SYLLABUSES FOR
SECONDARY SCHOOLS

USE OF ENGLISH

ADVANCED SUPPLEMENTARY LEVEL

1999

PREPARED BY
THE CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

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HONG KONG

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PREAMBLE

This syllabus is one of a series prepared for use in secondary schools by the Curriculum Development Council, Hong Kong. The Curriculum Development Council, together with its co-ordinating committees and subject committees, is widely representative of the local educational community, membership including heads of schools and practising teachers from government and non-government schools, lecturers from tertiary institutions, officers of the Hong Kong Examinations Authority as well as those of the Curriculum Development Institute, the Advisory Inspectorate and other divisions of the Education Department. The membership of the Council also includes parents and employers.

All syllabuses prepared by the Curriculum Development Council for the sixth form will lead to appropriate papers of the Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination.

This syllabus is recommended by the Education Department for use in Secondary 6 and 7. Once the syllabus has been implemented, progress will be monitored by the Advisory Inspectorate and the Curriculum Development Institute of the Education Department. This will enable the Use of English Subject Committee (Sixth Form) of the Curriculum Development Council to review the syllabus from time to time in the light of classroom experiences.

All comments and suggestions on the syllabus may be sent to:

Principal Curriculum Planning Officer (Sixth Form),
Curriculum Development Institute,
Education Department,
Wu Chung House, 13/F.,
213 Queen's Road East,
Wan Chai,
Hong Kong.

1. AIMS AND DESIGN OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CURRICULUM IN HONG KONG

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Language is an essential element in the development of the individual. The opportunity to achieve proficiency in a second language helps to broaden the scope of this development. In the Hong Kong context, proficiency in English opens new avenues in educational, career and personal development. The English Language curriculum in Hong Kong seeks to prepare learners to face the challenges of the twenty-first century by providing them with opportunities for extending their knowledge and skills in understanding and using English.

1.2 LANGUAGE AND INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT

Language is necessary for our intellectual, social, personal and aesthetic development. It enables us to explore the world of knowledge and experience and encounter the thoughts and experiences of the greatest human minds. It allows us to reach beyond our home, school and neighbourhood. It provides us with a means for reflection and understanding about ourselves. It is the most effective tool for expressing ourselves. Altogether it plays an important role in shaping the kinds of people we become. The shaping of personality and exploration of one's own self are inextricably bound up with the development of our language abilities. Our personality and language enhance each other in an ever-developing process.

1.3 THE ROLE OF A SECOND LANGUAGE

In addition to education in the mother tongue and the opportunities for learning and experiencing that it offers, every student in Hong Kong has access to learning a second language which provides further opportunities for extending knowledge and experience. A new word in the second language may draw one into awareness of a totally new concept, and a new foreign expression may enable one to be acquainted with the culture and conventions of the language behaviour of other countries. Such extension of understanding, knowledge and experience is even more important for the twenty-first century, with the advancements in information technology

bringing about not only rapid socio-economic changes and demands, but also turning the world into a global village. The development of personality, values and abilities in preparation for adult life must be compatible with these changes. Analytical, critical and independent thinking, problem-solving strategies, including creativity, social competence and cultural awareness are of vital importance to our learners.

1.4　　THE IMPORTANCE OF ENGLISH

As a result of the number, size and influence of the English-speaking countries in the world and their scientific, technological, economic, commercial and cultural influences, English has become a truly international language. English is the language of international communication, commerce, education and entertainment. The mastery of English therefore opens up new possibilities for our learners in career advancement, educational attainment and personal fulfilment.

1.5　　THE NEED FOR PROFICIENCY IN ENGLISH

In order to ensure the development of individuals capable of meeting the challenge of life in the twenty-first century in Hong Kong, it is necessary to broaden the scope of the individual's knowledge and experience to take on a world-wide perspective. The important and urgent needs for proficiency in both Chinese and English have been pointed out by the Education Commission. In the consultation document *Education Commission Report No.6: Enhancing Language Proficiency: A Comprehensive Strategy* (December 1995), the Commission identified the following needs:

> The Education Commission recognizes that the fundamental aim of our school education is to develop the potential of every child, so that our students will become independent-minded and socially-aware adults, equipped with the knowledge, skills and attitudes which help them to lead a full life as individuals and play a positive role in the life of the community. In order to achieve that, school education must equip students with the necessary language proficiency.

The Commission is also conscious of the fact that there is a need to enhance the Chinese and English proficiency of our young people so as to maintain or

improve the competitiveness of our workforce in the Asia Pacific Region. Proficiency in English is important both in and beyond school education for the following reasons:

(i)   English is the language of international communication

In order to communicate with non-Chinese speaking people in and outside Hong Kong, a good command of English is essential. It also enables our learners to widen their knowledge and experience beyond that of their immediate environment and helps them to develop an understanding of and respect for people from different parts of the world, their way of life, their cultures and ideas.

(ii)   English provides access to lifelong education

Proficiency in English also enables learners to have access to information via print and a variety of media. Most of the scientific, technological and academic information in print is available in English. Much the same can be said of texts presented in electronic formats (such as CD-ROMs and multimedia packages) as well as the vast and diverse range of materials provided on the ever-expanding Internet. To gain access to a wide variety of information resources conducive to lifelong learning, learners need to have a good mastery of the English language. Indeed, in addition to the learning opportunities provided through the mother tongue, English can facilitate continuing education and personal development when supported by the mastery of study skills, development of independence and self-initiative in learning.

(iii)   English is the language of international business, trade and professional communication

Any organization engaged in international trade will naturally be working with English. It is also the language for the tourist industry. The development of Hong Kong into one of the leading financial, banking and service centres in Southeast Asia has meant an increasing demand for people who are proficient in English.

(iv)   <u>English widens the scope of leisure and entertainment</u>

Knowledge of English opens up the world of leisure and entertainment for our learners. There is a wealth of literature written in English by writers from different parts of the world. The ability to read in English also enables our learners to have access to some of the greatest works directly or sometimes through translation. The international entertainment and advertising business is heavily English dependent.

1.6   AIMS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CURRICULUM

In response to the need for all learners to develop proficiency in English, the English Language curriculum in Hong Kong aims to:

- offer every child the right to a second language which provides further opportunities for extending knowledge and experience of the cultures of other people, including opportunities for further study, pleasure, and work in the English medium; and
- enable every child living into the twenty-first century to be prepared for the changing socio-economic demands resulting from advancement in information technology, including the interpretation, use and production of materials for pleasure, study or work in the English medium.

The Target for the subject of English Language for learners from Primary 1 to Secondary 7 emphasizes the role of a second language in personal, intellectual and educational development and aims to enable learners:

to develop an ever-improving capability to use English

- *to think and communicate;*
- *to acquire, develop and apply knowledge;*
- *to respond and give expression to experience;*

and within these contexts, to develop and apply an ever-improving understanding of how language is organized, used and learned.

1.7 DESIGN OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE CURRICULUM

The English Language curriculum must cater for the needs of the child from Primary 1 to Sixth Form and beyond. A child's development is a continuum, therefore it is necessary to have one single continuous integrated curriculum for English rather than separate and isolated syllabuses. The curriculum should cover all levels of school education and prepare the learner for continuing education after school.

Key Stage 1	Key Stage 2	Key Stage 3	Key Stage 4	Sixth Form	continuing education
Primary 1-3	Primary 4-6	Secondary 1-3	Secondary 4-5	Secondary 6-7	further studies, work, etc.

Each stage should be developed from the previous stage and lead to the next stage. All stages should provide learners with education in English learning appropriate to the age and language experience available to them in Hong Kong. Key Stages 1 and 2 focus on laying the foundation of English language development. Key Stages 3 and 4 focus on the application of English for various everyday, learning and developmental purposes. The Sixth Form provides language preparation for further studies at tertiary level as well as work, where on-the-job training may or may not be available.

1.8 THE SIXTH FORM ENGLISH LANGUAGE CURRICULUM

The *Guide to the Sixth Form Curriculum (1993)* identifies the general aim of producing "balanced, well-informed individuals who are proficient in both English and Chinese, and who are prepared for further education, work and adult life."

The Use of English Syllabus is intended as a continuation of the primary and secondary English Language curriculum. Learners are expected to have acquired a good command of the language system and be able to apply it in communication. The two-year Use of English curriculum aims at developing learners' ability to use English effectively for further study, work and leisure. At the end of the Sixth Form course, learners should be able to:

a) understand and use spoken and written English for purposes of practical communication, in study and/or job situations appropriate to their level;

b) successfully complete job-related and/or study-related tasks requiring the use of integrated language skills; and

c) develop an interest in, and an appreciation for, recreational and cultural activities in which English is used.

2.   CURRICULUM OUTLINE

2.1   INTRODUCTION

This chapter intends to describe more explicitly what learners learn and use at the Sixth Form level in order to achieve the necessary proficiency in English. The content of learning is organized under the following general areas:

Forms and Functions
- Text-types
- Vocabulary
- Communicative Functions
- Language Items

Skills and Strategies
- Listening
- Speaking
- Reading
- Writing
- Language Development Strategies and Study Skills

Attitudes

At the previous Key Stages, learners should have encountered many of the forms, functions and skills. There should be ample opportunities at this stage for revisiting previously learnt items in new or more complex situations, both for consolidation and extension.

Naturally there will be considerable variation in the extent to which learners become proficient in using English in the above areas as learners progress through various Key Stages up to the Sixth Form level. Individual learners differ in their abilities and rates of development. It is therefore necessary for teachers to exercise their professional judgement in deciding when learners are ready or need to develop particular skills, the degree of support required and the degree of complexity to which learners are expected to develop them. Tasks which cater for a range of ability will allow different learners to acquire, develop and use the language forms and skills most appropriate for their level.

The following sections of this chapter intend to give teachers a full picture of all the essential items that learners should acquire at this stage. However, teachers have to understand that learners may have learnt some of these items already in the previous stages and they should allow learners to progress further as far as possible.

2.2   FORMS AND FUNCTIONS

In order to develop an ever-improving capability to use English for various purposes, learners need to master different aspects of the language system and be able to mobilize this knowledge for effective communication. Learners must not only know the grammatical rules and focus on the forms, they must also learn how to apply such knowledge for purposeful communication in real-life situations. Equal emphasis should be given to the learners' mastery of the forms and the meaningful use of them. The major areas of Forms and Functions, which include text-types, vocabulary, language items and communicative functions, are presented on this and the following pages.

Text-types

Text-types refer to forms of speech and writing. The intended purpose and audience of each text-type determine its structure and special linguistic and stylistic features.

To assist learners in their development as proficient users of English, it is important that they are introduced systematically to a good variety of text-types. Different text-types provide meaningful contexts for the learning and purposeful use of specific language items and vocabulary. A report is one such example with a clearly defined function and language features. In addition, the awareness of the demands of different text-types is essential for successful and effective communication.

The range of text-types widens at the higher levels of learning. At the same time, the text-types that learners are exposed to and are expected to produce increase in complexity according to the levels of learning. The selection of text-types will depend on learners' needs, experiences and interests. It may also partly depend on publishers' materials and learners' environmental support. It must be recognized that in authentic situations, learners will only

be required to produce a limited range of text-types and they will be engaged with other text-types through reading and interpreting.

For text-types and communicative functions, the format of add-on lists is used. This helps to highlight the new elements that are introduced at each Key Stage. It also underlines the view that learning involves a spiralling rather than linear process. The following is not intended as a checklist. Rather, it suggests the variety and range of texts that learners may be exposed to and produce, whenever appropriate. Teachers should bear in mind that the text-types for previous Key Stages must be consolidated and developed to a greater degree of complexity.

Text-types for different Key Stages

Text-types for Key Stage 1:		Additional text-types for Key Stage 2:	Additional text-types for Key Stage 3:	Additional text-types for Key Stage 4:
captions	notices	advertisements	brochures	debates
cartoons	posters	maps and	formal letters	editorials
conversations	rhymes	legends	(such as letters	feature articles
charts	riddles	plays or	of appreciation/	formal letters
diagrams	short stories	dramatic	complaint)	(such as
diaries	signs	episodes	journals	letters of
forms	songs	poems	reports (such as	application)
instructions	tables	recipes	news reports,	
jokes	(including	stories	book reports,	
labels	school	TV schedules	and reports for	
letters	timetables)	weather reports	science	
lists	telephone		experiments)	
messages	calls		speeches	

Additional text-types for the Sixth Form:

agendas of meetings
application forms

bibliographies
biographies
commentaries
curriculum vitaes
documentaries
essays
formal letters on a variety of topics (such as letters of invitation or request)
guidelines
interviews
memoranda
minutes of meetings
proposals and recommendations
reports (such as reports of business, current issues or school functions)
reviews
survey findings

Vocabulary

Learners should continue to develop their knowledge of how words are generally formed in English through processes such as:

- *Affixation*.   This is the process of adding a prefix (e.g. un-) or suffix (e.g. -ly) to a root (e.g. "like").
- *Compounding*.   This refers to the formation of words from two or more words which can occur independently in other circumstances, e.g. "self-made", "coffee shop".

These word-formation processes should be introduced early on, in KS 3 and KS 4. A greater awareness of these processes at the Sixth Form level will help learners to deduce the meaning of new words even if the context is not familiar. When necessary, this awareness will enable learners to create new words to achieve special effects.

Learners also need to be introduced to different types of vocabulary items, including phrasal verbs, idioms and fixed expressions. In selecting these vocabulary items, teachers should pay attention to such factors as learners' needs, frequency of use, occurrences across different text-types, etc.

In addition to exposing learners to different vocabulary types and a wide range of lexical items, it is essential to help learners further develop essential vocabulary building strategies. The strategies they need to strengthen or acquire at this stage are as follows:

1. Guessing and inferencing

One of the most common vocabulary building strategies that learners should employ is making guesses and inferences about new words. They are the processes a good learner will follow when faced with difficulty in reading, or during a test, or any situation where running to the dictionary or asking someone is not possible or appropriate. This skill is particularly important to learners in the Sixth Form since they will encounter lots of texts with words they may not know. Learners should be encouraged to make guesses through searching for contextual clues within a text and make intelligent guesses from a meaningful context. Through some well-designed practice, learners should be convinced that they do not need to resort to the dictionary for every unknown word they encounter.

Knowledge of word parts is useful for learners to check if a guess from context is correct. Learners can also try to guess the meaning of words by using linguistic cues. For instance, learners can make use of the grammatical structure of a sentence or connectives when guessing the meaning of a new word and check their guessed meaning against the immediate context to see if it fits in.

Guessing and inferencing skills may come naturally to many learners, but some learners may lack them, or misdirect them, or be accustomed to learning modes where such skills are not developed. In this case, teachers have to consider teaching learners directly these skills and helping them to practise such skills. Besides providing learners with activities like "nonsense words" which can train them to search for context clues within a text, helping learners to acquire knowledge of word formation including prefixes, suffixes and compound words will help learners to decipher new words if they see familiar roots within them. Teaching learners the knowledge of lexical relations including collocation and sense relations (relations of sameness - synonymy, relations of oppositeness - antonymy, and relations of inclusion - hyponymy) will also help learners to make good guesses.

2. Collocation

Collocation is another important aspect of vocabulary development as learners should know the combinatory possibilities of a word. Words can collocate with different degrees of frequency and acceptability. When two words frequently collocate, they are described as having high-frequency or habitual collocation. For example, a high-frequency verb collocate of "law" is "make" as in "make a law". When two words cannot co-occur, they are of unacceptable collocation. For example, whereas it is possible to talk of "strong tea", one cannot say "powerful tea". Such knowledge of collocational appropriacy facilitates learners' ability to encode and decode language. Teachers can present the collocational information directly to learners by telling them the common collocates when learners learn a word. They can also use a more discovery-based approach by asking learners to analyze a number of sentences, each of which contains the target lexical item. From these, learners are led to discover what the different collocates are for the item. Learners will then be able to acquire a richer vocabulary and use the words more effectively when they know the collocational range of a word and its high-frequency collocates. They will also be able to guess the meaning of words with this knowledge of collocation. Learners can thereby expand their vocabulary during the process of these activities.

3. Using the dictionary, lexicon and thesaurus

Using references such as the dictionary, lexicon and thesaurus is an essential skill that all learners should develop in order to become independent in their learning. With effective use of the dictionary, learners can solve their problems in comprehension and confirm their guess about a word. Learners at this level should also learn to use the dictionary to find out the less frequent, unusual or rare meaning and special usage of a word in the text. They should also develop more extended dictionary strategies to find out the more subtle differences in the meanings of words and to know about the usage of different words. By reading the examples provided in the dictionary, they can also learn to use the words appropriately. They can make use of the information in the dictionary to use vocabulary actively by making sentences on their own. However, learners must be guided to develop an awareness of the subtle differences in meanings among the synonyms and the syntactic requirements of different words which may make interchangeable use of words not possible.

A lexicon is different from a dictionary since it takes groups of topics instead of the alphabet as its basis for organization. It provides the core language for a range of topics such as buildings, food, the human body, emotions and entertainment. As a vocabulary reference book, a lexicon brings together words with related meanings and lists them in sets with definitions, examples, and illustrations to help learners see the similarities and differences between them. These sets may include words with the same meaning, or may list the names of the different parts of something. By using the lexicon, learners can increase their vocabulary and quickly search for the words they want under a topic.

The purpose of a thesaurus is to enable learners to refine their choice of words in writing, with synonyms and near-synonyms, or to make a more precise choice of vocabulary. It can help learners to find a more appropriate term or expression to portray their thoughts and sentiments, best suited to their purpose.

4. Recording words

Language learning activities and extensive reading, which can increase learners' knowledge of new words and familiar words, may be ineffective if learners make no effort to retain the words. They, therefore, need to be trained to record words and acquire the habit and strategies for reviewing them. For example, they can be encouraged to enter the words and related information in designated vocabulary notebooks that are organized either alphabetically or, better still, thematically. The records can take a variety of forms, for example, card-indexes or vocabulary notebooks. Card indexes are flexible as far as the amount of information recorded on each card is concerned; they can be flicked through for alphabetical searching or just browsed and can be rearranged if the learners feel like it. The vocabulary notebook can be carried round easily and added to and studied at any time. There can be a variety of types of entry. Learners can store the information about words by using diagrams (e.g. spider maps) which help to highlight the relationships between items. Learners will find it useful if they also enter information about the usage of the words, collocations of them or even note down the examples showing the usage of the words. Records of words according to both meanings and usage are encouraged.

5. Retaining words

It is important to help learners develop effective means of retaining the words they have come across or learnt so that their repertoire of vocabulary is really enlarged. This can be done by asking learners to make word lists and go through their word lists bit by bit every day, e.g. when they are travelling to and from school. Learners can repeat the words to themselves orally or write them repeatedly when they try to remember them. Learners can also be helped to develop strategies in remembering the words by association and by creating a mental image of the new word. Other memory skills can be developed through learning words which are related in their spelling or shapes, sounds, meanings and the contexts in which they are used.

Helping learners to acquire and consolidate various vocabulary building skills is a particularly productive area for the encouragement of learner autonomy in organizing vocabulary learning. Learners can reflect on the ways of learning vocabulary and develop individual approaches to solving problems. They can ask themselves what is important for them to know about individual words, assess their own vocabulary needs and shortcomings regularly, and keep a record of their performance in actual situations. Learners can be encouraged to develop their own personal learning styles for vocabulary, in such areas as memorizing and retaining new words. Teachers should remember that the development of vocabulary learning strategies requires increasingly spaced practice over a period of time. Besides asking learners to have an intensive study of shorter texts in developing vocabulary building strategies, learners should also be encouraged to read extensively, through which they can build up vocabulary more effectively.

Communicative Functions

The range, complexity and level of use of the communicative functions increase according to the levels of learning. Learners should have learnt the communicative functions listed for all the previous Key Stages but they should be further consolidated and extended to a much greater degree of complexity at the Sixth Form. In addition to the communicative functions listed for Key Stages 1 and 2, further communicative functions are suggested for Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 and they are listed below for teachers' reference:

Ask for and give advice on simple matters

Ask for minor favours and assistance

Describe one's feelings and responses to happenings and states of affairs in some detail

Express gratitude and regret

Express obligation, prohibition, agreement and disagreement

Give and follow more advanced instructions

Give directions on how to get to places in Hong Kong

Invite, make and refuse suggestions and proposals

Justify one's behaviour and point of view in simple situations

Make a complaint

Make comparisons and give descriptions of processes and situations

Make general statements about the world and "universal truths"

Offer and decline help

Pay a simple compliment

Refer to events in the past, present and future and to the frequency with which things occur

Seek advice on matters related to one's studies

Seek information and respond to enquiries

Use the telephone effectively: deal with wrong numbers, offer/respond to requests to take messages, return calls

Additional communicative functions which should be covered at the Sixth Form include:

Deal with enquiries and respond to requests or complaints

Express factual information and present plans

Express personal feelings, opinions and judgements and present arguments

Find and provide evidence for a particular conclusion

Formulate hypotheses for investigation

Gather information and interpret it for a particular task

Give presentations on a variety of topics

Give recommendations and make proposals

Handle data presented in different formats for various purposes

Make enquiries and observations

Make reasoned decisions and formulate solutions to solve a particular problem

Participate in and follow group discussions

Seek and give advice on more complicated matters

Language Items

Language items suggest the range of English that learners need to develop and acquire as they perform the communicative functions. Learners at the Sixth Form should have encountered most of the essential structures of English and applied them in various situations. The list suggested for both Key Stages 3 and 4 should be consolidated and extended to a greater degree of complexity at this level. Some of the language items and communicative functions for Sixth Form learners have been combined in the table below to illustrate the relationships between them. The suggestions here are by no means exhaustive and teachers should try to adapt them according to the learners' needs and abilities.

Language Items and Communicative Functions	Examples
Use a variety of tenses, prepositions, formulaic expressions, adjectives, adverb phrases, adverbial clauses, passive voice, etc., to express factual information and present plans	According to the statistics, there has been a sharp rise in the number of unemployed people during the last six months. As a matter of fact, more and more university students take up part-time jobs nowadays for a variety of reasons. Some do it because they have a genuine need to pay their increasingly high tuition fees. UNICEF's work is guided by the Conventions on the Rights of the Child which has been ratified by 190 countries. I'm afraid family problems have become more and more acute these days and many people resort to violence instead of tackling the problems themselves. The school authority is planning to build a new wing next to the hall during the summer holiday.
Use the simple present tense, adverb phrases, adjectives,	I really appreciate your firm stance on environmental issues.

gerunds, conditionals, formulaic expressions, etc., to express personal feelings, opinions and judgements and present arguments	I am much <u>annoyed</u> by the new election procedures as they are so complicated. <u>Creating more job opportunities</u> should be the most important issue on the agenda. <u>If the government had made</u> good publicity of its new policy, the reactions from parents <u>would have been</u> more supportive. <u>In my opinion</u>, child abuse has already become a major social problem in Hong Kong.
Use a variety of tenses, passive voice, adverb phrases, adverb clauses, etc., to find and provide evidence for a particular conclusion	<u>Considering</u> the figures provided by the commercial sector, <u>it is evident that</u> most women still lack opportunities for advancement <u>in their careers</u>. According to recent research, passive smoking <u>has been proved</u> to be <u>extremely</u> dangerous to health. <u>As a result of</u> the strengthened police protection scheme for witnesses, more people reported crime last month. <u>In order to</u> attract more young people to join the teaching profession, the government has tried to improve teachers' fringe benefits and <u>it is proved</u> to be very effective. <u>There is no information</u> as to which political parties have more support from the public and so a survey is being conducted by a local university at the moment.
Use imperatives, modals, adjectives, adverb clauses, formulaic expressions, etc., to give recommendations and make proposals	<u>Stop</u> buying electrical appliances or products that are not <u>energy-efficient</u>. <u>In order to</u> help conquer poverty and create a more effective economic system, fundamental structural changes <u>must be made</u> in the financial

	markets and more stringent measures <u>have to be</u> taken. <u>I feel strongly</u> that the government <u>should</u> redouble its efforts in prohibiting discrimination against the handicapped. <u>It is of utmost importance</u> for the government to <u>seriously</u> review the tertiary education policy. <u>Would it not make more sense</u> to promote the use of canvas bags instead of plastic bags? <u>Another alternative</u> is to encourage manufacturers to use recycled paper as far as possible.
Use modals, formulaic expressions, adjectives, etc., to make enquiries and observations	<u>I am writing to enquire about</u> the possibility of being exempted from the oral examination as I have taken this paper already. <u>I should be grateful if you could inform me</u> of the procedures I have to take in order to apply for this job. <u>I can see that</u> you have made a very <u>good</u> effort in doing this project. Never have I seen such <u>marvellous</u> work before!
Use a variety of tenses, passive voice, adverb phrases, adverb clauses, formulaic expressions, etc., to give presentations on a variety of topics	<u>I've just read about a topic</u> which worries me a lot: bullying in school. <u>There is no doubt that</u> parents are very concerned with their children's employment opportunities in the future. I remember <u>last year</u> when I was <u>in Canada</u>, <u>it was rumoured</u> that Hong Kong was plagued by cholera. <u>First of all</u>, I would like to talk about the arrangements of the proposed trip. <u>I would like to conclude</u> with the following suggestions: …

Use a variety of tenses, modals, adverb phrases, adverb clauses, formulaic expressions, etc., to participate in and follow group discussions	<u>Should we start our discussion</u> with the first option on the list <u>now</u>? <u>In that case, do you think that it's a good idea</u> to employ more native speakers? <u>May I finish</u> my point first before you express your opinion? <u>Do you mean</u> you don't agree to the proposal at all? Well, yes, <u>to a certain extent</u>. It seems we all <u>think differently</u> and it is quite impossible for us to come to a consensus. <u>Shall we compromise</u> or take a vote?
Use adverb clauses, modals, formulaic expressions, etc., to deal with enquiries and respond to requests or complaints	<u>With reference to</u> your request for a replacement of the new CD you bought <u>recently</u>, <u>I regret to inform</u> you that they are all sold out already. <u>I write to clarify</u> the possible misunderstanding which <u>might</u> have arisen during the meeting between the two parties. <u>I represent</u> the ABC Company and wish to express our deep concern over the accident that happened yesterday. <u>Let me apologize</u> on behalf of the company. <u>We deem it necessary</u> to ban all smokers from our shopping centre. <u>Should you have any queries</u>, please contact me directly.

2.3 SKILLS AND STRATEGIES

In order that learners can use English effectively for various purposes, it is essential that they develop competence in the skills of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Language development strategies and study skills are

the strategies that learners need to develop in order to become motivated, independent and responsible for their own learning.

Listening Skills

Understand, interpret and organize spoken English as it might be encountered in academic or vocational situations

- understand and interpret different kinds of spoken texts to perform different tasks including taking messages, writing short notes, filling in forms, etc.
- identify ideas and key concepts in a passage, discussion or conversation
- identify details that support a main idea
- identify the sequence of events, causes and effects
- predict the likely development of ideas
- understand speaker's intention, attitude and feelings
- understand language used in situations of different levels of formality and informality
- understand the use of discourse markers
- be aware of (and interpret the use of) different intonation and stress
- understand both denotative and connotative meanings of words
- understand speakers with a variety of accents
- establish and infer meanings from clues
- distinguish between facts and opinions
- judge the validity and adequacy of main ideas and arguments

Speaking Skills

Convey intended meanings, attitudes and feelings clearly and coherently

- convey ideas and key concepts in a passage, discussion or conversation
- describe details that support a main idea
- describe the sequence of events, causes and effects
- present arguments in an organized and convincing manner
- use words and expressions appropriate to the context
- be aware of and use persuasive devices effectively
- use discourse markers appropriately

- use language appropriate to the role or situations of different levels of formality and informality
- use correct pronunciation and appropriate intonation

Participate effectively in an oral interaction

- open and close an interaction appropriately
- verbalize inability to understand, ask for slower repetition and spelling
- elicit response by asking questions or providing information
- seek and give clarification, explain what information one requires and why, rephrase one's questions when necessary, sum up points made and redirect the discussion when the need arises
- maintain an interaction by taking one's turn at the right moment and making a balanced contribution without either dominating the discussion or being too reticent
- express, elicit and respond to ideas, opinions and feelings in a group discussion
- make judgements and suggestions, support and develop each other's views, disagree and offer alternatives, reply, ask relevant questions, explain, give examples and use formulaic expressions where appropriate
- use appropriate interaction skills and conversational strategies

Reading Skills

Use reading strategies for understanding and interpreting a variety of written texts

- make use of knowledge of the world to make sense of the text
- skim a text to obtain a general impression and understand the overall meaning
- scan a text to locate specific information
- identify main and supporting ideas
- extract information relevant to specific tasks
- predict the likely development of ideas and events
- identify implied meanings through inferencing
- recognize how writing conventions affect meaning and cohesiveness
- interpret how linguistic and structural devices achieve certain effects

- recognize the rhetorical functions performed by sentences in the development of a text
- understand how sentences and parts of a sentence relate to each other
- deduce the use and meaning of unfamiliar words, phrases and expressions in context through understanding linguistic and contextual clues and by making use of previous experience of word meanings
- understand the use of discourse markers
- understand the different types of meanings of words, and the semantic associations that exist among words
- know what a word or phrase refers to in the previous or subsequent context
- follow and evaluate the development of a point of view or argument
- understand and appreciate tone, mood and intention of the writer and his/her attitude to the theme/topic
- relate cause to effect
- relate evidence to conclusions
- recognize limiting effects of qualifications and exceptions
- differentiate facts from opinions

Writing Skills

Present information and ideas to complete a range of writing tasks using clear, concise and grammatical English in an appropriate style

- gather information, select relevant ideas, organize and integrate them to complete different writing tasks
- understand and identify purpose, audience, roles and context for different writing tasks
- respond to, reflect upon, and evaluate and make use of given information to complete different writing tasks
- present arguments and ideas clearly and logically
- express views, feelings and ideas, imaginative and otherwise
- describe and discuss experiences
- present and elaborate main ideas and supporting ideas through exemplifications, paraphrases, explanations, etc.
- relate events and their causes and effects to make a report, proposal, complaint, etc.
- draft, revise and edit a piece of writing
- begin and end a text appropriately

- plan and organize ideas with the help of cohesive devices
- use appropriate discourse markers to signal the development of ideas
- adjust the balance of ideas and length of the writing to meet different requirements
- use appropriate linguistic, structural and rhetorical devices, a variety of structures and vocabulary to achieve desired purposes
- use strategies to arouse and sustain readers' interest
- write a variety of text-types such as simple memos, records and notes, reports, letters, speeches, debates, etc.
- complete a text by various means, e.g. supplying or selecting words or phrases, pairing, matching or ordering sentences, matching the correct responses with the questions

Language Development Strategies and Study Skills

working with others

- ask others for help and offer help to others
- ask for clarification, elaboration or illustration
- give clear and precise description, justification or illustration
- express views and suggestions, draw conclusions and make decisions
- discuss and negotiate with others to complete a task
- listen to different opinions and respond appropriately
- employ negotiation skills to reach consensus, compromise or bargain
- identify and assume appropriate roles in group activities
- assume leadership in group activities

working independently

- extract important points and make notes when reading or listening
- look for materials independently for the completion of a certain assignment, and make notes of the data and information in various forms
- classify information and ideas meaningfully and make reference to them whenever necessary
- organize materials, information and ideas systematically
- identify ideas and data that support opposite views, weigh pros and cons, advantages and disadvantages

- set meaningful realistic goals and determine what information or resources are necessary for completing a task
- schedule one's learning and plan a timetable for study and revision
- make arrangements for broadening and deepening of one's learning
- develop active and effective methods in managing homework
- evaluate one's own progress and note one's strengths and weaknesses
- use printed texts, on-line bibliographic databases, CD-ROMs, the Internet and the media to look for ideas and information
- apply thinking skills: deducing, inducing, reasoning, conceptualizing, generalizing, etc.

related study skills

- *developing reference skills*

  - use dictionary skills to find out about pronunciation, usage and grammar
  - recognize the salient features of various text-types and use them efficiently for locating information and ideas
  - identify relationship between materials, data, ideas, events, etc.
  - classify information under different themes/topics
  - read broadly for specific purposes

- *developing library skills*

  - use school and public libraries regularly to collect information
  - promote efficient use of the classification system of the library
  - develop research skills by using the library

- *developing note-taking skills*

  - make notes from spoken and written sources
  - emphasize the need to be selective when making notes and justifying one's choices
  - make sure that accurate information is noted
  - take down the main points and important supporting details
  - make the notes precise and concise
  - present the notes in an outline form, e.g. table, flow chart
  - use abbreviations as far as possible: "e.g.", "i.e.", "&", etc.

- *developing thinking skills*

  - develop reasoning skills (use induction, deduction, conclusion, etc.)
  - explore and speculate about possibilities
  - analyze data and situations systematically for better understanding or solving problems
  - generate criteria and principles for action and judicial thinking
  - think creatively/innovatively

- *developing enquiry skills*

  - ask for advice and suggestions on how to complete an assignment, and take note of such advice and suggestions
  - use appropriate tone and approach when asking for information and explanation
  - repeat questions and seek clarification politely and pleasantly
  - use appropriate opening remarks and formulaic expressions
  - request explanation when there is misunderstanding or query in a polite and pleasant way
  - understand the use of different tones and degrees of formality
  - ask follow-up questions appropriate to the occasion
  - write simple notes or letters to ask for information and materials, both formally and informally

skills and attitudes to maintain motivation and confidence

- overcome shyness and inertia by deliberately urging oneself to face challenges
- identify and appreciate one's own strengths in learning and further developing them
- take brief record of one's successes
- understand that everybody has some weaknesses and not being afraid to expose one's weaknesses
- participate in tasks despite the possibility of making mistakes
- take every opportunity to practise as much as possible and perhaps even try to look out for or create these opportunities
- make positive statements to oneself for self-encouragement and reflect positively about one's learning experiences
- identify tangible goals for each new stage of development

- cultivate one's own perseverance and the power of innovativeness

2.4 ATTITUDES

Attitudes, along with knowledge and skills, form an integral part of the curriculum. Some attitudes, such as developing confidence in using English, are likely to permeate all learning activities. Others, such as awareness of English as an international language of communication, will be consciously developed only in specific tasks and may not be immediately apparent in all tasks. Opportunities for exploring, developing and encouraging these attitudes should be provided in the learning tasks.

Attitudes to be developed at Key Stage 1

- confidence in using English
- keenness to participate in activities leading to improvement of knowledge and skills in the language
- sensitivity towards language use in the process of communication
- appreciation of the beauty of the language

Attitudes to be developed at Key Stage 2

The attitudes listed for Key Stage 1 should be further developed at Key Stage 2. Additional attitudes to be developed at Key Stage 2 are:

- enjoyment of reading
- an awareness of English as an international language of communication
- respect for the different cultures of the English speaking world

Attitudes to be developed at Key Stage 3:

The attitudes listed for Key Stages 1 & 2 should be further developed at Key Stage 3. An additional attitude that learners should be developing for Key Stage 3 is given below:

- an awareness of the potential influences (both positive and negative) of language use on other people's feelings and direction of thinking

Attitudes to be developed at Key Stage 4:

The attitudes listed for previous Key Stages should be further developed at Key Stage 4. An additional attitude that learners should be developing for Key Stage 4 is given below:

- a critical attitude towards ideas and values in spoken and written English texts

Attitudes to be developed at the Sixth Form:

The attitudes listed for previous Key Stages should be further developed at the Sixth Form. Additional attitudes that learners should be developing for this stage are given below:

- an awareness of the value and power of language
- a critical attitude towards analyzing and discriminating the different meanings of language
- a cautious and critical attitude towards the use of language in order to achieve the desired effects
- an open-minded attitude towards different cultures, ideologies and points of view and a willingness to share ideas with different people
- a serious attitude towards language learning with an attempt to improve one's capability

3. CONSIDERATIONS FOR TIME ALLOCATION AND SCHEME OF WORK

All Advanced Supplementary level subjects, including Use of English, are allocated 5 periods per week on the school time-table. Teachers have to strike a balance between class work and homework, between teaching time and assessing time. As listening, speaking, reading and writing are interrelated, it is important to allocate time for learning activities in such a way that learners are given plenty of opportunities to use all four skills.

It has to be borne in mind that classroom time devoted to the learning of the English language is not sufficient for the development of the language competence to meet the language challenges that learners will face at both work and study. Learners have to develop the awareness that in addition to their English lessons, they must be willing to devote much time to independent learning in order to consolidate and improve their command of the language.

Planning an effective scheme of work is the preparation for successful classroom experiences for learners. A large number of factors have to be taken into consideration and this may initially seem formidable. However, as schemes of work can be recycled from year to year, such planning can become easier with time and can certainly reduce teachers' day-to-day stress.

In planning a scheme of work, teachers may find it useful to consider the range of language skills and attitudes that learners should be developing and the variety of themes and tasks they need to work through in order to achieve the expected language competence. In the process, teachers may find it expedient to consider not just one but several coursebooks and supporting resource materials to ensure that all the necessary skills are adequately covered.

It may be time efficient to prepare for more than one unit at a time so that teachers have a comprehensive picture of where and how the teaching and learning are progressing. It will also help to achieve a sense of balance - whether some skills or text-types need revisiting and consolidation.

Teachers who are using a coursebook will need to first read through the whole unit or chapter including teachers' notes, tape scripts, to get a good feel of the unit. Teachers will need to take into consideration the following:

- the key objectives of the unit, e.g. the language items, language functions, and higher order thinking skills to be learned and practised
- the core activities for the whole class
- appropriate assignments
- opportunities for differentiation and independent learning
- opportunities for making use of information technology including the computer, CD-ROMs, audio/visual aids, the Internet, etc.
- the focus of assessment

4. ASSESSMENT AND MARKING

4.1 PUBLIC EXAMINATIONS

In public examinations, marking is merely instrumental in ranking and giving information to the assessor regarding a learner's achievement at that particular time. It is not intended to provide qualitative feedback to learners, and examination marking schemes are produced with this in mind. For these reasons such marking schemes should not be used as models for classroom marking procedures or techniques. To give an example, Section B of the Use of English examination (the writing paper) is assessed using a scaled double-impression marking scheme. This works very well for examination purposes but if teachers were to adopt such a marking scheme in the classroom, the results would be obviously counter-productive.

4.2 SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

School assessment has a very significant role in the teaching programme. It helps both teachers and learners identify the progress learners have made and the difficulties they encountered. It also helps the teacher find ways of tackling and overcoming these difficulties and make future teaching plans. Formative assessment should be employed as part of an on-going process and exploited as a teaching tool and as a means of providing a two-way channel of information between teachers and learners.

It is crucial that teachers on the subject panel discuss and come to agreement upon the methods of assessment they intend to use for various purposes. In other words, panel chairpersons should co-ordinate an assessment policy to ensure that there is consistency across the panel in this area. There are obvious advantages to teachers and learners if there is an agreed marking policy which emphasizes recognition of attainment, positive response and treats mistakes as opportunities to promote learning.

The keeping of records and documented evidence of learners' achievement and progress should be encouraged. They may be in the form of portfolios and profiles. Such records can be used positively and regularly referred to by teachers and learners in the monitoring and planning of teaching activities. Periodic diagnostic testing can also help in deciding priorities for teaching.

Selecting assessment activities

Any system of assessment that is devised should be kept simple and easy to manage. The use of tests and practice papers should be kept to a minimum and used for examination practice and summative evaluation purposes only. Similarly multiple-choice exercises such as MC cloze and MC reading comprehension tests should be employed for testing purposes only.

Assessment activities need not be restricted to the formats of the relevant examination papers. Familiarity with the examination format does not necessarily guarantee success in public examinations which assess learners' language proficiency. Teachers may devise other assessment activities that require learners to demonstrate specific language use and thinking skills. These other activities include:

- *Observation*. By observing how learners answer questions in class, participate in group discussions, etc., teachers can gain informal impressions of general aspects of learners' work.
- *Projects*. Projects require learners to bring together a range of skills such as enquiry, analysis, synthesis, presentation and drawing conclusions. They are also useful tasks for both teaching/learning and assessment.
- *Portfolios*. A portfolio is a purposeful collection of a learner's work, e.g. samples of writing or tape recordings of speech. Portfolios provide a continuous record of language development and allow both the teacher and the learner to gain insights into the progress of the learner himself or herself.
- *Conferencing*. Conferencing refers to informal conversations between the teacher and learners. Conferencing can be conducted within or outside class time, and is useful in helping teachers understand aspects of learners' work (e.g. strategies used for reading) that are difficult to obtain through other types of assessment activities.

Where certain skill-based activities are being practised, it is important for the teacher to ensure that he or she obtains feedback on whether or not a learner can perform the skills in question successfully. In other words evidence should be sought, through the language assessment tasks involved, that a learner can, for example, skim a text, or infer the meaning of an unknown vocabulary item, or make appropriate use of cohesive devices, etc. To facilitate effective teaching and learning, careful thought needs to go into the

materials used for these purposes and the assessment schemes devised, without which the teaching situation will not be a profitable one.

Some forms of assessment are definitely more time-consuming than others and it should always be ensured that the time is being well-spent and will have profitable results. It helps to strike a balance within the teacher's own schedule among the various forms of assessment which may be done in and out of class.

Assessment and evaluation

In setting up criteria for assessing learners' work, it is important to strike a balance between content, accuracy and their organization. The teacher should also inform learners about these criteria. Rather than simply giving a mark or grade, the teacher should provide feedback on various aspects of learners' performance, e.g. the thoughts and feelings expressed, their linguistic/stylistic strengths and weaknesses, so that the learners would know what should be worked on for improvement.

Various marking techniques may be appropriate at various times or with different learners. A whole array of corrected errors in a composition, for example, may not always prove useful and the teacher and learners might benefit more from concentration on one particular feature.

Self and peer assessment

Teachers should continually foster the habit of proof-reading and editing by learners themselves. There are many techniques through which such self-assessment can be achieved. Learners should, at all times, be discouraged from seeing the teacher as a "marking machine" - such a view does not enhance awareness of a learner's own errors and is quite detrimental to learner independence.

Learners should also be encouraged to realize that they can learn from each other's strengths and weaknesses. Peer correction is a valuable form of assessment, particularly in the area of writing. It is an activity that, if carefully nurtured and monitored, can prove very successful.

5. GUIDELINES ON TEACHING

This chapter examines some of the specific issues that are relevant to the teaching and learning of English at the Sixth Form level. In addition to the emphasis on authentic use and communicative competence, attention is paid to learner differences and the development of learner independence, particularly in the preparation for tertiary education. Recent advances in information technology also provide exciting resources that teachers can exploit for the enrichment of the language learning experience.

5.1 LANGUAGE IN USE

Learning English enables our learners to have access to the English speaking world and what it has to offer in terms of its economic, practical, academic or political advantages and necessities. To use the English language properly, learners have to know the vocabulary, grammatical forms and structures and their meanings. They also have to know what forms of language are appropriate for given situations. Language in use is distinguished by a wide range of contexts in which the features of spoken and written English appear in an unlimited number of variations and combinations. A register is a variety of language use according to the context of the situation. It includes the lexico-grammatical and phonological features that typically realize the meanings of the situations. Certain language features, styles and strategies of meanings are typically associated with each register.

Learners of the English language have to develop an awareness that there are many varieties of English and there is no one prestigious variety. The key rather is in appropriateness of language use. In the English Language curriculum, there must be opportunities for learners to be exposed to and explore language in use. The use of authentic texts enables learners to develop this understanding of the subtle ways in which meanings are conveyed and communicative functions achieved. Learners are also expected to produce texts using the appropriate register.

5.2 PREPARATION FOR TERTIARY EDUCATION

One of the aims of the Sixth Form English Language curriculum is to prepare learners for tertiary education in local or overseas institutions. While the

focus is not the subject-specific language required for different disciplines, learners need to develop proficiency in English to meet the demands of tertiary education.

Reading

A huge amount of reading is required in any undergraduate course. Learners' attention may be drawn to the particular relevance of some reading skills in further education.

In researching for a topic, learners have to process a lot of reference materials at high speed to determine whether the materials are relevant, useful, cover familiar or new territory, provide a broad, generalist view of the issue or examine a particular perspective in depth. Effective skimming skills are an important first step in efficient study and research.

Learners have to be able to follow the development of ideas in a text, how the writer draws upon evidence to develop a thesis and arrive at conclusions. Moreover, it is essential that learners are able to judge ideas and arguments critically as to whether they are logical, convincing or biased. Data presented have also to be evaluated for their reliability and validity.

Thus, learners have to be provided with opportunities to read a variety of authentic materials to develop the confidence to tackle writing in different styles and registers. This is an area in which the English Language teacher can collaborate with teachers of other subjects to develop suitable learning and practice materials.

Writing

Although it is impossible for English Language teachers to prepare learners for the specific writing tasks that are required at tertiary level, learners should have mastered the skills of writing text-types common to many disciplines, such as reports, argumentative essays and analytical essays.

Listening

Effective listening skills are essential in lectures and in all formal and informal communications with academic staff. In tertiary institutions both locally and

overseas, undergraduates are likely to come across lecturers and learners speaking a variety of accents. The early exposure of learners to a variety of accents would help develop learners' awareness that the initial difficulties encountered with an unfamiliar variety of English can be overcome.

Teachers have to provide learners with opportunities of exposure. Local television provides ample examples of different varieties of spoken English. These programmes range from dramas, situational comedies, news reports, and documentaries on a wide variety of topics. Chinese subtitles can be conveniently covered by a length of cardboard. Occasionally showing films with English subtitles can also help weaker learners pick up the language.

Speaking

Tutorials and group discussions are important modes of learning in tertiary education. Learners should therefore be prepared to take an active role in these oral activities.

One big challenge lies in how to motivate learners to take an active part in discussions. Learners have to be aware that learning is not a passive process of receiving information but rather an active process of constructing meaning. In addition, knowledge is only truly gained after one has worked with it, grappled with it, debated on it, considered different points of view and developed one's own perspective. In order to obtain this kind of knowledge, learners have to be ready to express their points of view, develop arguments, support these with evidence and draw conclusions. In the process of discussion, they should be willing to critically evaluate ideas, defend their viewpoints, and be open to different points of view so that they can re-evaluate their own points of view. Such discussions are integral to the learning process of inquiry, scrutiny and the development of principles and values.

One impediment to having meaningful discussions is learners' lack of information or ideas. Learners should be given time to conduct their own research before coming to a group discussion. Time should be profitably spent on the effective application of listening and speaking skills for communication rather than mouthing trivia.

<u>Study skills</u>

Learners preparing for tertiary education need to develop independent study skills to become successful and competent learners. Other sections of this book which deal with the development of study skills, self-access learning and the use of information technology are relevant.

5.3 TASK-BASED LEARNING

5.3.1 General Considerations

Language learning should be experiential and it should aim at developing learners' communicative competence. The task-based approach to language learning places emphasis on learning to communicate through purposeful interaction in the target language. Teachers have to help learners achieve communicative competence, which has to be supported by learners' development of linguistic competence and a good mastery of language skills as well as language development strategies. Learner independence and their positive attitude towards language learning are also essential to make language learning successful.

The task-based approach aims at providing opportunities for learners to experiment with and explore both spoken and written language through learning activities which are designed to engage learners in the authentic, practical and functional use of language for meaningful purposes. Learners are encouraged to activate and use whatever language they already have in the process of completing a task. The use of tasks will also give a clear and purposeful context for the teaching and learning of grammar and other language features as well as skills. Such language focus components in turn enable learners to construct their knowledge of language structures and functions. All in all, the role of task-based learning is to stimulate a natural desire in learners to improve their language competence by challenging them to complete meaningful tasks. Language use is stimulated and a range of learning opportunities for learners of various levels and abilities are provided.

Effective learning tasks motivate learners by
- appealing to the imagination;
- providing challenge;
- developing confidence;

- providing a sense of achievement;
- expanding interests;
- providing enjoyment; and
- providing learners with opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning.

Tasks should involve learner participation and develop positive attitudes in language learning. Well-designed tasks encourage learners to participate actively in learning activities and promote risk-taking. Learners are required to provide input in terms of knowledge, skills and meaningful contribution in completing tasks. Their active involvement helps develop their ability to predict the consequences and repercussions of their choices of input in completing the task, their consciousness and reflection of the process, as well as their critical awareness of the process of language learning.

In order to accomplish different learning tasks, learners should:

- attain a high degree of linguistic competence and become aware of the social meanings and potential communicative functions of linguistic forms in different situations;
- develop the skills to manipulate the linguistic system spontaneously and flexibly in order to convey meanings appropriately under different circumstances and to interpret the specific meanings intended in written or spoken texts; and
- develop the skills and strategies for using language to communicate meanings effectively.

A language learning task embodies the following five features:

1. A task should have a purpose. It involves learners in using language for specific communicative purposes beyond the practice of language for its own sake.
2. A task should have a context from which the purpose for using language emerges.
3. A task should involve learners in a mode of thinking and doing.
4. The purposeful activity in which learners engage in carrying out a task should lead towards a product.
5. A task should require the learners to draw upon their framework of knowledge and skills.

Teachers should note the following points when developing and/or using tasks as a means of promoting language learning:

- Tasks should involve communicative language use in which learners' attention is focused on meaning rather than linguistic structures.
- Tasks should be authentic so as to help learners develop the skills they need for carrying out real-world communicative tasks beyond the classroom.
- Tasks should involve learners in various activities in which they are required to negotiate meaning and make choices in what, when and how to learn.
- Tasks should be sequenced systematically and integrated with other exercises and activities, in which learners can focus upon and practise specific elements of knowledge, strategy and skill for the task.
- Tasks should be graded or easily adapted to suit learners of different abilities.

In short, tasks are characterized by an emphasis on activity, participation and flexible differentiation, and the process of communication among participants which occurs through a variety of modes and media.

5.3.2 Adopting a Task-based Approach

When planning for task-based learning, teachers should first consider learners' needs and abilities. They should design activities which challenge learners and extend their experience. To make task-based learning effective, learners should be allowed time for seeking information, processing it, formulating questions and responses, and making connections; they should also have the opportunities to observe, discover, experiment, practise, discuss, analyze and share. Most learning tasks require knowledge and skills developed across the curriculum, involving information and ideas from other subjects in both the formal and informal curricula. These activities all contribute to the development of the learners' framework of knowledge and skills.

In designing task-based teaching, teachers have to help learners see that language is a dynamic resource for expressing and creating meaning rather than just a system of rules. Learners should not be taught to know various

grammatical rules alone but to apply the rules effectively and appropriately in interaction and communication. Grammar serves as an essential tool which enables learners to accomplish the tasks. Fluency and accuracy are complementary and learners ultimately have to use language productively in different contexts for various purposes. Learners at the Sixth Form are more mature and may employ more cognitive and metacognitive strategies, which enable them to benefit from formal grammar which can be taught deductively or inductively. But teachers should be aware that although explanation of grammar rules is sometimes necessary, it only helps if the learner has adequate experience and knowledge of the language to make sense of it.

It is essential that learners are ultimately exposed to the variety of language they will need to understand and use outside the classroom. This might be language they will need in order to study other subjects, to use at work, or for pleasure. The classroom time can be better spent in increasing exposure, expanding learners' repertoire of useful words and phrases, relating forms and functions and asking them to use the language themselves. There should be an attempt to link classroom language learning with language used outside the classroom. In the process of task-based learning, learners' own personal experiences should be enhanced as important contributing elements to classroom learning.

Examples:

(1) *Learners explore the topic of "dating". Based on the learners' personal experiences of dating or their perception of it, the teacher can ask learners what they consider as the good qualities of a boyfriend/girlfriend. A list of these qualities can be derived from the discussion and learners can try to prioritize them on their own. Learners can be encouraged to design a questionnaire and interview their classmates. The teacher can further develop tasks on love and marriage, e.g. what makes a happy marriage or the common causes of broken marriages. Learners finally write an article on dating offering advice to their schoolmates to be published in the school newspaper.*

(2) *Learners consider the genre of detective fiction. Teachers can ask them to read one or two short stories about crime (e.g. stories by Agatha Christie, those from the Nancy Drew or Hardy Boys series, or those from The Oxford Book of American Detective Stories (1996) edited by*

Tony Hillerman and Rosemary Herbert). Teachers can also ask learners to watch a detective film (such as Barry Levinson's <u>Young Sherlock Holmes</u>, or one which teachers deem appropriate for their learners). Based on their reading and viewing experiences, as well as their previous knowledge of the genre, learners discuss in groups the distinguishing features of a detective story and how it appeals to readers/viewers. Then in groups they write a review of one of the stories they discussed for the English Club Newsletter. An alternative task is to ask learners to write a detective story to be contributed to the school newspaper or magazine.

Teachers should always be flexible in designing and adapting materials for various activities. They should always try to expose learners to a range of listening, speaking, reading and writing activities by using a lot of different written and spoken texts which incorporate a variety of language. They should place sufficient emphasis on study skills which help learners learn efficiently and develop greater independence in learning. To cater for learner differences, differentiated or graded tasks can be designed for learners of different interests and abilities. Teachers should pay special attention to the needs of learners and allow for flexible approaches to the task, offering different modes of participation, media, procedures, etc. They can then allow for different solutions depending on the skills and strategies drawn on by learners.

e.g. *Learners explore the issue of the mass media. They read articles on the functions, roles and possible abuses of the media. Learners may choose different aspects to work on. One group may study samples of a range of newspapers, including both local and overseas and note the differences in style and approach in their treatment of the same issue. Another group may study and compare the range of programmes available on the English and Chinese TV channels in Hong Kong and discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the different programming choices. A third group may compare different documentaries, some serious and others more sensational. Each group discuss, analyze and present their conclusions on the possible social impact of the respective media and how young people may be shaped or influenced by them.*

All English teachers must take on the responsibility for selecting and adapting suitable tasks from different materials or designing tasks for their own learners. They can make use of authentic materials from newspapers, magazines, journals, etc. or adapt them for different purposes. To enhance the sharing of experience and materials, teachers of the same school or level may collect resource materials and build up a bank of tasks. When drawing on such resources at a later date for other learners, teachers need to evaluate the effectiveness of the selected tasks and, if necessary, modify them.

5.3.3 Integrated Tasks

Learners at this level should have developed some competence in using the four language skills of Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Most tasks in real life situations involve the use of more than one skill. Teachers have to create or adapt a series of authentic tasks which combine the use of more than one of the four language skills. They should design tasks in which learners are given opportunities to practise the integrated use of skills in appropriate contexts so that learning is meaningful, purposeful and authentic. Adopting a task-based approach encourages application of a combination of skills. Skills are not practised in an isolated manner, but form an integral part of the process of completing the tasks.

Using theme-based materials is a good way to provide an organizing focus for different activities involving integrated use of skills (please refer to Appendix 1). Teachers can give the lessons coherence and interest by selecting a topic, or getting the class to select a theme for several lessons. The topics can arise logically and naturally from clearly defined situational, personal and academic needs or interests. They can have an educational rationale and be based on substantive issues including cross-curricular issues. They can also come from the life experience of the learners. Learners can be encouraged to bring their own experience to class and teachers can design interesting original topics based on learners' input. A wide range of topics are needed to give learners variety. No matter what the themes are, the teacher's intention is to provide opportunities for realistic language use, focusing the learners' attention on the tasks themselves and finally developing their communicative competence.

e.g. *The teacher can ask learners to gather information on the Asian economic crisis which began in late 1997 including the sharp fall of Hang Seng Index of the Hong Kong share market, the property slump,*

the increase of the prime rate, etc. Learners who study Economics can focus on the economic background and causes of the crisis and analyze the effects of this crisis on the Hong Kong economy. Learners studying Government and Public Affairs can focus on the government's role and its policy in tackling the issue. The political impact of the crisis can be explored as well. Learners taking the subject of Psychology can focus on the study of Hong Kong people's responses towards such a crisis, what stress is created and how they should cope with it. Interviews can be conducted with experts, politicians, psychologists or members of the public to gather information and opinions. Learners write reports based on such interviews and comment on the issue. To facilitate learning, different roles, e.g. a psychologist, an economist and a politician, can be assigned to learners taking different subjects and they are to organize an open forum discussing the issue from various perspectives as a concluding activity while some members of the audience will play the role of reporters or very active participants.

5.3.4   Projects

Projects are very useful tools to help learners develop independence and work according to their own pace and ability. Learners are allowed to set their own learning targets as they proceed. The motivation for learning therefore comes from within not from without. The learners themselves can select and devise the project, with the teacher acting as co-ordinator and facilitator or consultant. Motivation for learning is sustained and increased as the work progresses. The project enables learners to use the target language in real situations and leads to tangible results - an end product which they themselves have created. Such personal involvement will help learners become responsible for their own learning.

Project work also provides a useful way of integrating the four skills. Skills are treated not in isolation, but combined. In the initial stages of a project - stimulus, discussion, negotiation - there may be more speaking and listening than reading and writing. Once the project is under way, however, learners will be using all four skills simultaneously, that is, speaking and listening (e.g. interviews, oral presentations), writing (note-taking, reports), and reading (brochures, pamphlets, background material).

Project work offers learners an opportunity to apply what has been learnt through formal teaching. It often takes place outside the classroom and is cross-curricular. They are encouraged to move out of the classroom into the world and put what they have learnt to use. Learners can therefore experience learning outside the classroom. Project work helps to bridge the gap between language study and language use. It is therefore a valuable means of extending the communicative skills acquired in the classroom.

In addition to the five specific features that characterize tasks, projects should be topic-based and provide an effective framework for language use and development. They can involve combinations of task types. Project work can be both individual and collaborative. It may take learners out of the classroom and involve them in the collection of data through interviews or library work. The product can be in any form that the learners find suitable.

The processes of project work are usually more complicated than those of a task and involve steps such as planning, action, reviewing, collaboration, organization, finalization and reporting. The different stages of development in project work can be divided broadly as follows:

1. Stimulus
   Learners have an initial discussion and define the project objective. They may share and negotiate ideas, and debate issues among themselves and with the teacher.

2. Data collection
   Learners design ways to collect and collate information, e.g. questionnaires, interviews or surveys. Learners may work individually, in pairs or in small groups, inside or outside the classroom.

3. Organization of information
   Learners study the data collected, and read more extensively for cross-reference and verification. They try to organize the collected materials with the idea of developing the end-product of the project.

4. Final presentation
   Learners work out the manner of presentation, which will depend largely on the form of the end product, e.g. chart, booklet or oral presentation.

Since project work is meant to be learner-centred, teachers need to develop a more flexible attitude towards the learners' work. Teachers will be working with the learners, not directing them but acting as counsellor and consultant. Teachers may provide learners with guidance, check their progress and give them feedback whenever necessary. The amount and type of guidance should match learners' individual needs.

Teachers may remind learners that they should cultivate open-mindedness and respect for others' perception and opinions. In a group project, learners should learn to co-operate with each other, divide work among themselves sensibly, and develop interpersonal and collaborative skills. Organisational skills and team work are important in getting the project done. Each learner should try his or her best to participate and contribute to the completion of the project. For a project to succeed, a good working relationship needs to be established. The learners must be able to co-operate not only with each other but also with the teacher.

For teachers, the project may incur certain problems. They may have extra work. Projects require an additional commitment, e.g. in establishing contacts, finding suitable sources of material, etc. Teachers may also find it difficult to monitor project work. This means strategies have to be devised for checking systematically on what the learner has heard, learnt and understood, e.g. by providing checklists and project report forms. Where available, audio and video recording equipment can also be used to help in assessing learners' performance. Although problems and difficulties do exist, teachers must see them in the right perspective. Teachers should realize that the considerable advantages of project work definitely compensate for the occasional difficulties which may arise and for the additional work which may be required of them, particularly in a full-scale project.

The ultimate goal of project work is to develop learners' ability to inquire, communicate, conceptualize, reason and solve problems. It can cultivate in learners a sense of commitment to their own learning, enhance the learning and use of English, and develop the knowledge, attitudes and skills that will enable learners to participate in authentic, interesting activities outside the classroom. It can also help learners form behaviour and habits conducive to the development of ever-improving capabilities in language learning.

e.g. *Learners can be asked to do a project on the decline of Hong Kong's tourist industry from late 1997 to early 1998. They can play the role of staff working in the Hong Kong Tourist Association who are told to work on a proposal for promoting tourism. To start with, the teacher can prepare some relevant materials for learners to read and extract information, e.g. newspaper cuttings, articles from economic magazines and statistics from the Hong Kong Tourist Association. The teacher can draw learners' attention to Hong Kong's declining tourist trade, the possible causes and effects, measures taken to alleviate the situation, etc. Some brainstorming sessions can be held among learners of the same group regarding this issue. Learners should then work in groups and discuss what they want to focus on in this project. They are encouraged to collect and collate information from various sources, e.g. the Hong Kong Tourist Association, to conduct interviews or surveys on tourists' opinions on Hong Kong, libraries, etc. Learners have to study all the information/data and analyze them. They should attempt to make suggestions on how to promote the tourist industry in Hong Kong. They have to decide how they are going to organize the information and present it in their project.*

5.3.5 Role of the Teacher in Task-based Learning

Teachers should facilitate learning by balancing the amount of learners' exposure to and use of language, and ensuring they are both of suitable quality. They should be able to identify learners' needs and create the best possible conditions for learning. It is essential for teachers to nurture learners' self-confidence so that they are willing to adopt risk-taking language learning attitudes and strategies. Teachers have the responsibility of overseeing learners' development and coordinating activities so that they form a coherent and systematic progression, leading learners towards communicative competence. Teachers can play the following roles:

- They motivate the learners, arouse their interest and involve them in whatever activities they are participating in.
- They facilitate the communication process in all tasks, offering support, guidance and advice to learners whenever necessary in the learning process.
- They conduct and monitor the learning activities, devise and provide the appropriate amount of input and practice, guide the learners in the

classroom procedures and activities, group learners appropriately for different purposes, and give learners a chance to participate and monitor their performance.

- They provide information and act as a source of ideas, information and language. For instance, they select the new materials to be learned and present them to the learners.
- They act as language informants and cultural guides when the focus of learning is on language form.
- They diagnose and evaluate learners' work, give advice on ways of improvement and use learners' performance as a basis for planning future learning activities.

Teachers should never dominate classroom interaction and should always be sensitive to learners' needs and open-minded in teaching, especially when sharing and responding to learners' ideas. They should aim at establishing a learning atmosphere which gives learners a sense of security, satisfaction and value as individuals. Co-operative relationships and collaborative learning should be the emphasis. At this stage, it is vital to give learners opportunities to upgrade their language to a higher level, to use richer vocabulary, more complex syntax and more appropriate registers.

When giving feedback, teachers should:

- react to the content of learners' work;
- comment on the quality of the language and presentation;
- give feedback tactfully and positively;
- give examples of good expressions or phrases and mention other good points;
- when correcting, ask learners to suggest suitable amendments, e.g. ways of completing the phrases; and
- acknowledge learners' efforts and show a keen interest in what they have presented.

In short, teachers should give guidance and advice throughout the process and play a supportive role all the time.

5.3.6 Role of the Learners in Task-based Learning

In task-based learning, learners take the central role in learning and the idea of learner-centredness is paramount. They no longer play merely a passive recipient role in learning. Instead, they often play the active role of a negotiator in language learning activities. They negotiate with themselves or other learners in the group or class and decide on the learning objectives and learning process. Learners at this stage are relatively more mature and they should be allowed more freedom in choosing what and how to learn. After all, learning is a collaborative effort between teachers and learners. Learners should be involved in decisions on designing and selecting the content of learning and on methods of completing and evaluating the tasks. Learners at this stage are capable of giving as well as taking in the learning process. They must take responsibility for their own learning, developing autonomy and skills in learning how to learn which will enhance their lifelong language development.

5.4 CATERING FOR LEARNER DIFFERENCES

Every class is composed of individuals with their own mix of variables such as: cognitive, affective and social maturity; motivation; ability; learning styles; aspirations; and interests. Catering for learner differences is a significant and challenging consideration in determining teaching and learning content, level and methods. The paragraphs below give suggestions on catering for learner differences.

To cater for learner differences, a teacher needs to be:

- sensitive to learners' needs;
- able to evaluate learners' development of cognitive abilities and to present new ideas of a cognitive level consistent with the learners' intellectual and linguistic development;
- able to judge what materials will challenge learners at a given point in time within their range of ability;
- able to arouse learners' interest and desire to complete an activity;
- able to respond to and help learners' who require extra help; and
- able to appreciate learners' capacity to learn and improve.

Teachers should be aware of learners' current cognitive levels in order to:

- help create situations intended to provoke questions and encourage experimentation;
- select suitable questioning strategies that will encourage learners to clarify thinking; and
- facilitate the formation of views and solutions to problems that promote conceptual development.

Teachers should employ a variety of teaching techniques, using different kinds of class groupings (including pair and group work), and various resources (such as print material and the media). They should create an atmosphere of trust to encourage learners to be adventurous, allowing learners to make choices, to find answers to their own questions and pursue their own interests.

Example:

- A class is divided into groups (about 6 learners in each group) of different abilities.
- Teacher helps learners where and when necessary - to different degrees according to individual abilities.
- Each group considers the global developments and challenges in the twenty-first century.
- Each group chooses, defines and writes about an aspect of global development and prepares a report for the class e.g. the changing nature of jobs and lifestyles because of technological developments, the challenges to maintain a sustainable environment, the implications of the global village.
- The better groups explore the issues in greater depth and reflect on how they can prepare for the twenty-first century and the possible roles they can play in it. The weaker groups generalize and report on the information they collect.
- Sub-groups of two to three learners each reads up on their chosen issue and prepares notes for report to the other sub-groups orally - the weaker sub-groups get help from the teacher as well as classmates.
- Each group now prepares a formal report in writing, including information and views given by the sub-groups, and then relates it to the whole class

for open discussion. (A number of periods should be allocated for all the groups to present their reports in turns.)

- Teacher gives advice and suggestions to each group for improving their reports; the reports can be re-drafted and revised a number of times; if necessary, the reports are also marked and corrected.

Teachers may provide all learners with the same task but vary the input provided and the amount and style of support they give. Or they can give the same task but require different levels of outcome.

Example:

- Learners write a proposal to suggest ways to improve the facilities and services in a large public housing estate.
- The teacher provides additional support to the less able learners by giving more preparatory work focusing on text-types, language items and skills, giving them more clues and suggestions of ideas and wording, and guiding them to work through a model or example.
- The teacher requires two or more levels of performance: the least able learners focus the discussion on improving some obvious aspects of community life in a large public housing estate, such as cleanliness of the environment, security, sports and recreational facilities for young people.
- The other learners are required to take a broader view of the various needs of different sectors of this community such as working mothers and the elderly and examine the issue from different perspectives.
- The higher ability learners argue for a comprehensive policy that addresses not just isolated problems but embodies a vision of how to build a strong community.

In order that teachers' efforts in catering for learner differences are effective, learners should be helped to understand that it is appropriate for teachers to give different assignments to learners and that different learners will have different products. In addition, learners need to take on an active rather than a passive or receptive role. They should be self-directed, self-pacing and responsible for their own learning. Each learner needs to establish a learning goal and be committed to it, using various strategies, e.g. a learning contract and arranged conferences with teachers. More information about setting goals and using learner contracts is given in 5.6.

The final outcome of the efforts catering for learner differences should be to foster pleasure and satisfaction, confidence, motivation, concentration and persistence, knowledge and skills, and learning pace, not only in the weaker learners, but also in the better learners.

5.5   LANGUAGE ENVIRONMENT

Creating a rich language environment both in the school and the classroom increases learners' exposure to the language. English should be insisted upon at all times in the English classroom. By the time learners have reached the Sixth Form, they should have mastered the essential classroom language to enable them to understand teacher instructions and carry out classroom activities. The more able learners will strengthen and consolidate their language skills through the continued efforts to use the language for inquiry, discussion and expression. The less able learners will benefit from the continued exposure to the use of English and the opportunities for mustering their language resources for communication. The reliance on the mother tongue may seem expedient at times but it sends off the negative message that English cannot be relied upon for the purpose of effective communication. Further, through successfully engaging with the language, learners will come to appreciate that they are able to make the language work for them. As a result, their confidence and motivation to learn and improve their language skills is enhanced.

Extra-curricular activities can also be organized to maximize learners' exposure to and use of English. These may vary from attending performances in English or watching video programmes to running a stall in the jumbo sale on an English-speaking day. In addition, learners in the Sixth Form are very often responsible for organising activities for students in the school. Organising activities in English would give them not just the opportunity to practise but the incentive to improve their English.

In the school environment, a wealth of materials should be available in English including those in print, audio, visual and multi-media formats. All written and spoken communications between teacher and learners should be in English. Displays on bulletin boards, newsletters and school newspapers can also be in English. These opportunities allow learners to assimilate and internalize a lot of authentic language in a natural manner.

Learners should also be encouraged to look out for opportunities to use English in the environment beyond the classroom and school whether for information or leisure and in a variety of formats including print, audio/visual and multimedia.

5.6 SELF-ACCESS LEARNING

5.6.1 Learner Autonomy and Independence

Learning is most effective when learners take an active role in the learning process, make choices independently and direct their own learning. For this reason, an important goal of school education is to produce autonomous learners who are capable of independent thinking and action.

There are many ways to encourage learners to move towards autonomy and independence. In English language teaching, for example, learners can be asked to set realistic objectives for themselves, to decide how to go about doing a project, to use English independently for authentic communication outside the classroom, etc.

The process of encouraging learner autonomy and independence should start at an early age and continue throughout the secondary curriculum. By the Sixth Form, learners should be able to exercise more control over their own learning and have a greater degree of decision-making in various aspects including objectives, methods, time, place, materials, pace, learning strategies, monitoring and assessment. They should also have the ability to analyze their language needs and make decisions in their own learning for further development.

To help achieve the objectives above, self-access learning should be actively promoted at the Sixth Form. Depending on the situation of individual schools, self-access boxes, corners or centres should be made available as useful learning resources.

5.6.2 Reasons for Promoting Self-access Learning

"Self-access" refers to a particular way of organizing materials so that learners can work independently (but not without guidance) from the teacher. In self-access learning, learners choose what skills to practise and what

materials to use. Learners also decide whether to work individually or in a group, and they carry out self-assessment of their performance.

The benefits of self-access learning are numerous. First, self-access learning activities are effective in promoting independent learning. Learners choose the materials which suit their interest and level, and work on them during library periods or when they are free. They determine their learning goals, and conduct learning activities with assistance from the teacher whenever necessary. Learning is therefore self-directed and autonomy is encouraged. Second, self-access learning caters for learners' individual needs. Self-access learning allows learners to work at their own pace, and on areas in which they need most practice. Learning is therefore more individualized, and the disadvantages of lockstep instruction are compensated. Third, as self-access work is initiated by learners themselves, they will have a greater commitment in their learning. In other words, there will be an increase in motivation. Finally, the self-access mode of learning provides increased exposure to English. Learners have more opportunities to process and practise the language in self-directed tasks, which facilitates acquisition.

5.6.3   Setting up Self-access Facilities

Self-access work can be promoted within the classroom, e.g. when learners are given the opportunity to choose to use their own grammatical structures in less controlled activities or exercises, and when learners attempt some reading activities. More frequently, however, self-access learning takes place outside the classroom, where self-access facilities are set up to help learners take charge of their own learning.

Self-access facilities can take many different forms. Boxes can be used to hold self-access materials, which are wheeled around on a trolley if the need arises. Steel cabinets can also be used to store and organize self-access learning materials. Where space is not a problem, a corner of the library, a section of the multimedia learning resource centre, or even a dedicated room can be set up as a self-access facility.

Where resources allow, audio-visual equipment can be provided in a self-access room or centre to enhance independent learning. Useful equipment includes cassette recorders, television monitors, video players, headsets and computers. Computers are particularly useful for self-access as they offer the

possibility of self-directed learning. Many computer-based resources are now available for self-access work, for example:

- word-processing programs - for writing and editing purposes;
- text analysis programs (e.g. concordancers) - for studying how words are used in authentic texts;
- educational CD-ROMs - for providing language practice and information on a wide range of topics and issues;
- simulations and games - for increasing motivation and for practising problem solving; and
- tests and quizzes - for assessing learners' proficiency.

The first two types of programs are particularly useful for Sixth Form learners. Word-processing programs facilitate the learning of writing as a process, and can be used for simple desktop publishing tasks. This will come in useful if learners want to publish their work for their peers or other people to look at. Concordancers help learners discover how the English language works, and are particularly good for checking whether certain words collocate. By means of a concordancer, learners can examine a corpus of authentic English and discover grammatical and lexical patterns for themselves, for example (a) whether they can say *"do* crime" or not, (b) whether it is grammatical to say *"on* this page" or *"in* this page", and (c) whether it is more common to say "busy with our *studying*" or "busy with our *studies*".

In addition to the five types of computer-based resources mentioned above, teachers may want to purchase some authorable programs so that they can write their own computer-based learning materials for their learners. Such programs do not usually require high computer expertise, and can be used to create tailor-made materials for particular learners.

5.6.4 Developing Self-access Learning Materials

Self-access facilities should be stocked with good and user-friendly learning materials conducive to independent learning. These materials can be obtained or developed through different means:

- Teachers can buy commercially made materials from publishers. These materials need not be restricted to printed materials, but can include

games such as Scrabble and Hangman. Audio/video tapes and computer software can also be provided if the school has the required equipment which learners can access.

- Teachers can develop self-access materials by extending, adapting or rewriting parts of published materials like books, magazines and newspapers. Authentic materials such as leaflets, advertisements and speeches which are related to learners' daily life can also be exploited.

- Teachers can make past examination papers, both internal and public, available for individual practice. These materials will be perceived as directly relevant by Sixth Form learners.

- Teachers can ask learners to bring in any printed materials or any audio/video productions which they enjoy. Teachers can then develop them into self-access materials. Alternatively, learners can be asked to design questions on the materials and supply an answer key. This not only helps relieve the teacher's workload but more importantly, fosters learner autonomy.

- Teachers can ask learners to help build up topic-based materials. This can be done by first listing "hot" topics which are often discussed, e.g. pollution, environmental protection and crime. Learners can then collect materials from government offices, newspapers, magazines, etc. Alternatively, they can search for relevant information from educational CD-ROMs, the World Wide Web, newsgroups, etc.

In developing self-access materials, teachers may like to take the following into consideration:

- The materials should be relevant, interesting and stimulating to attract learners to work on them on their own.
- The materials should be categorized carefully and systematically to help learners locate what they need promptly. For example, colour-coding the materials and labelling materials/book shelves are very efficient ways to promote user-friendliness.
- The materials should be graded and arranged from easy to difficult to allow learners to progress in a systematic manner.
- Materials on specific skills should be integrated with other skills or areas of language learning, particularly the ones learners are studying, to help learners see the communicative and integrated nature of language use.
- Instructions on how to use the learning materials, how to find books, and how to use equipment such as video players and computers are always

helpful as reminders for learners. Such instructions should be given in written English and enclosed with the materials or posted up at appropriate locations.

- All materials should have built-in self-assessment tools as far as possible.
- The tapescripts of any self-access learning materials should be included.
- Suggestions on what learners should do next should be provided.

5.6.5   Role of the Teacher

In helping learners make full use of self-access materials, the teacher plays an important role as a facilitator as well as a provider of guidance and resources. It is recommended that teachers use the following ways to help learners develop independent study habits:

- Introduce the concept of self-access learning and explain its importance.
- Help learners identify their needs and decide which areas of the language they should practise (Appendix 2).
- Sensitize learners to their learning styles and strategies.
- Familiarize learners with the school's self-access facilities so that learners know what types of resources are available and choose the ones they like to work with.
- Help learners set realistic goals. One way of doing this is by making contracts with learners to help them set up manageable objectives and monitor their progress (Appendix 3). It should be recognized that designing and negotiating a learning contract is only a starting point. Learners should realize that they can change their plans when they have developed more understanding of their language needs or learning styles.
- Maintain contact with learners while they are doing self-access work, and ask them to reflect on what they are doing. Teacher intervention may be needed especially at the initial stage when learners are likely to encounter difficulties.
- Help learners keep records of their work so that they are well aware of their own efforts and achievements. Whenever necessary, check learners' records and make use of them in evaluating learners' progress and in making further contracts with the learners.
- Help learners acquire the skills to monitor and assess their own learning. Further information on self-assessment is provided below.

- Understand that learner autonomy and independence is not developed overnight. Accept learners' limitations and be an effective facilitator offering encouragement, coaching and advice whenever necessary.

5.6.6 Self-assessment

The education of learners to make judgements on their communicative competence is a crucial part of the learning process. In self-access learning, learners are offered an opportunity to learn how to monitor, review and assess their performance. Teachers should build self-assessment procedures into learning materials by providing such things as answer keys to gap-filling exercises, comprehension questions and so on. Teachers should also develop various other procedures to enable learners to better assess themselves. For example:

- learners can be asked to keep a language learning log or journal/diary to record and reflect on their learning experiences (Appendix 4);
- learners can keep records of their attempts and success in portfolios, to review their work regularly, and to evaluate their performance against their own targets;
- learners can do peer evaluation with the help of checklists, especially where fluency activities are concerned. Peer evaluation gives learners the incentives to try their best as they have a real audience; and
- learners can assess their performance by means of an answer key. For example, learners can work in pairs. Each learner has some information which is not available to his/her partner. They exchange their information and check whether they have closed the information gap by looking at the key.

All the suggestions above encourage learners to assess how well they are doing and see self-assessment as an ongoing process. Learners will gain a better knowledge of their own ability and develop a critical awareness of their language learning process. They will also be able to better identify their strengths and weaknesses in English and establish goals for future development.

In addition to evaluating their performance, learners can be issued with simple forms with which they evaluate the usefulness of self-access materials. The feedback obtained can then be used to improve the materials.

5.6.7 Preparing Learners for Lifelong Learning

Self-access learning can help learners in different areas. Learners can have the opportunities for analyzing their own language needs, improving their proficiency, understanding their strengths and weaknesses and seeking ways to improve themselves. They can assess their future language needs and plan their future language learning strategies accordingly. More importantly, they can use English for self-reflection and for personally involved and meaningful purposes. They are involved in decision-making processes and language use and they will have a better understanding of their learning style. If they work on self-access materials in pairs or groups from time to time, they can have the opportunity of working with and learning from each other. A range of language development strategies can thereby be developed and they will enable learners to take on their language learning as a lifelong process.

5.7 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Information technology (IT) has made a definite impact in the realm of education in Hong Kong, including language teaching and learning. The increasingly wide availability of the computer in addition to other forms of communications technology (e.g. television, audio/video recordings, etc.) in schools contributes to a stimulating learning environment and allows learners a greater variety of ways to explore and use language than before.

5.7.1 Potential Benefits

IT can be a useful tool for enhancing language teaching and learning. When appropriately used, it offers many advantages:

- It can increase learners' motivation to learn. For example, computer-aided instruction can turn uninspired drills into entertaining games. Often it integrates text, graphics, sound and animation to arouse learners' interests.
- It allows learners a more individualised mode of learning and the chance of developing learner autonomy. For example, using a multimedia encyclopaedia, learners work at their own pace to research their assignment or project topic. They can also have control over the degree to which they carry out their research. If they wish to pursue a certain topic of interest further, they can click on highlighted words in an article to read

related articles. Likewise, learners can make use of the search engines on the World Wide Web to find information regarding a specific topic. Should they desire, they can make use of hypertext links to connect them to related documents.

- It promotes process writing. The word processor particularly lends itself to the process approach to writing. It greatly facilitates text revision, as learners need not "begin from scratch" every time they redraft their work. The time thus saved can be used to focus upon other meaningful activities such as teacher-learner conferencing, peer review, etc.

- It enhances communication in English. For example, games and simulations allow learners to learn through exploration, experimentation and interaction with other students. Besides, the Internet enables learners to communicate electronically with one another without having to be in the same physical location.

- It gives instant feedback to learners. A good deal of computer-assisted language learning software provides hints and guidance if learners need help along with giving immediate feedback on their work.

Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) software, educational CD-ROMs and the Internet are common IT resources which have much to contribute to language teaching/learning.

5.7.2 CALL Software

Many CALL software packages are available for use by teachers and learners. When opting for CALL programs, teachers should of course take into account their content as well as learners' level, interests and needs. In addition, teachers might like to choose programs which lend themselves to a task-based learning methodology. Software focusing on language drills may not be as interesting and challenging as programs which emphasize using forms for communication or getting learners to discover language for themselves. The following are some common forms of CALL programs:

Skill-based programs - some of which focus on one or more of the language skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening, while others highlight specific aspects such as pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, etc.

Interactive simulations or games - which aim to arouse learners' interest in language learning and encourage group collaboration or competition.

Concordancers - which provide learners with authentic examples of how words and phrases are used.

Word processors - which facilitate multiple drafting and project work done on an individual or collaborative basis.

Authoring programs - which teachers can redevelop to suit their learners' level and needs. Their design is often simple and user-friendly, thus allowing teachers easily to add, edit or modify the content to create programs with varying degrees of difficulty for different learners.

5.7.3 Educational CD-ROMs

The CD-ROM is a multi-media resource which encourages self-access or independence in language learning. Many CD-ROMs integrate texts, graphics, sound and animation, and have great potential in motivating learners to develop their language proficiency. They often include answer keys and explanations, and allow learners to work at their own pace.

CD-ROMs also facilitate information search. A number of dictionaries and encyclopedias are available on CD-ROMs. Learners researching information for projects or assignments will find them a valuable resource, as they provide a wealth of information, pictures and photographs on a wide range of topics.

5.7.4 The Internet

The Internet is a world-wide network of computer networks. It contains a vast and diverse range of resources such as library catalogues, databases, software, government publications, documents, pictures, sounds, videos, electronic books and journals and many more. In the context of language learning, it encompasses a rich body of materials including games, jokes, quizzes, crossword puzzles, multimedia dictionaries and encyclopedias, on-line newspapers and magazines, along with forums for electronic conference/discussion. There are also many websites which offer information and interactive activities pertaining to language learning. A list of some of these websites is provided in Appendix 6.

The Internet is obviously a powerful tool that teachers may like to exploit for language teaching/learning. The Internet is useful when learners need to find:

- information that cannot be found in print texts;
- data collected by governments or public interest groups; and
- current information such as the latest polling results.

The Internet is also a place where learners can:

- *collaborate with learners all over the world*
  There are websites posting projects that learners can contribute to. They may respond to the requests for information and enquiries that other teachers or learners have placed on the Internet. For example, they may contribute to an international project on environmental protection by providing examples from Hong Kong.

- *publish their own projects and publications*
  The Web provides an ideal platform for learners to design and publish their own class projects and create on-line publications. The Web provides a wider audience for learners' work and motivates them to write better and improve their presentation. Reading, writing and thinking skills are developed through learners writing to one another and discussing issues.

- *develop information skills*
  The Internet offers learners the opportunity of developing information skills. There is doubtlessly a huge amount of resources and types of information on the World Wide Web. However, Web search can be a time-consuming and frustrating experience, since a search request may retrieve many documents, but few are actually relevant to the topic. It is therefore necessary that teachers help improve learners' skills in accessing net information. Learners need to thoroughly analyze their topic, carefully plan their search strategy, choose the suitable search engine, and submit appropriate requests ranging from simple queries to complex searches with the use of boolean logic and truncation.

- *conduct research and evaluate information*
  The availability and growth of the Internet allow users to find information and data from all over the world. It also provides a good opportunity for developing learners' critical reading and thinking skills. Unlike most print

resources such as magazines and journals that go through a filtering process (e.g. editing, peer review, evaluation by information professionals), information on the World Wide Web is mostly unfiltered. Teachers should therefore develop learners' critical evaluation skills by engaging them in the task of examining the quality of web resources in terms of their accuracy, authority, objectivity, currency and coverage.

- *discuss with learners and educational professionals from all over the world*
  Learners can take advantage of functions such as electronic mail (e-mail), discussion list and newsgroups on the net and engage in conversations and discussions with learners and educational professionals from other parts of the world.

  ◊ *E-mail* - is a method of communication that involves sending messages electronically over the computer. It is very efficient for both one-to-one and one-to-many communication. It is particularly useful for group or project work, since those who are working on it can communicate with one another without having to be located in the same room or even in the same country.

  ◊ *Discussion List* - also known as electronic conference or electronic discussion. It enables a group of learners or network users to discuss issues regarding a particular subject via electronic mail. Any message sent to the list automatically goes to all subscribers to the list. Joining a discussion list enables learners with similar interests to "meet" electronically, maintain current awareness, and exchange ideas and opinions.

  ◊ Newsgroup - also known as electronic notice board or bulletin board. It covers a variety of topics. Learners can post messages to a newsgroup. People interested in the message can respond by posting a response to the newsgroup or by contacting the learners directly. Newsgroups differ from discussion lists in that a learner has to subscribe to a discussion list to receive mail.

When assigning work which involves the use of the Internet, teachers may consider the following:

- Select a topic that appeals to learners' interest. It should also be one with rich resources for learners to explore so that they can meet with success on their first Internet experience.
- Establish the aim of the assignment, e.g. learners manage Internet research information and present their findings in a report.
- Inform learners of the expected outcome of the activity.
- Prepare learners adequately for any Internet-based assignments, and help them to see that many of these assignments have linguistic as well as non-linguistic value.
- Set time constraints and deadlines as surfing on the net can be an overwhelming and time consuming exercise.

SAMPLE UNIT

The following is a sample unit which intends to develop the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing in a battery of tasks. Task 1 is a listening task. Task 2 involves integrated reading and writing. Task 3 is a reading and speaking task. Each task is followed by a set of mini-tasks which attempt to demonstrate how some of the skills can be taught and practised through using these materials. The target skills are presented in shaded boxes with the suggested activities presented below each box. The activities are not meant to be used exhaustively. They are intended to demonstrate how tasks can be meaningfully used for the effective development of language skills.

Task 1: Stress management

The following is a radio programme on how to deal with stress. As you have a friend who feels a lot of pressure at work, you want to find ways to help him. You try to make notes as you listen.

1. The name of the radio programme: _____

2. The young man was thought to have killed himself because

_____

Hong Kong is considered a stressful city because

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Some common causes of stress are:

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

9. _____

Someone may be under stress if s/he shows signs such as

10. _____

11. _____

12. _____

13. _____

Give one example of how someone can change his/her style of work.

14. _____

What forms of relaxation does Ms Jane Ma recommend?

15. _____

16. _____

17. _____

18. _____

Suggest two ways to prevent stress.

19. _____

20. _____

Tapescript

Host:
Good evening and welcome to this week's programme on "Staying Healthy". The issue of stress drew much attention last week when a young man in a promising career took his own life. His death was attributed to the immense pressures of work. It seems such a sad waste that a young man who seems to have so much ahead of him should find it necessary to end it all. What causes stress and more importantly, how can the individual deal with it? With us tonight is Ms Jane Ma who has taught stress management courses to many large corporations in Hong Kong. Ms Ma, why is Hong Kong considered such a stressful city?

Jane Ma:
Hong Kong is an overcrowded city and the pace of life here is very hectic. You can feel it just walking down a street in Central. People are always in a hurry and there never seems to be enough time. In the workplace there is great competition to perform, to outshine your colleagues. And even if you show excellent performance, the next time round, you are expected to outperform yourself.

Host:
Yes, we do place a lot of importance on performance. And we have such long working hours in Hong Kong.

Jane Ma:
Some employers even expect their staff to work all hours to meet deadlines, even Sundays. Very often, people think that it's their responsibility to get the job done at whatever cost. And the long working hours will eventually have an adverse effect on the person. In many cases, people are afraid to ask for help They think they should handle the problem solely by themselves so as to look capable. They do not realize that prompt action in seeking assistance brings about prompt relief.

Host:
What are the common causes of stress at work?

Jane Ma:

There are many in fact. Stress can result from overwork. Some people have far too much work. It is simply not possible for one person to handle so much work. But the person may think that he or she is not competent for the job. Rushing to meet deadlines is another major cause of stress. Failing to meet a deadline means the loss of big money or business. It's a risk that no employee can take. Another possible cause of stress is the rules and restrictions in the workplace. The person feels bound by the rules and yet unable to change the situation. More importantly strained relationships contribute to the mounting stress in the workplace. There may be a lack of communication among colleagues or between supervisors and supervisees. As a result, conflicts and arguments may arise. The employee may be confused by the lack of clear instructions and therefore is uncertain about the priorities of tasks and is often made to feel that he is incompetent.

Host:

What are the symptoms of stress? What are the tell-tale signs that tell us we are under stress?

Jane Ma:

When faced with severe stress, the human body reacts automatically with physical or psychological changes. Such phenomena are summed up as "fight or flight". That is the body either prepares to resist the stress or gives in to the stress. Symptoms may include tiredness, irritability, physical upsets such as headaches and rashes and possibly changes in personality and behaviour.

Host:

What are some of such changes in personality and behaviour that you have seen?

Jane Ma:

The person may suddenly become very aggressive or impatient. Or he may take up heavy smoking and drinking or he may be unable to go to sleep.

Host:

Having recognized the possible symptoms of stress, how can the individual effectively deal with the situation?

Jane Ma:

The important thing is to recognize that stress, like all other problems in life, can be handled. Suicide is not the only way out. It may be a good idea to begin by examining your style of work. If it is not working, maybe you need to change it. For many people, it may be a question of setting priorities. Make sure that you complete the really important and urgent tasks of the day. For other people, it may be an issue of finding more effective ways to handle tasks. Spending more time on tasks does not necessarily mean that your performance is better.

Host:

I've heard that relaxation helps to restore a sense of well-being in the person. What forms of relaxation do you recommend?

Jane Ma:

It very much depends on the person. It may come in the form of reading a good book in a comfortable chair or watching a light movie. By the way, watching a violent movie is definitely not a good idea. Developing a hobby can also help a person to relax. It unleashes your creative energy and helps to develop a sense of self-esteem. I would also recommend a simple form of meditation. A lot of research supports that meditation brings physical as well as mental relaxation.

Host:

Meditation. It sounds pretty difficult. Fit only for people who can settle down quietly.

Jane Ma:

Well, stillness has a refreshing quality. On the other hand, experts have found that exercises also help to relieve tension and restore a sense of well-being. Working out at the gym after a tiring day's work actually helps to restore energy. It brings many positive side-effects, such as relaxation, enhanced self-esteem, and simply getting one's mind off work for a while. Going on a holiday can have a similar effect. Last of all, having a network of social support can also make a world of difference. They may be members of the family, friends or people at work. They provide the caring and support that we all need.

Host:
You've talked about many ways to cope with stress when it appears. Is there anything we can do to prevent stress from happening?

Jane Ma:
On the more proactive side, it is of great importance to maintain self-control. Learning to control situations instead of letting situations control you is important. People under stress should also become more aware of their own limits and recognize the danger signals. For example, they can learn to avoid people or situations that will put them under stress. When in doubt, employees can ask for clearer instructions that would help clarify the requirements of the tasks they have been assigned and the performance standards expected. Setting and agreeing on priorities is another useful strategy to help the overworked employee gain control over his life and work.

Host:
Some people seem to see trouble and disaster wherever they turn. What advice can you give to help them cope with that?

Jane Ma:
Another powerful tool that we can all make use of is positive thinking and action. Many people have a small voice inside their head that speaks to them all the time. Learning to change the way that voice speaks is important. One can waste a lot of time worrying about all sorts of unpleasant situations. Or one can use the time to find ways of dealing with them. I once had a client who was convinced that he had no choice but to pack up his business. When he began to change the way he looked at things, he was able to see new possibilities. He thought of new ways to run his business which marked the turning point of his career.

Host:
That's very encouraging indeed. Thank you very much Ms Ma for your insights on issues related to stress. I hope we're all on the way to greater health of the mind.

Teaching listening skills
Teachers often focus on certain skills for emphasis when they teach listening. Accordingly, they should use and sequence relevant activities at their own discretion. For example, if one of the target skills is "Predict the likely

development of ideas" (p.20), it is obligatory that the prediction activity/activities be placed at the beginning of the listening task.

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understand and interpret different kinds of spoken texts to perform different tasks including taking messages, writing short notes, filling in forms, etc.

You work in the human resources department of your firm. Using the information from the interview, develop a leaflet for all employees on how to handle stress at work.

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identify ideas and key concepts in a passage, discussion or conversation

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Present in the following diagram the main ideas put forward by Ms Ma in this interview.

---
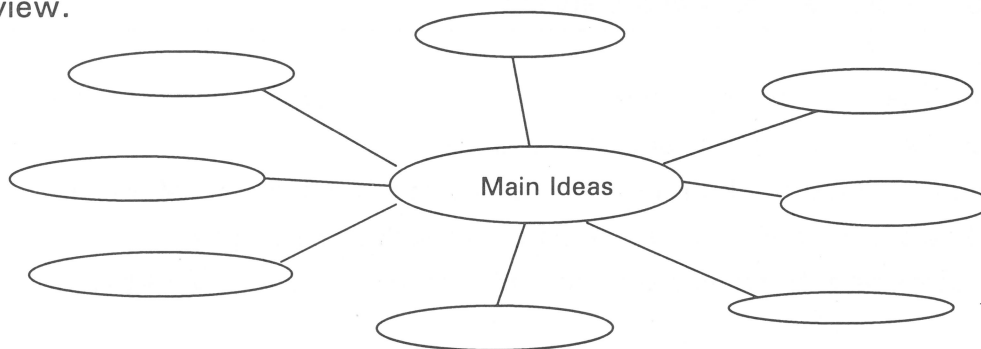
identify details that support a main idea

Listen to the first half of the interview and identify what supporting details Ms Ma gives for the following points:

- The pace of life in Hong Kong is very hectic.
- A lot of importance is placed on performance.
- Strained relationships contribute to mounting stress.

---

predict the likely development of ideas

Listen to the introductory remarks by the host of the show. Suggest aspects of stress which are likely to be discussed in the interview.

understand speaker's intention, attitude and feelings

- Listen to the introduction by the host of the programme. Which of the following words would you use to describe his attitude towards the subject?

  a. angry   b.   sad   c.   baffled

- Listen to the first part of the interview up to "...prompt action in seeking assistance brings about prompt relief." Which of the following words would you use to describe Ms Ma's attitude towards people who experience a lot of stress at work:

  a. impatient   b. sympathetic   c.   indifferent

distinguish between facts and opinions

Listen to the part of the interview on relaxation and meditation and decide whether the following are facts or opinions.

- Reading a good book in a comfortable chair is a form of relaxation.
- Meditation. Fit only for people who can settle down quietly.
- Exercises help to relieve tension and restore a sense of well-being.

judge validity and adequacy of main ideas and arguments

"Stress, like all other problems in life, can be handled." This is the assertion of Ms Ma on the show. Identify the main ideas she puts forward concerning stress management and discuss whether they are adequate in helping a person deal with stress.

Task 2: Coping with stress

<u>Situation</u>
You are Chris, a social worker trainee in a youth community centre in Tuen Mun. Your main duty is to assist the social worker who counsels and offers help to the young people in your estate.

<u>Task</u>
Recently, your supervisor Ronnie received a letter from Mrs Chan who has great problems in handling her son under stress (in the data file). The mother writes to seek advice on what she can do and what help is available. Ronnie asks you to draft a reply to the mother. She has left you the following note:

Chris,

I have a letter from a mother and I hope you can draft a reply to her. In the letter, please explain briefly to her the possible causes of her son's behaviour. Try also to offer her some advice and give her some ideas of how teachers can help. Advise her to seek help from her son's teacher as well. To provide the mother with more information, prepare an information sheet on the existing services available. For my reference, please make a list of the possible causes of stress in young people. John has collected some relevant press cuttings and articles on the issue of stress and you can make use of them.

Ronnie

Use any information you find useful in the data file to help you complete the following activities:

A) Make a list of the possible causes of stress in young people. Briefly explain each cause.
B) Complete the information sheet on the existing services available.
C) Draft the reply letter.

Data File 72

Letter from Mrs Chan
Press cuttings on stress collected by the Youth Community Centre (pp. 74-77)
Letter to the Editor from Lee Kwok Ho
Articles from Hong Kong Magazine
Tables and pamphlet

Data File

Letter from Mrs Chan

Dear Ms Lam,

I have no other alternatives now but to turn to you. My son Peter is really worrying me. Recently, he has been very depressed. He refuses to talk to me and always locks himself in his own room. He has a very bad appetite and can only eat very little. Sometimes, he even throws up after eating. I also notice that he cannot sleep at night. He has lost interest in everything, including the computer games that he likes very much. He's losing weight and he looks horrible. I have tried to ask him what's wrong. But he simply remains silent. If I press him further, he will get furious and tell me to stop nagging him. Yesterday, his form teacher called me and told me that Peter had been absent for two days already. But Peter just left home for school in his uniform as usual! Where did he go? He has been a very responsible and hardworking student and I really cannot accept this. I was really shocked and could just keep asking what's wrong. Something terrible must have happened. What may be the causes? I want to help him and I simply do not know how. I have been crying for the whole day and I do not know what I can do. Where can I get help? I am a divorced woman and I am all on my own. Should I talk to his teachers? Do you think they can help? I can't let my son go on this way. He's only 13! Please tell me what I can do.

Mrs Chan

Press cutting: From the Hong Kong Daily, 14 December 1997

Coping with youth depression

In view of the serious problem of student suicide, many legislators urged the administration to review its youth policy and act quickly to prevent more suicides at yesterday's meeting. Proposals included strengthening ethical education, putting more emphasis on school-parent co-operation and increasing the number of social workers. Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong member Cheung Hon-chung suggested that life education should be a compulsory subject in school to help students develop a positive attitude and "life education officers" should be responsible for this task. Democratic Party member John Tse Wing-ling said that every school should set up a group to cope with youth depression. Principals, teachers and staff should be trained to recognize signs of distress in students so that counselling can be provided as early as possible. On the other hand, Frederick Fung Kim-kee of the Association for Democracy and People's Livelihood proposed that the government should review the unimaginative "spoon-fed educational style" and teach students to think critically and rationally. More resources should be allocated to students coming from troubled homes and poor families. Regarding the media, Liberal Party member Miriam Lau Kin-yee said that a code of practice should be drafted for the media so that it would cover suicide stories with discretion.

Regarding the need to provide training for parents on proper parenting and communication skills, it is suggested that counselling service, parental guidance and tangible assistance should be provided for single parent families, families with relationship problems or financial difficulties through casework service rendered by the family services centres of the Social Welfare Department. Caseworkers can help parents understand the needs and problems of their children and enhance their parenting skills with a view to facilitating them to build up positive relationship with and provide support to their children.

In response to legislators' queries on the existing support services to help students, the Director of the Social Welfare Department replied that it has installed an Interactive Voice Processing System (IVPS) in its hotline. Enquiries for readily available information are handled by recorded messages of the IVPS. Social workers who man the hotline are providing counselling to the needy callers. Whenever necessary, the SWD hotline staff can refer the cases to the psychiatric emergency team manned by psychiatric social workers for assessment and intervention in crisis situations. Besides, the SWD started to expand the Youthline service of the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups in August 1995. The Youthline service provides timely professional social work support and guidance to young people at times of crisis.

The Director of the Social Welfare Department added that besides the family casework services, school social work services are always available to students with needs. Whenever necessary and with their agreement, students with financial difficulties or other problems would be referred to other appropriate social security field units and/or social service units for assistance.

Legislators also raised a question on the therapeutic intervention for young people who have attempted suicide. The Director of Education said that follow-up services will be provided. School social workers who make regular contacts with the students concerned will also offer them support and other services whenever necessary. Young people who have attempted suicide will receive professional services from medical social workers while under hospital treatment, and from family caseworkers after discharge from hospital. These young people will be referred to clinical psychologists for therapeutic treatment if situation warrants.

All legislators felt that the services and proposals above are only initial steps to offer help to students and parents who are in need and urged the administration to continue to think of measures to offer students, parents and teachers the help they need in order to stop tragedies from occurring again.

Reduce the stress on students

In response to the wave of student suicides, a survey conducted jointly by the Sha Tin District Board and Shue Yan College which interviewed about 1,000 students from 34 secondary schools in Sha Tin revealed that more than 70 per cent of the respondents had difficulties with their homework and were under great pressure. Only less than 10 per cent said that they could manage their homework easily. Around half of them reflected that they did not understand their teachers' instructions in class and they were not satisfied with their learning materials because there were too many English words in their textbooks. The survey showed that study pressure was the most prominent cause of students' tendency towards committing suicide.

It is therefore suggested that school heads and teachers should review their teaching methods, the amount of homework and the teaching medium so as to offer a good learning environment for students.

The survey proposes that teachers can do a great deal for their students by taking care of them as if they were their own children. Teachers have to try to be understanding and more approachable in order to establish a good relationship with the students. They should encourage the students to seek help when there is trouble.

When confronted with a student who has great stress, teachers should first of all take it seriously and accept the possibility that the student may be at risk. Then they should check it out with other colleagues to see if they share the same opinion. It is important that teachers do not panic but take time to listen and encourage the student to verbalize his/her feelings. If teachers show that they understand and are really concerned, the student will feel that he/she has got support. Teachers should also seek professional help and go with the student for assistance.

To equip teachers with more effective skills in handling students under great stress, there should be training for teachers to identify students with problems and offer help whenever appropriate.

Currently, through case consultation and staff meetings, school social workers maintain close collaboration with teachers to help identify students with problems. At present, the Working Group on Services for Youth at Risk, chaired by the Director of Social Welfare personally, has commissioned a non-governmental organization to develop a comprehensive screening tool for teachers and social workers to identify students at risk, including suicidal tendency. In addition, the Education Department has taken an active role. Since 1992, it has counselled teachers, students and parents on how to cope with despairing youth. It also runs seminars on crisis management and provides support services by education psychologists for guidance teachers. The department encourages teachers to hold discussions with students and foster a positive attitude towards life. However, these existing measures are surely inadequate. The recent tragic trend of student suicides definitely requires all parties to do more.

From the Daily News, 18 February 1998

Counselling through the Internet

Young men under stress can now turn to the Internet following the launch of The Samaritan Befrienders Hong Kong's counselling service on the information superhighway. The Hong Kong branch has joined the Internet and it is the first centre outside Britain to go online. Geraldine Wilson, who set up the Hong Kong service, said the scheme aims directly at young men with problems who are at risk but not contacting them for help. It aims to stall the soaring suicide rate among young men who are often reluctant to talk about emotional problems.

Actually, it is found that some students, especially the boys, prefer the privacy of the school or college computer terminal to their home telephone and they talk about their problems through e-mail. It is discovered that people who communicate via e-mail are three times more likely to talk of suicide than callers who use their hotlines. Many people find it easier to pour out their deepest feelings at a computer than talk to a stranger over the phone. According to Wilson, they write about everything - exactly the same as on the phone - relationships, lack of confidence, low self esteem, financial worries, etc.

Geraldine Wilson said that the target is to get to young people and young men in particular. She hoped that the e-mail service will offer useful service to young men and help revert the rising trend in student suicides in Hong Kong. The service can be contacted on jo@samaritans.org or samaritans@anon.penet.fi.

From the Youth Daily News, 3 March 1998

Need for more school social workers

It is long believed that adolescence is a vulnerable period in life. During this critical period, young people have a lot of problems to face. There are problems they may encounter in schools, especially for those low ability students who have difficulties in coping with the demands of school work and examinations. There are also problems involving parent and sibling interactions and interpersonal relationships such as those involving peers, boy/girlfriends. On top of that, students may have problems about their own worth, such as low self-esteem and a sense of worthlessness. All these external and internal conflicts may exert heavy pressure on students. And they need to be equipped with the skills and strength to cope with the problems.

The Director of the Hong Kong Social Service Y.F. Hui pointed out that school social workers play a vital role in helping students achieve personal growth and in developing their potential to the full. They can also identify and help students whose academic, social and emotional development is at risk. Moreover, social workers can contribute towards solving the student suicide problem, particularly on the level of preventive intervention. Here, the social workers guide students in building up positive values and a positive outlook on life, as well as developing proper self-image. Social workers can also do a great deal in helping students understand and develop their skills to cope with stress.

Unfortunately, the present situation is appalling. There is only one school social worker for every 3,000 students, which means a social worker is required to serve two to three schools, staying in each school for only one and a half or two days a week, handling only 15 to 18 cases. With such a poor school-social worker manning ratio, how can students with pressing problems get the attention and the guidance they need so badly? In many schools, there are a number of students with acute emotional problems and suicidal tendencies. For instance, over 500 cases of emotionally unstable youths and over 300 cases of manageable anxieties in stressful situations have been reported in recent years. So, social workers are urgently needed to organize activities for young people as a preventive measure. Mr Hui believed that the government should understand the gravity of the problem and improve the school-social worker ratio. The government should show its concern and commitment to youths by providing more social workers to schools.

Letter to the Editor from Lee Kwok Ho
Hong Kong News, 23 March 1998

Spend more time with children

I REFER to the letter from May Chan, which appeared in the South China Morning Post on March 3, in which she expressed concern about the impression that more students are failing to cope with stress and are even attempting to commit suicide nowadays. The problem is getting very serious. I couldn't agree more.

It is really sad to see small children commit suicide and I can't stop asking why. These children still have a promising future ahead of them. What makes them so desperate that they have to take their own lives?

Many people talk about the problems children face these days. Some have difficulties with their school work and cannot face the pressure from tests and examinations. Some will become very upset when they are penalized for having done something wrong. Others have family problems and cannot communicate with their parents.... This list can be endless. To me, all the causes boil down to one main problem: children don't know how to handle the situation when something unfavourable happens to them; and they fail to accept temporary setbacks or failures. They feel that they have no one to turn to and they escape by taking their own lives.

We should understand that children are too young to think like adults and they need a lot of guidance and support to become strong and mature enough to handle the problems. Parents are obviously the closest persons to the children and they have the most important role to play. The problem is that many parents now tend to overprotect their children instead of helping them to grow. So many children are dependent and they are very fragile. When they meet problems, they are always at a loss and do not know how to handle them. They tend to think that the solution is to die and quit the game.

Some parents do not realize that their children find too much pressure from their studies. They simply have high expectations of their children academically and sometimes fail to understand the limitations of their children. They only emphasize the academic achievement of their children and do not see that their children may have some other potential. For children who cannot meet the expectations of their parents, their sense of failure will increase and thus they may develop a suicidal tendency.

Also, parents now are very busy with their work and they simply cannot spare time to talk with their children.

Some of them may value earning money more because they think that providing a better environment for the children is through providing more material goods. When communication between parents and children is lacking, parents will not be aware of the torment being suffered by their children. Children will feel that their parents do not support or care about them and there is not much to treasure in life. They will then easily choose to end their lives. Actually, such suicidal behaviour is a way of seeking attention. So it is very important for parents to spend more time with their children instead of burying themselves in their work. It is also silly to just satisfy the material needs of their children. What is more important than showing concern to the children? Parents should listen more to their children and help them find solutions to their problems.

Parents should stop just giving their children the material comforts of life and should pay more attention to their children's emotional well-being. If they can build up mutual understanding and good relationship with their children, the suicidal wave will certainly subside.

Lee Kwok Ho
Tsimshatsui

Article from Hong Kong Magazine, 3 April 1998

An interview with Dr Tsoi on youth problems

This week Hong Kong Magazine's reporter, Joyce Yeung, reports on an interview with Dr Tsoi Wah Kit, an education psychologist.

J: Good afternoon, Dr Tsoi. I am pleased that you have agreed to talk to the Hong Kong Magazine. We are all very concerned with the problem of depression among young people and we wonder if anything can be done to help them cope with stress. Can you first of all help us to identify the symptoms of depression in young people?

T: Depression is easily recognisable. The depressed one simply feels sad or down, and loses interest in even the most pleasurable activities. Moreover, he or she may suffer from either significant gain or loss of weight, sleeplessness or over-sleeping, sluggish movement and thinking, fatigue, feelings of guilt and worthlessness, weak concentration and forgetfulness. In extreme cases, he or she may have suicidal tendencies.

J: But what causes young people so much stress?

T: In the early years of adolescence, lots of young people have emotional problems. As they are growing up, they begin to search for their identity and establish their self-value. When they find that they cannot live up to other people's expectations, they may feel upset or even helpless. They are also facing lots of changes in their body as well as the environment. If they have negative feelings, they may choose not to face up to the situation and just dwell on the problem. Then their anxiety will build up. In that case, they won't be able to cope with stress which arises from all the pressures just mentioned. It is true there may also be pressures from their parents, teachers, friends, etc. However, the greatest pressure comes from the young people themselves.

J: What advice can you give to young people who face stress?

T: They should first of all understand that stress is part of life because there will always be problems to tackle. Instead of trying to control the stressful events, they should accept that there are no guarantees in life and they simply have to live with uncertainty. To overcome the sense of helplessness, they should learn to think positively and develop a healthy attitude towards life. It is also important for them to learn to release their feelings in a proper channel, like telling their parents or friends how they feel or in any other ways they see fit. In case of any problems, they should turn to someone who is wiser and more experienced, who can really offer them help and advice.

J: What can parents do to help their children then?

T: When parents feel that their children show certain symptoms of stress, it is essential to take them to the doctor for a physical check-up first to decide whether the symptoms are due to stress. After determining that the problems are due to an inability to cope with stress, some stress management strategies are needed to help the children. These include recognizing the problem and solving the problem. Of course, parents and teachers should seek professional help and advice whenever necessary.

Article from Hong Kong Magazine, 3 May 1998

Teenagers crying for help

Isn't it shocking to find that some Hong Kong teenagers are slashing, cutting and burning themselves to express their cry for help when they are depressed? Such forms of self-mutilation, which often lead to suicide, have become a sort of "sub-culture". If one person in a group hurts himself/herself to get attention, for example, then the other young people in that group are likely to do the same because it becomes a kind of sub-culture where they follow each other.

Self-mutilation is most prevalent among teenagers aged between 13 and 16, who have difficulty adjusting to adolescence. That age is probably the hardest for teenagers because they are stuck in the middle between childhood and adulthood and they have a hard time adjusting to the physical and psychological changes that are taking place. Teenagers have an internal struggle to be independent and yet want to stay secure at the same time.

According to a recent study examining 2524 students in Australia, the students who are at greatest risk are those studying for examinations or those who come from single parent families. It is believed that in Hong Kong, youngsters face a similar situation. Some of them do things to hurt themselves to attract attention. By self-mutilation, they are directing anger at themselves. This anger may be because of their situation of the lack of care they get from their parents. Instead of letting it out, they choose to direct everything at themselves. It is important to help teenagers manage their anger and resolve their conflict in a more proper manner.

In Hong Kong, self-mutilation is more common among girls than boys. According to Dr Leung Shung-pun, consultant psychiatrist at Castle Peak Hospital, more than 90 per cent of the self-injury cases he has seen are females, many of whom have cut their wrists. A possible reason could be that self-mutilation among girls is acceptable by the peers as a way of discharging one's emotions. For boys, they may see self-mutilation as behaviour of the weak and so is a kind of inferiority.

Hong Kong is an exceptionally harsh city for despairing adolescents suffering from depression. The problem is parents may not recognize the symptoms of depression in their children and in such situations, the problem will get worse. Professional counselling for the family would be the most appropriate option.

Tables

Stress-related Figures

Table 1: Findings of a survey on problems triggering suicidal attempts

	Trigger for suicidal incident	Major underlying problem	Significant secondary problem
Abnormal emotional reaction (overreaction to apparently trivial events)	21	0	0
Poor family relationships/ management	2	23	13
School/learning problems	12	8	12
Boy-girl relationship	5	4	1
Psychiatric factor (depression, lack of emotional support)	4	9	4
Personality and health	0	11	15
Poor peer relationships	4	2	5
Unknown	20	11	19
Under investigation	1	1	1
Total	69	69	70*

*There was one case with two secondary problems.

Table 2: Findings of a survey on young people's opinions on stress and whom they turn to for help

Number of interviewees: 920
Age: 10-19
Date: January, 1997
1. What is the main problem you have had in the past three months?
Study problems   (31%)
Relationship with parents   (25%)
Problems with friends   (21%)
Dating   (19%)
Other   (4%)
2. Who are you most likely to consult when you have problems?
Parents   (15%)
Teachers   (26%)
Friends   (38%)
Social workers   (19%)
Other   (2%)

> 3. What will you do when you have problems?
> Talk to someone (26%)
> Do something to relax (21%)
> Write about it in a diary or to someone (13%)
> Do nothing (18%)
> Do something to hurt yourself (10%)
> See a doctor (5%)
> Other (7%)

Table 3: Findings of a survey on the time parents spend with their children

> Number of parents interviewed : 543
> Time survey conducted : February, 1997
>
> 1. How much time do you spend with your children each day?
> a) less than 1 hour (30%)
> b) 1 to 3 hours (47%)
> c) 3 to 5 hours (19%)
> d) more than 5 hours (4%)
>
> 2. What do you usually do with your children?
> a) help them to do their homework (46%)
> b) watch television (30%)
> c) play games with them (12%)
> d) read books with them (6%)
> e) talk to them (4%)
> f) other (2%)
>
> 3. What do you usually talk about with your children?
> a) homework and school results (43%)
> b) school life (23%)
> c) family life (15%)
> d) friends and relationships (10%)
> e) other (9%)

Table 4: Number of secondary school social workers

	1991/92	1995/96	1999/2000
Secondary school social workers	(150)	+78(228)	+64(214)*

The figure in brackets denote the total provision in that year.

* It was predicted that the student population of secondary schools would decline after 95/96, so the demand for school social workers would decrease accordingly.

Pamphlet from The Samaritan Befrienders Hong Kong

Who can you talk to about the subjects you may not find at school?

TIMETABLE

Periods	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1	Cruel Parents	Weight Problems	Trouble with Friends	Loneliness	Exam Worry
2	Boyfriend Problems	Homo-sexuality	Parents Arguing		
3	Incest		Girlfriend Problems	Illness	Rape
4		Skin Problems	Job Prospects	Periods	Child Abuse
5	Bullying	Drug Abuse	Shyness		Broken Homes

Call The Samaritan Befrienders Hong Kong. A confidential call, day or night. When things get too much - 2389 2222 - we listen.

The Samaritan Befrienders Hong Kong

Thanks are due to The Samaritan Befrienders Hong Kong for their kind permission to reproduce the above pamphlet.

Teaching reading skills

skim a text to obtain a general impression and understand the overall meaning

1. Skim through the letter "Spend more time with children". Which of the following statements best expresses the purpose of the letter?
   a. Students fail to cope with stress.
   b. Parents should place more emphasis on their children's emotional needs.
   c. Children have problems in communicating with their parents.

2. Write one sentence to summarize the main argument of the article "Need for more school social workers".

scan a text to locate specific information

Read the article "Teenagers crying for help" and find the answers to the following questions as quickly as possible:
a. For which age group is self-mutilation most prevalent?
b. How many students in Australia have been examined in a recent study?
c. Who are the youngsters directing their anger at by self-mutilation?
d. How many per cent of the self-injury cases are females according to Dr Leung?
e. Find one possible reason why self-mutilation is more common among girls than boys.

extract information relevant to specific tasks

1. According to the survey described in "Reduce the stress on students", what are the steps proposed to be taken by teachers when confronted with a student who has great stress?

2.   Read the article "An interview with Dr Tsoi on youth problems".

   a.   List the things that parents and readers can do to help young people.

   b.   List 5 symptoms of depression.

> deduce the use and meaning of unfamiliar words, phrases and expressions in context through understanding linguistic and contextual clues and by making use of previous experience of word meanings

Read the article "Coping with youth depression" and give the meanings of the following words/phrases:

- cover suicide stories with discretion (para 1)
- tangible assistance (para 2)
- rendered (para 2)
- timely (para 3)
- at times of crisis (para 3)
- if situation warrants (para 5)
- therapeutic intervention (para 5)
- initial steps (para 6)

> identify main and supporting ideas

Read the article "Reduce the stress on students". What is the key reason for students' tendency towards suicide? Give 3 pieces of supporting evidence.

> differentiate facts from opinions

Read the third paragraph in "Need for more school social workers". List 3 facts and 3 opinions in the box below.

Facts	Opinions
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

> appreciate intention of writer and his/her attitude to the theme/topic

In "Reduce the stress on students", is the writer satisfied with the government's assistance to teachers in helping students at risk? Give reasons to support your answer.

> follow and evaluate the development of a point of view or argument

1.   Read the article "Coping with youth depression", and consider the replies of the Secretary of the Social Welfare Department and the Director of Education to the legislators' queries. What are the major differences in the services provided by the two government departments? What do both these departments stress?

2.   In the article "Counselling through the Internet", what are the reasons to support the view that it is more effective to get to young men in particular through e-mail? Are the reasons sufficient? Can you think of any disadvantages of communicating through e-mail?

> distinguish different points of view and argument

In the article "Coping with youth depression", how do different legislators respond to the government officials' replies?

> relate cause to effect

According to the writer of "Spend more time with children", what are the major problems of parents nowadays? How do such problems relate to the problem of youth suicide?

> relate evidence to conclusions

Read the following concluding statements and decide whether they are supported by the figures in Tables 1, 2 & 3. Support your answer by quoting the relevant figures.

a. Abnormal emotional reaction is the major reason for youth suicide.

b. Poor family relationship is a more significant underlying problem which leads to suicidal attempts when compared with school/learning problems.

c. Poor peer relationship is not as important as the other factors.

d. Most young people do not know what to do when they have problems.

e. Parents seldom communicate with their children.

f. The major concern of most parents is their children's academic achievement.

Teaching writing skills

respond to, reflect upon, and evaluate and make use of given information

Read the letter by Ronnie and work out what Chris should include in the letter to the mother.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

e. _____

gather information, select relevant ideas and organize them to complete different writing tasks

You want to find out the causes of youth depression and explain the behaviour of Mrs Chan's son. You read the following articles: "Reduce the stress on students", "Need for more school social workers", "Spend more time with children", "An interview with Dr Tsoi on youth problems", and "Teenagers crying for help".

Make notes on the possible causes of youth depression as mentioned in the various articles.

a. "Reduce the stress on students"

_____

_____

_____

b.   "Need for more school social workers"

_____
_____
_____

c.   "Spend more time with children"

_____
_____
_____

d.   "An interview with Dr Tsoi on youth problems"

_____
_____
_____

e.   "Teenagers crying for help"

_____
_____
_____

---

express ideas in a variety of styles and registers appropriately

Rewrite this draft paragraph to make it more personal and supportive.

> Dear Mrs Chan,
>
>   Your worry about your son's behaviour is unnecessary and useless. It is of utmost importance for you to investigate your son's problems and find out the causes in the first place. The causes for youth depression are multifarious and complicated. You have to understand that adolescence is a vulnerable period in life and young people are facing a lot of changes physically as well as mentally. Only after a thorough study of youth psychology will you be able to identify your son's problems and offer professional advice ...

---

begin and end a text appropriately

Discuss with your classmates:
- what to include in the first paragraph of the reply letter

- how to end the letter in the last paragraph
- the tone and style to be adopted
- the message to be conveyed

Write the first and the last paragraph below:

first paragraph

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

last paragraph

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Alternative approach

As presented in the section "Teaching reading skills", one possible approach to language teaching is that the teacher might like to identify the skills that s/he plans to emphasize. S/he then chooses and uses the relevant texts or materials from a Data File that would enable him/her to help students develop those skills.

An alternative approach is to choose or design a task through which to help learners develop the specific language skills which the teacher has planned. Consider the task "Coping with stress". Before learners are asked to complete the three activities which constitute the task, the teacher can prepare them by using mini tasks on reading and writing skills. The mini tasks can be organized under different language skills which the teacher wants to emphasize.

The teacher can also consider using one particular article and ask learners to study it more intensively to develop different skills. For instance, the teacher can use the article "Reduce the stress on students" and ask learners to work on the following questions:

1. According to the survey described in "Reduce the stress on students", what are the steps proposed to be taken by teachers when confronted with a student who is under great stress?

Skill involved:	extract information relevant to specific tasks

2. Read the article. What is the most prominent cause of students' tendency towards suicide? Give 3 pieces of supporting evidence.

Skill involved:	identify main and supporting ideas

3. Is the writer satisfied with the government's assistance to teachers in helping students at risk? Give reasons to support your answer.

Skill involved:	appreciate intention of writer and his/her attitude to the theme/topic

Task 3: Group discussion

It is customary for the graduating S7 class of your school to organize some educational activities for S3 students. These normally include talks, workshops, experience sharing sessions, film shows and visits. This year, your class has chosen to organize the activities around the theme of "Managing Stress and Life Education".

Discuss the activities that you will organize for your fellow students. These activities should be targeted at the particular needs of the students and what you think will be most effective in bringing home your message.

As preparation, different members of the groups read and report on the ideas in the following texts.

Text 1

A positive school climate

Schools should promote the development and well-being of students by providing structured and guided opportunities for their intellectual, social and emotional development.

This may take the form of daily or weekly assemblies where the whole school is gathered for the sharing of ideas, feelings and experiences related to issues of interest and concern. Such assemblies need not be the sole responsibility of teachers. Different classes may be invited to present issues of their choice. Through an in-depth exploration of the issues, students are able to consider different perspectives and make the experience their own.

Speakers may be invited from time to time to speak on topics related to students' emotional well-being or conduct drama workshops with them. Dramatic situations help to highlight particular issues through the interaction of characters in real life contexts. As students examine critically the responses of the characters, they too have an opportunity to come to terms with their own emotions.

Teachers can help to establish an open and warm setting in the school. Activities may be organized to foster comradeship among students. Many schools have developed their own "big brother" or "big sister" scheme whereby senior students take care of a number of young students. This will create a strong network of support which students in distress can turn to.

Text 2

Death education

Students need to confront the issue of death. Their images of death may have come from television dramas or films. Death is often romanticized as a way of putting an end to problems such as unrequited love or a failed business. Death is also glorified in some gangster movies where it is considered heroic to die for one's buddies during a gang war or fighting the police.

Students have to come to grips with death and the idea that death does not solve problems. It only creates more problems for the people around them. Suicide is a form of escape, running away from problems rather than facing up to them squarely and then finding solutions to deal with them. Students should also be led to realize that death should not be used as a means of revenge on their teachers, friends or family.

More importantly, they should develop awareness of the love of life - that despite the disappointments, sorrows and stresses of life, there is much to enjoy and treasure in life. Life consists not so much in having happiness happen to us but in creating happiness for ourselves and the people around us.

Text 3

Communication skills

Developing strong communication skills among students is one very effective way of preventing student suicides. A sense of powerlessness and hopelessness puts them at great risk.

Communication skills workshops can help young people to perceive that there are alternatives in life and that no problem is too complicated to be solved. Such workshops give them the experience of immersing themselves in a specially stressful situation, recognizing their own responses, looking at the options and coming up with different ways to cope with it. The experience of confronting stressful situations and successfully handling them has a far greater and lasting impact on young people than a lecture.

Most people resort to silence or angry outbursts when they are under stress, which invariably leads to a breakdown in communication. They lose the human contact and support they need most at such times. The willingness to open up and share can very often turn out to be a life-saver. Learning how to make and keep friends is also an essential skill. Students should learn that traits such as consideration, honesty, tolerance and keeping commitments are essential for maintaining relationships. Older students also need to learn how to break up a relationship without causing themselves or others too much harm.

Text 4

Coping with stress

Students should be aware that stress exists in their lives as in others and that there are effective ways of dealing with it.

Stress may come in the form of tests and examinations. Learning how to set realistic goals for oneself and following them through are essential elements of successful learning. Good study skills and habits are also essential.

The family is another major source of stress and anxiety to many young people - whether they are neglected or overly controlled by parents. Learning how to communicate with parents, sharing their feelings with parents without getting into a confrontation certainly require skills on the part of young people. Role-play and simulations are often effective in helping young people develop such skills. They also help them come to grips with their parents' feelings as well.

Relationships with peers can also be stressful. There is a lot of peer pressure on young people to conform - the clothes they wear, the music they listen to, the books they read, and everything they are supposed to do or not do. Young people have to learn that who they are and what they really like are more important than what other people think of them. Winning approval is after all not the true meaning of life.

Teaching speaking skills

convey ideas and key concepts in a passage, discussion or conversation

Learners work in groups of four with each person given one of the 4 texts. After reading the text, they take turns to present the main idea. The following questions may be asked.
Text 1: Identify 3 ways to foster a positive school climate.
Text 2: What are the common misconceptions about death?
Text 3: What skills help students to cope better with stress?
Text 4: What are the main sources of stress for students?

describe details that support a main idea

For each of the main points given above, learners have to supply one supporting detail.

use language appropriate to the role or situations of different levels of formality and informality

be aware of and use persuasive devices effectively

use correct pronunciation and appropriate intonation

Learners are given different contexts and roles for expressing the main ideas of the texts they have read. For example:

Text 1: You are the teacher in charge of the Counselling Team in school. You share with the new teachers in your team your experience of creating a positive climate in your school. Your task is to persuade the new teachers of the rewards and challenges of your job in contributing to a positive school atmosphere.

Text 2: You are a teenager who has once attempted suicide. You are talking to a group of teenagers about the misconceptions you used to have about death and your view about life now. You hope that your audience will not repeat the mistake you made but will develop a positive attitude towards life.

Text 3: You run courses on communication skills for young people and you are addressing a group of parents. You persuade them to enrol their children on your courses.

Text 4: You are a parent and you are discussing with the class teacher the different kinds of stress your son is under. You try to win the teacher's sympathy for your son who has caused a lot of trouble in school recently.

make judgements and suggestions, support and develop each other's views, disagree and offer alternatives, reply, ask relevant questions, explain, give examples, and use formulaic expressions where appropriate

express, elicit and respond to ideas, opinions and feelings in a group discussion

Each member of the group summarizes the main points of the given text. Then he/she asks another member of the group his/her view or feelings about the issue discussed. The other person responds accordingly.

seek and give clarification, explain what information one requires and why, rephrase one's questions when necessary, sum up points made and redirect the discussion when the need arises

After each presentation, the other members of the group ask questions, request further information or offer opinions.

Finding out My Language Needs

(Note: Before you start any self-access learning activities, you should think about your own language needs and what you hope to achieve through the activities. The following questions will help you to find out your needs.)

A.   Areas I find most important:

Ask yourself how necessary or important each area is for you and circle one of the numbers.   (1 = least important;   5 = most important)

	Area	least important most important				
1	**Listening**					
1.1	in conversations	1	2	3	4	5
1.2	in academic situations (e.g. speeches, documentaries, taking notes)	1	2	3	4	5
1.3	in work situations (e.g. following instructions, taking minutes)	1	2	3	4	5
1.4	for pleasure or entertainment (e.g. films, radio programmes)	1	2	3	4	5
2	**Speaking**					
2.1	in conversations	1	2	3	4	5
2.2	in academic situations (e.g. oral presentations)	1	2	3	4	5
2.3	in work situations (e.g. speeches, meetings)	1	2	3	4	5
3	**Reading**					
3.1	feature articles (e.g. newspapers, magazines)	1	2	3	4	5
3.2	academic texts (e.g. textbooks, reference books)	1	2	3	4	5
3.3	for survival/work (e.g. instructions, labels, procedures)	1	2	3	4	5
3.4	for pleasure (e.g. novels, comics)	1	2	3	4	5
4	**Writing**					
4.1	informal texts (e.g. letters to friends, notes)	1	2	3	4	5
4.2	formal texts (e.g. reports, proposals, memos)	1	2	3	4	5
5	**Grammar**	1	2	3	4	5
6	**Vocabulary**	1	2	3	4	5
7	**Pronunciation**	1	2	3	4	5

B.   Areas I am weak in:

   1._____

   2._____

   3._____

C.   Areas I need to work on:

   1._____

   2._____

   3._____

D.   Specific skills I need to work on for each area:

   1._____

   2._____

   3._____

E.   Amount of time I plan to spend on each area:

   1._____

   2._____

   3._____

F.   Specific improvements I hope to make:

   1._____

   2._____

   3._____

Name: _____   Date: _____

Learner Contract

Name: _____   Class: _____

This learning contract is made between my teacher _____ and me on _____ .

Period covered: _____

Goals: By the end of this period, I should be able to

_____

_____

I will do at least _____ hours of work or _____ language activities a week on the areas I've chosen.

I will assess my achievement by:

_____

_____

I will meet my teacher _____ times a week/month to discuss my progress and problems.

Signed: _____   Date: _____

Teacher's signature: _____   Date: _____

Learner Diary

(Note: Learners are encouraged to make records of what has happened in their language learning activities over a period of time, for instance, a week or a month. This learner diary should be adapted by teachers for their own learners.)

	Date/Period _____	Date/Period _____	Date/Period _____
Activities done (with catalogue reference no.)			
Time spent			
Usefulness of the activities			
Difficulties encountered			
Ways tried to solve the problems			

Aspects of the activities I liked			
Aspects of the activities I didn't like			
Things I have learnt			
Further improvements I need to make			
Follow-up/Other activities I want to try			
Other comments			

Resource Materials for the Sixth Form Level

Book Title/Edition	Author(s) / Editor(s)	Publisher	Skills Practised	Remarks
A Manual of Advanced Writing Skills (97)	R Eng	Rivera	Writing (Es, Ow, Su)	Aims to assist teachers in capturing as many students' areas of weakness as possible. Includes students' common writing mistakes, which are analyzed and corrected. Introduces some basic writing techniques so students' essays can have some stylistic variation.
A New English Course (75)	R Jones	HEB	reading, writing (Es, Su)	Writing skills (e.g. organizing ideas) analyzed and practised. Spelling and vocabulary exercises also included.
Academic Writing Course (96)	R Jordan	Longman	writing (Es), usage	Practice in writing academic essays, reports, assignments and dissertations. Sections on accuracy (spelling, grammar, vocabulary, style) and functions.
Advanced Integrated English (87)	N Lee, J Farrell et al	Longman	listening, reading, writing (Su, Ow), usage	A course for the Use of English exam.
Advanced Reading Skills (81)	P Barr, J Clegg & C Wallace	Longman	reading	Authentic texts included. A specific reading skill (e.g. scanning) or language feature (e.g. formality) practised in each unit.
Advanced Vocabulary Development: Form 6 & Form 7 (88)	V Smith	Macmillan	reading, writing (Ow)	A variety of exercises to encourage vocabulary development provided.
Advanced Writing Skills (84)	J Arnold & J Harmer	Longman	reading, writing (Es, Su, Ow), usage	Reading passages to provide materials for discussion. Language in each unit presented and practised under 3 headings: language functions, topic vocabulary and grammar.
Anti-grammar Grammar Book (91)	N Hall & J Shepherd	Longman	usage	Grammar learning approached through problem-solving and inductive activities in worksheet format.
AS Level Use of English: Better Writing for Sixth Formers (95)	P Liu	Leo Publications Ltd.	writing (Es), usage	Details about how to write argumentative/opinion essays and practice in the steps in arguing a case included.

Note: Es=Essay; Su=Summary; Ow=Other Writings, e.g. memos, note-taking

Book Title/Edition	Author(s) / Editor(s)	Publisher	Skills Practised	Remarks
AS Level Use of English: Reading & Language Systems for Sixth Formers (93)	A Tse	Leo Publications Ltd.	reading, usage	Methods on how to teach reading comprehension, cloze, sentence completion, summary cloze, matching, and proofreading outlined in the first chapter. Followed by practice papers, each with a different theme.
Authentic Reading (82)	C Walter	CUP	reading, writing (Su)	Authentic texts and follow-up exercises provided to train reading skills. Special areas causing difficulties in comprehension also dealt with.
Better Reading Skills (76)	KF Lee, P Fleming	OUP	reading	Various reading skills (e.g. understanding analogies and scanning) explained and practised.
Beyond Words (82)	A Maley & A Duff	CUP	speaking, listening, writing (Su)	Materials of a wide range of styles and topics selected. Reading and listening texts thematically linked.
Breakthrough In English: Novel Ideas (85)	A O'Cathasaigh	University Tutorial Press	speaking, reading, writing (Es, Su, Ow)	Different types of materials (e.g. poems, play extracts, newspaper articles) used to stimulate oral and written responses. Comprehension exercises also included.
Cambridge Skills for Fluency Reading 3 & 4 (92)	S Greenall & D Pye	CUP	speaking, reading, writing (Es)	A variety of authentic texts used to cover a range of reading skills, including extracting main ideas, understanding the writer's style and evaluating the text.
Career English (82)	P Smith, J Gibbons, R Westcott	Nelson	speaking, reading, writing (Su), usage	A function (e.g. reporting, giving directions) in realistic situations presented in each unit. Practice in specialised areas (e.g. business, tourism and technology) provided.
Communicate in Writing (81)	K Johnson	Longman	reading, writing (Es, Su)	Reading passages used to train note-taking and summarising skills. Techniques for writing descriptions, arguments and essays also covered.
Comparison and Criticism (69)	B Stark	HEB	reading, writing (Su)	Passages similar in subject but different in situation and style put together for comparison. Literary aspects (e.g. alliteration, use of words) of individual passages also studied in Part 2.
Conversation Gambits: Real English Conversation Practices (88)	E Keller, ST Warner	LTP	speaking, writing (Ow)	Speaking activities on a wide range of topics to practise various functions given. Gambits introduced for each activity. Writing tasks related to the topic under discussion provided.

Note: Es=Essay; Su=Summary; Ow=Other Writings, e.g. memos, note-taking

Book Title/Edition	Author(s)/Editor(s)	Publisher	Skills Practised	Remarks
Critical Thinking (76)	CA Kam & S Edmunds	Longman	reading, writing (Es, Ow)	A variety of topics selected to train skills for critical analysis and expression. Questions checking comprehension, stimulating critical thinking and discussions included.
Effective Reading (86)	S Greenall & M Swan	CUP	reading, writing (Es, Su)	Materials from a variety of sources (e.g. newspapers, advertisements, instructions). Practice of reading skills - extracting main ideas, inferencing, guessing meanings of unknown words. Writing practice and other language activities also suggested.
Encounters (76)	S Gopinathan & F Vaz	OUP	speaking, reading	Reading passages and discussion topics thematically linked. Comprehension questions (involving critical thinking, giving judgements) provided.
English in Context (82)	P L McEldowney	Nelson	speaking, listening, reading, writing (Su, Ow)	Reading passages, charts and diagrams used to practise various skills (e.g. identifying cause and effect relationship, translating and presenting information, etc.)
English through Reading (75)	WWS Bhaskar & NS Prabhu	Macmillan	reading, writing (Es), usage	Reading passages on a variety of topics. Arranged in a graded series according to the difficulty level in terms of vocabulary, syntax and thought-content.
English You Need to Know, The (87)	M Brombey & J Liebb	Barron's	reading, writing (Es)	Essays and analyses included to demonstrate techniques of effective writing.
Fact or Fiction? (95)	P Kennedy	Macmillan	speaking, reading, writing (Su, Ow)	Reading and discussion activities to develop more efficient reading strategies.
For and Against (68)	LG Alexander	Longman	reading	An analysis of arguments presented after each passage. No comprehension questions included. Some topics for discussion.
Foundation: Getting Ready for UE (97)	E Nancarrow G Yam P Nancarrow	Precise Publications	Reading, writing (Es), listening, speaking, usage	With slightly graded exercises in terms of difficulty. Earlier units are teachable and approachable for both teachers and students with HELP sections for hints on language use.
Freestyle (86)	T Hedge	Nelson	reading, writing (Ow), usage	Vocabulary and structures introduced through short passages (interviews, cartoons, short paragraphs) leading to writing practice. Grammar exercises included.
From Paragraph to Essay (75)	M Imhoof & H Hudson	Longman	writing (Es,Ow)	A variety of paragraphs and essays presented and analyzed. Exercises provided to develop writing techniques and styles.

Note: Es=Essay; Su=Summary; Ow=Other Writings, e.g. memos, note-taking

Book Title/Edition	Author(s) / Editor(s)	Publisher	Skills Practised	Remarks
Functions of English (81)	L Jones	CUP	speaking, listening, writing (Es, Ow)	Language functions (e.g. giving opinions, talking about similarities) presented and practised through role plays, pair work and group work. Follow-up writing tasks included. Taped dialogues to demonstrate intonation of expressions available.
Getting Students to Talk: A Resource Book for Teachers with role-plays, simulations and discussions (90)	A Golebiowska	Prentice Hall	speaking, reading	Consists of 3 parts. Part 1 explains how to use role-plays effectively. Part 2 contains role-plays, simulations and discussions on a variety of topics. Part 3 gives a complete breakdown of the functional language needed for the activities in the book.
Grammar in Context: proficiency level English (90)	H Gethin	Longman	usage	Combined grammar reference and practice book for advanced learners. Emphasis on links between structures and meaning. Answers included.
Guide to Writing (2nd ed) (95)	P Leetch	MacMillan	reading, writing (Es, Ow)	Model writing covering newspaper writing, letters, speeches, debates, reports, minutes, proposals, discussion essays, brochures, expository essays, descriptive essays. Notes on style and content provided and followed by guided writing and free writing practice.
Heinemann English Wordbuilder, The (89)	G Wellman	HEB	speaking, reading, writing (Ow)	Each unit focusing on one vocabulary area. Words shown in context and followed by written or spoken practice.
Hold the Front Page (92)	M Webster	Longman	reading, writing (Ow, Su)	Articles taken from the SCMP for reading, discussion, vocabulary building and grammar practice.
Ideas (84)	L Jones	CUP	speaking, listening, writing (Es), usage	Photographs, advertisements and recordings used as stimulus. Tasks such as problem-solving, discussions, role-plays and information exchange exercises provided to encourage students to express ideas.
Images (87)	G Ramsey	Longman	speaking, writing (Ow)	Pictures to stimulate students' imagination and comments and their own experience of the situation. After discussion, each unit ends with a writing task related to the theme.

Note: Es=Essay; Su=Summary; Ow=Other Writings, e.g. memos, note-taking

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Book Title/Edition	Author(s) / Editor(s)	Publisher	Skills Practised	Remarks
In their own words (88)	T Boyd	Nelson	speaking, listening, writing (Ow)	Authentic listening materials (interviews) with exercises, language practice (on idiomatic expressions, vocabulary and structure) and essay questions.
Integrated Skills (90)	J Bell	Heinemann	listening, writing	Activities are task-based and integrated. Most units end with a writing task which includes writing stories, reports, discursive essays, dialogues and summaries.
Interactions II: A Speaking Activities Book (87)	DP Keller & EA Thrush	Random House, Inc.	speaking, reading, writing	Use of role-plays, problem-solving and authentic tasks to motivate the authentic use of spoken language in discussion and other speaking activities.
Issues 1 (87) Issues 2 (88)	J Chamberlain	Witman	speaking, listening, reading, writing (Su, Ow), usage	A course for the Use of English exam. Authentic materials thematically organized.
Issues and Arguments (89)	E Edwards	MacMillan	speaking, reading	Newspaper articles presenting different viewpoints on different contemporary issues for discussion. Discussion topics provided at the end of each set of articles. Originally designed for students taking the Victorian Certificate of Education English Study paper in Australia.
It happened to me (80)	R Kingsbury	Longman	listening	Stories of unrehearsed recording. Exercises include ordering of pictures, identifying speakers' attitudes. Grammar also included. More appropriate for self-access learning as exercises involve stopping the tape frequently.
Language in Action: For Use of English (92)	M Webster	Longman	reading	Written for the Use of English exam. Reading skills analyzed and practised, ranging from the more basic elements of a reading text such as words to the logic of sentences and paragraph. Strategies needed to break up a reading text, including predicting what to come next, text organization, expanding and extending ideas, and identifying the author's purpose included.
Language of Discussion, The (78)	F Heyworth	Hodder & Stoughton	speaking, reading, usage	Discussion techniques trained through discussions and role plays. Vocabulary exercises and language notes also included.
Learning to Listen (84)	A Maley & S Moulding	CUP	speaking, listening	Listening tasks designed from simulated authentic dialogues. Extended pair and group work also provided.

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Book Title/Edition	Author(s) / Editor(s)	Publisher	Skills Practised	Remarks
Listening Comprehension & Note-taking Course (86)	K James, R Jordon & A Matthews	Collins	speaking, listening, reading, writing (Su), usage	Practice focusing on note-taking and specific language features in spoken English. Exercises on reading comprehension and grammatical structures also provided.
Longman Advanced English (86)	R Kingsbury & G Wellman	Longman	speaking, listening, reading, writing (Su, Ow), usage	A course preparing students for the Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency. Practice of the 4 skills included. Vocabulary building, functions, structure, style and register covered.
Making Sense of Reading (83)	S Maingay	Nelson Harrap	speaking, reading	A range of authentic British and American texts for reading comprehension exercises and activities. Speaking activities introduced through discussion of the reading texts.
Mastering Writing Essentials (96)	A Macdonald, G Macdonald	Prentice Hall Regents	writing (Es, Su, Ow)	Collection of college writings. Students' developmental writing problems dealt with.
Mastery of English for Senior Students (91)	PM Wheeler	Longman	reading, writing (Es, Ow), usage	English language skills practised either on group basis or for individual extension practice.
Meaning into Words (Upper-intermediate) (84)	A Doff, C Jones & K Mitchell	CUP	speaking, listening, reading, writing (Es), usage	Functional, notional and grammatical areas covered in each unit.
Meet the Press (81)	J Abbott	CUP	speaking, reading, writing (Ow)	Extracts from British and American newspapers and magazines for practising reading skills. Writing tasks and discussion exercises included.
Meeting People (80)	TL Fredrickson	Longman	speaking, listening	Unrehearsed recorded interviews used to train students to listen to spontaneous English spoken at normal speed. A glossary and further activities (e.g. group discussions and role-play exercises) also included.
New Use of English (87)	R Tongue, K Gude et al	MacMillan	listening, reading, writing (Su, Ow), usage	A course for the Use of English exam.
Notions in English (81)	L Jones	CUP	speaking, listening, usage	Specific notions used in conversations covered. Relevant vocabulary, conversational techniques and language functions presented and practised. Grammatical items revised. Role plays, simulations, discussion topics suggested. Taped dialogues available.

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NUE All-In-One Practice (2 nd ed) (96)	BJ Gran J Li, K Hall, M Reive, P Leetch E Dixon	MacMillan	Reading, writing (Es), listening, speaking, usage	With introducion on how to prepare for each paper to help students better understand the intricacies of the exam and boost their confidence in their exam skills.
Overtones (85)	R Aitken	Nelson	speaking, listening, writing (Ow), usage	Different problems presented to train listening skills. Controlled structural practice and vocabulary building exercises also provided.
Paragraph Development: A Guide for Students of English as a Second Language (81)	ML Arnaudet, ME Barrett	Prentice-Hall	writing (Es, Ow)	Writing skills such as identifying topic sentences, supporting the topic sentences with facts, statistics, etc., writing a paragraph of definition, and developing a full composition from well-organized paragraphs practised.
Perspectives (89)	A Hopkins	Longman	reading, writing (Es, Ow)	Different text-types, common errors and linking devices analyzed. A checklist for learners to check first drafts and notes on how the text should be written provided.
Play it by Ear (86)	R Aitken	Nelson	speaking, listening, reading, writing (Ow)	Different tasks designed to provide practice in understanding and using recorded information.
Practise Advanced Writing (92)	M Stephens	Longman	speaking, reading, writing (Es, Su, Ow)	Different text types including notes and messages, letters of advice, film and book reviews, letters of complaint discussed. Followed by exercises moving from a general analysis of the text to more specialized language exercises.
Process of Composition, The (2nd ed) (88)	JM Reid	Prentice Hall	reading, writing (Es, Ow)	Prepare students for writing assignments such as expository essays, analytical writing and research papers. Writing strategies explained and examples provided.
Quartet (83)	F Grellet, A Maley & W Welsing	OUP	speaking, listening, reading, writing (Ow)	Texts thematically linked. Group problem-solving activities also provided.
Reading Advanced (88)	B Tomlinson and R Ellis	OUP	speaking, reading, writing (Es, Ow)	Different text-types with a variety of tasks included. Comprehension and students' response to the reading texts solicited.

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Book Title/Edition	Author(s) / Editor(s)	Publisher	Skills Practised	Remarks
Reading and Thinking in English (79)	HG Widdowson	OUP	reading, writing (Su, Ow), usage	A series of activities/exercises covering reading skills, grammar, vocabulary, communicative functions and functional organisation. The topics are mainly about science and technology.
Reading between the lines: integrated language and literature activities (84)	J McRae and R Boardman	CUP	speaking, listening, reading, writing (Ow)	Texts thematically linked. Extracts from literary works used. Exercises and activities provided to develop an awareness of literary use of language and improve general fluency.
Reading Upper-intermediate (87)	B Tomlinson and R Ellis	OUP	speaking, reading, writing (Es, Su, Ow)	Reading passages followed by comprehension questions provided to train reading skills.
Reasons for Listening (84)	D Scarbrough	CUP	listening	Listening materials including radio commentaries, news broadcasts, public announcements, etc.
Scenes and Themes from Everyday Life (85)	G Ramsey, M Rutman	Hulton Educational	speaking, listening, reading, writing (Ow)	Short listening activities to stimulate discussions. Practice in writing, vocabulary, intonation and pronunciation included.
Shades of Meaning (83)	M Ellis and P Ellis	Nelson	reading, writing (Sul), usage	Texts of various types. Units organized in three stages: stage one on scanning for gist; stage two on comprehension; and stage three on sentence and text structures.
Skills for Learning: development (80)	UMESPP	Nelson, U of Malaya Press	reading, writing, usage (mainly word building)	A course to teach students to read and write academic texts. Vocabulary and language functions needed for the tasks are provided. Various study skills covered.
Something to Talk About (81)	D Peaty	Nelson	speaking, listening	Different viewpoints provided by different speakers. List of expressions for discussion provided.
Speaking 3 (92)	J Collie, S Slater	CUP	speaking, listening, reading, writing (Ow)	A variety of topics. Pictures, articles, listening materials to stimulate discussion of the theme presented. Writing assignments included in some units.
Speaking Personally: quizzes and questionnaires for fluency practice (83)	GP Ladousse	CUP	speaking, reading, writing (Ow)	Questionnaires and quizzes to elicit personal responses. Pair work and role-play activities included.
Speaking Skills (89)	A Lawrence, Philip Leetch	MacMillan	speaking, reading	Written for the Use of English exam. Various language skills covered. Speaking skills further practised.

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Book Title/Edition	Author(s) / Editor(s)	Publisher	Skills Practised	Remarks
Study Listening (83)	T Lynch	CUP	listening, writing (Ow)	Practice of various listening skills and note-taking exercises included. Writing tasks related to the topic under discussion suggested.
Study Reading (92)	EH Glendinning & B Holmstrom	CUP	reading, usage	A variety of task-based, problem-solving activities to develop learners' reading strategies and reading proficiency.
Study Skills in English (80)	MJ Wallace	CUP	reading, writing (Es, Ow)	Practice in reading skills, note-taking skills and writing skills. Useful for self-access learning.
Study Writing (87)	L Hamp-Lyons & B Heasley	CUP	speaking, reading, writing (Es, Su, Ow)	Authentic materials selected to provide practice in organizing information and structuring ideas in whole texts. Practice ranging from guided writing to creative work.
Themes (82)	A Matthews & C Read	Collins	speaking, listening, reading, writing (Es, Su, Ow), usage	Authentic texts organized in four main thematic sections. Language skills integrated in motivating practice.
Understand and Criticise (5th ed) (94)	J Doraisamy	OUP	speaking, reading, writing (Es, Su)	Units organized under different topics. Comprehension questions to solicit factual answers and point of view. Suggested topics for debates, discussions and projects. List of essay topics suggested.
Use of English (85)	L Jones	CUP	speaking, writing (Es, Ow), usage	Practice in English grammar and usage. Expressions for different functions provided. Exercises include gap-filling, sentence completion, joining sentences, communicative activities (pair work, role play).
Use of English 1 & 2 (87)	B McRae, P Hill et al	Witman	listening, reading, writing (Su, Ow), usage	A course for the Use of English exam.
Use of English Developing Skills (2nd ed) (94)	J Field & A Wiseman	MacMillan	speaking, listening, reading, writing (Ow), usage	A coursebook that aims at gradually building techniques and language skills.
Variations on a Theme (78)	A Maley	CUP	speaking, listening	Short sets of dialogues on common language functions with variations on basis of speaker, relationship, topic, when and where the dialogue takes place. Practice in interpreting the situation, the relationship between the speakers, their attitudes, etc. and expressions for specific functions provided.

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Book Title/Edition	Author(s) / Editor(s)	Publisher	Skills Practised	Remarks
Ways to Reading (86)	J Taylor, P Ahern, J Shepherd, R Rossner	MacMillan	reading, usage	Reading passages with varied themes for practising different reading strategies used. Various types of comprehension exercises provided.
What the papers say? (81)	G Land	Longman	reading, usage	Press cuttings taken from British and American newspapers and magazines. Exercises in comprehension and language practice provided.
Writing Advanced (87)	R White	OUP	reading, writing (Es, Ow)	Composition skills like producing and developing ideas, using and choosing expressions, checking and improving drafts included. The writing process covered.
Writing for Advanced Learners of English (96)	F Grellet	CUP	writing (Es, Su, Ow)	Writing activities for advanced learners of English language and literature.
Writing Matters: writing skills and strategies for students of English (89)	K Brown, S Hood	CUP	reading, writing (Ow)	The writing process focused and different text-types illustrated. Exercises in drafting paragraphs, re-writing paragraphs, writing a paragraph etc. given.
Writing Tasks (84)	D Jolly	CUP	reading, writing (Es,Ow)	Different text-types presented and analyzed. Useful expressions given and writing practice provided. Topics covered: notes, memos, personal letters, descriptions, writing to companies, letters to newspapers, etc.
Writing Upper-Intermediate (87)	R. Nolasco	OUP	writing (Es, Ow), usage	A series of tasks/activities to guide students in acquiring the writing skills with appropriate vocabulary, language, style and register. Examples and models provided. Useful for self-access learning.

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Some Useful ESL-related Websites

Website addresses are subject to change. Sometimes websites come and go; sometimes they cannot be accessed because of reasons such as different Internet access software or a different Internet service provider is being used. If a site is unavailable, use a search engine such as YAHOO or Alta Vista to search for it, using the name of the site. The addresses given below were accurate at the time this syllabus went to press. They are grouped under the following 19 headings: Associations, Dictionaries/Thesauruses, Encyclopedias, ESL-related Centres in HK, ESL/EFL Publications, Games, Grammar, Idioms, Lesson Plans and Materials, Links for Students, Mass Media, Meeting Other Teachers, Oral English, Poetry, Publishers, Resources and Databases, Student Internet Projects, Search Tools, and Writing. The list is not exhaustive but should provide useful links and reference.

Associations

ACTFL (http://www.actfl.org/)
The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages

ACW (http://english.ttu.edu/acw/)
Alliance for Computers and Writing

AECT (http://www.aect.org/)
Association for Educational Communications and Technology

ATELL (http://www.arts.unimelb.edu.au:80/Horwood/ATELL/atell.html)
Australian Technology Enhanced Language Learning

The British Council (http://www.britcoun.org/)
The British Council

CALICO (http://www.calico.org/)
The Computer Assisted Language Instruction Consortium

IATEFL (http://www.man.ac.uk/IATEFL/)
International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language

IRA (http://www.reading.org/)
International Reading Association

NCTE (http://www.ncte.org/)
National Council of Teachers of English of the USA

TESOL (http://www.tesol.edu/)
Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

Writing and Computers Association
(http://www.cogs.susx.ac.uk/users/mike/wa/wricom.html)
Writing and Computers Association

Dictionaries/Thesauruses

COBUILD (http://titania.cobuild.collins.co.uk/)
This is the COBUILD home page. A related site is CobuildDirect at
(http://titania.cobuild.collins.co.uk/direct_info.html)

Longman Dictionaries
(http://www.awl-elt.com/dictionaries/)
Longman Dictionaries Home Page

Roget's Thesaurus
(http://humanities.uchicago.edu/forms_unrest/ROGET.html)
On-line version of the publication

Synonym Dictionary (http://vancouver-webpages.com/synonyms.html)
This home page carries lists of English synonyms

WWWebster Dictionary (http://www.m-w.com/dictionary)
Searches include pronunciation, etymology, and a built-in thesaurus

Wordsmyth English Dictionary - Thesaurus
(http://www.lightlink.com/bobp/wedt/)
On-line version of the publication

Encyclopedias

Britannica On-line (http://www.eb.com/)
On-line version of the publication

Encarta On-line (http://encarta.msn.com/encartahome.asp)
On-line version of Microsoft's CD-ROM

ESL-related Centres in HK

Centre for Independent Language Learning (http://elc.polyu.edu.hk/CILL)
Home page of the Centre for Independent Language Learning at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University with many components and links

English Language Centre (http://elc.polyu.edu.hk/elsc/)
Home page of the English Language Centre at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University with various components; useful links are also available from the English Enhancement Programmes

English Language Centre (http://www.cityu.edu.hk/elc)
Home page of the English Language Centre at the City University of Hong Kong with links to listening and dictation exercises

Independent Learning Centre (http://www.ilc.cuhk.edu.hk/english/)
The English section of the home page of the Independent Learning Centre at the Chinese University of Hong Kong with many components and links

Language Centre (http://lc.ust.hk/)
Home page of the Language Centre at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology with many components and links

Language Centre (http://www.hkbu.edu.hk/~lc/)
Home page of the Language Centre at the Baptist University with many links to materials for self-access learning

Language Resource Centre (http://www.info.gov.hk/ed/lrc)
Web page of the Language Resource Centre of the Advisory Inspectorate Division, Education Department, with links to useful websites for language

teaching (English and Chinese, and access to information about the Language Resource Centre

Virtual English Centre (http://ec.hku.hk/vec/)
Home page of the English Centre at the University of Hong Kong with many components and links

ESL/EFL Publications

EFLWEB (http://www.u-net.com/eflweb/)
An on-line magazine for those teaching and learning English as a foreign language

ELT Journal (http://www.oup.co.uk/jnls/list/eltj)
An international journal for teachers of English to speakers of other languages published by the Oxford University Press in association with The British Council and IATEFL

Language Teaching (http://www.cup.cam.ac.uk)
An international abstracting journal for language teachers, educators and researchers published by the Cambridge University Press

On-CALL (http://www.cltr.uq.oz.au:8000/oncall/)
The Australian Journal of Computers and Language Education from the Centre for Language Teaching and Research, University of Queensland, Australia

TESL-EJ (http://www-writing.berkeley.edu/TESL-EJ)
On-line publication of Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language, an academic journal

TESL-HK (http://www.tesl-hk.org.hk)
On-line newsletter for English language teaching professionals in Hong Kong offered by the City University of Hong Kong

The Language Teacher On-line (http://langue.hyper.chubu.ac.jp/jalt/pub/tlt/)
Excerpts from The Language Teacher, the monthly publication of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT)

Games

Crosswords & Other Word Games
(http://www.syndicate.com/crossword.html)
This site also has several links from Syndicate.com

The Disney Company (http://www.disney.com)
Interactive section for kids of all ages

Interactive WWW Games List
(http://einstein.et.tudelft.nl/~mvdlaan/texts/www_games.html)
Links to interactive games are included besides having games like TicTacToe,
Hangman, etc.

KidsCom (http://www.kidscom.com)
Interactive and fun site for children

Where's That From? (http://www.intuitive.com:80/origins/)
Interactive games for guessing the origins of English words

Wordland (http://www.wordland.com/)
Students can play interactive word games with other players from around the
world

Grammar

English Grammar Links for ESL Students
(http://www.gl.umbc.edu/~kpokoy1/grammar1.htm)
Good selection of links from Karen M. Hartman of the University of Maryland,
USA

ESL Grammar Notes #1-3
(http://www.fairnet.org/agencies/lac/grammar3.html)
Brief notes on some grammar points

ESL Helper Center
(http://www.pacificnet.net/~sperling/wwwboard2/wwwboard.html)
Help for ESL/EFL students from an international team of ESL/EFL teachers

Idioms

Animal Idioms
(http://www.edunet.com/english/practice/rside/V_animaq.html)
On-line exercises to help students learn expressions containing various animal references

Toon in to Idioms (http://www.elfs.com/2nlnX-Title.html)
Cartoons and audio from Adam Rado

Lesson Plans and Materials

AskERIC Lesson Plans (http://ericir.syr.edu/Virtual/Lessons/)
Lesson plans, materials, and curriculum units from ERIC

English Teaching/Learning Materials
(http://www.ling.lancs.ac.uk/staff/visitors/kenji/kitao/material.htm)
Collection from the Kitaos, including Holidays, Colonial Days, Communicating with Americans, and Developing Reading Strategy

EFL and ESL Lessons, Games, Songs (http://www2.gol.com/users/language)
A commercial site with some teaching ideas and links

ESL Discussion Center
(http://www.eslcafe.com/discussion/wwwboard7/wwwboard.html)
Forum for discussing ESL/EFL activities and games

ESL on the WWW (http://www.artsci.wustl.edu/~langlab/ESL.old.html)
Links to ESL resources

ESL Quiz Center (http://www.pacificnet.net/~sperling/quizzes/index.html)
Self-study quizzes for ESL students on a broad range of categories, e.g. grammar, idioms, people, reading comprehension, science, slang, vocabulary, world culture, writing, etc.

Heinemann English Language Teaching
(http://www.repp.com/support/register/elt.htm)
Activities, idioms and teacher tips from the publisher

Teams Distance Learning K-12 Lesson Plans
(http://teams.lacoe.edu/documentation/places/lessons.html)
Links to lesson plans in all subjects and a variety of sources from the Los
Angeles County Office of Education, USA

Lesson Plans and Resources for ESL, Bilingual, and Foreign Language
Teachers (http://www.csun.edu/~hcedu013/eslindex.html)
Resource from Marty Levin of California State University, Northridge, USA

Photocopiable Worksheets (http://www.helt.co.uk/resource/wksht.html)
Samples of photocopiable resources produced by Heinemann ELT

TESL: Teaching English as a Second Language
(http://www.quik13.com/mher/tesl)
Site created by Maria Hernandez with many components, including lesson
plans and links

Links for Students

(Also see ESL-related Centres in HK)

ESL Links Page for Students
(http://www.pacificnet.net/~sperling/student.html)
Links to interactive Web pages from the ESL Cafe

The Internet TESL Journal (http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~iteslj/ESL.html)
Selected links for students of English as a second language

Mass Media

BBC World Service (http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/)
CBC Radio (http://www.radio.cbc.ca)
CBS Audio News (http://uttm.com)
CNN Newsroom (http://cnn.com/CNN/Programs/CNNnewsroom/daily)
Electronic Telegraph (http://www.telegraph.co.uk)
Hong Kong Standard (http://www.hkstandard.com)
Newslink (http://www.newslink.org/)
South China Morning Post (http://www.scmp.com)
The Guardian (http://www.guardian.co.uk)

The Times (http://www.the-times.co.uk)
USA Today (http://www.usatoday.com)
World Radio Network (http://www.wrn.org/audio/html)

Meeting Other Teachers

ESL Teachers Home Pages
(http://www.aitech.ac.jp/~iteslj/Links/TeacherPages.html)
A database of ESL/EFL teachers' home pages from around the world

TeleNex (http://www.telenex.hku.hk)
Teachers of English Language Education Nexus is a computer network run by the Department of Curriculum Studies at The University of Hong Kong to enhance English language standards and the quality of English language teaching in Hong Kong. There are 5 components: Teaching Ideas Database, Grammar Database, News and Messaging, SCMP, and Test Bank, but the last two components are not available on the Web yet.

Oral English

The Alphabet in English
(http://www.edunet.com/english/grammar/alpha.html)
Anthony Hughes' pronunciation of the English alphabet, complete with sound files; also English grammar clinic and subject index, etc.

Did the Cat Get Your Tongue? (http://www.cuhk.hk/eltu/ELH/doc4.html)
Entertaining article on how to improve spoken English

Learning Oral English Online (http://www.lang.uiuc.edu/r-li5/book/)
Useful resources and information edited by Rong-Chang Li of the University of Illinois

Poetry

American Poetry for Students of English Worldwide
(http://interserver.miyazaki-med.ac.jp/~Kimball/ex/po.htm)
Collection from John Kimball of Miyazaki Medical College

English Poetry Database (http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/epd.html)
A full-text searchable database of hundreds of poems from the University of Virginia library

The Internet Poetry Archive (http://sunsite.unc.edu/dykki/poetry/)
Selection of poems from a number of contemporary poets

Publishers

Addison Wesley Longman (http://www2.awl.com)
Cambridge University Press (http://www.cup.org/)
Heinemann (http://www.heinemann.co.uk)
Longman (http://www.Longman.co.uk)
Macmillan (http://www.mcp.com/)
McGraw-Hill (http://www.mcgraw-hill.com/)
Oxford University Press (http://www.oup.co.uk/)
Prentice Hall Regents (http://www.phregents.com)
Scholastic (http://www.scholastic.co.uk/)
Syracuse Language Systems (http://www.syrlang.com)

Resources and Databases

Aesop's Fables
(gopher://spinaltap.micro.umn.edu/11/Ebooks/By%20Title/aesop)
The on-line version of the full text

Dave's ESL Cafe (http://www.eslcafe.com/)
Several interactive resources, e.g. ESL Question Page, ESL Idea Page, ESL Links Pages, ESL Help Center, ESL Discussion Center, etc.

EFL (http://www.globalnet.co.uk/~efl/)
Slang, grammar, news, exercises, and activities from Nikki Bennett et al.

English as a Second Language Home Page
(http://www.lang.uiuc.edu/r-li5/esl/)
Links, information, resources, and activities from Rong-Chang Li of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

English Language Teaching Resources
(http://www.tcom.ohiou.edu/OU_Language/)
Collection of resources from Ohio University

Foreign Language Teaching Resources
(http://babel.uoregon.edu/yamada/forlang.html)
Resources from Yamada Language Center at the University of Oregon

Linguistic Funland TESL (http://www.linguistic-funland.com)
Extensive links and more from Kristina Pfaff-Harris

Resources for English Language & Culture
(http://www.tcom.ohiou.edu/OU_Language/english/index.html)
Teaching ideas and materials for teachers and students including English-language newspapers from around the world, the ESLoop and links

Teachers Helping Teachers (http://www.pacificnet.net/~mandel/)
Teaching tips and ideas for teachers

The International Lyrics Server (http://www.lyrics.ch)
A database on lyrics

The Internet Movies Database (http://us.imdb.com/)
A database on movies

The Secret Diary of Lotus and Rose (http://www.cityu.edu.hk/ls/lotus&rose)
A Hong Kong Language Fund project conducted by Ken Keobke et al. of the City University with teaching ideas and useful links

Virtual English Center (http://www.comenius.com/)
Information, resources and links provided by the Comenius Group, e.g. the Weekly Idiom, Fluency Through Fables, and the E-mail Key Pal Connection

VOLTERRE-FR (http://www.wfi.fr/volterre)
Extensive links and resources edited and published by Linda Thalman

World Kids Network (http://worldkids.net/)
A site for kids and run by kids to promote literacy and independent learning and research skills

Student Internet Projects

English Foundation Programme
(http://www.cityu.edu.hk/li/topics/topics.htm)
Argumentative essays written by students taking the English Foundation
Programme at the City University of Hong Kong

Internet Projects for Learners and Teachers of English
(http://www.wfi.fr/volterre/inetpro.html)
Lots of links from VOLTERRE-FR

Student Stories (http://www.scoe.otan.dni.us/cdlp/visalia/studcont.htm)
Edited and unedited student stories from Visalia Adult School

Web Projects for ESL/EFL Class
(http://www.kyoto-su.ac.jp/~trobb/index.html)
Articles and Japan-related student projects by Thomas N. Robb, Kyoto
Sangyo University, Japan

Writing for the World (http://icarus.uic.edu/~kdorwick/world.html)
Links to sites offering examples of student writing from around the world

Search Tools

Yahooligans (http://www.yahooligans.com/)
A search engine for kids

Writing

On-Line Resources for Writers
(http://webster.commnet.edu/writing/writing.htm)
A list of on-line resources recommended by Charles Darling of the Capital
Community-Technical College

The Electric Postcard
(http://postcards.www.media.mit.edu/Postcards/Welcome.html)
Students can practise writing by sending virtual postcards to their friends and
teachers

GeoCities (http://www.geocities.com)

Free home page for students to do their Web publishing