Jargon Busting: Key Terms and Concepts

One of the most daunting and bewildering aspects for teachers embarking on a new career as an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teacher is the seemingly endless array of abbreviations and acronyms. Most of these are fairly straightforward concepts, which, for reasons unknown have been shortened into abbreviated form, which is rather odd for a profession committed, in the main, to promoting ‘correct’ English usage. Below is a list of 20 common terms relating largely to the ‘nuts and bolts’ of teaching EFL (we shall explore the grammatical jargon in Unit 7). Familiarise yourself with the list and if planning to work in a specific country it would be advisable to also spend some time reading the additional material (see web link below) on anthropologist Geert Hofstede’s Power Distance Index.

http://www.clearlycultural.com/geert-hofstede-cultural-dimensions/power-distance-index/

1. **PDI - Power Distance Index.** Knowing how your host country’s culture will influence your classroom is extremely helpful. For example, are classroom discussions encouraged? Or are teachers expected to be strict and authoritative? The Power Distance Index, created by Geert Hofstede, measures a country’s distribution of power and how citizens respond to hierarchy. Check out where your country stands as it can help clue you in to how your new classroom environment may be.

2. **HPD - High Power Distance Countries.** Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong and South Korea are strong examples. These nations emphasise hierarchy, where obedience and respect for authority is paramount. Most students in these countries will be comfortable in lecture-based lessons, where the teacher is the formal figure of authority. It may be more difficult to encourage students to speak up or participate in class in these countries.

3. **LPD - Low Power Distance Countries.** Denmark, Norway, the U.S. and Canada are very Low Power Distance countries. These countries stress equality and independence. The student-teacher relationship is more casual and opinion sharing and discussions are common in the classroom.

4. **Acquisition.** The process of learning a language and the methods through which learning is facilitated.

5. **Production Speaking and Writing.** These are the hardest parts of learning a language. A student may be able to read a poem but not write an email.

6. **CLT - Communicative Language Teaching.** An approach that focuses on developing students’ communication skills over grammar accuracy and drilling. The idea behind this is that students can acquire a language more easily when they’re communicating in meaningful ways. Role-playing activities such as ordering at a restaurant, giving directions or preparing for a job interview are some classroom activities that allow for authentic expression.
7. Experiential Learning / Learning by doing. It can be listening to a song, reading an article, or leaving a phone message. Experiential activities help students learn English through real-life experiences and situations.

8. TPR - Total Physical Response. A very powerful method that uses physical movements to teach a language. Playing the game ‘Simon Says’ or having students pass around an object as they respond to your questions are two great TPR activities.

9. ESP - English for Specific Purposes can cover a range of language functions and bespoke course materials from business English to conversational English and more specified language functions for certain vocational jobs (hospitality and service industries, commerce, the military and even sport).

10. EAP - English for Academic Purposes usually relates to preparation for study in British or American universities (or institutions where English is the primary language of teaching and learning). EAP is often linked to preparation for minimum entrance qualifications such as IELTS (International English Language Testing System) or Cambridge First/Advanced Certificate in English.

11. YLE - Young Learners English is normally divided into three distinct categories based on the following age ranges: 3 to 5, 6 to 8 and 9 to 11. The focus in YLE is very much to make learning English fun through learning songs and playing language-based games with an emphasis on speaking and listening more than writing or grammatical structures.

12. ELL - English Language Learner, otherwise known simply as ‘students’.

13. LMS - Learning Management Systems. A software application or online course used for education and training, more commonly referred to as e-learning. LMS products are becoming increasingly sophisticated and interactive to include elements such as ‘virtual classrooms/lecture halls’ and video conferencing. The LMS provider is also able to monitor and assess student progress and development.

14. CALL - Computer-Assisted Language Learning. Basically the same as LMS but specific to language learning and encompassing traditional CD Rom/DVD packages commercially available in the ‘Do It Yourself’ model.

15. BL - Blended Learning is a mixture of e-learning or CALL with some elements of more traditional classroom-based instruction. Typically a student will work part of the time on their own using CALL packages but will be assessed at key points by a tutor/instructor. Blended Learning schools or institutions are more common in parts of South East Asia (Japan, Korea, Taiwan) and parts of South America than in Europe and are geared towards adult professionals wanting to learn business English.

16. AD - Academic Director/DOS - Director of Studies. The head teacher at a language school responsible for all aspects of teaching and learning and curriculum development.

17. TTT - Teacher Talking Time. One of the biggest sins of EFL teaching. In effect, the amount of time that the teacher spends speaking AT the class radically affects the amount of time students are actively engaging with the
target language. A well-balanced lesson should keep TTT to a minimum by providing plenty of opportunity for students to practise speaking.

18. **STT - Student Talking Time.** Elements of a lesson in which the students engage with a variety of tasks, from controlled practice and pair work to role plays, stimulus response and authentic and free production and practice of the target language.

19. **L1 - 1st Language** - Students’ first or native language.
   **L2 - 2nd Language** - Students’ second language, commonly English.