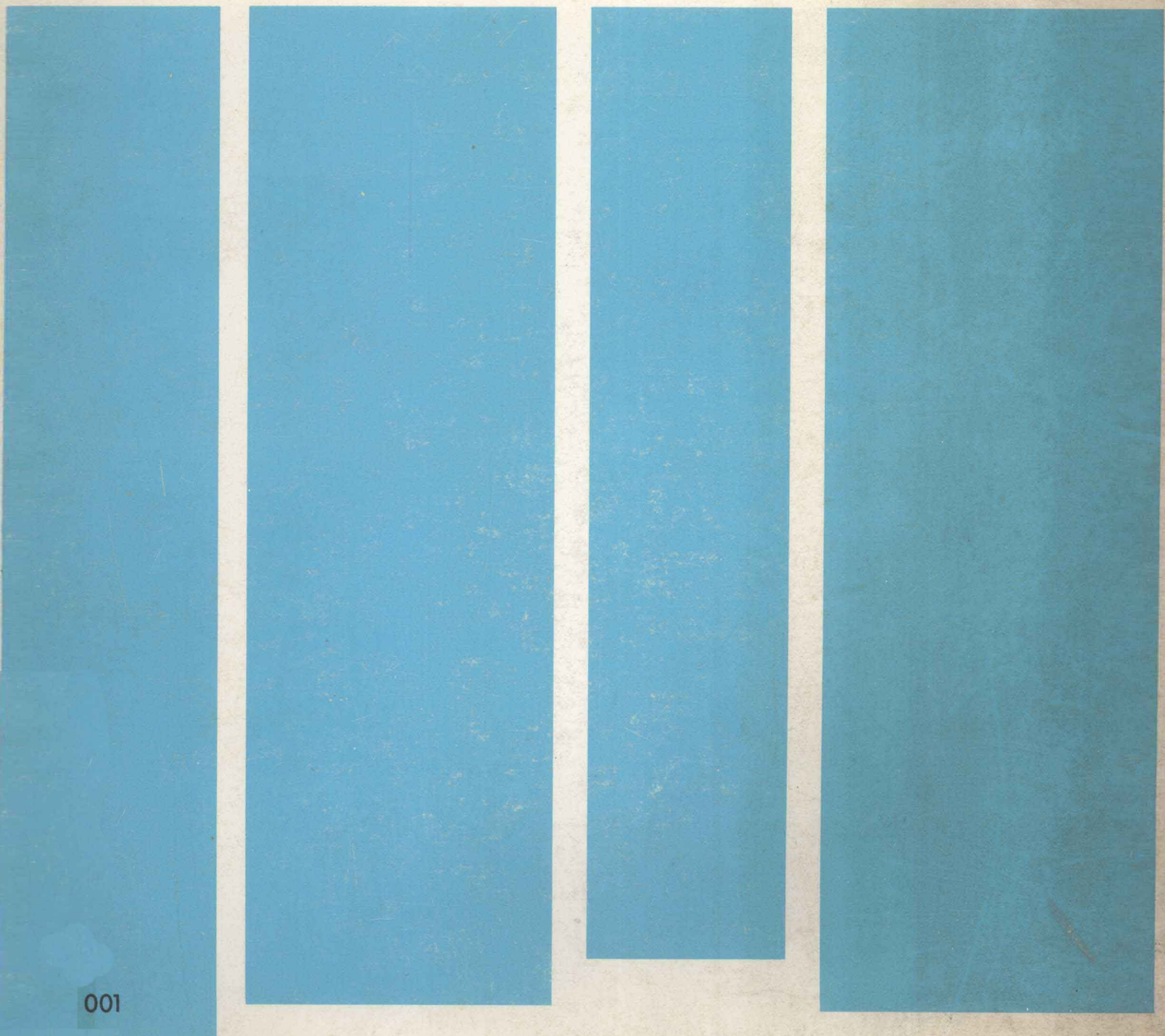
SR®

TEACHER'S MANUAL

ORIENTATION IN AMERICAN ENGLISH



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ORIENTATION IN AMERICAN ENGLISH

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Revised Edition

Published by
Institute of Modern Languages, Inc.
The Language People
2622 Pittman Drive
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Printed in the United States of America
ISBN 0-88499-257-8

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PART I–SR® PHILOSOPHY

Situational Reinforcement®, known as SR®, is an approach to language teaching. It's similar to other approaches in one basic respect–one of its major goals is to help people learn a language. How SR differs is the means by which students learn the language . . . by a natural and gradual process in which everyday experiences become the springboard for communication.

SR grew out of a dissatisfaction with other materials and methodologies generally accepted for the teaching of English as a second language (ESL) toward the end of the first half of the twentieth century. Before that time, most language students were concerned more with written language than with oral communication. For the most part, they were involved with the translation of classical literature and formal analyses of structures.

At the same time, historical and comparative linguists spent their time analyzing diachronic and synchronic relationships between languages. Among other things, they focused on sound systems and endeavored to show both how specific languages were related and how languages changed through time. This required little or no ability to use language as a means of communication. The primary concern of these scholars was with the form, not the function, of a language or languages.

The Second World War forced an interest and evaluation of the status of language teaching in the United States. It quickly became apparent that few native Americans had enough of a command of languages other than English to be able to communicate with people they came in contact with overseas. Most people who "knew" other languages were primarily able to analyze, read or translate them rather than use them directly as a vehicle for interchanging ideas. A great need arose for materials which could be used to help members of the armed forces learn to speak and understand languages crucial for

relationships with other nations. Because of this need, materials were developed during the forties based on the linguistic theories which were then in vogue.

This gave rise to a methodology often labeled "pattern practice". The materials were based on behaviorist principles which asserted that to learn to speak a language, a student must acquire and internalize a set of habits. These habits were to be learned through a process of repetition, memorization and manipulation of sets of structurally related sentences. Students were to learn their target language through *oral* drill and practice rather than through the written word. Once these structures were internalized, it was felt that students would be able to select the proper ones in real communication situations outside the classroom.

The methodology was not limited to the teaching of military personnel. It was recognized that language learning should begin earlier, and many schools, public and private, initiated programs in foreign languages, most of them adopting the pattern practice approach. This methodology was widely accepted for the teaching of English as a second language as well. And it was used for the teaching of English and other languages throughout the world.

During the sixties, Eugene Hall, then Vice President of the Publications Division and Director of an ESL Manpower program in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, was using such pattern practice materials in his classes. Although many students performed extremely well, he noted that there was little transfer from this practice to actual competence in English in a non-class situation. He learned that his colleagues in Saudi Arabia were having the same kinds of problems and were in agreement that something had to be done so that their students would really learn English.

Teachers weren't the only ones dissatisfied with their language classes. Students throughout the world who sincerely wanted to learn English or some other language found that they couldn't communicate well on the basis of what they'd done in class. Some

couldn't say what they wanted and needed to say because they had to wait for several months to learn a tense they needed. Others found themselves trying to recall some of the drills consciously by thinking things like, "This is an affirmative sentence. How can I change it to a negative?" (And, of course, they questioned this in their native languages rather than in the languages they were supposedly learning.) They were trying to employ drills and practice to manipulate the language rather than use it, even when they had the opportunity for conversation. They couldn't generate new language on the basis of what they'd learned. Teachers began asking, "Are my students really learning English?" rather than "Did they do the drill properly?"

Hall questioned the basic premises on which pattern practice was based. He noticed that students weren't really involved in conversation in the classroom a majority of the time. Conversations they did participate in were carefully controlled, often stilted and not at all meaningful to them. They were involved in a great deal of dialoguing, saying things other people might say but rarely saying something they could use outside of class. Because Hall was able to pinpoint the problem, he was able to do something about it, developing the theory now known as Situational Reinforcement.

SR met with immediate success in the classroom because students carried on a conversation the first day of class. They comprehended what they heard and said and used a mixture of structures successfully, correctly and meaningfully from the outset. Since then, the theory has been further developed and tested so that materials based on it could be tailored appropriately for students in various places and with different goals.

A basic difference between SR and pattern practice is that materials and classes are *situationally* rather than structurally controlled. Since SR is concerned with a functional use of rather than an analytical approach toward language, SR materials are focused on *communication in context,* and the language learned is determined by that context.

In the past, students were introduced to English structures in terms of arbitrary

grammatical complexity; that is, they were taken from utterances which appeared to be structurally simple to those which appeared to be structurally complex. The goal here was to lead them gradually through as much of the language as possible in a systematic way. SR orders the language which students learn on the basis of situational complexity; that is, students deal first with concrete situations and gradually move to more abstract ones. The goal here is to lead them gradually through language they will need in the framework of situations they encounter systematically.[1]

Thus, students first begin to learn a language by discussing what *can* be discussed in the classroom. The first situations they encounter are simple for them to understand because they see them and are involved in them. Actions are easily demonstrated and understood because the social context for the language that students learn initially is understood by all of them. Students learn to talk about these actions, objects and ideas in their immediate environment–the classroom.

Students deal first with concrete objects and real actions that either they or their classmates perform. As they gradually learn more English, the situations extend to other environments besides the classroom and to more abstract ideas. Students have little difficulty with this transition, because they are prepared for it by dealing with familiar, concrete concepts first.

In the past, other theories which had conversation as a major goal endeavored to approximate conversational English in the classroom as it could ostensibly occur outside the classroom. *Rather than approximate possible conversations, SR motivates real conversational exchanges from the outset.* These exchanges have meaning in the classroom itself and do not require the hope that some transfer will take place so that similar exchanges might take place elsewhere. The conversations have already occurred.

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[1] Since there is little evidence supporting a direct relationship between superficial grammatical complexity and its effect on language acquisition, the ordering of materials according to complexity appears to be based on an unrealistic assessment of language learning.

Structures which occur infrequently in real conversation also occur infrequently in SR materials. Thus students don't waste time trying to understand and use sentences such as, "John has been being good," or "The furniture had been bought by the Logan family" if they have no reason to use such sentences. Other low frequency structures which may not be quite so difficult for language learners to comprehend are not used extensively in SR materials because they are not used extensively in normal conversational exchanges. Thus, the simple present (habitual) tense which occurs in such sentences as, "John gets up" and "I go to the store" is used only in situations where habitual action occurs, even though it might be easier for students to say than some other structures.

Should situations require particular structures, no matter how complex, students have the opportunity to learn these structures because they are appropriate to the given situation. The appropriateness of the structure not only helps the student understand it but also motivates him to learn it.

One difficulty with the pattern practice methodology was the pattern practice itself. Students were required to repeat or manipulate structurally related sentences which did not reflect conversation. But by their very nature, conversations involve more than one structure—at least some questions and answers. SR captures the nature of conversation by incorporating several structures at the same time—not in some arbitrary order, but in terms of whether these structures are appropriate to a given situation.

The core of SR is the *Response Sequence.*[2] Made up of a mixture of structures based on one situation, the sequence reflects realistic conversations which are possible in the particular context of a given topic. Several structures are introduced from the very beginning. Sequences are easily demonstrated by the teachers and understood by the students because they are reflected by language appropriate to them.

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[2]The exact procedure for teaching Response Sequences is discussed on pages 15-28.

Students are introduced to the sequence by the teacher, and, as soon as possible, they use the sequence as a basis for conversation. The students, rather than the teacher, do the talking, because it is the students who need the practice in English. The degree of repetition of what the teacher says is limited and even eliminated where possible because repetition is infrequently used in conversation.

A basic advantage of this approach is that communication begins almost immediately in SR classes. With other methods, students often have to wait to communicate with each other until specific steps have been completed. They usually are required to participate in several manipulative drills and other exercises or memorize various sentences or sets of sentences—all of which seem to have little positive results for conversational goals. The potential for participating in conversation immediately not only helps students with the conversation itself but also motivates them to continue learning English because they see a use for what they learn as they learn it.

Grammatical structures are incorporated naturally and appropriately. If students say they've done something in the past, it's because they have. If they say they're going to do something in the future, they will do it, and if they say they're doing something at the current time, they will most certainly be doing what they are saying. There's no pretending in SR. If one student does something and says so, it's meaningful to him and to other students as well because they see him do it. If a motor response is designated and carried out, it serves to make meanings clear for the participants and observers and helps motivate the students to learn more.

The use of meaningful language is a serious concern in SR. Meaningless dialoguing, even in a minimal sense, is definitely out. Students are not asked to say something that's unreal to them in order to get them to say a particular structure. If the unreal situation is the only way to get the student to use this particular structure, then there's no need for him to learn

it. For example, in an SR class, if a student says, "My sister is a secretary," you will be certain of two things: (1) the student has a sister and (2) this sister is a secretary. If these two points are untrue, there's no reason for the student to say the sentence.

The creative use of role playing, however, can be an effective means by which the teacher can introduce much new vocabulary of interest to the students within the "confines" of the ESL classroom. Students studying to be travel agents, as an example, should be given many opportunities to experience the roles they will play in this profession in a *direct* and meaningful way. This can be accomplished through the use of props and the development of realistic situations through which the students can interact, learn new vocabulary, ask questions, and develop their repertoire of relevant language. A still better method, of course, is to directly involve the students in learning through frequent visits to stores, offices, and locales in which they will be interacting. Socio-drama, in which students participate in enactments of solutions to a social problem and produce new sentences based on their own behavior or that of other students[3], is also an effective communication-building technique.

With SR, student control of the language being learned is gradual. It involves a system of continual exposure and review, which some psycholinguists have called the "Creative Construction Process."[4] Through this process, learners "gradually reconstruct rules which cause them to use certain strategies to organize that linguistic input, until the mismatch between the langauge systems they are exposed to and what is produced is resolved."[5] Through the recurrence of high-frequency structures and meaningful vocabulary in the SR materials, students begin to develop "hypotheses" through a trial and error process. The process of hearing the language and beginning to develop hypotheses about it might be

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[3]Robin C. Scarcella, "Socio-Drama for Social Interaction," *TESOL Quarterly*, Vol. 12 (1978), p. 41.

[4]Marina Burt and Heidi Dulay, "Creative Construction in Second Language Learning and Teaching," in *New Directions in Second Language Learning, Teaching, and Bilingual Education.* (Washington, D.C.: TESOL, 1975).

[5]Ibid.

called *receptive competence.* The trial process, where the learner ventures his own expressions and utilizes the hypotheses, is called *productive competence.* Often, after testing (during interaction with the physical and social environment), the fledgling rule system must be reorganized or modified. Through this on-going, systematic Creative Construction Process the student forms a natural, workable rule system. This is the process of *language acquisition* toward which all teaching methods and teachers strive.

SR, then, through the introduction of meaningful, realistic experiences, helps the student to build his language repertoire through direct interaction with the physical and social environment. Each experience provides a springboard for the Creative Construction Process to occur. In other words, through each experience, the student begins to internalize and control a "finite set" of syntactic structure types upon which he will begin to build his own free, creative, and acceptable use of that language.

The word "acceptable" brings up the whole issue of error correction in the SR methodology. Error correction, when it occurs, takes place in context only. Students aren't given drills which require them to repeat a word or related items ten times. Instead, they're asked to repeat the entire utterance with the correct forms, which are modeled by the teacher.[6] By using important structures and vocabulary over and over again, students gain more and more control over the basic syntactic structures from which they will revise and build their rule system.

Besides making sure that the language which is used is appropriate to a given situation, teachers of SR are ready to accept alternate answers offered by students if they're appropriate and correctly used. Even when everyone in the class knows a specific, correct answer to a question, another answer might be possible. If, for example, the class wants to find out what happened to someone's book, "He lost his book," "He can't find his book," or even "It fell in the mud" might be appropriate. It's up to the teacher to decide when to

[6]For a detailed treatment of error correction, please refer to pages 37-40.

accept alternate responses and when not to, but the basic criterion is appropriateness. Again, this is a departure from more traditional approaches where students are required to use specific structures and are often penalized when the alternative answers they give turn out to be more appropriate than what their teacher had in mind.

Given a conversational approach, students are expected to learn to use English correctly. But the correct use of English does not necessarily imply perfection in pronunciation. Like the control of structure, the control of the English sound system is gradual. If errors are corrected at all, they are errors which interfere with communication in some way.

If students have difficulty saying what they wish to say, teachers come to their aid immediately. They're not left to flounder so they can't communicate. The purpose of the language lesson is to teach students to communicate—not to torture students who don't know how to say something they need to say.

SR doesn't deny early experience in reading and writing to students who want it and need it. From the first lesson on, they can read everything they say (after they've learned it orally). They can use workbooks, tapebooks and readers, both for reading and writing practice and for the reinforcement of their oral work. This is especially helpful for the student with future academic goals. His control of the graphic skills keeps up with and often passes his control of the oral skills so that when the need arises for him to read and write something not specifically related to oral work in class, he has already been prepared for it in some way.

A focus on the graphic skills also allows students to draw on their knowledge from their own language if it is related in some way to English. The frequent use of cognates helps them with vocabulary development which can proceed on an individual basis and allows more time for the development of other aspects of English in class.

To review, then, here are some basic principles of SR which you should keep in mind as you use it:

1) Emphasis is placed upon natural communication. Students are led to talk about familiar persons, objects, actions, and situations. They extend what they learn inside of the classroom to situations outside.

2) The situation in which the student is placed controls the complexity of the language structure presented. SR makes the point that natural learning of a language is not structured learning, that a student should not be forced to master present tense before past (as is often advocated in audiolingual materials) or the active before the subjunctive. At the onset of instruction, there should be a mixture of structures, as in natural speech. Emphasis is thus placed on situations in order to force the student to "think" in the language that he is learning, not merely to manipulate the structure of the language.

3) Gradual mastery of the language is emphasized. Structures, since they occur in situations, are continually reviewed, corrected, and reinforced, all within a context that is *real.* Reinforcement of the language by real situations eliminates the need for translation in the SR method.

4) An alternative response is accepted if it is appropriate and correct. Here, following Chomsky's observation that language is creative, is where SR reflects, to a great degree, the research of modern linguists.[7]

These principles should help you understand why certain procedures are suggested in the methodology section of this manual. In addition, they should help you make the decisions you will find yourself faced with when you're teaching, and which can't be anticipated in any manual.

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[7]Curtis W. Hayes *et al, The ABC's of Languages and Linguistics* (Silver Spring: Institute of Modern Languages, Inc., 1977), p. 172.

In conclusion, we'll quote from *The ABC's of Languages and Linguistics* (Hayes, Ornstein, and Gage, 1977) which summarizes SR quite well:

> To recapitulate, SR calls upon the student to participate actively in the language to be learned in as typical a situation as possible and calls upon his ability to infer from the data the "rules" of the language. As it stands, SR emphasizes reality with its setting of responses and participation and offers a method that emphasizes language performance. As such, it differs from classical audiolingualism, with its emphasis upon disconnected drills and patterns.[8]

For further reading on SR and how it compares with other methods you may with to refer to the following:

Anthony, Edward M. "Approach, Method, and Technique." *English Language Teaching*, 17: 63-67. 1963.

Diller, Karl C. *Generative Grammar, Structural Linguistics, and Language Teaching.* Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House, 1971.

Edmonds, Marilyn H. "New Directions in Theories of Language Acquisition." *Harvard Educational Review* 46 (May 1976): 175-197.

Hall, Eugene J. "New Departures in TESOL Materials." Paper read at EPDA Institute in TESOL, 1969, at Inter American University, Hato Rey, Puerto Rico.

Hauptman, Philip C. "A Structural Approach vs. a Situational Approach to Foreign Language Teaching." *Language Learning* Vol. XXI 1971 .

Hayes, Curtis W., Ornstein, Jacob, and Gage, William W. *The ABC's of Languages and Linguistics.* Silver Spring, Md.: Institute of Modern Languages, Inc., 1977 .

Kearny, Mary Ann. "Pattern Practice and Situational Reinforcement in Language Teaching." Georgetown University Thesis No. 3547, Washington, D.C., (1969).

Schumann, John. "Communication Techniques." *TESOL Quarterly* Vol. 6, No. 2 (1969).

Stevick, Earl W. "The Riddle of the 'Right Method'." *English Teaching Forum* (April-June 1974): 1-5.

Taylor, Barry P. "Adult Language Learning Strategies and Their Pedagogical Implications." *TESOL Quarterly* 9 (1975): 391-99.

Wardbaugh, Ronald. "TESOL: Current Problems and Classroom Practices." *TESOL Quarterly* 3 (1969): 105-16.

[8]Ibid., p. 173.

PART II–SR® TEACHING METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

The *Orientation in American English* series is made up of six levels. Level 1 and all that is written about that level is fundamental to the effective teaching of English by the Situational Reinforcement (SR) methodology. All subsequent levels contain some deviations from and modifications of the first level. For this reason, we strongly suggest that, even if you're teaching a group at Level 4, you first read the section on the teaching of Level 1 and then proceed to the section on Level 4 to see how it's different. The Level 1 discussion is the only one which completely covers all aspects of the methodology.

This *Teacher's Manual* has been prepared to serve as a guide for anyone who expects to be using SR materials. It's suggested that new teachers stick closely to the methodology as presented. If you follow the outlined steps, even if you've never taught a language before, you're going to have a more successful classroom experience than if you attempt to deviate from what we consider the basic techniques. Read through this manual carefully. You'll find many parts of it that you'll want to refer back to as particular problems arise in your classroom.

There are certain distinctions that must be made between various types of classes that may be using SR materials: (1) Intensive classes; that is, groups made up of 8-12 students who attend an average of 15-20 hours of classroom instruction per week, (2) Large classes of sometimes varying attendance, often evening adult groups, made up of people who probably work during the day and have no time outside the 2-6 hours of instruction they receive in class to work on their English and (3) Private instruction with only one or two students. Each of these groups will need special consideration, and the materials will have to be

adapted to deal with those specialized needs. For our general purposes, we'll be writing for the intensive groups--the ideal situation. We've included comments for the other types of groups in Part III of this manual (see pages 89-106).

Of course, we don't suggest that this series will be the panacea for dealing with all aspects of teaching English as a second language, especially on the upper levels. We do believe, however, that once teachers have fully grasped the philosophy and purpose of SR, they will find their possibilities endless in teaching truly creative, relevant lessons based on the foundation prepared by the Institute of Modern Languages.

SERIES OUTLINE

Level 1 (20 lessons)

Text
Workbook
Tapebook
Tapes

NOTE: *Communication Skillbook1: Beginning in English* (IML, 1978) complements *OAE* Level 1 by making the grammar of the level explicit and by reinforcing it for the student through a variety of interesting, creative, and practical exercises. Skillbooks for Levels 2–4 are also in development. Write IML for details.

Levels 2, 3 and 4 (10 lessons each)

Text
Workbook
Tapebook
Tapes
Reader

Levels 5 and 6 (5 lessons each)

Text
Reader

Each level has been designed to take approximately 80-100 hours of classroom time in intensive courses meeting approximately twenty hours a week. This will vary according to your students' ability, the amount of hours the class meets per week and the amount of classroom time devoted to supplementary materials such as readers and tapebooks.