Glyn S. Hughes

A Handbook of
Classroom English

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INTRODUCTION

Overall objectives

The aim of this book is to present and practise the language required by the teacher of English in the practical day-to-day management of classes. It is intended for two main groups of readers:

1 Trainee teachers. By working systematically through the materials in the book and applying them directly in the preparation of lesson plans, in micro-teaching sessions and actual demonstration lessons, students will acquire a wide range of accurate, authentic and idiomatic classroom phrases that will be of value throughout their teaching careers.

2 Teachers in the field. It is assumed that this group will already have attained a certain level of classroom competence, although experience suggests that there may be recurrent inaccuracies, or even an unwillingness to use English for classroom management purposes. It is hoped that this book will encourage experienced teachers to make more use of English and help them to extend the area of operation of their classroom English; for example, in running a language laboratory session in English.

The rather different needs of these two groups have meant that the format of the book is a compromise between a textbook and a work of reference.

Rationale

Teaching is considered primarily in terms of methodological problems and practical solutions to these problems. As a result teachers in training spend considerable time acquiring the basis of sound methodological habits for the presentation, practice and testing of learning items. It is, however, often forgotten that the classroom procedures derived from a particular method almost invariably have to be verbalized. In other words, instructions have to be given, groups formed, time limits set, questions asked, answers confirmed, discipline maintained, and so on. The role of this linguistic interaction is perhaps one of the least understood aspects of teaching, but it is clearly crucial to the success of the teaching/learning event.

Whatever the subject taught, all teachers require this specialized classroom competence and should be trained in it. Foreign language teachers in particular require linguistic training aimed at the classroom situation since, if they believe in the maximum use of the L2, that is, the language being taught, they are obliged to use it both as the goal of their teaching and as the prime medium of instruction and classroom management. Despite the linguistic demands of the L2 teaching situation, foreign language graduates are seldom adequately prepared for the seemingly simple task of running a class in the L2. The nature of the first-degree study programme may have meant that there was no opportunity to practise the key classroom functions of organization and interrogation, or teacher training units may be unwilling to interfere in what appears to be an aspect of 'knowledge of subject'. The result is generally that the trainee teacher acquires a very limited repertoire of classroom phrases, or makes as little use of the L2 as possible. In both cases there is likely to be a detrimental effect on learning:

'Our data indicate that teacher competence in the foreign language—however acquired—makes a significant difference in student outcomes. . . . The data appear

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to indicate that neither the sheer amount of teachers' university training in the foreign language, nor the amount of travel and residence in a foreign country, makes any particular difference in student outcomes. From the standpoint of teacher selection and training, this means that any measures taken that would increase teacher competence would have positive effects. . . .'

John B. Carroll,
The Teaching of French as a Foreign Language in Eight Countries.
(1975) pp. 277–8.

An extremely important element of overall teaching success is careful advance planning, but equally important is the teacher's flexibility in the actual classroom situation, i.e., the teacher's willingness and ability to deviate from a lesson plan, for example in order to make use of the pupils' own interests and suggestions, or to devote more time to individual learning difficulties. In the case of L2 teaching, such flexibility makes heavy demands on the teacher's foreign language skills, although the result may provide a learning bonus for the pupils:

'For the teaching of listening comprehension and spoken skills, more informal methods of language teaching are advisable—involving massive exposure of the student to the meaningful situational use of the language. One way of accomplishing this, our data strongly suggest, is to emphasize the use of the foreign language in the classroom, allowing the use of the mother tongue only where necessary to explain meanings of words and grammatical features of the language.'

The theoretical starting point of this book is that the classroom situation *is* a genuine social environment which allows 'the meaningful situational use of the language', and that its communicative potential is closer to real interaction than is often assumed. This view probably requires some further explanation:

1 Language is a tool and not a museum exhibit. As such one of its primary functions is to communicate information. In the classroom information gaps occur repeatedly, that is, the teacher has new information which the pupils require in order to continue participating in the lesson, or the pupils have answers which the teacher needs in order to know whether to proceed to the next stage of the lesson. These information gaps provide opportunities for language to be used communicatively. The phrase *'Open your books at page 10, please'* is not something the pupils repeat, translate, evaluate as true or false or put into the negative, but a genuine instruction which is followed by the simple action of opening a textbook. It is perhaps an interesting paradox that whereas teachers are quite willing to spend time practising key structures in phrases like *'Cows eat grass'* and *'Is John your mother?'*, they may well switch to the L1 in order to set the day's homework. The reason very often put forward for this is that the pupils may not understand! Any naive pupil may come to the very understandable conclusion that English is basically a very tedious subject since all the information it conveys is either known or meaningless. The instinctive reaction to a question like *'Who has got a grandmother?'*, for example, in the classroom situation is to repeat it, or answer it by reference to the text being dealt with. Only in the last resort will it be considered a personal question. Fortunately,

this kind of pedagogic ambiguity is usually avoided when the teacher adds the necessary functional label: 'No, I'm asking *you*.'

2 Much of the language put into the mouths of learners in the name of practice may well have little direct application outside the classroom, but many classroom management phrases can be transferred to 'normal' social situations, e.g. *Could you open the window*; *I'm sorry, I didn't catch that.* By using these phrases the teacher is demonstrating their contextualized use and indirectly accustoming the pupils to the form-function relationships (and discrepancies) that are part of English. Exposure to this aspect of language is particularly important in the case of polite requests (see p. 17).

3 Classroom situations and procedures are generally quite concrete, which means that most classroom phrases have a very clear situational link. This fact should allow the teacher to vary the form of the instructions given as part of the learning process. For example, given a specific context (repetition after the tape) which is familiar to the pupils, the teacher should be able to choose from '*All together*', '*The whole class*', '*Everybody*', '*Not just this row*', '*Boys as well*', '*In chorus*', or '*Why don't you join in?*' and the pupils should be able to react appropriately. In fact, by varying the phrases used in any particular situation, the teacher is giving the pupils a number of free learning bonuses. The pupil is hearing new vocabulary in context and at the same time developing the important skill of guessing the meaning of new words on the basis of the context. Similarly, the teacher can deliberately use a structure that is going to be taught actively in the coming lessons and so 'pre-expose' the pupils to it. For example, the future tense might be pre-exposed by choosing 'now we shall listen to a story' instead of 'let's listen'. Systematic variation is then a valuable pedagogic tool.

4 There still perhaps exists a belief that (i) pupils cannot really understand a sentence they hear unless they are able to break it up into separate words and explain the function of each of the words, and (ii) pupils at early stages should be able to say everything they hear in the lesson, and not hear anything that they are not able to say; in other words, there should be a 1:1 input–output ratio. This point of view implies that pupils at an elementary level would not understand '*Would you mind opening the door?*' and therefore they should not hear it since this type of structure occurs later in the textbook under the headings 'conditional' and 'gerund'. Clearly, however, the phrase '*Would you mind opening the door?*' can be understood in the simplest communicative sense on the basis of the key words '*open*' and '*door*'. The pupil may hear the '*Would you mind*' as a meaningless noise which will only be 'understood', i.e. broken up into its separate parts, later when the pupil has more experience of the language. If it is accepted that pupils may well understand more than they can say, it means that the teacher's choice of classroom phrases can exceed the pupils' productive abilities. This means, then, that the classroom can provide opportunities for the pupils to hear genuine uncontrolled language used for genuine communicative purposes. Because classroom activities are so diverse it is tempting to suggest that an entire teaching syllabus, even methodology, could be built around the use of classroom management phrases.

5 The classroom situation is often labelled 'artificial'. If artificiality can be measured statistically, it means that the 11 million schoolchildren in Britain spending 7 hours a day, five days a week, 40 weeks a year in school—a total of 15,400 million

hours!—are not engaged in some form of genuine social interaction, and, therefore, of course, the 50 million hours spent watching football matches is an even less genuine form of interaction. What in fact is meant by 'artificial' is that the interaction in the classroom is one-sided. For example, all exchanges are probably initiated by the teacher, or all pupil–pupil communication is mediated by the teacher. This obviously has something to do with the prestige position accorded to teachers traditionally, but in the case of language learning it may be due to the fact that pupils are not equipped from the outset with the necessary linguistic code, that is, the phrases and vocabulary related to their needs and problems as learners which would allow them to take part in the lesson as equals. By giving intermediate learners a list similar to that contained in Appendix 1 (p. 219), practising the phrases and then insisting on their use, the teacher is increasing the pupils' opportunities for using the language communicatively. After all, the teacher may well be the only living interacting source of the language and the classroom may well be the only social context for practising it. Even at an elementary level pupils can acquire classroom phrases holophrastically (i.e. as self-contained unchanging units), e.g. *I'm sorry I'm late*; *Could you repeat that*; *What's the answer to number 1?* The phrases used to talk about the language itself and learning it *Can you say that?*; *What's the English for this word?*; *Is there a corresponding adjective?*; etc., are particularly useful but seldom taught. Such metalinguistic phrases provide the pupils with a means of improving their language skills independently, that is, by asking native-speakers for corrections, explanations, etc.

Even though this book emphasizes the importance of making the maximum use of the L2 in the classroom situation for the benefit of the learners, it is not a dogmatic plea for a new monolingual teaching orthodoxy. When outlining new working methods or giving formal grammatical explanations, for example, teachers should feel free to use the L1. Naturally, an attempt can first be made in the L2, followed by an L1 translation. This method has the advantage of allowing for differentiation; that is, the better pupils have an opportunity to listen and try to understand while the weaker ones can rely more on the L1 translation. After all, successive translation is not unlike the subtitling used in films and television programmes which many pupils are accustomed to. The switching from language to language need not be a disturbing factor, especially if the teacher prefaces each change, e.g. *I'd like to say something in Spanish now*, *Let's use English now*. An alternative method is to appoint a class interpreter whose job it is to translate any unclear instructions. Experience suggests that pupils enjoy this, and it may be of practical value. Similarly, a pupil can be given the task of checking new or difficult words from a dictionary.

The main point should now be clear: the classroom situation, despite its renowned remoteness from real life, has enormous intrinsic potential in language teaching. By managing the class deliberately and flexibly in the L2, the teacher is taking an important step towards removing the barriers between controlled, and often meaningless, practice and more genuine interactional language use. In other words, the very goal of a teacher's efforts can also be used as a powerful and adaptable tool in achieving that goal.

Specific objectives

In the following list the various language functions related to classroom management have been grouped under key headings and expressed in terms of what the teacher should be able to do. The headings are suggestive only but they may be useful to Teacher Training Institutes in the preparation of syllabuses aimed at teaching classroom competence.

Language Functions Related to:	Objectives	Sample Phrases
A. ORGANIZATION A1. Giving Instructions.	The teacher gives appropriate instructions related to recurrent classroom activities, e.g. using textbooks, blackboard work, group work.	Open your books at page 73. Come out and write it on the board. Listen to the tape, please. Get into groups of four. Finish this off at home. Let's sing a song.
	The teacher can control the pupils' behaviour by means of commands, requests, and suggestions. Usage should correspond to native-speaker usage.[1]	*Could you* try the next one. *I would like you to* write this down. *Would you mind* switching the lights on. *It might be an idea* to leave this till next time.
	The teacher can vary the form of instructions in order to show the range of possibilities in the foreign language.	Everybody, please. All together, now. The whole class, please. I want you all to join in.
	The teacher can offer the pupils alternatives, i.e. different working methods, themes, groups.	Who would like to read? Which topic will your group report on? Do you want to answer question 6?
A2. Sequencing	The teacher can sequence the lesson effectively and communicate this sequencing to the pupils.	First of all today, . . . Right. Now we shall go on to exercise 2. All finished? O.K. For the last thing today, let's . . .
	The teacher can check what stage the pupils have reached, whose turn it is, and so on.	Whose turn is it to read? Which question are you on? Next one, please. Who hasn't answered a question yet?
	The teacher can introduce the class to a new activity and new stage of the lesson.	Let me explain what I want you to do next. The idea of this exercise is for you to make . . .
	The teacher can set time-limits related to various activities.	You have ten minutes to do this. Your time is up. Finish this by twenty to ten.
	The teacher can check that all pupils are equally capable of starting the next stage of the lesson.	Can you all see the board? Have you found the place? Are you all ready?

Language Functions Related to:	Objectives	Sample Phrases
A3. Supervision	The teacher can direct pupils' attention to the lesson content.	Look this way. Stop talking. Listen to what Alan is saying. Leave it alone now!
	The teacher can give warnings and threats.	Be careful of the lead. One more word and . . .
B. INTERROGATION		
B1. Asking Questions	The teacher can ask questions fluently and flexibly, using the various forms available in the foreign language.[3]	Where's Alan? Is Alan in the kitchen? Tell me where Alan is.
	The teacher can ask questions related to specific communicative tasks, e.g. giving a description, opinion, reason, or stimulating conversation.	What was the house like? What do you think about this problem? Yes, but how can you tell?
B2. Replying to Questions	The teacher can give verbal confirmation of pupils' replies and/or guide them to the correct reply.	Yes, that's right. Fine. Almost. Try it again. What about this word here?
	The teacher can give encouraging feedback both in controlled drill-type exercises and freer conversation.	Very good. That's more like it. Could you explain what you mean?
C. EXPLANATION		
C1. Metalanguage	The teacher can produce and also get the pupils to produce a translation, a paraphrase, a summary, a definition, a correct spelling, a correct pronunciation and grammatical corrections.	What's the Swedish for 'doll'? Explain it in your own words. It's spelt with a capital 'J'. Can anybody correct this sentence?
	The teacher can give written and spoken instructions for exercises.	Fill in the missing words. Mark the right alternative.
C2. Reference	The teacher can give appropriate background factual information related to people, places and events.	After they left the USA in 1965, the Beatles . . . The church was started in the last century.
	The teacher can give a verbal commentary to accompany pictures, slides and films.	This is a picture of a typically English castle. In the background you can see . . .

Language Functions Related to:	Objectives	Sample Phrases
	The teacher can use basic rhetorical devices to make the commentary more interesting and more easily followed.	While we're on the subject of . . . As I said earlier, . . . Let me sum up then.
D. INTERACTION		
D1. Affective Attitudes	The teacher can express anger, interest, surprise, friendship, appreciation, pity, sympathy, disappointment, etc., as needed in the classroom situation.	That's interesting! That really is very kind of you. Don't worry about it. I was a bit disappointed with your results.
D2. Social Ritual	The teacher can use everyday phrases related to recurrent social situations, e.g. greeting, leaving, apologizing, thanking, congratulating, and other seasonal greetings.	Good morning. Cheerio now. God bless! Have a nice weekend. Thanks for your help. Happy birthday! Merry Christmas!

1. See Unit 1, page 13.
2. This is a good example of the way in which practical classroom methods are supported and reinforced by adequate language skills.
3. See Unit 2, page 33.

How to use the book

The material consists of 10 units. Units 1 and 2 deal in detail with the two main language functions related to classroom management, namely: giving instructions and asking questions. Units 3-10 constitute the core of the book and contain lists of classroom phrases grouped around key situations and activities.

Units 1-10 are constructed in the following way:

1. In the top left-hand corner of the left-hand page there is the number of the unit, the letter identifying the section and the title of the section; e.g. 9 L **Repetition and Responses.** On the right-hand page there is the number identifying the sub-section and its title; e.g. 2 GROUPING.

2. The actual phrases are grouped on the right-hand page under key sentences, given in bold type; e.g. **4 In turns**. This sentence or phrase acts as a point of reference. The phrases listed under it are usually variations or more difficult versions of the sentence, or phrases relating to the same context or activity;

   e.g. One after the other, please
   In turn, starting with Bill
   Take it in turns, starting here

   The phrases are not graded in any way nor marked for their suitability at different levels. The choice made by teachers is a personal decision which will ultimately depend on their own methodological beliefs and practices.

   The majority of the phrases involving instructions are given in the basic imperative form, although teachers are recommended (see above, page 9) to make use of the wide range of variations outlined in Unit 1, as and when appropriate.

Notice that certain phrases occur under different headings and that, since the list does not claim to be exhaustive, adequate space is left for teachers to add their own discoveries or pet usages.

3. The left-hand page contains comments and remarks (indicated •) related to language use, grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation. Certain common errors (indicated ★) are also listed, together with their correct form. Notice that Standard British English has been used as a model.

   The cartoons scattered throughout the book are meant primarily for light relief, but they should also help when the book is used as a source of reference.

4. At the end of each unit there is a series of exercises with answers. These are mainly of four types: 1) Vocabulary and idiom; 2) structure and grammar; 3) activation of the unit materials, and 4) suggestions for micro-teaching topics. There has been no attempt to grade exercises precisely or systematically either within each unit or over the course of the whole book. Many of the superficially simple exercises are designed to expose the reader repeatedly to the classroom phraseologies.

Although the ten units were conceived of as an integrated whole, each one is self-contained and can be used separately. This allows the teacher or trainee to select his or her progression sequence. Once familiar with the main outline of the contents, the trainee can then use the book for reference purposes, for example, in the preparation of lesson plans. Inevitably, teachers will develop preferences for certain phrases, but the principle of variation mentioned above (p. 11) should be remembered.

The original version of the book was designed for Finnish trainee teachers and it is possible that the phrases selected reflect some of the methodological principles current in Finland. The material was collected on the basis of approximately 200 hours of English lessons at all levels in Finland, and 25 hours of teaching in an English comprehensive school. The book has been successfully used in Finnish Institutes of Education since 1978.
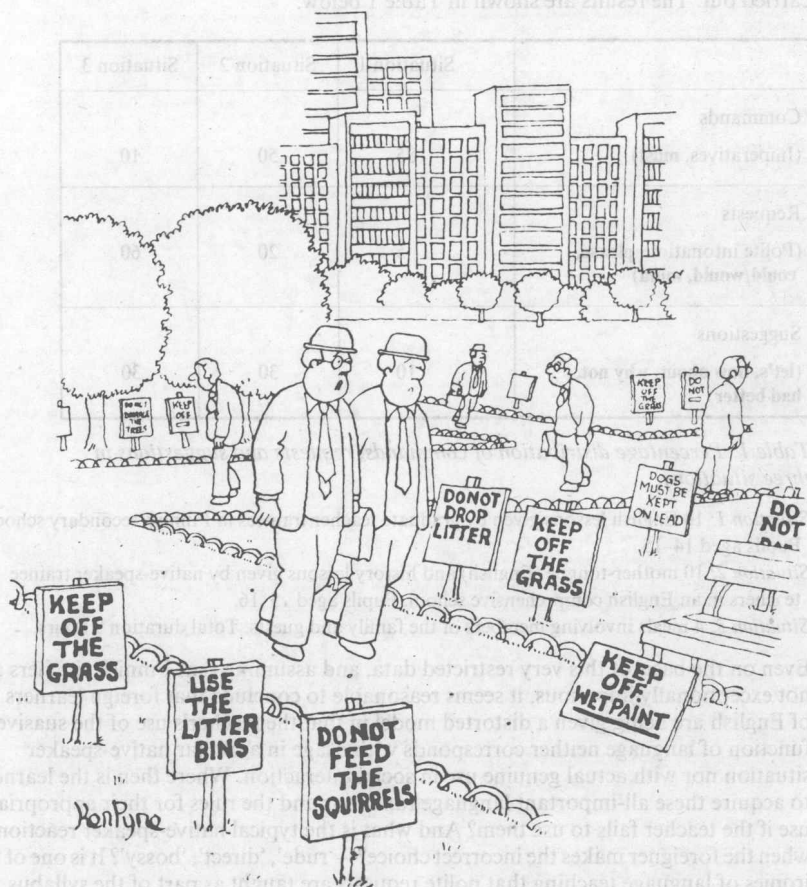
Unit 1

Getting Things Done in the Classroom
1.1 Commanding
1.2 Requesting
1.3 Suggesting and Persuading
Exercises
Answers

KEEP OFF THE GRASS

USE THE LITTER BINS

DO NOT FEED THE SQUIRRELS

DO NOT DROP LITTER

KEEP OFF THE GRASS

DOGS MUST BE KEPT ON LEAD

KEEP OFF WET PAINT

KenPyne

*'That's what I like about strolling in the park during my lunch-hour—
I get a marvellous sense of freedom when I get back to my office.'*

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