1. Experiential Learning

Underpinning this material is Kolb's model of experiential learning. This model depicts learning as a cyclic process, in which experience, reflection, abstract conceptualisation and action are integrated. The idea is that theoretical concepts can only be connected to a learner's frame of reference after they have been experienced meaningfully on an emotional level, and so the whole learner needs to be engaged in the learning process, which requires a mixture of left-brain and right-brain activities. These materials contain a balanced mixture of both types. Reflection is an important feature of this process, as it enables learners to bridge the gap between experience and theoretical conceptualisation. The teacher's role is to provide opportunities for this and to guide learners through the cycle.. These materials help enable this by building reflection - on ideas/opinions, on work produced and on activities completed - into the materials at regular intervals in addition to left- and right-brain activities.

Further reading:

Kohonen, Jaatinen, Kaikkonen and Lehtovaara (2001) **Experiential Learning in Foreign Language Education.** *Pearson Education Limited. Harlow.*

2. Text-driven framework

This framework favours activities that encourage affective and cognitive engagement, both of which are considered significant in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research. The text-driven framework enables learners to respond holistically, affectively and multidimensionally to a text, before they are required to learn something lingustic from it.

These materials ask learners to imagine, to draw, to mime, to act, to personalise or to connect a given text with their own experience, at various points in the reading section of a unit. Initial speaking tasks are what Tomlinson would call readiness activities, preparing learners to meet the text by activating their own personal experience of the topic, which should help them subseqently to connect with the content of a text. Learners are also given an "initial response" activity to do while reading or listening, typically a visualisation activity. Response to the text is then developed and articulated. It is only after this that learners tackle "input response" activities which focus learners on specific linguistic, discoursal or stylistic features of the text.

Further reading:

Tomlinson, B (2003) **Developing Principled Frameworks** *in Developing Materials for Language Learning. Tomlinson B. (ed) Continuum. London.*

3. Task-based Learning (TBL)

The TBL framework developed from a strong approach to communicative language learning. For a language learning activity to be considered a task, as defined by this approach, there are four main criteria that should be met:

- the primary focus must be on meaning
- there should be an information or opinion gap
- learners should be largely reliant on their own resources, both linguistic and non-linguistic.
- there should be a clearly defined non-linguistic outcome.

Tasks differ from situational grammar exercises in purpose and focus, with the latter stipulating a linguistic purpose, with focus on form, while the former stipulates a non-linguistic outcome, with focus on meaning. There is no evidence that the mainstream PPP

(Presentation-Practice-Produce), which favours use of situational grammar exercises, leads to acquisition. TBL, on the other hand, is well supported by SLA theory. However, adopting a TBL approach idoes not preclude focus on form. Tasks can be focused or unfocused, with the former providing learners with the opportunity to communicate using a particular structure, while the latter provide opportunities for using language in general. Focused tasks are not the same as situational grammar exercises, as the former do not reveal the language focus to the learner until after they have done the task, while the latter explicitly request that learners use specific language in order to complete the activity. The language focus in a TBL framework may use a mix of discovery style interpretation activities and consciousness-raising activities. Accurate production of a feature is not expected to be immediate, but by raising awareness of it and allowing learners to experiment with it, it is thought that the process of becoming ready to acquire it is accelerated.

These materials combine TBL and the text-driven approach, to increase flexibility, make better provision for different learning styles and enable more systematic coverage of language than either framework might allow in isolation. In order to suit deductive as well as inductive learners, a Language Reference section is included at the back of the student book, providing extra support for learners who are more comfortable with a deductive approach. You may wish to encourage use of this in class or direct learners to it for homework.

Further reading:

Ellis, R. 2009. **Task-based Language Teaching: sorting out the misunderstandings**. *in International Journal of Applied Linguistics vol. 19. No. 3.*

4. Concordancing

Building and analysing a concordance places learners in the role of researcher. It is often associated with use of corpora, or collections of spoken or written texts, and computers. The ability to notice patterns in language, that analysing a concordance requires, is useful for a language learner to possess, particularly a higher level learner with access to a lot of target language input outside the classroom, but does not

come automatically by dint of studying a language.

These materials help learners to develop this skill by providing scaffolding to guide them through the process. Early in the book, the learners are guided to make very small concordances, using written texts or transcripts of spoken texts, and prompted to notice features of it. As the course progresses, learners will be encouraged to make larger concordances from multiple texts and scaffolding will be gradually removed. Later in the course, learners will be introduced to larger corpora, such as the British National Corpus, and guided to make use of this - first with scaffolding, then increasingly unsupported. Ultimately, the goal is for the learner to be able to slip into the role of researcher, and use this process of creation and analysis of concordances, independently. By being set against a background of experiential activities of various types, the analytical nature of this thread does not disadvantage non-analytical learners but may in fact help them to develop analytical skills, while allowing them opportunities to learn in ways that they find more comfortable and efficient as well.

Further reading:

Willis, J. (2011) **Concordances in the Classroom.** *in Materials Development in Language Teaching. Second Edition. Brian Tomlinson ed. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge.*

8. Metacognition

Some theorists place a lot of importance in the role of metacognition in successful language learning. The premise is that in helping learners increase their awareness of the processes involved in using language, we enable them to be more effective in their deployment of these processes and to be able do this without teacher guidance.

The development of metacognitive awareness is another of the threads that weaves through these materials. The metacognitive approach to listening put forward by Vandergrift and Goh, 2012 (*See Further reading below*) informs the development of learners' listening skills

in the course book and on the Connections language learning website. This approach provides learners with scaffolded learning experiences that help them to develop metacognition.

The table below is taken from **Vandergrift and Goh(2012:99)** *and sets out the developmental objectives for Metacognition.*

Of course, knowledge will not be useful to the learners unless they can deploy it. Therefore, activities that promote use of strategies which contribute to overall listening development are also used.

The table below, also from Vandergrift and Goh (2012:100), sets out these strategies.

Further Reading:
Vandergrift and Goh (2012) **Teaching and learning second language listening.**
Routledge. Oxon.

Person Knowledge

Aim: Develop better knowledge of self as listener

Objectives:
1. Examine personal beliefs about self-efficacy and self-concepts with regard to listening in a second language.
2. Identify listening problems, causes and possible solutions.

Task Knowledge

Aim: Understand nature of L2 listening and demands of learning to listen,

Objectives:
1. Experience mental, affective and social processes involved in listening.
2. Differentiate different types of listening skill (e.g. listening for details, listening for global understanding, listening to infer information)
3. Analzye factors that influence listening performance (e.g. speaker, text, interlocutor, strategy)
4. Compare and evaluate ways to improve listening abilities outside formal instruction.
5. Examine phonological features of spoken texts that influence perceptual processing.

Strategy Knowledge

Aim: Understand roles of cognitive, metacognitive and social-affective strategies.

Objectives:
1. Identify strategies that are appropriate for specific types of listening tasks and problems.
2. Demonstrate use of strategies.
3. Identify strategies that may not be appropriate for learning style or culture.

Planning
Aim: Identify goals and means by which goals can be achieved.

Listening comprehension	• Preview task demands and prepare for listening. • Rehearse language (pronunciation of keywords and phrases) needed for the task. • Consider strategies for coping with personal challenges.
Overall listening development	• Set personal goals for listening development. • Seek appropriate opportunities for listening practice. • Make plans and preparations to address challenges in learning to listen.

Monitoring
Aim: Check progress of efforts during listening and in learning to listen

Listening comprehension	• Check understanding of message by drawing on appropriate sources of knowledge (e.g. context, factual, linguistic) • Check appropriateness and accuracy of understanding against old and new information.
Overall listening development	• Consider progress of listening development in light of what has been planned. • Assess chances of achieving learning goals.

Evaluation	
Aim: Judge progress and success of efforts at listening and learning to listen.	
Listening comprehension	• Determine overall acceptability of understanding and interpretation of message/information. • Check appropriateness and accuracy of undertsanding against old and new information. • Assess the effectiveness of strategies for learning and practice.
Overall listening development	• Assess effectiveness of overall plan to improve listening. • Assess appropriateness of learning goals.

6. Learner Autonomy

There is a strong learner autonomy thread running through these materials. A bit of a buzzword in the ELT industry today, it is important to pin down exactly what is meant by this and how it can benefit these learners. The learners have come to the U.K. and have signed up for a language course. This could be for a number of reasons, commonly including improvement of job prospects and integrating socially. These learners will spend a lot of their time in the English-speaking environment of the U.K., so will potentially be exposed to a lot of input. Conversely, time spent in the classroom will be comparatively brief. Therefore, it is important to help learners become better able to learn outside of the classroom.

These materials embody a social constructivist, experiential theory of learning, where learning is done through making connections with prior experience and through collaboration with others, and within this, the sociocultural approach to learner autonomy fits nicely. This approach to learner autonomy views the goal of autonomy to be participation in a community and places great value on mediated learning. With these materials, Learners are encouraged to learn from each other, from the teacher and from the materials.

It is important to remember the diversity of cultural and learning backgrounds that come together in a multilingual class in the U.K., and this is why a strong methodology, emphasising building on learners current capacities for independent learning and helping them identify what strategies work best for them, is used.

Further reading:
Oxford, (2003) ***Towards a more systemstic model of Learner Autonom*y** *in Learner Autonomy across cultures. Palgrave-Macmillan. Basingstoke.*

7. Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)

One of the recognised drawbacks of a text-driven approach, as opposed to a structurally driven approach, is the difficulty in ensuring systematic coverage of language. However, it is possible to address this issue and maintain systematicity. These materials do this by using the CEFR as a guide to the language and skills that learners at a particular level need and ensuring that these are covered over the course of that level.

Reference is made to the CEFR in the procedural section of the teachers book, to help make this explicit for you, the teacher. Texts have also been analysed by Word Frequency analysis software, www. wordandphrase.info/analyzeText, to ensure that coverage of high frequency words is high and that texts are accessible for learners of a particular level.

Further Reading: North, Ortega and Sheehan ed. ***British Council EQUALS Core Inventory for General English****. British Council.*