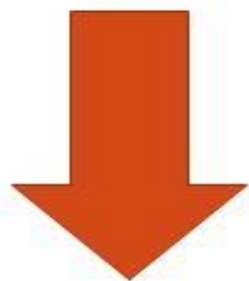


**What exactly are we
teaching?**

Is 'in-the-head'
knowledge
sufficient?

Language Systems



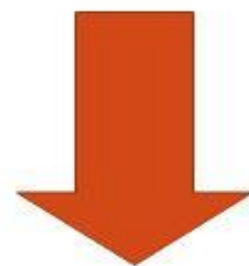
Lexis

Grammar

Discourse

Phonology

Language Skills



Speaking, Writing

Productive Skills

Reading, Listening

Receptive Skills

Language systems

We can analyse a sentence such as *Pass me the book* in different ways.

We could consider:

- the sounds (**phonology**);
- the meaning of the individual words or groups of words (**lexis or vocabulary**);
- how the words interact with each other within the sentence (**grammar**);
- the use to which the words are put in particular situations (**function**).

Phonological	<p>/pɑ:s mi: ðə 'buk/ or /pæs mi: hə 'buk/</p> <p>The stress is probably on <i>book</i>, but also possible (with different meanings) on <i>Pass</i> or <i>me</i>.</p> <p>The words <i>me</i> and <i>the</i> probably have a weak vowel sound.</p>
Lexical	<p><i>Pass</i> = give; hand over; present</p> <p><i>me</i> = reference to speaker</p> <p><i>the book</i> = object made of paper, containing words and/or pictures and conveying information</p>
Grammatical	Verb (imperative) + first person object pronoun + definite article + noun
Functional	A request or order
Discoursal	<p>Although not a direct transparent answer to the request, we can still draw a meaning from this reply. The word <i>it</i>, referring to <i>the book</i>, helps us to make a connection to the request. Assuming that Mary's put it in her bag is intended as a genuine response to the request, it may suggest a reason why the book cannot be passed (eg I can't because Mary took the book with her). In order to fully understand the meaning, we would need to know more about the situational context (ie who is talking, where, etc.) and more about the surrounding conversation (ie what knowledge is assumed to be known or shared between the speakers).</p>

- 1 the construction *can* + pronoun
- 2 the meaning of *play* and *guitar*
- 3 variations, eg strong /kæn ju:/ vs weak /kæn jə/, stress on *guitar*, etc.
- 4 asking about ability
- 5 typical question-and-reply sequences containing this language

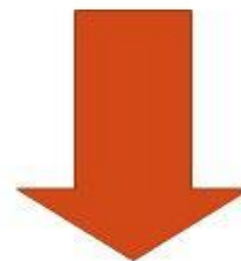
- a function
- b discourse
- c lexis
- d grammar
- e pronunciation

Example: *house* compared to *flat* = L (lexical)

- 1 *I went to Paris* compared to *I've been to Paris*
- 2 *Lend us a fiver* compared to *Could you possibly lend me £5?*
- 3 *library* compared to *bookshop*
- 4 *woman* compared to *women*
- 5 *Sorry* compared to *Excuse me*
- 6 *hut* compared to *hat*
- 7 *impotent* compared to *important*
- 8 *some* compared to *any*

‘up-the-head’ knowledge

Language Skills



Speaking, Writing

Productive Skills

Reading, Listening

Receptive Skills

Consider briefly how you listen to the radio weather forecast in your own language. What would be different if you listened to one in a foreign language that you have been studying for a year or so?

- 1 A 24-year-old Japanese learner has studied grammar at school for nine years; she can read and understand even complex texts well. She has arrived in England to take a two-week intensive course. In her placement test (which was mainly multiple-choice grammar questions), she scored very well, but at the initial interview, she had trouble answering even simple questions about herself and often haltingly asked the interviewer to repeat the question.
- 2 A group of three undergraduate science students have enrolled for an English course at a language school in the Czech Republic. They know no English at all.

If we start using English in class to do more than simple mechanical drills, then the subject matter becomes anything that we might do with language, any topic that might be discussed with English, any feelings that might be expressed in English, any communication that we might give or receive using English. The people who use the language in class, and their feelings, are, therefore, also part of the subject matter. This might be a little daunting and may lead you to keep the uses of language in class at a more mechanical, impersonal level, without allowing too much 'dangerous' personal investment in what is said or heard. This seems sad to me; I believe that we need to give our students chances to feel and think and express themselves in their new language.

	Mainly systems	Mainly skills
1 You write a grammar exercise on the board which learners copy and then do.		
2 Learners read a newspaper article and then discuss the story with each other.		
3 Learners underline all past simple verb forms in a newspaper article.		
4 Learners chat with you about the weekend.		
5 Learners write an imaginary postcard to a friend, which you then correct.		
6 Learners write a postcard to a friend, which is posted uncorrected.		
7 You use pictures to teach ten words connected with TV.		
8 You say 'What tenses do these people use?' Learners then listen to a recorded conversation.		
9 You say 'Where are these people?' Learners then listen to a recorded conversation.		