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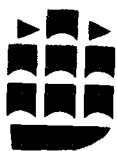
**other
words**

LG Alexander and
Catherine Wilson

In other words

20 composition exercises for
intermediate and post intermediate
students of English

L G Alexander & Catherine Wilson



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To the teacher

Rationale

Students are often asked to rewrite sentences when learning English as a foreign language. The usual technique is to provide them with a model followed by a cue:

We only realized what had happened when we got home.

It wasn't until _____.

And they are expected to write: **It wasn't until we got home that we realized what had happened.**

This form of exercise is frequently to be found in English language practice books, in tests and in examinations. It is fairly easy to see why it assumes such importance in the teaching of writing skills. The exercise trains the student to think analytically about the structure of English; to see semantic relationships in apparently unrelated structures; to cope with lexical, grammatical and syntactical problems, etc. As a *teaching* device it enables the teacher to make the student aware of the many different ways there are of saying or writing the same thing. For instance, in the model quoted above the student might be asked to produce any or all of the following:

When we got home we realized what had happened.

After we got home we realized what had happened.

We only realized what had happened after we got home.

It wasn't until/till we got home that we realized what had happened.

Only when we got home did we realize what had happened.

We got home only to realize what had happened. etc.

As a *testing* device it is an economical way of finding out what range of language the student has at his disposal.

This kind of written exercise can only have one long-term objective: the improvement of the student's composition work. Yet it has one chief drawback: sentences are presented to the student out of context so it is very difficult for him to see what the purpose of the exercise is. It doesn't help to be told that you can say or write the same thing in a number of different ways when there is no real context to work from.

The purpose of this book

The *general aim* of this book is to provide the student with material which will enable him to rewrite sentences which are presented within the framework of meaningful text.

The *immediate objectives* can be summed up as follows:

- 1 To train the student to think analytically of the structure of the written language.

- 2 To develop the student's awareness of the semantic relationship that exists between apparently unrelated structures.
- 3 To enable the student to cope with grammatical, lexical and syntactical problems when rewriting sentences.

The *long-term objective* is to improve the student's written composition by obliging him to cope with a range of expression which he would not normally attempt on his own.

It must be said at once that the exercises cannot be strictly defined as 'guided composition' in the sense that the student is led by stages from controlled to free writing. However, at this level the student must learn to connect ideas and handle really complex sentences if he is to express himself fluently in writing. No matter how many 'free compositions' he writes he is unlikely to achieve this breakthrough because he is acutely aware of his own limitations and consciously avoids difficult forms of expression. To that extent he remains the prisoner of his own acquired English and wholly unaware of the true complexity of the written language. This book does not set out to train the student in writing 'free composition' as such, but merely to extend his range of expression and build up his confidence so that he will become more adventurous (from a structural, lexical and syntactical point of view) when writing English.

For whom the book is intended

This book will be suitable for secondary (15+) or adult students who have been learning English for about six years and who require active training in the written language. It will meet the needs of students preparing for intermediate and advanced EFL examinations (like the Cambridge First and Proficiency certificates) or who are attempting to make the transition from 'intermediate' to 'advanced' without any particular examinations in mind.

Assumed ability

It is assumed that the student

- 1 Is currently learning English from an Intermediate course (e.g. *New Concept English—Developing Skills* or *Mainline Skills; Success with English*, Book 3, etc.) or is using a variety of practice books at the intermediate level (e.g. *Guided Course in English Composition* by Jupp and Milne, etc.).
- 2 Has a reasonable oral and written command of English and has had considerable experience in writing 'free compositions' (mainly narrative and descriptive).
- 3 Has an *active* lexical range of about 2000 words and is familiar with most of the basic structures taught in course books.

How the book may be used

Each exercise demands about one hour's concentrated work. Because the student is being trained to think analytically, the level of concentration demanded of him is considerable. For this reason it is unwise to attempt more than one exercise a week. The exercises may be set in class or as homework. If they are set in class, two periods should be devoted to any one exercise. During the first period the teacher may help the class as a whole to understand the passage and then go round assisting individual students while they are working. During the second period the teacher may use the exercise as the basis for instruction in grammar, syntax, word order and composition by discussing possible variations in the students' answers, pointing out what is acceptable and what is not and giving reasons. If an exercise is set as homework it should be followed up with a classroom lesson on these lines.

Further uses

The teacher may set 'free compositions' of his own choosing which in some way relate to the subject matter of each text. Exercises of this kind are not provided in the book itself and are left to the discretion of the teacher.

A description of the material

In other words contains 20 exercises and consists of two parts:

- 1 Texts and Composition Exercises: Version A.
- 2 Answers to Composition Exercises: Version B.

1 *Texts and Composition Exercises: Version A.* The material is laid out on facing pages. There is always a text containing numbered sentences (1-10) on the *left hand* page and ten sentence transformation exercises on the *right hand* page (also numbered 1-10). The 20 texts are roughly graded in order of structural and lexical difficulty, but the exercises themselves could not, because of their nature, be rigidly graded. The texts take the form of essays, articles or letters and deal with a wide range of topics of current or general interest.

2 *Answers to Composition Exercises: Version B.* This section contains a different version of the same 20 texts which appeared in the first part of the book. The texts are contained in a booklet inserted into the back cover of the book. This can be removed easily, and will, therefore, be valuable to the self-study student.

How the method works

The whole book is based on the idea that sentence transformation exercises can be closely linked to a context and therefore to composition

work. The student rewrites each sentence in a text (Version A) using the clues provided. If he works strictly according to the principles outlined in the section entitled *Suggested instructions to be given to the students* he will arrive at Version B—barring a number of minor variations. When the student completes a Composition Exercise, he checks his own answer against Version B. In classroom follow-up work the teacher uses Version B as the criterion to judge how far the student has produced acceptable or unacceptable answers.

It cannot be stressed too strongly that Version B is not the only correct answer, but is merely a likely one which can be generated by the clues provided. Alternative versions have not been given as the number of correct answers can be very great indeed, necessitating an extremely complicated grammatical, lexical and syntactical commentary. This kind of commentary can be provided directly by the teacher when he is discussing the students' answers.

Grading

Considerable thought was given to this problem and in the process of devising the materials we found that it was possible to grade the *content* of the passages but not the *exercises* themselves. The reasons for this will immediately become obvious when the book is used. The passages are roughly graded in order of increasing difficulty which minimizes comprehension problems. However, the exercises cover a wide range of language so it is extremely important to use the book with students who are really ready for it.

The nature of the exercises

We are acutely conscious that some of the clues may provide the same kind of difficulty that is posed by a crossword puzzle. This is the last thing we want. The material has been tested on multilingual groups of students (studying English in Britain) and monolingual groups (studying English in their own countries). In testing the material we looked to the students' answers to help us to improve the quality of the clues. The critical factor is how much assistance the students should be given and there is no arbitrary way of defining this. In the light of our experience we have tried to provide clues which will *help* and not *puzzle*. However, we are well aware that some of the clues may still be more puzzling than helpful, despite our efforts. We would be most grateful if teachers would write to us pointing out instances where particular difficulty has been experienced. In this way it will be possible to improve the quality and usefulness of this book in future impressions.

Suggested instructions to be given to the students (in English or their own language)

These instructions should be explained carefully before any exercise is set and the example given on pages xvi-xix should be dealt with in detail by the teacher. The instructions will seem a little complicated at first glance but will rapidly become clear when practical work is underway.

- 1 You will find that each passage in the book contains ten sentences. These sentences would normally be written as one complete paragraph, but they have been numbered 1-10 to make the exercises easier to follow.
- 2 First read carefully through the passage on the *left hand* page (Version A). You must understand the meaning of each passage before you begin the exercises and you may use a dictionary if there are any words you do not know. (Alternatively, the teacher may choose to read through a passage and explain any known difficulties.)
- 3 On the *right hand* page, you will find the composition exercise. Each exercise consists of ten incomplete sentences. New words and phrases are introduced so that you can rewrite the passage (Version B) using different structures and vocabulary. *It is very important to write your answers in a separate exercise book. Do not write in the book itself.* Remember to keep as close to the meaning of Version A as possible and do *not* use new words or phrases unless they are indicated in the composition exercises on the right hand page. Again, use a dictionary if there are any new words which you do not know.
- 4 When you have completed a composition exercise, check your version of the passage against the text of Version B which you will find in a separate booklet in the back cover of the book. Remember that the wrong use of one word alone can make a difference to the structure as well as the meaning, so take great care to check each version word for word. If your version is not the same as Version B it does not necessarily mean you are wrong. Different variations will be discussed in class after you have completed each exercise.
- 5 The exercises require a great deal of concentration, but if you do them carefully you will learn a great deal about the structure of the English language.

A note on typographical conventions which should be explained to the students

- 1 When you see a short rule (—) you can only use *one* word to complete the phrase or the sentence. E.g.

He is taking driving lessons. (A sentence in the text)

He is learning — drive. (Composition exercise)

He is learning **to** drive. (The required answer)

If you fail to observe the single-word marking (—) you can rewrite the sentence in this way: He is learning **how to** drive. This sentence is correct, but is not the one you were asked to write.

- 2 When you see a long continuous rule (————) you must use *two or more* words to complete the phrase or sentence. The length of rule varies to give you a rough idea of the number of words required, but it is *never* an *exact* indication.
- 3 When a word in the exercises is given in brackets () it means it is a new word which was not used in Version A and which you are expected to use in your answer. E.g.

Everybody needs to eat.

Everybody — (food).

Everybody **needs food**. (The required answer)

Not all new words are bracketed in this way: they are only given when they are likely to help you.

- 4 When a new word is given in brackets and italicized it can only be used as a *verbal form*. E.g.

He gave his horse daily exercise.

He (*exercise*) every

He **exercised his horse** every **day**. (The required answer)

- 5 You are often expected to change the form of the word in brackets so that it fits the sense. E.g.

My coat is less expensive than yours.

My coat is (cheap) than yours.

My coat is **cheaper** than yours. (The required answer)

Sometimes you are required to make other obvious changes. E.g.

She sings beautifully.

She is a —————

She is a **beautiful singer**. (The required answer)

- 6 If a noun is to take the place of an adjective, or an adjective the place of a noun, you must provide the appropriate form of *be* or *have*. E.g.

He had very little money.

He (poor)

He **was very poor**. (The required answer)

- 7 The introduction of a new word can change the structure of a sentence and affect the number of words used. E.g.

He is much stronger than most boys of his age.

He is (exceptionally) a boy of his age.

He is **exceptionally strong for** a boy of his age. (The required answer)

- 8 Sometimes a different construction may affect the tense. E.g.

I haven't seen her since your wedding.

The last time was at your wedding.

The last time **I saw her** was at your wedding.

Now work through the examples given on pages xvi-xix.

Poor workmanship

- 1 Sometimes I go down to the beach in the evenings and help old Mr Clarke pull his boat up out of the water.
- 2 'Why don't you buy a fibre-glass boat?' I often ask him, and I point out that few man-made materials are stronger than fibre-glass and that fibre-glass is also much lighter than wood.
- 3 However, he is very proud of his heavy wooden boat, and in reply to my suggestion he usually complains that there is no beauty or skill in boat-building nowadays and that no one has the time or patience to build a boat like his.
- 4 Once I was foolish enough to offer him the loan of my fibre-glass boat, but he pointed to it in disgust and exclaimed: 'Even if you give me one, I shall never go to sea in an ugly thing like that!'
- 5 Mr Clarke does not believe that any modern product can stand up to a normal amount of wear and tear, nor that it can be beautiful.
- 6 His boat has certainly stood the test of time—he had it built over forty years ago and it has never needed any serious repairs—and I must admit that it is a beautiful piece of workmanship.
- 7 I do not agree that machine-made products are necessarily ugly, for one can produce unusual and beautiful designs with modern materials. However, I have to agree that the quality of modern workmanship is often poor.
- 8 Poor workmanship is the result of the manufacturer's attempts to keep the cost of production down while he is also attempting to increase his sales, and when quantity is the aim behind production the quality of a product is sure to suffer.
- 9 I know only too well from my own experience that clothes fall apart at the seams and the covers come off books, and even more expensive items break down for no apparent reason.
- 10 At least I can mend my clothes or my books myself, but if the television set breaks down and I ring up the engineer, he will probably tell me that he cannot come for two weeks because he is already so busy with repairs.

Poor workmanship

- 1 Sometimes I go down to the beach in order to _____ out of the water.
- 2 I often ask him why _____, and I point out that fibre-glass is not only one of _____ but is _____ material than wood.
- 3 However, he is very proud of his heavy wooden boat, and he usually _____ to my suggestion by _____ and that people _____ either _____ (busy) _____ (impatient) to build a boat like his.
- 4 Once _____ offered to _____, but _____ to it in disgust, he exclaimed that _____, _____ go to sea in such _____.
- 5 Mr Clarke has no faith _____ (durability) _____ any modern product, nor _____ that it can be beautiful.
- 6 His boat has never needed any serious repairs since it _____ for him over 40 years ago, so _____, and it _____ (undoubtedly) _____.
- 7 I have to agree that modern workmanship is often poor _____, although _____, for designs _____ are both unusual and beautiful _____ with modern materials.
- 8 Poor workmanship (*stem from*) _____ to keep the cost of production down and at the same time _____, and _____ (bound) _____ when it _____ (*mass-produce*).
- 9 I know this only too well from my own experience of clothes _____
_____ for no apparent reason.
- 10 At least I can mend my clothes or my books myself, but if I ring up the engineer because _____, he will probably tell me _____ that he cannot come for two weeks.

Poor workmanship

- 1 Sometimes I go down to the beach in order to **help old Mr Clarke pull his boat up** out of the water.
- 2 I often ask him why **he does not buy a fibre-glass boat**, and I point out that fibre-glass is not only one of **the strongest man-made materials** but is **also a much lighter** material than wood.
- 3 However, he is very proud of his heavy wooden boat, and he usually **replies** to my suggestion by **complaining that there is no beauty or skill in boat-building nowadays** and that people are either **too busy or too impatient** to build a boat like his.
- 4 Once I **foolishly offered to lend him my fibre-glass boat**, but **pointing** to it in disgust, he exclaimed that **even if I gave him one, he would never go to sea in such an ugly thing**.
- 5 Mr Clarke has no faith **in the durability** of any modern product, nor **does he believe** that it can be beautiful.
- 6 His boat has never needed any serious repairs since it **was built** for him over 40 years ago, so **it has certainly stood the test of time**, and it is **undoubtedly a beautiful piece of workmanship**.
- 7 I have to agree that modern workmanship is often poor **in quality**, although **I do not agree that machine-made products are necessarily ugly**, for designs **which** are both unusual and beautiful **can be produced** with modern materials.
- 8 Poor workmanship **stems from the manufacturer's attempts** to keep the cost of production down and at the same time **to increase his sales**, and **the quality of a product is bound to suffer** when it is **mass-produced**.
- 9 I know this only too well from my own experience of clothes **falling apart at the seams and the covers coming off books**, and even more **expensive items breaking down** for no apparent reason.
- 10 At least I can mend my clothes or my books myself, but if I ring up the engineer because **my television set has broken down**, he will probably tell me **that he is already so busy with repairs** that he cannot come for two weeks.

A few notes on Version B

It would be equally correct to write:

- 1 Sometimes I go down to the beach in order to help old Mr Clarke **to pull his boat up out of the water.** *Help* can be followed by an infinitive with or without *to*.
- 2 Note the word order in the indirect question: **I often ask him why he does not . . .**
- 3 Note how *by* must be followed by a gerund (**by complaining . . .**)
- 4 Note the tense sequence in indirect speech: **he exclaimed that even if I gave him one he would never . . .**
- 5 Note the inversion after *nor*: **nor does he believe . . .**
- 6 Note how the causative with *have* (*he had it built*) transforms to a passive: **it was built for him . . .**
- 7 Of course it would be equally correct to write: **for designs that are both unusual and beautiful can be produced . . .** (Where this kind of choice occurs, only one correct answer is given in Version B.) Note how you were required to join two sentences in this exercise.
- 8 Note this use of *bound to* to express certainty about the outcome of future events.
- 9 Note the use of the participle construction: **I know only too well from my own experience of clothes falling apart . . .**
- 10 It would be equally correct to write: **but if I ring the engineer up because . . .** Note the necessary change of tense after *because*: **my television set has broken down . . .**

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