

ROUTLEDGE INTRODUCTIONS  
TO APPLIED LINGUISTICS



# Exploring English Language Teaching Language in Action

Graham Hall

## 1 The language classroom

### Roles, relationships and interactions

The classroom is the crucible – the place where teachers and learners come together and language learning, we hope, happens.

(Allwright and Bailey, 1991: 18, citing Gaies, 1980)

This chapter will:

- consider the social as well as pedagogic character of English language teaching classrooms;
- explore how teachers assume a variety of roles in class, and investigate how these roles may affect language learning and ‘classroom life’;
- investigate how patterns of classroom interaction, including teacher and learner talk, error and error treatment and teachers’ questions,

SERIES EDITORS:  
Ronald Carter and Guy Cook

After reading, choose **two** of the questions below.

Write about half a page answer for each question (around 500 words total).

Refer to content in the reading, your own opinions, and your experiences.

**Due Week 3**  
**Reading 1 - Reading Questions**

**The Language Classroom: Roles, Relationships and interactions**

from *Exploring English Language Teaching* by Hall

The reading starts on the next page. After reading, choose **two** of the questions below.

Write about half a page answer for each question (around 500 words total).

Refer to content in the reading, your own opinions, and your experiences.

- What was the most interesting topic in this reading? Explain the topic and your thoughts.
- What are your beliefs about the ideas that ‘errors in the language classroom should be corrected as soon as they are made’?
- What are your beliefs about the ideas that ‘getting learners to work in pairs or groups is the most effective way of promoting learning in the ELT classroom’?
- What is/are the most appropriate role(s) for the teacher and learners in the L2 classroom?
- How much should teachers and learners talk in class? How can a teacher attain the right balance?



## Question examples

How much should teachers and learners talk in class? How can a teacher attain the right balance?

Have you ever experienced difficulties in the classroom or adjusted your teaching 'style' and the roles you enact to accommodate the beliefs of others (e.g., learners, managers, parents)?

What is the difference between an 'error' and a 'mistake'? Do you recognize this difference from your own experience (as a teacher or as a language learner)?

# **The language classroom**

- Roles of teachers and students
- Relationships between teachers and students
- Interactions between teachers-students and students-students

“The classroom is the crucible – the place where teachers and learners come together and language learning, we hope, happens.”

\* **Crucible** (noun) a place or situation in which forces interact to cause or influence change or development

This chapter will:

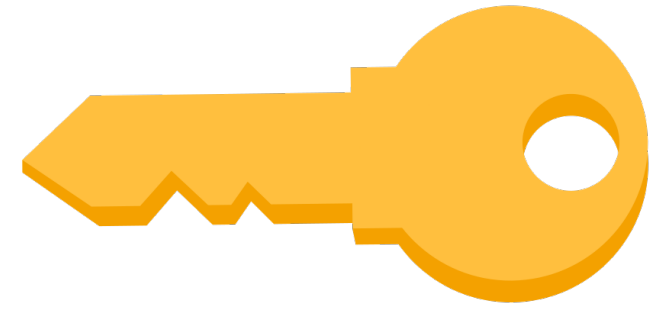
- consider the social as well as pedagogic character of English language teaching classrooms
- explore how teachers assume a variety of roles in class, and investigate how these roles may affect language learning and 'classroom life'

\* **Pedagogy** (noun) the method and practice of teaching

This chapter will:

- investigate how patterns of classroom interaction, including teacher and learner talk, error and error treatment and teachers' questions, may affect opportunities for language learning
- encourage readers to reflect on their own beliefs and classroom practices, while acknowledging possible alternatives.

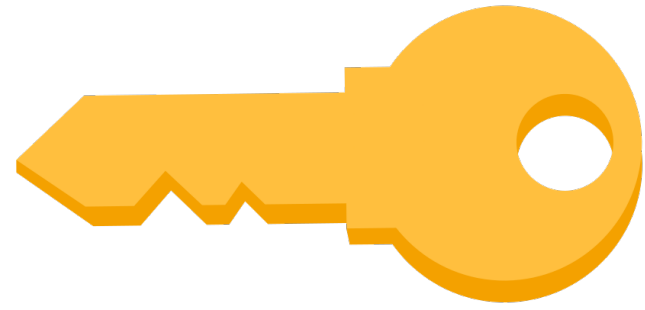
## Key parts



- Classrooms are social environments
- Beliefs and expectations affect classroom practices and behavior
- Classrooms are diverse and complex
- Each classroom is unique
- Theories inform actions, actions inform theories. (Not always in sync!)

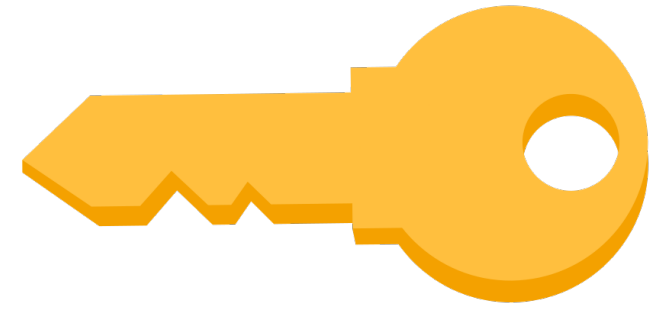


## Key parts



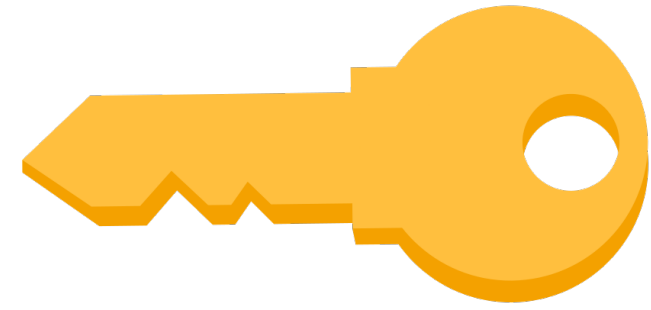
- 'Teaching from the front' vs. group-based discovery activities
- Teachers must change roles
- Balance both social and pedagogic purposes
- A teacher is controller, prompter, participant, resource, tutor, instructor, organizer, evaluator, guide, resource and manager

## Key parts



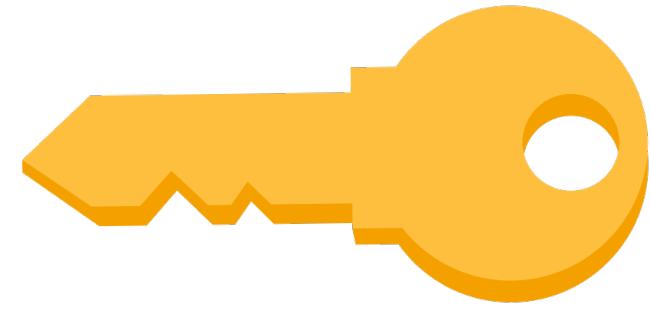
- Teachers do not cause learning *directly*; instead they provide the conditions for learning to take place
- *Teacher talk* is the language teachers typically use in the L2 classroom
- Teacher talking time (TTT) and student talking time (STT) - what is the balance?
- TTT for input, examples, comprehension
- STT for practice and production

## Key parts



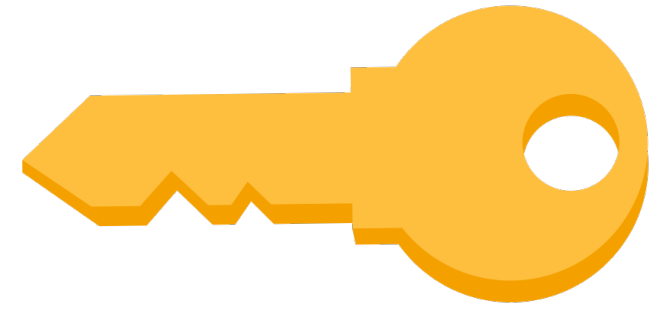
- Teacher questions help teachers elicit information, check learners' understanding and keep learners' attention
- The use of appropriate questioning strategies requires an understanding of the *function* of a question in relation to what is being taught

# Key parts



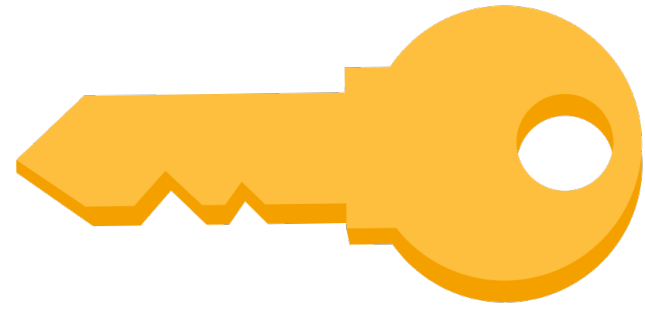
- Explanations **don't** always = learning
- Deductive = teacher explains
- Inductive = guiding learners to discovery
- Effective explanations require the active engagement of learners in processing new information and linking it to old information
- Effective explanations neither over-explain nor under-explain the issue.

# Key parts



- Making mistakes is a part of learning
- Errors are systematic and related to the learners' development
- Mistakes are in the moment ~  
“performance error”
- Errors should be evaluated on significance (affect meaning?)

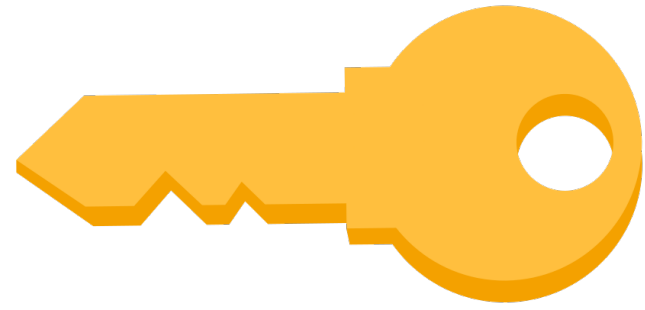
## Key parts



- Error correction may depend on the step within the lesson
- Learner self-correction, help from classmates, teacher explanation, or teacher reformulation (repeating back the correct form)
- Avoid learner embarrassment and maintain classroom rapport



## Key parts



- Initiation-Response-Feedback (IRF)

*Teacher: Now, who wrote a play called Romeo and Juliet?*

*Learner: William Shakespeare.*

*Teacher: Shakespeare. Yes, that's right. Does anyone know any other plays that Shakespeare wrote?*

Suggestions:

Encourage Ss to ask and respond.

Use group discussions and debates.

# My reflections



Some errors are not important.

# My reflections



Some students don't want to work in groups.

## **My reflections**



Spend some class time having real social interactions.