

A COURSE ON

WORDS

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To the Instructor

Most students enter a “words” course with one clear goal—to learn new words in order to be more successful in classwork, in examinations, or in a variety of work-related situations. In following the programmed instruction in *A Course on Words*, students will indeed learn new words, but, more important, they will gain an understanding of how words are built and how they can use this information to analyze new words they will encounter outside the classroom. Thus an important objective is, as one student expressed it, “to sensitize us to words.”

The programmed course presented in this book is the result of tryouts conducted over three years with 327 university students. It was revised after each semester on the basis of both subjective and objective feedback regarding individual frames and subjective reaction to the content and value of each unit. In addition, there was constant revision based on the results of unit tests.

Not too surprisingly, in a questionnaire given at the beginning of the course, most of the students in the participating classes indicated that they used their dictionaries only infrequently, usually to check on the spelling of a word. This course provides exercises based on actual dictionary entries to teach students how to extract all possible information from a dictionary. Most students in the experimental classes expressed amazement at how interesting and useful the dictionary can be, relief at how nonthreatening it is, and regret that they hadn’t discovered all this much earlier in their schooling.

Besides its use of dictionary entries, the course is unusual in offering both programmed and nonprogrammed material. Each is designed to provide students with the maximum amount of involvement and practice. The students do not simply read definitions of words, as is the case with some courses. Rather, they engage in many different activities: not only defining words but analyzing and building them, and learning to use context to derive meaning. The programmed approach enables students to do the work on their own and receive immediate checks of their answers. Classroom time, therefore, is free for review, reinforcement of programmed activities, work on the nonprogrammed material, and attention to the needs of individual students. In addition, an Instructor’s Manual accompanying this book provides source material for studies of special topics.

In contrast to many textbooks and programs that become boring because the same types of tasks occur in every lesson, this program uses a wide variety of techniques. We have also been careful to avoid another fault of programmed instruction: the overcuing that makes it possible for students to supply answers with so little thinking that there is little or no retention.

Students begin the course by examining words as they appear in two specific contexts—a bank advertisement and a brief passage from the Declaration of Independence. Thus the course

postpones learning of lists and, instead, encourages students to think about etymology as well as the role of context in vocabulary acquisition and recognition. Only gradually do students begin to work from lists of prefixes, suffixes, and bases to build and to analyze words both in and out of context. At the end of each programmed section is a series of nonprogrammed exercises: "Review Exercises," "Words of Interesting Origin," "Easily Confused Words," and "Latin Phrases." These provide practice in concepts learned in the unit and an opportunity to explore a wide variety of topics, such as eponymous words and the literal meanings of Latin expressions used in English.

The words that occur in this course represent various areas of study such as history, science, and literature. Furthermore, they were chosen according to one of these criteria:

1. Productivity. For example, the base {phob}, meaning "fear," is used in scores of words, as is the base {fer}, meaning "carry."
2. Value in illustrating linguistic principles, in keeping with our avoidance of rote memorization.
3. Usefulness in conveying to the student that new and unfamiliar words can be understood on the basis of morphemes that have already been mastered.

The words range from high-frequency terms that are likely to be familiar to most students, such as "nature" and "refer," to low-frequency terms, such as "antipathy" and "periodontist," that may be unfamiliar to many students.

We wish to express our deep gratitude to the following people whose assistance was essential in writing this program. First, thanks go to two colleagues who were department chairmen at The University of Michigan: Professor Howard D. Cameron, who assigned us this course and gave us much help, including a careful examination of the text in its final manuscript form; and Professor John H. D'Arms, his successor, who permitted us to continue to offer the course in experimental form. We are indebted to the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching at The University of Michigan for several grants. We wish to thank Dorothy M. Lohr, former Administrative Assistant in the Department of Classical Studies, to whom we ran for help on many occasions and never in vain; Catherine Caudell, of Woodbridge Senior High School, Woodbridge, Virginia, who tested the program at the high school level; and Martha Welborn Baldwin, who assisted in the teaching of several sections and who, in addition, served as editor-typist with extraordinary speed, accuracy, and judgment. Professor Charles Witke taught the course with great success while this book was in production, giving us an invaluable final check on the contents. And we appreciate the contributions of five members of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich: Matthew Milan, Jr., whose advice, based on long experience in publishing, convinced us to make major changes in our approach and who, more than any one person, was responsible for the publication of the book; Susan Eno and Susan Joseph, who went over the manuscript and proofs with meticulous care and presented their suggestions with admirable tact; Marilyn Marcus, who created an attractive and practical design; and Tracy Cabanis, who efficiently managed the production of the book. Finally, only someone who has written and validated a program can know how much we owe to the students in the experimental classes; their comments significantly determined the ultimate form of the book.

Waldo E. Sweet
Glenn M. Knudsvig

To the Student

The aim of this course is for you to increase your vocabulary, not only by learning new words but by learning certain *elements* of words which will enable you to determine the meaning of many words you encounter in the future. This book does not teach in the ordinary manner of a textbook; rather, it is programmed instruction. The tasks are broken down into small steps, and after each step you find out immediately whether your answer is correct. To succeed in learning all the material, it is important that you make a reasonable attempt to answer every question before looking at the answer printed below.

Here is the way to proceed. Use a piece of blank paper, or a card, wide enough to go all the way across the page. The beginning of each frame is signaled by a number in boldface on the left. Lower the paper down the page until you reach a row of boxes like this:



Hold your paper level with this line so that you cover the answer printed beneath. Read the discussion if there is one; then answer the question by writing on the line or lines provided. Next, check your response by uncovering the answer. If your answer is incorrect, go back as far as necessary until you understand why the answer given is the correct one. Then move your paper down and go on to the next numbered frame.

Ask your instructor for clarification if you have any questions. And enjoy the course!

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UNIT ONE

Extent of Borrowing in English from Greek and Latin

In this unit you will begin to see the rich background from which the vocabulary of English comes. Specifically, you will get an idea of how many common words are borrowed from the ancient languages Greek and Latin. To illustrate this we will show you borrowed words as they appear in a current newspaper ad and in the Declaration of Independence. You will also see that most of these borrowed words have been changed somewhat when they were borrowed into English. Second, you will learn how individual building blocks are put together to make words. Finally, you will learn how to get more information from a dictionary than you may be getting at present.

Those of you who know the structure of English or of another language, especially Latin, may find parts of this unit (and Unit Two) too easy. If so, work through the unit quickly, but be sure that you do not let your familiarity with the words being used cause you to miss the general concepts being taught. We have purposely used many easy words in these first two units in order to teach concepts instead of emphasizing vocabulary.

You are responsible for knowing the meanings of *all* words introduced in this unit. You are also responsible for *all* the terms used in talking about language, such as "derivatives," "content words," and "morphemes."

Note that in the book, in order to emphasize *how* words are built, we often have given only one of several common meanings of a word part.

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SAMPLE TEXTS IN THIS UNIT Bank Advertisement in a Newspaper
Excerpt from the Declaration of Independence

Introduction: Analysis of a Newspaper Advertisement
(Frames 1–3)

1 Read the following newspaper advertisement:

Your Daily Working 5¼% Account

Here's What It Can Do for You . . .

With all the recent emphasis on high interest rates for investment certificates, you may be overlooking a very important family financial tool . . . the five and one quarter percent per annum passbook savings account.

This is your "daily working" savings account. It earns daily interest—from day of deposit to day of withdrawal. The money is always available, so you can use this account to accumulate dollars, take them out when you need to pay a medical bill, a repair bill, taxes, a trip. It's about as convenient as a wallet, but your money is earning a good return every day it is on deposit and it is safely insured with an agency of the federal government.

A bonus feature is that by maintaining a balance of \$1000 or more in savings you are entitled to all of the travelers checks and money orders you can use. No charge.

So invest all the money you can in our top interest paying certificate accounts for long term requirements, but for day to day needs and emergencies keep a healthy balance in a five and one quarter percent daily working account where it will be immediately available and earn a good return.

SOURCE: Reprinted by permission of Great Lakes Federal Savings, *Ann Arbor News*, August 29, 1978.

In your opinion is this advertisement written (a) in language that would be understood by the average reader? Or (b) in language that would be intelligible only to a person with a college education? _____

(A card should be covering everything below the row of boxes. Pull down your card *only* when you have come to a decision and have written your answer.)



A: Of course, we asked for your opinion, so either choice would have to be considered correct. But certainly the people who placed the advertisement were trying to reach a large number of people. Therefore, (a) seems like the better answer.

2 Here is the same advertisement with all the words which are **borrowed** (= **derived**) from Latin and Greek printed in boldface type.

With all the **recent emphasis** on high **interest rates** for **investment certificates**, you may be overlooking a very **important family financial** tool . . . the five and one **quarter percent per annum passbook savings account**.

(continued)

words in the first sentence of the Sample Text are *with*, *the*, and *on*. It is difficult to provide a meaning for many of these words.

- 4 The meaning of content words is comparatively easy to provide. For example, if asked what the meaning of *emphasis* was, in the sentence “There is an *emphasis* on winning,” what would you say? (in your own words) _____

A: “Special attention,” “stress,” etc.

- 5-6** You can easily distinguish function words from content words after a few examples. Which two of these words from the first sentence of our Sample Text do you think are function words? (Circle your answers.) *For, investment, a, family.*

A: For; a.

■ We will now ask you to distinguish between content words and function words, using examples from the Sample Text.

- 7 Is *certificate* a content word or a function word? _____

A: Content word.

- 8** Is *money* a content word or a function word? _____

A: Content word.

- 9** Is *by* a content word or a function word? _____

A: Function word.

- 10** Is *overlooking* a content word or a function word? _____

A: Content word.

- 11** Is *and* a content word or a function word? _____

A: Function word.

12 Is *interest* a content word or a function word? _____

A: Content word.

13 Is *with* a content word or a function word? _____

A: Self-test item. No answer given. (If you are not sure of your answer, it means that you did not learn the material. Reread frames 4–12.)

Ancestors of Modern English (Frames 14–19)

■ As we have seen, Modern English has borrowed many content words from Greek and Latin. However, Modern English is descended from a language spoken by the Angles and the Saxons, who were people from northern Europe who invaded England in the fifth and sixth centuries A.D. The earliest form for which we have written records is called **Anglo-Saxon** (or **Old English**), the form of the language from about A.D. 400 to A.D. 1100. In the form used from A.D. 1100 to A.D. 1500, this language is known as **Middle English**. Modern English has Anglo-Saxon **structure**.

We use the word “structure” to describe the way a language is put together. An English sentence is put together on the model of an Anglo-Saxon sentence. The structure depends partly on **function words** and partly on **word order**. You have already been introduced to function words; here are examples of word order as a signal of structure.

14 Observe the word order in “The dog bites the boy.” Who does the biting? _____

A: The dog.

15 Again, from the word order, who does the biting in “The boy bites the dog”? _____

A: The boy.

16 So, what is the *structural signal* that distinguishes the meaning of “The boy bites the dog” from the meaning of “The dog bites the boy”? _____

A: Word order.

17 What is the structural signal that distinguishes the meaning of “race horse” from “horse race”? _____

A: Word order.