ENGLISH
in
CONTEXT

Teacher's Book

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INTRODUCTION

The need for *English in Context*

There has been a steady increase over the last few years in the number of overseas students coming to Britain to study at universities and other institutes of higher learning. Before they can begin their study, they are required to develop a proficiency in the language skills involved in studying in English. This need is reflected in the increase in entries from 4500 in 1975 to 12000 in 1980 for the *Joint Matriculation Board's Test in English (Overseas)*, one test of such language proficiency which is accepted as an entry qualification by the majority of universities in Britain. In addition, many universities and polytechnics have had to appoint full-time tutors to deal with 'in-service' English teaching for students whose language deficiency has been discovered only after they have begun their courses of specialist study.

In this context there is a clear need for the development of learning materials designed to train students to the required proficiency. Any such materials must obviously be based on an examination of the target behaviour, and this involves the consideration both of the study tasks students are required to carry out and the language that is the medium for those tasks. It is on such a basis that the materials in *English in Context* have been developed.

It is assumed that though learners might have common goals, individual learners and teachers are so different that it is unrealistic to attempt either to produce a course book that can be followed from beginning to end with no deviation and no supplementation. or to lay down specific techniques for materials' use that can be applied in all situations. For this reason, *English in Context* is intended to provide a framework for learning which can be exploited in ways best suited to individual situations. Though the exercises have been written in such a way that they can be used as they stand by students working by themselves, they can equally well be supplemented or exploited in other ways under the direction of a teacher. The exercises thus also have the purpose of illustrating for teachers techniques by which they may themselves develop learning materials.

If the materials are to be understood and supplemented it seems important to outline briefly the assumptions on which they are based including both an examination of the target and the pedagogic principles considered valid in preparing learners to cope with this target.

The information cycle

In most courses of study students are engaged in collecting information from written, verbal sources like textbooks or periodicals; from spoken, verbal sources like lectures or seminars; and from non-verbal sources like diagrams, maps, statistical summaries, practical demonstrations. In the process of comprehension they will, at any one time, be involved in several different levels of mental operations, the nature of which is determined by a combination of the conventions of English, the writer or speaker's purpose and the reader or listener's purpose. These operations may be grouped into seven broad categories.

Identifying

For whatever purpose information is to be collected, it is necessary to be able to identify what is relevant to the given task. This may involve a skimming operation as particular words or phrases are picked up while the eye moves rapidly over some body of material; alternatively, it may be necessary to scan beneath the surface to find the topic of a sentence, paragraph, chapter.

Distinguishing

Once relevant information has been identified, it is often important to separate the component parts from each other so that, for instance, fact is distinguished from opinion, cause from effect, same from different.

Classifying

Once different pieces of information have been identified and, if necessary, distinguished, more often than not the discrete pieces need to be grouped according to a set of criteria which will produce a whole. For instance, to discuss the industry of a given area, information needs to be collected under headings like RESOURCES, LABOUR, TRANSPORT, etc.

Ordering

Once information is identified and, if necessary, distinguished and/or classified, it frequently needs ordering perhaps in sequence of OCCURRENCE, AGE, IMPORTANCE, GENERALITY, etc.

Synthesising

The four operations described above often entail putting together into a balanced whole information from a range of different sources. For instance, a discussion of the

events of World War II might entail the meshing of opinions taken from both British and German sources. Or the putting together of a basic list of dates and times from an Admirality report of a particular sea battle with a more personal eye-witness account.

Inferring

Very often the solution of a given problem with information collected through the exercise of any combination of the operations already referred to involves the making of inferences. For instance, general principles may have to be applied to a specific situation; or information not explicit in the sources can be worked out from what is actually there.

Translating

Whichever combination of operations is involved in the collection process, there is a constant move from one form of display to another of what is essentially the same information. Thus, verbal information in one source may be expressed differently in another; the same verbal information might be expressed both through the medium of speech and writing; or the same information may be expressed both verbally and non-verbally.

Once the necessary information has been collected, the same categories of mental operation are involved as students rework it to show evidence that learning is taking place. In this respect, there may be a non-verbal goal, such as the carrying out of an experiment; the drawing of a plan to supplement an account of a battle, or a sketch map to support the description of the soil pattern of a given area; the provision of a set of diagrams to help explain the working of a complex process. Alternatively, the goal may be verbal, such as connected speech for leading a seminar, or connected writing for producing an assignment or thesis.

A generalised language learning cycle

The language teacher, then, must build up the learners' proficiency in listening, reading, speaking and writing. Because in the study situation the student is expected to use the information from his sources as the basic data for his own production, language learning materials can most efficiently parallel reality by arranging practice in such a way that comprehension exercises provide the information for learners' production. Moreover, because a student's use of his sources in real life should represent a selection and reworking of the information there, the learners' production in the language class should not represent a mirror image of the original.

Further, we note in the study situation that, as the collection of information proceeds, there needs to be some summary or distillation of information from the sources

before it can be reproduced in the student's own terms. In some cases this may be a purely mental process, while in others it may be in note form, tabular, pictorial and so on. It is here that the language teacher can take account of the need to familiarise learners with non-verbal means of communicating information. Ordinarily, as suggested above in *The information cycle* on page 2, such devices are supplementary, aiding and exemplifying verbal communication. For successful language learning, however, this pattern is inappropriate. If meaning is immediately conveyed merely in a visual form, the words will become redundant and the learner will have no need to read or listen. For this reason, the two means of conveying information need to be separated. Thus, a learner might be asked to read a description of, for instance, valley profiles so that he can use the information to label blank diagrams or to draw them.

It would seem, therefore, that verbal summaries and non-verbal displays of information can hold a transitional place in a learning cycle. Information from the source can be turned by the learner into either type of summary and this can then be turned into his own verbalisation of some part of the information from the source.

This cycle in which information is selected, summarised and changed from one form to another, ensures that language learning is a cognitive rather than an automatic process and so provides the learner with the necessary practice in the mental operations outlined above in *The information cycle* on page 2. Moreover, it reflects the sound pedagogic principle that successful learning is dependent on effort.

The medium of the information cycle

Of central importance in a consideration of the medium through which the information cycle described in *The information cycle* on page 2 is expressed is a consideration of the purpose of the communication involved; at the broadest level, this is to convey in the most neutral way possible, information that is considered by the writer or speaker to be factual. For instance, in the written mode, the impersonal style of:

Dairy factories in the country were clean and well-organised.

which might be found in an inspector's report is considered to be typical of study English. It contrasts sharply, for instance, with the style of:

I was really glad I went to see some dairy factories as they were so clean that you couldn't imagine any problems from impure products.

which might occur in a personal letter describing a visit while made on holiday.

Further, within the broad context of the impersonal communication of fact, speakers and writers may have one of three main intentions with regard to their content. First, the intention may be *to describe* - and, in one form or another, description accounts for just under two-thirds of factual language. It may take the form of a catalogue of characteristics in a stative form, as in describing

a) the general appearance of different types of lake or printing machine, the parts of a flower or combustion engine in general;

b) the appearance of a particular lake like Whakatipu in New Zealand, or the layout of a particular city like Manchester; or

c) the descriptive detail that is tied to a narrative of occurrence, such as the appearance of the sky and mountains seen through a steam cloud included in the narration of the eruption of Mount Tarawera in 1886.

Alternatively, a description may outline a sequence of occurrence, as in an account of the nitrogen cycle or how steel is manufactured.

Second, the intention may be *to narrate* a sequence of events which has actually happened, making clear in one form or another the sequence of occurrence, as in outlining the events of the Second World War or in reporting the findings of a housing committee. Such language accounts for about one fifth of all factual language.

Third, accounting for a further fifth of factual language, is the intention *to instruct*. The purpose here is to tell someone, step by step, how to do something like carrying out a chemical experiment or mixing a suitable dye or, alternatively, to give unsequenced 'hints' on how to care for laboratory equipment or ensuring safety in the laboratory.

Then, each of description, narration and instruction is composed of a whole hierarchy of minor purposes. So in description, for instance, the expression of location might be important, and within this component the expression of inclusion might be important, and then within this component the expression of partial rather than complete enclosure might be important, and so on.

Further, when the intention is to communicate facts through speaking, the basic information is typically padded out with expansion and repetition, remarks dependent on situation and personal asides to check that comprehension is proceeding. Consider, for instance,

Well, first of all you need a piece of paper - about this size will do - I mean a piece of A4. Right are you ready? Well, next you roll it ...

which contrasts sharply with the sparer, easier to read written instructions

Take a piece of A4 paper. Roll it ...

Thus, it would seem that learning materials should be based on spoken and written examples of descriptive, narrative and instructive language of a factual type in the proportions typical of that type of language and each illustrating the hierarchy of minor purposes typically associated with it.

The tools of learning

Having established the type of language necessary for study purposes, we assume that the language teacher's task is not to build up any body of knowledge that might be contained in representative texts. Rather, he is engaged in ensuring that the prospective student will be able to learn through the medium of that language and to show evidence of his learning in the same medium. We need, therefore, to examine its component parts and establish the role each plays in the study cycle so that we may decide which tools to teach and which learning tasks to develop for each.

First, we note that in any piece of English there will be two basic components - grammar and content. Consider, for instance, the following short extract:

Of the pleuronectiformes, the dabs are very common. Like all fishes they have a very ...

Here, pleuronectiformes, dabs, fishes, and common are content items, and though we might be unfamiliar with two of them, we are able to recognise that the first three are objects identifiable in the real world and that the fourth refers to a quality of one of them. It is the other component of English, the grammar of the language, which enables us to establish this reference – all combined with —es in fishes and the with —s in pleuronectiformes and dabs, together with their position of occurrence (head of a preposition phrase in the case of pleuronectiformes and fishes, and sentence subject in the case of dabs) tells us that these are nouns; and very, together with its position after the verb are, tells us that common is an adjective.

Further, the content information with regard to a group of content items is the expression of the set of relationships between them. This again is communicated by the grammatical component of the language. Thus, we are able to arrange fishes, pleuronectiformes and dabs in an order of decreasing generality. First, the word of tells us that dabs are a sub class of pleuronectiformes and like tells us that dabs are a type of fish. Then, the use of the general marker all, as opposed to the more specific the, enables us to put fishes at the top of the hierarchy.

If we had not already known that dabs were a type of fish belonging to the pleuronectiformes group, to have been able to work it out from the extract indicates an ability to learn, and we saw that the basic tool for doing this was a knowledge of the grammar of the language. In this way then, we have isolated what seems to be a basic comprehension tool which must be taken care of in our language learning programme.

Any development of a skill requires a learner to practise it. It would seem, therefore, that our reading and listening texts should contain a proportion of unfamiliar words and relationships which learners are led towards working out for themselves. This is the reason that the unit *Flax*, for instance, contains 'technical' terms like retted, rippled, slivered, roved and not because they are considered useful vocabulary items or because the unit is

directed towards textile specialists. In fact, the unit might well be seen as a direct hindrance to the development of a general reading skill for textile specialists in that they probably already know the terms and so cannot use the unit to practise finding out. From this point of view, it is probably unwise to base language learning on texts taken directly from the learner's prospective specialist disciplines. Further, there is sound motivational justification for the inclusion of the unknown when we consider that, if we had already known the information about dabs, there would have been no reason to read the text. Moreover, we note here, therefore, that it is pedagogically unsound for a teacher to explain the 'new words' to a class before they read or listen. Not only does it take away the motivation for reading or listening, but it also prevents the practice of the basic comprehension skill of using grammar to find out content.

The efficient 'comprehender', however, does not rely entirely on this tool. Consider, for instance:

> The rocklings are interesting. These drings are among the smallest of the gadiformes.

We can work out that rocklings are drings; that gadiformes are drings and that rocklings are gadiformes but we cannot work out the overall relationship between the three as easily as we could in the dabs example above. If however, we replace drings with fishes we are then able to see that rocklings are fish belonging to the gadiformes group, an arrangement from general to specific. As in the dabs example, the knowledge of the common content item fish, available to the non-specialist, enables us to work out a relationship between terms probably familiar only to the zoologist or fisherman.

Thus, there is another learning tool to consider. It is important, however, to be aware of the exact nature of the content items involved. A large proportion of content items have a general meaning available to the layman but take on a technical refinement of meaning in specialist situations. For instance:

bony: of a person or animal having prominent bones and not much fat (general)

bony: of a fish having a skeleton made of bone rather than cartilage (zoology)

tie: something used for fishing (general)

tie: a curved line joining two or more notes of the same pitch tying them together as one note with the time value of both, or all, added together (music)

Such specialist meanings together with completely discipline-specific terms like pleuronectiformes or gadiformes are an element in the knowledge to be mastered while studying in a particular discipline as taught by qualified specialists. It is the general meaning of content items which is the tool for learning, and it is this general meaning that the language teacher is qualified to deal with.

Comprehension and an inherent learning problem

A further point of significance emerges for the language teacher when we observe the ways in which grammatical and content information overlap so that many of the same concepts are communicated in more than one way in any piece of English. For instance, in:

> They hatch out in 24 hours.

the concept of 'more than one' is communicated both by 24 and by the —s on hours; in:

> They established trade routes thousands of years ago.

'pastness' is signalled by both thousands of years ago and the —ed in established; and in:

> During desalination, first the water is boiled and then the steam is condensed.

the fact that steps are related in sequence of occurrence is marked by first and then as well as the sequence of two passive verb groups.

We note that in each case, if the grammatical marker of the concept were omitted, communication could still be effected:

> They hatch out in 24 hour.
> They establish trade routes thousands of years ago.
> First the water boil and then the steam condense.

In fact, as they have little real world meaning all grammatical markers can be omitted, and word order together with content knowledge ensures communication:

> *Heteromi* contain 20 group long eel-like fish length 18 inch find depth 1,200 - 7,800 feet.

The opposite, however, does not hold true. Consider, for instance,

> The _____ _____ed in the
> _____ _____ six _____s.

This phenomenon has implications for comprehension learning.

We saw that knowledge of the content item fish helped us read the rockling extract above more efficiently. It seems to follow from this that a large receptive content vocabulary is important for efficient comprehension. We have also seen that a message cannot exist without content items though communication can take place without grammatical ones. As grammatical items provide what is essentially a supportive means of communicating information that comes more directly from content items, given the relatively fixed word order of English, the more efficient a reader becomes, the more he is able to pay less conscious attention to grammatical signals and to let his eye skip over them.

The language teacher is thus faced with the dilemma of providing the learner with the opportunity both of building up a large receptive vocabulary and of directing attention selectively towards relevant content items without, at the same time, preventing the development of the grammatical skill without which no real learning can take place. Emphasis on the first two objectives to the exclusion of the third ties the learner to rote learning of content for which he will always be dependent on an informant. Such emphasis will not provide him with the tools for finding out for himself in the manner illustrated in the dabs and rocklings examples.

To solve this problem we can allow complete realisation of meaning to develop gradually rather than attempting immediate and absolute communication. We can do this by a cyclic approach which moves from the abstract to the concrete. In *Flax*, for instance, an expression like is rippled is expanded bit by bit into an explanation of the type:

> The stalks are pulled through the teeth of a comb and as the seed heads push against the teeth they are forced off.

Then, eventually, this step in the process is depicted in pictorial form. As the learner moves through the exercises he is able to build up his grammatical skill using language cues to find out the meaning of is rippled. Then, his repetition in speaking and writing of the terms used in explanation provides a means of building up a vocabulary of 'useful' content items. Then, the final matching with a pictorial representation ensures that the learner does not become frustrated by constant verbal abstraction and provides a concrete check of achievement of meaning.

Production and an inherent learning problem

From the point of view of the language learner's own production, the fact that grammatical items have little communicative value represents a three-fold learning problem. First, they require greater learning effort than do items that have real-world association, second, they are liable to omission:

> The stream flowing downhill.
> They can jump like frog.

and third, they easily become confused:

> The stream is flows downhill.
> They are frogs-like.

One solution is first, at any stage of learning, to keep low the proportion of new grammatical items to total content ones. For instance, as a structure for naming:

> This is a book.

with three new grammatical items to one content item is

considered to be too difficult for any learner at the beginning of a course, whereas the more usual naming structure a book, with a one to one ratio is more reasonable. Second, if the first policy is carried out, only one grammatical item will be taught at a time and this has the effect of separating items prone to confusion. Third, we need to assign a clear meaning to each grammatical item and to illustrate it consistently in our learning materials.

It is important, therefore, to consider what it is that can best illustrate the meaning of a grammatical item.

Presented as a discrete item we note that the frame:

> They _____ the water.

allows a wide range of possible completions:

> drink, drank, can drink, have drunk, are drinking, have been drinking and so on.

Moreover, the use of cues like:

> now, every day, next week, since 6.00 am

for the automatic response of:

> is drinking, drink, will drink, have drunk

respectively do not parallel the real language use situation. Consider, for instance, the form are drinking in the following three examples.

In:

> They have eaten the grain and *are drinking* the water entering through the pipe at the top of the cage. They completely ignored the trough
> ...

from laboratory notes timed at 5.00 p.m., the purpose is to describe an action at one point in time (correlating with the reference 'now'). In:

> They refused the solution despite all attempts to neutralise the taste of chemicals. The subsequent addition of X to their food, however, deadened their taste sense and we observe that in this set of experiments they *are drinking* it quite freely ...

from a report on an experiment, the purpose is to describe an action over a period of time (correlating with the reference 'every day'); and from the same report:

> Because they *are drinking* the new solution as part of our new group of experiments there is no need to include factor Y in the present feeding schedule.

the purpose is to describe an action that is planned (correlating with the reference 'next week').

We notice, first, that the original frame can be completed with any verb form for which we can find a context of use, and second, that the context, more often than not, is not overtly marked by cues like now and every day. These cues are, in fact, descriptive summaries of behaviour rather than instruments of actual use. Assuming that language learning involves the mastery of its use in typical ways rather than the ability to describe it, it would appear that each grammatical item should be

observed and produced by the learner in typical contexts of use rather than in isolated sentences tied to descriptive cues.

Let us now consider how we might go about arranging for this.

The association of grammatical tool with use

In each of the are drinking examples in *Production and an inherent learning problem* on page 6 we note that the primary intention is descriptive and in each case it is an action that is being described but, as we have already seen, each action is described as being different. This represents a hierarchy of purpose already referred to in *The medium of the information cycle* on page 3 and, if we are to equip our learners to deal with it, we must establish the grammatical tools used to express each purpose. With regard to the are drinking examples, for instance, the descriptive intent is expressed by are (i.e. the stem form of a verb) while an —ing form was used as an 'adjective' of action. The detailed reference of each action as occurring at a point of time, a continuing phenomenon or a planned piece of behaviour is, however, more dependent on covert contextual relationships. Not only, therefore, does this move down the purpose hierarchy represent a move from general towards more detailed meaning, but it also represents a move from overt, marked illustration of purpose to a more diffuse sophisticated one.

Given this situation then, we might well start our examination of the correlation of form and purpose at the top level of the hierachy and consider the main markers of description, narrative and instruction.

i) Description

We referred above in *The medium of the information cycle* on page 3 to stative and dynamic description. A stative description may be general:

> All ocean plants are alike in one way. They all need sunlight and therefore live close to the surface. While none occurs farther down than 600 feet, most in fact exist in the upper 200 feet of water.

or there may be comment about a particular example:

> This piece of brown sea-weed is a piece of oyster thief. It has threads called holdfasts for holding it in place. There are also air sacs to keep it afloat. It has fastened itself to an oyster shell.

In both cases there is a high percentage of stative verbs in the stem form (are, need, lie, occur, exist) and in the stem + s form (is, has). Sentences have subjects, and sentences of the linking type with verbs like be are common:

> All ocean plants are alike.

as are sentences introduced by there:

> There are also air sacs.

The third type of stative description, which occurs in conjunction with a narrative of events, is the same in all respects except that the verbs are in the stem + ed form. Consider, for instance, was, were, had, became in the following, extracted from a framework provided by a narrative of the development of oceanic research:

> It was in the nineteenth century that scientific expeditions were equipped to remain at sea a long time. They also had the equipment to carry out biological investigations. Researchers became interested in the plant world of the oceans.

Dynamic description, on the other hand, contains sequences of passive verb groups, sequences of the stem (+ s) forms of dynamic verbs or sequences in which both types alternate. In all cases they are related in an order of occurrence. For instance, consider move, enter, lay, float, are hatched out in the following description of a natural process where simple verbs predominate:

> In winter the cod move to defined areas. By early spring they enter water not more than 30 fathoms deep. Here each female lays 4 — 6 million eggs. The fertilised eggs float upwards and are hatched out in the warmth.

Or is forced, is dissolved, is raised, is evaporated in the following description of a manufacturing process where passive verb groups predominate:

> Water is forced down through bore holes and the resulting solution, the brine, is raised by suction. The brine is then evaporated leaving only the salt.

ii) Narrative

In contrast to description, narrative contains a high proportion of the stem + ed form of dynamic verbs related in the order of occurrence. For instance reported, carried out, made, brought up relate four steps in the following historical sequence of development:

> Early explorers reported mainly on the position and existence of land. In 1773 the Royal Navy vessel *Racehorse* carried out the first successful sounding of the sea bottom. Then, the Antarctic expedition of 1839 made the first successful series of soundings and, in 1854, Brook's cylinder brought up a sample of sediment from the sea bed.

iii) Instruction

Both sequenced and non-sequenced instruction were referred to in *The medium of the information cycle* on page 3. Both contain a high proportion of the stem form of dynamic verbs as the sequence place, insert, pack, pour in:

> Place some gravel on the bottom of the tank.
> Insert the roots of the plants in the soil below.
> Pack them round firmly. Pour the water in
> carefully.

or the non-sequenced use, ensure, do in the following
'dos and don'ts' about marking creatures in a pond
selected for observation:

> Use a non-toxic enamel. Ensure it is durable in
> sea water. Do not allow it to make the creature
> more conspicuous.

In instruction, sentences typically have no subjects.

From the above observations we can generalise a
schedule on which form and purpose are matched for
verbs at a very broad level of analysis:

a) General description: stem / stem + s; stative verbs
b) Particular description: stem / stem + s; stative verbs
c) Narrative padding: stem + ed; stative verbs
d) Sequenced description: stem / stem + s; dynamic verbs
e) Sequenced description: stem / stem + s of passive verb groups
f) Narration: stem + ed; dynamic verbs
g) Instruction: stem; dynamic verbs

We note that the same type of schedule can be drawn up
for other grammatical items at this broad level of purpose
and for all the other levels in the hierarchy but space
allows us here to do no more than demonstrate a general
technique.

The establishment of one form for one purpose

With regard to the schedule drawn up in *The association
of grammatical tool with use* on page 7, first, we notice
that, in any body of context, the categories of language
described occur in conjunction with each other so that
there is constant switching of purpose. For instance, a
description that has the main purpose of classifying
different types of volcanic cone (general description) may
be exemplified by comments about actual named
mountains (particular description). In addition, it may
make reference to the general process of eruption
(sequenced description) and this may, in turn be
exemplified by what happened when an actual named
volcano erupted (narration). To fulfil our criterion of
ensuring ease of learning (see *Production and an inherent
learning problem* on page 6) it seems justifiable, however,
to practise one category (and this implies high-lighting
one central grammatical item) by itself and, then, when it
is well established, to practise a second before the two are
finally put together.

Second, there is on the schedule an overlap of form
and purpose both with regard to general and particular
description and also with regard to sequenced

description. If we are to prevent confusion we can
establish for initial learning one form for one function.

We note general and particular usage is marked more
significantly by noun phrase usage. For instance, in *The
association of grammatical tool with use* on page 7,
generality was marked in the description of ocean plants
by the combination of all and —s in:

> all ocean plants

and particularisation by this in:

> this piece of brown seaweed.

If we consider article usage in this respect, we find that
particular reference may be specific:

> Give me the yellow flower.

where choice is restricted to one identifiable example in a
situation. Specificity is expressed by the forms the + N;
the + N + s. Alternatively, particular reference may be
unrestricted:

> Give me a flower.

where there is free choice of one of any of the objects
present in the situation. The concept of 'any' is expressed
by a + N; some + N + —s. General reference on the
other hand may be expressed by any of the + N, a + N,
the + N + s or N + s:

> The freesia / A freesia is sweet-scented. or:
> Freesias / The freesias are sweet-scented.

all of which communicate the same basic information
the class of flower called freesia as opposed to that called
daisy, marigold etc.

To establish one form for one purpose for this area of
grammar we can build on optional and compulsory usage
to produce the schedule:

		SINGULAR	PLURAL
Particular	Any	a + N	some + N + s
	Specific	the + N	the + N + s
General		N + s	

This helps us to solve the first verb form overlap problem
mentioned above. If particular description is to be marked
by a + N and the + N initially, it will correlate with
stem + s verbs:

> She has a freesia on her desk. The freesia is yellow.

and, if general description is to be marked by N + s it
will correlate with stem verbs:

> Freesias are flowers.

Then, with respect to sequenced description, we find,
as already indicated above in *The association of
grammatical tool with use* on page 7, that singly occurring
stem / stem + s forms are more common in the
description of natural processes while sequences of
passive verb groups occur more commonly in descriptions
of manufacturing processes.

We can, thus, modify our original schedule with regard to items a), b), d), e):

a) General Description: stem; stative verbs
b) Specific Description: stem + s; stative verbs
d) Natural Processes: stem / stem + s; dynamic verbs
e) Manufacturing Processes: stem / stem + s of passive verb groups.

We have thus suggested that, by taking into account criteria like typicality, usefulness and ease of learning, it is possible to isolate one form for one purpose for initial teaching; and that that form should always be associated with its purpose; and that the purpose can be best demonstrated, not in single sentences, but in some body of context increasing from two to three sentences in length as learning proceeds.

From core to sophistication

As learning proceeds, other forms expressing an increasing refinement of purpose must be introduced into contexts illustrating initial broader purposes. To take account of this we can generalise a learning cycle which follows, for each general purpose a) g) on our schedule above in *The association of grammatical tool with use* on page 7 and *The establishment of one form for one purpose* on page 8, a movement from core to sophistication. For instance, a core general description is defined as consisting of several simple sentences (i.e. one verb per sentence) each containing only one concept:

John Dories are fish.
They live in the Mediterranean.
They are brown.
They have spots.
The spots are black.
They grow from 10 to 20 inches.
Their flesh is well-flavoured.

At the other extreme, the same information may be expressed:

Living in the Mediterranean where they grow from 10 to 20 inches, John Dories are brown, well-flavoured fish with black spots.

That is, all the concepts have been compressed into a noun phrase and adjunct in a manner typical of definitions.

Language learning can be seen to be a development from core towards sophistication through a process of putting individual blocks together for more and more refined purposes. For instance, in stage one of learning, a description might occur involving the concepts of classification and colour:

John Dories are fish.
They are brown.

or the concepts of marking and colour:

John Dories have spots.
The spots are black.

Then, in stage two of learning, two ideas might be compressed when attention is, for instance, on the comparison of several creatures rather than on cataloguing the characteristics of a single fish:

John Dories are brown fish. They have black spots. Whydahs, however, are brown birds. The males have red tails.

Then, in stage three of learning, three ideas might be compressed when attention is, for instance, on distinguishing among several fish:

John Dories are brown fish with black spots, Clown fish are brown with orange and white stripes, and Chromis are blue fish with a line of black spots.

In this way the learning task can be broken down into manageable proportions ensuring the minimum confusion and frustration for the learner.

Balancing comprehension and production

Now, having suggested a generalised development from core to sophisticated, we note that in language learning, productive skills develop more slowly than do receptive ones. If we were to restrict reading and listening texts to the level of linguistic sophistication that the learner is capable of producing, we would seriously hinder the development of his reading and listening skills. Learning can be arranged so that information in comprehen- texts expressed, perhaps, in the forms illustrated in stages two and three of the John Dory examples in *From core to sophistication*, is reformulated by the learner in terms of the core, stage one example. In this way, at any one point, input can and should be more sophisticated than output.

As well as ensuring that what the learner produces is a reworking of what he has read or heard (see *A generalised language learning cycle* on page 3) and that his comprehension skills are given a chance to develop at a proper speed, the procedure has good pedagogic justification in that it is more likely to ensure that there will be adequate receptive experience of any given grammatical item before the learner is asked to produce it. In this way a too hasty production is less likely to reinforce random associations or incorrect forms which, once established, may be almost impossible to eradicate.

The establishment of grammatical tools

Once the grammatical tools have been isolated and sequenced for whatever hierarchy of purposes is to be

taught they should become the pivot of the learning process.

It is an important pedagogic principle that, if a learner is to learn to comprehend, he must at all stages be given a reason for listening or reading. A learner who is told just to listen is not likely to achieve much. At the best, his reaction at the end of the experience might be 'Yes, so what?' When we consider possible ways of focusing attention we remember that, in general, it is our knowledge of grammar which provides us with the basic tool for discovering content meaning. Here then we have one way of focusing attention. A sequence of stem + ed verbs related in the order in which they happened is a typical feature of narration. Thus, learners might well be asked to make such a list from their reading of a text in which they are expressed either in basically the same form or in some more sophisticated way (see *Kite Experiments* for instance). On another occasion, as in *Printing*, learners may be asked to listen to an account of a manufacturing process and asked to sequence a list of passive verb groups derived from the text.

Such lists of verbs which, for instance, represent a skeleton summary of a narrative or sequenced description may then be used as the cues for the production of a simpler version of the original. Each verb will represent the central unit around which to build a sentence for each step in the sequence of occurrence.

In this way, as appropriate grammatical features become the pivot of an exercise, a sub-conscious knowledge of the grammar of the language is built up for the learner. The same principle also holds true, of course, for any content items which may need special attention drawn to them.

The movement from control to freedom

What we have just described with regard to making language tools the pivot of learning tasks implies that the learner is very closely directed in what he does. It is the overt drawing of attention to the language tools necessary for carrying out a given task that in fact makes the difference between teaching and testing. A test of comprehension might provide a text including information about the pattern and purpose of several bee dances and ask candidates to identify and label a set of appropriate diagrams from information in the passage. Alternatively, in a test of production, candidates might be given the appropriate information in diagrammatic form together with the rubric: Describe the pattern of three bee dances and comment on the purpose of each.

To prepare learners for such 'testing' tasks we need to move steadily from the tight direction suggested above in *The establishment of grammatical tools* on page 9 to less and less control as learners begin to develop a command of a particular tool. Towards this end we can organise a unit of learning so that there is an overall cycle of collecting information from the source for use in

a final spoken and written verbalisation by the learner – that is, basically the test situation. To get to this goal, the learner can move through several mini-cycles of information collection and use, each of which is complete in itself and each of which deals with a relatively small piece of information that will cumulatively build up to the final extended verbal output. As each mini-cycle takes for granted the tasks carried out in previous cycles, guidance is reduced towards the end of a learning unit.

Let us exemplify this in some detail from one of the units in *English in Context*.

In *Bee Dances* the first mini-cycle (Parts A and B) leads the learner to find information about the pattern of one type of dance, to summarise it on an annotated diagram and then to say and write a description of the pattern. The next mini-cycle (Part C) deals with information about the purpose of the same dance. In it, learners are led to identify the relevant information to produce a spoken description with the help of an intervening written summary. Then, Part D deals with the pattern of the second type of dance and learners find the information, draw a diagram and then use the diagram to verbalise the pattern. In Part E, they collect information about the way in which the second type of dance communicates information about the direction of the food source, summarise it diagrammatically and then use the information with new examples based on the original information. Next, Part F deals with finding information about the distance of the food as communicated by the second type of dance, and moves through tabulation to pictorial representation and to verbalisation. Finally, Part G asks learners to tabulate information about the three dances under the headings of:

EFFECTIVENESS
INFORMATION
NUMBER OF DANCE CIRCUITS (in a given time)
DROP IN NUMBER OF CIRCUITS
NUMBER OF ABDOMEN FLICKS
DROP IN FLICKS
DIAGRAMS

that is, all of the information that has been dealt with in a stepped way in earlier parts of the unit.

We see, therefore, that Parts A to E are concerned with helping learners to develop the tools necessary for the type of task demonstrated in Part F where guidance is limited to indicating what information is relevant and suggesting a suitable organisation for production. The earlier parts of the unit guide learners step by step. In Part A a great deal of help is given in scanning and skimming to find relevant information. Part B then gives stepped help in visualising this before requiring learners to use an annotated diagram as a summarising device. It then gives further aid by supplying the verbs to be used in a simple five-sentence description. We note that this mini-cycle covered two Parts and involved nine guided steps. In Part D learners carry out a similar cycle using the example of another dance, but this time, in only three guided steps. Parts A and B provide the tools which are practised more at the initiative of the learner in Part D.

In this way we have devised an alternating pattern of input and output in both an overall and detailed sense giving the learner an integrated variety of experience and moving towards greater learner freedom as basic tools have been high-lighted in earlier mini-cycles.

It is at this point that we might draw attention to the possible use in language work of the learner's own previous experience, including his knowledge of his own specialist field of study. Presuming, therefore, that engineering students for instance need at some point in their study to demonstrate a knowledge of construction processes, or that textile students need to demonstrate their knowledge of dyeing processes, and presuming we have practised the necessary language items with unknown processes, a learner can now use his newly acquired tools to inform colleagues and teacher about a process familiar to him. The effectiveness of such communication can be tested by asking the learner to play the role of the teacher as he directs tasks of the type illustrated in *English in Context*.

A model for a unit of learning

We can summarise the above discussion by the following diagram which illustrates the model on which each unit of learning in *English in Context* is based.

Original form of information (relatively sophisticated)

INPUT
Reading and listening texts

Collection operations
(CONTROLLED → FREE)

First derived form of information

TRANSITION
Summaries: verbal and non-verbal
Abstract → Concrete

Production controls
(CONTROLLED → FREE)

Second derived form of information (relatively unsophisticated)

OUTPUT
Learner's speaking and writing

Classroom exploitation of *English in Context*

Students should not always be left to work through a set of exercises completely by themselves. Let us see how a teacher can conduct exercises in each of reading,

listening, speaking and writing so that we may establish the nature of the teacher's role with regard to the types of exercises illustrated in *English in Context*.

i) Reading

Learners should be asked to turn to the relevant reading passage and their attention should not be drawn to the exercises in the Learning Materials.

Example 1: *Kite Experiments* Part A

1. a) The teacher might give the first instruction orally:
      'Find the names of the two experimenters as quickly as possible.'
      'Put your hands up when you have them.'

   When a suitable number of hands is raised the teacher might then ask:
      'Which paragraph?'
      'Put your fingers on the names.'
      'They are?'

   The teacher can then write the names on the blackboard, pronouncing them clearly as he does so.

   b) The practice might continue:
      'Find the next paragraph in which **Wilson** is mentioned.'
      'How many times?'
      'Put your finger on each.'
      'Look at paragraph 4.'
      'How many times do you see **Wilson**?'
      'Draw a line in the air to show where in the paragraph.' (to indicate the way students' eyes move to pick up the words)

   c) The teacher might then say:
      'Wilson occurs twice more.'
      'Paragraphs?'
      'Put your fingers on them.'

   d) A similar procedure can be carried out for Melvill if necessary.

2. Depending on whether an aural/visual or a visual/ visual match is to be practised, the teacher can say or write on the blackboard:
      They carried out a test flight.
   and then say:
      'Find it.'
   When everybody is ready, say:
      'Find the paragraphs that tell you about the test flight and write the paragraph numbers.'

3. The teacher might then give the instruction for finding the number of people involved and, after hearing the numbers decided on by the different members of the class, list the names on the board with the class's help, before actually agreeing that there are four. If there is

doubt, then identification exercises similar to those carried out in 1. should be continued for the boys.

4. a) The teacher might then write on the blackboard:

    launched
    rose
    carried
    stood
    prepared

    and say:

    'Read paragraph 3 and tell me what Wilson did first.'

    As the answer is given, underline launched on the list on the blackboard and say a suitable sentence e.g.

    Wilson launched a kite.

    b) The class might then be asked to read paragraphs 4 and 5 to find the two things Wilson did:

    'Just write the verbs.'

    Encourage the class to say held (on to) and let go, and in each case provide them orally with a suitable sentence: **Wilson held (on to) the line. He let it go.**

    c) The procedure can then be repeated with regard to paragraphs 4 and 5 for Melvill (**took and hooked**) and then for the two boys
    (**laid, spread, lifted, threw**)

    d) Learners can then be asked to turn to the list of verbs in item ☐4 i) of the Learning Materials and given the instruction to underline what the four people did.

    e) Next, learners can be asked to write paragraph 3 on a piece of paper or in their exercise books and to underline it. They should then be asked to list the appropriate verbs from ☐4 i) down the middle of the page. They should then write 'who' in front of each verb.

    f) The procedure should be repeated for paragraphs 4–6.

    g) Then the order of overall occurrence can be established. Say:

    'Look at your list.'
    'What happened first?'
    'Write 1 in front of it.'
    'Look at paragraph 4. Boys. First? Next?'
    'Hooked goes with laid or straightened. Which?'
    'How do you know?' (**As the boys were laying the second kite on the ground ..., Melvill hooked the line to its back.**)
    'So, write the numbers 2 and 3.'

    And so on.

    h) Learners can then be directed to open their books and do item ☐4 iii).

ii) Listening

It should be noted that, despite the advantage of recorded listening materials, eliminating the danger of non-verbal clues to meaning, once spoken material is recorded it becomes depersonalised and loses a great deal of its other inbuilt assurances of comprehension – it cannot take into account feedback from the listener. It is much more difficult to listen to a cassette than it is to listen to a personal delivery. This should be taken into account when training listening skills.

If learners are new to the type of listening exercises illustrated by *English in Context*, teachers should probably first use the cassettes as models for delivering short lectures. That is, chosen source information should be delivered by the teacher as spontaneously as possible to maintain the stress and intonation typical of speaking rather than reading out loud. At the same time the reaction of the listeners should be taken into account so that necessary repetition and rephrasing of information, individual padding and the like can be built into the listening experience to ensure that comprehension is taking place.

It is only when confidence has been built up this way that learners should be exposed to recorded materials. In both cases learners should not have the Learning Materials open as they listen. Any reading preparation should be done first and the books closed.

Example 2: *Miniature Trees* Part A

1. a) Learners should be asked to listen and be ready to draw a classification diagram like the one illustrated in item ☐1 i). Section 1 of the cassette should be played through without stopping for as many times as necessary to allow the majority of the class to feel that they have the relevant information.

    b) To check, the teacher might ask:

    'How many main classes?'

    • Then, on hearing the answers, should ask the students to listen and put up their hands as they hear the information. He should stop the cassette as soon as a hand goes up and get the learners to repeat the information. The teacher might then draw the top two boxes of the tree diagram on the blackboard.

    c) The teacher might then say:

    'Listen for the sub-classes of straight trunk.' and repeat the procedure as before.

    d) The teacher should proceed in the same way until the diagram on the blackboard is complete and check that all learners have a correct version of the diagram in front of them.

2. a) Learners might then be directed to look at item ☐2 in the Learning Materials and told:

'Listen and number the words in the order you first hear them.'

b) Then, once attention has thus been drawn to the appearance of the words heard on the cassette, the learners can be asked to listen again and decide which words to write in which box of the diagram.

iii) Speaking

Again, learners should be instructed to close their books.

Example 3: *Kite Experiments*, Part B
(Main intentions practice, see 4, page 12)

1. A completed FIGURE I should have been built up on the blackboard or overhead projector as learners were helped to produce the correct information.

2. The teacher might then say:

'Look at 1 on FIGURE I and listen.'
Wilson launched the first kite.

'Look at 2 on FIGURE I.'
Next Melvill ...
Learners: ... hooked the line to the back.
While the boys ...
Learners: ... laid the kite on the ground.
First ...
Learner 1: ... Wilson launched the first kite.
Next ...
Learner 2: ... Melvill hooked a line to the back ...
... while ...
Learner 3: ... the boys laid the kite on the ground

The whole sequence can be built up in this cyclic way with individual learners, helped where necessary, saying a step each.

3. In the next stage of the drill the teacher should not give verbal cues unless necessary. He can merely point to the relevant part of the diagram to elicit a response.

4. Next, individual learners can be asked to give more than one step at a time until, finally, individuals can repeat the complete sequence.

Example 4: *Kite Experiments* Part C
(Minor purposes practice, see 4, page 12)

Learners should not look at the exercises but at the reading passage.

a) The teacher might write had prepared on the blackboard and ask the learners to find it in the passage and read out the relevant sentence. Then, the teacher might say:

First they made a cross.

and write made on the blackboard.

Next they ...
Learners: ... attached a body.

Write attached on the blackboard.

Then they ...
Learners: ... added a tail.

Write added on the blackboard.

Finally they ...
Learners: ... attached a line.

Write attached.

The resultant list on the blackboard should appear:

made
attached
added
attached
had prepared

To draw attention to the relationship of the verbs say the whole sequence:

They made a cross, attached a paper body, added a tail and then attached a line. When they had prepared their kites in this way, they carried out a trial flight.

and, as you say it, write a + sign in front of attached, added, attached and an = sign in front of had prepared.

b) Drill the pupils in the model in the way indicated above for Example 3.

c) Then the teacher might give further narratives and encourage the learners to write a suitable final sentence with when and had. For instance:

He brushed his teeth, washed his face, and combed his hair. He put on his best suit ...
Learners: When he had made himself tidy he went to meet the director.
or When he had finished he visited his girl friend.
or He blackened his face, put in false teeth, pulled on a balaclava ...
Learners: When he had disguised himself he climbed down the drain-pipe.

d) Then the procedure might be varied by writing the following frame on the blackboard:

cleared
thawed
put
added
placed
When he put the dinner on, he went to smoke his hubble bubble.

Learners then can each be encouraged to produce their own version for the others to hear.

e) Finally, individual learners can make up their own narratives of three or four steps and the rest of the

class can be invited to provide suitable when sentences to complete them.

iv) Writing

It is in preparation for writing that the rather controlled speaking developed above plays an essential role. Learners should not be asked to write without adequate oral drilling. In an oral drill the teacher can ensure both that grammatical forms are correct and, provided that some body of speech is drilled rather than isolated single sentences, that an appropriate organisation is being established. This develops a fluency in speech which carries over to a fluency in writing.

Moving around *English in Context*

The order in which the context areas or main categories of language are presented in the book reflects a loose development in degree of difficulty with regard to the language concepts illustrated. Apart from the fact that narrative should precede the teaching of description within narration so that there is a clear reason for using stem + ed description and a framework to base it on, context areas can, however, be dealt with in any order. What is important, though, is that learners should not become confused by contrastive treatment of pairs of contexts or constant shift from one type of context to another.

The units within each context area are also presented according to a loose overall scale of difficulty. The response will obviously vary from learner to learner and from teacher to teacher, however, and units can be dealt with in any order.

As already indicated in *The movement from control to freedom* on page 10 above, each part of a unit is self-contained and it is possible, and sometimes desirable, to switch backwards and forwards from one unit to another within a given context area.

The materials are also written so that the learner can stop at the point between the receptive and productive steps. It may be that a learner requires help in comprehension skills which are illustrated in the materials in conjunction with production models that he does not yet have the tools to use. In *Bee Dances*, for instance, two dance pattern descriptions involve sequenced description. If a learner is still practising the production of stative description, he should not do the production part of the cycle, though he might well benefit from practising the comprehensive skills involved. He can return at some later date and practise the production model when he is ready to do so.

This option of coming back later is an important element in the conception of *English in Context*. If

experience of information collection and use is in any way to parallel the real situation, there needs to be some fairly extended body of text provided. This means that each unit is quite long because of the amount of guidance needed to help learners through it. Moreover, the exercises demand a high degree of intensive attention. This means that moving through a complete unit without a break in attention may often not be the best approach, especially in the early stages of skill development. It may well be preferable that learners should move through one mini-cycle in one unit and then move to another mini-cycle in another unit to practise many examples of the same skills at a similar level of guidance. If the experience is to be meaningful, he needs to practise the skills with different content information and with different types of exercise. It is for this reason that, in the same context area, there is a variety of content and in each unit a variety of information collecting operations, summarising devices and production controls. Learners who move from unit to unit are given the opportunity to consolidate selected skills at a suitable level of guidance. When a learner then moves to a level where there is less guidance or where new skills are introduced, the two main types of learning motivation can be kept in balance. A move back to a unit already worked on offers the reassurance of 'I've been here before' in terms of content and that of 'What's this?' in terms of a less guided or different exercise.

A complete unit provides a model of the length and complexity of the sort of texts students will encounter in their own chosen subjects. So, once a student has reached a good standard of competence and confidence in all the necessary study skills and operations, working through the extended body of text in a complete unit will give him the opportunity to learn which of those operations are most relevant to which aspects of the sort of texts he will have to manipulate in the real situation at university and college study level.

To help teachers in moving around the book, information about skills practised is provided in three different forms.

Appendix 1 is an index of the information collection operations or comprehension skills illustrated.

Appendix 2 tabulates the grammatical items practised productively in each context area in order of linguistic sophistication.

Appendix 3 is an index of the production controls or ways in which learners are guided towards speaking and writing correct and appropriate English.