

ELT-39

Pre-sessional Courses for Overseas Students

Milestones in ELT

Milestones in ELT

The British Council was established in 1934 and one of our main aims has always been to promote a wider knowledge of the English language. Over the years we have issued many important publications that have set the agenda for ELT professionals, often in partnership with other organisations and institutions.

As part of our 75th anniversary celebrations, we re-launched a selection of these publications online, and more have now been added in connection with our 80th anniversary. Many of the messages and ideas are just as relevant today as they were when first published. We believe they are also useful historical sources through which colleagues can see how our profession has developed over the years.

Pre-sessional Courses for Overseas Students

This 1978 title offers a snapshot of English teaching practices for overseas students in the UK in the late 1970s. The book is a collection of edited papers from the national seminar, Pre-sessional English courses for Overseas Students in Higher Education held at the University of Manchester in April 1977. The seminar was organised by SELMOUS (The Group for Special English Language Materials for Overseas University Students), which had been founded in 1972 and was the forerunner of what is now BALEAP. In his Introduction, RR Jordan refers to the wide range of innovative work being carried out in the UK in the fields of social English, study skills and English for specific purposes. Topics covered by the papers in this book include: assessing and accommodating students' language needs and levels of proficiency; course and syllabus design; pronunciation activities; study skills; the teaching of social skills and social English; and materials production.

An Occasional Paper
Pre-session Courses
for Overseas Students
ETIC publications



The British Council
ENGLISH TEACHING INFORMATION CENTRE

ETIC Occasional Paper
Pre-sessional Courses
for Overseas Students

ISBN 0 900229 51 9

**© The British Council, 1978
Produced in England by The British Council,
Printing and Publishing Department, London
3M/4/78**

CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction R R Jordan	5
<u>Framework of Pre-sessional Courses</u>	
Placing Students on Pre-sessional English Courses Frances M Bissell	7
Pre-sessional Course Design R R Jordan	10
<u>Social English and Orientation</u>	
Linguistic and Social Orientation R J Collet	16
Overseas Students versus the Local Dialect Olivia Farrington	20
The Social English Component of a Pre-sessional Course Keith Johnson	25
<u>Study Skills</u>	
Testing for Study Skills: A Prototype J C Higgins & Judith E Davis	33
Lecture Comprehension and Note-Taking Alan Matthews	40
The Production of Academic Writing Materials Keith Johnson	48
Report Writing A Dudley-Evans	54
Seminar Discussion Strategies Catherine Johns	60
Seminar Strategies: Asking for Repetition or Clarification G Cawood	64
Seminar Strategies: Agreement and Disagreement Janet E Price	67
Jigsaw Listening and Parallel Listening Gill Sturtridge	71
Projects Pauline Robinson	75
<u>Subject-Specific Materials</u>	
Materials for Students of Textiles and Related Subjects R A Knight	79
An English Language Course for Post- graduates in Management Science Catherine Johns	85
Common-Core EST Materials Jonathan Trench	96
The Interpretation of Diagrams, Graphs and Tables T J Gerighty	100

INTRODUCTION

R R Jordan

Department of Education, University of Manchester

'Pre-Sessional English Courses for Overseas Students in Higher Education' was the title given to a national seminar convened at the University of Manchester, 21st - 23rd April, 1977. The Seminar was held in response to the growing interest in such courses and especially interest in such areas of teaching, materials and organisation as Social English, Study Skills and English for Specific Purposes (E.S.P.). The edited papers from the seminar that appear in this collection reflect the variety of approach that is feasible in these areas and given an indication of the experimentation that is taking place in the production of teaching materials.

The seminar was organised by the SELMOUS Group (The Group for Special English Language Materials for Overseas University Students). SELMOUS consists of university lecturers who hold special posts established to provide help for overseas (postgraduate) students who generally speak English as a Foreign Language. In addition to teaching, the lecturers investigate the language needs of the students, and carry out the applied research necessary for the production of teaching materials both for the classroom and the language laboratory to meet these needs.

The SELMOUS Group, to date, has members from the Universities of Aston-in-Birmingham, Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Reading and also from the University College at Buckingham. The Group had its first meeting at the University of Birmingham in June, 1972 and since then has met regularly at different member Universities to exchange information, ideas and teaching materials.

The wider interest in the types of activities with which SELMOUS concerns itself resulted in the decision to organise national seminars: the one in Manchester is the second such to be arranged. The 'wider interest' was also clearly shown in the first paper to be delivered at the seminar by Janet Price of the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. This was entitled 'The Structure of Existing Pre-Sessional Courses' and was based on a survey of courses already in existence in Britain. Descriptions of courses in nineteen establishments in both the public and the private sectors of education were included.

An attempt was made to compare and contrast aspects of the various courses from the point of view of background, administrative organisation, course aims, materials used, types of student and so on, and to draw general conclusions about course patterns and future developments.

This paper is not included in this collection as it is to be published separately by the British Council as a SELMOUS/-ETIC guide to pre-sessional English courses; it will include information on all the courses currently in existence in Britain.

PLACING STUDENTS ON PRE-SESSIONAL ENGLISH COURSES

Frances M Bissell
Technical Cooperation Training Department
The British Council

The following is based entirely on personal observations made over the last four years during my involvement in placing students on pre-sessional English courses. There are no policy statements on behalf of the British Council contained in my comments.

In the British Council a number of departments administer awards, scholarships and fellowships to overseas students. Some are financed by the British Council itself such as scholars, visitors and bursars, some are financed by the student's own government these are what we call the private scholars, and some are financed by outside agencies such as OECD, Council of Europe, WHO, United Nations and the ODM. For 1974/75 the total number of scholars from overseas administered by the Council under a variety of schemes was 26,541. In 1975/76 the number was 28,772. The number coming under the British Technical Cooperation Scheme was 4,097 and these awards were administered by Technical Cooperation Training Department. A very small number compared to the 90,000 plus overseas students who are here at any one time. Of course we realise that nothing like this number is in need of pre-session English; perhaps one quarter, if our own operation is anything to go by. The British Council places about 500 on pre-sessional English courses each summer.

It will be useful to have a rough break-down of subject area for the 4,000 in 1975/76; 306 were in the field of agriculture, 210 in arts and humanities, 602 in education, 341 in medicine, 942 in science and technology and 1,696 in social studies.

So, what we have at this time every year are application papers relating to a heterogeneous group - of mixed nationalities and language backgrounds, of mixed ability and of various subject interests, who need, in a given period of time to become linguistically equipped to derive the maximum benefit from their period of study in the UK. They will need amongst other things to:

- 1 understand lectures and make notes,
- 2 write essays and examinations and perhaps ultimately a thesis,
- 3 read and absorb vast amounts of material,
- 4 participate in seminars and informal discussion.

But not only do they have to cope with their academic environment, they must be equipped also to cope with their social environment if they are to feel reasonably happy and at ease here for a period of anything up to three years. These are two reasons why we place people on remedial English courses. There is a third reason: we have to make sure that our candidates meet the universities own entry requirements, as many universities will themselves prescribe a period of pre-sessional English.

Let us now look at the mechanics of our operation. How do we go about placing people on pre-sessional English courses? First, some of the limiting factors involved. Finance is important in this context. The money which we spend on training and English tuition is not British Council money, it is ODM money and as such is accountable to the Treasury. The maximum period of Language tuition we are normally able to offer is three months for an academic course of nine months or longer. In cases of top priority training where the best engineer or doctor would not necessarily be the one with the best English, we can give up to six months English tuition according to Treasury regulations. Then difficulties arise at the other end. Because the candidate is a university lecturer or works in the public sector he is often not able to get leave of absence for such a long period. Another factor is that, seemingly, all university postgraduate applications have to go before the Senate or postgraduate committee here and some of these do not meet until May. That gives very little time to give someone a scholarship and expect him to wind up all his personal affairs in six weeks.

How do we decide who should attend such a course? Accompanying the application papers for an award there will be an assessment of the candidate's English ability. This will usually be in the form of the Davies Test or the British Council subjective assessment form giving grades A to E in the four main skills - understanding, speaking, reading and writing. These are scrutinised fairly thoroughly as it is not possible to simply say that four Bs means eight weeks English etc. From experience we have learned that this depends to some extent on the strictness or otherwise of the tester and also the candidate's nationality.

The Davies Test results have to be looked at carefully too. Again, one cannot automatically accept that a score of 40 plus means that no English tuition is necessary or that 34 is very border-line. Since the Davies Test does not assess a candidate's ability to speak and write English, this has to be tested subjectively. Again we have found different reactions to the test from different nationalities. Some react badly to a mechanical test and develop 'tape recorder nerves' which may tend to lower the score, yet the candidate can perform markedly better in the interview and written test.

However, the English assessment is only one factor material to our placing operation, although it is the most important one. The candidate's age is also quite important in deciding how quickly he is likely to improve, as is his language history. If, too, it is twenty years since he attended university he is going to need a fairly lengthy period to adjust to an academic course and for such a candidate a twelve weeks study skills course would be almost essential. Then we try to match the students to existing courses.

Our choice at the moment can be made amongst a variety of courses - generally 12-, 8- and 4-week university courses and 12-, 8- and 4-week ESP and EAP courses in the private sector, as well as general English courses. Ideally we would like to place everyone on a course of the right length and content run by, or in conjunction with, the institute where he will be receiving his main training. We find that it alleviates many of the social and welfare problems if we can get a student to his main place of study and well settled in by the beginning of term. Quite often our students do have to move around, however. If the university runs a three or four week English course in September and attendance is compulsory and yet he needs twelve weeks English tuition we will have to arrange the balance for him elsewhere.

To conclude, may I remind you again of the relatively small size of our operation in comparison with the total numbers coming to the UK who are in need of remedial English tuition. Registrars and student officers in embassies and high commissions also have to recommend and place people on pre-sessional English courses.

PRE-SESSIONAL COURSE DESIGN

R R Jordan

Department of Education University of Manchester

In this paper I intend to look in some detail at the Pre-Sessional Intensive English Course that is organised in the Department of Education, University of Manchester, each year in August and September for seven weeks. In the process of developing the course over the last six years certain problems have arisen and we have tried to rationalize our approach and justify our course design.

Background:

All the students are postgraduates who will be attending different Departments at Manchester University. They apply to join the course if they feel they need help with their English or if the Department accepting them recommends them to attend or if the British Council indicates such a course is necessary:

1976 course information:

49 postgraduates: 23 Middle East (mostly Iraq/Iran); 10 Asia (mostly Indonesia/Malaysia); 9 Europe (mostly Greece/Turkey); 7 Latin America.

main subjects: 12 Economics; 10 Adult Education; 9 Architecture/Town & Country Planning; 18 Maths/Sciences/Engineering.

time: 7 weeks: 4½ day week: 23 periods a week: total - 160 hours.

Staff : student ratio - 1:12, 1 social organiser.

facilities: rooms, tape-recorders, language laboratory (22 booths), small library of supplementary readers, use of premises of International Society for social activities.

We decided to divide the heterogeneous students into four groups according to language proficiency (measured by the Chaplen Test, supplemented by a continuous writing test and an interview). The students were re-grouped for ESP sessions later in the course.

The coverage of the course we considered should stem from the language needs of the students.

Needs of the students

The language needs of students can be looked at from three points of view but all relate to the students' proficiency in English at the beginning of a course and all need to aim at some target at the end.

1 A student needs to survive in a social environment from the moment he arrives. Thus we include an element of Social English early in the course. The approach is functional and we concentrate on greetings, conversational openings and responses, requests, invitations, accepting/declining invitations, apologies.

2 A student needs language and techniques for academic studies in general. This applies equally well to British students, of course, as is ably demonstrated by Ruth Beard in 'Teaching and Learning in Higher Education' (Penguin Books). Thus we include an element of study skills. This involves: Lecture Comprehension and Note-taking¹, Academic Writing² (which concentrates on the following functions: describing, defining, exemplifying, classifying, comparing and contrasting, interpreting data, observations, assumptions, inferences and conclusions), Seminar Strategies³ (which concentrate on asking for repetition or clarification), Dictionary Use (based on the ALD), and some Reading for Information.

3 A student needs practice in the language associated with his specific subject (syntax, lexis, style). Thus we include an element of ESP later in the course. The approach is a mixture of functional and study skills, concentrating particularly on those functions practised in the Academic Writing sessions viz. describing, defining, etc., and using also some of the techniques practised in the Lecture Comprehension and Note-taking Units.

Our starting point then is the student's proficiency in English, which determines which of the four groups he is placed in. The content of the course is geared to his language needs, and the target is communicative adequacy, supported by grammatical competence, sufficient to enable the student to cope with a real-life task viz. listening to a lecture, taking notes, writing a report and extending it to incorporate certain prescribed features eg a definition and then to make a comparison.

In designing the course, how are the different needs balanced?

Weighting the needs

In December 1972 a survey of the English problems of overseas students was conducted among a total of 106 overseas postgraduate students at the Universities of Manchester and Newcastle upon Tyne⁴. The survey indicated that the vast majority of students considered understanding of spoken English to be their biggest problem on arrival (listed by 70%). This was followed by speaking (48%) and writing (11%). Reading was in final place (4%). Six months later speaking was considered to be the biggest problem (listed by 42%), followed by understanding of spoken English (39%). Writing had increased as a problem (from 11% to 22%) as students discovered problems connected with writing essays and reports that they were now expected to submit. Reading was still considered to be significant as a problem (1%).

The information gained from the survey together with our own observations, discussions with students, and feedback from earlier courses helped us in determining where the emphasis should be placed in the course. Overall, for an individual student, about 45% of the time is allocated to listening, 30% to speaking, 20% to writing and 5% to reading. This is according to language skills. Onto this pattern has to be fitted the various language needs.

Motivation and Variety

1 Although many of the students have opted to join the course and can therefore be presumed to have a reasonable motivation, nevertheless we felt it worthwhile noting those items that seemed to stimulate interest. In addition, nearly all the students have experienced some kind of traditional grammar-based English teaching in their own country in secondary schools. To adopt the same approach would be self-defeating in that it might automatically reduce motivation, especially if it has failed before. Therefore a different approach may help because it is different.

a Many students liked working in the language laboratory in the library mode, ie without being monitored, using self-access material, commercially-produced or produced by us.

b Most students liked the opportunity to have individual help while preparing a short talk; this is one of the features of afternoon activities.

c Working together in pairs or small groups on projects, such as analysing the content of English newspapers or conducting some elementary research into traffic problems, was appreciated.

d A number of students liked doing grammatically-based exercises and wanted more; the Remedial Grammar Bank caters for this need; so also does some of the material in the language laboratory.

e The ESP sessions were generally popular as the students felt they were 'coming to grips' with their reason for being in Manchester at all, viz. their own subject.

f A number of students commented that they liked the framework of discipline surrounding the course, part of which required some homework and preparation.

Variety of activity was also seen as a means of maintaining or increasing motivation. Several years ago we had one timetable that operated for the whole seven weeks. We soon found that both the students and the tutors became bored or stale by about half-way through the course. This led us to re-think the timetable. Eventually we brought it into line with the expressed language needs of the students.

2 The students initially experience most difficulty with the receptive skill of listening and understanding, therefore this should have the emphasis at the beginning of the course. Later, the students experience most difficulty with the productive skills of speaking and writing, therefore these receive most emphasis later in the course. The change in emphasis is reflected in the timetable. There is one timetable for the first week, known as the introductory week: this time is utilised in familiarising the students with a number of the components of the course eg using the dictionary, taking notes, using the tape-courses in the language laboratory. There are a further three timetables, each one covering a block of two weeks, and each one is different, gradually changing the emphasis: for example, Social English is needed immediately for shopping, finding accommodation etc.; it is therefore included in Block I. Full-scale lectures, given by lecturers from other Departments, are like the real University situation, and therefore appear in Block III.

3 Change or variety is also reflected in the daily timetable: the morning focuses on the listening comprehension and note-taking, especially in the first half of the course. Later, writing units and ESP are introduced. The afternoons focus on the productive skills of conversing, giving a talk, discussing,

and individual practice in the language laboratory. There is also a change of tutor in the afternoon sessions.

4 Some flexibility is given to each tutor and group by including a number of open periods per week. This allows a tutor to work at the pace of the group and include practice in that period that he considers desirable. There is also flexibility in the use of the teaching materials which cater for a range of abilities. Flexibility is also incorporated in the progress tests given at the end of each Block (these act as a stimulus to learning/remembering); each tutor determines his/her own test content. But at the end of the whole course all students take the same test.

Learner-centred projects were only introduced in a meaningful way last year; these are now being developed more fully, in some ways similar to those described by Dick Allwright in his stimulating article 'Language Learning through Communication Practice' in ELT Documents (76/3) published by ETIC, London.

In conclusion, the exact course components and their integration within the framework of the course are best seen by examining the course outline which is contained in the Appendix.

References:

- 1 Described in detail by Alan Matthews in this volume.
- 2 Described in detail in ELT Documents, ETIC, The British Council, London, December 1977, "English for Academic Purposes: Practice Material for the Listening Comprehension and Writing Needs of Overseas Students".
- 3 Described in detail by Graham Cawood in this volume.
- 4 Published in the Journal of the Institutes of Education of the Universities of Newcastle upon Tyne and Durham Vol.25 No.125, November 1973.

**UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER PRE-SESSIONAL ENGLISH APPENDIX
 COURSE OUTLINE**

(✓ = presence of the item; – = absence of the item)

BLOCK MORNING	Week	Intro	I			II		III	
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Listening Comprehension & Note-taking		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Academic Writing		–	–	–	✓	✓	✓	✓	
E.S.P.		–	–	–	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Seminar strategies & seminars		–	–	–	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Guest lectures		–	–	–	–	–	✓	✓	
Projects		–	✓	✓	✓	–	–	–	
Open periods		–	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Progress tests		✓	–	✓	–	✓	–	✓	
AFTERNOON									
Preparation for Language laboratory		✓	✓	✓	–	–	–	–	
Language laboratory		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Social English		✓	✓	✓	–	–	–	–	
Reading for information		–	✓	✓	–	–	–	–	
Talks/discussion		–	–	–	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Open periods		–	–	–	✓	✓	✓	✓	

LINGUISTIC AND SOCIAL ORIENTATION

R J Collet
UWIST, Cardiff

The UWIST pre-session course in September 1976 was a pilot scheme, for an intensive two-week period, designed for 38 postgraduates, predominantly from the Middle and Far East, whose subjects included Maritime Studies, Electronics and Population Growth. The work of the course covered three distinct, but overlapping, phases: a Foundation Component, of linguistic and social orientation, a Study Skills and finally a Subject Text Component. These latter phases, leading into the academic year, could only be successful if the individual's working knowledge of the code of English was revised, refreshed and where necessary remedied during the foundation phase. This suggested the integration of topics of social survival with work on the grammar of spoken and written English.

The Foundation Component includes seven broad and complementary Topics, which allow the student time for: adjustment to the new environment; consolidation and activation of language skills; and transition into the perhaps unfamiliar 'communicative' methods and resource materials. The Topics are as follows: oral/aural skills; social survival; information retrieval; reading/writing skills; grammar review; interpersonal behaviour; analysis of low-level subject texts. Each Topic may be practised by any of the following seven techniques: general lecture and follow-up; autonomous/group work; functions of spoken English; authentic materials; language laboratory/video; role-playing/simulation/problem-solving; visits. Topic 1, for example, oral/aural skills, is integral with all the others, and can be practised using all seven techniques. It comprised lectures and follow-up work on pronunciation, stress and rhythm and intonation: information useful in itself, and as a tool for later communicative tasks.

The pronunciation lecture introduced the phoneme symbols used in 'The Advanced Learner's Dictionary'. Their usefulness was demonstrated with reference to the different spellings in normal orthography, drawing attention, for example, to the fact that post-vocalic 'r' is not pronounced in standard British accents. The potential interference problems of individual language backgrounds were considered and common areas of difficulty were covered, for example, the morphophonemic variation in the past '-ed', and the plural '-s' pronunciations. It must be emphasised that the symbols are used only for

receptive work, using the dictionary; students are encouraged to look up the correct pronunciation in the dictionary of words from their special subject and from the handouts on social orientation. The aim, of course, is not to turn them overnight into R.P. speakers - but to provide them with a standard matrix against which to judge their own speech and other foreign or regional accents.

Perhaps the biggest pronunciation fault of non-native speakers of English is, paradoxically, a too careful pronunciation of each phoneme, with lack of attention to stress conventions and weakened forms, for example, pronouncing 'advertisement' as if it were 'add+ver+tie+cement'. The lecture on stress examines the highlighting of the stressed syllable in polysyllabic words through the loss of vowel quality of the other syllables. This feature is exemplified with some words commonly mispronounced, and through the contrast of such pairs as 'frequent/ to frequent' and 'import/ to import'. Rules of sentence stress are also presented and exemplified.

A similar practical approach is adopted in the lecture on intonation, which is in effect a guided listening exercise based on dialogues. Students are made aware of the use of the falling tone on short statements, exclamations, 'wh' questions, orders, and tags expecting agreement. They note the occurrence of the tonic on the last significant lexical item -

- a Where do you come from?
- b I'm from Iran. Where do you come from?
- c I'm from Nigeria.

Students are able to contrast the presence of the tonic in (a) on 'come' with that in (b) on the word 'you' - understanding that the topic of 'coming from somewhere' is already given. The time spent on this intonation practice is well justified if only for this last insight into the information structure of English clauses, the signalled relationship of the clause to the discourse, and the awareness of the shared assumptions of speaker and addressee. Repeating and acting such simple dialogues may be considered an artificial activity, but it is justified if students come to understand the importance of this feature of English speech, a concept which is later transferred to written texts.

For 24 hours after each lecture, tutors carry out a 'blitz' on pronunciation, stress or intonation, to keep these features in the learner's consciousness. But the insights from these lectures are given immediate relevance by their integration into the social orientation work.

A handout on the medical services was used for vocabulary work and also as a follow-up to the pronunciation lecture. Here is a short section from the handout:

'You may find when you first arrive that the climate and change of diet give you headaches, colds, upset stomach and so on. It's usually unnecessary to bother your doctor with things like that. The nurse in the medical centre will give you medicine and advise you if you need to see the doctor . . .'

As a language exercise, students extracted words of which the stressed syllables contained similar vowel sounds, as follows:

vowel:

1	2	6	11	15
see	things	doctor	first	find
treatment	give	bother	nurse	arrive
need	prescription	probably		climate
piece				advise

Intensive practice was then possible, not only on the spellings related to the sounds, but on the conventions for reduced vowel quality on the unstressed syllables. Students whose mother tongue is a stress-timed language, like Farsi, benefit greatly from such insights, as do students from countries where English is a second language, but who have rarely heard native-speaker models.

The handout on 'Shopping' was similarly exploited. When the orientation purpose had been completed, students inserted the sentence stress, selecting the major lexical items and marking them as follows: "There are 'three 'general 'ways in which 'shops in 'Britain are 'organised. There are the 'small 'shops where you 'ask the 'Shopkeepers for 'what you 'want, they 'give it to you, and you 'pay them di'rectly. There are 'some where you se'lect what you want and 'take it to a 'central 'pay-desk . . ."

The students saw a direct application of the lecture information, and they agreed that their oral reading efficiency improved significantly when attention was paid to sentence stress, rhythm and intonation. Similar exercises with the introductory 'low-level' special subject texts gave them confidence in handling the basic lexis of the discipline and improved their ability in aural comprehension.

The intonation lecture information was practised in the student responses to the worksheet on the functions of spoken English (based on van Ek 1975), and in the simulation and problem-solving activities. Students now had some criteria against which to measure their performance, and which could assist them in autonomous listening comprehension exercises in the language laboratory.

The language revision work in oral/aural skills thus made the social orientation activities more meaningful and useful, and in addition introduced the students to the use of the support facilities, the language laboratory and the video equipment.

Given a discernibly structured programme of realizable short-term goals, this bridge-building exercise between conventional language study and the perhaps unfamiliar interactional and heuristic techniques of the course evoked a positive student response: in a questionnaire at the end of the course, the 'grammar' lectures, including those on pronunciation and stress, scored very highly on the scale of 'usefulness'. Of course, it is not the lecture itself, but the way it is related to the real needs of the student that makes it useful. It was felt that the predicted positive output features of the foundation component were largely realised. The conclusion is that it is worth continuing to investigate ways of integrating grammar work with the social orientation activities.

OVERSEAS STUDENTS VERSUS THE LOCAL DIALECT

Olivia Farrington
The Language Laboratory, University of Aberdeen

The emphasis placed on the communicative rather than the grammatical competence of overseas students studying in Britain has led to a much more careful consideration of their actual language needs and to the development of different sorts of material to meet these needs. A major one that has been widely recognized is for the overseas student to be able to interact in informal social situations. To feel even minimally integrated into the society he is living in, he needs to be able to ask the way, buy groceries, say hello and goodbye, talk about the weather and who he is, etc.

The material devised to equip him with this social 'survival kit' as it has been called (Johnson & Morrow, 1976) usually takes the form of set dialogues and of role playing exercises based on these. What strikes one about these dialogues is their stereotyped nature and their uniformity of language. The language is generally and broadly speaking the language of informal, written Standard English. If there is an accompanying tape the accent is almost always RP, with notable exceptions made for taxi drivers, porters etc., who have, not too pronounced, regional accents. The participants are also always polite, articulate and succinct, and on the whole they all sound very middle class and respectable, and nearly always from the south of England.

There is a good reason for this, of course, as one's aim is to simplify as much as possible for the student his task of producing informal everyday Standard English. But communication is a two-way process, and the drawback to this sort of material is that it gives him very little practice in coping with the heterogeneous nature of the replies he is likely to get. In particular, it gives him no preparation for non-standard varieties of English, or for Standard English spoken with a strong regional accent.

I should like to put forward the view that overseas students, particularly in their first few weeks, and even in the south of England, are going to be very much in contact with non-standard varieties of English, and/or with strong regional accents, and, that, if there is to be a 'social English' component in a pre-sessional course, there should be some recognition of this in the planning of it.

I should like to begin by outlining briefly the language situation in Aberdeen. My observations are based on subjective impressions since little actual research has been carried out.

From the point of view of the non-Scot who arrives in Aberdeen speaking a non-Scottish variety of Standard English, there seem to be three broad categories of speakers: non-Scottish speakers of Standard English; Scottish speakers of Standard English; and speakers of the local dialect. It is this third category which provides the cultural shock. The geographical isolation of the north east of Scotland, and the low social mobility within the region, have played a large part in keeping the local dialect, a variety of Lowland Scots, very much alive. It is the common variety of English still overheard in shops, on buses, in the doctor's waiting room etc. And in its most extreme form it sounds like a foreign language.

I say overheard, though, because the other aspect of the language situation which strikes the newcomer is the apparent ease and willingness with which most of the local people switch into a form of English which can be understood without much difficulty. The local grocer (highly-motivated and well-practised in switching), as soon as he knows you are not local, will usually change

from 'I dinna ken' to 'I don't know'
from 'tak 'is een' to 'take this one'
from 'fit kin ye dee' to 'what can you do'

And although others will still use 'mair' for 'more', 'tae' for 'to', 'nae' for 'not' and 'dinna', 'canna', 'wisna' forms as well as words like 'dyke' and 'brae', they move near enough to Standard English to be easy enough to follow.

Coming on to the overseas student who arrives in Aberdeen (or who arrives anywhere in Britain), one has first of all to consider the attitudes and preconceptions he arrives with, as regards the English language. These will come both from the language situation existing in his own country, and also from what he will have been taught concerning English. However, whatever the status of the different regional/social/stylistic varieties of his own language, whatever the cultural and linguistic diversity (or maybe because of it), what he wants to learn when he arrives here is Standard English. He is, generally, psychologically and linguistically ill-prepared for the specific local language situation he finds when he arrives

in Britain, and in particular maybe when he arrives in the north east of Scotland.

How can he be helped on a pre-sessional course at a British university?

I think he can be helped in three major ways. Firstly, I think this is a situation where teaching about the language rather than teaching language is justified. To begin with, as regards Standard Scottish, a brief outline of the differences between Standard English and Standard Scottish, emphasising the complete acceptability of the latter, is needed, if only to reassure him that he is not going to be contaminated by any inferior version of the language. More importantly as regards the local dialect, he needs to be told that the language he hears around him spoken by the local people, and by some students, among themselves, is often incomprehensible to non-Scottish native speakers also. As regards the language the local people use when talking to him, he needs to be told that it will probably be fairly similar to Standard English, but dialectal features that might appear need to be pointed out. The main differences in pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary can, in fact, be listed very easily but it is important that they should be listed so that the overseas student is clearer about what forms should not become part of his active knowledge.

Secondly, as an essential supplement to existing survival kits, the foreign student needs practice material in understanding a form of English much closer to the reality he meets with outside. Instead of learning how to ask for directions in four different ways, what he needs is practice in understanding four different sorts of reply, demonstrating not only linguistic variation but also socio-cultural and personal variation, and also the many features of actual conversation absent from the scripted dialogue.

Wilkins (1976) recognizes that 'much more attention needs to be paid to the acquisition of a receptive competence, and that an important feature of materials designed to produce such a competence would be authentic language materials' (p.79). He goes on to define these as 'materials which have not been specially written or recorded for the foreign learner, but which were originally directed at a native-speaking audience'. However, in teaching receptive competence in the context of the language of social interaction one is concerned with language which is directed at a foreign audience. Authentic spoken materials here would require foreign

learners interacting with native speakers. One compromise which I have arrived at works quite well as a basis for listening comprehension practice in restricted situations. It consists of making tapes which are based on a few specific questions eg "How do you get to the centre of town from the university?"; 'How do you get from there to the railway station?'. These same questions are asked of a variety of people (eg cleaners, lecturers, students, laboratory technicians).

Thirdly, even at the pre-sessional stage, I think it is important for the overseas student to try to break the local language barrier, not just for immediate survival purposes, but for more long-term reasons. Where the language is inaccessible, the people and their way of life remain inaccessible and the overseas student remains outside the local community while he remains unfamiliar with their language, confused by it, suspicious of it.

The overseas student would benefit, particularly in the first few months, from practising his language skills on the local people, and this for the following reasons:

Interaction with local people is usually not in a group but on a one-to-one basis.

Because Standard English is not their natural way of talking either, they speak it, or a variety approaching it, more slowly and carefully.

The overseas student is less inhibited, more confident talking with people whom he feels to be less critical and impatient of his efforts, admiring even.

The topics of conversation are usually less wide-ranging, more predictable, more homely and everyday, the old familiar topics of weather, health, personal history, local customs.

One way of encouraging this interaction is by providing the student with specific questions - opening gambits - that he can approach his landlady, the cleaner, the porter, the local grocer with. (Excuse me, I need a sweater. Can you tell me where I can buy one in Aberdeen? or on a more 'cultural level', Where do local people go for their holidays? Are there many parks in Aberdeen? etc.).

Another way is by using tapes of local people talking about aspects of local life. The most successful tape we have made in this area is of a local Aberdonian (a technician in the

Language Laboratory) talking about the Scottish New Year. The main aim of this tape was not to introduce the students to a slice of folklore, but to stimulate interest in the life going on around them so that they would feel motivated to go out and talk, and feel less cut off.

Although my observation and my experience are based largely on the special language situation existing in Aberdeen, my main point would apply to anywhere in Britain. Before we can talk about the social/cultural integration which is said to play such a part in linguistic progress, we must get away from the notion of the stereotyped and monolithic everyday informal standard heard the length and breadth of Britain and incorporate into our teaching samples of how people actually talk.

References:

- Johnson, K & Morrow, K (1976), Communicate: The of Social Interaction (Draft edition), Centre for Applied Language Studies, University of Reading, Reading.
- Wilkins, D A (1976), Notional Syllabuses, Oxford University Press, London.

THE SOCIAL ENGLISH COMPONENT OF A PRE-SESSIONAL COURSE

Keith Johnson

Centre for Applied Language Studies, University of Reading

Introduction

In 1974, the Centre for Applied Language Studies at the University of Reading began preparing a set of Social English materials for use on its pre-sessional summer course. These materials have now been in use for two years, and the main aim of this paper is to describe the rationale behind parts of their original design. A secondary aim is to discuss ways in which this design was subsequently modified, and generally to report on how the materials have withstood the test of time.

Selection of appropriate syllabus type

1 The original decision was to develop a syllabus that was primarily functional in design; that is, one which as its basic units of organisation uses categories of the type characterised by Wilkins (1973) as 'categories of communicative function'. This leads to teaching units bearing such labels as greeting, inviting, making plans, and so on.

2 Space does not permit discussion of why this particular type of syllabus design was considered most suitable. But it is important to note that while the initial decision was to use a functional organisation, it was not intended that this should preclude materials of other orientations from the programme.

No one syllabus type, it was felt, can cater for all the needs of a given student population. The functional syllabus is no more a panacea for all ills than a structural syllabus, and to believe otherwise is to adopt a theoretical position of unjustifiable rigidity. While the functional design does indeed have many advantages for the pre-sessional student, there are, not unnaturally, various types of information which may best be conveyed in units of different orientation. The students require, for example, a great deal of 'cultural' information on how to open bank accounts, how to register with the police, how to join the Health Centre. Whereas it certainly would be possible to convey this information within functional units, it is more convenient to do so by means of setting - or topic-based materials. For this reason the Social English materials contain a series of units each dealing with selected topics or settings.

3 A similar observation may be made about structural practice. Despite the considerable advantages in adopting a semantic syllabus for the programme, it remains true that many students both want and need structural practice. This is provided by a set of 'grammatical follow-up' materials. These consist of notes informing the teacher where he can find drills and explanations dealing with the main grammatical structures occurring in each of the functional units. A bank of grammatical materials is provided and the teacher can draw on these whenever necessary. The programme allows for two hours of Social English daily, and with a low level group this might entail up to seventy-five minutes of structural practice. With groups at higher levels, the amount of functional practice will increase as the necessity for structural drilling decreases.

4 There are thus reasons for adopting a course design which, though it may be basically functional, is flexible enough to provide room for materials with a variety of orientations. That this point needs making at all is perhaps a reflection on the present state of language teaching. Much of what is novel and interesting in applied linguistics today is associated with the so-called 'communicative' movement, within which the development of functional syllabuses has taken place. Perhaps the most useful contribution of this movement is that it has alerted teachers to the need for an additional sociolinguistic dimension to language teaching, and is explaining the means by which this dimension may be provided. It would almost certainly be a mistake to elevate (or debase) this contribution into a dogma advocating the adoption of certain types of material throughout all areas of language teaching.

Unit ordering within the syllabus design

1 The question of unit ordering is an important one whatever the syllabus design. When the design is grammatical, it is usual to apply a structural simplicity criterion to determine which items should be taught earlier, which later. Although there are of course problems associated with all simplicity criteria, the procedure does at least ensure that a unit ordering is arrived at in a principled way. When the design is semantic on the other hand, a structural simplicity criterion cannot be so easily applied. It is generally true that the language associated with any one function is structurally as simple or complex as the language associated with any other function. It may be the case that there is more language which one would want to teach in association with one function (such as describing people) than with another (such as greeting). To this extent - the extent that 'more'

entails 'more complex' - it is possible to arrive at an ordering of some functions in terms of 'simplicity'. But it is an easy matter to find examples of greetings which, by any simplicity criterion, are more complex than chosen descriptions of people. (a) and (b) illustrate this:-

- a Why hallo, George. I haven't seen you in weeks. How's the wife keeping. I heard she'd been ill.
- b He's very tall.

2 A simplicity criterion is, then, of restricted value. A second possible criterion considers 'priority of needs'. It is certainly possible to identify some activities - such as opening a bank account, registering with the doctor (and with these, associated functions like giving personal information, requesting services) - which the student will need to learn about early in his stay. Many of these early requirements are associated with a fixed number of topics and settings, and it is for this reason that the topic-/setting-based units appear early in Book I.

Again, however, the criterion has restrictions. It cannot be applied to all the functions one wishes to teach, and questions like 'do the students need to learn how to apologise before learning how to interrupt? have no clear answer.

Also, the findings which the application of this criterion provide cannot be easily translated into syllabus design terms. The findings are that there are two types of function (setting and topic) - those which the student needs to know about very early on in his stay, and those to which no priority of need at all can be attached. Unfortunately the functions which need to be taught very early on are so numerous as to make anything but a token application of this criterion meaningless. One soon finds oneself having to make decisions like whether registration with a doctor is more urgent than opening a bank account. Will the students be ill before they need money? Or vice versa?

The initial course design certainly placed more faith in this criterion than has turned out to be justified, and experience has suggested that any systematic attempt to grade semantic items according to priority of need is doomed to failure.

3 'Sequencing potential' was another criterion much used in the course design. A syllabus may be said to have high sequencing potential if it provides the students with plenty of opportunities for sequencing the taught functions together to form longer interactions. If, for example, the functions greet, invite, make arrangements are taught in consecutive

units, it becomes an easy matter to provide role play exercises in which the student greets a friend, invites him to dinner, makes arrangements about where and when to meet. If these functions are not treated consecutively (but, say, in units 3, 9, 15), then a role play exercise of this type cannot be given until the last of the three units (unit 15) has been studied. A syllabus constructed without concern for sequencing potential will miss many opportunities to give regular practice in sustained conversational interchanges.⁴

However useful this criterion might be, there are again restrictions on its application. Many functions fall naturally within sequences involving more than one participant, each of whose behaviour is reasonably predictable. Examples might be inviting and greeting. It is a viable generalisation to say that an inviting move is generally followed by an accepting or declining move. Acceptance may in turn be followed by a sequence in which arrangements are made. Similarly a greeting will often be followed by a returned greeting and perhaps by an invitation ('come in and have a drink'), an expression of solicitude ('how's Jane. I hear she's been ill'), or the like. In teaching what might be termed 'interactive' functions of this sort, there are positive advantages in presenting them within the sort of sequences in which they occur, and the criterion of 'sequencing potential' may therefore be applied. But other functions are not interactive in this way. Some, like describing people or expressing feelings characteristically involve one person only. In others, the participation of the second person is quite unpredictable. For example, although the function of interrupting must by its nature occur as part of a sequence involving at least two people, the participation of the 'interruptee' is not sufficiently predictable for a sequence of moves involving both participants to be taught. The criterion of 'sequencing potential' cannot be usefully applied to non-interactive functions.

4 Cost effectiveness is a further criterion relevant to the question of unit ordering. It has already been mentioned that the course design included a number of setting-/topic-based units. It was found that a small number of functions (such as asking for and giving personal information, requesting services) occurred so frequently in these units that a good deal of redundancy could be avoided by teaching these initially, before the setting-/topic-based units themselves. For reasons of cost effectiveness, therefore, a small number of 'preliminary functional units' were introduced into the design. Since it is often difficult to predict before materials have been written what items are likely to recur, cost

effectiveness may be a more useful criterion to apply at the materials revision stage.

Providing materials for various proficiency levels

1 Most pre-sessional courses face the problem of providing materials for a large variety of proficiency levels. The Reading pre-sessional has at its peak as many as twenty classes graded (for some activities at least) by performance on an initial proficiency test.

2 When Social English materials were first produced three years ago it was assumed that most students, however grammatically sophisticated they might be, would to a large extent be communicatively 'naive'. Their systemic knowledge might be excellent; but this does not necessarily imply a knowledge of how to greet, invite, make arrangements in socially acceptable ways. This would, it was predicted, hold true particularly for 'situationally-bound' language. Most students would not for example know lexical items like budget account, overdrawn, to cross a cheque, essential to function in the bank setting.

For this reason it was decided not to level the materials in Book I, which contains the situationally-bound language of the setting-/topic-based units. The experience of the 1974 pre-sessional course served to indicate that this decision was justified, but by 1976 a gradual change in the student population had become apparent. More students from oil-rich countries attended the course. Because of their financial position many had already spent time in England, and some indeed had travelled widely through Britain and Europe. Consequently when the course began they already possessed some of the basic communicative knowledge Book I was designed to teach. The implication is that some means of grading is necessary even for this book.

3 A number of criteria were used to level the materials in Book II. Again an attempt was made to use a syntactic simplicity criterion. Again problems were encountered. Is 'how about coming to the theatre?' a more complex or simple exponent of inviting than 'why not come to the theatre?' The difficulties of using this criterion meaningfully are compounded by the fact that with multi-lingual groups simplicity cannot be determined on contrastive grounds.

4 A more useful criterion is that of utterance length, expressed in terms similar to those used by Sinclair & Coulthard (1975). (a), (b) and (c), for example, represent three exponents of 'inviting' suitable for teaching at three levels. They differ in terms of length:-

- a Would you like to come to our party on Saturday?
- b It's our wedding anniversary on Saturday and we're having a party. Would you like to come?
- c It's our wedding anniversary on Saturday and we're having a party. Would you like to come? We haven't seen you for ages.

(a) is a simple invitation. In (b) there is a 'pre-head' in which the speaker states what the occasion for celebration is. The invitation in (c) is followed by a 'post head' in which the speaker gives an extra reason for the invitation.

5 A third criterion involves the notion of 'transparency'⁴. (a), (b), (c) illustrate three utterances which might, under certain conditions, be interpreted as requests (for someone to open a window):-

- a Would you mind opening the window?
- b I wish someone would open the window.
- c It's really stuffy in here.

Of these, (a) is most 'transparently' a request. It uses a form ('Would you mind') frequently associated with requests in English. (b) is less transparently so. On the surface it is merely the expression of a wish, and only in certain circumstances would the listener be led to interpret it as a request. (c) is the most 'opaque' of the three. Here the speaker appears merely to be stating a fact. Again, in certain situations this utterance might be interpreted as a request.

There may be an argument for introducing the more opaque exponents of a function at a higher level. It is partly a question of 'generativity'. The more transparent exponents can usually be used in a large variety of situations, just as in the example considered 'would you mind' can be used to 'generate' a large number of requests. For this reason there are advantages in introducing transparent exponents to all students. Learning to request by expressing a wish or stating a fact is in a sense a secondary issue which can be left to the higher level.

6 One criterion which has not received much theoretical attention in the past is grading by exercise type. It is uncontroversially the case that the higher the student level and the better he is able to manipulate the language, the more communicatively complex the tasks he can undertake. While the lower level student might only with difficulty be able to do a simple drill, the advanced student will be able to process quite complex pieces of information and respond to

them in a variety of ways. The notions of communicative complexity is as yet a relatively unexplored one, but there are obvious ways in which what may be expected of a student in a communicative situation may be made more simple or complex. We may vary the amount of choice he is given as to what to say; how much advanced information he is given as to what the interaction to be practised is about (and how his interactant will respond); we may vary the degree of importance we place on rapid response, on the ability to predict what is about to be said, on the degree of redundancy necessary for comprehension. Such measures of communicative skill have largely been ignored in communicative language teaching, and indeed in communicative language testing.

7 This criterion of complexity of communicative task is used in parts of the Social English materials. These materials are experimental, and part of the experiment is to utilise various patterns of unit organisation in order to identify the most suitable. One pattern is as follows:-

Common Core Module — — → Diagnostic and Revision
Model — — → Practice Module — — → Extension Module
— — → Role Play Module.

The principle is that the students should do as much of each unit as possible in the allotted time. The minimum is the common core, and there is no information contained in the other modules which is essential to the student in subsequent units. A student who only covers the common core can therefore proceed to the next unit without difficulties. Intermediate students pass from the common core into the diagnostic and revision module. This module consists of a series of short role plays, designed to reveal to the teacher particular areas of difficulty which the students may be encountering. If it is clear that the students need further practice in the language introduced in the common core, they then pass on to the practice module. If not they proceed to the extension module which introduces new items and includes more complex exercise types. The advanced student will then have time to move to the role play module. The tasks set in this are fairly complex and the students are given considerable freedom as to how to fulfil their respective roles.

No study has yet been done on the effectiveness of the various patterns of unit organisation introduced. But the pattern described above certainly goes a long way to provide

the degree of flexibility required for the pre-sessional situation in which variety of levels is a major problem.

Notes:

- 1 The materials are known as 'Communicate: The English of Social Interaction'. The Reading pre-sessional course lasts three months and a maximum of about 240 students attend. The views expressed in this paper are personal, though most of the points arise out of collaboration with my colleague Keith Morrow. The original syllabus design was drawn up by David Wilkins, Keith Morrow and myself.
- 2 For a discussion of this criterion see K Johnson 'Communicative Syllabus Design for Written English' (mimeo).
- 3 Since it is one of the aims of discourse analysis of the Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) type to identify characteristic sequences of functions, such studies will eventually provide the materials designer with much useful information in this area.
- 4 This concept has been discussed in relation to testing by K Morrow 'Techniques of evaluation for a notional syllabus' (1977). Study commissioned by the Royal Society of Arts.
- 5 One crucial area which this paper has not touched upon is that of methodology. A Social English course is clearly committed to do more than provide the student with an elaborate phrasebook for social survival; it must also give practice in communicating in simulated situations. For further discussion of this question, see K Johnson 'Simulating aspects of communication at various levels' (1977) Mimeo.

References:

- Sinclair, J Mc H and Coulthard, R M - 1975 - 'Towards an Analysis of Discourse'. London. O.U.P.
- Wilkins, D A - 1973 - 'The Linguistic and Situational Content of the Common Core in a Unit/Credit System'. In 'Systems Development in Adult Language Learning', Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

TESTING FOR STUDY SKILLS : A PROTOTYPE

J C Higgens
OUP/English Language Teaching Development Unit

Judith E Davis
Colchester English Study Centre

This paper concerns the pre-sessional course in study skills run at the Colchester English Study Centre in the summer of 1976, and in particular the design and administration of a test.

First, to give a context for decisions on the test aims and design, one should outline the sort of operation that is mounted every year at Colchester. A basic concern is always that of grouping. A degree of institutionalization is unavoidable, and as a result certain constraints operate. The students come through the agency of the British Council on a contract basis. This specifies a full-time course of five periods per day, one in the language laboratory, over twelve weeks. Students are allocated to groups that have an economic membership of about ten. Real individualization is therefore not feasible. In addition, as the course takes place in summer, it relies heavily on seasonal staff. Though fully competent, these teachers cannot be expected to work effectively from the first day unless course structure and materials are ready in advance. They are not required to develop original materials.

So the first concern, given this sort of framework, is the organisation of the students into 'teachable', or homogeneous, groups.

The 1976 Colchester programme was an evolution from courses mounted in previous years. (A report on the 1974 course appears in the papers of the 1975 BAAL/SELMOUS Conference (1)).

The initial orientation section, lasting three weeks, helped students accustom themselves to living in Colchester, working in the Study Centre, finding their way round, articulating their problems, locating people who could solve them, and so on. (This is an aspect of these students' needs examined elsewhere (2)).

There followed a section of what was called study skills development, in ability groups, lasting five weeks. This is the

section we are particularly concerned with here. And, finally, a section of four weeks, for which students were regrouped by specialist subject area.

In previous years we had tried other course configurations. However, they were based on an underlying assumption that if a student had a certain level of competence in, say, reading, he had an equal level in other skills. And experience showed clearly that these assumed homogeneities did not exist. That is, most students had different levels of ability in the different skill areas. It was the attempt to cater for these differentials that produced the format for the 1976 programme and, consequently, the need for a different form of test.

For materials, there were available from previous years the 'one group, all skills' materials. For 1976, these were separated out, edited and arranged to produce separate sub-courses in each skill area. They were graded and were self-contained, except in terms of theme, which was made the same for all sub-courses in a given teaching week, to provide some sort of unity. The grading was along a notional line starting at the lowest anticipated level of ability and moving up to the point where students, especially weaker ones, could be expected to join the subject-specific, but mixed ability groups of the final four weeks, with some confidence and chance of benefiting.

The next problem was the allocation of students to groups for each of the separate skill sub-courses. It was intended that the teacher could rely from the start on homogeneity of level in any group, and would take groups forward from their initial levels as far as possible, and at their own speed, towards readiness to regroup into subject-specialism groups. So it was clear that a test was needed. This would determine levels of ability in each skill for each student, and be used to form groups for each skill sub-course, and to establish the point of 'entry' to the graded course materials for each group in each skill.

The test itself was constructed under pressure and is only a very tentative prototype. We shall describe its design, administration and results, and draw some preliminary conclusions from these results and summarise the students' and teachers' reactions.

There are three principal design features which perhaps make the test different in some respects from other tests generally in use. First, the test is 'longitudinal'. There are four sub-tests, one in each skill area. Each sub-test consists of a graded sequence of tasks, the grading reflecting that applied to the rearrangement of the course materials, already mentioned. (see figure 1). Students were instructed to start on the first task and work through as many tasks as possible.

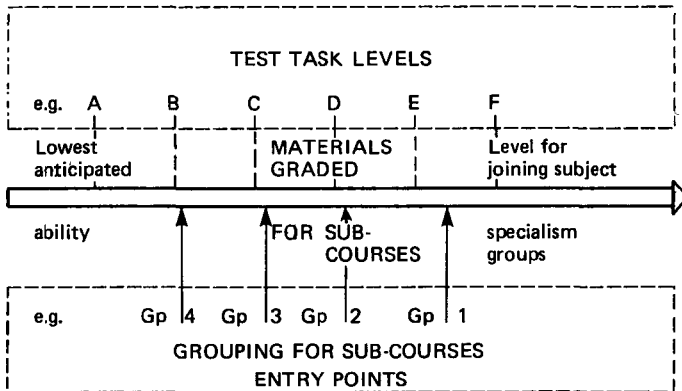


FIGURE 1

Second, we look at the role of time in a test situation. We considered two points. One, that a known, announced time limit would impose pressure on the student which might distort the picture of his ability that we needed. Two, the speed at which a student works tells us something about him. Whether he does well or not so well overall, it is useful to know whether he works fast or slowly. In other words, speed of work was taken to be a dimension of ability. So a system was tried out by which a time limit for each sub-test was decided on, but was not announced to the students.

Third, two types of task were set. The aim of the first type, which one might call 'macro', was to get an answer to the question: 'At what level is this student operating in each skill area?'. The second type we called 'micro' tasks. These focused on the students' ability to recognise and manipulate linguistic features at the levels of discourse, (cohesion and coherence), syntax and lexis.

There were two purposes in the micro type of task. The first was to see what sort of correlation existed between a student's performance in the macro tasks and his success with the micro type. In other words, to what extent does the ability to recognise these features of lexis, structure and discourse contribute to the ability to 'operate', ie carry out a macro task? That there is such a correlation is a clear assumption underlying a lot of conventional teaching and testing. We now have some data for looking more closely at this assumption, but have not yet carried through the analysis. The second purpose, which was achieved, was to compile for each student a dossier or profile which listed problems, individual to that student, that might require remedial or individual attention. These profiles were available to teachers, who added to them and eventually passed them over to teachers responsible for the subject-specialism section of the course. The complete set of four sub-tests took some four hours to administer.

The reading sub-test consisted of seven parts, progressively more difficult in both text and task. The time allowed was 1½ hours, though this was not announced. Another time, the higher level parts should be dropped, as no student reached them, and more added at lower levels, to give greater discrimination at around the mean. The writing sub-test also had an unannounced time limit of 1½ hours. There were five parts. First, jumbled words to be recombined into sentences; second, jumbled sentences for recombination into short paragraphs; third, a description of the information displayed in a graph; fourth, a letter to the student's prospective place of study, for which some notes were provided; and finally a request to the student to write a general introduction to his field of study. Another time, the first two parts should be shorter, giving more time for the connected writing tasks.

The listening sub-test lasted 45 minutes. There were five parts, recorded on tape, with answers written. The parts were word discrimination, a gap-fill predictive listening exercise, a postman describing his route for students to mark on a map, a descriptive passage with students labelling blanks in a flow-chart, a dialogue with pie-charts to be completed and other figures tabulated, and a text for a summary exercise. Thus, the content and tasks increased in difficulty over the five parts. In fact, the parts were played on a single recorder and consecutively, thus departing from the 'at your own speed' principle. Another time, each part should be put on cassette, and students would complete each one at their own speed before requesting the next.

The speaking sub-test consisted of warm-up questions, then a passage for reading aloud, then a picture or cartoon to be described and finally a more or less free conversation. It was intended that students be allowed to continue up through these tasks until it was clear they were no longer communicating effectively, and be halted at that point. Thus, for one student, three minutes might be sufficient to find his level, for another seven or eight. The sub-test was conducted by one teacher and marked by another. Teachers tended to be rather 'soft' in this sub-test, and a stricter application of a time limit would be necessary another time.

A sample of the results is given in Table 1. There seems little doubt that they bear out the original hypothesis, that students are better in some areas than in others. In the sample, only three (asterisked) students ended up in the same level or group for all skills. At the other extreme, there was a Farsi speaker who was in a group 4 for writing, a group 4 for reading, a group 3 for listening but a group 1 for speaking. A global test would not have revealed these differences. Nor would it have led to the individual timetables which were drawn up for each student. This enabled him to move from group to group, allowing for the different levels of ability. In this way, genuinely homogeneous groups were assembled. Students felt secure and confident that they were getting teaching at an appropriate level and speed, among fellow-students who were at the same level. Teachers, also, were confident, knowing that materials prepared for a given group would be fully relevant to the needs of each member of it. They were also well motivated to adapt and supplement, as necessary, and were, in fact, pleased to be able to develop expertise in a particular skill area.

The evidence from the subject-specialism groups for the general success of the skills development section of the programme was of two sorts. First, there was a high degree of transfer from the skills development work to the subject-specific materials used in the final section. Second, although these subject-specific groups were mixed ability, the type of grouping that had been set up in the skills development section made for tolerance and cooperation among students within these mixed groups.

The proper analysis of the results, in statistical terms, will have to wait on a second use of the test, revised as already suggested. In general, however, it can be seen as a useful step - and the nearest we can hope to get at present - towards individualization of teaching and learning for this type of student.

References:

- 1 English for Academic Purposes, BAAL/SEMOUS, pub. Reading University, 1977.
- 2 eg 'Communicate', K Johnson & K Morrow, Reading University.

See also other papers in this collection.

TABLE 1:Sub-Course Groupings

Student	Writing	Reading	Listening	Speaking/ Seminar
1	1	3	1	1
2	1	4	3	1
3	1	1	1	2
4	1	1	1	2
5	1	1	3	2
6	1	3	1	1
7	1	2	2	2
8	1	3	2	1
*9	1	1	1	1
10	2	3	3	2
11	2	2	4	3
12	2	1	2	2
13	2	3	4	2
14	2	3	2	2
15	2	2	2	1
16	2	2	1	1
*17	2	2	2	2
18	2	2	1	2
19	3	4	3	3
20	3	4	2	3
21	3	1	3	3
22	3	2	4	3
23	3	4	3	3
24	3	3	3	4
25	3	1	3	4
26	4	3	4	4
27	4	3	4	4
*28	4	4	4	4
29	4	2	2	4
30	4	2	2	4
31	4	4	3	3
32	4	4	3	1
33	4	4	4	3
34	4	4	4	3

LECTURE COMPREHENSION AND NOTE-TAKING

Alan Matthews

Department of Education, University of Manchester

This paper is largely an up-to-date report on the lecture comprehension and note-taking materials developed at the University of Manchester for use on the annual Pre-Sessional Intensive English Course.¹

Section One

One of the most important features about the students on our course is that they are extremely heterogeneous: they come from all over the world; they will study a wide range of subjects; they will have had very different professional backgrounds, some being accustomed to high-ranking status in the Civil Service, Industry or Business, others embarking on postgraduate studies straight after their first degrees; they will have had varied exposure to English; and their aptitude to language learning will differ greatly.

This heterogeneous nature of the students is a serious problem in devising a set of teaching materials which have to be flexible enough to cater for the full ability range of the students and, just as important, they must be relevant to everyone's needs.

Common to most students is the type of course they will follow - usually a very intensive Postgraduate Diploma or Master's programme with a strong emphasis on lectures and seminars, especially in the first term. None of them will have had much experience of listening to native speakers of English and very few, if any, will have had to take notes in English. The need to concentrate on these Study Skills is overwhelming.

Section Two

But what are the specific problems involved in listening to lectures and taking notes? The biggest problem of all is the need to operate several language skills simultaneously: students must use their listening, writing and, to a lesser extent, their reading skills at the same time. It is necessary to understand and remember what the lecturer said, write it down in note-form - providing it is considered to be of sufficient importance - simultaneously listen to the on-going lecture, select and organize what is presently to be written -

if anything - and in addition monitor, and perhaps modify, what has already been written by skim-reading. This is clearly a formidable task.

But in addition to these inherent problems in lecture comprehension and note-taking - which, it should not be forgotten, stretch even the native speaker - the overseas student has a range of additional difficulties to contend with:

1 he generally finds himself in a predominantly British audience where the lecturer is unlikely to make any allowances for the few foreign students;

2 he is constantly pressurized by the 'once-only' nature of speech; he has only one chance to understand, he cannot normally stop the lecturer or influence his pace of delivery. If he misses a point it is rarely repeated;

3 the lecturer may well have a marked regional accent, may speak rapidly or softly and, perhaps most difficult of all, may use colloquialisms;

4 the student may be puzzled by cultural references, for example, the type of cricketing metaphor that ex-Prime Minister Wilson was so fond of; the student may also miss the point of English humour, especially that involving understatement or cynicism;

5 apart from the obvious difficulties with unfamiliar lexical items, the overseas student frequently mishears or fails to hear words which in print he would instantly recognize. I refer especially to weak forms and contractions;

6 finally, the overseas student will not have the same ability to make semantic predictions as a native speaker. He may, for instance, miss the significance of various linguistic signposts, such as inter-sentential logical connectors which help to indicate the direction the argument is about to take.

So far I have mentioned some of the difficulties faced at the decoding and comprehension stages (which must be considered separate stages since it is clear that accurate decoding does not ensure comprehension). But assuming for the moment that accurate comprehension is achieved, there are further problems at the note-taking stage:-

1 the student has difficulty selecting what is important and eliminating secondary and tangential remarks. The tendency is to assume that everything is of equal importance and hence to attempt the hopeless task of writing everything down;

2 overseas students find it extremely difficult to restrict themselves, in their notes, to information-carrying words, eliminating redundant features such as deictics, function words etc. This is not surprising as the note-taking task is, in a way, the reverse of what is normally aimed at in English classes, ie achieving grammatical accuracy. And, of course, reasonable grammatical accuracy is aimed at in other Pre-Sessional components;

3 students make little or no use of standard abbreviations and symbols; neither do they know how to exploit the layout of the notes to increase clarity;

4 finally, for many students, especially those from Arabic-speaking countries and Iran, the problem of taking notes is further compounded by having to operate at speed with a different writing system in a different linear direction.

Section Three

The Lecture Comprehension and Note-Taking Units used at Manchester, while concentrating very largely on improving lecture comprehension and acquiring a more efficient note-taking technique, also touch upon other areas, for example, reading comprehension and remedial grammar exercises. This is mainly to provide variety in the classroom and to give practice in known areas of language difficulty. There are ten Units all of which follow the same basic design pattern - though, as will be seen below, this does not by any means suggest that they should all be exploited in the same way in the classroom.

The subject-matter of the Units concerns various aspects of Study Skills and the difficulties students often experience when studying through the medium of English. Titles of the Units include: 'Some of the Problems of Overseas Post-graduate Students', 'Listening and Understanding', 'Problems of Writing in a Foreign Language' and 'Seminars and Tutorials'. There are three main advantages in selecting Study Skills as the main theme: firstly, it conveys useful information and advice about language learning; secondly, it has relevance for all the students alike, regardless of their subject specialisms; and thirdly, it is suitable subject-matter for the simulation of academic-type lectures.

We have recorded all the Units for use with a tape-recorder in class. Different tutors, both male and female, were asked to do the recordings so that the students would hear various voices and accents.

Each Unit consists of three Stages, each of which deals with the same subject-matter. Stage 1 is a lead-in to the Unit and consists of the key ideas to be developed at greater length in subsequent Stages; Stage 2 is an expansion of the points in Stage 1; and Stage 3, a further expansion of Stage 2, is a fully-fledged lecturette. Different language exercises are based on each Stage.

Stage 1 is a passage of between 50 and 90 words. It aims at giving practice at intensive listening and writing from dictation. The students follow the text as they listen to the recording. The tutor draws attention especially to the important phonological points, for instance, weak forms, contractions, pronunciations of plural 's' etc. and also to a lesser extent to any syntactic and lexical difficulties. The text is then written from dictation.

We feel it is important that features of continuous speech known to cause difficulty in understanding are made explicit. The dictation gives immediate practice and indicates how well the students are able to decode these features accurately.

Stage 2 is a passage of between about 300 and 500 words, on which exercises are based in the following order:-

Firstly, a listening comprehension exercise: the students listen to the recorded passage without seeing the tapescript. They are then given the exercise which consists of five true/false questions designed to test their overall understanding of the passage. They are all then asked to justify their answers orally. Next comes a blank-filling exercise. The aim here is to give practice mainly in listening for and distinguishing weak forms and contractions. The tapescript is gapped and the students write in the missing words as they listen to the text. The students almost always know of the existence of contractions even if they sometimes fail to recognize them in speech. Weak forms, on the other hand, still seem largely to be neglected in language teaching yet an understanding of their usage is relatively easy to teach and is worthwhile for the improvement it makes in the students' ability to decode accurately.

Thirdly, there is a reading comprehension. This exercise again consists of five true/false questions. The students have to search for the relevant information by reading the tapescript and justify their answers by giving evidence in writing, from the tapescript. The tutor can suggest that the evidence the

students choose to give should be written in note-form; thus this exercise can also serve as an additional and less demanding note-taking task -less demanding because the notes are taken from a written text and not from speech, although basically the same technique is involved.

Fourthly and finally, at Stage 2 level there are two or three written grammatical exercises. Certain key grammatical structures and certain language functions are purposely built into the text of Stage 2 and serve as the basis for written exercises. They are a small selection and provide only a limited set of remedial exercises. They do not include remedial practice for grammatical items which, although occurring very frequently, are of little communicative value, for instance, article usage.

Stage 3 is between 800 and 1,200 words in length. It aims to train the students in note-taking and also in note-reconstruction in both the oral and written modes.

The students are given a sheet of Guided Notes which indicates the overall framework of the lecturette and provides a number of written prompts followed (or preceded, as the case may be) by dotted lines where the students should write their own notes. Before the first Unit is attempted the tutors will have given the students information and advice on note-taking techniques, including a list of common abbreviations and symbols.

As the students listen to the recording of the Stage they complete the Guided Notes sheet. It is usually necessary (at least for the first few Units) to stop the tape at the end of sections or paragraphs to allow the students time to write. It is important, though, that they are encouraged to write as quickly as possible and as little as is necessary to give sufficient meaning. It is necessary with all our groups in the early part of the course to play the tape a second time.

Clearly in reality a student does not have the opportunity to listen a second time to a lecture. By giving the chance of listening twice (or even three times) we are moving away from the realistic lecture situation. Initially, however, we are more concerned with providing the students with practice at acquiring a technique and we feel justified in reducing the students' task for the purpose of technique learning. As the course progresses, however, the guided notes become increasingly less full - and with an advanced group may be completely dispensed with and the students will hear the tape only once.

After taking their own notes, suggested notes are then handed out but it is made clear that these are suggestions only and by no means the only possible version.

The notes - either the students' own notes or the suggested ones are further exploited. In an authentic situation notes are taken in order to be used to recall the points of significance of a lecture at some later date. With this in mind we require the students to use the notes as prompts for either a written or an oral reconstruction of the lecturette. This is perhaps best done a few days after the notes were first taken in order to give a more authentic challenge.

Section Four

I should like to mention some of the design problems we have come up against:-

An initial problem was to decide on the theme of the Units and serious consideration was given to three alternatives: firstly, Study Skills and the problems of overseas students studying through the medium of English - the one that was finally decided on; secondly, subject-specific material; and thirdly, aspects of living in Britain. We decided against subject-specific content because of the very wide range of specialisms and the impossibility of providing for each one. In fact the range of subjects will alter from year to year, sometimes quite markedly, and we know the exact composition only when the students arrive. The Pre-Sessional Course has an ESP component anyway - with four or five groups as homogeneous as possible - which runs for the second half of the course and which contains some listening comprehension material. We rejected culturally-based materials because many topics, for example, Banking, Shopping in Manchester etc. tend to be descriptive and factual rather than analytical or presenting points of view; we felt they were therefore less appropriate for the simulation of academic-type lectures. We recognize the value of tapping this source of information for teaching purposes but decided to use it as the basis of a Reading for Information component.

Another problem was how to cater for such a wide range of abilities. The three Stages provide the necessary flexibility. Within the time allotted to one Unit there is no need for a tutor to cover a complete Unit: he may, for instance, consider it desirable with a low-level group to concentrate only on Stages 1 and 2 and only in later Units to tackle

Stage 3. Conversely, with an advanced group he may decide to omit Stage 1 altogether and start with Stage 2 or, towards the end of the course, tackle Stage 3 immediately with or without the help of the guided notes.

The first attempts at writing the Units resulted in another problem, that is, a certain lack of standardization, particularly in the guided notes sheets. The Units were first written about four years ago by a team of tutors. Each tutor to some extent used his own system of note-taking with the result that, although there was a large degree of common ground, certain abbreviations, symbols and features of layout differed. This caused confusion from Unit to Unit. Since then one tutor has completely revised and standardized the guided notes sheets.

Confusion was also sometimes unwittingly caused if the written cues on the Guided Notes sheets did not follow the exact phraseology and the exact order of the lecturette. We therefore had to revise the Guided Notes by cutting out all paraphrases of the lecturette in favour of the exact words used, aware that we were encouraging a more rigid note-taking system than we ourselves would use.

A further problem was that the Units, at all three Stages, lacked the spontaneity of normal speech. All three Stages were fully scripted, prepared with the formal lecture situation in mind. The result was an unrealistically polished performance by each of the recording tutors, more typical of a radio talk than the average lecturer's style. There were none of the normal features of unscripted speech, such as hesitations, backtracking, mid-sentence direction changes and occasional ungrammaticality. In addition - and very important for note-taking - the information content was far more concentrated than in the average live lecture. For last year's Pre-Sessional Course we tried a different approach at Stage 3 level with the last few Units. A tutor was asked to read and take fairly detailed notes from the tapescript of Stage 3 in preparation for a recording he was to make by speaking from his own notes. This successfully introduced many of the missing features of spontaneous lecturing. Predictably the speed of delivery was slower than the read version and the content was less dense. Generally speaking the students found this version easier to understand and easier to take notes from. The tutors all agreed it was an improvement on the spoken prose.

In conclusion, I should like to make clear that practice in lecture comprehension and note-taking is not restricted to the Units alone. In the second half of the course, in addition to the Units, the students are required to take notes from talks given live by the tutors and also from short lectures given by guest lecturers from various University departments.

Reference:

'Listening Comprehension and Note-taking Course' -
published by Collins, 1979, as part of the Collins Study
Skills Course in English.

THE PRODUCTION OF ACADEMIC WRITING MATERIALS

Keith Johnson

Centre for Applied Language Studies, University of Reading

Background

Pre-sessional course students have writing problems of various types, ranging from difficulties on the purely mechanical level of handwriting through to the inability to produce extended pieces of discourse which are coherent and cohesive. For this reason, no one set of materials can be expected to cover the entire range of writing skills. The materials being described here are part only of the total pre-sessional writing programme at Reading, and the area they concentrate on is the production of coherent discourse.¹ Since the main concern is with discourse, it is natural that the units of organization on which the course design is based should be discourse (rather than structural) units. Little work has been done on the analysis of written discourse (except for some in America; see Lackstrom, Selinker, Trimble (1973) and Kaplan (1976)), and for the materials being described something akin to Sinclair & Coulthard's (1975) 'acts' were taken as the main units.²

The Course Design

The course design (which for reasons of space can here be only described, not justified in detail) was arrived at after analysis of a number of texts of the sort which the students themselves would be expected to produce on their post-graduate courses. The results of this analysis suggest a classification of academic discourse into two general rhetorical types: exposition and argumentation. Exposition was then further classified into the description of phenomena and ideas, and the description of processes (what is sometimes referred to as 'process analysis'). These three discourse types were then subcategorized into introductory, developmental and concluding units. The practice of analysing discourse in terms of units (paragraphs or groups of paragraphs) defined by discourse position is commonplace in rhetoric tradition. An attempt was then made to identify functions characteristically associated with each discourse position for each discourse type.

This analysis suggested a course design having three sections: the first dealing with descriptions of phenomena and ideas, the second with descriptions of processes, the third with argumentation. For each of these rhetorical types the

students are taught functions characteristically associated with introductory, developmental and concluding paragraphs. One advantage of this design is that it permits regular practice in sequencing the taught functions together to produce longer stretches of discourse. For example, once the functions associated with the introductions to descriptions of phenomena and ideas have been taught in isolation, practice can be given in linking these together to produce introductory paragraphs of this type. Then, once the functions associated with the development of such descriptions have been covered, practice in writing both introductions and developments may be given. Sequencing practice of this sort is provided in the 'consolidation units', appearing in boxes in Table 1 (which illustrates the entire course design).

Not surprisingly, it is sometimes the case that the functions associated with a discourse position are the same for each rhetorical type. This was found to be particularly true for conclusions, and the concluding devices used for descriptions, process analyses and argumentations were often found to be the same. In this situation a criterion of cost effectiveness was applied, and concluding devices are not treated separately for each rhetorical type but together in the final units of the materials.

The presentation of functions within given discourse positions is not intended to imply any kind of prescriptivism. For example, the implication of presenting definition as a function associated with the introduction to descriptions of phenomena and ideas is neither that every such introduction should contain a definition nor that definitions cannot occur in other discourse positions. The prime motivation is a pedagogic one, that by presenting functions in this way (rather than in arbitrary order) one is creating opportunities for sequencing practice.

Techniques

The materials being described are experimental and one part of the experiment is to test a large variety of techniques. Each unit therefore uses different techniques and it is difficult to make generalizations about the materials as a whole. One characteristic sequence is as follows:-

- 1 The exponents to be taught are introduced in the context of a paragraph. The students are asked to assess the truth value of various statements. This often requires a high level comprehension of the passage (including understanding of the presuppositions involved in what it says) and hence of the exponents.

Table 1

		Number of Units
A	<u>Introductory units</u>	
1	Functions, and types of discourse	1
2	Topic and comment/old and new information	1
3	Degrees of categoriality/the status and value of propositions	1
4	Cause and effect	1
5	Reason, result, consequence	1
B	<u>Describing phenomena and ideas</u>	
6	Defining	2
7	Classifying	2
8	Identifying	1
9	Characterising phenomena and ideas	1
C	<u>Describing phenomena and ideas</u>	
10	Contrasting and comparing	2
11	Exemplifying	2
12	Particularising, generalising, intensifying	1
13	Types of description statement	1
14	Structuring a description	1
D	<u>Introducing a process analysis</u>	
15	Purpose and means	1
16	Prediction and expectancy	1
17	Introducing a process analysis	1
E	<u>Developing a process analysis</u>	
18	Sequential description	2
19	Issuing instructions	1
20	Describing a process analysis	1
F	[linking unit]	
21	Description and argumentation	1

G Argumentation

22	Introducing an argument	1
23	Substitution	2
24	Modification	2
25	Implication	2
26	Developing an argument	1

H Concluding

27	Summarising	2
28	Drawing conclusions	2
29	Expressing personal view/Assessment	1
30	Concluding a description or argument	1

40 units of one hour duration. TOTAL 40

2 The exponents are drilled in conventional ways (blank-filling exercises, and so on).

3 The students are asked to analyse part of the passage in such a way as to reveal the structure of the function being taught. For example, a passage in a unit on classification might contain the following:-

Trees may be classified according to whether or not they lose their leaves in winter. There are two sorts of trees, deciduous and evergreen. Deciduous lose their leaves in winter, and evergreen do not.

This might be said to have the following structure:-

- a Identification of what is to be classified. (trees)
- b Criterion for classification. (loss of leaves)
- c Number and labels of classifications. (two; deciduous, evergreen).
- d Characterisation of each classification in terms of the selected criterion (deciduous lose leaves, evergreen not).

The students would be asked to identify these four components by filling in a table.

4 The students read a number of passages containing these components, but presented in different orders and using different exponents.

5 They analyse these passages as under (3) to reveal their structures.

6 Finally, they reconstruct the passages to look as much like the original passage (presented in (1) and analysed in (3) as possible.

They use the exponents that have been drilled, and their reconstructions must have the same structural organization as the original passage.

This procedure may be summarised in the following way:- the students are introduced to a restricted number of exponents in a given passage. They drill the exponents and analyse the passage. They are then introduced to a large number of different exponents in several passages. They analyse these passages, thus revealing how they differ in structure from the original passage. They finally rewrite these passages to look as much like the original passage as possible.

Notes:

- 1 The materials are known as 'Communicate in Writing: the English of Academic Study' and were produced by the present writer. They are as yet incomplete and exist only in first draft. They are to be revised and completed during 1978.
- 2 For a brief discussion on the possible reasons for incoherence in foreign students, see Johnson (1977). For a full description and justification of the process by which the course design was arrived at, see Johnson (1976).

References:

- Johnson, K - 1976 - 'Communicative Syllabus Design for Written English' mimeo; - 1977 - 'Why are Foreign Students Incoherent'. In SELMOUS Occasional Papers No.1.

Kaplan, R B - 1976 - 'The Anatomy of Rhetoric: A Prolegomena to a Functional Theory of Rhetoric' London, Harrap - Didier.

Lackstrom, Selinker & Trimble - 1973 - 'Technical Rhetorical Principles and Grammatical Choice' TESOL Quarterly 7:2.

Sinclair, J Mc H and Coulthard, R M - 1975 - 'Towards an Analysis of Discourse'. London, O.U.P.

REPORT WRITING

A Dudley-Evans
Department of English Language & Literature
University of Birmingham

This paper will describe a course in report writing developed at Birmingham University, a course which up to now has been a term-time, one hour a week course, but one which it is felt has great relevance to pre-sessional courses. At Birmingham University undergraduate students start laboratory work in their first week at the University, and are expected to hand in reports of their work each week. Overseas students are given very little, if any, guidance as to how to organise these reports, even though the marks given form an important part of their final mark, and in spite of the fact that many students, particularly those from the Middle East, have had little experience of writing a laboratory report in their own language, let alone English. Postgraduate scientists and engineers doing a MSc by course are also expected to write laboratory reports during their first term. These two groups will obviously benefit from the inclusion in a pre-sessional course of a report-writing component. Even postgraduate students doing a MSc by research, whom one would expect would be able to follow a term-time course, so often fail to find time during term to come to classes and would therefore benefit from some attention to the writing of reports during a pre-sessional course.

It is perhaps worthy of mention that of the various study skills concentrated upon on the course (term-time) for undergraduate engineers, report writing was listed as being the most useful by all students and on our forthcoming pre-sessional course for undergraduate engineers report writing will be an important component.

This course is based on a study of various laboratory reports selected by different science departments as representative of what they expect in a good laboratory report. This study has shown that a report is normally divided into seven or eight sections. The abstract, the introduction, equipment and instruments used, the method, the results, the discussion of results, the conclusions and recommendations and the appendix. The equipment and instruments section may form part of the introduction, and in some reports the recommendations may form a separate section.

The study has also shown that it is possible to identify various notions and rhetorical functions that will typically occur in different sections of a report, and that it is, therefore, possible to teach both the organisation of a report and, at the same time, the various functions and their grammatical realisations needed in writing a report (see Diagram 1).

The abstract summarises the content of the report and is, therefore, normally written after the other sections. It usually states the purpose of the experiment, and the main conclusions to be drawn.

The introduction is quite different from the abstract and basically introduces the experiment and the background theory to the reader. It may state the value of the experiment, how it is carried out, and how the results are calculated, without actually giving the results. The main linguistic notions employed are, therefore, those of experimental method, process and cause and effect. In some subjects, particularly metallurgy or, to a lesser extent, chemistry, definition, description and classification of the materials used in the experiment is very common in an introduction. The presentation of relevant formulae and equations is also very frequent and various linguistic forms are used to introduce these.

Equipment and instruments used in the experiment are normally presented by means of line diagrams. This section is unlikely to contain a description of the structure of the equipment. It is far more likely to contain a description of the function of the most important parts of the equipment.

The section called procedure describes the steps taken during the experiment. It is, as is known by even the most inexperienced ESP teacher, normally expressed in the past passive. It should, however, describe only the most important steps taken. The transformation exercise used in so many ESP course books whereby the imperative is converted into the past passive may, in fact, be misleading. Unnecessary detail, such as 'the experiment was begun by operating switch "A" to start the motor' would normally be avoided.

The results are normally presented in tabular or graphical form, and this section is, therefore, not the concern of the language teacher.

The discussion of results section is basically a critical appraisal of the results obtained. At undergraduate level and often even at postgraduate level, experimental work is not concerned with finding new information, but rather with establishing the validity of existing laws and to show that the student can obtain a result approximating to the expected result. This section, therefore, comments on the accuracy of results, and whether they agree with the accepted value. This will normally be done with statements such as 'The copper wire was found to have a resistivity of . . . which is consistent with or significantly different from the accepted value as found in Kaye and Laby'. The writer may also make comparisons between the results, show how the results correlate, or comment on the shape of the graphs produced. In case of the results being different from the accepted value, or the graph not being of the expected form, an explanation is normally given.

The conclusions are a number of generalizations arising from the discussion of the results, which answer the questions posed by the title and objective of the experiment. It usually contains recommendations as to how the experiment could be improved, and about possible future work.

The appendix will normally contain a bibliography, and may supply additional theoretical background, particularly in the form of formulae or equations.

These investigations have clear implications for the teaching of report writing. Most of the functions listed have particular grammatical realisations, which are often quite limited in number. Take, for example: explanation of error, which occurs in the results section. This invariably seems to be expressed by an expression such as

This error discrepancy etc.	may be	due to	. . .eg, a mistake
		the result of	in the
			calibration
			of the
			instruments

The danger is, of course, of over-generalisation and becoming too prescriptive about the forms likely to appear in reports. Certainly there is a need for much more extensive research into the nature of reports and for more discussion with scientific colleagues. I would, however, argue that this danger is considerably less for report writing than, for example, for thesis writing, given that most of the reports investigated do

seem to follow a much more rigid organisational and linguistic pattern than theses, or dissertations.

The Course Itself

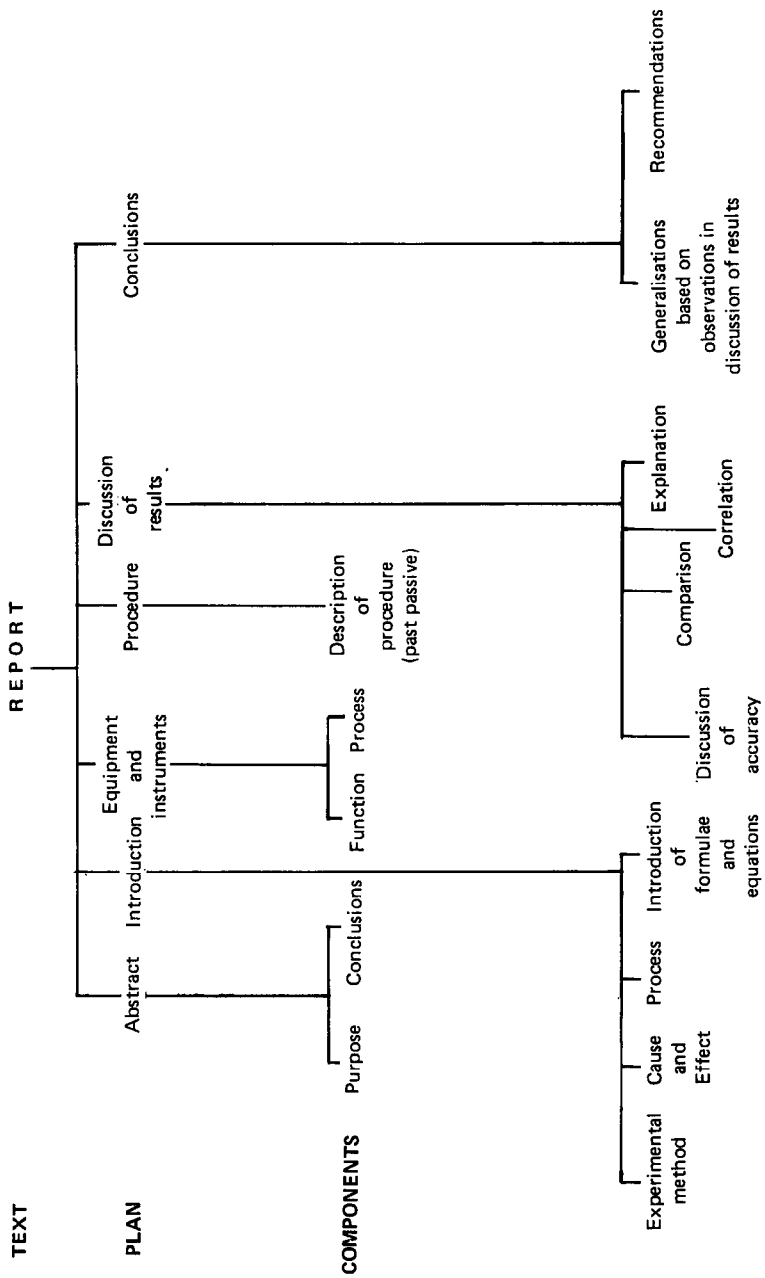
The course is designed for scientists and engineers of nearly all disciplines. The term-time course was followed by mechanical engineers, electrical engineers, transportation engineers, soil scientists, nuclear physicists, metallurgists and chemists. While the problem of finding suitable topics for linguistic exploitation are not as great as they are in other classes in Birmingham, where we might find a student of Byzantine studies sitting next to a student of mechanical engineering, they are still considerable. The academic writing course at Birmingham presents a number of 'strategies of exposition' such as 'stating a problem' 'reference to and summary of the relevant literature' 'arguing a conclusion' etc. The presentation leads to the student writing a paragraph or a series of paragraphs based on the strategy introduced on a topic from his own subject. A similar approach has been adopted for the report-writing course, but with some modifications. It was found that the students attending the course needed to practise the particular phrases and structures much more within situations presented to them in handouts before going on to relate them to their own subjects. Thus the normal progression within a unit - for example, a unit presenting the discussion of accuracy of results, - would be to present an example taken from an actual report, then to practise the relevant phrases and structures by describing imaginary data, and finally for the student, often for homework, to write a similar discussion based on some actual results from his own work.

The great difficulty has, of course, been to find sections of reports which illustrate the functions and notions in contexts of sufficient generality and interest for students of quite different branches of engineering. One has tended to select sections from mechanical engineering, materials science and chemistry, as these areas seemed to have the widest appeal and relevance to the different branches. Fortunately, it has appeared that the students are sufficiently sophisticated to realise that, even though the subject matter is from a different discipline from their own, the linguistic items introduced and practised are of relevance to their own discipline.

The first part of the course provides a few ideas about what might appear in an introduction. The description of the different sections of the report may have given the impression that the course is completely prescriptive about notions and functions that should appear in each section. The course is, in fact, suggesting functions and notions, and their realisations which might be used, and leading the student to think about what ought to be included in a report in his own subject. The second part presents three short introductions taken unadapted from reports, and asks the student to think about which particular functions are employed. Then the student is asked to think about the functions which might be included in an introduction to a report on one of his own experiments. Then the unit goes on to practise the grammatical realisations of one of the functions - definition of materials. Subsequent units practise the grammatical realisations of the other functions mentioned.

As to the actual teaching of report writing, I would like to suggest that it is an ideal area for co-operation between the language teacher and the science teacher, not only in the preparation of materials but also in the actual teaching of the materials. It has been noticed in Birmingham that undergraduate students from overseas are, in the first term at least, unable to appreciate the significance of the results they have obtained during an experiment. The problem is not that they know what to say about their results but do not have sufficient competence to express it in English, but that they do not know how to begin to evaluate their results. The implications for integrating the English programme into the science programme are obvious. In Birmingham it has been suggested that the reports written by overseas students be marked initially by the English teacher and then by the science teacher. This integration is ideal, and would be very difficult to put into practice during a pre-session course, but it might be worth considering setting time aside for students to carry out one or two simple experiments under the guidance of a science teacher, who would then co-operate with the language teacher in showing the students how the experiment should be written up in a report.

To conclude, the course worked reasonably well in the classroom, and some science lecturers have said that the quality of reports has improved. Much more research needs to be done, and the units themselves need considerable polishing and expansion. Another possibility is that a number of subject specific units might be added to the general units, as with the "Nucleus" materials. These could be for classroom use or for self-access by the students.



SEMINAR DISCUSSION STRATEGIES

Catherine Johns

Department of Modern Languages, University of Aston

I hope to show that the title of this short paper contains a possible contradiction in terms, and that the time is ripe for resolving that contradiction.

With rare exceptions, language specialists have their educational background firmly rooted in the humanities. We tend to think of a seminar as basically a teaching situation, in which an expert or researcher in a field presents the findings of his work, and the interpretation of those findings. The audience politely listens, occasionally raising questions of a factual nature from the floor. Typically, the linguistic activity takes the form of

- a Monologue
- b Questions from the floor, response from speaker
- c Occasional exchanges between speakers on the floor, after which the role of 'chairman' or 'honoured guest' is handed back to the speaker
- d Open discussion after the speaker finishes his paper

However, in other disciplines, notably science and engineering, the term seminar may be applied not only to activities of the above pattern, but also to activities which are closer to a lecture proper (where the expectation is mainly monologue) or to a tutorial (where the expectation is close question-and-answer by the tutor). The variety of form of seminars was discussed in some detail in Johns & Johns (1975).

It is not appropriate here to describe the results of ongoing research into seminars which is taking place at Birmingham University, among others. On the anecdotal level, however, the seminars I have observed in my own institution in science and engineering departments positively discourage any language activity other than monologue, and dialogue between tutor/lecturer/speaker and student. Why does this happen? The answer seems to lie in the academic traditions of the disciplines in question. Departments of science or engineering are not likely to regard a question as having any possible answer, but rather as having an optimum solution: optimum among a few feasible solutions. Academics in the

humanities would regard it as ideologically unacceptable to inform a seminar group:

'Sorry - wrong answer. Education for an elite is in the national interest.'

The question of the language activity that takes place in a seminar is not trivial. If we expect overseas postgraduates to be involved in something other than receiving monologue, or participating in dialogue with the tutor, then perhaps we should look a little more closely at our expectations.

It seems to me that the humanities man's notions of what goes on in a seminar are primarily based on the expectation of an inward-facing circle, in which participants are free to address each other within certain definable limits. These limits are dictated by the conventions of discourse, and would include tacitly accepted norms on the location of interruptions, the great majority of which seem to occur at major syntactic breaks and not in mid-stream, in the 'Word In Edgeways' discussion analysed in 1975. Further, interruptions are frequently marked by overt verbal request for permission to interrupt ('If I can just come in here. . .') or, non-verbal request in the form of eye-contact plus breath-intake. In default of permission being given, some kind of mitigator may be required to facilitate entry ('If I could just make a point here. . .').

The linguistic interchange between a group of peers in the context of 'academic presentation' are not, I would suggest, typical of the seminars in faculties that many of our students enter: Science, Engineering, and Management Science. In six hours of taped seminars from the Management Science Faculty, there is not a single student-student exchange. The language activity is entirely monologue; or a single student answering a tutor's question; or occasionally a chain of tutor's question - student answer; student comment or additional question - tutor's answer.

The typical 'seminar' at postgraduate level seems to be more of a teaching situation than a discussion situation: it is not an inward-facing circle in which free address is the norm, in spite of the frequent claim that that is what lecturers see themselves as aiming at. There is a need for continuing research, and specifically for research as to comparative differences in seminar behaviour in different disciplines. Until such time as evidence to the contrary emerges, we should, I think, be extremely cautious about claiming

functional validity for 'seminar discussion' teaching materials. I am not suggesting that we should cease to prepare students for genuine discussion situations. It is more a question of not assuming that such teaching has relevance to the immediate study situation of a postgraduate course.

There are two practical points which need to be considered. One is that if the real language activities occurring in typical seminars are monologue (both statements and questions, some of which are extremely complex¹) and dialogue (including both questions and answers to questions), the implication is that we should do more to prepare students for these elements in seminar interaction. We should prepare students to interpret and formulate highly specific questions on their subject area. The ability to ask questions is one of the fundamental skills of advanced discussion. In many of the 'Word In Edgeways' discussions (see Johns & Johns, 1975) opinions, criticisms, and contributions to the development of an argument are stated in terms of a question. Ability to ask questions of the kind of complexity required in a tutorial, where detailed information is being pursued, is probably crucial to the student's development of understanding of his subject. This ability seems to develop late in the learning gradient. Students who are otherwise fluent and articulate continue to have difficulty with handling question formation accurately.

A second practical point which is relevant to the teaching of overseas postgraduates is that if genuine discussion tends to take place in an inward-facing circle of peers (defined in relation to degree of specialisation in a discipline) who are free to address each other, then the English language tutor is more likely to witness free flowing discussion than is the subject specific lecturer. This seems to me to be a justification for involvement by the language staff in the learning processes of the students' subject discipline. What I am suggesting is that students are less likely to be inhibited about expressing their ideas on their specialisation with a language tutor than they are with a subject tutor.

If we are to account for language functions within postgraduate study correctly, and to prepare valid teaching materials, then a more careful use of terms is not pedantic but a necessary preliminary. The evidence that exists suggests that the language skills required for seminars are not identical to the language skills required for academic discussion.

Reference:

'Seminar Discussion Strategies' : C M and T F Johns in
English for Academic Purposes - proceedings of
SELMOUS/BAAL Seminar at Birmingham University 1975.

Transcription¹ of a 'question' in a Business Administration
seminar at Aston:

'If some of the things we've been doing over the last
few weeks. .er. . months have helped you to sort out
your ideas in your own minds, then I'd like to go on
to look at other ways of evaluating the design of a
system, which would be the basis of your projects,
wouldn't it, before you actually go out on a case?'

Apart from the syntactic complexity, presumably students
had to decide whether this really was a question with
an answer, or whether it was a statement, to be taken
as information.

SEMINAR STRATEGIES : ASKING FOR REPETITION OR CLARIFICATION

G Cawood

Department of Education, University of Manchester

During classes on the Pre-Sessional Intensive English Course at Manchester, the tutors found that questions put by the students were often confusing, requiring the tutor to check and re-check on the aim of the question. Such questions were often aimed at establishing essential information which the tutor had already mentioned but which the student had not quite understood. A similar situation would most likely occur for the students later in the year in their seminars; so the tutors felt that practice material for such questions was necessary. This practice material would be aimed at the need the students would have in seminars for interrupting to ask for repetition, for clarification or for further information. It would provide a way for the student to get at basic information which he or she had not understood. These particular functions, ie interrupting to ask for repetition, etc., were intuitively felt by the tutors to be basic in a seminar situation.

Next, certain guidelines had to be established: firstly, the interruption would have to be polite; secondly, the subsequent request would have to be both concise and clear.

Each type of interruption and request seems to be divisible into sections, each of which performs a particular role in that question. Thus, there might be a section designating the 'required action' and another designating the 'mode of repetition'. Within each section a number of different exponents or items could be given. For instance, seven sections can be distinguished in the sequence used for interruption and a request for oral repetition. The first section would be the interruption itself, for example:

Excuse me, . . .

Followed by the polite request:

. . . please could you . . .

This would then be followed by the required action:

. . . repeat . . .

And then the required item:

. . . the last sentence . . .

When it came to the exponents in each section, intuition had to be relied on again. Those exponents which were regarded as the most frequent and useful were chosen. Certain sections of each request required topics of a general nature to be introduced and here simple academic English was used.

This procedure resulted in a tabulation of obligatory and optional sections which could be connected into complete questions with a particular function. Thereby, the examples also formed a substitution table.

The students were introduced to this scheme in two ways. They were given an adapted substitution table for intensive study and were also given a short recorded talk. This talk attempted to simulate real seminar conditions: in it, as in any seminar, there were indistinct words, numbers spoken too quickly, coughs by the speaker and so on. For practice, purposes, these occurred at vital points, so that the information which had been masked was necessary for the comprehension of the rest of the talk. Therefore, the students had to ask for repetition or clarification in order to understand what followed.

At each unclear point, there was an interruption and request for repetition or clarification so that the students were shown how to obtain the masked information. On the second reading, the students themselves were required to interrupt at the relevant points to obtain the masked information. Such practice was continued until all the information had been gained. In this way the students were placed in their own future role of listeners wishing to gather information in a seminar situation.

This material was easily integrated into the Pre-Sessional Course: the second half of the Manchester Pre-Sessional Course consists, in part, of talks, seminars and discussions which provide ideal opportunities for the students to practise. These talks and seminars are often given by the students themselves and so, with the usual quota of mispronunciations and other mistakes, the rest of the class usually finds plenty of occasions to use their new skills. By this time, then, the students were not simply role-playing but were in a real situation where these functions could be realised.

This procedure and the resulting material formed a useful starting-point. The need had been noticed and materials produced. For a future course, an expansion of seminar

strategies was envisaged. Perhaps more controlled practice would be necessary and certainly other functions would have to be introduced.

But there were still problems. The material had been based on intuition, which was unsatisfactory. Exact requirements for seminars would have to be established. It might be possible that the students did not need seminar strategies during their course of study. The wrong functions might also have been chosen.

Some investigation was therefore proposed to discover the exact requirements for these purposes. Two major questions would have to be answered: firstly, would the need for seminar strategies be felt during a course of study? The structure of each department in terms of lectures and seminars would have to be established and also what form these take. It might be that students in certain departments or on certain courses would not have to attend seminars but only lectures. Also there might be differences between departments (and even individual lecturers) on what was termed a seminar.

Secondly, what functions and what particular exponents occur? Perhaps the first intuitions were correct: the functions chosen would be the most important. But this was not certain and so would have to be analysed carefully.

A start on this necessary research has already been made at Manchester by sending a preliminary questionnaire to lecturers in various departments. This will be followed by an in-depth investigation and analysis of seminar activities in a few selected departments.

SEMINAR STRATEGIES : AGREEMENT AND DISAGREEMENT

Janet E Price

The Language Centre, University of Newcastle upon Tyne

Introduction

Presumably we have strategies for seminars because we want our students to participate more fully in their seminars. But how justified are we in spending time teaching a skill which may be desirable in certain subjects and irrelevant in others, since the nature of the subject matter determines strategies most appropriate for access to that subject? Even where it is desirable, how realistic are we in expecting students to put it into practice without pain and embarrassment?

Let us consider first of all the traditional student role. The overseas student may have come from a country where he has been more or less passive in the learning role, not active, not initiating dialogue, not commenting, not interrupting, not questioning, not challenging. There may be a number of reasons for this. One may be that his culture does not expect there to be a free exchange of ideas between teachers and taught, such as we might envisage in Britain. Also, he may be shy, not wanting to take the initiative. Furthermore, though he may be neither shy nor culturally ill at ease in commenting on his tutor's opinions, the situation in which he finds himself in Britain may so inhibit him that he would not dream of entering into a dialogue with an expert in his field, particularly a native English speaker. So there may be reluctance to adopt certain modes of behaviour, even resistance.

The initial problem then faced by the language teacher may be to break down this resistance and then build up confidence by providing the necessary language and the opportunities to practise that language. Teaching the 'correct' behaviour, pointing out that a different psychological attitude may be required in the new learning situation, giving a new set of rules to work a new system, is something that can be done usefully in the language classroom and needs to be done if the student is to benefit at all.

However, we may have to accept that some students may never have seminars at all and may be unable to open their mouths even where they do, however much they have been exposed to new attitudes to learning and new language. Yet we accept that it is desirable for them nevertheless to be able to initiate dialogue, comment, interrupt, question,

challenge, in other words, play an active part in general acts of communication, whether these be geared to a seminar situation or not. If this is so, then this language might usefully be taught as part of the wider area of 'language for discussion' purposes. What we are really saying to the student then is, 'If you feel the urge to jump up and challenge some statement at some point in the day, whether it be in the seminar or not, here's the language to do it with'. This would seem to be a reasonable pragmatic approach to adopt in the absence of any real information about the specific function and nature of the seminar in specific subject area.

Materials

With this in mind, I will now briefly explain my procedure and illustrate with examples, from material which attempts to integrate seminar strategies with those of general discussion. I have identified ten areas of discussion language, which I do not suggest are in any way definitive, but are based on experience at one particular time with one particular set of students. For the purposes of this paper, I have chosen to illustrate the language of Agreement and Disagreement.

As can be seen from the material, there are two parts to the procedure - presentation and practice. The new language is presented with a discussion of stress and intonation patterns associated with it, followed by the practice section which is divided into three parts. The first part is very controlled where the student is using the language in a structured fairly rigid way but where the usual substitutions may be made. The second part takes place at a different point in the week where the students use the newly acquired language where they consider appropriate in a much less controlled way but where they may be gently engineered to do so by the teacher. The third part takes place at a different time again and gives the students adequate opportunities to use the language with virtually no control at all, in a real discussion situation, where hopefully agreement and disagreement is truly meaningful.

PROCEDURE AND EXEMPLIFICATION OF ONE UNIT

- 1 Presentation of new language and discussion of intonation patterns associated with it.

Exemplification:-

Language of Agreement/Disagreement

Agreement	I agree with you wholeheartedly/ absolutely/completely. I fully support what you say. I think you're quite right. I am of the same opinion. I share your view.
Partial Agreement	I agree with you in part/partly/to a certain extent, but/however/nevertheless
Disagreement - 'Soft type'	- Don't you think you may be mistaken? - Isn't it possible you may be wrong? - I think you may be wrong. - I'm afraid you're mistaken. - I'm sorry but I have to disagree. - I'm very sorry but
- 'Hard type'	I disagree with you. - I don't/can't share your views at all. I think you're quite wrong. - You're absolutely wrong in my opinion. You've got the wrong idea completely.

- 2 Practice

Very controlled

role playing in structured dialogue situation.

Exemplification:-

- A. I think the plan for traffic control put forward by the city council is excellent.
- B. Yes, I quite agree with you. It's very well thought out.
- C. Well
I wouldn't go as far as that. I agree it's quite good but it has a lot of weaknesses too.
- D. Well, I have to disagree with all of you. In my opinion, it shows very muddled thinking and has no merits at all.

Note

The usual substitutions may be made or students may think their own statements to elicit different forms of agreement/-disagreement.

Less controlled - seminar situation.

Each session a different student gives a short prepared talk (3 - 5) minutes. Language of agreement/disagreement can be used if relevant in the discussion that follows.

Further practice - The 'seminar language' sessions are linked to general discussions/debates which form another part of the course. Further opportunities are thus provided to use the language of agreement/disagreement in a freer way, in the same week on a different day.

Exemplification:

The discussion situation which ties in with this language session is the following:-

A sum of money is available for improving the student common room, which at present is plainly decorated, sparsely furnished with bare walls and floors and no coffee facilities in the room itself or magazines.

A committee has been set up consisting of representatives from different student groups. Each committee member has his own list of priorities of what could be done with the money. Each one presents his case in turn, justifying his choice. Then there is a general discussion and a decision has to be taken.

JIGSAW LISTENING AND PARALLEL LISTENING

Design Techniques for Audio and Video-Taped Source Material

Gill Sturtridge
ELTI, The British Council, London

The students who attend our study skills courses are largely postgraduates who go on to study a wide variety of subjects at British universities. When designing materials for their course we are confronted with the following constraints.

Firstly, our students are of varied levels of language proficiency and come to study a wide range of subjects. When they are grouped into classes therefore we must accept either mixed-ability groups or mixed subject groupings. Secondly, the students come from different L₁ backgrounds and consequently differ in their attitudes to, and experience of, study skills. These are the constraints, and in designing materials for listening comprehension and note-taking practice we had in mind these objectives:

- a To cater for mixed ability groups and possibly for heterogeneous subject groupings.
- b To use authentic source material in the form of audio- or video-taped lectures given before a live audience, rather than using studio-recorded lecturettes or radio broadcasts.
- c To integrate the language skills in a way that would prepare students for using these skills in their subsequent university environment.
- d To provide teaching materials that could avoid the teacher-dominated class.
- e To provide the students with materials which would give them the opportunity to use the note-taking strategies which they had developed in preceding teacher-led classes.

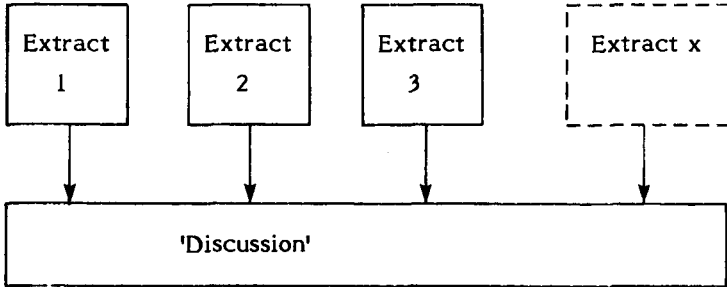
Our wish to integrate language skills had been prompted by the desire to provide listening exercises and note-taking exercises that were more than an end in themselves. We had found that the available listening exercises which required oral checking in class gave little reason for the student to speak. When he did so he was controlled and limited by the answer-checking situation. Only rarely was there a reason for real communication between the students themselves or the

teacher. Obviously they had all listened to the same tape and most of the time they were asking or answering questions to which they already knew the answer.

We saw a need for materials that led somewhere and would involve the students in real communication. The two design techniques we arrived at were jigsaw listening and parallel listening. Both techniques are for listening and note-taking practice and the distinction between the two is a materials designer's distinction rather than a teacher's distinction and I feel it relevant only to those who are working on taped sources and making their own listening materials. The basic principle behind both is that students are divided into groups and listen to different taped materials and afterwards discuss what they have heard.

Parallel Listening

For parallel listening the students are divided into three or more groups. Each group listens to a different extract and therefore the number of groups depends on the technical resources.¹

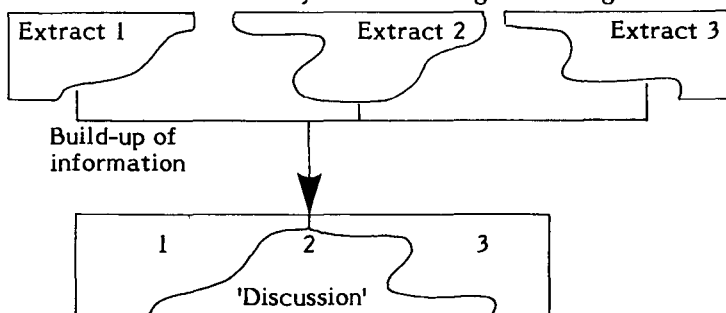


In this diagram the students are divided into three groups and listen to three different taped extracts. For example, if the discussion is on world energy supplies, Group 1's extract could be about oil as an energy source and Group 2's extract might be on coal. Group 3's extract might be concerned with nuclear or solar power. Each group listens to, and makes notes on, a taped-extract which is complete in itself but the topics --- oil, coal, nuclear power and so on are of "parallel" interest. After listening and discussing their notes within their own extract group, the students re-group to discuss energy supplies. They can re-group in threes with a representative from each extract, or they can work as a whole class.

Obviously the parallel listening technique lends itself well to case-studies of different types and can be supported with relevant parallel reading texts.

Jigsaw Listening

Turning to jigsaw listening we come to a refinement of the technique which is perhaps less easy to apply to study skills material but which is very valuable for 'general' English.



From the diagram you can see that the students are again divided into three or more groups and listen to different taped extracts. The difference is that the extracts are dependent upon each other. No one extract contains all the information needed to make up a complete picture, hence the term 'jigsaw'. For example, Group 1 listen to their extract and take notes and confer amongst themselves. To get all the information they need the groups come together, ask questions of each other and exchange information. It is not easy to find suitable authentic taped material which can be used for jigsaw listening.

The source material used on one occasion was a public lecture on the use of different technologies in developing countries and is intended for use with a mixed group of postgraduate economists. The lecturer made six points about the disadvantages of advanced country technology and these were made into six taped extracts. The jigsaw listening exercise is part of a larger unit of work on the use of different technologies and before listening the students had already worked through the lecturer's introduction with the teacher. They had also read the parallel reading texts which go with the unit. When all the groups have listened to their extract they come together and complete a summary sheet, pooling their information to do so and offering their own views in a pseudo-seminar situation. The summary sheet in its turn is the basis for written work.

This design technique is suitable for mixed-ability groups because some extracts can be made shorter or easier than others, or a more supportive worksheet can be given. It can also be used with mixed-subject groupings where extracts with varied specialist content can be chosen. Listening and note-taking lead on naturally to oral practice and on to written work so that the practice of the different skills is integrated. The teacher takes a monitoring role and the work becomes student-centred allowing them to work together and communicate freely.

Note:

¹Parallel and jigsaw listening can be done in a language laboratory or a classroom with three small tape-recorders. One tape-recorder can also be used in a classroom and groups can listen in rotation. Obviously it is easier to handle a larger number of tape extracts in a language laboratory.

PROJECTS

Pauline Robinson

Centre for Applied Language Studies, University of Reading

The term project is a fairly familiar one, which we might perhaps not think necessary to examine. It is a term used in many specialist subject departments and also in many English Language (service) departments. If we look at what the different departments intend by the term projects, however, we shall find that it has a range of meanings. I propose briefly to consider two types of real project and then to suggest what might be most useful for the English Language department.

For many foreign students in the Linguistics Department at the University of Reading, as in other arts and social science departments, 'doing a project' means that after thinking of a topic which is then approved, a student does some reading in the library (and perhaps some analysis of written data) and then returns to this tutor a few weeks later with what is in effect a long essay (with bibliography). This I would call a 'library project'.

Far more than this is involved in doing a project at the Reading Department of Agriculture (where there is a large number of foreign students). A typical project may centre on the assessment of a method or commercial product (machinery, type of feed) used in an area of farming, leading to the production of a report which could contain recommendations for future action. A project which I followed involved the students making three visits to a pig farm. Each time they had long talks/interviews with the farmer and pig men. The students did some reading in the library, but as, in fact, there was not much suitable material available there, they also wrote off for, and read, commercial catalogues and other such literature. In addition, the students studied the records kept by the farm on the progress and productivity of the pigs. Twice the students made an oral report. The first report was early on, after the first visit to the farm, giving the general initial findings. The second oral presentation was at the end of the project, when the students gave a full seminar paper, complete with graphs, overhead projector slides, etc.

The two types of project I have described do not seem to have much in common. Both involve some library work, but the second type of project need not involve very much. The chief

common factor is that the work is more or less directed by the student himself. That is, once his topic is approved, a student generally decides for himself how he should organise his work. All he is required to observe are his deadlines. Although tutors are willing to give help on organisation, they are rarely asked.

How much of all this is useful for the English Language department? Many English Language departments now teach study skills, eg library use, note-taking, academic writing, ie some of the 'how' of doing a project; but go no further. Indeed, students sometimes ask, 'What do all these study skills add up to?' I suggest that if we made pre-sessional course students do a project (of either type) we would then be linking all the study skills together into an interrelated sequence of activities with a definite end product. Students could thus have the satisfaction of creating something on their pre-sessional course instead of just practising for future creation. Those who will actually be required to do a project of the kinds I have described will also be acquiring the new study skill 'how to do a project'.

But of the two extremes of real project I have described, which is the more useful model for the English Language department? Clearly the second as it involves a greater range of language skills: listening, not only to teachers' instructions (which the library project may also involve) but also in interviews; speaking: in interviews and in the seminar presentations; reading and writing. In addition, there is the important point that students themselves can decide which skills they need to employ: one topic may not lend itself to interviewing, one may not to library material.

We now come to the crucial question: what can students actually do in projects on pre-sessional courses? Devising interesting, useful and feasible projects is difficult. One cannot, for example, have scores of foreign students all milling round the local pig farm!

A lot depends on the teacher: his/her enthusiasm, energy, and knowledge of the interests and abilities of the class. All that I can suggest here is an ideal sequence of activities which gives the opportunity for all the language skills to be employed. I can then suggest that we can do the projects at different levels, and give some examples of each.

The Stages of a Project

- 1 Lecture, or introduction/exposition by teacher, providing initial stimulus.
- 2 Group reading of general texts. Vocabulary work.
(Visit)
- 3 Group discussion of treatment of the topic. Individual or sub-group tasks allocated.
(Visit)
- 4 Students disperse to collect data. Teacher available at stated times for consultation, assistance.
- 5 Report session/seminar. Students report on their findings.
- 6 Discussion of the findings. Further tasks of data collection allocated/writing-up tasks allocated.
- 7 Final presentation in written form and/or one or two students only presenting longer seminar papers.

Stages 1 and 2 would be omitted for higher level projects on students' own subjects. Stage 5 would be the conclusion for lower level, eg orientation, projects. Stages 6 and 7 are optional depending on the level of the project, the degree to which students' interest is aroused, the degree to which the teacher thinks the topic can be exploited.

Visits, eg to a local factory, to a town, are optional and dependent on the nature of the project. I would suggest that visits would come after stage 2 or after stage 3. Students making their visit after 3 would be equipped with individual sets of questions to seek answers to, whereas after 2, students would not be individually briefed.

Following the 'Stages of a Project' we could imagine a visit to a newspaper printing works. Stage 2 might involve texts on journalism, or the class reading of a newspaper. Vocabulary would be that of the newspaper (features page, column, etc.), and of the office (journalist, editor, printer). Before the visit students might be briefed to ask about particular things, or might perhaps be given a worksheet to fill in. Afterwards students would discuss the visit and then be given further tasks. At an intermediate level these might involve comparing different newspapers, filling in a more detailed worksheet, etc. At a higher level students might seek more information (and write a paper) on the particular works

visited, on the product involved, on the industry in general, make a comparison with the industry in their home country, etc.

At the elementary level, with small groups of students, projects can form part of orientation activities; for example, on the resources of the town. After a preliminary briefing, students could be allocated such tasks as finding out about transport facilities, libraries and museums, shopping and recreation facilities. Their recommended sources would be the local newspaper, commercial maps and guidebooks, public library and railway station notice-boards, etc. The students might perhaps prepare a questionnaire for themselves on what to seek. Classroom exploitation of the project might not only consist of students giving their findings, but also discussing what they did to get their data. The end product might be a class report on the town and its amenities, for use by subsequent groups of students.

An intermediate level project could be on education, following a lecture on higher education in UK. This could be broken down into sub-topics for students to research on further - eg financing, government control, etc. Students whose home countries appear to offer an interesting comparison could report further on this. Students would be encouraged to study such sources as university calendars and prospectuses; the THES; and to interview university and other officials.

At the highest level students could do projects in their own subject areas, topics being obtained perhaps from the specialist departments. The preliminary group discussion would establish which topics would be likely to be of interest to the whole group. Probably not all topics would lead to seminar presentation: only those of most general interest.

MATERIALS FOR STUDENTS OF TEXTILES AND RELATED SUBJECTS

R A Knight
The School of Education, University of Leeds

Background

The three-week pre-session language course which is run each September for overseas students entering the University of Leeds offers as one component subject-specific classes. Occupying one timetable slot each morning, these classes represent an overall commitment of some 12 to 15 hours; the precise total will depend on the course organisation in a given year.

Most of the coursework takes place in groups composed of students who, as rated both on the Leeds English Proficiency Test and in an interview with two course tutors, have similar standards of English. The combination of subjective and objective measures works well; placement according to subject presents far more problems.

The number of students taking part in our courses tends not to exceed 70. Prior to students' arrival there is a good deal of confusion as to precise special interests, since students will be described on application forms by labels ranging from the accurate course-specific ('MSc Environmental Pollution Control') to the most general ('Chemistry').

Inevitably, some students fail to arrive and others who have made no application from overseas appear seeking tuition. The precise focus of interest in subject-specific groups is bound to shift in such circumstances. Even within Textiles and related subjects there may be an emphasis on dyeing or chemistry as opposed to engineering or design.

Quite apart from this question of specificity we have the problem of individual proficiency. In fact, the most limiting factor in subject-specific work seems to be the differing standards of English of students in a given group, and this clearly will have an implication in materials design. Such diversity is in our experience far more marked in some specialisms than in others. By comparison with, say, students entering the Overseas Education Unit of the University, or with those specialising in management studies, students of textiles and related subjects on our course last year showed a far smaller range of proficiency test scores. The factors

likely to underlie such characteristics are perhaps too complex to analyse; they include not only students' professional use of English but also their perception of the need for certain standards and their ability to identify what sources of assistance are available. It seems fairly safe for our purposes to assume that the typical student of textiles and related subjects entering our course will be relatively low-scoring on our test and will require relevant remedial grammatical practice as well as guidance in increasing substantially his store of subject-specific and common-core academic lexis.

Subject-specific programmes in the context of course and year

Where will a subject-specific programme link with our other activities on the pre-session course and during future terms? The organisation of our pre-session course is such that little systematic carry-over can occur between subject-specific and other elements. Students in a given subject-specific group will meet in the plenary session which starts our mornings, proceed then each to his own proficiency-graded group, come together for the component in question and then move to any of four groups alternating two-and-two for reading improvement and language laboratory practice.

Ultimately the solution may be to take up general plenary work - based on 'Studying in English' by J B Heaton¹ to practise in subject-specific contexts such skills as lecture comprehension and note-taking and -making. Apart from a lack at present of sufficient authentic materials in, say, textiles-directed lectures, and the need potentially to create a very large stock of such materials to cater for the varying foci which might emerge from year to year, I am far from sure whether the typical student is at the commencement of our course best served by such an approach.

Turning to term-time activities: the only systematic subject-specific programmes offered are in academic writing. While a rather high proportion of pre-session students attend such classes, they will naturally be joined by newcomers who must be offered an integral course. It would seem advantageous, however, to construct some sort of link between pre-session and term-time work without losing the necessary internal integrity of each part and without being repetitious. In some sense, then, the subject-specific component under discussion now might represent a pre-writing programme.

This fits rather well with the emphasis of other pre-sessional components at present.

Materials Design

Looking back at the very early efforts in the Leeds subject-specific writing programme², we can see how specialist lexis is pre-supposed even when the type of pattern practice suggests poor structure mastery on the part of students. I hasten to add that the programme has come a long way since those times, but an example may be taken because it seems to typify many early efforts in the special-purpose English field.

Canvas is a warp-faced cloth. (SUB) georgette/plain-weave

Sateen has a weft-faced weave. (SUB) satin/warp-faced

Somehow it is necessary to break into the vicious circle in which lexis (or lack of knowledge of it) represents a barrier to meaningful pre-communicative pattern practice.

We are pressed for time on the pre-sessional course, and it will be impossible to provide a full treatment of all that is really necessary to overcome students' problems. Due to the sort of ignorance which I mentioned earlier, it is also inevitable that the actual content of the materials, viewed in terms either of lexis or of structures which will later be employed as function realisations, will be somewhat random and far from complete. This can no doubt be improved gradually.

But bearing in mind the need to find a point of entry, and the need too for a rather compressed programme which will serve several aims, we have some thoughts towards an approach.

The key elements in the programme are a set of authentic subject-specific extracts from textbooks and periodicals or papers. Although the selection of these is somewhat arbitrary, control is exercised through the recurrence of both lexis and of the grammatical realisation of various rhetorical functions.

The use of such authentic material seems highly desirable from a motivational point of view. The purpose of using the extracts is both to promote comprehension of written discourse and to provide models for writing, since sentences or paragraphs can be extracted for guided composition

purposes. It should be stressed that our emphasis is on the accurate production of certain limited characteristic sentence patterns, given that this course will feed into the term-time programme.

An important phase is, however, the build-up to work with the whole extract. This is ideally such that few problems arise when the extract is finally presented. Material from the first step of one introductory phase is appended. It will be noted that students are familiarised with the use of two reference works - 'The Advanced Learner's Dictionary' and 'Textile Terms and Definitions'³- during this period. The section may in fact be viewed as a preparatory exercise which could be used as self-study material.

Although the overall character of the material can scarcely be perceived from the fragment appended, it should be mentioned that in working towards the handling of authentic text we employ materials designed to entertain. While students may well be positively motivated simply by perceiving that a programme is directed towards their specialist needs, I see no reason for treating subject-specific approaches with undue solemnity. We may take ourselves too seriously, and in the context of a pre-sessional course with its highly intensive programme such relaxation is more than usually important.

References:

- 1 'Studying in English' - J B Heaton - Longman, 1975.
- 2 see "Preparing a Writing Programme for Students of Science and Technology", A P Cowie and J B Heaton, in 'English for Academic Purposes', BAAL/SELMOUS, 1977.
This describes later developments in the programme.
- 3 "Textile Terms and Definitions", The Textile Institute, Manchester. (7th edition) 1975.

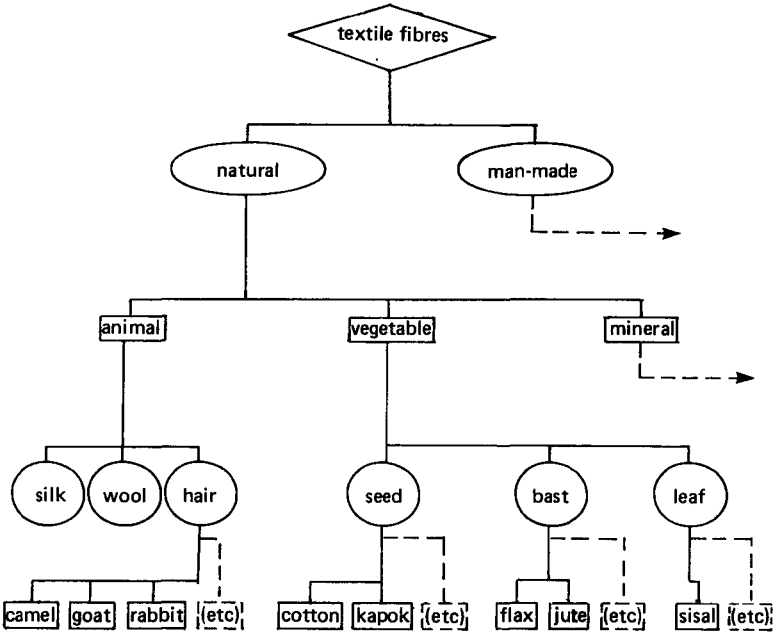
CLASSIFICATION OF TEXTILE FIBRES
(Partial)

Source:

**Textile Terms
and Definitions**

The Textile
Institute,
Manchester.

7th ed., 1975



EXAMPLE OF STEP 1 IN THE INTRODUCTORY SECTION OF A UNIT

Study the CLASSIFICATION OF TEXTILE FIBRES on page 1
(This is taken from TTD p.228)

- 1 Complete the following sentences:
 - 1.1 It is possible to divide textile fibres into two main classes:
_____ and _____.
 - 1.2 Natural fibres may be classified into three groups:
_____, _____ and _____.
 - 1.3 Animal fibres include _____,
_____ and _____.

Now use 1.2. as an example to complete this sentence:

- 1.4 _____
_____ : seed fibres, bast fibres and
leaf fibres.

Similarly, use 1.3. as an example to complete both these sentences:

- 1.5 _____ cotton and kapok.
- 1.6 _____ jute.

2 Look up wool in TTD. Follow the instructions there.
Then complete this sentence:

- 2.1 Hair is _____.

3 Look up bast fibre in TTD. Use ALD if you do not understand one word.

4 Look up jute in TTD and after reading the first two sentences complete the following:

- 4.1 Jute is obtained _____

- 4.2 It may be _____
_____ : _____ jute and dark jute.

5 Look up sisal in TTD and try to find quickly the information needed to complete the following:

- 5.1 Sisal is a _____ which is _____

- 5.2 The average fibre length is _____.

AN ENGLISH LANGUAGE COURSE FOR POSTGRADUATES IN MANAGEMENT SCIENCE

Catherine Johns
Department of Modern Languages, University of Aston

Current opinion in ELT does not dispute that students should be prepared for the linguistic demands of their specific field or vocation. We have moved from accepting that science or technology should replace general culture on the language syllabus for manpower training (Stevens 1971) to the realisation that the communicative, as opposed to the grammatical, properties of the language of particular specialisations may not be as obvious as we might have thought (Widdowson 1975).

Functional analyses of language such as that proposed by Wilkins (1972) have been applied to the question of how to design specialist language courses, and along the lines of the functional approach, possible frames of reference are available such as the one proposed by Trim (1974). The essence of his proposal is that choices of lexis, grammar, and conceptual and notional categories are informed by the wider situational context of the course, and the functional categories within it. The frame of reference, then, for the design of specialist courses seems to be firmly functional. Candlin, Leather and Bruton, in their (1976) article 'Applying Communicative Competence to Components of Specialist Course Design' claim:

'Pragmatically defined language functions constitute the soundest base for course design - in fact the indispensable base for a course aimed at developing communicative competence.'

They also point out the need for establishing the validity of their opinions about what is involved in language 'on the job'. The criterion of validity of functions on which a course is to be based is an important one. The language course must reflect the general activities in which the learner will be involved. However, presumably, some choice of functions, both behavioural and linguistic, has to be made, which will reflect judgement as to what is relevant to success within the profession or vocation in question - in this case, doctors. The analysis by Candlin, Leather and Bruton (1976) of the ways in which doctors successfully negotiate conflicting and simultaneous demands on their powers to communicate

indicates their view of what it is that makes for successful communication in the various roles the doctor has to fulfill.

We have no such model of what it is that makes a student academically successful within his specialised field of study, because we do not know how much of academic success is due to language factors. Certainly, the complaint is often heard that undergraduates (British and overseas) do not read textbooks, but get by on lecture notes and handouts, with some reference to tutorial sessions. For postgraduates, the mystery is perhaps greater. Some students whose score on a conventional language test is poor do remarkably well on their scientific or technical course work.

The course designer faces the criterion of the functional validity of the behavioural and noncomitant language activities he assumes. This must be tempered by uncertainty as to which particular mix and weighting of elements will have a greater chance of producing academic success. It is not impossible that the mix will differ for different students.

It seems politic, then, to bear three criteria in mind when approaching course design:-

- 1 The validity of the behavioural and linguistic functions drawn up.
- 2 The methods by which students are assessed by the department or institution receiving them.
- 3 The mode of learning to which different students have hitherto been exposed.

For postgraduates entering Management Sciences at Aston, some of the behavioural functions required are observable, and ipso facto provide a valid basis for a preparatory language course. They include:-

- 1 comprehension of and participation in lectures. (possibly taking notes, asking questions if allowed, replying relevantly to questions, following other participants' contributions).
- 2 doing written assignments (involving location and summarising of relevant texts, organising notes and working out an overall structure, expressing ideas coherently, stating opinions on the literature, supplying references to and summaries of background literature etc.).

- 3 researching, collecting data, and processing it statistically (requiring knowledge of statistical techniques, data presentation in tabular, graph, or flow-chart form).
- 4 establishing relationships with lecturers (which may be crucial for advice on projects, for feedback on assignments, or for learning in small-group teaching situations).
- 5 competitive participation in classes, seminars, or general discussion (which may contribute to assessment of a student's competence relative to that of others in the group).
- 6 finding information in libraries, or directly from companies
- 7 extracting relevant information from textbooks, reports and journals
- 8 general social interaction, on and off campus (both with university officials/administrative staff, and with a wide variety of individuals not connected in any way with the student's course of study).

These observable aspects of student behaviour were taken into account in designing a preparatory course for postgraduates entering Management Science, and to that extent one might claim face validity. However, the requirement that the Management Faculty's method of assessment be borne in mind might lead one to weight elements heavily in the direction of written output, since this is the only objective basis on which students are accepted or rejected for particular courses. This requirement might run counter to a need for a mix of possible learning modes, since students differ so much. Some thoroughly dislike note-taking techniques and note-taking practice, preferring to learn privately from written texts. Some say they gain most from discussion, and have no confidence in what they gain from a written text. It is obvious that a course must allow for different learning styles, and include within it variety of activity and variety of register. Even when these allowances are made, it is still not possible to say with any confidence: this formula is guaranteed to bring academic success. Here is one area that clearly needs investigation.

It is appropriate to say a little about the Faculty of Management Sciences at Aston before describing the language course for incoming overseas postgraduates. It has about 1,000 postgraduates and undergraduates, representing 20% of the total student population. Postgraduates may do research towards a PhD, one of three MSc courses (Systems

Analysis, Operations Research, Industrial Administration), or a Diploma course (either over six months or twelve months). The problem in the past has been matching an incoming student to a course which is appropriate for his academic background. A pre-postgraduate course was instituted to enable the Management Faculty to assess the academic standard of intending students, and to give them a period in which to adjust to the teaching and learning style that operates in the Faculty. The pre-postgraduate course is based on a common core of aspects of Industrial Administration, which will be needed by all graduates no matter what their specialisation has been, and English language work.

Some success has been achieved in cutting the wastage rate of students entering courses of study (students, for example, starting an MSc course when failure was almost certain because of their lack of appropriate background). A second advantage has been that the English language preparation has enabled students to improve their language sufficiently before beginning a full-time postgraduate course in the following October for them to have significantly less difficulty.

For the third year, a ten week pre-postgraduate course has been offered. The course that has evolved is now briefly described.

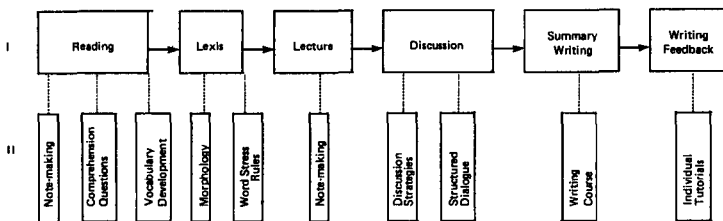
Management Science lecturers offer a general course in Industrial Administration which is relevant to students entering various specialised areas. This occupies three afternoons a week. Mornings are spent on English language work which shadows the material taught in the Industrial Administration lectures. Topics in Industrial Administration are selected from two introductory textbooks: 'The Organisational World' (Leavitt, Dill & Eyring), and 'Management Made Simple' (Coventry). The topics are fairly self contained, and are spread over ten weeks, with time allowed for pre- and post-testing in language and study aptitude (the latter administered by the Management Faculty), and for a final examination of topics in Industrial Administration. The topics taught are not highly specialised, and include such general areas as Systems and Organisation, Computers People and Motivation, Finance Authority and Power in an Organisation.

Management lecturers take the view that the purpose of their lectures on the ten week course is to familiarise students

with study modes at a British university; to familiarise them with general terms in the areas covered; and to give them an opportunity to adjust linguistically to studying in Britain. The purpose of the English language work done is to provide students with sufficient language, as far as is possible, for them to be able to continue with independent study through lectures and reading in English.

The topics selected by Management lecturers provide a rationale for the English language work. The combination of English and Industrial Administration is cyclical in that basic ideas and lexis for a theme are first presented in a number of forms in English language sessions, then presented again authentically by Management Science lecturers. The cyclical presentation allows students with less language, or less subject background, to absorb the subject matter through two-stage exposures.

The English language work is thus intimately connected with the subject matter taught by the department. It has two strands. One strand develops a particular theme, or aspects of a theme, by presenting it in different forms. These thematically connected units are represented by level I in the diagram below. Level II represents other language learning activities which feed into the thematic units, providing additional linguistic structure for the development of ideas in the thematic units.



The thematically linked units begin with a reading text which the student prepares, and note-making, comprehension, and vocabulary development exercises which the student completes, all of which rehearse and reinforce the main ideas

in the text in different ways. Class contact begins with checking these exercises, and with additional work on morphology. A lecture relating to the theme being studied then follows, during which the students take detailed notes. Questions arising in the lecture are then discussed in small groups with the English language tutor who has given the lecture. A written summary is then done either of the differing views in the discussion, or of the lecture itself. Later in the ten week course, students are encouraged to add critical comments of their own on the direction the lecture or discussion took. The written summary is then corrected, and discussed individually with the English language tutor for the group.

The second strand is self-explanatory, with the exception perhaps of the Statistical Information Unit, which develops students' ability to interpret and discuss non-verbal data (charts, tables and graphs); and of the Structured Dialogues, which simulate social interaction on and off the campus (Making Appointments, At the Library etc.).

It is not possible to describe here all the language materials used during the course. Two aspects are selected which seem to present new problems.

Testing

Tim Johns's Diagnostic Test (described fully in 'The Current Programme of Materials Development' in English for Academic Purposes) provided a profile of individual students' weak areas in grammar, and a basis for selecting areas on which to concentrate.

It was felt that an additional test was needed which was:

- a text-based and not sentence-based (as the diagnostic test is);
- b a reflection of the kind of language which students would need during the ten week course and in later post-graduate study (which the diagnostic test was not designed to do).

The intention was to compare the relationship between scores on the sentence-based test of grammar, and scores on the text-based test of grammar (ie grammatical choices within the context of an extended text). The hypothesis was that sentence-based tests present a difficulty - contextlessness - which is absent in text-based tests.

It was also intended to discover how far students already had a basic comprehension of the kind of texts they would be studying. Comprehension was glossed as relating specifically to intra-textual relationships, and to referential relationships without which the text could not be fully understood. The interest was not simply in whether they had 'seen' and 'understood' a word like 'organisation' (in the sense of a body of individuals with a common purpose), but also whether they knew that 'an organisation' has 'members' who are often referred to as 'staff'. This kind of relationship often holds across sentence boundaries. Semantic relationships across sentence boundaries include what Halliday terms lexical equivalence or lexical substitution (whether hyponymous or synonymous), but also inferential links. For example, in

The management intends to rationalise procedures within the organisation. Staff will now have sectional meetings prior to any executive meetings.

the reader must understand that 'having sectional meetings' is a sub-set of the class of 'procedures'; that 'staff' are people employed within 'the organisation'; and that the class of 'sectional meetings' and the class of 'executive meetings' are mutually exclusive. Without these underlying notions, the text cannot be said to have been 'understood'. What was wanted was a test that would explore students' grasp of semantic relationships within text, as reflections of realities in the outside world.

The test that was constructed to complement the Diagnostic Grammar Test had four components:

- a a listening exercise requiring note-taking and simple calculation
- b a listening exercise requiring true/false judgements of a set of data (a pie chart or a table or graph)
- c two passages, one of which tested knowledge of grammatical principles including grammatical cohesion, and one of which tested vocabulary, semantic relationships between lexical items across sentence boundaries, and semantic relationships holding between sentences (eg inference)
- d three short writing tasks, two of which related to diagrams and charts.

Scores on the two tests were to be taken into account in the general assessment of the progress students had made between pre- and post-testing. Other relevant criteria were the quality of the small research project each had to undertake; and the marks in the examination administered by the Management lecturers. On the basis of these criteria and his general academic background, the student would then be advised as to the postgraduate course which would be most suitable for him.

Lexis

The second problem concerned the analysis and teaching of the kinds of lexis that students would encounter in their textbooks. A preliminary analysis showed that the lexis they would encounter fell into three general classes (setting aside grammatical links, rhetoric markers, cohesion devices and so on).

1 Neutral Academic

Examples objectives, measure, available, quantitative, techniques, probability, development, criterion, evaluate, approach, relevant, recommended, policies, procedures

These are not exclusive to any one academic field, but form a common core across many discipline boundaries. They also cut across boundaries of mode (in the sense in which Emkvist, Gregory and Spencer (1964) use mode to refer to differing styles in speech and writing), in that they are heard in lectures as well as being read in textbooks.

2 Technical

Examples Trunking costs, systems approach, marginal theory, break even point, critical path, deflation, opportunity cost, redemption yield, queuing theory, time sharing

The meaning of these terms is not readily accessible to those outside the discipline of Industrial Administration (and related fields). It is not being suggested that there is a rigid boundary between lexis in Management Science and lexis in general academic texts, or even texts in other distinct disciplines. It is probably more often the case that a word with a generally accepted currency takes on a specialised meaning within a specialised field, Industrial Administration being no exception. Perhaps a computer analysis could give

print-outs of the lexical spans dominated by a particular lexical mode, with differences between subject specific areas being shown up in the span rather than in the mode itself. This procedure is suggested by Sinclair (1966).

3 Colloquial Metaphor

Examples

old hat, know how, flying by the seat of his pants, joining the ranks of the initiated, on the management ladder, a bird's eye view, a grass roots approach, the old guard still won't, being kicked upstairs, the high fliers, carrot & stick

The meaning of phrases such as these is not arrived at by summing the parts. Perhaps they are idioms. However, a search through dictionaries of unconventional English (eg Eric Partridge: 'Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional Language'; or W Freeman: 'Concise Dictionary of English Idioms') locates no more than 5 in 60 randomly chosen. Of the same 60 items, no fewer than 53 were, interestingly, listed in 'The Advanced Learner's Dictionary of English'. For the non-native speaker, it is this last category that presents probably the greatest difficulty. Courses in reading frequently stress attention to context, and intelligent guessing can go a long way towards cutting down use of the dictionary. It is more often the case with colloquial metaphor, however, that context provides little clue as to meaning.

For the student, the sheer size of the vocabulary to be learnt is daunting. Anything that can make his entry into the lexical jungle more orderly and systematic is therefore of value. With this aim in mind, vocabulary units have been developed which select semantic fields which are central to the text under study. These units are worked through individually, in preparation for discussion of the text. They present semantically linked concepts, and

a rehearse through these concepts points to be learned from the text

b select lexis which realises key points of content, presenting

(a) meaning (b) collocates (c) contrasts

c give practice in bringing a limited number of lexical items into active use, through blank-filling recall exercises

In each of these study sections in the vocabulary development units, word stress is given graphically. Without access to rules of word stress, the student is unable to produce new lexis comprehensibly. Such rules are to be found in Chomsky (1986) or Briere (1970). Without an understanding that the -ate ending, for example, assigns stress to two syllables before (as in dominate) in a three+ syllables word, and to -ate in a two syllabled word (as in dictate) which is a verb, the student has no principled way of knowing where pitch rises should be located.

There are aspects of the course which need to be looked at more closely. We hope to refine the co-operation between the English Language Unit and the Management Science Faculty and to learn more in the process about what preparation is most useful.

References:

- P D Strevens: - 'The Medium of Instruction and the Formation of Scientific Concepts' - IRAL VOL/ IX/3 August 1971
- H G Widdowson: - 'EST in Theory and Practice' in English for Academic Study - ETIC Occasional Paper, British Council April 1975
- D Wilkins: - 'An Investigation into the Linguistic and Situational Content of the Common Core in a Unit/Credit System' mimeo Council of Europe (Strasbourg)
- C N Candlin, J H Leather, C J Bruton: - 'Doctors in Casualty: Applying Communicative Competence to Components of Specialist Course Design' - IRAL Vol. XIV/3 August 1976
- Leavitt, Dilland Eyring: - 'The Organizational World' Harcourt, Brace, Jovannovich 1973
- W Coventry: - 'Management Made Simple' W H Allen, 1970
- T F and C M Johns: - 'The Current Programme of Materials Development (mineo) partly reported in 'English for Academic Purposes' BAAL SELMOUS publication 1977
- J McH Sinclair: - 'Beginning the Study of Lexis' in 'In Memory of J R Firth' Longmans, 1966

- Eric Partridge: - 'Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English' (OUP 19)
- W Freeman: - 'Concise Dictionary of English Idioms' English Universities Press
- Chomsky and Halle: - 'The Sound Patterns of English' Harper and Row, 1968
- L Briere: - 'Drills in English Stress Patterns' Longmans, 1970
- Enkvist, Spencer, Gregory: - 'Linguistics and Style' OUP, 1964

COMMON-CORE EST MATERIALS

Jonathan Trench
The Bell School of Languages, Norwich

This paper is concerned with the basic thinking behind the common-core English for Science and Technology materials we are beginning to develop at the Bell School, Norwich.

We have been in operation since August 1975. In this time we have had to prepare groups of students who were going on to various courses in the social sciences or in science and technology. All of the EST students so far have been academically oriented. But some of the other groups, eg bankers and doctors, were not and we expect to have EST groups also who are going on perhaps to attachment in industry rather than to a course.

On average we have five groups in the school at a time and we have a permanent teaching/writing staff of $8\frac{1}{2}$ with 1 or 2 part-timers. It means that for quite long stretches people may be doing 20 or more periods a week of teaching - and therefore little or no writing - while at other times they may have a teaching load of say 10 periods a week and be doing a lot of writing. The normal pattern is a 28 period week.

Clearly with our staffing it is out of the question to produce completely different material for every group. If we were asked to produce material for 28 periods a week for 8 weeks for even one group it would mean a big increase in staff and a very expensive course. In fact what we have done is use some of our own materials (cultural orientation) with almost every group, and only about a quarter of the material (or less) used by a group will be ESP narrowly defined. This is sometimes published material but in most cases it has been written by us. In between the two extremes will be study skills material, which can be used or adapted for use by all the academically oriented groups (the majority, but not as many as need cultural orientation), and EST or ESS (English for the social sciences) material ie material at a middle level of specialisation. Whether or not the narrow ESP component begins at the beginning of the course or some time later will often depend on how much time and information we have been given for the preparation of it.

We begin with a few days or a week devoted entirely to cultural orientation. Then we introduce both a 'general' English and an EST component. General English is phased out

and ESP and study skills are brought in during the second half of the course. We have used a variety of general English coursebooks (eg 'Strategies', 'English Fast', 'Kernel Lessons Intermediate') and on the EST side we have used both the ELTDU 'Basic English for Science' and the 'Nucleus Science' book.

For our students much of the content of the general English coursebooks is irrelevant; they already know it, or they do not need to know it. And the style, the storyline, the illustrative situations are generally inappropriate. The students do need social English it is true. But this can be provided in the cultural orientation part of the course. The aim of cultural orientation, insofar as it is linguistic, is communicative effectiveness of a kind that can be and often is achieved without the solidly based control that the students nevertheless need for their academic work.

Yet general English courses are at present where one has to go to supplement existing EST materials.

Both the EST coursebooks referred to deliberately avoid dealing with language items which are not characteristic of scientific or technical English. Now it is desirable that our students become familiar with the typical features of scientific and technical English, but it is essential that they gain control of the important features and it is clear that many if not most, of these belong to the common core of English. They are not more characteristic of scientific and technical than of other varieties. To give just two examples, our students need to know how to express reference in noun phrases; they have to cope with notions of general and specific reference and with definiteness and indefiniteness. They also need to be able to deploy a range of cohesive features. There may well be differences in the use of these features between scientific and technical English and other varieties, but there is a great deal of overlap, too.

We have come to feel that it would be much more satisfactory to have a comprehensive set of materials covering the priority EST features, including the common-core features, and to dispense with a separate general English component altogether. Diagram (1) shows the course design we should prefer.

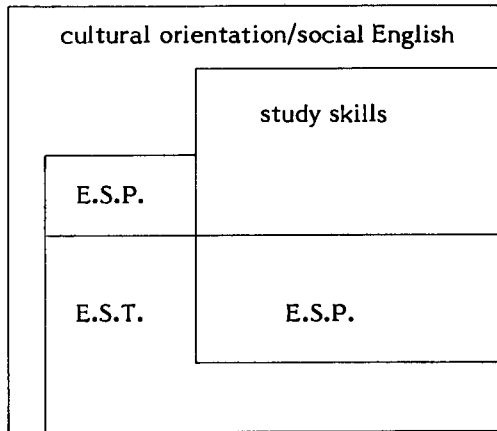


Diagram 1

We need EST material which is usable by students who are going on to work at first degree and graduate level, but also HND level. The students need to be able to understand lectures, communicate with lab technicians and departmental secretaries and write reports and notes. There is a danger that the scientific and technical content will be boring for some and too difficult for others. We have in fact decided that the content should be below first degree level. However, even for the scientifically more advanced students a good deal of it should be new in the sense that it will be problem solving materials. Puzzles and 'diversions', Heath Robinson fantasies and De Bono lateral thinking exercises also have parts to play.

These types of exercise should also help to solve another difficult question - the subjects represented. Clearly, applied maths should be well represented as of interest to many varieties of scientists and technologists. But won't the chemists be turned off by exercises involving physics? I think a certain eclecticism at the elementary general science level, as the ELTDU course or Nucleus, is inevitable.

The ordering of our EST materials has been settled in outline. Each unit will contain listening and speaking, reading and writing sections. The listening and reading sections will be based on passages in which a cluster of associated notions are represented. The idea is to include some work on cohesive and

rhetorical features in each unit. These students will inevitably meet more than one way of expressing a particular meaning in the listening and reading sections of the unit. But in the speaking and writing exercises they will practise only one way. Alternative ways of expressing the same meaning will be introduced in later units.

Where the aim is to develop reading or listening skills it is probably sensible to present a number of synonymous forms concurrently (eg 'X is Y cm long' and 'X has a length of Y cm'). The notional/functional coursebooks that I have seen - both in general English and in EST -all in fact do this. But it probably makes it more likely that the student will confuse the two forms in speaking and writing. It seems easier for students to cope with several notions or functions at the same time (because they can be distinguished semantically) than with several synonymous forms.

We shall try to avoid exercises containing series of isolated sentences. Just as the students will be working above the sentence level in many exercises, so their attention will often be directed to elements below sentence level. Diagram labelling exercises are an obvious way of practising reference in the noun phrase. So are exercises involving choice of eg an *item of equipment meeting certain requirements*.

We plan to allocate about one third of the time of the EST component to the lab. Most of the specifically listening or speaking exercises will be done there. There is a notorious lack of inspiring lab exercises and we hope to produce somewhat better ones.

THE INTERPRETATION OF DIAGRAMS, GRAPHS AND TABLES

T J Gerighty

Centre for English Studies, Bletchington Park, Oxford

The object of this paper is to examine some of the implications of interpreting diagrams, graphs and tables. Students of the sciences, economics, statistics, agronomy, planning and engineering, in particular, are in daily contact with such visuals which form part of their working code.

We are dealing with visuals, graphics, which aim to present a message succinctly; they represent a classic form of non-verbal communication; they are meant to be read and understood at a glance or, at least, quickly. The study skill mostly involved is that of reading; reading for rapid understanding. The context of this reading in a course of study will be dominated by text-book presentation. Only occasionally visuals form part of lectures when their presentation is accompanied by a spoken description. Reading, then, is the first and dominant skill involved. Such reading and understanding, generally, present little problem to the initiated student. He knows the code, grasps the essential quickly and understands the whole. Trouble begins when this non-verbal communication has to be verbalised either by a lecturer in his accompanying talk about a visual or, more critically, when the student himself has to describe or evaluate the same, either orally or in writing.

This, for example, (Figure 1 - Carburettor) is a diagram which any mechanical engineer would doubtless find insulting.

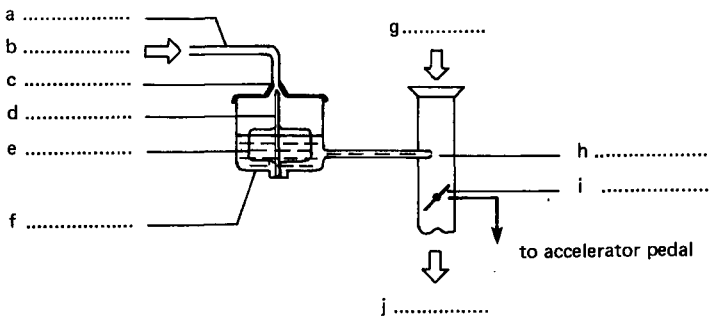


Figure 1: Carburettor

He probably would not have much difficulty in labelling the parts from (a) to (j), although they are strictly technical lexis. However, if asked to describe the process involved in the diagram, the odds are that he would be struggling.

The diagram illustrates how a carburettor operates. In his talk a lecturer might describe it like this:-

The Carburettor

The carburettor is a device which provides the engine with an air and petrol mixture in the correct proportions for all running conditions.

This simplified diagram shows how it operates.

Petrol enters the float chambers via the feed pipe and the fuel inlet. Right? When the chamber is filled to the correct level, the float and needle-valve rise, cutting off the fuel supply. When the piston moves down the cylinder, it reduces the pressure within the cylinder. Are you with me? The pressure of the atmosphere then pushes air in through the carburettor where it mixes with a fine jet of petrol from the float chamber to produce finely divided fuel droplets. The quantity of this atomised fuel which enters the cylinder is controlled by a throttle valve. In a motor car, the throttle valve is opened and closed by operating the accelerator pedal. Right.

I have referred to the easy understanding of diagrams, graphs and tables on the purely visual level. The crux of the difficulty lies in the verbalisation of this. I have also referred to code. Let us look at a table for example (Figure 2).

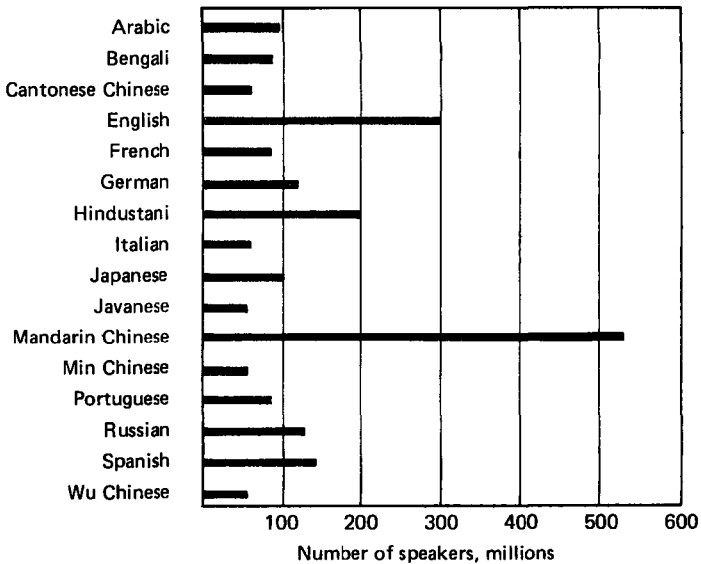
<u>Figure 2: Whose Reserves Went Up?</u>		
<u>\$M</u>	<u>Reserves End 1976</u>	<u>Change Over Year</u>
Brazil	6477	+ 2243
India	3074	+ 1701
S. Korea	2964	+ 1410
Argentina	1608	+ 1156
Malaysia	2420 (a)	+ 942
Indonesia	1499	+ 913
Colombia	1158	+ 637
Singapore	3358 (b)	+ 386
Chile	454	+ 344
	(a) end October	(b) end November

A table displays information clearly in columns - in the same familiar way as timetables or tables in maths, physics or chemistry. They are used for quick reference. An important part of the code is, of course, that of numeracy - which has its own problems of verbalisation.

A line graph also presents few problems in terms of immediate visual comprehension. Graphs illustrate a relationship between at least two poles of reference, one of which is measured on a vertical axis, the other (or others) on a horizontal axis.

Yet another, a bar graph (or histogram), is equally easy to follow with its more static statement of fact. (see Figure 3).

Figure 3



Finally, a circle graph where the circle represents the total of some specific information and the pie-shaped pieces represent a portion of the total. These portions are often expressed in percentage terms.

So the code in each case is accessible, clear and easily grasped. A layman has few difficulties with all but the more subtle versions of these visual; the initiated student should experience none. The assumption we can make, therefore, is that a known code makes for quick understanding - even in a listening context.

There are, nonetheless, certain provisos. If we return to the chart on reserves (Figure 2) there are various symbols, abbreviations and note form techniques which cannot be assumed. The dollar symbol should be known but what of 'm'? (a) and (b) are footnotes; 'Reserves end 1976' meaning 'the position of reserves at the end of 1976'.

Middle Eastern students may still need training in reading from left to right, and in interpreting the three-dimensional; though this chart should present few problems. These are, however, minor problems. When asked to verbalise this same chart or table, students experience genuine problems. However, I would like to suggest that most diagrams, graphs and tables have common factors relating to the language of their content.

These can be grouped under three heads:-

- a Information transfer
- b Relationship and reference
- c Judgements and conclusions

In Figure 2, for example, we begin to describe the table by answering the question: What is the point of this table, what is it about? A close look at the title and the context is important here. Thus:-

'This table illustrates (or shows or represents) the state of reserves at the end of 1976 in a variety of countries and shows which went up most.'

From this general statement, facts can be stated:-

'India's reserves at the end of 1976 were \$3,074 million which represents an increase of \$1,701 million over the year.'

This is information transfer.

Or, more usually, relationships can be established in the language of comparisons:-

In simple terms:

'South Korea's reserves increased more than those of Chile.'

Or: 'Malaysia has smaller reserves than Brazil.'

If one is more adventurous:

'Argentina's reserves increased by \$1,156 million, whereas Indonesia's only increased by \$913 million.'

Or: 'Although Singapore's reserves increased by \$386 million, this was a proportionately lower increase than of Chile at the end of 1976.'

This is the kind of language textbooks use when describing charts. In doing so, these same textbooks impose a language mode on students which is not easy.

In terms of a conclusion, one could say that:-

'The chart clearly shows that it is not necessarily the country with the highest reserves at the end of 1976 which increased its reserves most over that year.'

I would suggest that training in the use of such language - that of information transfer, that of relationship and reference and that of judgement - is greatly facilitated by the visual support and by the fact that we are dealing with relatively limited registers.

I tested the validity of some of the above in a simple experiment using the graph Languages of the World (Figure 3). Two students were involved, a Bahraini accountant and an Austrian student of economics. Their English competence was above average. The following, representing part 1 of the experiment, is a transcript of their recorded description of the graph in a language laboratory. There was naturally no support from the teacher and no consulting with each other.

1 Bahraini accountant - (spoken quickly):

This graph shows languages of the world. It means that more people speak Chinese than others. English is second and then Hindi-Hindustani and then Spanish. Er (pause) Arabic is very important also. (Pause) German is er. . . many people speak German too. (Pause) That's all.

no comparisons

facts expressed clumsily

jumps from what it's about to what it's meant to convey.

2 Austrian economics student:

This chart is about the languages of the world. It is not clear when this survey was made but at the time almost 600 million speakers. . . people could speak Chinese. This is a much greater number than any other group. As is to be expected, English is also spoken by a great number - 300 million in fact. (Pause) Just like there are many Hindi Hindus (I'm not sure what you say) and so. . . their language comes next. Of the European languages, it is interesting for me to note that German is spoken by over 100 million people. However, Spanish is spoken by even more. So is Russian. (Pause). . .

I think this chart is interesting for students of population as well as languages. It is obvious, I think, that, in spite of the numbers, English is more important than Chinese or Hindustani. (Pause) and perhaps Russian is more important than Spanish - perhaps, I don't know.

obviously more complete

facts are there but are often expressed through comparison and contrasts

inferences are made

conclusions are formulated.

Now - they left the lab. and one hour later I asked them to write a description of this bar graph.

The Bahraini's written version was as follows:-

This graph shows the languages of the world. It does not show when this survey took place. It is clear that

Chinese is by far the language in the world which is spoken by most people. The fact is that 600 million people speak Chinese. But most, if not all these people are Chinese. This is not the same for English but it is for Hindustani. English is the world's most important language and it is spoken by almost 300 million people. Then, in lower order, comes Spanish, Russian and German. Arabic will probably become more important and you can see from the graph that it is already more important than French.

The chart does not show the economic importance of nations. It is about languages and population at least for Chinese and Hindustani.

The Austrian student's version was as follows:-

This bar-graph represents a recent survey (undated) of the most important languages in the world. It is dominated by three languages - Chinese, English and Hindustani. Chinese and Hindustani are only spoken by their local populations and so cannot be described as a world or international language like English. English is, in fact, the most important language and is spoken by 300 million people everywhere in the world. Because of history, Spanish comes high in this table with over 100 million speakers. Russian is also spoken by over 100 million but mostly, I think, by Russians themselves. Germany comes next and is followed by Japanese, Portuguese and Arabic. This chart is surely about populations rather than languages - with the exception of English.

Surprisingly, perhaps, there is no great difference in the quality of the two written pieces. The Bahraini's spoken mode was clumsily and poorly expressed. The Austrian's spoken and written version would seem to suggest a striking similarity in the verbalisation of the diagram be it in the written or spoken mode.

The implications of this are important for it would seem to suggest that text book presentations accompanying diagrams, graphs and charts represent a fair copy of spoken (lecture)

versions to which students may be subjected. Such verbalisations follow the pattern we have just seen; they

convey information

contain references, comparisons and contrasts
and draw inferences and conclusions

There would seem to be no better teaching tool therefore, for this purpose than the authentic source of the text book.

There has been a considerable amount of talk of relating the content of the pre-sessional course to the real aims of the task ahead of the student and to the conditions of that task. There would seem to be something comforting about graphics for students of many disciplines - comforting in the sense of an immediate point of recognition. I would suggest, perhaps timidly, that we might consider communication in and through study skills for the postgraduate student in a much wider context than 'can he express it correctly' and that multiple methods of communication, notably in and through visuals in certain disciplines have probably yet to be explored.

References:

- 1 see English for Mechanical Engineering. O.U.P., 'English in Focus', by Eric H Glendinning.

LANGUAGE TEACHING LIBRARY

20 Carlton House Terrace

London

SW1A 2BN

This is a specialist library maintained jointly by ETIC and CILT. It has a unique collection of 24,000 books dealing with the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language and also allied subjects such as general linguistics, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics and the teaching of foreign languages in Britain. There are also 380 periodicals currently received and filed. The library houses a collection of dissertations on linguistic topics. ETIC Specialised Bibliographies are available free of charge.

The Audio-Visual section contains over 700 different courses and sets of teaching materials. There are over 2,000 tapes, 700 discs, 1000 slides and numerous wallcharts, posters and other non-book materials.

ETIC Archives contains a large collection of unpublished documents relating to the teaching of English overseas and files on English language teaching in all countries. With the help of the British Council's English Language Officers, overseas English Language Teaching Profiles, for over 60 countries have been produced and it is hoped to extend the coverage globally.

Also available to the public is a photocopying service and a micro-film and micro-fiche reader.

price £2

ISBN 0 900229 59 1

