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NEW CONCEPT ENGLISH

FLUENCY IN ENGLISH

An Integrated Course for Advanced Students

L. G. ALEXANDER



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To the Teacher

Towards Fluency

The student who has successfully completed an Intermediate Course in English often has good reason to feel disheartened when he embarks on an Advanced Course. The reason for this is not so much that he has at his command only a fairly limited vocabulary, but that he is suddenly thrust into the world of ideas. The biggest barrier, particularly with younger students, is not language as such, but mental maturity. An advanced course necessarily presupposes a degree of mental maturity and fairly wide general knowledge which many students do not possess. In oral work, the student is expected to take part in discussions on argumentative topics covering a wide range of subjects. As far as writing is concerned, it is not enough to be able to write narrative or descriptive compositions in simple, correct English. The student must pay close attention to form and content; he must express difficult ideas and know how to handle facts and opinions. Where before his *précis* work consisted largely in reproducing the main sequence of events in a piece of narrative, he now has to summarize difficult passages of factual, argumentative and reflective prose. In addition to this, he frequently has to work under pressure, particularly if he is preparing for an examination. Because the syllabus is loaded, the teacher is obliged to assume that his students have, by now, grasped the fundamentals of grammar. He therefore spends little, if any, time on it, even though he knows how much his students require further practice.

The answer to these problems is again to be found in the use of carefully selected passages which can be used as multi-purpose texts to continue the student's training in the four skills, *understanding, speaking, reading* and *writing*. At this level, the texts should be selected from the work of a wide variety of authors, so that the student can become familiar with different styles of writing. The passages should be graded in terms of length, complexity and intellectual content to introduce the student gradually to the world of ideas.

About this Course

Basic Aims

1. To provide a comprehensive course for adult or secondary students who have completed an intermediate course. The course contains enough material for one or two years' work, depending on the amount of time allotted to it. The student will receive most of his training in the classroom and will be required to do some extra work in his own time.
2. To introduce the student gradually to the world of ideas and to make him familiar with a wide range of different styles of writing. The passages are graded not only from the point of view of language, but in terms of length and intellectual content as well.
3. To continue the student's training in the four skills: *understanding*, *speaking*, *reading* and *writing*—in that order. In this respect, the course sets out to do two things: to provide material which will be suitable for aural/oral practice and which can also be used to train the student systematically to write English at a difficult level. The passages will be used to develop a maturity of approach as well as to provide a stimulating basis for discussion and study.
4. To provide the student with a book which will enable him to *use* the language.
5. To provide the teacher with material which will enable him to conduct each lesson with a minimum of preparation.
6. To enable the teacher and the student to work entirely from a single volume without the need for additional 'practice books'.
7. To enable students to sit for the *English Language* and *Use of English Papers* in the Cambridge Proficiency examination if they wish to do so. This aim must be regarded as coincidental to the main purpose of continuing the students' training in the four language skills.

For Whom the Course is Intended

This course should be found suitable for:

1. Adult or secondary students who have completed *Practice and Progress* and *Developing Skills*, or who have completed *any* other intermediate course.
2. Schools and Language Institutes where 'wastage' caused by irregular attendance is a problem.
3. Advanced students who wish to study on their own.

How Much Knowledge has been Assumed?

The material in *Developing Skills*, the intermediate course which precedes this one, has been designed to 'overlap' this course. Students who have completed it will have no difficulty whatever in continuing where they left off.

Students who have learnt English from other courses and who now wish to continue their studies with this course should have a fair working knowledge of the items listed below.

Assumed Knowledge

Aural/Oral

1. The ability to understand English dealing with everyday subjects and spoken at normal speed.
2. The ability to answer questions which require short or extended answers.

3. The ability to ask questions to elicit short or extended answers.
4. The ability to use orally a large number of elementary sentence patterns.
5. The ability to reproduce orally the substance of a passage of English after having heard it several times and read it.
6. The ability to conduct a simple conversation on everyday subjects (e.g. expressing preferences; polite interchange; careers; travel; common experiences etc.)
7. The ability to give a short talk (prepared or unprepared) lasting up to four minutes on everyday subjects.

Reading

1. The ability to read a passage of English aloud. The student should have a fair grasp of the *rhythm* of the language (stress and intonation) even if he is unable to pronounce unfamiliar words correctly.
2. The ability to read silently and understand works of fiction and non-fiction of the level of Longmans' Bridge Series. The student's passive vocabulary range should be in the region of 3,000 words (*structural* and *lexical*). The student should be sufficiently familiar with a wide variety of English sentence patterns so that he can 'get the gist' of what he is reading even though he may not know the meaning of a number of individual words.

Writing

1. *Word Order*

The ability to write simple, compound and complex sentences. The ability to join simple sentences using conjunctions to form compound and complex sentences. A sound command of the *word order* in an English sentence.

2. *Comprehension*

The ability to write answers to straightforward questions on a passage of English of the level of that given in the Language Paper of the Cambridge Lower Certificate Examination.

3. *Vocabulary*

The ability to deduce the meaning of words and phrases from a context and to explain them by means of other words and phrases.

4. *Précis*

The ability to reconstruct the main sequence of events in a piece of narrative prose (e.g. describing actions or experiences). This presupposes that the student is capable of the following:

- a Reading, understanding and carrying out instructions.
- b Extracting specific information to write a list of *points* in note form outlining the main sequence of events in a piece of narrative prose.
- c Connecting these points to form simple, compound and complex sentences and arranging them logically to write a well-constructed paragraph in a set number of words.

5. *Composition*

The ability to write a narrative or descriptive composition of about 300 words. This presupposes that the student is capable of the following:

- a Making a short plan (i.e. listing a few ideas in note form).
- b Connecting the ideas to write a composition of about three or four paragraphs. The composition should contain an Introduction, Development and Conclusion.

6. Letter-writing

The ability to write a short personal letter of about 100 words. This presupposes that the student is familiar with correct layout (Heading, Salutation, Subscription).

Command of Language

1. Grammar (*Key Structures*)

The course presupposes that the student has had a fair amount of practice in using tenses, articles and prepositions. It is clearly recognized, however, that further practice is required.

2. Usage (*Special Difficulties*)

The student should be familiar with common phrasal verbs, certain words which are often confused or misused, and a limited number of idiomatic expressions.

A Description of the Course

General Arrangement of Material

The course falls into two parts each of which is preceded by a searching test. The first part aims to teach English at the pre-advanced level: it ensures that there will be a smooth transition between intermediate and advanced levels. The second part aims to teach English at the advanced level.

Each part consists of three Units and each Unit comprises ten passages, making a total of sixty passages in all. As the course progresses, the passages become longer and more complex. Each Unit is preceded by Instructions to the Student.

The passages are multi-purpose texts. Each passage will be used to train the student in the following: aural comprehension; oral practice; reading aloud; oral composition; extended oral exercises; dictation; comprehension; vocabulary; sentence and paragraph structure; précis; composition; grammar and usage.

Instructions to the Student

The instructions which precede each Unit should be read carefully. They deal only with the difficulties presented by the central exercises in each Unit: The Sentence; The Paragraph; Précis; Composition. The successful completion of this course depends entirely on the student's ability to carry out the instructions given. Worked examples have not been provided: what the student has to do should be abundantly clear without the aid of examples. The exercises that follow each passage should be done *in the order in which they have been presented*.

Introductory Tests

The test which precedes Part 1 will enable the student to tell if he is ready for this course. The test leading to Part 2 is so designed that the student will not be expected to make too sudden a jump between one year's work and the next. It will provide a clear indication of how much the student has assimilated.

The Passages

The passages have been drawn from the work of a wide variety of modern authors and are extremely varied in style and subject-matter. Many of the passages are broadcast talks and will be suitable for oral work. The approximate length of the passages in each unit is as follows:

Unit 1 : 250–300 words.

Unit 2 : 250–300 words.

Unit 3 : 300–350 words.

Unit 4 : 350–400 words.

Unit 5 : 400–500 words.

Unit 6 : 550–700 words.

Oral Exercises

Oral exercises are not included in the book itself and must be supplied by the teacher. They may be along the lines suggested in the section on *How to Use this Course*.

Comprehension Questions

The questions in Part 1 are straightforward; in Part 2, they are more searching.

Vocabulary

The student will be required to explain the meaning of difficult words and phrases as they are used in each passage.

Précis and Composition

The work that will be done in précis and composition has been carefully graded and controlled by means of a series of progressive exercises which gradually become more difficult as the Course proceeds.

The treatment of these two exercises is based on the principle that précis-writing is the exact counterpart of composition, the former being largely a matter of *analysis*; the latter of *synthesis*. For instance, when setting out to write a précis, the student must be able to understand a passage, break it down into its component parts, and reconstruct the original 'plan' of the piece in note form before writing his own version. Essay writing requires the reverse procedure, for the student sets out with a subject which has to be developed first in note form and ultimately written out in continuous prose. Accordingly, the exercises will aim at training the student in these two processes and will run exactly parallel. In Part 1 many of the exercises are based directly on material contained in the passages. The student will therefore be able to correct his own work simply by referring to the passage after he has finished an exercise.

Key Structures and Special Difficulties

All the exercises on Key Structures (Essential Grammar) and Special Difficulties (Usage) are derived from each passage. No use has been made of grammatical terminology, all difficulties being presented as sentence patterns. Where explanations are necessary, this has been done by relating one pattern to another.

Practice work in the Key Structures consists largely of exercises in recall, particular attention being paid to the use of verbs, prepositions, articles and the position of adverbs. The student will again be able to correct a great deal of his own work by referring to the passage after he has completed an exercise.

The exercises on Special Difficulties deal entirely with problems concerning usage: vocabulary, phrasal verbs and idiomatic expressions. Many of these are deliberately repetitive, the aim being to eliminate common recurring errors.

How to Use this Course

TEACHERS! PLEASE READ THIS INTRODUCTION CAREFULLY!

Allocation of Time

Ideally, two classroom lessons of approximately 50 minutes each should be spent on each text. The first lesson should be devoted to Guided and Free Conversation; the second to Composition and Language Study. This means that there is enough material in this book for 120 lessons. However, you may choose to spend only *one* classroom lesson on each text—in which case, every lesson may be devoted to Guided and Free Conversation and a selection of written exercises may be set as homework. Your first task is to decide how much time you have in your programme in relation to the material available in the course.

The suggestions given below outline the basic steps in each lesson. You may decide to follow them closely, adapt them to suit your style of teaching, or reject them altogether—BUT PLEASE READ THEM FIRST!

Lesson 1: Guided and Free Conversation

Books Required:

Fluency in English (for teachers and students)
Recorded Drills Tapescript (for teachers only)

The Stages of the Lesson

1 Aural/Oral Presentation:	about 15 minutes
2 Question and Answer Practice:	about 10 minutes
3 Pattern Drill:	about 5 minutes
4 Oral Reconstruction (Optional):	about 10–20 minutes
5 Talking Points:	about 10–20 minutes

Let's see what each step involves:

1 Aural/Oral Presentation:

a Listening (Books shut)

b Intensive Reading (Books open)

c Listening (Books shut)

d Reading Aloud (Books open)

a Listening (Books shut). Read the passage once. The students should *listen* and try to understand as much as they can.

b Intensive Reading (Books open). Read the text in small units (e.g. a sentence at a time, or less) making sure the students *really* understand it. Rather than give direct explanations, try to get as much information as possible from the students. (Think of it as 'a corkscrew operation'!) Explanations should be given entirely in English, but don't carry direct-method teaching to absurd lengths. If your students fail to understand in spite of all your efforts, translate briefly and move on. Remember, if you don't translate a particular difficulty, then someone in the class will!

c Listening (Books shut). Read the passage once more.

d Reading Aloud (Books open). Ask a few individual students to read small portions of the text.

2 *Question and Answer Practice*

Question and answer practice should be based mainly on the text. However, you may frequently vary this with questions which relate to the student's own experience. If you find it difficult to ask questions spontaneously, prepare yourself in advance. Questions should be asked individually round the class—preferably at speed. Two exercises are suggested:

a Mixed Questions

b Asking Questions in Pairs

a Mixed Questions. General comprehension questions may be asked. Here, for instance, are a number of questions which relate to Text 1.

Teacher: Where did people first learn to write?

How long ago?

Was it 5000 years ago? etc.

b Asking Questions in Pairs. Train the student to ask a question using an auxiliary verb and then to ask *precisely the same question again* preceding it with a question word.

Teacher: Ask me if people first learned to write 5000 years ago.

Student: Did people first learn to write 5000 years ago?

Teacher: How long ago . . . (Always provide the question word.)

Student: How long ago did people first learn to write?

3 *Pattern Drill*

The publication entitled 'Fluency in English, Recorded Drills: Tapescript' contains situational drills based on language points in the texts. Here, for instance, is part of the drill which relates to Text 1:

Teacher: Do you think the artist used photographs?

Student: He may have used photographs. It's hard to tell.

Teacher: Then perhaps he painted it in his own studio?

Student: He may have painted it in his own studio. It's hard to tell. etc.

The students may be trained to answer in chorus or groups, or the drill may be conducted rapidly round the class with individual students responding. A brief grammatical explanation may be given before the drill is conducted. If a language-laboratory is available, this will be adequate preparation for further practice. However, it must be stressed that a laboratory is by no means indispensable: it is quite possible to do all the drilling live in the classroom. Naturally, teachers who have tape-recorders may choose to play the drill in class.

4 *Oral Reconstruction*

This is an optional exercise and may be omitted when the text provides ample material for general discussion (see point 5 below). Write a few brief notes ('key words') on the blackboard summarising a portion of the text (say a paragraph). Now invite individual students to reconstruct the text by referring to the notes. Here, for instance, are some notes which relate to the first paragraph in Text 1:

1 Read—5000—Near East—people—write.

2 Some parts world—people—now—write.

3 Can preserve history—sagas—legends—generation.

- 4 Useful—migrations—people long ago—none could write.
- 5 Anthropologists wondered—ancestors Polynesia—came from.
- 6 Sagas—Indonesia—2000 years ago.

5 Talking Points

Where a text immediately suggests a subject or subjects for general discussion, the students should be invited to participate. Here, for instance, are a few talking points suggested by Text 1.

- a Exchange information about local history and pre-history.
 - b Exchange information about the migration of peoples in ancient and modern times.
 - c Exchange information about a famous journey to establish the migration of peoples: e.g. Kontiki, Ra, etc.
- (Note that not all discussions need necessarily be arguments or debates.)

Lesson 2: Composition and Language Study

All the printed exercises are intended for writing. As has already been indicated, this entire lesson may be omitted and a selection of written exercises may, instead, be set as homework. If this approach is adopted, then the Précis and Composition exercises should always be set. Needless to say, more satisfactory results will be obtained where a complete classroom lesson can be devoted to written exercises. These should be tackled in the order in which they are given. While the students are writing, you may go round the class helping individuals. Exercises not completed in class time, may be set as homework. The written exercises become more demanding and time-consuming as the student progresses through the course. However, it is not necessary to complete every single exercise.

Dictations

Depending on the amount of time available, dictations should be given frequently. A few sentences taken from a passage the students have already studied may be dictated. The students may correct their own work by comparing their version with the passage.

Additional Reading Material

If the student is not working for an examination and is not studying prescribed books, the following scheme is recommended:

Part 1: Works of fiction and non-fiction from Longman Abridged and Heritage Series.

Part 2: Unsimplified and unabridged works of fiction and non-fiction, plays, newspaper and magazine articles (particularly from *The Listener*, published by the B.B.C.)

Additional Oral Practice

If additional oral practice is required, it may be obtained from *For and Against* published by Longman Group Limited.

Additional Written Practice

If additional practice in writing is required, it may be obtained from the following:

Précis: Sixty Steps to Précis (Longman) Part 2, Passages 31–60.

Composition: Essay and Letter Writing (Longman) Part 2, Chapters 6–9.

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