

Unit 12 Building a resource bank

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Before leaving the UK

It is difficult to predict exactly what you will need in your host school but there are certain basic materials that are helpful in most language teaching situations. Try to get as much idea of the standard of English in your school before leaving as you can consult relevant textbooks and teaching material at ELT bookshops and university libraries. It is unwise to buy piles of books only to find that they don't suit the age range and language levels of the students. Invest in one or two basic reference works, like a good grammar of English for language teachers, but hold back on any purchases if you are not clear about your future teaching situation. However, a basic store of visuals and authentic materials should be collected before you leave the UK.

- **Start with yourself.** Collect photos of your family, pets, home, living environment, friends, holidays and town. Focus on photos of people doing everyday things, families at festival times, spare-time activities, etc.
- **Look for material in English about your host country**, such as tourist brochures advertising holidays to the region. If you are aware of the school type and know you will use newspaper articles, start collecting articles about your host country too. Obviously avoid anything too topical that might date. Short articles rather than detailed analysis will be best. Find advertisements for products from the host country. How are these products sold to English people? What image is created of their country? Is it a stereotyped view? These types of material are useful for cultural studies.
- **Make your own personal tape** (or even video if you have the equipment). Record a range of people speaking clearly and in an interesting way about their likes/dislikes, everyday routines, jobs, family, holidays, etc. Interview friends and family. These interviews and recordings should be easily divided into short sections of one to three minutes. You may even find someone who has visited or lived in your host country to talk about their experience.
- **Make a songs (or poetry) cassette.** Record suitable songs from your collection, including two or three recent hits, but try to avoid things that will date. Remember to focus mainly on clear singing without too much background noise and clearly enunciated lyrics. Check on web sites and in song books at your library. Some modern EFL courses have songs as part of the course, so if you can consult books check what those songs are and how they are exploited. Use friends and family to record a selection of poetry from an anthology aimed at the age range you will be teaching. GCSE and AS level anthologies will give you ideas.

Using local resources in your host country

It will be easy to supplement your picture collection by using the same procedures as below, getting magazines locally if necessary. Make use of maps of the town where you are staying and leaflets in English (if the English is correct) since students can always play themselves helping a tourist in their own country. This is also the most likely scenario as many may meet foreigners on their own territory and have to give directions, give help at the station or explain dishes on a menu. Some students in upper secondary, especially tourism and commercial schools, need to practise more specific situations linked to industry and contacts in their area. Discuss this with teachers in these types of school. Use leaflets and situations from local *bureaux de change*, hotels, industries or tourist attractions.

Visual aids

Realia/props

Collect as much authentic material as you can before leaving the UK. There's nothing more immediate than holding the real thing. Pick up a few copies if you can as it will save on photocopying.

- Collect pub menus, menus from cafés, restaurants and fast food places.
- Bus or train timetables, information leaflets, instructions for using the phone to call abroad or leaflets from post offices, banks and libraries can all be useful.
- Greetings cards, postcards and invitations can be a good source of language and stimulus for discussion. Build up a theme, e.g. postcards of places, people, funny postcards, works of art, greetings cards for festivals, for family events or for everyday celebrations like passing an exam, moving house, etc. Ask family and friends for cards they don't want.
- Leaflets from local theatres, cinemas, concert halls or advertisements from events and listings magazines may form the basis of speaking and reading activities.

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a cultural topic**
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**Controlled
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Collecting and storing pictures for flashcards

- Collect pictures from magazines in categories, e.g. food, hobbies, clothes, everyday activities, or broader discussion themes like the environment, cultural activities, teenage life, crime, education or immigration.
- Stick pictures on card, cover with plastic if possible, and store them in groups with notes on what type of language they might 'generate'. For example, divide your food and drink pictures into countable/ uncountable nouns.
- Pictures can be collected to practise structures, language functions or vocabulary areas. Make a note of this as you collect. For example, for the function of making/accepting invitations, collect a series of pictures of places to invite someone to, like a cinema, a party, a swimming pool, a game of tennis, etc.

Sources of pictures

Before buying lots of magazines explore ways of getting free magazines for building up your collection.

Using photos
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Using card games
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- Ask all friends and family for magazines, Sunday supplements, television magazines, holiday brochures, supermarket publicity and mail order catalogues. Just three or four of those small mail order catalogues free with Sunday supplements and women's magazines will give you a good collection of household objects to cut up and make into card games for a whole class. You should be looking for variety and quantity and a good range of unusual and large photographs for stimulating discussion.
- Collect a variety of holiday brochures from travel agents to have a wealth of flashcard images and small card images for locations, climate, activities, monuments and much more.
- Find pictures of key UK and American figures (not just fleetingly famous), big enough for flashcards, such as members of the Royal Family, the prime minister, personalities in international sport or music, etc. Add local figures once you arrive in your host country.
- Collect advertisements which can be grouped by product type or advertisements aimed at young people. Look for issues that would appeal to young people, such as anti-drugs advertisements, advertisements for slimming products, alcohol, fashion, etc.

Using advertisements
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Posters or maps

You can get free posters from local tourist boards. There are also very cheap ranges of posters sold in local libraries in the UK which can be particularly useful for younger learners, such as weather, shapes, or counting posters. Large organisations also give schools posters (see cultural resources).

Useful maps and wall-charts

- A map of the UK, your region or your town. Small maps of local areas of interest or the town centre (maybe maps of the local transport network) can be useful for information gap activities and role plays.
- Maps of the UK in geography or history books often show specific features, such as the spread of industry, the different climatic conditions or the concentrations of population. Maps of this sort are useful for your Cultural Studies lessons as you can write questions based on the maps and discuss the country using this visual stimulus.
- Make your own posters about the UK based on these small maps if and when you need them. The advantage of posters is that they are easy to roll up and transport and can be adapted to all your classes.
- Free wall-charts from national organisations are good for vocabulary and Cultural Studies (see below).

Pictures and cartoons for describing and story telling

You have to be careful with cartoons as it could be assumed that they are easy when in fact they often contain a great deal of culture-specific reference. Cartoons in newspapers can refer to a topic in the news at the moment or a trend unknown to students, and may use colloquial language unfamiliar to students. Choose carefully to find short strip cartoons for story telling, reordering, dialogue building and discussion. Individual cartoon pictures can work well, e.g. the work of Gary Larson in *The Far Side* can sometimes provide an interesting and amusing starting point for a theme.

Games and communication activities

Use board games (e.g. Scrabble), memory games and game props (e.g. dice). Puzzle books, holiday books and quiz books for young people. These are an excellent source of word mazes, spot the difference pictures, join the dots, and pictures for describing as well as teasers which activate language. For example, a puzzle book for Christmas might have anagrams for Christmas

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cultural content**
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words hidden in a picture, or a holiday book may have a crossword which can be adapted or used with classes. Even if written for native speakers, they can be a good source of games and five-minute filler activities for language learners. Check out children's and teen sites on the Internet, especially sites relating to celebrations like Easter or Halloween in the UK.

Fig. 1 Basic pronunciation table

Problems	German speakers	French speakers	Spanish speakers
Consonants	<p>/θ/ (think) and /ð/ (these) do not occur in German.</p> <p>/w/ (window) is a problem sound as learners may confuse with /v/ or /f/.</p> <p>/b/, /d/ and /g/ are sounds which cause difficulty at the end of a word and tend to be substituted by /p/, /t/ and /k/.</p>	<p>/θ/ (think) and /ð/ (these) do not occur in French.</p> <p>/s/ tends to be substituted by /z/.</p> <p>/tʃ/ and /dʒ/ (jam) do not occur in French.</p> <p>/ŋ/ (sing) does not occur in French.</p> <p>/h/ is often omitted and inserted when it shouldn't be.</p>	<p>/b/ (boat) and /v/ (vote) are confused and tend to be substituted by a combination of the two.</p> <p>/j/ (year) tends to be substituted by /dʒ/ (jeer).</p> <p>/θ/ (thought) is often substituted by /f/ (fought) or /s/ (sought).</p> <p>/ʃ/ (shoe) does not occur in Spanish.</p> <p>/h/ is often omitted, or conversely, over-pronounced.</p>
Vowels	<p>/ɒ/ (hot) can be a problem.</p> <p>/a/ (bad) can be confused with /ε/ (bed).</p> <p>/ʌ/ (fun) does not occur in German.</p>	<p>/ɪ/ (ship) and /i/ (sheep) are confused as /i/ does not occur in French. Learners use /i/ for both.</p> <p>/a/ (bad) and /ʌ/ (fun) are often confused.</p>	<p>/ɪ/ (ship) and /i/ (sheep) are confused as /i/ does not occur in Spanish. Learners use /i/ for both.</p> <p>There is no weakening of vowels, so /ə/ (the schwa) will be problematic.</p> <p>/a/ (bad) can be confused with /ε/ (bed).</p> <p>Vowels tend to be pronounced phonetically.</p>
Rhythm	The rhythm of German is very similar to that of English, so there shouldn't be too many problems.	The rhythm of French is very different from that of English. Learners need to focus on reduced vowels in unstressed syllables.	Each syllable in Spanish is pronounced very clearly with a full vowel. This is often transferred to English.
Word stress	In German there are strong and weak forms of words, but attention should be drawn to weak forms in English.	English words have a tendency for stress to fall at the front of words whereas in French it tends to be at the end. The mobility of stress in English words is problematic, especially when the stress falls on the first syllable.	Compound nouns (such as download) are a problem as Spanish has no equivalent, so all parts are stressed.

Pronunciation

The table on page 130 outlines the main problem areas for speakers of French, German and Spanish. Use this as a reference guide when planning pronunciation work and building materials, such as cards to represent minimal pairs of sounds.

Finding texts for speaking and writing practice

Use the age range as your starting point. What type of reading material and content appeals to the age range in the UK? Look at teenage publications, at reading material in libraries, short story collections, poetry anthologies and popular music which appeals to this group of learners. Look at teenage publications on arrival in your host country too for topic ideas.

- Collect UK magazines for the age range you are going to teach. Apart from articles and stories, students also like to see and handle a whole magazine. Practise finding your way around a complete publication. These magazines can also be a good source of questionnaires to use for speaking or for short articles which can be used to stimulate discussion or used for dictation.

Example: *'It happened to me ...'*, *'My worst ever holiday ...'*, *'I'll never forget when ...'* are common themes.

Problem pages, questionnaires and small advertisements all provide springboards for controlled and free speaking practice. Articles where three or four teenagers give their point of view on an issue can be useful, or articles where three or four products or people are being compared can generate a whole series of discussion tasks and language practice.

- Look out in the national press for articles that would appeal to the age range and could introduce an issue or topic. Special sections relevant to young people and the secondary curriculum can provide a good source, e.g. the section in the *Education Guardian* for schools with readings and Web links. Also look for short human interest articles of five to ten lines for text dictations, reconstruction and discussion starters.
- Very short stories which are amusing, mysterious or thought-provoking. Find these in cheap collections like *Amazing but true* types of books and the non-fiction sections for young people in local libraries.

Speech work
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Motivating teenagers
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Discussion tasks
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- Magazines especially written for language learners can be an excellent source of texts from age eleven up to very advanced older teenage learners. Each country has a crop of these magazines. The most widely used and respected in Europe are the series published by Mary Glasgow International which contain activity pages that can be used in class. These magazines are also a good source of Cultural Studies material that is up to date and topical.

Cultural Studies resources

- **The press.** Start by looking at your daily paper from a foreigner's viewpoint. What can you learn about the latest social trends, what is the attitude towards issues and what can you find out about ordinary people, ethnic minorities or national institutions? Collect articles which will help introduce topics about your country and its people. Gather a good selection of papers to take which reflect the diversity of the British press, including Asian papers, papers for the Black community or specific religious communities. The UK is unique in the plurality of its press and the importance which it places on the written word.
- **National organisations.** Many national organisations provide an educational resource service for teachers. Posters, fact sheets and leaflets are often obtainable free by writing or visiting web sites. The Parliamentary Education Unit has a web site which will give you ideas and can be used by your students. Other types of organisation include national tourist boards, the Health Education Authority, the Commonwealth Institute, conservation organisations like the National Trust, youth organisations, large companies like Tesco (see their Tesco 2000 web site) or charities. Local libraries can give you a list of addresses or web sites to get you started.
- **Films, video, television and radio** reflect lifestyle, trends and attitudes and can be exploited for this.
- **Your own souvenirs and realia.** Recipes, local traditions and souvenirs from your area.
- **The media in your host country.** Capitalise on news stories as they occur, to give background, e.g. during elections, cover the system of government, during a crisis look at the issues. Refer to local media coverage of your country. It may be biased but you can redress that.

British Studies – the British Council’s web site

www.britishcouncil.org.uk/studies/index.htm

The Internet

You can visit the UK from your host country and follow events, lifestyle changes and festivals as they happen. Authentic material and statistics are easily obtainable and specific teaching resources for EFL and Cultural Studies are widely available. There are vast banks of educational material in all English-speaking countries to suit the age ranges you teach, and worksheets, visuals, texts and lesson plans can be downloaded. Here is a brief summary of possible resources for assistants to tap in to. Selected links are provided on the **Languageassistant** web site at www.britishcouncil.org/languageassistant

Web sites for teachers and learners of EFL

For example, the British Council’s Learn English site (www.learnenglish.org.uk) or the BBC’s site for foreign learners with a good literature section (www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish). Visiting main organisations in the field, such as IATEFL or TESOL will give you links to more sites. Check out ESL sites in the US geared towards secondary students as they are a rich source of texts and stimulating content. www.edunet.com/elt provides good resources and links.

Educational networks for secondary and primary schools

UK networks, including the BBC learning zone or the Tesco resource bank, (www.tesco.schoolnet2000.com) are a rich source of texts and writings by real teenagers. Canada and Australia have well developed networks such as www.schoolnet.ca and www.edunetconnect.com for many issue based lessons and international topics. Australia’s cultural network is at www.acn.net.au/culture

School networks and web sites

All English-speaking countries have links between schools who share learning resources and many schools have their own web sites so you can visit a real elementary school from Canada to New Zealand and even e-mail the teachers and students. Some schools have their own magazines, look for net pals to e-mail and have homework help.

Homework sites

Many English-speaking children use the Internet for their homework and these resources are also useful for language teachers. Try some of these examples and search for more.

www.bigchalk.com

www.studyweb.com

www.factmonster.com

www.homeworkheaven.com

Media sites

All major magazines and newspapers have their own young people's versions and sites linked to television (see BBC) which are a good source.

www.telegraph.co.uk

www.timeforkids.com

Media for teachers are also good for links to educational resources, e.g. www.tes.co.uk (The *Times Educational Supplement* on-line version).

National institutions

All have their own sites which have educational sections with worksheets and resources aimed at schoolchildren. Examples include:

www.csu.edu.au/australia/ comprehensive Australian government site for history, travel, geography

www.explore.parliament.uk a schools guide to the system of government in the UK

www.royal.gov.uk the official site of the British monarchy

www.whitehouse.gov/WH/kids/html/ Mail the President and use these resources for children in the US President's house.

International institutions

Official bodies like the United Nations and the Worldwide Fund for Nature have activities in English geared to children and schools: www.wwf.org

Electronic libraries and encyclopaedias

Far more fun and interactive bringing any topic alive, e.g. www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk

Museums

There is a rich educational resource geared even to pre-school children in places like London's Natural History Museum where children can see dinosaurs in action, travel with Captain Cook on his journey to discover Australia and much much more. www.nhm.ac.uk/

Published resources

Resources for games

Elementary communication games – Jill Hadfield (Longman ELT)

Photocopiable resource of pair and group games featuring role cards, picture prompts and information gap. Excellent for low levels. Also see Intermediate and Advanced versions in this series.

Play games with English (series of levels) – Colin Granger (Macmillan Heinemann ELT)

Small handbooks of filler activities for all classes

Word games with English (series of levels) – Howard-Williams and Herd (Macmillan Heinemann ELT)

English puzzles (series of levels) – Doug Case (Macmillan Heinemann ELT)

The grammar activity book – Bob Obee (Cambridge University Press)

From elementary to upper-intermediate. Contains over sixty ready-to-use, photocopiable grammar games for younger/teenage learners.

Grammar games – Mario Rinvolucri (Cambridge University Press)

Grammar in action again – Christine Frank and Mario Rinvolucri (Prentice Hall)

Grammar games and *Vocabulary games* (two books) – Peter Watcyn-Jones (Penguin ELT)

Basic reference material (essential for all assistants)

A good monolingual dictionary for language teaching which you can refer to in class, e.g. The *COBUILD Essential English dictionary* (Collins) is good for classroom use as it gives examples in context which are helpful in lessons, rather than just a basic definition.

The *Cambridge learner's dictionary* is good for intermediate learners upwards.

A grammar reference which helps you think of your language from a learner's point of view, such as *Practical English usage* – Michael Swan (OUP).

Recommended resources and background reading for visuals

1,000 pictures for teachers to copy – Andrew Wright (Longman ELT)

A very useful book for copying drawings for the blackboard and finding pictures for composition and eliciting key vocabulary and structures. It contains useful hints on using pictures for language teaching.

Visuals for the language classroom – Wright and Haleem (Longman ELT)

Visual impact – D.A. Hill (Longman)

Pronunciation and speech work resources

Pronunciation games – Mark Hancock (CUP)

Good for raising awareness, controlled practice and revision.

Teaching English pronunciation – Joanne Kenworthy (Longman)

Ship or sheep? and *Tree or three?* – Ann Baker (CUP)

Conversation – Rob Nolasco (OUP)

Keep talking – Friederike Klippel (CUP)

Fluency activities, useful for higher levels.

Discussions that work – Penny Ur (CUP)

Ways to get students talking.

Sources for dictation

Dictation – Paul Davis and Mario Rinvoluceri (CUP)

Ground-breaking look at new and creative ways to use dictation in ELT.

Grammar dictation – Ruth Wajnryb (OUP)

Divides activities into levels from pre-intermediate up and is a good source of texts.

General methodology and guidelines

The source book – Michael Lewis and Jimmie Hill (Macmillan Heinemann ELT)

A practical introduction to work as an assistant.

Learning teaching – Jim Scrivener (Macmillan Heinemann ELT)

Useful for assistants who find themselves teaching whole classes alone.

Literature in ELT resources

Literature in the language classroom – Joanne Collie and Stephen Slater (OUP)

A window on literature (Literary extracts for lower-intermediate learners) – Gillian Lazar (CUP)

Literature – Alan Duff and Alan Maley (OUP)