
NEW PROFICIENCY ENGLISH

TEACHER'S GUIDE TO BOOKS 1-3

W. S. Fowler

I. Pidcock

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General Introduction

New Proficiency English

New Proficiency English is a four-book course, planned as a replacement of *Proficiency English*, published in 1976–8, and as a logical continuation of the approaches adopted in *New First Certificate English*, published in 1984. In effect, it is the result of several years' experience of using the previous course and gradually adapting materials to the needs of students taught at earlier stages in the learning process by different methods from those current in the early 1970s. As in the case of *New First Certificate English*, my co-authors, John Pidcock and Robin Rycroft, and I have preferred to write a new course, taking this experience into account, rather than rewrite the original. While some elements that have proved particularly successful have been retained – above all in *Book 3, Use of English*, where the revised Cambridge syllabus of 1984 for the paper shows no innovations – over 80% of the material in the course is new.

By this time, it will be evident that the examination as such has not changed to a noticeable extent, either in level of difficulty or in form, except in the design of the aural/oral tests (covered in this course by *Book 4*). The main change in our approach, especially in *Book 1*, has been to shift the emphasis away from the reliance on structures and towards the acquisition of skills, while retaining the overall coverage of necessary grammatical revision through an extensive reference section for students in *Book 1* and a wide variety of remedial exercises in *Book 3*. This change, however, was not influenced by changes in syllabus but by the continuing research and pretesting we have undertaken in recent years.

The main problem for teachers at advanced level and for students attempting the Proficiency examination is that the former are inclined to relax the pressure once students have passed First Certificate because the Proficiency examination is still a long way ahead, while the latter underestimate the difference in standard. This course has been written for students likely to attempt the examination two years after First Certificate if they attend classes five hours a week (300 hours) or three years afterwards if they attend three times a week (270 hours). The material has been pretested and graded through use with students at each stage to allow for the time span envisaged, but it is above all important to point out that the language-

learning process should be continuous. Our experience leads us to believe that it is necessary to develop skills methodically throughout the period and that it is unwise to imagine that students can be left largely to their own devices for a year or so before making a systematic approach to the examination.

The design of the course

The four books comprising the new course can be used independently in order to concentrate on a specific paper in the examination, but they have been written in such a way that they complement each other. *Book 1, Language and Composition*, consists of 28 units, the last four forming a separate section intended for those students who wish to attempt the Prescribed Books option in composition. The units of the other three books have been written in parallel to the basic 24 teaching units of *Book 1* so that every unit of that book is supported by two out of three possible units devoted to the skills required for Reading Comprehension, Use of English and Listening Comprehension/Interview. The chart at the back of this *Teacher's Guide* shows the relationship. In this way, the themes of units in *Book 1* are frequently reflected in the choice of reading passages in *Book 2* so that there is an opportunity for revising and expanding vocabulary; the structures necessary for the composition tasks in *Book 1* are revised and practised in *Book 3*, and the topics for summary in *Book 3* also have a thematic relationship in the majority of cases with parallel units in *Book 1*; the opportunities for free discussion and the listening material provided in *Book 4* are also related to themes and group-work activities presented in *Book 1*. The design of the course, comprising 24 basic units for study in *Book 1*, permits teachers to make a convenient break either after Unit 8, if students are studying three hours a week, or after Unit 12, if they are studying for five.

A skills approach at advanced level

The problems of students at advanced level are not primarily grammatical, even though mistakes persist both in speech and writing. In both areas, but particularly in writing, they stem in our experience from the following causes:

- 1 inadequate training in English (and probably in

- their own language) in the techniques of discourse, with the consequent inability to organise their thoughts in a convincing manner, uncertainty of the basic premises behind paragraphing, linking ideas together through the use of connectors and modifiers, etc.;
- 2 a limited vocabulary which makes it difficult for them to express themselves fluently except in general terms on a small number of subjects;
 - 3 a growing awareness that the English of real life is much more subtle and varied than a diet of text books may suggest, which may cause them to become disillusioned, although it can be channelled into a new source of interest in the language;
 - 4 a failure to perceive until too late that the demands of the Proficiency examination are not necessarily much more demanding linguistically than those of First Certificate, except in the range of vocabulary that students are expected to understand, but are intellectually much more demanding because of the nature of the tasks they are asked to perform.

The ways in which we have attempted to combat these potential weaknesses are explained in detail in the separate introductions to the books in the course and the notes that follow. Methodologically, there is nothing revolutionary in an approach that first presents a wide variety of materials appropriate to the level; secondly, enables students by means of examples to analyse not only its content in terms of structure and lexis but also the techniques of discourse employed to make it effective for its purpose; and finally permits them, first through activities in pairs and groups in class and afterwards through individual composition tasks etc. to use everything they have learnt for themselves. What we believe we have achieved, nevertheless, is a method in which the necessary components of such a system are thoroughly integrated in a logical manner that takes into account the relative length of a Proficiency course.

The stages in a Proficiency course

As indicated above, we designed this course for students with from 270–300 hours' tuition between passing the First Certificate examination and reaching the level of Proficiency. In our view, again as already indicated, the problem for teachers is to avoid introducing examination materials too soon in such a

course but at the same time to avoid a long, easy-going period preceding intensive work for the examination. For students, too, the problem presents itself in similar terms; on the one hand, they must not imagine that the level of Proficiency is not much higher than that of First Certificate and overestimate their chances, while on the other, they cannot be allowed to think that the skills, and in particular the range of vocabulary they need, can be learnt in a hurry at the last minute.

For this reason, the skills to be learnt in terms of writing in *Book 1* of this course have been presented in a cyclical form of six stages, allowing for their gradual acquisition at the appropriate time; the passages for comprehension and the lexis taught, practised and tested in *Book 2* have been carefully graded; the structural items introduced and practised in *Book 3* have been graded in the same way; the tasks for listening comprehension and oral practice in *Book 4* have also been planned to relate to the basic stages in *Book 1*.

Pretesting

As in the case of *New First Certificate English*, we have been fortunate in being able to count on the help of the teachers and students of schools in Barcelona with over a thousand students between them in three levels of post-First Certificate classes and with good pass rates in previous Proficiency examinations. Consequently, every lexical or structural item in the progress tests and test papers in these books has been thoroughly pretested and assigned to an appropriate stage in the course. The teacher's notes for *Book 2* and *Book 3* in this *Teacher's Guide* contain detailed analysis of the results in all cases and provide accurate data from which teachers can measure the progress of their own classes.

Acknowledgements

We have acknowledged the help given to us by the staff and students as a whole and by a number of individuals in particular in the relevant students' books of the course, but we take the opportunity here of thanking them once again. Without their help, the organisation of this course in a logical, systematic manner would not have been possible.

WILL FOWLER, Barcelona,
October, 1984

NEW PROFICIENCY ENGLISH
Book I
Language and Composition

Introduction

The organisation of units

As indicated in the chart at the back of this *Teacher's Guide*, *Book 1* of the course consists of 28 units. The first 24 units are divided into six stages of four units each, reflecting the different kinds of composition students may be asked to write – description, narrative, discussion and types of directed writing, more accurately defined as rewriting; the last was a task formerly set in the last section of the Use of English paper. The stages have been designed so that students can make progress towards more sophisticated techniques in self-expression and in the later stages there is an emphasis on the need to blend techniques (for example, of description and narrative) in order to handle certain topics. The last four units form an optional section on prescribed books for those students who are reading a book in order to take advantage of the fifth question in the composition paper. The design of the stages is such that teachers can make a convenient break either at the end of Unit 8 and Unit 16 in a three-year course of three hours a week, or at the end of Unit 12 in a two-year course of five hours a week.

In the notes that follow we have indicated throughout:

- 1 the aims of the unit and its components in terms of developing skills;
- 2 structures that will be required by students in order to complete the composition tasks and which may need to be revised, either with exercises appearing in this book or with the help of exercises in *Book 3*;
- 3 advice on presentation and on the activities, together with suggested answers for those activities where students are asked to analyse texts either for their style and content or for the techniques employed;
- 4 relevant links between the texts and activities in this book, related texts in *Book 2* and exercises in *Book 3*.

Teaching the skills

Although the persistence of elementary mistakes may at times suggest that the problems of students at advanced level resemble those of the intermediate student preparing for First Certificate, they are essentially different. The main difference lies in the fact that students who have passed First Certificate have sufficient knowledge of structure to write accurately and the structures they have learnt already are quite

sufficient for them to achieve fluency if they know how to use them. Consequently, we regard grammatical revision (see below) as something that teachers should use with great discretion to avoid demotivating students; we also consider that the few structures students may not have encountered before are for the most part seldom used in good modern English and are best dealt with as items for structural conversion (*Book 3*), a matter of recognition rather than use.

On the other hand, primarily because the majority of students do not read widely enough in English and do not analyse the techniques of discourse employed in what they read, they are often incapable of developing their writing skills towards fluency without considerable instruction in technique. The difference between writing a satisfactory composition for First Certificate and for Proficiency is not one of employing more complex forms of expression, as many students imagine, but of having a much greater variety of technical resources and the correspondingly wider and more precise vocabulary in order to deal with more sophisticated topics. We have therefore provided a large number of texts aimed at helping students to identify techniques used in writing of different kinds, and in the accompanying activities have given students the opportunity to develop their command of these techniques for themselves, largely through pair and group work, so that they will be able to use them naturally in individual compositions.

Taken together, the texts and activities have the following general aims:

- 1 to introduce the theme of a unit (and potential source of composition topics) in an interesting way so as to help students to clarify their ideas;
- 2 to help students to analyse the construction, development and linkage of paragraphs;
- 3 to help them to analyse the style and content of passages written for a specific purpose, either in isolation or by means of comparison;
- 4 to aid the analysis of the techniques employed in these passages so that they can employ them for themselves;
- 5 to use information retrieval techniques as a basis for exercises enabling students to reorder and rewrite information in a different form, and to indicate what changes may be required in terms of structure, register, etc.;
- 6 in some cases, to revise grammatical points essential for specific composition tasks.

We have placed considerable emphasis on the use of pair work and group work in the classroom even though many of the tasks could be equally well completed by individuals. This is largely because tasks at this level require considerable powers of intellectual concentration and can easily be time-consuming but not very productive if too much weight is placed on individual performance.

At the same time, we have generally preferred pairs to larger groups as the best way of dealing with activities, since our experience in pretesting indicates that if too many people are involved in the same task, much time is taken up with needless details in discussion, or else the entire responsibility can easily fall on an outstanding student.

We expect individuals to demonstrate the progress they are making in the compositions they write at the end of each unit, which we would normally require to be done at home. It is also very important, for the activities to function effectively in the classroom and time not to be wasted, that students should contribute to this by reading texts before coming to class when asked to do so.

We have indicated what we have found to be the most effective way of handling each activity throughout the book, but we would stress that such suggestions are meant to be flexible and to be adapted to teachers' individual circumstances.

Grammatical revision

Whereas at First Certificate level, in the course preceding this one, *New First Certificate English*, we provided a checklist of grammatical items at the beginning of each unit which had to be thoroughly understood before the unit could be started, it seemed to us discouraging to students at advanced level to adopt the same approach. What we have done instead is to provide a thorough Reference Section at the end of the book for students to refer to.

This decision was based on practical experience; in common with the vast majority of teachers of advanced classes we have consulted on the subject, we are convinced that long-standing structural problems – as distinct from students' ability to develop writing skills and clear up points of vocabulary and usage by asking the teacher – can only be cured by the students making the effort to check such things for themselves. This is not to say that remedial practice is discounted. There is an ample section devoted to problems commonly found among advanced students at the beginning of *Book 3*, but this is primarily intended for revision of points that affect the majority of a class, not as an essential part of the initial presentation.

The units therefore form not so much a grammatical progression, although this feature is incorporated

within them, as a gradual approach to handling more and more complex topics in a more sophisticated manner. In such circumstances, it is not the teacher's role to introduce structures as if they were being presented for the first time, but only to remind students of those they will need to complete the tasks. In this connection, we have attempted to foresee students' needs and to provide the necessary cross-referencing so that remedial exercises can be done whenever they prove necessary.

Composition

In all cases, the composition task at the end of the unit is meant to measure the extent to which students have absorbed the content of the unit and are capable of putting what they have learnt into practice. While writing is therefore the ultimate aim of the unit, however, this does not mean that it should be the main activity in class. Above all, students should learn to deal with the activities in terms of making notes from which they can speak, rather than writing out long answers unless specifically required to do so.

The ideal from the teacher's point of view in dealing with each unit is to ensure that students read the texts beforehand so that most of the time in class can be spent on analysing them and discussing their content, appropriateness for their purpose and the techniques employed; in the same way, if the final composition task is set as homework, students have the opportunity to demonstrate their individual progress and should also take more time over their work, consulting the Reference Section whenever they need to do so. In this way, the classroom work is concentrated almost entirely on skills and the exchange of ideas.

Two further points need to be made in connection with composition. One is that in our experience the progress made by students almost always has a close correlation with the amount of written work they do at home and the consistency with which they produce it. It should be impressed on all students from the beginning of the course that if they are seriously interested in passing the Proficiency examination eventually, even though it may seem a long way away in terms of time and hours of study, they will hardly ever achieve this aim unless they are prepared to practise and improve their skills in written English throughout the period, and not as a last-minute form of preparation.

The second point is that compositions at advanced level are notoriously difficult to assess for a number of reasons. For the benefit of teachers inexperienced at this level, we have included a section on composition marking and assessment as a guide to what might reasonably be expected at the different stages in what is inevitably a long course.

Composition marking

Teachers new to advanced classes leading up to the Cambridge Proficiency examination may be unsure of what standards to apply and what method of marking to adopt. The examples given below are intended as a guide to standards. The system used, an impression mark out of 20, is similar to that used by Cambridge, with one notable difference. Cambridge indicate that they award 8/20 (40%) as a pass level and subsequently correlate scores with those in other parts of the examination (e.g. multiple-choice questions) where, although no pass mark is given, it must be of the order of 60%–65%. We consider it to be fatal to suggest to students at any time that 40% could be considered a pass mark, when nothing less than 60% would achieve a pass level elsewhere in the Proficiency examination. We have therefore adopted a pass mark of 12/20 (60%) for all the compositions assessed here. It is obviously necessary at the same time to realise that in long courses such as Proficiency, there is a considerable difference in what can reasonably be expected of students at different stages; as a rough guide, we would calculate that composition deserving a pass mark of 12/20 soon after the student has passed First Certificate would only be awarded 8/20 if he or she was in a Proficiency class approaching the examination.

We would not wish to convey that it is essential to give students marks in this way; it is a matter of opinion whether students benefit from receiving what can at best be an honest, but subjective, evaluation of their work in the form of numbers or letters. We ourselves do not give marks for students to see, except in examinations, but we note our assessments in a book for our own guidance on their progress. What is essential is that students should receive the maximum amount of advice (see 'Correction', below) but should be encouraged to analyse their own mistakes and realise that detailed correction involves a great deal of hard work, which will be wasted if they do not study the corrections afterwards. In this connection, giving a mark may be counter-productive, since it may lead students to become either over-confident or disillusioned.

Assessment

It is considerably more difficult to assess compositions at Proficiency level than at First Certificate because form and content and choice of subject play a much more important part. It is also necessary to bear in

mind the comparative length of Proficiency courses and to recognise that what may appear a reasonable attempt not long after passing First Certificate is unlikely to be adequate later on. In all the examples given below, the mark given is an impression mark out of 20, where CPE level is 12, but in the first group of examples, taken from students with only 50 hours' tuition after First Certificate, the compositions would have received four marks less if they had been in a Proficiency class, so that none would have come close to passing. They have been chosen as illustrations of the main problems teachers are likely to encounter.

1. Organisation and Accuracy

Compare the two compositions on the same subject, which was to write a story beginning: 'There were six of us, and I was the only one who understood a word of English . . .' Note that the second, in fact, continued for a further fifteen lines within the single paragraph that constituted the whole composition. Make up your own mind about a mark for each before reading our comments below:

I CLARA

There were six of us, and I was the only one who understood a word of English. Nobody else had any knowledge of the language and it was quite difficult to me to remember or pronounce correctly the few words I learned in a mounth course I took before going to this trip. As you can imagine we can explain a lot of funny and confused situations that happened to us.

You ask for a room and don't understand the number of it and they have to repeat it, or you ask for a place before having repeated the sentence to yourself twice or three times you say it correctly but you don't understand the answer. Mainwhile your friends are waiting for you. They believe in you! Anyhow, sooner or later you find the way to be understood.

The problem is the things that you loose because you don't know a language. You don't have the possibility to meet native people and you can't know anything about the way of life, how they live, what are their problems etc. You see things in your point of view.

Although we spent a good time all together it was as we had gone to some place in our country. That's why I don't want to go to another country if I don't know the language or they speak on English.

2 NURIA

There were six of us, and I was the only one who understood a word of English. I had never been in such a situation before but anyway it didn't sound very exciting to me. At first I was scared but after a few days I decided that even if my English wasn't good enough it wasn't that important; so finally my friends convinced me and there we went... We were going to spend our holidays in England, there were a short holidays but really good ones. A sunny Sunday August morning we were leaving Barcelona by plane we arrive to Gatwick on time the flight wasn't delay that was a great succed for Iberia, I still remember that as soon as Montse trade English earth told me 'these chaps are improving!' We took the bus to London and as soon as we arrive at Victoria Coach Station I asked where was the nearest information office, we easily found a bed and breakfast house for one week, the house wasn't very far from there but we didn't feel like carrying them so we took two taxis, I sent the first group in a taxi to the right adress and the other three followed them in another one.....

Assessment

Almost certainly, you awarded a higher mark to Clara than to Nuria. In fact, the standard of English is not very different, and Nuria has a more idiomatic vocabulary ('scared', 'these chaps are improving', even when she cannot quite remember the correct phrase – 'as soon as Montse trade (for 'trod') English earth'. Nevertheless, Clara is at all times understandable simply because she has organised the composition into four simple paragraphs and punctuated the sentences. Nuria has no idea of paragraphing at all and after a reasonable start, punctuation also disappears, so that it is virtually impossible to understand the last two sentences here without re-reading them two or three times. We consider that Clara merits a safe pass (13) but Nuria cannot be awarded more than 10, even though the story she is telling is quite lively.

2. Theme

As in Cambridge Proficiency examinations, students in the same class as Clara and Nuria were given a choice of subject. Rather than attempt the narrative option shown above, the next two chose a discussion topic: 'Marriage is the attraction of opposites'. Before looking at our assessment, decide on an impression mark for these compositions, using the same criteria as for Clara and Nuria. The second, Barbara, represents only the first half of the composition, and this should be taken into account.

3 NEUS

To say that marriage is the attraction of opposites is so easy that I can accept it.

It is sort of difficult to know the causes of marriage but we know that humans have invented it. Specially our society has adopted marriage as an institution which is the engine of a great deal of people's life. In the past the family chose the right person to be married with. So it was not a problem of opposites but a resolution of conveniences.

Nowadays, fortunately, these ideas have changed quite a bit. The vast majority of people do not believe in marriage. Then, I can consider that there are lots of attractions for lots of different people and of course, attraction of opposites can be a possibility but not the only one. It is more complicated than we think.

4 BARBARA

It is said that marriage is the attraction of opposites. In my opinion, this is a conventional way to explain the attraction between the two sexes, or a justification of marriage itself.

I understand the attraction of opposites, but opposites don't necessary have to be a man and a woman.

What opposites are is a personal question. Anyway marriage means or makes legal at society's eyes an attraction.

I think only religion or tradition makes people at the necessity to get married.

At the nature state, the attraction borned between opposites doesn't need any civil or religious justification. In fact attraction can easy be satisfied by living together.

It's strange to notice that now young people are inclined to get married even if tradition is more flexible. That makes me think a lot that many people feels now secure when they get married. I think people are afraid of loneliness.....

Assessment

The level of English of these two students is not markedly inferior to that of Clara and Nuria, and Neus, in terms of accuracy, is perhaps a little better than Nuria. The trouble is that Neus has very little to say about the subject and never suggests that she really understands what is involved in the title. Unfortunately, in our experience, students do not seem to regard composition topics in examinations as a means of showing how much English they know but, unless otherwise advised, seem to pick on them at random. It is very common for the students whose linguistic and intellectual equipment for the task is most limited to choose the most abstract subjects. Neus

could not be awarded more than 9 out of 20 on our scale, but if she had written about something familiar to her she might well have passed.

Barbara, on the other hand, has plenty of ideas, because the complete composition contained four more of her 'paragraphs'. The ideas are expressed, however, without any continuity and her 'paragraphing' demonstrates it. It is likely that the tendency to basic errors would have shown itself in a composition on a simpler topic, but the result would surely not have been meaningless to the reader, as this is. The score awarded was 7, but in fact all that is clear is that the composition is a long way below the standard demanded.

Comment

In general terms, the only solutions we can offer to these problems are the specific training in techniques for different kinds of composition that we have included in *New Proficiency English, Book 1*, but it is evident that students should be warned from the beginning of the importance of organisation, as well as accuracy, and should learn that in examinations it is unwise to attempt subjects beyond their linguistic capacity, however interesting they may appear to be in themselves.

3. Proficiency-level compositions

The following compositions were written by students in Proficiency classes some 50 hours of tuition time before attempting the examination. For reasons already given, the marking scale adopted is different from that used by Cambridge, and assessment is based on a scale where Cambridge A = 17 or more, B = 15-16, C = 12-14, D = 11, and E = 10 or less.

In all cases, the subject is the same: 'What improvements do you think should be made in your town or village?'. As in the case of previous examples, you may like to decide on your own impression mark out of 20 before reading our assessment.

5 LEANDRO

In the last few years speculation of the soil has made Barcelona a not very comfortable town to live in. Dreadful high-rise blocks cluster on the outskirts of the town, leaving no place for parks and green areas. People need places where they can practise sports, let their children play or just walk safely without looking out for cars.

Traffic congestion is a problem which worries many people in Barcelona. One way out would be to build new motorways round the town so that cars do not have to go through Barcelona to get to the other end of town. It would make the town less noisy, saving energy at the same time. Perhaps cars should be banned from the centre of town but I think this is a point that needs further discussion. Attached to this there should be an improvement in public transport. We just cannot tell people not to take the car if there is no bus or subway that goes to the place they want to get to. Public transport should also be cheaper.

Another thing which must be taken into account is pollution. Decreasing the number of cars, we reduce pollution but there are other ways to overcome this problem. For example, factories should be taken out of the town and people working in them should be given homes nearby.

Last but not least is the problem of educating people. We must build a town where people can walk in the streets at any time without fear of being robbed or hurt. We must teach the new generations to behave rightly and respect not only other people but also their own town. This is perhaps the most important thing for there is no point in building a wonderful town with all the commodities you may dream of if you cannot walk safely along the streets.

Assessment

There is no doubt that this composition clearly merits a pass at Proficiency level, and the only question is whether it qualifies for A or B level. It is well organised in logical paragraphs that (a) introduce the subject; (b) answer the question, giving examples; (c) reach a sensible conclusion. It is accurate, using a variety of tenses and forms correctly, and the only obvious mistake, 'built' for 'build' early in the last paragraph, may be a slip of the pen. The lexical range is considerable, with the choice of the correct phrase in most cases clearly evident - 'high-rise blocks', 'traffic congestion' - though not in all - 'speculation of the soil'. The student uses connectors correctly - 'last but not least', though not to the extent that a native speaker would. Our mark was 16, on the grounds that the composition is of a high standard but would not suggest to us for more than a sentence or two that it had been written by a native speaker.

6 BLANCA

Barcelona is settled in a privileged natural area. In point of fact, its bounds are the sea and two hills, Tibidabo (in the north part) and Montjuich (in the south-west). At the beginning of the present century, there was an architect called Sardà who presented to the major of the Catalan capital a map where it appeared a beautiful planification of the town. He planned the city with lots of parks and small, independant houses, each one with its own garden. Nevertheless, as industrialism was growing speedily at that time, the authorities yielded to material profit and to greediness and they therefore didn't allow Sardà's plan to come into being.

Nowadays, Barcelona is suffering from that narrow-minded decision as it has become an enormous town not because it extends a lot but because of its overpopulation - its density represents one of its most striking problems. At the same time, as Barcelona is one of the cradles of industry in Spain, it particularly suffers from pollution too.

Bearing in mind all these outstanding problems, life for the citizens of Barcelona could be improved by taking special care of the environment of the town. That is, by creating a lot of green spaces and therefore by limiting the building of houses. There should also be a strict control of the factories near the town so that they wouldn't throw their waste into a river or into the sea. At the same time, people (especially young people) should be stimulated to use a bicycle as their way of transport instead of going by motorbike or by car, not only to lessen pollution in general but also to avoid disturbing noises.

To sum up, Barcelona should follow the example of the most civilised countries, such as Germany, Sweden, where the respect of nature can even be called the worship of nature. In fact, the authorities and the citizens of Barcelona should react positively so that the well-spread sentence 'Let's hope it will rain so that we can breathe and we can see the sun' should never be uttered again.

Assessment

The composition is well organised. While it devotes more space to explaining the reasons for the city's problems than the solution to them, it provides an intelligent historical perspective and in the third paragraph concentrates on the major difficulties to be overcome. There are few serious errors - 'a map where it appeared a beautiful planification' - and the use of connectors throughout gives the composition a sense of continuity which makes it easy to read. The student's main weakness is inadequate vocabulary, with some confusions prompted by the first language - e.g. 'major' for 'mayor', 'planification'. Our mark was 13, influenced by the control of the argument and use of connectors.

7 MARTA

Barcelona is a big city and has all the common problems of a city of its size. The fact is that a great number of cities grew in a very disordered manner and without a rational planning. Nowadays, we are faced to the problem of improving things and trying to solve mistakes but in most cases we have very few possibilities. We cannot for instance destroy a building or a certain area completely and then built it up again, and that is what is necessary in a lot of cases.

The only thing we can do is try to solve the initial mistakes the best we can and also assume that the life in a big city has a series of disadvantages that we have to accept.

The most important of these disadvantages is pollution, the importance of traffic makes the city air dirty and we have very few solutions to that because it is difficult to decide which traffic is essential and which is not. One solution is to try to locate factories as far from the city as possible and then we will have to stand only the fumes of the cars. But the solution is not at all perfect because trying to protect Barcelona we are now destroying the countryside around.

Related to all the problems of traffic I would consider a good idea to try to reduce it in the commercial areas, so that people would be able to do their shopping in a more pleasant way. But if we reduce traffic in the commercial areas we have to be sure that the public transport is good enough to supply the necessities of the people.

Another point which I consider very important is the problem of the delinquence. I think that local government should improve their measures to fight against it.

Assessment

The composition is relevant to the question and an honest attempt to answer it. At first sight, the standard of English may appear to be approximately the same as Blanca (number 6), but the overall first impression is by no means as good because of the lack of organisation, inadequate paragraphing and a much less consistent and convincing use of connectors. The second paragraph is really an adjunct to the first, and the last is not a conclusion, but an afterthought, so that the composition has no real end. The vocabulary is accurate, though limited, and this is also true of the structural control displayed; it does not break down to the point where we are unlikely to misunderstand the meaning, but a second reading reveals weakness and uncertainty in some areas: - 'without a rational planning', 'the best we can', 'I would consider a good idea'. Our mark was 11, not quite enough for a pass, but if Marta had organised the composition as well as Blanca, she would have passed.

8 ANA

Many of us consider Barcelona as a great city. That's to say full of daily entertainments, cultural activities, or just the politic and economic centre of Catalonia. Unfortunately we counsciously forget the hide side of the city.

Take for instance La Trina or La Prosperitat. They are two suburbs in the outskirts of Barcelona, where their problems such as unemployment, different ethnic backgrounds, lack of teachers who really are able to deal with those problems, bilingualism - children are taught a new pair of language without knowing their mother tonge properly - and so on.

In spite of these the townhall has already done a great deal of improvements. However, many more are needed. The Council provided these areas of sport facilities, libraries, medical assistance, as well as organized a set of rock concerts during the last season.

Why is it so difficult to integrate them? Which is the best way to improve life? We should live there to understand their daily problems: blocks of flats, drugs, no open spaces - a completely new world for most of us. Most citizens, the afortunatly ones, usually associate peripheral suburbs with vandalism (which becomes true most of the time) but we should consider that when children and youngs play in an sport area they are wearing the same shoes they use all the day, and many teacher will explain you how many days off their students are, because they work in an street market, trying to help their families. I only would suggest something: try to get to know them.

Assessment

A good example, in our view, of a student who is carried away by a theme which is not quite the same as that of the question, and whose enthusiasm leads her into linguistic difficulties beyond the capacity of her English. The second paragraph, for example, contains fluent phrases - 'different ethnic backgrounds', 'lack of teachers who really are able to deal with those problems', but even in the second phrase the definite article is missing and the position of 'really' is questionable, above all, the long relative clause beginning with 'where' never reaches an end because it has no verb or complement. The same problems occur in the long penultimate sentence of the composition, where the intention is clear but the English breaks down under the strain of the parenthetical ideas - 'the afortunatly ones', 'which becomes true most of the time', 'youngs', 'many teacher will explain you', etc. Our mark was 8, but we would regard Ana as a student capable of reaching Proficiency standard if she was able to learn the techniques emphasised throughout this book.

Correction

The mass of corrections frequently required for compositions at advanced level demands a system that students can understand, since we are convinced that it is not helpful for compositions to be marked unless every mistake is indicated clearly.

It is a great advantage if students write their compositions on alternate lines; otherwise, there will be no room for the corrections. They should also use an exercise book so that they, and you, can compare their work with their previous efforts, and note repeated errors. In examinations they should always write on alternate lines, because they may wish to change things neatly, and many waste time producing rough copies and then hurriedly copying them out again.

The composition corrected below (9. Laura) is reproduced exactly as we would have corrected it ourselves. The symbols used can be replaced by any that are convenient to you. What is important about them is their intention. The main difficulties for the teacher are indicated by the scope of the corrections that must be made. To a considerable extent, errors tend increasingly to fall into the area of those that are not English usage (*mm*) rather than those that are grammatically unacceptable (—). The decision to 'improve' students' English is inevitably subjective - e.g. replacing 'possible' with 'feasible' in the last paragraph. What matters is to instil into students' minds the idea that they should learn by analysing their own mistakes; otherwise, the effort the teacher makes in correcting compositions in depth is wasted.

In our view, it is important to follow up the correction of pieces of written work with useful suggestions, and students are too often unwilling or too shy to ask about points they do not fully understand. We therefore make a point of raising issues (See me - ? - Ask me) that can be dealt with in class. In the first case, we would want to draw attention to the unnatural form of the sentence picked out and recommend the active construction: 'The state should give grants to the university, as well as to schools . . .' In the second, while we imagine 'motorways' is intended, the student may mean 'through-ways', 'clearways' or 'ring roads', and this is an opportunity to clear up the lexical problems involved; in many cases, we would be forced to put a question mark in this way, because we would genuinely not understand what the student was trying to say.

9 LAURA

Barcelona is the town where I was born and where I have been living for twenty years, a town that I sometimes love and ^{Sometimes} others hate. If it was in my ^{power} hand, I would make lots of changes in order to create a more agreeable, beautiful ^{and} humanitarian city.

Barcelona has some beautiful areas, which should be ^{looked after} arranged. Buildings should be cleaned and painted, and there should be green areas, even ^{if they were} small, ^{surrounding} them, where children would play freely and old people could ^{sit} and talk. But this seems quite impossible due to the speculation ^{because of} of soil, something that would have to disappear ^{from} in the ideal city.

SEE ME → Monetary ^{Grants} helps to the university ^{should be given by the state} as well as to schools, in order to improve the quality of teaching. New schools should be created, ^{specially} in the suburbs, where the need ^{for} of them is ^{greater} bigger.

ASK ME Barcelona is a hectic town, and during the day ^{the} traffic is impossible. Some houses might be demolished and new motor ^{ways?} rails might be created so that the traffic was fluid. ^{could move freely} The underground ^{Metro's} lines might be increased so ^{that people would be able to travel} as to have the possibility of travelling underground and reach ^{quickly} different ^{zones of the town} some of which are ^{not} ⁱⁿ ^{connected} nowadays.

The ^{major} ^{unbearable} ^{impossible} should tackle the problem of pollution, sometimes ^{that} ^{safety on the streets} security, which ^{fills} occupies ^{the} the pages of the papers every day. Many other improvements could be made, such as increasing the number of libraries ^{and} parks, ^{instituting} making special ^{rates} fees for students in theatres, cinemas and museums, creating public ^{sports areas} sport zones, and many others.

Some of these suggestions may seem ^{feasible} possible, others may be ^{considered} ^{idealistic} ~~considered~~ as ~~utopias~~ ^{for} ^{always} exist.

Key to symbols used

- X Serious mistake (i.e. beginners' error). No correct answer given.
- Normal mistake at this level. Correct answer given at first.
- ~~~~~ Not English usage, though not grammatically wrong. Always corrected.
- / Word omitted. Given until it becomes a consistent error.
- () Word(s) to be omitted. Always indicated.
- ⌋ Transpose word(s) indicated. Always indicated.
- ⑤ Spelling mistake. Correct version given until it becomes recurrent.

Description: People

Components	Aims	Grammatical revision
1 Who's who?	Introduction	
2 Appearance and personality	Grammatical revision	Book 3, Exs. 1, 2A–D, 70
3 Portrait of the Artist	Analysis – style and content	
4 Linking description	Analysis – writing techniques Paragraphing	
5 Pen pictures	Directed writing	
6 Annoying characters	Analysis – writing techniques Grammatical revision	Exs. 3, 4

Related texts: *Book 2*, Unit 1, passages 1 and 2.
Further grammatical practice: *Book 3*, Exs. 67 A–F.

Presentation and grammatical revision

As a general rule, we do not believe that it is essential in all cases to re-present familiar structures as part of the presentation of the unit. All references to grammatical revision made in the scheme above are included only to indicate where the emphasis on certain structures in the content is heavy or where a sound knowledge of them is required for subsequent tasks, *except in cases where grammatical revision is listed as one of the aims of a component*. In such cases, we suggest in the following notes where a revision exercise will almost certainly be necessary, in the light of our experience, and at what point it can be most conveniently introduced.

In this unit, it is essential for students to be able to:

- 1 use comparative forms of all kinds;
- 2 be aware of the rules governing the word order of adjectives;
- 3 differentiate between the different kinds of relative clauses, including co-ordinate relative clauses.

The last-named skill is not required until p. 7, and should be re-presented separately, if necessary.

Page 1 Who's who?



Before looking at the list of adjectives given in q. 1, ask students to look at the computer portrait and supply

adjectives of their own to describe the face. Link their suggestions together in two ways: He's **thin and dark**/ He's **a thin, dark man**. Ensure that students do not say: 'He's a *thin and dark man*'. Then see how many of the adjectives listed are already known and teach the rest by reference to the computer portrait and photographs. Ask students to name well-known figures they would describe as 'bald', 'bearded', etc. Ask for connected descriptions of well-known people:

He's old, bald and hawk-nosed and again, make sure that the order of the adjectives is natural.

Move on to q. 2, ask students to decide which photograph fits the computer portrait, and in listening to the reasons given, note their control over comparative forms with a view to using *Book 3*, Ex. 2, particularly 2A (comparative and superlative forms) and 2D (**the same as, different from**, etc.) for revision, if necessary. Introduce q. 3 by mentioning the relationship between face and voice (not necessarily reliable) but stressing the more accurate clues given by age and personality.

Play the cassette twice, first straight through and then after a pause, allowing students to form ideas, play each voice at a time and ask students for reactions without giving the answers. Ask pairs to justify their choices.

Use *Book 3*, Exs. 2A and 2D for revision of comparatives, if necessary.