of wood, initially designed to teach children mathematics. They have a variety of uses: for example, the illustration of colours; placed *in, on, under, behind* an object such as a box they can demonstrate the meaning of prepositions; they can be used to show word stress – one rod for each syllable in the word with a taller, different coloured rod to mark the stressed syllable.

Using visuals has a number of advantages:

- They often illustrate meaning more directly and quickly than through verbal explanation – they cut down unnecessary teacher talking time.
- They attract the students' attention and aid concentration.
- They add variety and interest to a lesson.
- They help make the associated language memorable.
- On permanent display (posters, charts, etc) they can help make a classroom a stimulating and attractive place in which to work.

What are visuals used for?

Among other things visuals are used to:

- arouse interest and concentrate attention at the beginning of a lesson;
- elicit already known language;
- illustrate a new language item, often a vocabulary item;
- create a need for new language which the teacher then satisfies;
- set the scene for a story or roleplay;
- stimulate discussion.

Finding and storing visuals

It is never too early to start collecting material that you think might be useful to show in class. The best source is magazines, but pictures and posters can also be obtained from holiday brochures, tourist information offices, catalogues, etc. If you have something particular in mind it is often easier to draw your own picture than spend a long time looking for one. You can spend some time preparing visuals to keep and use again and you can also make effective use of quick board sketches. You can ask the students to find visuals as part of their homework. They can be asked to bring in a photo of themselves when little or a member of their family, an advertisement they find interesting, even a favourite object. You can often provide visuals from objects commonly found in the classroom or on your person – examples of colours, materials, clothes, etc.

Work out a system for storing visuals you want to keep and organize them so that they become a resource you can keep re-using and adding to. Pictures simply ripped out of magazines look scrappy and unprofessional so it is worth making the visuals as attractive and durable as possible by mounting them on card and perhaps keeping each one in a plastic envelope. It might be useful to put a note on the back of each picture after you have used it to show what you have used it for. Don't forget that many pictures can be used for more than one purpose, in different lessons.

Showing visuals

When showing a visual make sure that:

- it is big enough to be seen. Before the lesson prop it up on a table where you would normally stand and look at it from the back of the room to check that it can be seen in sufficient detail;
- it is unambiguous (ie as simple as it can be for the purpose it has to fulfil) unless the ambiguity is deliberate and productive;
- you are holding it steady; when you first show the visual make sure that everyone can see it;
- if necessary you show the visual to each student in turn;
- you display a visual by sticking it to the board, on the wall or on a notice board. This makes it easier to refer to later in the lesson, particularly when you are summarizing what has been done. You may be able to make the visual into a permanent wall display, with the associated language printed on labels. This will serve as a constant reminder to the students of the work done and help make the classroom attractive.

Task 1

Aim

To assess how easily quick board drawings can be used.

Procedure

- 1 In a group of two or three, take it in turns to make a board drawing to represent the following: a car accident; a court room; your house or flat; a simple process such as making a cup of tea; two people falling in love; Paris.
- 2 Make sure that each drawing takes no more than 15 seconds to draw.
- 3 Discuss how effective the drawings were. Which elements conveyed the meaning most clearly and efficiently?

Task 2

Aim

To discover the ideal viewing distance for visuals.

Procedure

- 1 Select a picture about 20 cm x 15 cm with some bold figure in the foreground but a considerable amount of detail in the background.
- 2 Write a list of five or six questions which first elicit the image as a whole and then elicit some of the detail.
- 3 Stand a number of your colleagues at distances of 1m, 2m, 3m and 4m from you and hold up the picture.
- 4 Ask the questions and notice the cut-off point in terms of the detail they can perceive.

Task 3

Aim

To practise showing visuals to a group.

Procedure

- 1 Select one large (20 cm x 20 cm), one medium-sized (15 cm x 15 cm) and one small (10 cm x 6 cm) picture.

- 2 Stand in front of your group of colleagues and display each in turn, asking them to look carefully. Then put them on the board.
- 3 Discuss the different types of activities in which you could use the pictures.

Comment

- 1 It should be noticed how many different uses there are for the pictures.
- 2 You may be able to stand back and all the group will see the large picture, but you will have to go round and show the small one individually before any oral work can be done. It might be felt that the small one is more suitable for pairwork and groupwork only.

4 Worksheets and workcards

Although there are many excellent published materials available for the EFL classroom there are times when you will want to make your own worksheets to give to students to use in class or out of class for homework. These can take a number of forms: sheets of paper photocopied from a master you have produced, cue cards or role cards to use in pairwork and groupwork, or even home-made games.

Why should you want to make your own worksheets?

- to photocopy a text or exercise from a book which the students would not be able to keep or write in (but see the note below on copyright);
- to adapt published materials: perhaps change some of the questions to suit your students better, or introduce a new activity (by changing a straightforward text into a paragraph-sorting activity, for example);
- to write your own exercises to go with a piece of authentic material;
- to make cards for communication activities.

Making a worksheet or workcard

Many teachers have ready access to photocopiers so worksheets can be easily produced. Take care to make the worksheet as professional looking and as attractive as possible:

- If you write by hand make sure the writing is legible and neat.
- If you use a typewriter or word-processor check for typing errors.
- If you photocopy from published material it is often better to photocopy the whole page, cut out the part you want, glue it to a blank piece of paper and use that as your master.
- Don't make the writing too dense: leave space around the edge of the sheet and spread the work out.
- Include illustrations in the form of simple line drawings or pictures cut out of magazines to add interest (line drawings photocopy well but photographs don't).
- If you can, add colour – by hand to individual sheets and cards or by using a variety of coloured cards or photocopy paper.
- If you want to re-use cards, perhaps as part of a home-made game, it may be worth covering them in plastic or putting them in plastic wallets.

Other points to remember:

- It is often useful to keep a master of worksheets you make so you can use them again. Write on the back of the master details of when and why you used it, and make any changes you need before filing it away.
- As with visuals it is worth organizing and classifying your worksheets so you can lay your hands on them when you need them again.
- Don't waste time or money producing worksheets if you could achieve the same results with the board or the OHP.

Note on copyright

Unless it is explicitly stated that photocopying is allowed (this is sometimes the case with worksheets or tests in teachers' manuals, for example), it is against the law to make a photocopy of any part of a book, assuming the book is in copyright (copyright lasts for fifty years from the author's death). However, a system does exist whereby institutions can apply for a licence to photocopy a limited amount of material from published works; records are kept of copies made and the licence fee collected is distributed to those authors and publishers whose works are copied. Full details are available from The Copyright Licensing Agency Ltd, 90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P PHE. Alternatively, the publisher can be approached directly for permission.

Always include a reference to any published material you photocopy at the bottom of the worksheet.

Task



Aim

To evaluate 'home-made' worksheets.

Procedure

- 1 Get together with a few of your colleagues. Each of you bring a worksheet you have made, preferably one you have used or that you plan to use with a class.
- 2 Give each other feedback on the worksheets. You could evaluate them in terms of their clarity, attractiveness, interest and effectiveness. Try to make one positive suggestion for improvement for each worksheet.

5 The cassette recorder

The cassette recorder is one of the language teacher's most useful tools. Nearly all coursebooks and many other published EFL materials are accompanied by cassettes. In addition, many teachers have access to authentic audio material that can be brought into the classroom – most notably recordings made from the radio, and songs. Most teachers have access to a cassette recorder for use in the classroom and if you can borrow additional machines you can set up communicative groupwork activities.

You may also have access to a language laboratory, or audioactive machines, where the students can record and listen to their own voices. As there are a number of different types of language lab you must get help in the use of the one in the institution you are doing TP in if you want to take your students there. For ideas on using this technology see Chapter 5 Section 2: *Receptive skills: listening*, and Section 4: *Productive skills: speaking*.

Using the cassette recorder

The more complex the machinery the more need there is to be efficient in operating it. Practice and preparation are essential. So:

- Before you prepare your lesson make sure you know how to use the machine you'll be using. Practise inserting the cassette; make sure you know which way round to insert the side you want; try winding and rewinding to see how fast the machine performs; practise using such buttons as 'cue', 'fast forward', 'pause' or 'recap', etc. Can you use the counter button efficiently to find your place on the tape? Does the machine need a separate speaker? Is the sound quality good? (Perhaps the heads need cleaning.) What effect do volume and tone have on the sound quality – especially as heard from the back of the room?
- Check the availability of the cassette you plan to use and give yourself plenty of time to find the excerpt you want.
- Listen to the whole of the excerpt you want to use to make sure that it is complete and clear throughout.
- Before the lesson, put the cassette on, find the beginning of the piece you want to use and 'zero' the counter.
- Make sure you rewind to the right place. You can plan to do this while the students are discussing what they heard during the first listening. However, a moment's silence while you concentrate is better than losing your place. Don't forget to set the counter button again if you use a second cassette in the lesson.

Recording your own tapes

If professionally produced tapes do not suit your needs or are not available when you want them, you may have to make your own. It is fairly straightforward to record something off-air – perhaps a topical news item – if you have the right equipment. Do check any copyright conditions that might apply, though.

It is much more difficult and very time-consuming to make your own tape from scratch. The results are often of such poor quality that it is not worth the effort. However, if you are determined to have a go:

- Find a quiet room (drawing the curtains will help), although some background noise can add authenticity.
- Use a separate microphone (built-in microphones tend to pick up a lot of noise from the machine).
- Stand the machine on a soft surface to reduce the amount of noise it makes.
- Try to use other speakers (not just yourself) to add authenticity.
- If you have a script, rehearse your piece before recording it.
- For an authentic-sounding conversation, don't give your speakers a script, but give them an outline of the sorts of thing you want them to say.

Task

Aim

To develop familiarity with the controls of a tape recorder.

Procedure

- 1 Select a short dialogue (about six lines) spoken at fairly normal speed.
- 2 Find the beginning and 'zero' the counter.
- 3 Play the dialogue through several times, each time using the counter to return to the beginning.

- 4 Play the dialogue again, stopping after one line.
- 5 With one finger on the 'rewind' and one on the 'stop', rewind the tape by one line of the dialogue only.
- 6 When you can do this successfully, move on to the next line.
- 7 After two or three lines, look at the further corner of the room and repeat steps 5 and 6!

6 Video

Although video cassettes are not quite as common as audio cassettes in the classroom they are generally very popular with students and can add variety and a welcome change of focus in a lesson.

Video cassettes have several advantages over audio cassettes:

- Because the students can see as well as hear what is being said the recording is much closer to 'real life'.
- Video is much easier to understand; the facial expressions, the gestures and the physical background all give additional information.
- The visual element is attractive and commands the attention better than audio alone.
- Videos are often intrinsically more interesting, as many people are more familiar with watching television and video than listening to audio material other than music and songs.

Using a video machine

When using a video playback machine (VCR), exactly the same rules apply as with an audio cassette recorder. Follow the same steps outlined in *Using the cassette recorder* on p74. However, the leads connecting the parts of a video system are slightly more complex so it is essential that these are checked beforehand. Also you need to know which channel is used for playback on the particular machine you are using.

Another point to note is that the 'pause' facility, if it exists on the VCR, is often not as refined as on an audio cassette player. It is difficult to do intensive listening work if there is a delayed pause.

Producing your own videos

You may have access to video-making equipment – anything from a hand-held camera to a fully equipped studio. As with language laboratories you need to become fully familiar with the equipment in the institution where you are doing TP before you can use video-making equipment with students. Although you can make your own videos for viewing in class it is a very time-consuming business. It is often more appropriate to use video-making equipment in lessons which aim to develop the students' speaking skills. Video is an excellent method of providing feedback on student performance. See also Chapter 7: *Giving feedback to students*.

For more information on video materials see Chapter 4 Section 1: *Published materials*. For ideas on how to use video playback facilities and video-making equipment in skills work, see Chapter 5 Section 2: *Receptive skills: listening*, and Section 4: *Productive skills: speaking*.

Task



Aim

To practise recording off-air and creating an accompanying worksheet.

Procedure

- 1 Record a five-minute extract off-air (from either the radio or the television) – perhaps a short news bulletin.
- 2 Write some questions that focus on the main points of the news item(s). (Try to have a particular class of students in mind when you write the questions – perhaps the one you are teaching on TP.)
- 3 Play the extract to some colleagues and ask the questions.
- 4 Ask for their feedback on the choice of extract and on the questions.

Comment

You may have an opportunity to incorporate the extract in one of your TP lessons.

7 Computers

If the use of computers is included in your TP you will need to be shown how the particular machines used by the institution work: how to switch on and off and how you can find your way around the programmes, using the menus; whether they are stand-alone or networked with other machines; whether the programmes are on discs and, if so, how they are stored and accessed. For information about the kind of materials and activities you can use with EFL students, see Chapter 4 Section 1: *Published materials*.

8 The photocopier

Finally, a piece of equipment which most EFL teachers have come to depend on is the photocopier. Use of the photocopier may be an area of tension in some institutions and teachers may be limited to a certain number of copies. Make sure you know the 'house rules' about use. If there is no photocopier (or when it has broken down!) you may have to use your ingenuity to compensate. Creative use of the board, flipcharts, large pieces of card or paper, and of dictation can be just as effective and the lack of individual photocopies can be turned to your advantage: the students' attention can be focused as a group and extra writing practice can be included.

Further reading

Hill, D. 1990 *Visual Impact* (Longman)

Wright, A. 1993 *1000+ Pictures for Teachers to Copy* (Nelson)

Wright, A. 1989 *Pictures for Language Learning* (CUP)

Wright, A. and Haleem, S. 1991 *Visuals for the Language Classroom* (Longman)