

Oxford  
Progressive English  
Course

*by* A. S. Hornby

Teacher's Handbook

BOOKS 1—3



A. S. Hornby

Oxford

**Progressive English  
for Adult Learners**

Teacher's Handbook

Book One

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## INTRODUCTION

*Oxford Progressive English for Adult Learners* has been designed for classroom use. The teacher has a large and important part to play, and this *Teacher's Handbook* has been written to make his work easier.

The decision to use a certain textbook means that the teacher has left to the author of that textbook the choice of vocabulary and structures to be taught, and the order in which these are to be presented. The decision does not mean, however, that the teacher has also given up his freedom to choose his own methods of presenting that material. He is free to decide upon the procedures to be used for that purpose.

This *Handbook* provides numerous suggestions for teaching procedures. These are intended as a guide to the teacher who is perhaps beginning his teaching career and is without much experience. They may also be helpful to teachers who wish to experiment with new methods of language teaching. The suggestions need not, of course, be followed in their entirety. The procedures outlined here may be modified according to the teacher's own inclinations and the results of his own experience, or to suit the particular needs or aims of his students.

### THE LEARNER'S AIMS

The design of any language course that claims to be complete must depend upon the aims of the learner. Unfortunately we cannot be certain of what these aims are. The learner himself may not, in the early stages, be sure of them. Some learners may hope to visit an English-speaking country and will, therefore, hope to understand and speak the new language well. The aims of others may be limited to the acquisition of the ability to read the language. If this is the aim, the chief interest may be in general



literature, a purely cultural aim; or it may be confined to technical books and periodicals. Other learners may be interested in English language broadcasts or in films with English dialogue. In this case one of their aims will be the ability to understand spoken English when it is mechanically reproduced and they may be uninterested in the ability to speak the language themselves. Other learners may have as their aim the passing of an examination in English. Some learners may wish to take the General Certificate of Education so that they may qualify to enter an institution of higher learning in Great Britain. Other learners may wish to take one of the Cambridge examinations, perhaps because the diplomas earned by passing this will help them to obtain better employment. In such cases the learners will have, as one of their aims, the ability to write good and grammatical English. The ability to write English is important to those who are likely to engage in trade and commerce.

### THE BEGINNING STAGE

Whatever may be the final aims of the learner, it is wise to make extensive use of oral work during the beginning stage. It is during this stage that the foundation of all future work is to be laid. Subsequent work may require a shift of emphasis to reading or writing and there may be much less emphasis on oral work. That will depend upon the learner's aims and needs. But most linguistic experts agree that whatever the final aims may be, the beginning stage is best based on extensive oral work. There is the practical consideration that oral work is fast. We speak much faster than we write; practice is essential and oral practice is faster than written practice.

The length of the beginning stage will depend upon the time available for study. If the learner can attend class for only two or three hours weekly and has little time for study outside class, it may last two years. If he can attend class four or five hours weekly



and has time for a fair amount of work at home, the beginning stage will be correspondingly shorter. The three books of this course are designed to provide a foundation. After completing them the learner may proceed to the kind of work in which he wishes to specialize.

### TEACHING METHODS

There are numerous methods of language teaching. The old 'Grammar and Translation Method' is now generally discredited and, although still widely used, is favoured chiefly by teachers who are not qualified to use other methods. These other methods, known by such names as the 'Direct Method', the 'Oral Method', the 'Natural (or Nature) Method', and the 'Situation Method', are often described as new, as twentieth century methods. This is inaccurate. Such methods have always been used, though there have been developments during the last fifty years that have made them better tools. The difficulty is to know exactly what is meant by these names.

The name 'Direct Method', for example, is widely understood as one that stands for the almost complete exclusion of the use of the mother tongue of the learner. More accurately defined it should mean a method that aims at the formation of a direct association between a new concept and the word, phrase, collocation or construction that symbolizes that concept. The concept may be a material thing such as a tree or a horse, an abstract idea such as virtue or poverty, a relationship in time or space as expressed by a preposition or adverb, or a time concept as expressed by tense usage. The term 'Direct' should be connected with the forming of the associations, and not necessarily with the process by which the learner comes to understand (or 'identify') the word, phrase, collocation or pattern. The mother tongue may, in some cases, be used for the purpose of identifying the new concept.



The name 'Oral Method' merely indicates that much attention will be paid to the spoken word. It does not tell us whether the use of the mother tongue is excluded, or how the transition from the spoken word to the written and printed word is to be managed.

The name 'Natural Method' suggests a method based on the process by which the mother tongue is learnt. But classroom conditions are artificial; we cannot learn a foreign language, after the period of infancy, in the way we learnt our mother tongue. There is much to be learnt about language teaching from a study of how the mother tongue is acquired in infancy, but the results of the study will not supply us with a complete method for teaching a foreign language.

The name 'Situation Method' indicates that new material is to be presented, so far as possible, in real situations, in a vivid and lively manner. Words are presented in contexts, not in isolation. The name stands for a combination of Direct Method and Oral Method procedures.

#### THE MATTER TO BE TAUGHT

Teaching methods are important, and procedures are dealt with below. But before we consider methods in more detail we have to decide *what* to teach. What *is* a language? It is much more than the collection of words to be found in a dictionary or the mass of information to be found in grammar books. There are the sounds of the language, the rhythm and intonation of its speech. There are the inflexional forms of its words and the structures of its sentences.

The first thing to be done is to make a selection from this mass of material. Then we must decide the question of how to present this material, the order in which it is to be presented and the procedures to be used for doing this. We must aim at interest and at economy of effort.



## THE SOUNDS OF THE LANGUAGE

The new language will almost certainly include some sounds that will be new to the learner, sounds that are not found in his mother tongue. The learner may have difficulty in producing, or even in hearing and distinguishing, some of these new sounds. It will be a great advantage if his teacher has studied the phonetics of English, and a still greater advantage if he has studied the comparative phonetics of English and the language of his students.

A detailed technical study of the phonetics of English is not necessary for the foreign learner. He needs help only with those sounds, and those combinations and distributions of sounds, that are new and difficult. For this reason it would be unwise for the teacher to go through, with his class, any of the well-known textbooks of general phonetics. These are for the teacher, not for his class. It would be a waste of time to tell Greek learners how to produce the sound represented by the symbol  $\theta^1$ ! But some Greek learners may need help in distinguishing between *s* and *ʃ*. Learners in many countries may need help in distinguishing between *ou* and *o:*. It is the teacher's business to know how to help his students in these matters; it is usually possible to do this without requiring the learner to become familiar with the technical vocabulary of phonetics.

Useful suggestions for helping learners to produce unfamiliar vowel and consonant sounds will be found in P. A. D. MacCarthy's *English Pronunciation* (Heffer, Cambridge) and in the same author's articles, 'Pronunciation Teaching, Theory and Practice', in *English Language Teaching* (British Council), Volumes VI and VII.

In the textbooks of this course phonetic transcriptions are used throughout. The symbols are those of the International Phonetic Association and the transcription is a simplified one that comes within the Association's recommendations. The learner should be taught the values of these symbols. He should not be allowed to assume that a phonetic symbol, because it is a roman letter with

<sup>1</sup> Phonetic symbols are printed in sanserif type without brackets.



which he is familiar, necessarily has the value normally given to that letter in his own language. The symbol *t*, for example, stands for a sound made with the tip of the tongue against the teeth-ridge, not for the sound heard in Romance and Slav languages in which the tip of the tongue is against the upper teeth.

See pages 42-4 of this book for notes on phonetic symbols and transcriptions.

### RHYTHM AND STRESS

Intelligibility depends as much upon rhythm and stress as upon the use of the right sounds in the right places and in the right order. If the learner does not utter his sentences with a normal rhythm, he is unlikely to be easily understood. The teacher must, therefore, pay attention to the correct placing of stress in words, to sentence stress, and to the general rhythm of speech. With stress is involved the question of strong and weak forms. There is a rhythmic tendency for strong stresses to occur at approximately equal time intervals. This usually results in a shortening and weakening of the sounds in the syllables that come between the strong stresses. For some of the lessons in this course there are notes that draw attention to these features of the spoken language.

### INTONATION

Intonation is closely related to stress and rhythm. If rhythm and intonation are approximately correct, failure to produce the right sounds is less likely to result in unintelligibility. The statement: 'I want two third-class tickets to Birmingham, please', uttered with the normal rhythm and intonation, even though the values of some of the sounds may be faulty, is more likely to be understood at the ticket-office than would the same words uttered on a monotone and with a succession of equal stresses.

The teacher, therefore, should have a good knowledge of the theory of English intonation, as described in the textbooks of the experts. He should be familiar with at least one of the most



commonly used systems of tonetic transcription. But he should not, during the beginning stage, give technical terms to his class. It will be sufficient if he uses such simple terms as 'rising tone', 'falling tone', 'high level' and 'low level'—and even these, during the first few months, will need to be put in the learner's own language. The teacher should beware of giving any firm rules for intonation, or for any other feature of the language for that matter.

What the teacher *can* do is to give his students ear-training exercises of an elementary kind so that they learn to recognize and name a falling tone and a rising tone. In the statement: 'I saw him ↘yesterday' there is, if the time element is stressed, a falling tone on the first syllable of the last word. Yet, because the voice may need to rise to a high level in order to make this fall possible, many untrained listeners will declare that there is a rising tone instead of a falling tone.

Simple ear-training exercises of this kind can be helpful. A few very general statements (not to be called *rules*) may follow, for example the statement that a falling tone normally indicates completion or finality and that a rising tone normally suggests incompleteness. This may be illustrated by a comparison of such a statement as 'He reached ↘home' with the same three words preceded by *when*: 'When he reached ↗home, . . .'. The addition of *when* changes a complete statement into a clause, incomplete, and may involve, in some but not all contexts, the change of tone.<sup>1</sup>

The notes to some of the lessons in this course deal, from time to time, with questions of intonation. A few simple symbols are used to indicate the essentials, but no attempt is made to provide complete tonetic transcriptions of sentences. Even the simplest sentence may be spoken with a great variety of tunes or speech melodies, depending upon the placing of emphasis, the emotional colouring, and other factors.

<sup>1</sup> The danger of giving rules is shown by the possibility of uttering this clause on a low level without the rising tone on *home*, as in: 'He was ↘tired when he reached home'.



You will be teaching your class polite forms of request. Your time will be wasted if they learn the forms but speak them with an inappropriate intonation. 'ˋWould you mind shutting the ↗door, please' is polite. 'Would you ˋmind shutting the ↘door, please' is an impatient and not at all polite form of command.

See pages 44-6 of this book for notes on tone symbols.

## VOCABULARY

The vocabulary used in the three books of this course includes all the important structural words. No structural word of high frequency has been omitted merely because of its difficulty or because it is a word that is not necessary for the expression of a concept.

There are some course designers who favour the omission of some of the high-frequency words, or their postponement to a late stage, because these words are not considered necessary. Thus the verb *may* will be excluded from a course that includes *perhaps* and *can*. The argument is that for *may* indicating possibility the use of a construction with *perhaps* is adequate and for *may* indicating permission *can* is more frequent in colloquial use. *Shall* is excluded from some courses because of probable confusion with *will* and because, in many parts of the English-speaking world, *will* is nowadays fast replacing *shall* in almost all contexts.

Those who follow this practice appear to assume that for the learner the composition of English (in speech and writing) has a more important place than the mere understanding of English, spoken and written. But most learners will read far more than they will write. They are more likely to listen to lectures, broadcasts and talking films than they are to speak English. And when they read and listen they will read authors and listen to speakers who will not control their vocabulary by avoiding the use of common structural words. It is unnecessary for the beginner to learn to make the subtle distinctions between *will* and *shall* that still survive in educated Southern English. The beginner will be



understood if he uses *will* in most contexts, even if he says 'Will I open the window for you?' But he must be aware of the chief uses of *shall*: he will certainly meet the word before he has got far in his studies. It is a word that he must at least recognize.

*Must* is another word of high frequency. It is a structural word of some difficulty, used in a variety of senses. But this is not a reason for excluding it from the beginning stage. The way to deal with such words is not by omission but by careful presentation. Each of the important structural words is introduced into this course, but care is taken to present the different meanings and different uses step by step and in suitable contexts. Provision is made for adequate repetition and there are oral and written exercises to give practice.

There are, excluding proper names, between seven and eight hundred words in each of the three books of the course. These cover the vocabulary of *A General Service List of English Words* (Longmans Green, 1953), Dr West's revision of the *Interim Report on Vocabulary Selection* (1936, now out of print).

The non-structural words included in the course have been selected largely on a frequency basis. Thus, both *begin* and *start* are included, but *commence* is excluded. The likelihood that many of those who use the course will speak a language in which there are many cognate words has not been allowed to influence the choice of vocabulary. *Commence* may be an easier word than either *begin* or *start* for French- or Spanish-speaking students to identify. But *begin* and *start* are the words they will normally see and hear when they read and listen to English.

### SEMANTIC VARIETIES

Many of the most frequently occurring English words have more than one meaning. Many of them have a large and wide variety of meanings. Care has been taken to introduce all the most important meanings and to introduce these meanings in stages.



Prepositions are used with a range of meaning that must be bewildering to the learner. An attempt has been made to guide him through this maze by the provision of notes and tables placed after the reading-texts. Illustrations are used when these can be helpful.

### VERB TENSES

The order in which the verb tenses and the various tense equivalents are introduced will perhaps be regarded as novel and unorthodox by some teachers. The two simple tenses (Simple Present and Simple Past) do not occur in the first ten reading-texts of Book One. These are the two tenses that are essential for narrative and descriptive writing. They are the tenses least needed for oral work. In spoken English the Present Perfect Tense is very frequent. It has been introduced in this course at an early stage, the stage at which action chains are used.

An advantage of this order is that the involved interrogative and negative mechanisms with *do*, *does* and *did* are not required until the learner has had time to acquire some confidence in his ability to speak in English. The continuous tenses, the anomalous verbs *be*, *have*, *can* and *must*, all form their interrogatives and negatives by inversion.

When the two simple tenses are introduced, it becomes possible to present reading-texts in which narrative and descriptive writing take their place. This is the point at which a shift of emphasis from purely oral work to reading becomes possible. The need for oral work remains, but reading outside the classroom now has a place in the programme.

### STRUCTURES

A 'bottle of milk' is not the same thing as a 'milk bottle'. 'He is standing still' does not mean the same as 'He is still standing'.



Word order is one of the most important and significant features of a language such as English, a language that has lost most of its inflexions.

Any English course for foreign learners must be designed so that questions of word order, the most common structures, the chief patterns into which nouns, adjectives and verbs enter, are set out clearly and in a suitable order. The learner does not 'know' an adjective merely because he has learnt its meaning. He knows the adjective *afraid* only when he has learnt to use it (a) meaning 'feeling fear' and followed by *of* or a *to*-infinitive,<sup>1</sup> and (b) suggesting regret or apology and used with a *that*-clause.<sup>2</sup> The learner does not 'know' a verb until he has become familiar with the main patterns into which it enters. If, for example, he learns the meaning of the verb *explain* but does not learn its patterns, he may make the mistake of saying or writing: 'Please explain me this sentence'.

The structures and patterns of English have not been analysed for frequency in the way that vocabulary has been assessed for frequency. The chief structures and patterns have, however, been sorted out. In this course what seem to be the most important and useful are included.

The teacher who follows the order in which patterns are here introduced is urged to see that he gives no examples of his own that might be unnatural. An example may be provided from the two patterns *give (show, tell, etc.) something to somebody* (Vb. × D.O. to I.O.) and *give (show, tell, etc.) somebody something* (Vb. × I.O. × D.O.). The two patterns are not introduced together. The second comes first. When sentences are made in the second of these two patterns, care should be taken to make the Indirect Object shorter than, or no longer than, the Direct Object. 'Tell me your name.' 'Show John your new book.' Similarly, when sentences are made in the first pattern, care should be taken to make the Indirect (or Prepositional) Object longer than, or as long as, the Direct Object. 'He told the news to everybody in the village.' Avoid the

<sup>1</sup> e.g. afraid of the dog; afraid to fight.

<sup>2</sup> e.g. I'm afraid I don't know.



kind of sentence exemplified by 'Tell the news to her' or 'Show your new book to me'. These (unless the personal pronoun is to be stressed for emphasis or contrast) are not typical of normal speech. 'Tell her the news' and 'Show me your new book' *are* typical.

These warnings are given because there is a temptation, when new structures and patterns are presented in a planned sequence and spaced at intervals, to use sentences that may be not quite normal. The teacher, conforming with the order of patterns in the textbook, is not always careful enough to avoid unnatural examples.

The learner should at no time be offered examples of English in an unnatural form. It is better to present the normal and idiomatic form at the start than to present an unnatural form and hope that time and opportunity for corrective work will be available later. Bad habits are easily formed and with difficulty discarded. It is easy to forget the corrective work.

## BACK TO PROCEDURES

We can now return to methods of presentation. How is all this material to be presented to the learner? How is the learner to be helped to form the direct association between concept and symbol that is essential if he is to master the new language?

Before there can be association there must be identification. This is the first step. Direct association is the second step, and is by far the more important.

There are four procedures that can be used for the purpose of identifying a new concept. These are (1) the ostensive procedure, (2) the contextual procedure, (3) definition, and (4) translation.

## THE OSTENSIVE PROCEDURE

The ostensive procedure is particularly useful and effective during the beginning stage. The teacher holds out an object, such as a



pen or a book, touches an object, for example a wall or the blackboard, points to an object, for example a window or the ceiling, or calls attention to a picture, diagram, blackboard sketch, photograph, or perhaps something projected on to a screen from a film-strip. At the same time he names it, talks about its shape, size, colour, position, etc. Or the teacher may do something, such as walking to the door, opening and closing the door or his book, lifting a chair. Again he talks about the activity in which he is engaged. This procedure is illustrated in detail in the 'Preliminary Oral Work' in this Handbook.

#### THE CONTEXTUAL PROCEDURE

This procedure, too, is useful and effective during the beginning stage, and continues to be useful during later stages. The teacher uses a new word or phrase in a context that makes its meaning clear. Thus, when the words *clock* and *o'clock* have been taught (by ostensive procedures), the word *hour* is taught by presenting it in such sentences as: 'From one o'clock to two o'clock is one hour', 'From one o'clock to three o'clock is two hours'. And when *hour* is identified in this way, it is a simple matter to go on to *day*, *week*, *month*, *year*, and the names of the days of the week, the months and the seasons.

It is often useful to follow up (after an interval) the teaching of a new word through ostensive procedures by further work using contextual procedures. If, for example, *between* has been taught through such examples as 'I'm standing between the desk and the door' (ostensive), you may, later on, give such examples as 'Sunday comes between Saturday and Monday', 'June comes between May and July'. This illustrates the extension of use from position in space to position in time. It prepares the way for the presentation of *after* and *before*. 'June comes after May and before July.'