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Editorial

Welcome to Issue 9 of the International House Journal. It was great to have so much interest in and feedback on Issue 8. There was also a keen response to our request for 'vignettes' about local schools as you can see on page 31. Thank you to all of you who contributed nuggets for others to read about your school. If you haven't already sent one, please do try. You can see that any format goes.

We would also like LETTERS on some of the burning issues our contributors discuss in their articles and we promise to print them in issue Number 10. This includes responses to reviews (see page 38) to which, of course, authors, publishers and users, also have the right to reply. (Email would be easiest for us -ihjournal@ihlondon.co.uk)

We hope you can see from our contents list that we are more than just an 'in-house mag', in that we aim to make a serious contribution to debates on the theory and practice of ELT teaching all over the world. We are delighted to include an article from Scott Thornbury; through his discussion of a symposium of papers, he makes his own thoughtful and entertaining contribution to the Form versus Meaning argument. It is also good to hear from one of our founding figures, Brita Haycraft, on the all-important matter of pronunciation. Her emphasis on whole-sentence production and sentence stress meshes nicely with the lexical approach. Jeremy Page's item on Quality is essential reading for all those DOSes, Directors, and Trustees who are responsible for maintaining the high standards their teachers would like to be able to offer ALL the time! We know that there are many excellent managers in IH Worldwide and we would love to hear about your management successes and your problems.

If you are a teacher-trainer, Mike Cattlin, and Derrin Kent with Karl Kaliski, will provide you with ideas and food for thought, while Trish Burrow points out some of the things teachers and trainers need to be aware of when tackling Young Learners. Pippa Bumstead and Jo Cooke draw on their experiences with the Internet and exam classes to offer ideas and advice. And finally, Mark Lloyd and Rod Fricker suggest ways of dealing with two perennial bug-bears: the Present Perfect and those troublesome Modals

The only thing that's missing is anything about Teaching English for Business. This is a pity because it's one of the most important growth areas in the industry. Please try to find time to write and tell us, for example, about the first time you took on a one-to-one student. How was it different? How was it the same? What was good? What was terrifying? Another important 'Business English' debate is 'Standard English' vs 'International English': do we really need to teach the difference between the Present Perfect and the Past Simple, when most of the time your client is going to be dealing with people who don't know the difference either?

You will also notice that in this issue we have lots of exciting news on pages 30-34 about happenings in IH Worldwide. In addition, we'd like to highlight the IH London Educational Conference on Feb 9-10th 2000. It is called 'Artifice' ('The clever use of tricks and devices' according to the Collins Cobuild English Dictionary 1995) and if you are interested in speaking at it proposal forms are available from Roger Hunt (Tel 020 7518 6925. Fax 020 7518 6921. Email rogerhunt@ihlondon.co.uk).

Thanks, as always, are due to the editorial board for their ideas, design work and general help and to Steve Brent for his support and encouragement. Putting the Journal together (in the interstices of teaching two full-time timetables) gives us the chance to 'meet' fascinating people from throughout the organisation and is always an interesting and exciting experience. We've had a lot of fun doing it. We hope you will, reading it.

Susanna Dammann and Rachel Clark

The International House Journal of Education and Development is published biannually in Spring and Autumn. If you would like to join our list of regular subscribers, please contact Rachel Day or fill in the form on page 43.

Walking while chewing gum: A review

Scott Thornbury

Scott Thornbury is a teacher trainer at IH Barcelona, much in demand as a popular and distinguished conference speaker. His most recent work includes his prize-winning 'How To Teach Grammar,' reviewed on page 38

(This article first appeared in the November 1999 issue of the TTSIG Newsletter.)

The following is a rough transcription of an exchange that took place in a class of mine in Egypt maybe 20 years ago. We are practising the previously-taught pattern "Have you done X yet?", using prompts I am supplying:

Me:	*Visit The Pyramids. Hisham?*
Hisham:	**Have you visited the Pyramids yet?**
Me:	*Good. Eat kebab. Mervat?*
Mervat:	**Have you eaten kebab yet?**
Me:	*Good. See oriental dancer. Magdi?*
Magdi:	**Have you seen an oriental dancer yet?**
Me:	*Good. Listen Om Kalthoum. [well known Egyptian singer]. Hoda?*
Hoda:	**Have you listened to Om Kalthoum yet?**
Me:	*Good...*
Hisham	**[surprised by this reference to "insider"cultural knowledge and interrupting to ask a "real" question] Did you listen to Om Khalthoum, Mr Scott?**
Me:	*Hisham! What are we practising?!*

The incident has stayed with me because at the time I was dumbfounded by the apparent inability of the student (Hisham) to transfer the correct form for the meaning he wished to express, when the form would seem to have been optimally available. Most teachers will have had similar experiences - those moments when the students unaccountably refuse to transfer a form from a context of learning to a context of use. It is as if the student can't focus on structure and on meaning simultaneously - like the US president who supposedly couldn't walk and chew gum at the same time. For me this incident marked the beginning of a growing disenchantment with what is now known as a focus on forms. A focus on forms (note that plural) is, according to Long and Crookes (1992) "the use of some kind of synthetic syllabus and/or a linguistically isolating teaching "method", such as audiolingualism" (p. 43). Or, in Ellis's words (1994): "Focus on forms refers to instruction that seeks to isolate linguistic forms in order to teach and test them one at a time. It is found when language teaching is based on a structural syllabus." (p. 639). Or, to put it very crudely, it is the "today-is-Thursday-so-we're-going-to-do-the-present-perfect" school of teaching. It is the school of teaching which sits uncomfortably with the Hishams of the world.

So, what is the alternative? Well, obviously, a focus on meaning. As Beretta (1989) put it: "form can best be learned when the learner's attention is focused on meaning" (p. 233). Enter the semantic syllabus and the (strong) communicative approach. Grammar out. Tasks in. A representative statement of this sea-change is Allwright's (1979) claim that "if the language teacher's management activities are directed exclusively at involving the learners in solving communication problems in the target language, then language learning will take care of itself." (p.170). On the other side of the Atlantic, Krashen had taken up a similarly uncompromising position - what Ellis calls the zero option: no focus on form or forms, nor formal instruction. Instead of frog marching my Egyptians through the complexities of the present perfect, we should simply have done some sort of communication game on the theme of travel.

the evidence has started to trickle in to confirm what teachers have always secretly suspected: no pain, no gain

But more recently the evidence has started to trickle in to confirm what teachers have always secretly suspected: no pain, no gain. Left to their own devices, learners fossilise. Or, at best, stabilise. With no formal instruction Dick Schmidt's "Wes" achieved a measure of strategic competence but at the expense of his linguistic competence. The "terminal twos" studied by Higgs and Clifford (1982) at the Defence Institute in Monterey had, they suggested, been plunged into "free conversation" at the cost of later proficiency. The products of the Canadian immersion programmes so beloved by Krashen turned out to be less proficient than claimed. What was missing?

What was missing, argued Long, was a focus on form (singular). A focus on form "overtly draws students' attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication" (1991, quoted in Doughty and Williams 1998, p. 3). A focus on forms (plural) entails the pre-selection and pre-teaching of discrete items of language (it is thus proactive), whereas a focus on form is essentially reactive, entailing "a prerequisite engagement in meaning before attention to linguistic features can expect to be

effective" (Doughty and Williams, ibid. p. 3). In terms that may be more familiar to teacher trainers, a focus on forms presumes a PPP methodology, where presentation of pre-selected and pre-graded items precedes production, and where it is assumed that fluency arises out of accuracy. A focus on form fits better with a task-based approach, where learning is driven solely by the need to communicate and where, as in first language acquisition, accuracy is late-acquired. Re-cast in this light, my lesson with Hisham, Hoda and Co. might have taken the form of students first preparing questions to ask a visitor about their experiences in Egypt; then trying these out on me; after which I provide feedback and improvements (the form focus) and the they do the real thing.

Long was not insensitive to dangers of promoting a focus on form, and warned against shallowly interpreting such a focus as vindicating "a return to teaching discrete decontextualised grammar points, plus or minus overt grammar explanations" (Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991, p. 322). "Clearly we want to avoid an unwarranted inference of that kind" (ibid.) But this is exactly what happened. The "grammar revivalists" seized upon the catchphrase *"a focus on form"* in much the same way that creationists interpret "the big bang" as proof of a Creator. Coursebooks have already started appearing with "Focus on Form" sections, as if they subscribed to a task-based methodology, when, technically, their approach is unashamedly forms-focused.

So the appearance of a collection of articles devoted to the topic (Focus on Form in Classroom Second Language Acquisition. Catherine Doughty/Jessica Williams (Eds.) Cambridge University Press. 1998.) provides a much-needed corrective to some of the mythologising associated with FonF (as the editors somewhat tweely refer to it), as well as suggesting ways such a form focus might be operationalised. The editors are well qualified for the task: Catherine Doughty has researched the effects of "meaning-oriented" vs "rule-oriented" instruction in what is considered a classic study (Doughty, 1991) and Jessica Williams is the author of a very accessible paper on the subject (Williams, 1995) - essential reading for Diploma course trainees, by the way. They have assembled an impressive cast, not only Michael Long himself, but also Merrill Swain and Patsy Lightbown, among others. Names such as these are an indicator not only as to the quality but as to the level and intended audience of the book: it does not make for light bedtime reading, let's say.

Nevertheless, if you have unanswered questions about grammar instruction you should read this book - or at least some of it. Among the questions the editors set out to address are the following:

When should focus on form occur - both in terms of the individual lesson and the overall curriculum?
Which forms are amenable to a focus on form?
Is it likely to be beneficial in all classroom settings? Is age, for example, a consideration?
How is a focus on form best achieved? For example, should it be unobtrusive or overt? Should the forms be pre-selected?

But, hang on, isn't that last question out of order? Isn't a focus on form by definition reactive rather than pre-emptive? How can you plan ahead a form focus that is supposed to emerge from the learner's own attempts to communicate? Aren't we back in a focus on formS? This is a dilemma that ripples through the book, and is not entirely resolved.
For example, in their article Long and Robinson stress that a focus on form is "triggered by perceived problems with comprehension or production" (p. 23). And yet (on p. 5) the editors imply that the teacher has the option of planning the focus a priori. This is very much the option adopted by DeKeyser in his paper, where he maps FonF on to Anderson's cognitive model of skills acquisition, and where it seems to be a means by which declarative knowledge is acquired, in advance of proceduralization. It's what we used to call presentation, really: "if grammar is taught, it should be taught explicitly... and then should be followed by some exercises..." (p. 58). We seem to be back in Egypt 20 years ago. The difference is, however, that the exercises should not be "of a rushed or repetitive nature", like drills, but preferably written, the better to anchor the new rule solidly in the students' consciousness "so that it is easy to keep in mind during communicative exercises" (ibid.) Well, OK, but this is not my understanding of a focus on form.

Nor is input enhancement what I would call focus on form, either. Yet it is the subject of another paper in this collection ("Getting the learners' attention" by Joanna White). Input enhancement takes the form, for example, of highlighting a pre-selected language area in a text (e.g. possessive determiners) through use of bold fonts, underlining, highlighting pens etc, so that it is salient and therefore conducive to being noticed. Noticing, it is generally accepted, is a precondition for acquisition in that it converts input into intake. Enhancing the input is a form of implicit presentation. Another way of doing this is by means of input flooding - that is, choosing or designing texts that have a high frequency of the targeted item. (The Streamline course was premised on the principle of input flooding, although we didn't call it that at the time). Both input enhancement and input flooding assume some kind of preselection, hence some kind of synthetic syllabus, hence formS. And, as interesting as they are as alternatives to explicit instruction, a discussion of such procedures would seem more appropriate to a book called Awareness and Attention in SLA or Input and Intake, or some such.. (Matters are not helped by the fact that White's study is statistically dense and fairly inconclusive).

Merrill Swain's article on the way that the collaborative metatalk that results from text reconstruction activities (such as dictogloss) promotes attention to form moves us a few steps closer, and is consistent with a fluency-first approach. But the really illuminating article (for me) is the one on recasting by Doughty and Varela ("Communicative focus on form"). A recast is a form of feedback whereby the teacher reformulates the

learner's erroneous utterance: ideally, it should be done in such a way that the learner notices the gap between his or her utterance and the correct form, but not so obtrusively that it breaks the flow of talk. To use an example from the study:

José:	*I think that the worm will go under the soil.*
Teacher:	**I think that the worm will go under the soil?**
José:	*(no response)*
Teacher:	**I thought that the worm would go under the soil.**
José:	*I thought that the worm would go under the soil.*

[p. 124]

The researchers were curious to see what effect such recasts would have on the language development of a group of non-native teenagers in an ESL science class in the US over a sequence of lessons in which they reported on science experiments they had conducted (hence the worms). For research purposes they targeted past tense forms, recasting only mistakes in this area. Compared to a control group where no such feedback on form was given, the students showed significant improvements in their use of the past over a six week period, an improvement that persisted for at least two months after the treatment. It is important to note that the students were not getting any form of explicit language instruction in this class, and only minimal grammar instruction outside it. It seems that the recasts were sufficient to do the trick.

The researchers were also interested in the practical implications of this kind of form-focused intervention in what were essentially fluency tasks: would students be inhibited by the recasts, for example? They found that the optimal time for this kind of feedback was during pair or group work. When students were doing individual presentations in front of the class, however, such interventions were off-putting. They also recommend that the focus on form should be brief and immediate, and, importantly "the teacher must remember to pay attention to what the student is saying as well as to the formal realization of the message" (p. 136). These recommendations suggest a possible training agenda: coaching trainees in the use of recasts through, for example, observation tasks and microteaching. The conventional wisdom that teachers should not intervene in fluency activities may also need re-thinking.

In her article Lightbown explores issues related to the timing of a focus on form, and comes out strongly for the integration of the form focus during (as opposed to before or after) communicative (i.e. message-focused) activities. This typically takes the form of correction, but need not preclude quite explicit attention to form, and she quotes Lyster (1994) who describes a French immersion teacher;

"who seemed particularly adept at getting learners to correct their own errors. The teacher did this mainly by asking students pertinent questions about how they thought the language worked, always in the context of communicative interaction. Lyster called this negotiation of form, something different from the negotiation of meaning that is typical of communicative language teaching." [p. 192]

The book concludes with a long and comprehensive summarising essay by the editors ("Pedagogical choices in focus on form") which alone is worth the price of the book. Like Lightbown, they urge integration of attention to form and meaning: this assumes of course that learners are provided with sufficient opportunities for meaningful language use, so that the conditions exist for integration. A diet of mainly presentation and controlled practice, as in my class in Egypt, is not likely to provide such opportunities unless the students, like Hisham, sieze them. Without such opportunities they will never be able to walk and talk fluently while chewing the linguistic gum.

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The Perennial Present Perfect Problem

Rod Fricker

Rod Fricker has worked in IH Opole since September 1994, although only in the last two years has he risen to the dizzy heights of his current post as DOS. He took and passed his CELTA at IH Sahafayeen in Cairo where he worked for the first 18 months of his TEFL career. In 1997 he took the DELTA at IH Krakow under the expert tutelage of Jon Butt, Magda Markiewicz and Rachael Roberts. Last year, he was the highest wicket taker in the IH Opole back-yard cricket competition and also helped Chris Howell to produce one of the finest web sites known to TEFL: www.ih.com.pl/opole.

This article is dedicated to Rachael Roberts who, as DoS of IH Opole in Autumn 1995, gave an input session on the Present Perfect which started the train of thoughts that led/has led to the ideas presented below.

Why is it that the Present Perfect causes so many problems for students of English? What is it about this tense* which seems to defy all attempts at clear and unambiguous definition? The aim of this article is to try to offer an alternative explanation to that found in most grammar books and coursebooks, an attempt to make this tense not only easier for students to understand but also to question some of the currently accepted 'explanations' that, as will be seen, do not always correspond to actual language usage.

What is it about this tense which seems to defy all attempts at clear and unambiguous definition?

The problem, as I see it, is that traditional grammar explanations are either too simplified so that exceptions confuse the students or so complicated and so disparate as to make learning and using them a nightmare. Let's first of all look at what some of the most respected books on the market say and why I am questioning them.

Swan describes it as a 'kind of present tense, thinking of the present as well as the past'. Talking about past actions which are not recent, Swan says that the Present Perfect denotes that these actions are still with us. So, in his example "I've travelled to America" = I know America.
Similarly Michael Lewis in The English Verb looks at three statements about studying French suggesting that the Present Perfect is used to stress that 'I can translate that letter you have in your hand (now).'

Both these examples are looking at present relevance, one of the main explanations of using the Present Perfect. However, consider the following very natural and possible examples of English.

In the first, someone wants advice about America and is met by the response "I've been to America" suggesting present relevance ie knowledge. However, two other people are listening as well, the first says "Well, I was there last week", suggesting by the time reference that in fact his present knowledge is greater. The third, not to be outdone, chips in with "That's nothing, I used to live there". Who would you ask? Not, I imagine, the user of the vague Present Perfect.

Similarly with the speaking French example, if someone stated that they 'graduated in June with a first class honours degree' or that they "lived with a French family for two years from 1997-1999" it is, in fact, exactly the use of the past time expressions that are being used here, not to distance the event, but in fact to do completely the opposite, to stress its closeness to now and its present relevance to the situation under discussion. Thus, present relevance is surely a misleading and often entirely false 'explanation' for using the Present Perfect tense.

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Moving on to coursebook explanations other irregularities occur. The Headway Elementary Teachers' Book states that:
"The Present Perfect expresses the concept of an action happening at an indefinite time before now and so it cannot be used when a definite time is given". It then gives some examples of common mistakes one of which is 'In my life I went to most countries in Europe, but I never went to Greece'

* I have used the word 'tense' throughout this article to describe the Present Perfect though I realise that, strictly speaking, it is not a tense at all.

Now, while I can see why this may be a mistake, I can also see quite clearly that this could be stated by a native speaker choosing the Past Simple quite deliberately knowing that, although his life continues, his opportunities for travel have ceased. In a similar way, trying to pigeon hole which time expression can be used with which tenses also causes problems as the following dichotomy reveals:

"Did you go jogging this morning, David?"
"No"
"Have you smoked any cigarettes this morning?"
"Only two"

Clearly the choice of tense did not depend on the time expression 'this morning' rather on the perception of the speaker regarding the possibility of the event occurring again within the stated time period. Clearly, if the expression used is completely in the past eg 'two weeks ago' the speaker would presumably not believe that the event could happen again within the time period and so would not use the Present Perfect.

So far we have only looked at the Present Perfect used for experience and for present relevance, there are also of course other uses, the most common being an event continuing from the past to the present, either a continuous situation or a series of repeated actions and very recent events with 'just', although the First Certificate Gold grammar reference lists 8 uses of the Present Perfect in total.

Therefore, it seems clear that what is needed is an easier explanation that also more accurately reflects how the tense is used in everyday speech. What I shall do is to set out my idea and then compare it with traditional explanations and examples to see how well it holds up.

Swan says that it is 'thinking of the present as well as the past' and Lewis talks about 'looking back from point now'. My contention is that the Present Perfect looks not only at the past from the point of view of the present but also from the point of view of the future. That is that the statement made, or the implied meaning behind the statement, could, were the speaker to make the statement again in the future, be different in some way; altered in duration or frequency, repeated or no longer true. The Past Simple is used when the statement could not ever change as stated or implied and this is the fundamental difference between the two.

What does this mean, exactly?

Using the examples given in First Certificate Gold, a fairly comprehensive list, we can test the theory to see if it works for all of them.

***1.* Situations that have continued from some time in the past until now:** "Mike has lived in Japan for three years".
Clearly if this statement was to be made at some time in the future it would either be changed in duration or no longer true so this agrees with the theory above. 'Mike lived in Japan for 3 years' would be an unchangeable statement. Why? Obviously, because it is finished and the three years cannot be extended.

***2.* When we are describing recent events:** "I've eaten two packets of crisps....so far today".

I think here that the 'recent events' is misleading, rather it is the incompleteness of today that is important. But the sentence itself could clearly be changed in the time period given. In fact it is the use of the present perfect which implies that the speaker expects the stated facts to change, otherwise he would have said "I ate...today".

***3.* Repeated actions continuing from the past until now:**
"We've seen three movies this week"
Clearly the possibility that this situation will be added to exists. The week is not yet over and I am refusing to rule out the possibility of further visits to the cinema. 'We saw three films this week' is also possible if the speaker believes it to be an unchangeable fact.

***4.* To talk about experience, that is things that have happened at some time in our lives:**
"We've been to Athens".
...and the possibility exists that I may do so again within my lifetime.
Similarly the negative "I've never been to Athens" could, one day, no longer be true.

***5.* When we can see a present result of past actions:** "Someone's let the dog in.. and there are paw prints all over the sofa" What the speaker is talking about here is the paw prints which are all over the sofa and, of course, in the future they won't be there. So with present relevance statements we are not looking at the actual Present Perfect sentence but the reason it was used. What I am saying if I say 'You've had your hair cut" is that your hair is different from the last time I saw you and this may not be the case the next time I see you.

***6.* When we talk about the first/ second time we do something:** "That's the first time I've tried rock climbing" Clearly, this will always be the first time I go rock climbing but I could never again use that sentence. Therefore, even though this is slightly different from other uses of the Present Perfect, in one way it does fit. If I ever go rock climbing again, I will have to say "This is the second time I've been rock climbing." The past simple is used if the statement is always true, perhaps looking back on the climb - "That was the first time I ever went rock climbing".

***7.* When we use the superlative**
"Maria is the most beautiful girl I've ever seen".
Clearly, again, this situation may not always be true.

There still remain a few other uses and difficulties:

***a)* The choice between "Did you speak to the boss today?" and "Have you spoken to the boss today?"**
Clearly this is the difference between an unchangeable situation (past simple) and one that may change (Present Perfect)

***b)* Uses with 'Just'**
Fairly clearly if I say something has just happened, if I were to make this statement again in the future this would no longer be true. It would no longer have just happened.

***c)* Still/yet**
These words imply future change is not only possible but probable, therefore their use is easily explained.

***d)* For/since**
Again these words imply a continuation from a past point, so fit the rule, although 'for' can obviously also be used to talk about a finished time period and so can also be used with the Past Simple.

e) **What about situations that stopped a short time ago?**
"I've lived here for eight years" she said with a sigh as she walked out the door. Here the situation won't be true in the future. True, the eight year time period won't change, but the speaker is still implying a continuation up until the moment of speaking which won't be true in the future.

***f)* Newspaper reports**

The most difficult explanation:

"The President has been assassinated". This clearly cannot happen again, nor can it alter in any way. He's dead. Is this a stylistic exception to the rule? Is it perhaps used because the news media want us to keep reading/listening/watching and use the Present Perfect to indicate that possible future change demands us to stay tuned?

***g)* Why do we use the Past Simple with no time expression?**

Earlier on we had a sentence from Michael Lewis which stated "I studied French" which he says is a simple statement of fact. This is true but it has an unstated implication (at university/for A level) which makes it unchangeable in the speaker's view. Similarly "Have you seen the film?" means ever and implies that you could in the future if not in the past. "Did you see the film?" implies that the situation is unchangeable. Why? Because the unstated implication is 'on tv last night' or 'during its recent, now finished, run at the cinema'.

Whether the above theory stands up to deeper analysis or not, hopefully it may encourage a new look at a part of the English language which seems to cause more problems than most.

What we have at the moment are several uses of the Present Perfect that are both confusing and which don't always correspond to real life usage. In practical terms my idea is that

What we have at the moment are several uses of the Present Perfect that are both confusing and which don't always correspond to real life usage

we can tell our students that if they see the past action or situation as irretrievably finished and unrepeatable or unchangeable (because of time constraints or unstated implications) they should use the past tense. If not, use the present perfect. Forget the words used: 'in my life', 'this week' or whatever. Think more of what the speaker is trying to say. And if you read The English Verb, you will realize that, although I may have questioned Michael Lewis earlier, this is classic Lewis. All utterances are the result of a definite choice by the speaker and are not constrained by simplified 'rules'. And if your students, at the end of the day, still don't get it, cheer yourself up with the thought that neither do the Americans and they're (sort of!) native speakers.

A Model Modal Model

A journey through the maze of logic which is "modality"

Mark Lloyd

Mark has taught English in Spain and Portugal, and has worked as Course Director on numerous summer schools in the UK. He is currently Assistant Director of Studies at IH Madrid (Serrano), where he has worked for the last four years.

When it comes to teaching modal verbs, any English teacher knows that the possibilities are endless.....or, more to the point, the ways in which the concept of "possibility" can be used are endless. After a number of years spent successfully confusing students, I have now reached the somewhat self-defensive conclusion that it is not simply my teaching methods which are to blame - in fact, it is the reckless bandying about of the word "possibility" in countless course books which is the prime suspect. What follows is essentially the case for the prosecution.....

When it comes to teaching modal verbs, any English teacher knows that the possibilities are endless.....

Establishing The Facts

I would like to open, your Honour, by referring to Swan (1995), who separates modal auxiliaries into two groups according to meaning: those modals concerned with:

1. "degrees of certainty.....used to say for instance that a situation is certain, probable, possible or impossible":

and those concerned with

2. "obligation, freedom to act and similar ideas".

An obvious example from group 1, I venture to suggest, might be the sentence "It will rain", which could easily be interpreted as stating that

a) "I can say with complete certainty that it is going to rain",
or
b) "The probability that it is going to rain is 100%",
or
c) "There is a very strong possibility of rain".

Counsel for the defence would be correct to point out that there is no real risk of misinterpretation of meaning here, even without the water-tight alibi of a clear context. Likewise, "It might rain", "It may rain" and "It could rain" all express less certainty or a lower probability. Whether or not each of these three modals expresses an equal, greater or lesser relative probability than the other two is beyond the scope of this article - basically, though, the facts we are given in each case are the same and there is little risk of the information being misinterpreted. However, consider this example:

"He might go".
OK, so there is a reasonable chance of his going.
The probability of his going is between 40% and 70%, say. But, if this is true, then logically the possibility of his going must exist. It must be possible for him to go, because if it wasn't possible, the probability would surely be zero. Only a small leap of logic is required to see that the act of his going is either possible or impossible. In other words, it is not possible for something to be only 50% possible, for example. Something can be possible 50% of the time, but that is a different matter. Thus, the phrase "a very strong possibility", which you no doubt accepted unquestioningly in interpretation c) above, is nonsensical, and in terms of possibility it follows that "He will go" is exactly the same as "He might go". It hardly needs to be said that this way of looking at things neglects a rather important difference between these two examples, namely the fact that in the second case the probability of his going is somewhat smaller than in the first case.

Compelling Evidence;

What about "He could go"? By the above logic, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, this must mean

d) "It is entirely possible for him to go."

Also by extension of the above, in terms of possibility "He could go" is logically identical to "He will go" - once again a far from complete interpretation of the situation. Of course, we then have the further obstacle of the concept of "ability" - "He could go" meaning "He has the ability to go". This in turn could mean

e) "He has the ability to go because he possesses the necessary know-how";
or
f) "He has the ability to go because the external conditions allow him to".

There is a third interpretation, too:

g) "He has the ability to go because someone has granted him permission".

In all three of these examples, though, we are again confronted by the notion of possibility - in each case the possibility exists, although it arises from different sources, namely through internal possession of the necessary skills, obliging external environmental conditions or circumstances, and the granting of permission, respectively. With appropriate intonation and stressing the word "could", the interpretation becomes

h) "He has the ability to go, but I would really prefer it if he didn't",

thus expressing a reluctance to go which the notion of "possibility" totally fails to pick up on.

Past Convictions

Up to now, I have deliberately avoided mention of the past, but if we cast an eye in that direction we notice yet more complications. "He could go" translates as

i) "He used to have the ability to go",

with any of the added interpretations *e)*, *f)* or *g)* above, but once again always embracing the concept of "possibility".

Most damningly, perhaps, we have the potential involvement of the perfect infinitive:

j) "He will have gone" (a prediction of an action to be taken before a point of time in the future);

k) "He will have gone" (as an expression of certainty or deduction about a past action);

l) "He might have gone" (as *j)* and *k)* but with less confidence or certainty);

m) "He might have gone" (as a venting of annoyance and/or expression of criticism);

and my personal favourites:
"He could have gone", meaning

n) "He had the ability to go but he chose not to";

or

o) "There is a fair chance that he has gone, based on what I know about his internal skills and abilities";

or
p) "There is a fair chance that he has gone, based on what I know about the external circumstances and environment";
or

q) "He would have had a fair chance of going if the circumstances (either internal or external) had been different".

Not Obliged To Say Anything...

Even obligation can be called as a witness:

"He has to go", meaning

r) "There is no possibility of his not going"

or

s) "There is the possibility of his not going, but he is strongly advised to go".

and even "He must go", meaning

t) "There is the possibility of his not going but I strongly advise him to go".

Summing Up

Practically every course book or grammar book I have come across succumbs to the temptation to talk about "possibility", and in my opinion this kind of approach to modal verbs causes untold problems for students at all levels. Consider the following accomplices: "First Certificate Gold" (Acklam, 1996) claims that in addition to ability, permission, obligation, necessity, lack of obligation and deduction (which all include the notion of possibility, as we have seen), modal meaning also extends to, yes, that's right, possibility (which is further divided into either theoretical or factual). "Distinction" (Foley and Hall, 1993) attempts to convince students that with reference to present and future actions "must" and "will" express certainty, "should" and "would" express probability, and "may", "might" and "could" express possibility. "Proficiency Masterclass" (Gude and Duckworth, 1994) requires students to categorise ten vaguely contextualised sentences according to the meaning of the modal verb in each, and provides great potential for confusion by isolating "ability", "permission", "deduction", "future possibility" and "unfulfilled possibility", among others, as notionally distinct meanings. From the examples I have seen, the one which comes closest to the truth is "New Headway Intermediate" (Soars and Soars, 1996), which bravely admits that "one use of all [modal verbs] is to express possibility", although it comes dangerously close to contempt of court by tacking on the end the words "and probability".

I rest my case.
The Verdict: ***Guilty, as charged.***

Passing Sentence

it comes dangerously close to contempt of court by tacking on the end the words "and probability"

The intricacies of modal verbs are difficult for students to grasp, and there is no escaping this fact. However, my proposal is to adopt a rather lenient approach of damage limitation. By this I mean that the use of the concept of "possibility", even with the objective of simplifying matters for low level students, ultimately confuses students and masks the real "meaning" of the modal verbs in question. So, by avoiding the concept altogether, the chances of misinterpretation of meaning should be, if not eliminated, then at least reduced, and it follows that students will be less likely to make confusing or unclear utterances of their own when attempting to produce the target language.

I would suggest that modal meaning can broadly be categorised into two groups:

1. **Probability**
2. **Ability**

I accept that this might be over-simplifying matters, so a possible sub-division might be:

1. **Probability:**
   - deduction (prediction) about the future
   - deduction about the present
   - deduction about the past

2. **Ability:**
   - internal ability
   - internal obligation (an obligation to do something being seen as inability to avoid doing something)
   - external ability
   - external obligation (including permission - "Can I open the window?" being essentially the same as "Am I obliged not to open the window?")

There is still plenty of scope for a modal verb to fit into more than one category, which I believe is an unavoidable situation, as well as being desirable in the sense that students should be discouraged from looking for concrete, black and white answers in this complex area of English. I would, however, be extremely interested to see if anyone can come up with an example of a modal verb which does not reasonably fit into at least one of these seven categories.

Case closed, pending appeal....

Go Forth and Be Positive

Mike Cattlin

Mike Cattlin has been Director of Studies at Katowice for two years and recently spent two months at IH London training as a teacher trainer. Last year, he was a successful participant in the IH Diploma in Educational Management.

Perhaps I should begin with a rationale for the title. It stems from a comment made by one of the trainees on a CELTA course I tutored recently at IH London. At the end of the last observed Teaching Practice, the trainee remarked on her self-evaluation form that she felt she had completed the course (and completed it well, incidentally) but did not feel qualified to teach and she was about to go forth into the world with hope rather than confidence. My written reply was the above: "Go forth and be positive". But what is it really like these days to reach the end of a CELTA course and look forward into the big, wide world? Platitudes are easily given, but how reassuring are they? I invited the trainees on the course to tell me about their hopes, expectations and fears; and their responses demonstrate varying degrees of confidence, most of them, however, not very positive. The majority of those interviewed have initially uncertain futures. Of the twelve who responded, only five have any immediate plans, one for a two week period, one for four weeks, one with an arrangement through friends abroad which promises more, and another two outside ELT completely.

Their immediate expectations for their newly chosen career were generally not very optimistic. Most seemed to accept that March was not a good time to get a job and that the best they can hope for before September is to accumulate a small amount of experience in a summer school, voluntarily if needs be. Only two of the under 30-year-olds expressed any hope of getting a job abroad before then. An interesting aside is that only one of this age group seems to have joined the profession for travel reasons, having done the course as a prelude to travelling around the world, considering the options as he goes. Times seem to have changed in the last few years.

The thirtysomethings, as befits those who have undergone a major change in their lives, normally as a result of considerable soul-searching and pocket-delving, were generally more positive in their outlook. One trainee's views mirrored my own initial intentions at around about the same age, "looking forward to a challenge and a complete change from my previous job, expecting to have to work hard and to find it difficult at times". A long-time yearning for the job, for living abroad and for improving her language skills were also part of this trainee's rationale. Another expressed more or less the same ideas, but also expected it to be both stimulating and enjoyable, and a good learning experience (as a teacher), whilst another was already looking to South America or Asia, often seen as ambitious destinations for the newly qualified but where schools other than IH seem to have more opportunities ..... Challenge and variety were common themes; there were, however, some less optimistic views offered by the "older" age group, some of whom sounded so laissez-faire, I wondered if they really would ultimately pursue their initial goals.

So, what of their hopes for their first job? This is where my real interest started. As the Director of Studies of a large school in Central Europe (the Poles do not appreciate being referred to as part of Eastern Europe these days), I see a lot of straight-off-CELTA-teachers arriving every year and it is part of my job to settle them in and, along with other senior staff, support them through the initial stages of their first job. What do they really want and expect of us? Is this what we are giving, or are we too wrapped up in what we think they want?

...ily
...f us?
giving, or are we too wrapped up in what we think they want?

On this question, the age factor of the selected group played little part. Even the one thirty-plus exception who stated that she "does not want to be in an environment living and working with other English people" but prefers to become integrated into her chosen society, added that she "would, at the same time, like to have the support of the DoS/Director of the school and other teachers". She was not alone in expressing the desire to get involved in local life; another is looking for "plenty of opportunities for involvement with the local community".

The feeling behind the second half of the above quote, the part relating to support, was, not surprisingly, shared by the majority of the trainees. One of those who got a "Pass B" was keen not only to be in a supportive atmosphere, but also wanted to teach smallish classes at a fairly basic level. Thus suggesting some lack of confidence in his/her ability to teach effectively. Whilst we in Katowice provide the supportive atmosphere, often in copious amounts, our classes are rarely "small" (if I am interpreting the adjective correctly) and timetables of classes of up to intermediate level only are akin to needles in haystacks, especially for a teacher who fulfils the requirements laid down for

a "Pass B", i.e. candidates "who have demonstrated in their teaching practice a level of achievement significantly higher than that required to meet pass-level criteria in relation to classroom teaching skills" (Cambridge handbook).

If a member of the "Pass B" brigade expresses such feelings, one can only assume the "Passes" are at best similar but, more likely, far less secure. This is backed up by a quick review of their comments; for example, "I want to teach in a good school where I can learn a lot"; "well-developed support would be nice"; "I would like to work in a supportive environment which will work on the knowledge I have and build on this"; and "I want to go to a school where I can get plenty of support and help if needed". Having heard all too often of schools around the world who do not provide this, I was tempted to offer them all jobs; little pointers had to suffice instead.

Only then did he admit he had not enjoyed the course at all

Another concern noted was that of providing motivation to learn English for students in a monolingual environment. I often feel the monolingual nature of guinea-pig classes in centres like ours in Wroclaw can be more realistic with regards to what is to come post-course for the majority, but also much tougher for the rookie-teacher trying desperately to get their students to "speak English, please!!!!!". This is a factor which those of us in the monolingual world have to take into account when recruiting teachers from multilingual centres; sessions on providing motivation in our particular monolingual context should be up there in induction week.

Others said they "hoped" they would enjoy it. I wonder how many others hope, or even hope desperately, that they have done the right thing. My mind goes back to only last year when we took a promising teacher with a good reference off a course, brought him all the way across the continent and sent him off into his round of lesson planning and teaching, only for him to knock on the door three days later saying what a dreadful mistake he had made. Only then did he admit he had not enjoyed the course at all, despite improving rapidly throughout it, before telling me he would never set foot in a classroom again, starting from the one he was supposed to be teaching later the same hour (and yes, I do mean "hour"). I will come later to talk about teachers' fears of a school's expectations of them; what we must not forget is their expectations of us, whether they be realistic and achievable or not.

The linguistic aim referred to briefly above also came into play in other comments. One stipulated they would like to begin learning a "useful language". I suppose "usefulness" is in the mind of the speaker, but again, I can recall another pair of teachers we had last year who, in breaking their contract six months early, expressed this same desire and stated that Polish simply did not fit the bill. This is another problem for the Central and Eastern European schools, but one which may be out of proportion with possible reality. These are the countries which have joined or are about to join NATO, the EC and other such international organisations; knowing their language may not therefore be "useless" - difficult for a native English speaker yes, but useless no.

Others hope to discover a "calling" while most just want to get out there and put into practice all they have learned on the course and to consolidate their knowledge in the real world. After all, as one said, "it's like learning to drive - you don't really learn until you do it on your own" (I was not quite sure I agreed with the wisdom of that comment!). Above all, they just want to cope with their first job effectively. And that, of course, is where we at Senior Educational staff level come in, to help them achieve this aim, for their own benefit and, ultimately, the school's.

There is one final quote from this section, and one which as a DoS in Central Europe I find quite reassuring, and that is this: "I see the school atmosphere as being more important than the salary for my first job". Although only one trainee wrote this in black and white, I perceived it as being quite a general motivation and a good summary of the overall feeling. There is a great will to develop in the newly qualified trainee, and it is a will we can exploit to great effect and, again, mutual benefit.

there seems an element of cruelty in shoving them in at the deep end for them to sink or swim

And so, on to their fears, where age, once again, seems to play no part. Surprisingly, there were fewer responses to this question; in fact, two people put a line through the whole section - whether this is because they have no fears or simply didn't want to think about them on the last day of the course is open to question. Those who did answer repeated many of the arguments given above, but in reverse; somehow, this is even more effective and their views are ones I shall bear in mind when I go to meet the plane carrying the next batch of new teachers in September this year. The opinions can be split up into a number of areas.

First, as I mentioned above, is the weight of expectation they feel. Two of the trainees, including one "Pass B", believe they will be the object of great expectations which they will not be able to live up to. It is not just the expectations of the management which are of concern; they are afraid the students will be aware of their newly-qualified status and will not find them as convincing as the other teachers. Holding the hands of 20-30 new teachers, as is often the case with us, is simply not possible, but there seems an element of cruelty in shoving them in at the deep end for them to sink or swim ..... We find an

intensive Induction Week before teaching starts to be a great help, but there is still an awful lot of work to be done once the academic year gets under way.

Lack of knowledge, particularly not knowing the grammar book inside out, was another frequent cause for concern. Telling them they will pick it up in time and it will all become much easier as they progress, somehow does not seem to do the required trick - they want it all and they want it now. These days, Language Awareness seems to take a back seat on many initial training courses and in-service programmes; more often than not, it is the non-native speakers who have been through the system themselves who are much more in tune with this and the native speakers, whose knowledge is assumed, who are left to suffer into the small hours over well-thumbed copies of Swan, Murphy, Eastwood and the like. In Katowice, we run a Language Awareness Group separately from compulsory input which is voluntary but helps those most in need. Linked to the knowledge factor is the sheer, sudden burden of a 16-30 hour timetable after a two hour teaching week on the course which took at least three times as long to plan as it did to deliver. It simply is not possible. But it has to be. They have to cope, and do we really remember how difficult it all was?

Not surprisingly, a lack of support was the most commonly held fear. Senior staff and experienced colleagues are worth their weight in gold. We have some excellent second and third year teachers in Katowice who have been invaluable to the new comers, as much so as the senior staff, and this is something which needs to be encouraged year after year as classroom experience in the school simply cannot be replaced. This should be a major selling point of IH schools everywhere - one of our "almost unique" selling points to good teachers.

As our trainees admitted, they only have a very basic idea of what they are doing and there are some problems in class they do not know how to (or do not want to) deal with just yet. This rather vague reference probably includes a multitude of factors such as discipline and uncooperative students; a more clearly stated concern was that of facing the sorts of classes they feel they have not been prepared to teach, namely advanced classes, examination groups, Business English classes and Younger Learners, the latter three of which normally receive a session on a CELTA course, but little more. And yet in Katowice, some, or even all of them can be part of a new teacher's timetable from week one. Having said that, however, once they have got over the initial shock and with the help of appropriate support, this policy often produces very versatile teachers who at the end of their first year display a level of flexibility and experience well beyond what might have been otherwise expected. And the teachers themselves often really appreciate the variety, as opposed to the more closeted experience of teaching a limited range of levels and course types. In fact, in the last academic year, when we segregated Business and General English to a large extent, we actually got complaints from teachers who craved the variety we had previously offered. We have now returned to providing that variety.

Teaching students often with little immediate need for the language and a consequent lack of interest was of concern to more than one. Will they be able to make their lessons relevant and interesting outside the London scenario? As I said above, suggestions for providing motivation in a particular context will be valuable for them. Only one trainee worries about getting a job where "the teaching methods are laid down by the school to such an extent as to prevent me from being myself". The value of an eclectic methodology need not be stated.

I often feel the blindingly obvious sometimes needs stating

The final fear expressed was one of isolation and an inability to relate to people at the school and in the new culture. I cannot say this never happens in Katowice, but in a school of 50 teachers, the problem tends to be less frequent. We are not, of course, complacent in this regard: our Induction Week at the end of September introduces new teachers not only to the rest of the staff (teaching and administrative) and the systems, but also to the language, the culture and the local environment. The opportunity is there for them to be occupied for the entirety of the first week, should they so choose, before they become focused solely on lesson planning. Later arrivals normally get an individualised induction and, where possible, a mentor, often in the convenient form of a flatmate.

Looking forward to September and the influx of new teachers, then, will this year's approach be any different from previous years? To some degree, yes, and the above points will be ones at the forefront of our planning.

Much of the above may seem like stating the blindingly obvious; I often feel the blindingly obvious sometimes needs stating.

TBL or not TBL?

Implementing a TBL paradigm on pre-service teacher training courses.

Karl Kaliski and Derrin Kent

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Task-based learning (TBL) has been around for some time now, and it's probably fair to say that it has had an influence on many aspects of EFL. One aspect of EFL which appears to have been less influenced by TBL, however, is pre-service teacher training courses such as the Cambridge RSA CELTA. This article describes the planning and implementation of a pre-service course (the RSA CELTA) which is built around a task-based - as opposed to a PPP - methodology.

The argument for working with a task-based paradigm

A common argument against implementing a TB approach and sticking to the PPP model is that the latter offers trainees a degree of control over the classroom, and that a pre-selected language point provides them with something to hang on to.

However, our own experiences of working with trainees is that this 'control' is bought at too high a price. We have seen too many classes in which students are pushed through a lesson with little opportunity to express their own ideas and to use language creatively and communicatively. We have often found this to be frustrating for both trainee teachers and their students.

We also feel that the PPP approach reinforces precisely the kind of ideas about language teaching that we disagree with and are trying to wean trainees away from, i.e. a high degree of teacher control: a mechanistic, causal relationship between teaching and learning; and the idea that second language teaching ought to be grammar driven. Teachers can't control language learning to the extent implied in the PPP model, and we feel very strongly that it is important for our trainees to know this.

In addition to this, far from providing trainees with something to hang on to, our experience is that trainees work much better when they have a topic, a text and a task around which to build the class - they would rather hang on to a text about fashion than the future perfect, for example.

Designing and timetabling a task-based CELTA course.

We have approached the integration of TBL into our courses from three different perspectives:

- example (i.e. model lessons)
- input, both methodology and language analysis
- practice (encouraging implementation and experimentation with a TBL model in TP)

TBL through modelling:

In order to implement and run a pre-service course which is centred on a task-based approach, the first thing that we felt was needed was an input session, early in the course, presenting a basic model (or 'lesson shape') for a task-based class which trainees could make sense of. Following Hunt, we adopt on our courses a 'cyclic approach to time-tabling' (Hunt 1996), starting with input sessions which include whole lessons, modelled for trainees. These lessons then serve as models for the trainees to put into practice and experiment with in teaching practice.

The class which is modelled for the trainees is a practical demonstration of how to build a lesson around a task, following the model outlined by Willis (1996). We use a personal anecdote task for this, which involves recounting a first-time experience.

The model lesson begins with a pre-task stage introducing the task. This involves brainstorming typical first-time experiences and language used to describe how people feel about these experiences. This is followed by the task cycle consisting of the task performance (trainees describing to each other a first-time experience), planning and report back. While listening to their partner's anecdote, trainees have to choose the three adjectives which they feel best summarise the experience. The planning and report back stages consist of their writing and feeding back on the adjectives they have chosen and why. It is then explained that with foreign language learners a language focus stage would follow the task cycle.

Having modelled the class, using the trainees as 'students', a questionnaire is given out for group and open class discussion. The aim here is to draw the trainees' attention to some of the ideas which underpin the class which they have just participated in. Typical questions asked at this stage include:

- This lesson included time to prepare before you spoke. Why do you think you were given time for this? What would be the effect of giving students no preparation time before they were asked to carry out a task?
- The class included repetition of the task. Why? What are the benefits of task repetition?

• In general we can say that during the class the focus of the students is on either communication (using language to express their own ideas) or language form (thinking about the grammar and vocabulary that they use). Can you identify at least two stages which focus on each of these?

• Why do we need to balance the amount of time and attention we give to these two factors?

We have found that trainees are capable of making sense of these questions and come up with very reasonable answers to them. In fact, one could argue that the issues discussed here - task preparation, task repetition, the importance of both a focus on meaning and a focus on form in the foreign language classroom - would make sense to any intelligent layperson.

However, we also feel that the kind of approach we want to adopt on our course is probably quite different to the trainees' own language learning experiences, and we believe it is important to draw on these experiences in order to bring the teachers' "personal theories" of language learning into the open. Fortunately for us (!), many of our trainees appear to have had very mixed results with their previous experiences of language learning, based as they often are, around much more 'traditional' grammar-driven approaches. The result is that they are very responsive to the communicative nature of the lesson models offered.

Input sessions: working with texts and coursebooks

This introductory session to working within a task-based framework is followed up with a second session which offers trainees a range of task types which they could exploit with their students. These include ranking, categorising, listing, writing, discussion, role play, problem solving and so on.

Another key aspect of our course, as with all pre-service training courses, involves showing trainees how to work with texts. Working with texts, it seems to us, is unproblematic when examined from a task-based perspective - text work lends itself very naturally to a task-based approach.

Once our trainees appear to have a grasp of basic procedures for working with text, we go one step further. A key issue in TBL is that of how to find and engineer opportunities to draw students' attention to language form - within the context of a 'meaning-driven' approach to language learning.

Work with texts offers the possibility of striking a balance between meaning and form. We decided to show trainees how to exploit texts after comprehension work, for useful language. Texts are analysed with the trainees, and discussion takes place as to what kinds of language areas could be exploited and why. Trainees are then presented with a range of simple activities which they could use for post-text language focus work. Example activities include: underlining, gap fills, categorising, matching sentence halves and so on.
Newly-qualified teachers (quite justifiably) rely heavily on textbooks. We strongly felt that although we favoured TBL, we would be doing our trainees a disservice if we didn't show them how to work with and exploit textbook material. The problem we face here is that just about all of the textbooks which our teachers are likely to encounter and use are built around a pre-selected syllabus of discrete item language points - the antithesis of a task-based approach to language learning.

Here we did feel that a compromise had to be struck; trainees, for a whole host of reasons, do need to know how to deal with a pre-selected language point. One approach which we adopt, is to show trainees how to work with a language point from text. This builds on the basic procedures that have already been presented to trainees and also provides a strong context and topic for a language class. Trainees are also shown how to produce guided discovery worksheets which allow students more active involvement in language focus stages, while taking the pressure off the trainee - who then has more opportunities to help students as they complete the worksheet in pairs or small groups - instead of having to control a language focus stage open class.

Input: Language analysis

TBL argues that the role of the teacher isn't to control student production of language, but rather to motivate students and provide opportunities for communicative use. Within this context a focus on form is of vital importance, and a central aspect of the teacher's role is to show students how to express their thoughts in increasingly sophisticated ways.

Therefore, a task-based approach requires the teacher to monitor, and provide feedback on, learner production. In other words, the treatment of language in a TB approach is more reactive than pre-emptive (cf PPP). This is not a tall order: trainee teachers may struggle to explain <u>why</u> a piece of language might be right or wrong, but they do know <u>when</u> something is wrong and can usually suggest correct alternatives.

Nevertheless, we also work on raising trainees' awareness of the language systems - grammar, lexis and discourse. In order to develop trainees' language awareness and to hone their monitoring skills, the starting point of language analysis input sessions is generally an activity in which trainees identify and attempt to reformulate errors in learner-produced text. For example: "For this reason, I started working for that company" might be more naturally reformulated as "That's why I started...". This helps prepare trainees both to intervene on actual production (written or spoken) and to note errors for post-task clarification during teaching practice.

An interesting point to note here is that in the context of an approach to language learning which prioritises meaning and communication, students tend to pose many fewer difficult, challenging language questions to teachers than one might think. Instead they tend to ask for the language they need and get on with the (communicative) job at hand, whereas in a form-driven approach (such as PPP) students too tend to focus

on language and grammar - perhaps a reason why trainees so often come unstuck in open class language presentations?

A TBL approach requires that trainees draw on their interpersonal skills and develop the ability to talk and respond to students as people. This is a skill which is arguably more early-acquired than the ability to manage an open class language presentation stage and all that it involves. Simply put, a meaning-driven classroom with a strong emphasis on the communicative use of language would appear to play more to the strengths of pre-service trainees.

That said, challenging grammar questions do come up in language classrooms, whatever their methodological slant may be. When this occurs, our trainees have the same range of responses available to them as do any other trainees: to throw the question open to the rest of the group, to attempt to answer it, to appeal to the trainer for help and advice, to promise to look for the answer in a grammar reference book and so on. In no way are trainees working within a task-based paradigm disadvantaged here.

Findings so far...

Much to our relief, our initial finding having run two RSA CELTA courses in this way is that there were no disasters and the courses didn't fall apart!

Generally speaking our trainees have been very responsive. Many pre-service trainees come with little or no teaching experience and are open to whatever approaches trainers suggest. Also, they are quite capable of making sense of the principles and ideas which underpin our approach - providing that they are presented to them at pre-service level.

On the whole, we have found that trainees respond well to a strong focus on communication and meaningful language use. They can manage classes built around texts and tasks, and arguably respond and relate to students better as a result of this change in focus.
We have also found to date that this type of course runs much better than we would have thought possible based on discussions with other trainers, at conferences for example. We wonder if there is a kind of flawed logic underpinning many responses to running this kind of course. Many trainers were trained themselves within a PPP paradigm, and those who make the effort to seriously take TBL on board work hard to do so. "If it is this hard for me, with fifteen years experience as a teacher and trainer" so the logic goes, "how much more difficult would it be for new, inexperienced trainees to make sense of this?"
The answer, we argue, is that it is actually much easier, precisely because trainees don't have years of working within a different paradigm to answer to before starting the process of making sense of a task-based approach.

While the CELTA assessment criteria are fairly flexible, we have found it necessary to re-examine and re-evaluate our attitudes to assessing trainees' ability to deal with language form. Where we used to focus heavily on clarification during a language presentation, now we include error correction and feedback stages, clarifying issues of form in pre-task preparation, writing and report back stages, drawing students' attention to language form in post-task/text work and so on. Trainees continue to find dealing with language challenging - this is a skill which requires continued practice and effort after the course is over - but they cope at least as well as other trainees we have worked with prior to running this course.

Finally, the response from assessors so far has also been very positive, with a great deal of interest in the kind of course we are trying to run:

"This is the first pre-service course I have seen which pays more than lip-service to task-based learning". **(Assessors Report: April 2000)**

We very much see what we are doing here as 'work in progress' and the course itself is evolving and being adapted as we work with it more. We would be very interested in hearing from other trainers who have been doing similar things themselves, or who would be interested in experimenting in a similar fashion with their own training courses.

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Out of the Lion's Den

Trish Burrow

Trish Burrow is a teacher trainer based at International House, Opole

Blutak up noses, fingers stapled to desks, coatstands dismantled and used to attack the teacher, dictionaries flying out of windows and narrowly avoiding passers-by, sulky teenagers slumped in chairs and sighing dramatically. These are just some of the problems that newly qualified teachers, fresh off their CELTA, have to contend with when they venture into their first Younger Learner classes. Suddenly, all the reassurance that comes from being able to contextualise, clarify meaning, form and pron and provide learner-centred practice can dissolve when the children don't sit still and write, but start wriggling and running around. Result: mayhem and many a teacher left feeling they never want to teach kids ever again.

Blutak up noses, fingers stapled to desks, coatstands dismantled, dictionaries flying out of windows

The current global expansion of the Young Learners market in countries such as Spain, Italy, Portugal, Poland, China and Hong Kong to name but a few means this: for most teachers, at some point in their career it is very likely that they will have to teach children. More and more parents are enrolling their children in after-school English classes at an earlier age. In countries like Spain and Japan this can start as early as 2 - 3 years of age. Clearly the need for qualified and willing children's teachers is big and growing. Which leads me to my following point.

The CELTA and equivalent schemes give good grounding in the teaching of English language to adults. To teach children, teachers need further training on how children learn and how to cater for this. Primary teachers in the UK receive a year's initial training before they are fully qualified. New teachers in ELT are often thrown to the lions and are left to work out how to avoid being eaten alive. At best, the kids may get a teacher who researches the area, seeks help and thinks about what motivates children. Worst case scenarios include children running wild and feeling insecure at the lack of boundaries, a teacher using an 'adulty' approach or playing lots of games that whip the children up into a frenzy. The teacher doesn't know what to do, the children are taught by someone who, through no fault of their own, doesn't understand their needs and the parents are paying good money for this. Not exactly fair, is it?

So what can schools who want to give younger students and their parents a good deal do? Looking around the network of IH schools, there seems to be a lot of support for both new and more experienced teachers who teach Young Learners. Lots of the schools have a 'Young Learners person', induction programmes and in-house training include sessions on Young Learner issues, plus teachers can access the IH Young Learners website at **www.clubhomepage.com/ihyoung** to get ideas, post questions, go into chatrooms and share their own top tips. For teachers wanting specific training in Young Learners teaching, there is also the two-week Young Learners extension to the CELTA course.

Here in Poland we've been running Extension courses since February 1997. We run the two-week course twice a year - in September, before the start of the academic year and during the Winter Break in January/February. Last year we also ran a nine-week part-time course for teachers in IH Katowice. Many of the teachers who do the course are second year returning teachers, though there also some who have only a month's previous teaching experience. A typical timetable in a post here includes at least three classes with children and teenagers and teachers can expect to teach children as young as 8, with teachers in Katowice and Bielsko Biala teaching pre-school age children.

To get an idea of what the course can give teachers, I asked some who had already done the course and some who are planning to do it next September, the following questions:

How did you feel when you found out you would be teaching children?

A lot of teachers were apprehensive, particularly about teaching the children. Comments included: "Not happy.", "I would have preferred not to." and "Excited, but also nervous. I'd had a lot of contact with children in other circumstances, but could not imagine how I could begin to teach them English." Even those who had worked with children before were unsure about how to transfer this to a teaching environment.

What were your initial impressions of the children, their behaviour and how they learn?

Positive comments tended to refer to the fact that when things go well, lessons are great fun: "They are full of enthusiasm.", "There are so many activities you can have fun with which adults wouldn't do."

lany of the negative comments stemmed from the teachers' ck of training in utilising the way children learn and behave: Everything took twice as long as with adults." "Top volume, top nergy expenditure, incapable of listening to anyone other than nemselves. I felt like they were learning nothing." "It can be xhausting because they are restless or hyper," "They can be xtremely noisy and it is difficult to hold their attention."

eading these comments, it was easy for me to envisage how ese teachers could benefit from a training course that looked underlying principles such as stir and settle, learner styles, ow children learn language, teaching grammar, measuring rogress and classroom management.

/hy are you planning to do the YL Extension course?

ne main reasons cited for doing the course were: to gain a more rincipled and considered approach in teaching YLs; to improve ractical skills and to understand more about the way children arn and why they behave like they do. Those who had done the ourse also said they did it to feel more prepared for teaching nildren's classes and to get some ideas for activities.

ow has it affected your teaching?

ne teachers I spoke to said they felt much more confident and at the course helped them conquer the fear some of them had lt about teaching children's classes. They also talked about ow the input and Teaching Practice had helped them process ne principles of YL teaching and how these were now ingrained their teaching. From a developmental point of view it was very teresting to see how the course still acted as a reference point: ome said "they looked back at the course not only to get ctivities, but also to get inspiration to think of new ones."

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The Young Learners course isn't for everyone. If the thought of teaching 8 year olds makes you break out in a cold sweat after four years teaching and two successfully bargaining with the DoS to teach only teens, then you're probably not going to want to do the course. Not even if it meant you could safely entrust your blu-tak to learners under the age of 18.

However, if you enjoy the energy children have and want to learn how to use it more effectively, or if you want to work out how you can find your way out of the lion's den, this could be the course for you. And with more and more of the vacancies on the transfer list stating YLs experience or CELTYL required to work in Spain, Italy and Portugal, then having the YL Extension Certificate could give you the edge and work out to be a very good career move.

The International House Teacher Training Worldwide brochure lists details of CELTYL and YL Extension courses in:

Ih Budapest
Ih Rome
Ih Wroclaw
Ih Lisbon
Ih Barcelona
Ih Madrid

Contact centres for details of dates, prices and the age band (either 5 - 11 years, 8 - 13 years or 11 - 16 years)

Finding something really useful down the back of the sofa

Jo Cooke

Jo is a teacher and teacher trainer at IH London. She has taught in various countries, including Greece, Germany and the Czech Republic.

What a nebulous, woolly thing the Web is! It seems like my mind, full of useless information going off on tangents, with the nugget of really useful stuff just out of reach somewhere down the back of the sofa of my long-term memory. It's also full of speling misteaks. So when my colleagues, Carina Lewis, Howard Ramsay and I decided to design some internet lessons, we were at a bit of a loss as to where to start.

We thought first about reasons to use the Internet in class. Most of the old chestnuts were trotted out, about individualised learning and replication of what the students do in their own time outside school. Then we thought about the hard reality of why we should use the internet in class time, i.e. the students expect it, and also the big boss upstairs has paid for lots of computer equipment and wants us, quite reasonably, to do something with it. Furthermore, it's a great bank of authentic materials.

Individualised Learning

So far, so good. But when we thought about individualised learning in more detail, we soon found that we came up against a considerable problem. It's a great idea, but in practice if all the students are being individual, we have no way of keeping track of what they are doing, and no way of ensuring that they are getting value for money on their course.

Surfing the Web

We quickly realised that it was impractical in the time constraints of the classroom for students to spend time searching the Web themselves for the information they want. Some students do not have these skills and the ones that do are masters at going off to another planet. But if we as teachers choose the Website, what element of choice or individualisation do the students have? It would be no different from giving them an article (albeit a very long one) from the Guardian to read.

So we came up with the idea of a student-negotiated syllabus, both for the course itself and the Web component of the course. The students are told that they can use the Web as an integrated part of the course, and that they can choose the topics that interest them. It helps if the teacher can give them a list to provide some kind of stimulus, and then give them a set time to choose the ones they want or a topic of their own. We tried to guide students to topics that are likely to be more interesting/up to date on the web than would be found in a course book, e.g. book/music reviews, horoscopes, news, etc, as this seemed to us one of the real reasons to use the Web as opposed to another kind of text.

How much or how little?

On our first attempts we got very excited and found a vast number of web sites for each topic the students chose. Websites vary considerably in the amount of information they contain, but most have several pages and links to other websites. We found that picking one or two really good websites and adding them to Favourites was much more valuable for the students than having more that were of mixed quality. We thought about the quality and richness of the language, the difficulty of the language, the intrinsic interest, and the balance of text to visual images. We were, if you like, spending the time finding the thing down the back of the sofa that the students might want.

students W… …ich more toleran… unfamiliar lan… …ge on the screen, th… they would be if it … …e on a page in a cla… …om

Linguistic Value

One thing we especially wanted to pre-empt was the: "We just played on the net today" complaint from the students. We decided that each lesson should have an overt focus on language, either from the texts on the websites themselves or from the teacher or, most commonly, both. We thought of each lesson in terms of the tasks that we were going to ask students to do after collecting the information on the web and then focused on this language before the task was carried out, to make students aware that they were doing something of linguistic value.

Linguistic overload?

What kind of language is the site going to contain? How difficult will it be for the students and how are they going to cope with the unknown words? Clearly, no teacher in their right mind is going to read every page of every website they let their students loose on. There is an element of unpredictability and loss of control in every lesson using the internet, and some teachers might not feel comfortable with that. We did, however, think it was useful to attempt to predict the type and level of language that students might come across and think of strategies to deal with them. For example, the students could choose a maximum of 5 new words, look them up and explain them to a partner. Or they could look at all the instances of "would" and make a note of their functions. We found, when we put this into practice, that students were much more tolerant of unfamiliar language on the screen, than they would be if it were on a page in a classroom; in fact they tended not to focus on language at all unless it directly impeded their understanding. So our strategies for overcoming problems often turned into strategies for pointing out useful language.

Building in Communication

Someone once told me that the problem with computers is that you can't talk to them. Well, I do. I say, "Hurry up", "Don't do that, for God's sake", and "NOOOOOOO!!!!" However, it has yet to reply to me, so we also had to think about building in interaction to the lessons so that the students would produce as well as absorb language. We encouraged students to work in pairs at each terminal and we built communication or opinion gaps into the tasks so that the students would have real reasons to talk to each other after the information had been collected.

Integration

We felt that it was essential that each lesson should flow smoothly into the computer room and out again, just as using a tape would be a part of the natural flow of a listening lesson. Each lesson included a lead in or introductory activity and a task that was a logical extension of the reading/listening itself. This was important both for raising interest/activating schema etc. and also to "sell" the lesson to them. We found that if we told the students our lesson aims, i.e. that the task, not the Web itself, was the focus, they were much more motivated to read/listen, as they knew that they would have to "perform" something later on.

We feel that with these compromises we have come up with a framework that can be used by teachers to devise lessons for their students: the lessons would include the element of individualisation, but still retain a measure of control over the learning process and guarantee a level of input and output that the students would be happy with. Here is the framework, with an example lesson fitted into it.

A framework for designing internet lessons

1. Choose the topic with students
   e.g. Things to do at night in London.
2. Think of and design the task
   e.g. Plan a night out in London.
   Students in pairs search for interesting things to do in London.
   Students in new groups explain what they chose to see, and attempt to persuade others to come with them. The group together decides what they would prefer to do.
3. Search for interesting and good quality sites, and store them in Favourites.
4. Think of the language that students will/may need to do the task.
   e.g. Functions for suggesting, reaching consensus, disagreeing politely. Language to describe events/places (predictable, gripping, trendy etc.) and decide if/when to teach it.
   e.g. the functions before going on-line, the vocabulary afterwards.
5. Design a lead in/warmer.
   e.g. What can you do at night in London?
   What have you done that you enjoyed/hated?
   How is it similar/different to nightlife in your country?
6. Plan strategies for dealing with language that comes up whilst reading/listening.
   e.g. students pick 5 phrases that will encourage people to go to the particular venue and be prepared to explain them. (Dictionaries and teacher on hand)
7. Decide on your on-line time limit.
   e.g. 30 minutes max.
8. Design a follow-up to the task
   e.g. students go out on the planned evening and present a review (oral or written) the next day.
9. Check websites and computers are functioning.
10. **CROSS YOUR FINGERS AND HOPE THAT NOTHING CRASHES.....**

11 ....and some obvious things we didn't think of until they went wrong!

- Check the websites a short time before to make sure they haven't moved/vanished into the ether.
- Check that you have the software running e.g. Real player if you want to have sound as well as text.
- Check that a student who has no idea of how to use a computer sits with someone who does.
- Check that the technical wizard will be available if the computers crash.

And finally some reassurance!

Don't worry if things do go wrong – students tend to be quite tolerant of minor mishaps. Most teachers trying it for the first time found it a positive experience for everybody involved.

Exam Classes: Setting up Systems

Pippa Bumstead

Cambridge Exam classes present special challenges for teachers and learners alike. The course may be longer and/or more intensive than those the learners are used to; we need to teach our learners exam technique as well as the language they need to pass - they may be unfamiliar with the more holistic view of language (in terms of lexis and discourse in particular) which are tested at FCE and CAE; and finally, the amount of input (especially lexical input) is likely to be much greater than in general English courses.

This article will look at how incorporating a set of systems in exam courses can:

- orientate learners to the exam format, what each section tests and how best to tackle it
- individualise learning
- help learners see their progress through the course
- help learners to organise new language
- provide opportunities for recycling new language

Although only FCE and CAE are referred to in this article, most of the ideas are adaptable to other exam (and non-exam) courses too.

Orientating Learners to the Exam.

Class posters

Creating class posters is an excellent way of encouraging a positive group dynamic, as well as being a more relaxed activity with a different focus. For example, my learners have produced spelling posters based on corrections from their writing and which are added to throughout the course.

Another idea based on one suggested to me by David Albery of IH London is exam posters, to help learners find their way around the various papers, and later to focus on exam technique. Near the beginning of the course, I cut up a whole practice test exam, having tippexed out the question numbers. I gave each small group a large piece of paper (flowchart paper is a good size) with the title of the exam paper at the top (Reading, Writing, English in Use etc.). Using the exam information at the front of their course-book (alternatively, they could use Cambridge's own handbook), the learners pieced the exam back together again, sticking the sections in the correct order. As we covered each task type in class, they added to the posters any new information on ***a)*** what was being tested, ***b)*** exam technique and ***c)*** other activities in and out of class they had found useful to improve the skill in question. The posters were in use throughout the course, and provided a clear focus point when it came to revision.
My learners have also found it useful to tick off the parts of the exam we have covered in the map at the front of their coursebook. This not only reminds them of the question type, but also gives a sense of progress as each one is dealt with. If you are not using a coursebook, again you could use Cambridge's own guidelines or give out a list you have prepared yourself.

Individualising Learning and Monitoring Progress.

Composition feedback forms

For me, the marking of compositions can become a chore, and a frustrating one too. It is one aspect of exam courses which puts many teachers off running them. I used to find it difficult to keep track of learners' written performance: the notes I made on the compositions themselves obviously went back to the learners and were 'lost' forever. And, even with the best will in the world, I found my own parallel notes tended to fizzle out or become more bitty as the course went on. To cut out the need to write feedback notes on the composition and for myself, I designed a feedback form. Each member of the group has their own form which is handed in with every composition. As I mark, I fill in the details of the tasks they have completed, comments and, later on in the course, a grade. See below for an example, but bear in mind the type of notes you make will depend on your own style and on the individual's needs.
The response I have had from my learners on this system has been extremely positive, since they are able to see precisely where they are going and the progress they are making. It is also useful for the teacher; it can be difficult to remember what previous comments have been made, whereas with this system, the teacher can see clearly if a student is having a recurring problem with the same aspect. Another plus point is that I can see whether a learner is keeping up with the homework or not and take appropriate action.

Retrospective timetables

Learners find these extremely useful as an indicator of their progress; these can either be already completed versions by the teacher, or blank for the group to complete themselves. On my ten week intensive courses at IH London, I have given these out every two weeks; for longer courses abroad, every month might be a more appropriate option.

In addition to this, I try to give my learners frequent, regular opportunities for feedback, via questionnaires, class discussions or individual tutorials.

Pippa's FCE Group - March 2000 - Composition Feedback.

Name: Marisa Cortinovis

Task	Comments	Score
Maximiser p.11 – trans. informal letter.	I've made a few comments on the composition itself. Generally, the style is fine, but I think you could stretch your range of vocabulary a bit more. * Don't start a new sentence on a new line because this could be confused with a new paragraph.	/
Gold p.20 - trans. formal letter.	A good first attempt, Marisa! You need to pay more attention to detail- particularly style and spelling. Try to learn a few expressions which you could use in a variety of letters.	/
Maximiser p.33 – narrative	An interesting story! ✓ Good range of vocabulary. The narrative is well-shaped, but be careful to follow the instructions - you MUST start or finish with the words given. Tenses need more work - you will find reading fiction helps you become more familiar with how they work.	/
Narrative worst/ best - journey.	well done for correcting some of this, Marisa. Try to remember these for next time. A well-organised narrative with a nice range of expressions and structures. Try to include some more descriptive language for the next narrative.	3.II
Discursive - Childhood	Some organisational / linking problems here which you need to sort out. The paragraphing starts of well, but then disappears! How could you remedy this? Also - work on word order with adverbs of frequency (always, only etc)	3.I

Vocabulary records

It is essential that learners understand the importance of keeping clear, organised records of the language they learn and I have found that it is better to be insistent rather than persuasive on this matter: I quote to a new class the story of one student I had who spent the whole course intending to set up an organised system for his notes, finally began it a week before the exam as the panic set in, and wholly regretted not taking the original advice.

In the first week of the course, I hold a session on organising vocabulary notes; Wordflo has some useful suggestions which learners can discuss, as do many exam and general English course books. Nick Hamilton also makes some interesting suggestions for a 'lexical notebook' in his article in Issue 8 of this journal. I ask my students to buy a ring file and dividers, and give them the setting-up of the system they have chosen as a homework task. I ask to see the results in the following class, and also ask learners to bring them to tutorials. This may seem like a lot of work for learners at the outset, and it is important to refer back to them at regular intervals (see under 'providing opportunities for recycling new language' for suggestions on how to go about this).

Other records which can be set up and used in a similar way are 'Common mistakes/Correction' pages where learners note their errors from writing and/or speaking to refer to before a new activity or task; my CAE students (especially non-Germanic and non-Latin speakers) have also found it helpful to keep a separate page with formal/informal equivalents of lexical items.

Providing opportunities for recycling new language

It is important to deal with revision in a systematic way; short but frequent recycling activities not only help learners cope with the huge quantities of new language they may encounter, but also provide a change of focus and pace in the lesson. It is worth timetabling in 'revision slots' as well as using revision activities as five-minute warmers or fillers, and making this plan explicit to the learners. That way, they have the chance to review language in preparation for the class.

I have found vocabulary bags extremely useful: at the end of the lesson, learners write new items on coloured slips of paper with an example sentence and/or a definition. This task can also be carried out by early finishers, or set for homework. I have a separate bag for fixed expressions (eg: there is no excuse for _ing; make the most of), phrasal verbs (particularly for FCE), prepositional phrases (eg: depend on; invest in) and single items (eg: a bouncer; standoffish). I change the colour of the slips each week - this reminds learners more or less from which part of the course the language came - and we use the bags regularly for vocabulary games. These include 'Back to the Board' where a member of each team sits with their back to the board and their teammates define a word or expression I have written on it. This activity is also fantastic for longer expressions (eg: 'I look forward to your prompt reply') when the learners are forced to think not only about meaning but also accuracy and style. Another game I often use is 'Put it back'; one learner has a minute to successfully define as many words from the bag as possible in one minute. When the time is up, the other team shouts 'Put it back!' and the other team gets a go. The winner is the team with the most slips of paper at the end.

Collocation pelmanism

The class make their own pelmanism (matching and memory) games which can be kept for the whole course and used as revision/early finishers' activities. They have a set of cards on which they write collocations they have met (eg: a last-minute flight; to wage war on); the cards are turned face down and students take turns to turn over two at a time and try to find pairs.

Using learners' language records in class

Learners can test each other for example on their common mistakes. Particularly in a multilingual class, learners will find their typical mistakes differ; since the editing task at FCE and CAE are based on typical learner errors, the more practice they have at this, the better. They can either borrow their partners' notebooks and test each other orally, or write short exercises.

Systems can take time to set up. On short, intensive courses it is especially important to get them up and running as soon as possible so that they quickly become part of the course routine. Learners do not always automatically see the point, so it is important to be explicit in your aims. The pay-off from incorporating systems such as the ones mentioned here is immense; huge amounts of time are saved in the long run both for the teacher and the learners and they provide a skeleton for the course to 'hang on'. I have found that they have transformed my exam courses from simply ploughing through a coursebook and doing exam practice nearer the time into a more easily monitorable course for me, and in most cases, a much more satisfactory learning experience for the students.

Proof of the Pron Pudding

Speaking with conviction and expression

Brita Haycraft

Brita Haycraft, co-founder of what is now the International House Worldwide Organisation, has had a long and distinguished career in ELT. She was formerly Head of Speech Training at International House London and still regularly runs pronunciation workshops there, attended by students and trainee teachers alike.

The trouble with pronunciation is that there's never enough time to cover it in the classroom. Grammar and lexis come first, understandably. So the teacher shelves it or, pricked by guilt, embarks on the phonemes, but is too rushed to finish them or to move on to stress and intonation.

On a General English Course without scheduled slots for pronunciation help, the teacher has to find ways of building it into language practice activities.

This three-part series looks at easily integrated pronunciation help.

Part One deals with training students to use sentence stress in the normal way and put more intonation and expression into whatever they're saying.

Part Two covers English word stress, both in single words and in compound words, ideally taught with vocabulary practice.

Part Three looks at sounds, typical problems and how to solve some of them in the general lesson.

Basic training to shape the sentence

Sentence stress

First, separate stress and intonation in your mind, and begin with sentence stress. 'Sentence' is a better term than 'utterance' at this point as I'm thinking of the sort of short main clauses frequently used in text-books to present a language point.
Sentence stress is logical, and probably universal. Unless otherwise indoctrinated, even a beginner can tell the important words in a sentence.

So when the target sentence appears on the board for further practice, I ask the students 'Which words do you want to stress here?' to show that it is they, the speakers, who decide which words to stress and there isn't a rule they have to learn.

eg:
'What time is it?'
'Could I borrow your mobile phone?'

Even when they have marked the stresses on the appropriate words, some students still can't say the sentence that way, because they are thinking only about grammar. But a few models from the teacher or fellow students soon puts that right and they can 'feel' the sentence sounds more real. This initial training needs little extra time if the teacher makes a point of including it regularly. With due praise, the students will soon pick up the habit. It's fairly easy to hear yourself stress and to self-correct, and they don't feel self-conscious about it.

At first students tend to stress sounds rather feebly, so the teacher needs to encourage them to say the sentence again and again, with firmer stresses and more conviction, and more quickly.

Marking the stresses

All the words we want projected should be marked, not only the nuclear words; some of the others also carry stress and together they form the gist of what we are saying. But ignore post-nuclear secondary stresses, as this only blurs that final main stress.

The marked stresses act as pegs on which to hang the sentence, and with the stresses firmly in place, students find it easier to deliver their sentences meaningfully. If need be, they can first practise by saying just the marked stresses, telegramwise and then say the whole lot, in a natural way.

Linking all words and weakening/contracting unstressed structure words

Encouraged to say the sentence again more quickly, a student will begin to link up the words and say the unstressed sounds without blinking. To encourage this process, you can draw links between the words on the board:

- *What__time__is__it?*
- *Could__I borrow your mobile__phone?*

In the second sentence, speed also helps weaken the unstressed 'your'.

False Questions

A useful ploy to speed up students' speech is to ask a deliberately false Yes/No question, such as 'Is it Wednesday today?' or make a false statement 'Today's Wednesday, isn't it?', in order to provoke students to contradict 'No, it's Tuesday'. When they reply in protest, their answer comes out amazingly

quickly and spontaneously, with spot-on stress, true intonation, and a contracted 'it's'. The false question feels like some sort of remote control. In this game, make sure students discard the use of the short answer 'No, it isn't. - It's Tuesday', as it takes away the immediacy of their reaction, and acts as a brake, lowering the overall quality of their speaking. Personally, I'd ban all short answers from early learning, anyway.

Personally, I'd ban all short answers from early learning

Students don't mind how much you tease them with false questions like this, so it serves as a less dreary form of drilling, too.

Interactive stress in pair work

Pair practice is the perfect opportunity for students to adopt the habit of stressing 'you' or 'your', when finding out about each other, as in

- "WHERE do you LIVE?"
- "Near the centre. And where do YOU live?"

- "WHEN's your BIRTHday?"
- "In May. When's YOUR birthday?"

Any learner with Germanic L1, will, if told, use stress in this interactive way automatically, being used to it from their languages. Slavs and Japanese take to it at once, as well. Whereas those with Latin L1s struggle a little, despite the fact you can hear stress work similarly in exchanges in their languages, even in French.

The beauty of the interactive stress device, (a form of contrastive stress), is that it signals contact and common ground to others. Ignoring it, our students' exchanges sound wooden, like single isolated utterances. Whereas, with this stress tool in action, they sound informed and involved and they enjoy it. So how can teachers resist it?

Better comprehension results

Armed with paper and pen, students are helped by writing down the stressed words (or the beginnings of them) while following a tape. Those jottings sum up what was said and help them re-tell the story. We ourselves do it when taking down the details of, say, how to drive to a remote village. And far from prolonging a comprehension exercise, leaning on the stresses should enhance it.

Intonation

The concept of intonation is made much simpler, if dealt with after the stresses are in place. Its main role then is to add (or conceal) a personal feeling about the utterance. Students easily realise this when we say a sentence in different ways.
So how can we help them to speak with more energy and interest in their language practice? Here, two 'moodcards' prove of invaluable assistance. These are cards with a simple diagrammatic face, happy or gloomy.

Take any utterance: 'Half past two', 'Next to the window', 'Two pounds fifty', 'Could I borrow your mobile phone?' and have the class say it like the gloomy faces. They have no problem doing that.

Then show the interested, smiling faces and have them say the same sentence that way. Intrigued, they usually play along and say 'HALF PAST TWO!', their intonation undulating quite unaided.
An utterance of major importance to a foreign learner of whatever language must be a question, as it is active and enterprising and leads to something.

eg. Could I borrow your mobile phone?

Clearly, the speaker who sounds interested and polite is more likely to get a 'Yes' answer. Once students have experienced speaking with more involvement and liveliness, the teacher need only prod them now and again to put more life into whatever they are saying, to up the quality of classroom speaking.

Homework

It is often felt you can't give homework in pronunciation, which is true of certain vowel sounds. But the following stress and intonation work can easily be done at home, in privacy, and heard the next day in class:

"Mark the words you'd stress in this sentence. Practise saying it, as marked, with interest. Say it quickly without stopping between words. Draw links between the words to remind yourself not to stop. Say it several times, until you feel it sounds good enough."

'How much is that small computer?'
'Could I have a look at that camera?
'Is there a telephone here?'
'Could you give me the book department, please?'

(In an English-speaking country) go to a shop and put your questions to the test. Better still, phone a department store and put your question to them.

For more about these teaching ideas and their rationale, see *'English Aloud 1 and 2'*.

Quality Matters

Jeremy Page

Jeremy Page has been a Director of Studies at IH London since 1995. He has taught and trained in the UK, Italy, France, Hungary, Bulgaria and Argentina, and lives in Sussex.

If the quality gurus, from Deming to Peters, agree on one thing above all others, it is that quality is not an option. The pursuit of quality is an essential, probably the essential component of success. In the cut-throat world of 21st century ELT there is a strong case for saying that quality is no longer integral merely to success: it is now integral to survival.

If the quality gurus, from Deming to Peters, agree on one thing above all others, it is that quality is not an option

Yet a lack of commitment to quality assurance at the highest level - governments in power - has bedevilled ELT in the UK for decades. Starting a language school differs little in its essentials from opening a transport café: you find premises, employ staff, attract punters. There is no requirement for anyone opening a language school to have any educational credentials whatsoever. There is no requirement for the school to be accredited or approved by anyone. There is no requirement for the teachers to have either qualifications or experience. Schools may choose to submit themselves to external accreditation, but there is no obligation for them to do so. Hence the existence of a two-tier system: the regulated sector, in which students can expect minimum standards to be met and have means of redress if they aren't, and the unregulated sector, where anything goes. Students attending a non-accredited school may find themselves studying in a small group with a good teacher following a coherent programme of study in premises which are comfortable and appropriate, but experience suggests this is unlikely. Successive governments have fought shy of regulation, presumably fearing the loss of income that would supposedly result. Anyone involved in ELT knows that any short-term loss would be more than offset in the medium to long term by larger student numbers if quality was genuinely assured. As it is, the damage done to the reputation and image of British ELT by cowboy operators is easy to imagine, if hard to calculate. In the global ELT market of the 21st century, where Ireland, Canada, the USA, Australia and New Zealand among others are establishing an ever more impressive reputation for ELT provision, the status quo in the UK is sheer lunacy. Students who are underwhelmed by the course and school they have chosen in the UK may well vote with their feet (and their wallets) but will certainly tell their friends, who will no doubt tell their friends, who...

There is thus a considerable onus on language schools to deliver. Organisations such as ARELS and BASELT (working with the British Council), UCLES, Trinity and the fledgling BIELT are all, in their different ways, working towards quality assurance, but it is schools themselves - and everyone involved in the management of schools - that must take responsibility for delivering a level of service that at the very least meets and satisfies the reasonable expectations of customers. And there is a very strong case for the view that they should aim to do much more than that. While the verb 'delight', which is often used, may smack too much of a blue-rinse response to The Sound of Music, the notion of exceeding the customer's expectations would seem a realistic aspiration. And the business of enrolling for and attending a course of study at a language school involves a number of stages at which the customer's expectations may be exceeded, confounded - or merely met. From initial contact through registration to direct experience of whatever range of services the school provides, there are frequent opportunities for registrars, receptionists, secretaries, accommodation officers, teachers and Directors of Studies to get it right, or horribly wrong.

the notion of exceeding the customer's expectations would seem a realistic aspiration

Yet all too often, even in the accredited sector, the management of schools is seen to collude in the propagation of low standards, usually for reasons of cost. Organisations like ARELS may provide training in various aspects of customer service for member schools, but, where there is a financial implication, it is only too common for the status quo to be allowed to persist. Teachers may commit themselves to continuing professional development through studying for higher qualifications, attending conferences, writing articles or giving talks, but the schools that employ them are often content to reap the reward without contributing anything themselves. ELT practitioners have rarely

been able to aspire to the salaries of, say, estate agents, but it seems particularly callous to add to the injury of low pay and status the insult of ever higher professional expectations.

In a recent article in the EL Gazette, Christopher Hart made the point that internal customers benefit as much as external customers from an organisation's commitment to quality assurance. He wrote: 'You cannot on the one hand demand higher professionalism from employees and on the other regard them as menial contract staff. Why not? Because it is inequitable.

the need for the drive for quality to be embraced at the highest level within organisations is paramount

You also lose loyalty and goodwill. Accomplished individuals will not come into the profession and those that remain will not accept your contracts. The result? You will deprofessionalise ELT.' The staffing dimension is fundamental to the industry's 'coming of age' and the need for the drive for quality to be embraced at the highest level within organisations is paramount. Hart makes a strong case for ELT in the UK moving towards a declaration of minimum professional standards for employers. The European Association for Quality Language Services, with its explicitly formulated staff charter, has shown the way, and the time has clearly come for the UK ELT industry as a whole to follow.

There can be no doubt that there are some very real challenges facing the industry as it enters the 21st century. Compulsory registration of all English language course providers would seem a highly desirable first step. Other measures such as the establishment of a cross-sector forum to review standards of education and employment within the industry and a project to establish the equivalence of existing ELT qualifications with national and international scales would certainly contribute to the raising of the status of English language teaching as a profession. Arguably, however, the most significant factor in the future success or otherwise of ELT in the UK is likely to be a genuine and industry-wide commitment to and embracing of the quality assurance processes that already exist; and the will to make the aspirations expressed in the British Council's English in Britain Accreditation Scheme Handbook - encouragement to maintain high levels of quality and seek continual improvement - the minimum standards the industry expects of itself rather than the expression of some lofty ideal. Marrying the need to provide courses of consistently high quality while obeying the financial imperative to keep costs as low as humanly possible will surely provide the industry with its greatest challenge.

What You've Always Wanted to Know About IH Affiliates....And More!

In our last Issue we asked you to send us descriptions of schools in the International House Worldwide Organisation; you responded with enthusiasm! We had huge fun reading them and laughing over the photos - see the Opole pic; it was good to be in contact with colleagues from all over the world and really gave us a sense of what it means to be part of a world-wide community. We hope you will enjoy them as much as we did.

IH Cordoba

What I most like about living here is...

...the openness and friendliness of the people.
...sitting in the sun in February reading about cold spells in Britain!
...the sense of history of the place, with the great Arabic mosque, Roman ruins, and the cobbled streets in the Jewish quarter.
...the way everyone takes over the streets and life goes on outdoors.
...the great cycling terrain, with the woods and streams of the Sierra hills only half an hour away.
...hearing old church bells ring early on a Sunday morning.
...May in Cordoba, with street festivals, geraniums in flower everywhere, and Sevillanas dancing in the city squares.
...travelling around Andalucia at weekends and discovering castles or pueblos.

What I most like about the school is...

...getting on so well with everyone in all the areas of the school.
...working around a traditional Spanish courtyard surrounded by plants and whitewashed walls.
...the constant exchange of teaching ideas between colleagues.
...Spanish students' open, participative nature.
...working in a school which takes teacher development seriously.
...the opportunity to learn from very experienced teachers how to teach small children.
...meeting up with teachers from IH Seville, Huelva and Malaga for seminars.

The IH Opole

There is no world without Opole's walls

Actually, that isn't strictly true and the truth is important, I feel. The question, with this and all those recruitment brochure type articles, is how to give the facts without sounding like an elementary level 'there is/there are' lesson - "There is a swimming pool, there are two cinemas". In fact, reading through the information stuff of most schools, you'd be forgiven for thinking that the entire recruitment process revolves around the variety of ethnic restaurants in the vicinity of each school.

Well, I hope none of my FCE students read this - over halfway through and I haven't answered the question yet. The blame for that, of course, lies with Rachel and Susanna who were foolish enough to state, "any style you like" and I happen to like aimless waffle. However, there are over 100 potential pieces winging their ways to the Journal so I shall curtail my meanderings and leave you as I started, with a quote, this time from that famous Chinese philosopher Confuscious;

"He who wants to know about IH Opole looks at **www.ih.com.pl/opole"**
The people in the photo are - left to right - Andrew Hollins (now IH Kuala Lumpar), Rod Fricker, David Nicholson (both still IH Opole) and Phil Ladbrook (now IH San Sebastian)

Passnotes: IH Madrid Serrano

So what's with the Serrano part then? Isn't Madrid enough?

Well, there is more than one school in Madrid, you know.

So tell us more.

We're dead in the centre of Madrid just off plaza Colon. There are 42 teachers at the last count, from three different continents ...

Sounds a bit overwhelming. I thought small and friendly was the recipe for success these days.

That's how it started out and we haven't lost that family feeling. You ask any of the teachers who've been here for over ten years why they've stayed.

So what you mean is the staffroom's full of old fogeys.

Not at all, the age ranges from 25 to 45 with the average being about 30.

So what do you all do then to pass the time?

Well there's a lot of English teaching to be done out there: adults, kids, business, exams .. you name it, we teach it.

The school's a bit of a Jack of all trades then?

No, we're carefully structured, well organised with opportunities to develop as teachers and specialise in any areas that we're interested in and let's not forget the weekly seminars which are really useful.

So they don't just leave you to get on with it?

No, one of the things the school prides itself on is the quality of its teacher support.

What's with the management jargon all of a sudden?

No, really, we've got our Director, DOS, Department Heads, ADOSes, Coordinators...

Wow, sounds a bit heavy on the management side. Must be a bit hierarchical!

No, honestly they're really approachable, helpful, relaxed and friendly like everyone else on the staff.

Intuition Languages

Intuition offers, as its name implies, tuition in tutors' homes. Offering hospitality and tuition to a student in your own home can be a most enjoyable experience, for both teacher and student. It's a really special experience which teachers welcome for its flexibility (and the extra income from providing bed and board for very little effort!). You can take students them around your regular stamping ground and involve them in your hobbies and sporting activities. We try to make sure there is a match between student and teacher interests. We make sure there is a constant exchange of ideas and viewpoints between teachers at workshops and social meetings and through a regular newsletter.

The only other affiliate in central London, InTuition set up their shop within the ancient city walls, in an old warehouse building in one of the most newly fashionable areas of London. In our small street alone there are four Art Galleries and one of the best restaurants in the city. The building next door is an old de-consecrated church, which sells architectural salvage such as old pub and church furniture. Our office has a natural frenetic buzz to it, but as our work is primarily over the telephone, we are rather like ducks on a pond, legs thrashing around under water but above all appears calm and serene.

IH Lviv

The school is small and friendly with a staff of 16: the Director, 6 office staff, the DOS and 8 teachers, 2 of them part-time. At the moment, there are only two native speakers on the staff: the DOS and one teacher, but previously this figure was much higher, up to 8. Our students are two-thirds adults and one-third younger learners, who range in age from 5-year-olds to late teenagers. Out of 11 classrooms one, "the Butterfly Room", is specially set for teaching the very young, and two other rooms are equipped with video, one designated for video classes. The school is well-resourced in terms of books and other teaching materials, including a video camera.

We run General English, Younger Learners, Business English and Preparation for the TOEFL.

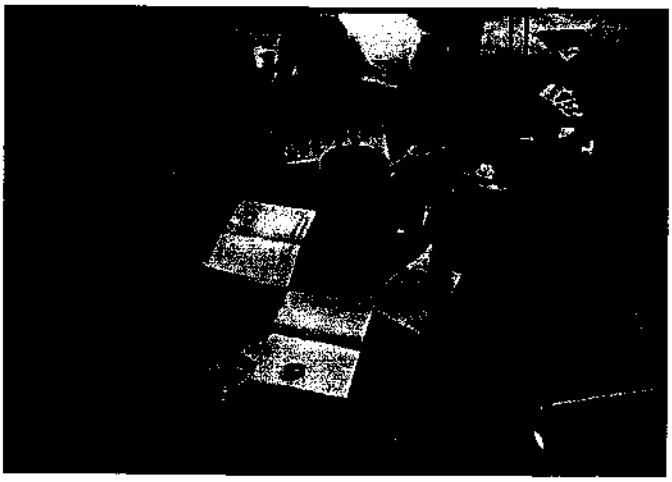
IH Mallorca

A Case of Mistaken Identity?

You know Majorca, of course. It's Union Jack swimming trunks, Man United T-shirts, and pasty-white torsos now glowing vivid red. It's a packed beach of 18-30s doing the "Macarena" and downing pints of Newcastle Brown and sangria. It's all-night discos and all-day hangovers. It's egg and chips and don't give me none of that foreign food, mate. It's "Parma" and shopping in C&As. It's "aggro" tourism and don't mention the war, Basil!

Do you know Mallorca? It's 320 kilometres of magnificent coastline with hidden coves and hideaway beaches. It's a spectacular mountain range with secret villages where the likes of Robert Graves come to live, work and rest in peace. Its 3,640 square metres of breathtaking scenery with extensive olive and orange groves, and almond blossom flowering in spring. It's farmhouses and country estates restored to their former glory. It's agrotourism.

It's Palma and her cathedral, a "vast rose-tinted creation of Gothic grace and beauty. Like a mother she stands by the sea's edge, and like children the buildings of the city gather behind and at her sides." *(1)*. It's Moorish architecture rubbing shoulders with Gaudi and Norman Foster.
It's the product of intermarriage between various types that include Carthaginian, Roman, Moorish and Spanish. It's two



languages - Spanish and Catalan, or is it now four - with English and German? It's an autonomous government trying to cut loose its apron-strings with Madrid.

It's International House: small in size with its five teachers (including, of course, an Englishman, an Irishman and a Scotsman), its Dos, Director and Secretary; but great in spirit as it maintains the standards of excellence in teaching and training. A small but significant gem in the IH World crown.

(1) From "Jogging round Majorca" by Gordon West, 1929

IH Skopje

Forget the selective impression the media gives of the Balkans; Macedonia is a veritable Shangri-La, hidden by mountains, compelling in its beauty. In the summer, those soaring peaks witness paragliders vying for airspace with the eagles. In the winter, skiers weave in and out of packs of wolves and the occasional stray bear, and the ubiquitous dayglo mob. Nearwhile, down on the enormous lakes pastel-shaded fishing boats and men with cormorants search the waters for the delectable freshwater fish that abounds here; and when the summer heat arrives, the beaches are packed out with pagan sun-worshippers. At all times of the year, the bars are the social centres of the cities, flirtation, tomfoolery and amiable confab the order of the day.

The school in Skopje is likewise Balkan-impervious; and the daily toil of inculcating the maddeningly difficult English language into the heads of several hundred diligent students proceeds at a gentle pace, the teachers going about their business with a Buddhist-like calm. And even when the demands of a successful business require a little get up and go, it is all achieved with beatific smiles and unruffled feathers.

So, why not pay us a visit? Pack your skis or parachute, lob on some factor 24 and your personal hangover cure and hopa! Get on that table and DANCE!

What's Going On in the Affiliate Network

New Arrivals

We are delighted to welcome the new affiliate schools in Coimbra - Santa Clara in Portugal, Shanghai and Jinan, Istanbul and Valladolid to our readership. We are looking forward to receiving news, views, descriptions and photos from them as soon as they have a moment.

Website Wonders

The Affiliate website is developing fast. A number of worksheets have been collected for the first version of an online Materials Bank, which will be accessible to all IH teachers and trainers worldwide very soon. Some schools have already been very generous in sharing material and the team hope to be able to add many more in the near future. If you're interested in seeing what's there, go to www.ihworld.com click on the button marked 'affiliates', enter your user name and password and choose which materials you want to look at.

The IH Teacher Training Steering Group

Roger Hunt contributes this report:

The first meeting of the TT Steering Group took place on the 7th and 8th of September at International House London. Attending were: Heather Bedell (IH Milan); Jon Butt (IH Wroclaw); Michael Carrier (Affiliate Network); Antonia Clare (Affiliate Network); Paula De Nagy (IH Lisbon); Roger Hunt (IH London) and Jim Scrivener (IH Budapest).

The aim of forming the Steering Group is to co-ordinate developments within teacher training in the World Organisation and to design a professional development path for IH Teachers, Teacher Trainers and Directors of Studies which we hope all schools will take on board. At the same time we hope to provide standardisation of the International House Certificate course (which should make the qualification more transparent to School Directors and Educational Authorities), and to implement some new courses for which we feel there is a need.

Consequently our main points of discussion were:

- A new Director of Studies course which will take place in IH London immediately after the DOS Conference in January.
- A re-launch of the IHC (under a new name) with an agreed core syllabus and assessment criteria.
- The implementation of a career path for teachers using the IH Budapest model as a starting point.
- The provision of three new distance training courses intended for inexperienced teachers in Teaching Business English, Teaching Younger Learners and Using Computers in the Language Classroom.
- Approval processes and procedures for those wishing to train as teacher trainers.

There was considerable lively discussion on these points and a surprising amount of agreement. By the end of the meeting we each took responsibility for fully documenting one or more of the main points of discussion for a presentation at both the DOS and Directors' conferences in 2001. We intend that some of the new courses will be on offer after Christmas and we hope that Directors will agree to implement the career path processes in the 2001 academic year.

IH Partnership Projects

By Steve Brent

Steve Brent joined International House London as Director, IH London in January 2000. Since his arrival he has moved office twice and is this week to be found in the somewhat spartan accommodation of the ex-bookshop on 106 Piccadilly. Of the many projects he is tackling, the partnerships between International House and other organisations which he outlines below, are of special importance to the development of the organisation.

Aston University: Language Studies Unit (LSU)

IH London has a signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the LSU. The rationale behind this Memorandum is to "identify areas of common interest and reach agreement on the ways in which the two institutions might co-operate in the field of teacher development..." In practical terms this has meant:

- People successfully completing the IH London Diploma in Educational Management gain credits towards Aston's MSc TESOL.
- IH staff collaborating with Aston to write modules for the MSc TESOL thereby expanding module choice. Maureen McGarvey (IH London) and Paula de Nagy (IH Lisbon) are writing double modules in Management and Young Learners respectively.
- Discounts for IH staff taking the MSc TESOL.
- Setting up a Teacher Training Steering Group (See Roger's 'artical' on page) with a view to gaining accreditation from Aston of the IH Certificate.

The British Council

This year IH London and the British Council started talks about jointly producing a CD ROM / web-based Distance Learning DELTA to replace the current Distance Learning DTEFLA (now in its final year). This seemed a natural partnership given that approximately half the candidates on the Distance programme are from British Council Teaching Centres. Subject to contract, this programme will be piloted next spring and go live in September 2001.

Watch this space!

An honour for Pam Walsh

Douglas S Crawford

Douglas is the CEO of ASC International House Geneva

Pamela Walsh was born, bred and educated in Yorkshire and taught French to the children of miners before moving to Geneva in the late Sixties. In 1974, she founded her own school, ASC, and set about promoting the teaching of the English language in Geneva. The school has grown steadily from humble beginnings and now provides employment for more than 80 people, many of whom are British by birth. Her success in business is an achievement in itself but much more important than this is the way in which this success has been achieved. By nature a giver rather than a taker, Pamela has spent the last 25 years looking after the personal and professional welfare of all of those fortunate enough to be around her. Her success in business brought with it a high profile which she has always shamelessly used to help others less fortunate than herself.

Her dedication to others rather than to self makes her an outstanding example and role model for all of us. The school has gone from strength to strength and now offers six languages to all kinds of clients. In pure business terms, it could have grown more quickly and could have made much more profit along the way but this was never the reason for starting the school. It was to unite a band of highly trained and professional teachers, capable of meeting the often bizarre needs of the international and commercial community in Geneva, and to offer high quality service and help to those who needed it.

Always a champion of personal development, Pamela has invested vast amounts of money in staff training in order to ensure that the teachers in her school can also continue to grow and to pass this development on to others. She has also been extremely active in giving workshops to teachers outside of her school and in many cases to teachers from rival schools!

To portray Pamela Walsh as a well-meaning academic would totally de-value the huge contribution which she has made to the lives of literally hundreds of teachers and students. Always exhausted, always late because she always books too much into her diary, she puts her causes first and her health and welfare second. Her causes extend far beyond the walls of her school.

A leading member of the church, she will often be found playing the organ in church on Sunday at the end of an exhausting week. Pamela was instrumental in the setting up of the Centre d'Echanges Pédagogiques (CEP) in Geneva, an organisation which brings together schools and teachers from all sectors in order to share knowledge, ideas, inspiration and equipment. Pamela also has a leading role in the Association Genevoise d'Ecoles Privées (AGEP) the association of Cantonal schools.

Although British through and through, she has also become accepted as a leading light of the Geneva academic fraternity, due mainly to her willingness to share and to work for the benefit of all.

Still in Geneva, Pamela is also a leading member of GEDS, the Geneva English Drama Society as well as GAOS, the Geneva Amateur Operatic Society, of which her husband Richard is also chairman.

Outside of Geneva, she also has two high profile roles within the British Swiss Chamber of Commerce. As Chairman of the Education Committee, she has been responsible for revitalising the image of the BSCC in the eyes of business and for giving this organisation a much more prominent role in the field of company training. Pamela is also the Vice President of the BSCC, the first woman to hold this position - no mean feat in such a male-dominated environment.

All of the above doesn't even begin to tell the whole story. As our Director General, she is our vision and our inspiration. She sees the best in everyone and is always keen to help staff to realise their full potential. Even in this year of Silver Jubilee celebrations, she is busy giving herself lots of extra work on behalf of others. Rather than celebrate with lots of expensive, self-congratulatory parties, Pamela decided that the 25th would give us the ideal excuse to ask the wealthy business community in Geneva to help us raise funds to build and equip two girls' schools in rural India. Having shared her vision with her staff and motivated everyone around her, the school has been busy with a host of fund raising events this year. Pamela visited the sites in person in January and has been the driving force behind the whole project. A range of events have been organised and some have already taken place, the highlight so far being a gala evening for Geneva's elite in the company of Sir Peter Ustinov, with all monies raised going directly to the projects.

This whole project is typical of Pamela Walsh. Grateful for her own good fortune and her health, her role is to help others less fortunate than herself and to run a school worthy of the name.

This is the text of the official press release issued when the news of her OBE broke:

We are delighted to announce that Pamela Walsh, Founder and Director General of ASC International House Geneva, is to be honoured by the Queen and will receive the award of O.B.E. News of this honour was released from Buckingham Palace on

Saturday 17 June and Pamela will receive her award from the Queen in person at the end of October.
This honour recognises the huge amount of time and energy which Pamela has devoted to her educational vocation during the last 26 years as well as her tireless work for charity.

Pamela was nominated for the award by her staff and on being given the news was quoted as saying

" It is a wonderful honour to receive recognition from your own country when you have spent much of your life a long way from home. I am fortunate to be surrounded by a wonderful team of people who give their heart and soul to turn my dreams into reality and this award pays tribute to their hard work and dedication. At ASC, we help people to realise their own individual potential and from small and humble beginnings; this commitment to our students has seen our school grow to be one of the top language learning centres in the world. To be able to mix business with helping others is a wonderful feeling and I feel very fortunate in this respect."

Having raised funds to help build and equip 3 girls' schools in India (a novel way to celebrate the silver jubilee of ASC) Pamela now plans to set up a charitable foundation to help fund educational projects in the poorer areas of the world."

The Ben Warren – International House Trust

The Ben Warren - International House Trust has been set up as a memorial to the life and work of Ben Warren, who was killed while attending the annual International House Director's Conference in London, in May 1991. Ben was one of the key figures in the growth and development of International House.

He was personally responsible for starting or developing fourteen International House schools in Spain, and he also provided an unquantifiable amount of help and advice to many other International House affiliates in other parts of the world. Without Ben's involvement and support, International House may not have developed into the "power house" in the world of language teaching and teacher training that it has in fact become.

Ben Warren

Ben was born in Tunbridge Wells in 1943. He took a degree in Geography at Cambridge and then became one of John and Brita Haycraft's first properly trained teachers. His first teaching post was in IH Algiers, after which he moved back to IH London, where he met his future wife, Carmen, who was one of his students. In 1968, at the age of 25, Ben was appointed Director of International House Tripoli. He was on the verge of opening a second school in Benghazi when Gadaffi's revolution took place. People with names like Benjamin became the subject of round the clock police surveillance so Ben and Carmen decided to leave. Ben's next assignment was as Director of Business English at International House Paris, but it wasn't long before he decided that it was time to start a school of his own. This first school was opened in 1971 in the industrial town of Sabadell, near Barcelona. IH Sabadell was soon a success and over the next twenty years Ben built a substantial business empire which included fourteen equally successful language schools, a book shop, a company promoting language courses abroad, a magazine for teachers and students and a printing business. Ben was fortunate in so far as his business acumen led him to start a school in the right place at the right time; but he was also the right person in the right place at the right time: many other people had the same opportunities as Ben, but none came anywhere near to equalling his achievements. Ben's business successes were based on a remarkable combination of personal qualities. These included almost limitless energy and a corresponding capacity to work hard for long hours, the ability to pick out and retain important details without getting clouded the broader picture, an unshakable sense of what was fair and reasonable, a commitment to honesty in his dealings, and a wisdom which was partly based on his business experience but also partly innate. His advice was always reliable and his judgments thoughtfully made. When he died - aged just 48, he left an immediate family of a wife and three children; he also left an "extended family" which included many hundreds of friends, colleagues, employees and admirers. All of these people benefitted in one way or another from knowing Ben and many of them have contributed directly towards setting up the Ben Warren - International House Trust.

The Ben Warren - International House Trust Prize

The idea of establishing a Trust in Ben's name surfaced almost immediately after he was killed. The difficult part was to decide how the Trust could be best used as a vehicle to commemorate Ben's work and consequently, what the Trust's aims of the Trust should be. There was no shortage of suggestions but eventually it was decided that perhaps the most effective way to achieve the desired aims would be to set up a fund which could be used to finance an award, to be known as the "Ben Warren - International House Trust Prize". It was also decided that the prize should be awarded on an annual basis to the author or authors of the most outstanding work in the field of language teacher education.

Teacher education has always been at the heart of the International House World Organisation. The RSA/UCLES CTEFLA, which is the most highly respected training course for EFL teachers ever developed, is based squarely on the pioneering work of John and Brita Haycraft at International House, and IH is still widely regarded as the foremost language teacher training organisation in the world. Ben Warren was also

dedicated to the idea of improving the standards of language teaching through teacher education. The Teacher Training Department at International House Barcelona - which is the largest training centre of its kind outside the UK - is a vibrant testimony to Ben's commitment to this idea, and so it seemed entirely appropriate that the prize should be awarded to someone working in this field.

The prize - which is a cash prize of £2,000 - is presented during the International House Directors' Conference, which is held annually in May. Candidates must submit three copies of their work - which needn't necessarily have been published - by 31st December of the previous year. A panel of judges consisting of one representative from IH London, one representative from IH Barcelona and a third person who is not directly connected with International House, evaluates all the entries and the finalists are announced at the end of March.

It is our hope and expectation that the Ben Warren - International House prize will quickly become established as the most highly esteemed award in its field. It will then constitute a suitable memorial to the life and work of a remarkable man.

To submit an entry for the Ben Warren - International House Trust Prize, please complete the application form (opposite), then send one copy of the form and the work to International House Barcelona, and two more copies of both the form and the work to London. The addresses to which entries should be sent are as follows:
Ben Warren - International House Trust Prize
Ben Warren - IH Trust Prize

International House
Trafalgar 14, 08010
Barcelona,
Spain

Affiliate Network
106 Piccadilly
London W1J 7NL,
England

All other correspondence concerning the Ben Warren - International House Trust should be addressed to:

The Board of Trustees,
c/o International House Barcelona,
Trafalgar 14, entlo., 08010 Barcelona, Spain,
Tel +34 93 26845 11,
Fax +34 93 268 02 39,
E-mail: ihbarcelona@bcn.ihes.com

The Prizewinner was announced by Ben Warren's son at the award ceremony, held during the IH Affiliate Schools Directors Conference in May 2000. Amid a hubbub of chat it was splendid to hear that the prize had been won by one of the Editorial Board and a contributor to this issue: **Scott Thornbury.**

The Ben Warren - International House Trust Prize
Application Form

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This Year's Shortlist:

Classroom Decision-Making: negotiation and process syllabuses in practice

Michael Breen and Andrew Littlejohn (C.U.P) 2000

Much theoretical discourse on involving students in decision making regarding syllabus and process has been available for some time. Finally, Breen and Littlejohn provide descriptions of this in practice. The book is essentially a collection of sixteen accounts of experiments involving students in the management of their language courses. The accounts cover a very wide range of contexts including primary, secondary and tertiary age groups and teacher education from the UK, Europe, the USA, South America and Asia.

The book starts with an excellent introductory chapter which includes much that has been said before, see for example Thomas and Legutke 'Process And Experience In The Language Classroom' Longman 1991. However, I have never read such a wide-ranging and complete account which includes references to psychology, philosophy and political history as influences in the current world of language teaching and learning. If you would like to know how the French revolution influenced our classroom practices this is the book to read. Bertrand Russell's name is not as often associated with language teaching as with philosophy and physics, but here he is. John Dewey is probably better known for his thoughts on emergent democracy than his ideas about how to teach grammar but here he is as well.

Breen and Littlejohn cite the more expected contributions of such writers as Maslow, Rogers, Stevick and Moskovitz. Summerhill's A.S. Neill is also included. Although the 'history' ranges from Vygotsky to David Nunan it is not as all-encompassing as Howat's A History Of English Language Teaching (OUP 1984), which begins in the 17th century with Nicholas Clennard's splendid account of how he caused his students' ears to be 'assailed by Latin, and nothing but Latin' while he 'stood by and made the thing more apparent by gesticulation' - an early form of 'Comprehensible Input' that surely must appeal to Steven Krashen? 'Principles And Practice in SLA' OUP 1982. However, this is not just an historical account - the ways in which these writers thoughts have influenced the practice of forms of negotiation is made clear not just in the introduction but also in the sixteen accounts themselves. Breen and Littlejohn describe three main types of negotiation: Personal (what I -the student- think about it), Interactive (how the student's ideas interrelate with the teacher's) and Procedural (how we put it all into effect). Again, much has been written on this before, but, in my view, largely from the perspective of what the academic thinks is good for the student (and teacher) with no follow up account of implementation in the classroom. Here we have those missing follow-up accounts.

This short review may make the book sound a bit of a dry historical account with little practical relevance - the book is not. The sixteen accounts read as genuine reflections of actual class practice, these experiments happened and they are described with warts and all. There is literally something for everyone here, but those teachers thinking of taking the Dip in the not too distant future would gain a great deal from dipping (sorry!) into this book. For others who would like to know where we all came from and, perhaps, where we might all be going, have a look and try out some of the experiments described with your classes. Candlin (The Communicative Teaching Of English,' (Longman 1981) said "any pre-designed syllabus was rendered redundant from the moment teacher and students began working" – if this strikes a chord with you, you are in good company - particularly with Breen and Littlejohn and the other authors in this book. I enjoyed it. I hope you will too. (RH)

Bibliography

Candlin – *The communicative Teaching of English.* Longman 1981

Howatt – *A History of English Language Teaching.* OUP (1984)

Krashen – *Principles and Practice in SLA.* OUP(1982)

Legutke and Thomas – *Process and Experience In the Language classroom.* Longman (1991)

How to Teach Grammar

Scott Thornbury (Longman 1999)

"Voted a fave read by Diploma candidates, a great popularist with a robust and engaging writing style, a stimulator of wide and lively debate, able to mediate between the ivory tower and the chalk face, all in all deserving of our gratitude"

....words written by, not about, Scott Thornbury, this year's winner of the Ben Warren International House Trust Prize, with his latest title *'How to Teach Grammar'*, Longman 1999. However, with a long list of published articles and books behind him and a strong reputation as a plenary speaker, the time has come when Thornbury's description of the work of Michael Lewis should now be turned on himself.

At the prize-giving ceremony in London, it fell to me, as one of the judges of the competition, to say a few words about this book. "Disappointing," I said, and among the hubbub and the wine, that is all that some people heard. Earlier this year at the IATEFL conference in Dublin, Thornbury compared discrete item grammar teaching to a packet of Chicken McNuggets: bite-sized, digestible ... edible, but not necessarily what you would choose to eat, all other things being equal. Provocative stuff, and I was expecting and hoping for equal provocation in this book. I was hoping for an eloquent trashing of a number of grammatical and pedagogical betes noires, but disappointed as I was, the great strength of this book is that it eschews entertaining but easy diatribes, presenting its case gently,

coherently, but forcefully nevertheless.

It avoids the heavy modality (needs, musts, shoulds) of so much applied linguistics (see for example a recent article by David Nunan on 'Teaching Grammar in Context' in ELTJ), preferring instead to invite readers to make their own judgements about approaches to teaching grammar in the context of their own teaching environments.

The book is organised in two ways. On one level, there is a textual and topical progression dealing with all the areas one might expect: the nature of grammar, reasons for teaching it, ways of teaching, practising, correcting and testing it, integrating grammar into the syllabus. Each of the ten chapters is accompanied by a photocopiable worksheet. Some of these will prove popular with teachers and educators trainers. Among my favourites are a task where you are asked to analyse a transcription of classroom interaction to see how a teacher responds to errors, and another where you turn a PPP-type lesson into something more task-based.

However, likely to prove more popular with trainers, trainees and teachers are the lesson plans or frames (sometimes as many as 6 in one chapter) that can be found throughout. As models to imitate or as templates to experiment with, it is these, I suspect, that will find their way, unattributed and photocopied, to classrooms and staffrooms around the world.

The second way in which the book is organised is through its critical stance. Each approach to grammar that is introduced is evaluated in terms of economy, ease, efficacy and appropriacy. With great clarity and precision of argument, the book is stimulating to read, easy to find your way around and immensely practical, in a theoretical kind of way.

Reprints won't be long in coming - if there's only one thing you read about your work this year, it should be this.
(PK)

Alive to Language

Val Arndt, Paul Harvey and John Nuttall (CUP) 1999

I enjoyed reading this book and I enjoyed reading it for several different reasons. I like reading ELT books which attempt to rise above practical issues or which go beyond, in this case well beyond, research results. This is a book with noble aims.
I also enjoyed it because of the range of authentic language examples - the extracts from newspapers, magazines and a wide variety of other text types were usually entertaining - and because of the tasks which I, the reader, was being asked to do. I normally execrate these interactive books for teachers. But this time I found myself actually doing the tasks with a will and then becoming absorbed in the commentaries, provided with, or as answers to the tasks.

But even more importantly, I am deeply sympathetic to the questioning nature of the book: as any trainee who has participated in one of my courses will know, I prefer questions to answers, riddles to solutions, and here is a book full of questions and puzzles. I will certainly use this book in preparing and delivering training courses.

Alive to Language is a series of illustrated, interactive essays in Language Awareness for language teachers, going well beyond the standard reference works to provide a broad view, based on language within socio-cultural dimensions. It claims to help teachers by increasing awareness of the way language actually works.

But how much help does it actually give? In baldly practical terms, precious little, and I do mean precious. It helps to clear up confusion about discourse analysis, with a few easy-to-cope-with definitions which clarify without over-simplifying; and it sorts out style and register, I would like to say once and for all, but I suspect that the confusion will stagger on.
It also gives practical help in analysing and evaluating course books: I will be making extensive use of the relevant section in Diploma courses since this is an area where the concise, succinct bringing together of ideas has been long overdue.

Then there is a useful list of words which teachers use when dealing with learners' grammar: an excellent starting point for thinking about teaching and learning, and some similarly excellent food for thought around alternative approaches to teaching grammar.

Help crosses over to warning, as the authors remind us how grammar books don't give the whole picture or even the truth and, more sombrely, how we teachers must "be alive to language and its power, not least because (we) are the ones with the language power"

But, as I have already hinted by showing how the help in this book comes, as often as not, in the form of starting points for thinking, the authors' main aim seems to be to stimulate discussion and debate.

Discussion ranges from the philosophical 'What is correct and who says so?' and, more abstractly 'What is grammar?' via the practical 'To what extent should teachers attempt to include the socio-cultural dimension and to what extent do learners want to participate in the L2 culture?', 'To what extent do we have to compromise in reducing discourse for teaching purposes?' to the political 'In what ways is language inclusive or exclusive?' 'Whose language is English anyway'. We are also, perhaps inevitably, enjoined to debate issues of sexism (or should we say 'genderism' now?) in language.

All noble stuff, then, and, to me, engaging and mind-moving. My interest grows precisely where the book moves far enough away from the classroom for echoes of chalk and drilling no

longer to be heard, where no learner can get in the way of studious reflection or interrupt after-dinner repartee and intellectual discussion with some severely practical demands.

I suspect, however, that trainees might not be so enthusiastic, just as trainees in the courses I run eventually get fed up with being challenged by questions and problems, begging for at least some answers and solutions.

I also worry that this book adds, albeit excellently, to the large corpus of work that deals with what we teach rather than who or how. The significance of this addition to our knowledge and awareness of language should not be underestimated; but neither should it deflect us from what, I feel, still constitutes the main focus of our endeavours - how to have some effect on our learners. (PR)

Other Book Reviews

Assessing Vocabulary John Read. (CUP) 2000

"...after many years of neglect, the study of vocabulary in applied linguistics is now flourishing" (Alderson and Bachman, series editors). This book looks at recent developments in vocabulary research in Second Language Acquisition and suggests that, while in many ways we are moving towards a more holistic view of language, our assessment of learners' vocabulary is still very much rooted in discrete item, selective and context-independent traditions. In particular, Read takes into account findings from computer corpus analysis when proposing a framework for expanding the old to accommodate the new. Refreshingly undogmatic in his attitude. Read covers the background to vocabulary testing, research into its acquisition and use and weighs up the validity of conventional methods of assessment versus that effected via the integrative performance of tasks. Four case studies of traditional tests are presented, and then the issues involved in comprehensive measures of testing are discussed.

This book would logically be of interest to those directly involved in testing, but also to teachers who embrace an element of lexicalism' in their teaching and want to extend this to their assessment of students. Assessment-specific terminology is concisely and clearly defined, which helps to make this a highly readable book. (PB)

Inside Out Intermediate Student's Book

Sue Kay and Vaughan Jones (Palgrave) 2000

In terms of graphics this book looks bright, colourful, interesting; but all current coursebooks look that way. Yet there is something extra here: topics are 'edgier' than usual (for coursebooks tend to be bland in order to cater to an international market): Women with bloodied hands at an animal rights demo, Jack Nicholson behaving badly, rubric that invites students to recall their first crush, first kiss, first broken heart.

Topic-wise, then, this is a little more interesting than most. There is also a more personal and intimate feel to the "personalised speaking tasks" as they are called: they concern dreams, fears, childhood, old age and moods.

Language is parcelled into no-nonsense categories: it is unusual to see that traditional threesome, Grammar, Lexis and Pronunciation, used as a basis for a coursebook, and I like it. Naturally Grammar focus is exploratory and student based; Lexis is, of course, presented collocationally; Pronunciation is attitudinal (showing empathy etc.)

I have seen this book delivered successfully by trainee teachers on preliminary training courses; and (for all my experience) I would like to use it myself. (RB)

Innovations

Hugh Dellar and Darryl Hocking (LTP) 2000

This book has caused some heated staff room discussions! On the one hand, from a teacher who used it on a TT course, we have this opinion:

At last, a 'lexically based' course book! I have long been a believer in the lexical approach and have enjoyed incorporating it into my teaching for years. I had also never come across a course book from LTP before. So when I discovered Innovations and was offered the opportunity to use it I leapt at it like a shot / my mouth started watering at just the thought! I couldn't wait to get my teeth into it (good lexical chunks there).

At first sight, its glossy cover and 'real photos' of people in up-to-date, interesting situations (for example three topless men at a rave, women boxers and a several lots of body piercing and tattoos) make the book really attractive. At the start of each unit is something else which caught my eye immediately - the language strip: a series of statements relating to the topic of the unit and which are lexically interesting and natural (for example in the Big Decisions unit - 'It just feels the right thing to do' - or in the Cars and Cities unit - 'Just ban all cars, full stop!'). The authors offer this as an extra resource to help the teacher encourage students to 'notice' the language. Great idea.

Innovations presents the new language in a wide range of unusual topics such as supermarket dating, clearing chewing gum off the streets and chat rooms. Within each unit we find tiny paragraphs containing reference to and explanations of 'real English' (eg 'dishy', 'My car cost over two grand' and 'Tell me about it!') including appropriacy of the new language.

The authors ensured that the grammatical items that one would expect in a course book at this level were also integrated in the syllabus. They have provided lots of opportunity to discuss language and 'notice' how it works.

In addition to the course book, there is a workbook with a vast supply of exercises that students can work on at home, and a very comprehensive teachers' book, full of suggestions on how to use the material in the course book.

So, lots of good things. However, beyond these, I found the book disappointing. Each unit follows the same format with very little skills work and a layout that is extremely hard to use. It is possibly unfortunate that I chose to use this for the first time with trainees since both they, and indeed I, found it problematic to timetable from, due to a lack of context for individual lexical chunks, minimal practice ideas and its rather 'bitty' feel (other very experienced colleagues who felt positive about the book all mentioned that it could be better used as a supplementary book for this reason).

A pity! I was so looking forward to devouring these lexical chunks wholeheartedly with my students and trainees and instead we came away knowing that we would have to supplement that diet so heavily that we would lose our appetites long before the end of the course. (DJ)

On the other hand from someone who used it to introduce the lexical approach to trainees on a CertTEB course, we have this:

At last, a general English coursebook with a lexical syllabus, which also manages to integrate the usual areas of grammar found in materials at Intermediate level.

The focus is primarily on lexical chunks, moving from there to an awareness of grammatical patterns. I particularly like the inclusion of so much really common language that has been largely ignored by coursebook writers.

The layout of the book is user-friendly, and the lexically rich texts make for very flexible material, allowing the teacher a considerable choice of language focus. If there was ever a book designed to genuinely help students to break through the Intermediate plateau, and not simply to go over the same old grammar, this seems to be it. I very much look forward to using it in my own lessons. (NH)

Read it, try it, make up your own mind, tell us what you think!

Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary (OUP) 2000

I have always been a great fan of this dictionary and constantly recommend it to higher level students. So, when the latest edition arrived on my desk, I was keen to see how it could possibly be any better.

Amazingly, it is...much! As the title promises, the focus is more than ever on helping the learner. The dictionary feels much more user-friendly in the increased size of its print and the reduction in the wordiness of definitions. Some explanations are now done diagramatically and a contents page, which did not exist in the previous edition, has been added to the central study pages. Another improvement is that these are on blue paper, which differentiates them from the rest of the dictionary and also makes the text leap off the page at the reader.

The learner can further benefit from the many useful help notes which highlight difficult language areas (eg 'most' – 'What did you enjoy (the) most?' 'It was what she wanted most of all.' 'The' is often left out in informal English.). In addition to these, the learner can find usage notes in boxes that inform them about;

- vocabulary or grammar issues (eg neither/either)
- differences between British and American English
- how to build on their existing knowledge of culture
- how to increase their wealth of lexis (eg alternatives to the word 'thing' or 'nice').

The topics and layout of the sixth edition have been updated. There are numerous colour illustrations as well as more topical black and white ones – I particularly liked the detailed, computer-related visuals including the Internet, and the examples of different types of hairstyles such as flat top, cread-locks, permed hair and a man with a ponytail. The study notes section now includes faxes, memos, e-mails and CVs (something my students are always asking for help with).

But maybe best of all are the real up-to-date language entries such as 'in-your-face', 'trolley rage', 'What are you on?', '-ish', 'designer drugs' and 'multi-skilling' which have taken the place of pages on the Commonwealth, chemical symbols and ranks in the armed forces. Good decision there!

So, I will definitely continue to recommend the Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary to my students - and now that the new Millennium edition is out, even more so! (RC)

New Headway Elementary and Pre-Intermediate

By John and Liz Soars (OUP) 2000

Following the up-dating of the Intermediate and Upper-Intermediate books, John and Liz Soars complete the series with the last two instalments. Those familiar with Headway (and who isn't?) will still recognize this old ELT chestnut, but may be pleasantly surprised by the authors' attempts to freshen it up with new texts, brighter pages and, best of all, a Teacher's Resource Book.

Teachers whose institutions use Headway will no doubt be overjoyed to have new topics and materials to work with: gone is Tina Stanley, the whingeing violinist of Unit 6, Headway Pre, and bane of my early-years-post-CTEFLA life! The man from Headway Elementary with a job in England AND a job in France has been reincarnated as Seamus McSporran (honest!), the man with thirteen jobs. Titles have replaced the numbered units, so Unit 13 of Elementary is no longer called 'Unit 13', but 'How terribly clever!". Indeed.

The novelty of these 'New' books involves little more than a fresh lick of paint, and to be fair to the authors, that is all that was intended. What is disappointing is the authors' claim to have balanced their structural-syllabus-with-skills with "approaches... which have been developed and researched more recently". Presumably this means including the first 'Test' phase in the Test-Teach-Test cycle which was also introduced in the New Intermediate edition - hardly revolutionary, but an improvement on the staid Presentation-Practice-And-Now-Here-Are-Some-Skills format. Vocabulary work is still dealt with in terms of discrete items; the learner-training element has actually been reduced; texts are used as a means of comprehension-testing and as lead-ins to discussion, but there is still very little which enables learners to develop their sub-skills. Teaching still seems to take precedence over learning in the New Headway series.

New Headway will undoubtedly continue to be as popular both in the UK and abroad as the old one was; the structural syllabus suits many newly trained teachers as it is easy to handle and requires little thought, and institutions love it for much the same reason - why change the habit of a lifetime? (PB)

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