



**Reflection and continued teacher development  
after the storm: Writing self-study materials for  
newly-qualified CELTA teachers**

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<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	
A brief outline of the dissertation.....	4
My background.....	4
<b>Part 1</b>	
Rationale for writing self- study materials to be used post CELTA: the need for trainees to continue their self-development after the course.....	5
<b>Part 2</b>	
A review of what materials are available for post-CELTA trainees to use in order to continue their professional development.....	10
<b>Part 3</b>	
Identifying the areas in which I would design the materials.....	16
<b>Part 4</b>	
Developing the materials.....	19
<b>Part 5</b>	
Revising the material in the light of feedback.....	44
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	49
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	53
<b>Appendices</b>	
Appendix 1: Grammar Materials	
Appendix 2: Vocabulary Materials	
Appendix 3: Phonology Materials	
Appendix 4: Needs Analysis Questionnaire for Newly CELTA-Qualified Teachers	
Appendix 5: Needs Analysis Questionnaire for CELTA Trainers	
Appendix 6: Feedback Questionnaires for CELTA Trainers	
Appendix 7: Questionnaire to enquire why Newly CELTA-Qualified Teachers had not completed materials	

**Susannah Pearson**  
**MAPDLE MA Dissertation**

**Reflection and Continued Teacher Development after the Storm: Writing Self-Study  
Materials for Newly-Qualified CELTA Teachers.**

**A brief outline of the dissertation**

This is an artefact-based dissertation in which I have developed some self-study materials for CELTA trainees. These materials build on and consolidate what is generally covered in CELTA input sessions. They come in the form of worksheets with self-study tasks to do, a key with suggested answers to the tasks. and a reading list for further research into the topic, should the teachers be interested in further developing their knowledge of that area. Where appropriate I have also included reflection tasks which they can relate to their teaching when they have finished the course.

The materials will be designed to be used by trainees either during their course if they are doing a part-time CELTA. For trainees on a full-time CELTA, they may wish to complete the materials after the course when they will have more time to reflect on what they learnt during the course. This is especially important taking into consideration the intensive nature of the course which does not suit all learning styles. I conducted a needs analysis questionnaire to identify which areas might be most beneficial to develop materials in. I then made my materials available to the newly CELTA-qualified teachers who completed the questionnaires so that I might get feedback in order to make improvements.

**My background**

I am a freelance English language teacher and teacher trainer based in the UK. Much of my

recent work has been as a CELTA trainer, both in the UK and on courses abroad. I am aware of the intense nature of the full-time courses I work on and have also received occasional requests for more tasks related to certain input areas. This led me to the idea of developing self-study materials related to the input sessions on CELTA courses, providing tasks for reflection and revision and which may develop even further the knowledge gained on the course.

## **Part 1**

### **Rationale for writing self- study materials to be used post CELTA.**

#### **The need for trainees to continue their self development after the course**

##### **1.1 CELTA as a first step only**

CELTA is an initial teacher training course, often done as a 4-week full-time course of a very intensive nature. At best, we as trainers hope that we can equip our soon-to-be teachers with initial skills, knowledge and techniques and there is still much to be done afterwards on the part of both teachers themselves and the institutions they work for. As Bolitho (1986; 2) states " Most (initial training courses) take place at a time when trainees are still squaring up to life and most, too, have a limited amount of time available to achieve minimum stated aims".

The CELTA syllabus consists of five specific topic areas:

- Learners and teachers, and the teaching and learning context
- Language analysis and awareness
- Language skills: reading, listening, speaking and writing
- Planning and resources for different teaching contexts
- Developing teaching skills and professionalism.

Due to time constraints, large areas of the syllabus such as the teaching of vocabulary, grammar, productive or receptive skills are give approximately three hours of input time.

Phonology receives about four and a half hours. Language awareness, which is mostly devoted to the analysis of basic grammar tenses and structures, receives more attention, with up to five 90-minute sessions. Other areas such as testing and assessment, and correction are allocated one session only. Given the vastness of some of these topic areas, there is only time to touch upon the basics of most areas.

The University Of Cambridge ESOL Examinations *Syllabus and Assessment Guidelines* booklet (Third Edition UCLES 2010) states the following as the need for support for candidates from each award category in their first teaching position: for candidates with a Pass grade: "they will continue to need guidance to help them to develop and broaden their range of skills as teachers in post".

For Pass B grade candidates: "they will continue to need some guidance to help them to develop and broaden their range of skills as teachers in post" and for Pass A candidates: "they will benefit from further guidance in post but will be able to work independently".

All teachers who pass CELTA need further support to develop into effective professionals.

Taking all of the above into consideration, the need for further professional development is clear.

## **1.2 The need to develop further language awareness**

The skills we hope to nurture on a CELTA course include the ability to analyse language for teaching purposes, albeit at quite a superficial level. This, it has to be said, matches the kind of level which most coursebooks look at language, particularly at lower levels, but there is more to be considered such as grammar at discourse level rather than sentence level and the grammar of spoken English, which we rarely have time to more than touch upon. Many teachers who are native speakers of English still struggle with language analysis and awareness when they leave. I know from experience that my colleagues and I often include phrases such as "has worked hard to improve their language awareness and is aware of the need to continue to do this". Our

preoccupation of course is how they are going to do this and who will support them once they start their first teaching position. For this reason, materials which can help recently qualified teachers to continue to reflect on language and improve their language awareness might be helpful.

### **1.3 The need for reflection**

In addition, the intensive nature of full-time CELTA courses, which are run on a 4-week basis means there is little time for self-reflection on the course. Self-reflection is viewed as (Richards and Farrell, 2005;7) "the process of critical examination of experiences, a process that can lead to a better understanding of one's teaching practices and routines" and is widely viewed as a key component in helping a teacher towards better practice (Richards, 1998; Schon 1983;). Wallace (1991; 59) in his expounding of the Reflective Model writes of "the importance of the continuing cycle of practice and reflection" in the development of professional competence. CELTA trainees are required to complete self-evaluation worksheets, often in the 5 to 10 minutes immediately after the lesson when feedback follows teaching practice. In situations where delayed feedback is done, often when teaching practice is in the evening and feedback is held the next day, trainees complete their self-evaluation sheets that evening and thus have more time to reflect. However, with the intensive nature of full-time CELTAs, they may also be more concerned with planning their next lesson or researching and writing written assignments and may not be able to devote much time to self-reflection. This situation may be much better where CELTA courses are run part-time, of course, allowing much more opportunity for self-reflection. Some part-time courses are simply three months, however, rather than one month and so may still be fairly intensive depending on the nature of the participants' commitments outside the course.

It could also be argued that self-reflection requires, or improves with, experience in the classroom. For many CELTA trainees who come to the course with no previous experience of

teaching, this may only be possible once they start their first teaching job. There is also compulsory 750-1000 word written assignment on the course where trainees are asked to reflect on their teaching and suggest strategies to help them improve. These assignments often do reflect an ability to consider and draw lessons from their teaching, but sometimes in the case of trainees with no previous teaching experience, it seems to be more of a case of copying what trainers have put on feedback sheets with little real understanding of what has really gone on. Hence the need to include, where possible, a self-reflection element in the materials which trainees can complete based on classroom experience and, hopefully, with more time at their disposal.

#### **1.4 The need for support with Continuing Professional Development (CPD) post CELTA**

On the CELTA course, we offer a Professional Development session at the end of the course which incorporates suggestions for how to continue developing as a teacher once the course has finished. In that session, we raise awareness of the need to self-reflect, with suggestions for how to do this. We also look at the need to ask for support from managers and teacher trainers, the value of peer observation and the importance of attending workshops, seminars and conferences and continuing to read up on teaching in academic journals and using online resources for professional development. This is a 90-minute session, however, in which we also need to look at some practical aspects of finding your first job. This session cannot therefore be seen as enough for trainees to then be able to go out into the teaching world and develop on their own.

The reality is, however, that recently CELTA-qualified teachers move on to different situations after the course, with varying levels of support and professional development . If I think back to my own experience, in my first job there was very little emphasis on professional development. I felt that my Director of Studies offered me very little guidance or encouragement in how to develop further as a professional. I was observed very little and my students presumably did not

complain or leave in large numbers, so I was deemed to be doing fine and left alone to get on with it. Any help with lesson planning or ideas for new activities came from my colleagues in the staffroom. There were no in-service workshops, no encouragement to attend conferences, no subscription to journals which might have encouraged us to read further about teaching, a very sparse selection of extra-resource or methodology books and no system of peer observation. Yet all of these are things which I have later learnt to be key in helping teachers to improve their skills. Malderez and Wedell (2007;26) cite several of these factors as being necessary "for effective teacher learning". The British Council Handbook entitled *Going forward. Managing Continued Professional Development for English Language Teachers in the UK* ( Davidson et al; 2012) emphasises the importance of continuing professional development for any teacher, with quotes from ELT managers giving their opinions as to how their schools and teachers have benefited and suggestions for types of CPD which include attending workshops and conferences, and being observed. Harding (2009; 5) cites one of the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development's requirements for effective CPD is that it is "an essential component of professional..life, never an optional extra." Foord (2009;14) observes that " a lack of teacher development in a school can seriously damage teachers".

Yet the language institution where I held my first teaching position was a very successful one, with several schools around the country, which leads me to wonder how many recently CELTA-qualified teachers are experiencing exactly the same thing. My own experience is backed up by a survey conducted by Ivor Timmis for Leeds Metropolitan University in which he discovered that "70 % received no structured professional development post CELTA" ( Timmis: 2000). Accreditation and inspection bodies such as EQUALS do look at whether effective opportunities are being offered at the institutions they inspect. "The inspectors seek evidence that the standards of teaching are monitored by well qualified and experienced academic managers, and that appropriate action is taken to continuously improve standards where and when needed. The professional development opportunities for staff and systematic assessment of teachers' work are also checked" (Overview of EAQUALS standards and assessment

criteria.pdf, found at [www.eaquals.org](http://www.eaquals.org)).

However, many schools may not be accredited and remain outside the system of inspection as an institution's name and brand may be enough to make it successful, without its clients attaching importance to it being inspected by an international body whose name may mean nothing to them.

In addition to this, data relating to the period between 1998 to 2012 from Cambridge ESOL suggests that only between 21 and 42% of CELTA qualified teachers go on to do the DELTA, suggesting that many teachers do not continue their CPD in any formal sense.

It is for this reason that a set of self-study materials for trainees to take away from the end of the course might support those who lack the "structured professional development" which Timmis refers to and which is vital in order to help teachers to grow. As Harding (op. cit ;8) says "It's all very well talking about self-development, but we all need a bit of help, commitment and structure."

## **Part 2**

**A review of what materials are available for post CELTA trainees to use in order to continue their professional development.**

### **2.1 Methodology books**

There is a huge range of such books. These may be books which cover a range of aspects of teaching in one volume such as *Learning Teaching* (Scrivener 2005) or *The Practice of English Language Teaching* (Harmer 2007). These books look at important aspects of teaching methodology, and offer practical tips and techniques for teachers. *Learning Teaching* also has tasks which can be completed, with a commentary which offers suggested answers. However, the materials which I have written would be specifically designed for teachers who have recently

finished their CELTA course, to review basic knowledge covered in CELTA input sessions and extend this knowledge. It would also be designed to help the teachers to improve on aspects of their teaching which may need further work. For this, I have drawn on my own experience as a CELTA trainer and the many discussions of observed lessons which I have had with other CELTA trainers I have worked with, many of whom have greater experience than I do.

There are also specialist books on many different areas of teaching such as reading skills, teaching vocabulary, designing tasks or learner autonomy. However, many institutions do not stock a good range of such books as they can be very expensive for schools abroad and difficult to obtain. Trainees, therefore, may not have access to such books. In my experience, libraries in language schools abroad often stock mostly extra resource books for teachers as these offer quick and easy solutions to the problem of incorporating a variety of activities into lessons for both learners and teachers and are often what teachers will request when their institution has a limited budget. These are of course invaluable, but there is also a need for methodology books in any institution's library to develop their teachers' methodological knowledge and perhaps help them to use these extra activities more effectively in order to help their learners' with specific needs. Even if there is a good range of methodology books, a recently CELTA-qualified teacher on a full-time contract may not feel they have the time to read books devoted to one particular area. Thus a set of materials which develops greater awareness of particular area, drawn from a range of sources and designed for teachers to work on areas of their teaching which newly-qualified teachers often need help with, might be a useful solution.

## **2.2 Published training materials**

There are a number of published books with tasks for teacher training. *Tasks for Language Teachers* (Parrot 1993) has tasks on a range of areas of teaching such as classroom management, teaching both language skills and systems and issues related to learners such as motivation and learning strategies. These include discussion tasks and ones based on

classroom research. The introduction recommends that they be completed by teachers working "preferably in small groups" (p3) and states that "most of the tasks pre-suppose that the teachers have some classroom experience" (p3). It states that the book could be used on courses leading to qualifications such as the DTEFLA or DOTE , both of which preceded the Cambridge DELTA. As this is usually a course which teachers are recommended to take after gaining at least two years of teaching experience, it suggests that the book may be at a level of both knowledge and experience which is rather higher than that of most teachers who have recently finished the CELTA. In addition, some of the activities presuppose the existence of a trainer, who doesn't necessarily need to be a professional teacher of teachers, but would be someone responsible for leading the sessions. The materials that I plan to design could be used by a teacher working alone and with very little classroom experience, although I would of course include reflection tasks to encourage them to reflect on their teaching even with very little experience.

*Teach English: A Training Course for Teachers* (Doff 1988) consists of a trainers' and teachers' handbook, again suggesting that a trainer should be involved in delivering the materials. Once again the introduction states that many of the tasks "are designed to be done by teachers working together in pairs or small groups" (p3). The introduction also states that "the course is especially designed to meet the needs of teachers who:

- teach in large, inflexible classes with few resources
- follow a set syllabus and textbook, and have little control over course content or choice of materials
- are not native speakers of English
- have little time available for lesson planning or preparation" (p1)

Although many non-native speakers do the CELTA course, there are an equal number of trainees who are native speakers. In addition, the other criteria may not apply to them. My materials would refer to a more general teaching situation and would be equally relevant to native and non-native speakers alike.

Both of the above books have very well-designed tasks and are written by ELT trainers of great experience. They offer notes with suggested answers to the tasks, which mean that they could be used for self-study. There are also suggestions for extra reading, which I would include in my materials. Due to the date of publication, few of these are online resources. As online resources are often easier to access for trainees whose institutions do not have well-stocked libraries, I intend to include these in my suggested reading lists. For recently qualified teachers on a full timetable, they are also shorter and so less time-consuming to read.

*Tasks for Teacher Education* (Tanner & Green 1998) is a photocopiable A4 book, with a range of useful tasks covering aspects of teaching such as presenting language, teaching productive and receptive skills, classroom management, error correction and adapting materials. While many of the activities are designed to be done in pairs and small groups, such as group discussion and microteaching tasks, some of them could be done individually and there is a separate book with answers which means it could be used for self-study. In addition, it encourages teachers to take a reflective approach to teaching and offers suggestions for further reading (though this does not include online resources as with the previous two books). It is pitched at the right level for teachers with little teaching experience and reviews many of the approaches and techniques covered in CELTA input sessions.

*Teacher Training Essentials* (Thaine 2010) is also an A4 photocopiable book of "ready to use teacher training workshops", which are suggested for use on in-service training courses, but also CELTA and DELTA. It covers a wide range of teaching areas from methodology to language awareness and encourages teachers to both draw on and reflect on their practice. The tasks provide a useful consolidation of many of the approaches and issues covered in CELTA input sessions. It is designed to be used with a trainer leading the sessions with a group of teachers, but the accompanying trainers' notes have answer keys and suggested answers to discussion tasks, so a good proportion of the tasks could be done as self-study.

Finally, *The Developing Teacher* (Foord 2009) has some very interesting tasks for getting teachers to reflect on themselves as teachers, and others which they encourage them to try out new approaches, test certain assumptions about teaching and get feedback from their learners. There are also activities to promote collaboration with colleagues, to help them deal with issues in their institution and which encourage them to reflect on teaching as a profession. There are no suggested answers as such as the tasks require teachers to try something out and draw their own conclusions from what happened. It is a very thought-provoking book but perhaps designed for teachers who have had a bit more experience and not those who are still developing their basic skills and knowledge.

### **2.3 Online resources**

There are some excellent websites for teachers on the Internet. Many of these such as [www.daveseslcafe.com](http://www.daveseslcafe.com) or [www.busyteacher.org](http://www.busyteacher.org) tend to offer mostly resources and new ideas

for teachers, although these of course can be very useful in enabling teachers to develop not just their repertoire of activities but also their teaching abilities, particularly if they reflect on any new activities they try out in terms of how effective they were in helping the learners to improve their English language skills. Other sites such as [www.onestopenglish.com](http://www.onestopenglish.com) do have some articles on methodology and approaches.

The British Council website [www.teachingenglish.org](http://www.teachingenglish.org) has a variety of short articles on many aspects of language teaching and these are very accessible to recently qualified teachers and often contain extremely useful practical ideas and tips. There are also seminars which teachers can watch, although some of these were quite specialised, for example relating to IELTS or EAP, whereas newly-qualified teachers might need help with more basic or general issues. Trainees can also access research papers and read about the latest news in ELT.

[Www.ieltj.org](http://www.ieltj.org) has access to several hundred articles on all aspects of technology. Although

some of them are rather context-specific such as *Overcoming Chinese-English Colloquial Habits in Writing*, there are others related to more general aspects of teaching such as how to encourage learners to interact with the teacher or using songs to help learners improve their listening skills.

Sites such as Cambridge English Teacher ([www.cambridgeenglishteacher.org](http://www.cambridgeenglishteacher.org)) offer limited resources to people who register for free such as a free language awareness course and access to some of their resources and articles. Online courses in aspects of teaching such as teaching vocabulary and pronunciation can be taken for a small fee.

Some of the professional publications have sites with online access to their journals for a subscription fee. Two which I have found useful in my own career are *English Teaching Professional* ([www.etprofessional.com](http://www.etprofessional.com)) and *Modern English Teacher* ([www.onlinemet.com](http://www.onlinemet.com)), both soon to come under one site called [elt.knowledge](http://elt.knowledge). Both of these publications have short articles on a variety of aspects of language and teaching, offer new ideas to try out in the classroom and contain reviews of recent publications. The only one of these which is free of charge is *EL Gazette* ([www.elgazette.com](http://www.elgazette.com)) which does have news from the world of English Language Teaching, teaching tips and free instant lesson plans.

Free webinars for teachers can be found on sites such as [www.elt-training.com](http://www.elt-training.com). It was by watching one of these on CPD using the Internet that I gained some of the information for this section such as which blogs might be useful for recently-qualified teachers. There are also webinars on encouraging learners to speak and ideas for using texts with learners. Every year, IATEFL make many of the sessions from their annual conference available to watch (eg [www.iatefl.britishcouncil.org/2012](http://www.iatefl.britishcouncil.org/2012)); extremely useful for teachers who are unable to attend the conference. Macmillan also offer a yearly online conference with online seminars which can be watched for no charge.

Teachers can read and perhaps contribute to blogs where English teaching professionals offer new ideas for the classroom, recommend websites or web tools and debate issues in English language teaching. Examples of this are Jo Gakonga who is behind the [elt-training.com](http://elt-training.com) website ([www.JoGakonga2011.blogspot.com](http://www.JoGakonga2011.blogspot.com)) or Scott Thornbury ([www.scottthornbury.wordpress.com](http://www.scottthornbury.wordpress.com)).

## **2.4 Conclusion**

Thus, there are a range of resources which teachers can use for professional development purposes and they all have their value. However, I believe there is still potential for a study-pack style range of materials which are specifically aimed at newly-qualified teachers and which do not require access to the Internet or collaboration with other teachers.

## **Part 3**

### **Identifying the areas in which I would design the materials**

#### **3.1 Designing a needs analysis questionnaire**

In order to identify which areas would be most useful for trainees to develop their knowledge, I designed a questionnaire for both trainees about to finish their CELTA course and experienced trainers. I was able to use this questionnaire for trainees in the UK and some who were doing CELTAs abroad, as most of the trainees doing their course in the UK are native speakers of English. I was aware that their needs might be different from those of non-native speaker teachers. For example, they might consider that they needed to improve their ability to analyse and teach grammar, whereas non-native speaker teachers often have a much better awareness of the grammar systems of English. Thus it was important for me to have a mixture of trainees to complete the questionnaire. However, even non-native speakers might benefit from looking at grammar at discourse level and considering the features of spoken grammar as anyone who has only developed their language awareness using grammar practice books for learners such

as *English Grammar in Use* (Murphy 2004 ) and the grammar reference sections at the back of coursebooks, as I did in my first few years of teaching until I did my DELTA, has not necessarily considered such areas in any great detail. I also asked some of my colleagues who are experienced CELTA trainers to complete the questionnaire so that I might have their perspective on which areas newly CELTA qualified teachers might benefit most from considering further.

In total, 23 newly CELTA-qualified teachers and 8 CELTA trainers completed the questionnaires, which can be found as Appendix 4 and 5.

I chose a number of areas which I felt materials could be developed in and which also reflect the main areas covered in input sessions on the course. In addition, I included two areas which I feel we are not able to cover in a great deal of depth on the CELTA course and yet which are key to effective teaching in my opinion - motivation and affect, and learner autonomy. I asked those completing the questionnaire to rank these areas in order of usefulness from 1-11; 1 being the area that they felt would be most beneficial to develop further knowledge of, and 11 being the least useful area in their opinion. I also asked trainees to provide me with their email addresses, should they wish to receive and complete the study materials. I did this so that I might get some feedback on the materials I had written and use this feedback to improve on the materials. Interestingly, all the trainees who completed the questionnaires did provide their emails, suggesting a high level of motivation to continue furthering their knowledge after CELTA.

### **3.2 Analysing the results**

When I collated the responses, I found a good deal of homogeneity when comparing the results for both groups, as can be seen in the table below. Both groups of respondents had chosen almost the same top 3 areas - with grammar being the first choice for both. Phonology and lexis also appeared in the top 3 for both groups, suggesting that language awareness is a priority area for development post-CELTA. However, classroom management was joint second with

lexis for the trainer group and lesson planning was joint third with lexis for the trainee group, suggesting that there are other aspects of teaching which both groups are aware of the need to work on after CELTA. Teaching speaking and motivation and affect came in 4th and 5th place respectively for both groups, and testing and assessment was a low priority for both, compared to the other areas on the questionnaire.

An aspect of the results which I found interesting was that Learner Autonomy was a higher priority for the trainee group than it was for the trainer group, coming before the teaching of receptive skills. This suggests that the trainees were either aware of the need to develop autonomous in their learners or simply found the topic idea interesting, whereas the trainers felt that other areas of teaching, for example the teaching of receptive skills, were more important in terms of what newly CELTA- qualified teachers needed to investigate further in the initial stages of their career.

## Results of questionnaires

Topics in order of which ranked most to least useful. (Lowest score means respondents thought that topic would be most useful)

<b>Trainees questionnaires 23 in total (score in brackets)</b>	<b>Trainers questionnaires 8 in total (score in brackets)</b>	<b>Both together 31 in total (score in brackets)</b>
Grammar (91)	Grammar (26)	Grammar (117)
Phonology (113)	Lexis/Classroom Management (Joint second -30)	Lexis (151)
Lexis/Lesson planning (Joint third- 121)	Phonology (41)	Phonology (154)
Teaching speaking (135)	Teaching speaking (42)	Lesson planning (172)
Motivation and affect (137)	Motivation and affect (50)	Classroom management/Teaching speaking (Joint fifth -177)
Classroom management (147)	Listening/Lesson planning (Joint 6th -51)	Motivation and affect (187)
Learner autonomy (149)	Teaching reading (59)	Teaching reading (212)
Teaching reading (153)	Testing and assessment (73)	Teaching listening (215)
Teaching listening (164)	Learner autonomy (74)	Learner autonomy (223)
Testing and assessment (179)		Testing and assessment (252)

As can be seen from the table, when the results were combined for both groups, Grammar, Phonology and Lexis came as the top three areas and I therefore decided to design materials for these three areas.

## Part 4

### Developing the materials

#### 4.1 CELTA syllabus and what is generally covered in CELTA input sessions

In order to develop the materials, I considered a number of factors. Firstly, I took into consideration the CELTA syllabus for the areas I had chosen to write materials on. Below I have taken the relevant sections relating to grammar, vocabulary and phonology from The University

Of Cambridge ESOL Examinations (2011) *Syllabus and Assessment Guidelines Third Edition* (CUP).

### **Grammar - Syllabus content**

Grammatical frameworks: rules and conventions relating to words, sentences, paragraphs and texts

### **Learning outcomes**

Successful candidates are able to:

a. understand a range of the rules and conventions relating to words, sentences, paragraphs and texts

b. demonstrate a basic working knowledge of how the verb phrase and the noun phrase are formed and used in English, for example:

- tense and aspect
- voice
- modality including the expression of hypothetical meaning
- finite and non-finite forms
- the adverbial element
- countability

### **Lexis**

#### **Syllabus content**

Word formation, meaning and use in context

#### **Learning outcomes**

Successful candidates are able to:

a. understand basic principles of word formation and lexical meaning, for example:

- meaning and definition
- pronunciation

- spelling
- affixation and compounding
- synonymy and hyponymy

b. understand the effect on word choice of factors such as:

- co-text (e.g. collocation)
- context of situation (style)

## **Phonology**

### **Syllabus content**

The formation and description of English phonemes

Features of connected speech

### **Learning outcomes**

Successful candidates are able to:

- a. demonstrate a working knowledge of the sounds of English
- b. understand some features of connected speech, for example:
  - linking
  - assimilation and elision
  - word and sentence stress
  - intonation patterns

Secondly I took into consideration what we are able to cover in the limited time we have available on the CELTA course. Grammar is focussed on in 5 language awareness sessions which usually cover the basic tenses and aspects (as the majority of our trainees are native speakers whose language awareness is very weak when they come to the course, and who struggle most with teaching tenses when it comes to teaching language systems). There is usually a brief look at function and sometimes grammatical issues relating to nouns.

Methodology consists of a look at how grammar may be presented through different media such as texts or situations, and the need to cover meaning, form (and phonology where appropriate) in a guided discovery approach. Initially, the methodology examined is the PPP method as most course books still use this and most language institutions use coursebooks, but we also consider Test-Teach-Test (cf British Council website [TeachingEnglish.org](http://www.teachingenglish.org) <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/knowledge-database/test-teach-test>) and sometimes Task-Based Learning (cf Willis 1996) and the Dogme approach (cf Meddings & Thornbury 2009), so that trainees are aware that there are other approaches to teaching language which they might want to experiment with, and explore further.

Vocabulary sessions cover mostly the syllabus as designed above, with a look at what it means to know a word for both active and passive use, how to convey and check meaning (as well as other necessary information) effectively. Issues of learner training in vocabulary teaching and learning are also touched upon: how to record vocabulary effectively, the importance of the learners' recycling, memorising and extending their vocabulary out of class.

Phonology sessions cover the basics of all the areas outlined in the CELTA syllabus above, with the greatest emphasis placed on sounds and word stress as these are areas we feel trainees can put into practice quite quickly in their teaching.

It should be remembered that many aspects of teaching are also reinforced in the feedback to Teaching Practice where all trainees are encouraged to reflect on their teaching and how it relates to what they have considered in Input sessions. They also gain greater language awareness through teaching, and observing their fellow trainees teaching different areas of grammar, phonology and vocabulary.

However, I felt that there were most definitely areas which needed to be reinforced and extended in the materials. Some examples of revision tasks are Task 1 and 2 in the Word Stress

section of the phonology materials (see Appendix 3, pp 4-5). The aspects of word stress in these tasks are usually covered in input sessions, but here they are presented in a different task-type in order to recycle the language area in a different format.

The learner-training materials in the Vocabulary Materials invite the teacher-user to consider aspects of learner-training connected to the recording, memorising and extending of vocabulary as well as helping learners to use dictionaries effectively, in more depth. In the Grammar Materials, Part 2 (see Appendix 1, pp.6-7) asks the teacher-user to develop their language awareness by thinking how a sample of utterances do not fit the rules often found in coursebooks. This is something we get them to start doing on the course, but are often unable to do in more depth or for more areas due to restrictions of time. There are also tasks in the materials which cover areas of language or approaches which we have not had time to go into, such as features of spoken English and looking at language at text, rather than sentence, level in the Grammar Materials (Parts 3 and 4 respectively: see Appendix 1, pp.14-17 and 22-23) ; and further aspects of phonology such as intonation patterns in backchannelling devices (Part 5 Task 3 in the Phonology Materials: see Appendix 3, p.36).

#### **4.2 My own experience as a CELTA tutor**

As a teacher trainer with 14 years' observation experience and 5 years' experience as a CELTA trainer, I also wanted to draw on my own experience when writing the materials. I have found through observing CELTA Teaching Practice and discussing it with fellow CELTA trainers, many of whom have much wider experience than me, that there are certain areas which novice teachers often struggle with and I was very keen to include materials which would help them to develop these areas.

Hence in the Vocabulary Materials, I included a section on conveying more than just the meaning of a word (Part 2: see Appendix 2, p.6) and also a task on teaching vocabulary items

which learners often confuse (Part 3: see Appendix 2, pp.13-14). In my experience, novice teachers can often convey the meaning of vocabulary items quite effectively, but may not remember to highlight other issues such as style, connotation or grammatical issues such as whether a verb is regular or irregular. Task 2 asks them to think about what they would need to consider when teaching certain items of vocabulary. They may also tend to gloss over the differences between commonly-confused vocabulary items, either because they lack the confidence to explain them effectively or they may never have considered the difference. Task 3 in the vocabulary section is designed to get them to consider some examples of these differences to help them develop their ability to clarify vocabulary more effectively.

When it comes to exploiting incidental vocabulary which comes up in class, I have often noticed that trainees do not always do this effectively, understandably, as they may be rather over-focussed on their lesson plan as novice teachers, and may also lack confidence to explore language which they have not prepared for in advance. However, I wanted to get them to consider what a rich source of language incidental vocabulary can be and subsequently how they might explore it with their learners in class (Part 5: see Appendix 2, pp.30-31).

Parts 3 and 5 also include reflection tasks. The Task 3 Reflection Task (see Appendix 2, p.14) aims to encourage the teacher-user to think about their teaching of vocabulary in general, including whether they are conveying more than just meaning to their learners. For Task 5 (see Appendix 2, p.31) , they are invited to think about whether they are exploiting such valuable learning opportunities in class and also when they might not focus on incidental vocabulary which comes up.

I also included a task in the Phonology Materials where the teacher has to decide what areas of phonology they might highlight when teaching grammar (Part 4 Task 2, see Appendix 3 p.25), as teachers often deal quite well with the meaning and form of target structures but don't always feel comfortable highlighting the phonological aspects. The task serves as an introduction to

sentence stress and weak forms, but is also designed to remind them that phonology can also be important when teaching grammar.

I have included a similar task where the trainees think about how they might highlight tricky sounds, sound-spelling combinations, or silent letters on the board for learners. Often pronunciation as a general area can be daunting to novice teachers so this task aims to build their confidence in working with sounds as an integrative part of their language teaching (Phonology Materials Part 3 Task 2d: see Appendix 3, p.15)

### **4.3 My own beliefs as a teacher and trainer.**

#### **4.3.1. The importance of a guided discovery approach to language, and getting teachers to think critically.**

Getting learners to "discover" how language works for themselves is an approach which we encourage trainees to use on CELTA courses, in the belief that this involves the learner more in the lessons, that they are processing language more deeply if they are asked to think about it for themselves, and that it encourages skills which they might then apply as independent learners when thinking about language outside the classroom. This theory is supported in the literature by Thornbury (2011). Our input sessions are designed in a way that puts the emphasis on eliciting as much information as possible from trainees, getting them to think for themselves about how language works and guiding them towards the correct answers, rather than giving them. In Teaching Practice feedback, this is also a recurring theme of discussion. This is an approach, therefore which the teacher-users will be used to and I wanted my materials to reflect this. An example of this is the Part 5 Task 2 of the Phonology Materials (see Appendix 3, p.35) which asks the teacher-user to examine a dialogue containing new and old information to try and work out whether intonation usually rises or falls on such information, with questions to guide them to the correct answer.

In terms of thinking critically, we encourage the trainees in input sessions to debate ideas such as what is "correct" language or evaluate coursebook materials for their effectiveness and purpose. We encourage them in teaching practice to "react" to the materials which they are allocated to teach, and adapt them to suit their learners or replace them with more suitable ones. Nunan (1989; 135) supports this promoting of a "critical attitude" towards classroom tasks. In my materials, I have asked them to evaluate classroom activities to think about how effective they are (for example in Part 4 Task 2 of the Vocabulary Materials; see Appendix 2, pp.20-22); examine extracts of classroom interaction and say how techniques might be improved (Part 5, Task 1 of the Vocabulary Materials; see Appendix 2, pp.30-31), and consider commonly-used approaches, such as the section on considering the PPP model in Part 5 of the Grammar Materials (see Appendix 1, pp.27-29) .

#### **4.3.2 That the teacher-users, like all learners, have varying strengths, abilities, needs and learn in different ways.**

The trainees which we have on CELTA courses come with quite different levels of previous knowledge and experience. Some will have done online ELT courses and therefore will have considered aspects of English Language Teaching already. Others come with previous teaching experience, sometimes as English teachers or from other contexts, such as primary and secondary education. Some will have neither. On the course, they may develop at different rates, with some needing a much greater level of support than others, and of course they will have different learning styles.

Thus I have tried to provide a variety of tasks such as completing tables; finding the odd one out; grouping similar words; evaluating and designing activities, and examining texts, and examples of classroom interaction and spoken and written English. As also discussed in the following section, I have tried to provide scaffolding for those who need it in the form of hints they can use for tasks; examples of how to do tasks; bullet points to consider when doing some

of the more open-ended tasks, and audio files for the Phonology Materials for those teacher-users who are not confident about their ability to produce and recognise phonology accurately.

I have also tried to provide tasks of varying levels of difficulty, so the Grammar tasks start with a very simple task to identify tenses, which some of the more experienced and more able teachers might not choose to do at all, but will provide an easy starting point for those who are still unconfident about their language awareness and need even that level of quite basic revision. In the same materials, there is a task with varying degrees of difficulty (Part 2: see Appendix 1, pp.6-7) where I have tried to include some quite basic examples of language not "fitting" the rules coursebooks teach, such as the use of *do* in present simple statements to give emphasis, and some less obvious examples such as the use of *will* and *would* in *if* clauses. Then there are the more challenging tasks such as thinking critically about the PPP method (Task 2: see Appendix 1) which we may touch on on CELTA courses but the teacher-user is encouraged to think about in much more depth in these materials.

I am always conscious, both when teaching and designing materials, of trying to cater for the different ways people learn. In these materials, however, I am conscious that my materials are quite print-based as I wanted them to stand alone (see section 4.5 below for a more detailed rationale for this). However, as mentioned above, I felt it essential for there to be audio recordings as support for some of the Phonology Materials and this would cater to the audio learner. I have also included links to different media such as Youtube videos or those found on blogs. I have also tried to vary the layout as much as possible, using bullet points, tables, and different colours and different fonts for tasks and answer keys. I have also put some of the text, such as classroom activities, in boxes to distinguish it other features of the assignment such as the instructions for the teacher-user as to what to do with those tasks. Such features, as well as trying to provide variety in the appearance of the materials, also "provide relief to the reader's eye" (Rowntree 1990; 200).

### **4.3.3 Giving learners choice in, and responsibility for, managing their own learning**

Learner autonomy is an area which we try to promote on CELTA courses and one area of learner autonomy is giving learners responsibility for their own learning (Benson and Voller, 1997), which includes giving them a choice over what they do in their learning. In these materials, I have tried to make it clear in the instructions that the teacher-user may do as much of the material as they wish to. Within each set of materials, the different parts are self-contained, so that although within each part there may be activities which follow on from one another, the parts themselves are self-contained. Thus teachers can choose the tasks which they feel would benefit them most and choose the order in which they do them, depending on their interests or the time available for study at that particular moment. Once again, I have tried to make this clear in the introduction to the materials. I have also provided an overview of the materials at the beginning of each set and stated the aim of each section, which should aid the user in making those choices.

Distance materials are particularly suited to giving learners autonomy about how to approach them as the trainer is not there to manage the learning. As Lockwood (1998; 139) writes: "Teachers and trainers who are assembling self-instructional materials need to realise they have little control over the way their students study". This may be a disadvantage, for example if the learners do not really give activities full consideration but jump straight to the answer key instead. It can also be an advantage, however, as the tutor is not there to direct which activities are done, how they are approached and how much time is spent on them. It also means that novice teachers on a full teaching timetable may do them over a period of time of their choice, whether that is in the first few months or even years of their teaching.

A hope which I have for my materials in relation to learner autonomy is that they might encourage the teacher-user to continue their Professional Development further, even if they do not have much support from the institution they work for. Besides the extra links and

recommendations for further reading in the materials, perhaps having a look at Scott Thornbury's excellent blog as suggested by the Grammar Materials might stimulate them to explore it further, look for other similar blogs and even contribute to them or perhaps even start their own ELT blog. The self-reflection sections might encourage a greater habit of self-reflection in their teaching in general. Doing some of the tasks from books such as the excellent English Pronunciation in Use series might stimulate them to use such resources to develop their own awareness of other areas of Phonology. They might become more curious about language as a result of the task in the Grammar Materials where they have to think about how certain utterances do not fit the rules given to learners about language in coursebooks (Part 1 Task B: see Appendix 1), and start to listen out for how language is used and whether it follows conventional rules.

#### **4.3.4 That materials which are motivating will be more appealing and memorable to the user**

Motivation comes from many different sources but I believe that there are important aspects which may increase learner motivation. One of these is relevance and this is supported in the literature on motivation in language learning (Dornyei 2001) and materials writing (Tomlinson 2011). As Dornyei (op. cit; 63) writes "students will not be motivated to learn unless they regard the material they are taught as worth learning". Chambers (1999; 37-38 cited in Dornyei (2001)) writes that "if pupils do not see the relevance of a subject, the teacher has from the outset a major challenge". In the same way, my teacher users will not be motivated to do my tasks unless they can see the relevance to their everyday teaching. I have tried to make my material relevant to the teacher user. I did this by considering what they might need as novice teachers, from my own experience of what it was like to be a novice teacher with very little support, and from my experience as a CELTA trainer. Writers who write about designing materials in general (Jolly and Bolitho (2011); Nunan (op. cit)) and also those who advise on writing distance materials (Rowntree (op. cit); Lockwood (op. cit); and Lewis 1981) emphasise the importance of

knowing your audience before designing your materials and "tuning" your materials to the needs of that particular audience (Jolly and Bolitho; op. cit; 128). Indeed Lockwood (op. cit) points out that distance materials are distinct from textbooks for this reason: that the materials are designed for a specific target audience rather than being written for a global audience. Of course I cannot possibly know all the newly-qualified CELTA trainees who will use my materials, but when writing them I constantly kept in mind the many trainees I have met in my 5 years as a CELTA trainer.

I have also tried to make the materials engaging wherever possible. I have used a humorous text from *Mr Stink* by David Walliams for them to analyse in the Grammar Materials and included a poem in the Phonology Materials. Tomlinson (op. cit) supports the idea of using engaging stories and appealing content, resulting in the materials achieving "impact" and thus making it more likely that the learners, or users in my case, will process their content.

#### **4.3.5 The importance of teachers being reflective practitioners and being able to assess their own learning.**

I have considered the meaning of reflection and its importance in Part 1.3 above, as well as the difficulty that trainees may have in finding time and space to reflect on a full-time CELTA course. Leach (1995;37) writes that distance learning may be particularly effective for reflection as it "creates a *distancing* between the learner and what is learnt; a more self-reflective mentality often lost in the more busy and pressurised atmosphere of classroom-based training". I would hope this to be true, however if a novice teacher goes immediately into a full timetable of 25 or more contact hours a week, they may still struggle to find time for effective self-reflection. He also suggests that self-reflection tasks are "more likely to be filled in with thought and attention if it is the only means of developing awareness than if the trainee has peers and tutors to do the reflecting for them".

I have included a number of reflection tasks in all my materials, some which encourage the teacher-user to relate "new knowledge" to their practice. In fact I tried to do this for every language awareness task I designed, so that there is a direct link between what has been just considered and how it might work in practice. An example of this are these questions from the Vocabulary Materials after Part 4 Task 5 (see Appendix 2, p.24), which raises awareness of different types of chunks.

Other tasks encourage the teacher-user to consider their teaching practice in general. This might be in order to get them thinking about their own views and experience of teaching a certain area before embarking on a set of materials, for example in Part 1 of the Phonology Materials (see Appendix 3, p.3), or reflecting on a particular area of their teaching to reinforce and review important aspects of practice which have been covered on the CELTA course, as in Part 5 of the Grammar Materials (see Appendix 1, p.28), where they are asked to reflect on a recent grammar lesson they have taught.

In terms of teachers assessing their own learning, I wanted them to reflect on what they felt they had gained from the materials and think about what they can do to develop their skills and knowledge even further in different areas. This is supported by writers advising on writing self-study materials, and in the literature on Learner Autonomy. Lockwood (1998; 16) states the need for self-assessment of learning for students "to check their understanding and competence" and Rowntree (op. cit; 167) suggests that instead of a list of objectives at the start of the materials, there could be a checklist at the end of the materials "against which your learners can review what they have learnt". Scharle and Szabo (2000; 8) write that in self-evaluation, learners have to "step into the shoes of the teacher and judge their own work as objectively as they can. By doing so, they can formulate an idea of their level of proficiency: discover weak and strong points and plan the directions of progress".

I have included a column in the final feedback tasks where they say whether what they have

done in each task has influenced their teaching in any way, but this is mainly designed to help me assess the effectiveness of the materials. I have also therefore put a checklist at the end of each unit for them to consider how well they feel they have grasped certain principles, concepts or approaches and give them some tips on what they might do if they feel they need to consider a particular area further. This way, those who feel they need more work on a particular area would gain some ideas on how to work on it more, in the spirit of *Continuing Professional Development*, which this dissertation has at its core. These tips include a combination of links to example lessons and articles; suggested reading from published materials and trying out techniques or approaches in the classroom, and then reflecting on them.

#### **4.4 The particular nature of self-study materials**

I also needed to take into account the particular nature of self-study materials. There are several important aspects which need to be considered.

##### **4.4.1. The need to make the aims and objectives of tasks clear to the users.**

This is something which is important for any learning situation. In a face-to-face training situation, I often invite trainees to reflect on the aims of tasks we do in input sessions. In teaching practice, we encourage the trainees to make the aims of activities clear to the learners. In self-study materials, these aims and objectives have the function of "providing an overview of what is to come" and "whetting the readers' appetite and convincing them that the lesson is worth spending time on" (Rowntree op. cit; 168). This may be even more key to my materials as my target audience is busy novice teachers who are choosing to do them, so I need to make it clear what they will achieve by doing them. It also means they can clearly see immediately whether they think each particular section will be relevant to them and decide whether they wish to do it or move on to a more relevant section. Thus I have provided aims for each section of my materials. An example of this is the first task in the Vocabulary Materials in which the teacher

user has to look at three ways of focussing on vocabulary in the classroom where I have stated the aim as: *to examine different ways of focussing on vocabulary in the classroom and evaluate their effectiveness.*

#### **4.4.2 The voice of the tutor in the materials**

Tomlinson (op. cit; 9) talks of the importance of developing a "voice" when designing materials which is "relaxed and supportive" in order to put learners at ease. He believes materials writers should "chat to the learners casually in the same way good teachers do". In order to achieve this he suggests using features of informal discourse, the active rather than the passive voice and concreteness in the form of examples. In self-study material, I believe this voice to be even more key as there is no teacher present to put their own voice to the materials in the form of giving instructions, guiding learners and conducting feedback.

I have tried to keep the voice in my materials friendly and personal, addressing the teacher directly as if I was talking to them, using contractions and the active voice. This came instinctively to me, but is supported by authors writing about how to write self-study materials, such as Rowntree (op. cit), Lockwood (op. cit) and Lewis (op. cit). Rowntree (op. cit ;82) is an advocate of the tutorial-in-print model, where you imagine a one-to-one tutorial and "put it down in print". He also suggests trying to "hear" your prose in your head. I used both of these methods to help me produce my materials.

#### **4.4.3 Importance of clear instructions.**

There are many ways in which a trainer or teacher can make instructions clear in a face-to-face session. They might physically show the activity which the learners or trainees will do either by holding up the handout or projecting it on a data projector and pointing at the relevant parts of the activity as they give their instructions. They may gauge understanding of their instructions

through the facial expressions and body language of their audience. They may then do an example with the group and finally check understanding by asking some questions about how the task should be done. They will then monitor their learners to check they are on task. None of these are possible when the materials are for independent study, thus making it imperative that instructions are as clear as possible, with examples provided where appropriate. Jolly and Bolitho (2011; 110) stress the need to write "efficient and effective" instructions when writing materials. This is even more vital in self-instructional materials. As Lockwood states (op. cit; 140) "You will not be around to witness the puzzled expressions or to respond to the requests for clarification". When I was writing the instructions I re-read them constantly and often re-wrote them to try and ensure they were as clear as possible.

One example of a task where I provided an example is from Part 3 of the Vocabulary Materials (see Appendix 2, p.13). This task is designed to encourage the teacher-user to consider the importance of exploring more than just the meaning of a word with their learners when teaching vocabulary. They are asked to look at a number of lexical items and think about what they might need to highlight to their learners when teaching them. Concerned that they might not know where to start with the task, I have suggested a number of areas they might consider in the instructions but have also provided an example to guide them. I deliberately chose an example which would more than one of the different issues suggested in the instructions, in this case there are both issues of form and phonology with the word *outdoor*.

#### **4.4.4 Use of scaffolding**

As there is no trainer present to help out when the teacher-users are doing the materials, I have chosen to provide some hints or prompts for tricky tasks. In some cases, the user may take advantage of these only if they so wish. The rationale behind using these scaffolding techniques is that the teacher-users do not get frustrated too easily and go straight to the answer key. In a face-to-face session, a trainer would employ a guiding technique to encourage the trainee to

"discover" the answer for themselves or provide them with prompts to stimulate ideas. If the trainees are working individually, or in pairs but where both trainees in the pair are struggling with a task, the trainer might encourage them to work in pairs or with another pair. The idea of the scaffolding is to compensate somewhat for this lack of a tutor or colleagues to help out, although in the case of working collaboratively, teacher-users who work in the same institution may choose to work on the materials together and I have encouraged this in my emails to the recipients of the tasks and in the introduction to each set of materials.

Two examples of tasks where I have chosen to use scaffolding techniques are Part 2, Task 2 of the Phonology Materials (see Appendix 3, p.6), where I have provided hints for the teacher-user to use if they wish to; and Part 5, Task 4 of the Grammar Materials (see Appendix 1, pp.29), where the teacher is asked to consider what the criticisms of the PPP approach might be. Here I have included some areas for consideration to guide them in their reflection.

For the section on the PPP approach, I also started with a definition and description of a lesson using the approach, so that the teacher-user is clear on what I mean by PPP before they start the tasks.

For some tasks I have provided suggestions of how to tackle tasks. Here are two examples. The first from the Grammar materials (Part 5 Task 4):

How can we take these criticisms into consideration and still use PPP as one way to present target language? *For this task, think about how you can adapt the PPP method to take into account some of the criticisms above.*

And another from the Phonology Materials (Part 3 Task 2d) :

Look at these words from task 1b. How would you record them on the board in a way that the learners have a clear pronunciation record to take away? *Think about whether you might just highlight one or two sounds, or record the whole word.*

For some of the Phonology tasks, I provided an audio file to help the teacher-user who might find it difficult to produce the correct intonation or word stress themselves if they are not confident with working with phonology. I also provided a link to a site with the phonemic chart on it to help teachers with the sounds tasks, and a phonemic chart in the appendix which they can refer to if they do not have access to the Internet at the time they are doing the materials.

#### **4.4.5 Making the context of an activity clear, or encouraging teacher-users to consider context.**

We often tell our learners, and trainee teachers, that context is key. I was conscious of this in my initial designing of my tasks. I believe context to be particularly key in self study materials as the teacher is not therefore to clarify or provide extra context should the teacher-user need it. Thus I have chosen, for example, to put extracts of teacher-learner interaction in the tasks, as I have done in Part 2, Task 1 of the Vocabulary Materials (see Appendix 2, p.6). I have also asked the teacher-user to find examples of collocations in a text (Part 4 Task 1; see Appendix 2, p.19), so they could see the language in its original context.

However, in my initial drafts it was pointed out to me by my supervisor that for some tasks more context was needed to help the teacher-user to understand and do the task. This might have involved adding an example of teacher-learner interaction as in the case of a task in the Vocabulary Materials dealing with incidental vocabulary.

The original task was a simple explanation of what incidental language consists of, followed by a reflection task:

#### **Part 5**

##### **Dealing with incidental language.**

Incidental language can often come up in a lesson. For example, in a lesson on freetime activities, you might ask students to come up with five things that people like to do in their freetime in the town/city where you all live. When preparing students to read a text on exams, you might get them to think of things you should/shouldn't do before and during an exam. This kind of task can bring up examples of vocabulary which you might think useful to focus on for the other learners in the class. Alternatively, a learner might ask you for a word they don't know. This vocabulary might be considered even more important than what you or the coursebook have chosen to teach them as it is language that comes from them or which they need to express themselves.

##### **Reflection task**

*Think about the last lesson you taught.*

What incidental vocabulary came up?

How did it come up?

Did you highlight it for the rest of the class? Why did you decide to do this/not to do this?

What aspects of the item did you focus on? Did you check meaning? Did you drill it? Did you record it on the board?

However, it was suggested to me that putting an example of teacher-learner interaction might "sharpen the focus" of the task, and make it clearer to the teacher-user. The final task is as follows:

#### **Part 5**

##### **Dealing with incidental language.**

Incidental language can often come up in a lesson. For example, in a lesson on freetime activities, you might ask students to come up with five things that people like to do in their freetime in the town/city where you all live. When preparing students to read a text on exams, you might get them to think of things you should/shouldn't do before and during an exam. This kind of task can bring up examples of vocabulary which you might think useful to focus on for the other learners in the

class. Alternatively, a learner might ask you for a word they don't know. This vocabulary might be considered even more important than what you or the coursebook have chosen to teach them as it is language that comes from them or which they need to express themselves.

### Task 1

a) Consider the following example from an upper-intermediate class.

In preparation for the learners reading a text on homelessness, the teacher has asked the learners to discuss the following questions in pairs:

*Imagine a typical homeless person in your country:*

- What age, sex and nationality might they be?*
- What reasons might have caused them to become homeless?*
- What might the government, religious groups or charities do to try and help them?*

Look at this example of teacher-learner interaction in part of the feedback to this task and consider how well the teacher exploits the incidental vocabulary which comes up.

Teacher: OK, so now let's think about the second question. What reasons did you think of?

Learner 1: Alcohol or drugs, maybe they are addict, maybe alcoholic.

Teacher: Great. Another reason?

Learner 2: Maybe nature problems like a tsunami or earthquake.

Teacher. Yes, good. Anything else?

Learner 3: Maybe war made them homeless, like a refugiado.

Teacher. Yes, a refugee. Well done. Any more?

Learner 2: Maybe they lost their job or got divorced.

Teacher. Well done. Lots of really good reasons. Now let's move on to the next question.

b) Why might you decide **not** to focus on a particular item of vocabulary which comes up in a lesson, but simply just acknowledge it and move on?

## **Part 2**

### **Reflection task**

*Think about the last lesson you taught.*

What incidental vocabulary came up?

How did it come up?

Did you highlight it for the rest of the class? Why did you decide to do this/not to do this?

What aspects of the item did you focus on? Did you check meaning? Did you drill it? Did you record it on the board?

Another example of making context clear was with the Grammar Materials where I was asking the teacher to consider how certain grammar structures might not fit the rules we often teach our learners. I wanted to do this as we only have 4 or 5 language awareness sessions on a CELTA course and often are not able to cover more than the basics of tenses and modality. As pointed out by my tutor, many of the examples I had chosen do not fit the rules found in coursebooks because they are examples of informal spoken English and that this task might be tricky for non-native speakers. He suggested that asking the teacher-user to think of a context in which these utterances might occur could help them with the task and I feel this was an effective addition to make.

#### **4.4.6 The importance of clear and helpful answer keys.**

I tried hard to make the answer keys clear and helpful. As Rowntree writes (1990; 35) "the relevance and helpfulness of your feedback can make all the difference to how satisfying the learners find your activities and how likely they are to keep doing them". My answer keys are intended to provide suggested or actual answers to tasks, with the tasks clearly signposted so that the teacher-user does not have to keep scrolling back up or cross-referencing back to the task to ensure they were in the correct part of the answer key. I used italics to keep examples separate from explanations and bold type to make answers clear when they are given within the task, as in Part 3 of the Grammar Materials where the teacher-user has to identify the features

of spoken English in a text (see below).

## Grammar Materials

### Part 3

#### Features of Spoken English

##### Task 1 & 2

Please note: the number in brackets refers to the number of each feature in the table in task 2.

A: **Anyway** (3 discourse marker), **got** (7 ellipsis) to go now.

B: Really? **Where to?** (10 follow up Q)

A: I've got this **sort of** (4 vague language) meeting to go to. **Not** (7 ellipsis) sure what it's about.

B: **A sort of what?** (9 echo Q)

A: Meeting. It's with Peter and Jane. About the new project. I'm not really looking forward to it. I like Jane, but **Peter** (2 header) I really find hard work.

B: Yeah, I know what you mean. I'm not that keen on him either, **Peter** (1 tail). And meetings (2 header), **erm**, (12 filler) **well** (3 discourse marker) I just find them really boring. Can't you say you're busy or something?

A: Nah, **don't** (7 ellipsis) think I can get out of this one. **Still** (3 discourse marker), **gets** (7 ellipsis) me out of doing that report for you, **doesn't it?** (5 Q tag)

B: **Report?** (9 Echo Q) Oh, the Cauldwell one. I'd forgotten about that. Doug's gonna kill me if I don't get it in on time. Just send me what you've got, **will you?** (6 directive tag) **Soon** (7 ellipsis) as you can.

A: **Will** (7 ellipsis) do. **By the way** (3 discourse marker), **looks** (7 ellipsis) good, **that new pub** (1 tail) that's opened down the road, **doesn't it?** (5 Q tag) Maybe we could try it out after work.

B: **New pub?** (9 echo Q) **Haven't** (7 ellipsis) noticed that. **Definitely** (8 adverb). Count me in. I'll need a drink if Doug catches up with me. Good luck at the meeting!

A: **Meeting?** (9 echo Q) **Oh no**. (11 interjection). It's about to start and I still need to grab my laptop **and stuff** (4 vague language). **Better** (7 ellipsis) go. **Er** (filler 12), **see** (7 ellipsis) you in the pub **ish** (4 vague language). And tell James, **will you?** (6 directive tag) He's always up for a drink, **James** (1 tail).

B: **Will** (7 ellipsis) do. Bye....

I also used bold to highlight key terminology, as in the example here from a task on text-level analysis (Grammar Materials, Part 4).

In this task, you have been asked to analyse a text for a number of features: the function of different words/phrases within it; the function of the grammar structures within it; how the

writer has made it connect and flow as an overall piece of text (**cohesion**). This is often called **discourse analysis**.

I have tried to make sure that these key terms are always explained and that I have been consistent in my use of terminology, as recommended by Lewis (op. cit) and Rowntree (op. cit).

Lewis also talks of the need for feedback which "talks through" the answers and discusses why answers are correct. I have tried to do this in my answer keys, trying to imagine what questions trainees might ask me if it were a face-to-face session. An example of this is my feedback for Part 2, Task 2.1 in the Vocabulary Materials, where the teacher-user is asked to analyse an extract of classroom interaction where a teacher is checking understanding of a vocabulary item and evaluate how well the teacher does this:

## **Part 2**

### **Task 1**

*Search for* is not quite the same as *look for*. Very few words have direct synonyms, so it might be less misleading to ask learners to give you a *similar word*, rather than a *synonym*. Often words can have a similar meaning, but it is still important for the teacher to make important differences in meaning clear. A more effective procedure might have been:

Teacher: Look at this example: John was searching for his keys. Can anyone give me a similar word to *search for*?

Learner: *Look for*

Teacher: Excellent. But what's the difference between *look for* and *search for*?

(Learners seem unsure)

Teacher: If I *search for my keys*, do I **really** need to find them, in a hurry?

Learner 2: Yes, *search for* is stronger

Teacher: Good, and do I look like this? (demonstrates looking vaguely around) or like this? (rum mages in bag, moves things to look in a more urgent way).

Learner 3: the second way

Teacher; Yes, *search for* something means you are looking much harder, perhaps you're a bit desperate. Why is John searching for his keys rather than just looking for them?

Learner 4: Maybe he's late for work.

Teacher: Good

Learner 5: Maybe he's already looked in the normal places.

Teacher: Good.

In this example, the teacher works much harder to make sure the learners have a good understanding of the meaning of search for. Sometimes it's hard to convey the meaning of words that seem quite similar, but aren't, or which may be false friends in the learners' L1.

The next task will help you to think about how to do this.

Some of the answer keys also have a synthesis of relevant information from methodology sources. An example of this is the learner training section of the Vocabulary Materials (Part 6: see Appendix 2, pp.33-38), which brings together ideas and theories related to aspects of vocabulary learning from *How to Teach Vocabulary* (Thornbury 2002) and *Working with Words* (Gairns & Redman 1986), such as the importance of recording vocabulary effectively on the board, and the value of memory aids such as mnemonics in memorising vocabulary. The Grammar Materials have a section which asks the teacher-user to consider the possible criticisms of PPP and how we might address them (Part 2: see Appendix 1 pp.27-29), with ideas taken from Scott Thornbury's blog <http://scottthornbury.wordpress.com> and *The Practice of English Language Teaching*, (Harmer 2007). Busy novice teachers often do not have time to read several methodology books on a topic, nor might they have access to them so I have tried to provide a useful and relevant synthesis of information related to the task from reliable sources written by key figures in the world of ELT.

## **4.5 Other considerations**

### **4.5.1 Introducing new teaching ideas**

From my experience of teacher-training in general, I have learnt that teachers always appreciate being introduced to new ideas for their teaching. This may be even more helpful for newly-qualified teachers as they may not have many teaching ideas in their repertoire. Ideas and activities for teaching form part of CELTA input sessions, but we have limited time for this as we also need to cover key aspects of methodology. I have included teaching ideas in all the materials, but particularly in the Vocabulary and Phonology Materials. With each set, I have asked the teachers either to evaluate them (as in Part 4 Task 2 of the Vocabulary Materials: see Appendix 2, pp.20-22), or to match them as appropriate activities to areas of language previously analysed (eg Part 3, Task 2 of the Phonology Materials; see Appendix 3, pp.13-14), thus serving the dual purpose of introducing some new ideas for classroom activities, and either getting the teacher-user to think critically about their effectiveness, or to consolidate previous learning.

### **4.5.2 Wanting the materials to stand on their own**

I wanted the materials to stand alone, so that the learners would not need to have access to anything else in order to do them. Although I have included links to online resources, these are not essential for the completion of the tasks. I was aware that there are many possibilities for the inclusion of other media and online resources in the materials and that this might have advantages in terms of variety and catering for different learning styles. However, I wanted the materials to be accessible to anyone. Although the teacher-users need a computer to receive the materials, they can then print them and do them anywhere, even if they don't have regular access to a computer or a good Internet connection. An example of this is the sounds chart for

use in Part 3 of the Phonology Materials, where I provided a link to an online Phonemic Chart which I think is particularly useful as the teachers can press on individual sounds and hear them. Conscious that at the moment the teacher-user wanted to do the materials, they might not have access to the Internet, I also provided a chart in the appendix to the materials. This chart includes an example word for each sound so that the teacher can have help identifying the different sounds if they are not completely familiar with them.

## **4.6 Conclusion**

In this section I have outlined my rationale for designing the materials, based on my beliefs as a teacher and teacher trainer; principles for designing materials in general and ones which take into consideration the particular nature of self-study materials, and what I perceive to be the needs of newly CELTA-qualified teachers. In the next section I will consider the importance of user and peer feedback, and how feedback I received has led to certain changes in the materials.

## **Part 5**

### **Revising the material in the light of feedback**

#### **5.1 The importance of feedback and my sample group**

Jolly and Bolitho (op.cit; 129) emphasise the importance of trialling and evaluation for materials to be successful. "Learners are the users of materials and we have to heed their opinions and listen to their feedback". They cite several case studies which show the process of revising materials in the light of user feedback. My materials were sent out to 30 trainees who had completed a Nile CELTA course between May 2012 and March 2013. These were the same trainees who had completed the questionnaires indicating which areas they felt would be most useful, plus a small group of trainees who finished a course I had worked on in March 2013 and

expressed an interest in trialling the materials for me. This number of trainees fits with the sample size of 20-30 which Rowntree (op. cit) recommends for developmental testing of materials. I sent the materials to these teachers in April and May 2013.

I also sent the materials to the same group of fellow CELTA trainers who had completed the initial questionnaires which helped me to choose the topics for my materials, and some participants on the Materials Development Module of the Nile-University of Chichester MAPDLE course, in order to obtain some peer feedback. I asked these fellow teachers and trainers to complete a questionnaire on the materials which can be found in Appendix 6.

## **5.2 User Feedback**

Unfortunately, I was able to obtain only a very small sample of user feedback. When I sent out a questionnaire in August to find out why they had not completed the feedback (see Appendix 7) three former CELTA trainees responded to say that they were not currently working in English Language Teaching and a further two cited lack of time as they had been teaching full-time from the moment they finished the course. I unfortunately received no reply from the others. One former trainee did complete most of the materials and gave me quite detailed feedback on the Grammar and Phonology Materials. A second did one section of the Grammar Materials and once again, gave me detailed feedback on this section.

### **5.2.3 User Feedback on the Grammar Materials**

With the Grammar Materials, the first respondent found the instructions clear or very clear and the answer keys useful. She found the tasks useful overall and I was pleased to hear that some of the tasks would influence her future teaching, for example encouraging her to try out some materials she had seen in coursebooks or even prepared herself on the features of spoken English, but had never used (Grammar Materials, Part 3: see Appendix 1, pp.14-17). Other

tasks such as Part 2 (see Appendix 1, pp. 6-7) she felt had improved her language awareness but was not sure she would impart this knowledge to learners who were still "stuck" on the basics. A comment she made was that the concept of aspect wasn't clear to her and this was reflected in feedback I received from an experienced CELTA trainer who also looked at the materials. I therefore included a simple definition of aspect in Part 1 of the Grammar Materials (see Appendix 1, p.3).

The second respondent completed Part 2 of the Grammar Materials. He sent me detailed feedback on his views of PPP and how it fits into his teaching. He found the instructions clear and the material useful "because it made me consider the limitations of the PPP method as well as how to overcome it". He states that he will refer back to it when planning future lessons. Some of his answers made me realise that some of the points for consideration when thinking about the criticisms of the PPP method were rather too brief and needed expansion to be clearer. For example, one of the points for consideration was *learner choice about what happens in the classroom*, which he understood as learners "designing their own lessons", whereas I was hoping the teacher-user would think more along the lines of the learners choosing which grammar items are focussed on in class. Thus I have expand some of these bullet points to make them clearer.

#### **5.2.4 User Feedback on the Phonology Materials**

The respondent who completed most of the materials stated that in her email to me that she found these materials "a valuable exercise. I learnt a lot. Thanks!". This is reflected in her feedback task, where she describes tasks as "very useful", with "clear", "very clear" or "perfectly clear" instructions and "very useful" answer keys. In terms of how it might influence her future teaching, some aspects, such as greater knowledge of word stress patterns, she was pleased to learn more about as she felt she could address it more effectively when she needed to. Some suggested techniques she already used herself, such as marking tricky phonemes on words

and referring to them when correcting errors, and encouraging students to find rhyming words or note down their own phonemic transcripts of words. She found the section on Connected Speech more challenging and felt she would need to spend more time on this. I have referred her to Sound Foundations (Underhill 2005); English Pronunciation in Use Advanced (Hewings 2007) and the BBC World Service Learning English website as they all have clear sections on aspects of Connected Speech.

### **5.2.5 Acknowledging the Need for More User Feedback**

I realise that my materials need more user feedback so that I can make them even more user-friendly and effective. I think that some of the former CELTA trainees who I sent my materials to may have felt intimidated by the initial layout of the materials, which is borne out by comments from some of my peers ("the layout is too cramped - it makes it hard to focus on the task"), and the number of tasks. However, when I designed the materials I wanted to include something for everyone with the idea that the materials could be dipped into, without the necessity of doing all the tasks or doing them in any particular order. I have now tried to make this clearer in the introduction to the materials and have provided an overview of the tasks and their aims to make navigation around the materials easier. To differentiate the tasks from the answer keys, I have used icons and blue headings in the answer keys so that the user can find the relevant parts more easily. I have also made greater use of white space to make them visually less dense. The idea also was that they could be done over a long period and the teachers have only had them for a few months, so I have made it clear that feedback on any tasks which the teacher-users complete in the future will still be very helpful. I hope to continue to receive such feedback to continue to improve the materials.

### 5.3 Peer feedback

With the group of CELTA trainers and MA students, I was able to get more feedback, with 4 sets of feedback on the Grammar and Phonology Materials and 5 on the Vocabulary Grammar Materials. The trainers were asked to rate each category from 1-4 (1= I don't agree, 4 = I agree strongly) for each task (see questionnaires in Appendix 6). The results of this feedback are presented in the following tables. The scores shown are an average of all the scores given.

#### Grammar Materials

Results from 4 sets of feedback. (See Appendix 6 for original questionnaire). For Part 2, the scores are for 2 sets of feedback only as two respondents gave feedback, but no scores for this part.

Task	Clarity of instructions	Appropriate level of challenge	How far the task achieves its aim	How useful it is for novice teachers	How clear and helpful the answer keys are
Part 1	3.5	2.5	3	2.75	3.5
Part 2	3.5	2.75	3	3	3.75
Part 3	3.5	3.75	3.5	3.5	3
Part 4	3.5	3.25	3.75	3.75	3.75
Part 5	4	4	4	4	3.5

#### Vocabulary Materials

Results from 4 sets of feedback as one respondent completed the user, not the trainer, feedback task. (See Appendix 6 for original questionnaire). Scores in final column are from three sets of feedback only as one respondent did not give an assessment for the answer keys.

<b>Task</b>	<b>Clarity of instructions</b>	<b>Appropriate level of challenge</b>	<b>How far the task achieves its aim</b>	<b>How useful it is for novice teachers</b>	<b>How clear and helpful the answer keys are</b>
Part 1	3.5	3	3.5	3	3.33
Part 2	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.67
Part 3	3.25	3.75	3.5	3.5	3.67
Part 4	3.25	3.63	3.25	3.75	3.67
Part 5	3.25	3.75	3.75	3.25	3.33
Part 6	3.5	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.33

### **Phonology Materials**

Results from 4 sets of feedback. (See Appendix 6 for original questionnaire).

<b>Task</b>	<b>Clarity of instructions</b>	<b>Appropriate level of challenge</b>	<b>How far the task achieves its aim</b>	<b>How useful it is for novice teachers</b>	<b>How clear and helpful the answer keys are</b>
Part 1	3.75	3.75	3.5	3.5	3.5
Part 2	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5
Part 3	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5	3.5
Part 4	3.5	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75
Part 5	3.5	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75

It was very encouraging to get some very positive feedback from my peers, who described different tasks as "well-designed and thought-provoking" (Grammar Materials Part 4: see Appendix 1, pp.22-23); "nicely staged" (Grammar Materials Part 3: see Appendix 1, pp.14-17); "very clear" (Phonology Materials Part 5: see Appendix 3, pp.34-38) and "with potential for a positive influence on teacher's thinking and teaching" (Vocabulary Materials Part 6: see Appendix 2, pp.33-38), as well as commenting "I really liked this bit" (Phonology Materials Part 4: see Appendix, pp. 25-31).

These tasks have a number of common features. Many of them use a guided discovery approach to encourage the teacher-user to draw their own conclusions about different areas of language awareness and teaching. They also include reflection tasks which encourage the teacher-user to think about raising awareness of different features of language or areas of language teaching with their learners and finally, some of them ask the teacher-user to analyse or evaluate classroom activities which might do this. Perhaps therefore a conclusion might be drawn that these are some key features of an effective self-study task.

The suggestions for improvement contained in the questionnaires were extremely useful in helping me to improve the materials. As well as the comments on the need to make the layout more user friendly which I was able to address as described in section 5.2.4, one trainer pointed out the constant scrolling up and down as the answer keys were at the end of the materials. I have now put the answer keys at the end of each section of the materials. I am aware that this makes it more tempting to go straight to the answer key, especially where the sections are short, but these are the minority and for most sections, the answer keys are sufficiently far down not to be visible immediately to the user.

There were also some inconsistencies in the naming of tasks between the tasks and answer keys, which I have now amended. Some instructions, hints and examples were not as clear as they could be and I have tried to make these clearer. For example, in the Vocabulary Materials the third description of how to focus on vocabulary in the classroom was not clear at all to one of the MA students and this meant she couldn't complete the task (Part 1, Example C: see Appendix 2, p.3). I have expanded the description to make it clearer. In Part 3 of the Grammar Materials (see Appendix 1, pp.14-17), I had provided an optional task of adding examples to a table, but had not presented the answers in the same format in the answer key, which two respondents highlighted and which I have now addressed. I tried to make one of the hints in the Phonology Materials clearer (Part 1 Task 2: see Appendix 3, p.6 ) as I completely agreed with one of my fellow trainers that it was not very helpful.

Interestingly, but not surprisingly, sometimes the feedback was conflicting. A non-native speaker teacher who finished her CELTA a year ago thought that the language awareness tasks at the beginning of the Grammar Materials (Part 1 and 2: see Appendix 1, pp.3-4 and 6-7) were too easy, whereas two experienced trainers thought that parts of Part 1 where the user has to think about the common features of the continuous and perfect aspect were "too open" and needed more scaffolding. One of these trainers also thought that many novice teachers would struggle with Part 2 where they are asked to think about how certain examples of spoken English don't fit the rules we often teach our learners. This has resulted in low scores for the level of challenge of these two tasks which can be seen in the results table below. I agree with the first respondent that for a non-native speaker teacher Part 1 is not really challenging but for many of our native speakers CELTA trainees, language awareness is often a weak area and believe that they would benefit from a basic review of tenses. Overall, I believe there is a balance of tasks in the materials which means they will be useful for both native and non-native speaker teachers.

In order to respond to the comments of the trainers mentioned above, for Part 1, on the excellent suggestion of one trainer, I have provided examples of the relevant sentences from the previous section to help the user see the common aspects more easily. I feel this provides more support and a more focussed task. The same trainer also suggested some guiding questions to help the user for Part 2, which I have provided as hints for those who feel they need it, thus keeping the task a challenge for those who have greater language awareness, while providing a way of guiding other users to the answer, to avoid their going straight to the answer key.

Two trainers thought that one of the Phonology tasks (Part 1 Task 2: see Appendix 3, p.6), an "odd-one-out" task where the teacher-user was asked to identify words in a set which do not have the same word stress as the others were rather tricky, even with hints, whereas two others found it to be achievable for the teacher-user. I have decided not to change it as I believe that with the hints, it is challenging but within the capabilities of a novice teacher.

When it came to the Vocabulary Materials, an experienced CELTA trainer thought that the answer keys to Tasks 2 & 3 (see Appendix 2, pp.8-12 and 15-16) had a lot of information and "you would have to be very conscientious to read it all" whereas one of the MAPDLE students described them as "elaborate and useful". Thus, I have chosen to leave them as they are so that there is enough information for those users who appreciate a detailed answer key, while others can pick out the bits they find most relevant.

## **Conclusion**

This has been a long journey for me, but one which I have benefited enormously from. The background reading I have done has helped me to reflect even further on different approaches to teaching, my own guiding principles and my language awareness. I feel I have identified a need for a self-contained pack of materials for independent study, which newly CELTA teachers can use to continue their professional development after their course, in their own time and according what they feel they need. However, judging from my lack of user feedback, perhaps there is a lack of awareness of this need among such teachers, or perhaps novice teachers are too busy at the beginning of their careers to find the time to do such materials. Given the importance of good language awareness of the grammar, vocabulary and phonology of the English Language and how to help learners with these areas in the classroom, plus the limited time available on a CELTA course to cover these areas in depth, I feel it could be helpful for institutions who employ newly-qualified CELTA teachers to make such materials available to novice teachers. This could be for self-study, perhaps with some individual time with a mentor or teacher trainer, or in in-service workshops. I believe that this could in turn help prepare them for later DELTA or MA studies.

I have designed my materials based on my experience and beliefs as a trainer and I feel I have been able to respond to the peer and user feedback I have received to make the materials more effective. As stated in section 5.3.5, I am aware that my materials need greater user feedback, but I hope to get this in time from the former trainees who already have my materials and from

teachers who continue to gain a CELTA qualification at Nile, to whom I will offer them. In the meantime, I have used some of the tasks in my general teacher training and the teachers have found them to be useful. I hope that they will be useful to many novice teachers to come.

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