

# Question and Answer

Graded Oral Comprehension Exercises

L. G. Alexander



**New Edition**

Revised by Peter Ferguson

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L. G. ALEXANDER

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*Revised by* PETER FERGUSON



LONGMAN

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# Introduction

## THE FOUNDATIONS OF SPEECH

The great majority of overseas students learning English are primarily interested in speaking the language. Paradoxically, such is the tyranny of the written word, they often get little opportunity to do so. In most English courses, far more attention is paid to writing than to speech. This is especially true for students who are preparing for examinations. Faced with the pressing requirements of an examination syllabus, teachers are often obliged to spend very little time on oral English. They work through a course in the conscious knowledge that their students will more or less have to bluff their way through an oral examination. Yet, ultimately, the student's knowledge of English will be judged by the world at large not on his capacity to write the language but to speak it.

As far as the teacher is concerned, part of the difficulty arises from the fact that lessons in conversation are not at all easy to conduct. Each lesson must be carefully prepared, otherwise the teacher will get little or no response from his class. No teacher would expect his students to attempt written composition before they had mastered a large number of basic sentence patterns and learnt to write simple, compound, and complex sentences. Yet he will often embark on a discussion with a class without providing his students with any prior training. Unprepared discussion on subjects like 'The Cinema Today' often lead nowhere and add nothing to the student's knowledge of the English language. During discussions of this sort, the student will often struggle painfully to express complex ideas in English. The teacher may be reluctant to correct him because this will interrupt the flow of conversation. Even if he does correct him, the student will retain very little. Sometimes the whole lesson breaks down and the teacher ends up doing all the talking. At other times, the conversation may prove to be so interesting that the students abandon English altogether and discuss the topic in their mother tongue.

Learning to speak a foreign language has much in common with learning to play a musical instrument. In each case, the final objective is that the student should be able to perform in public, making as few mistakes as possible. No one learning to play a musical instrument could possibly undertake to perform a difficult composition before he had mastered a large number of drills and exercises. The purpose

behind these drills and exercises is that the student should ultimately be able to play with a minimum of error. In the same way, careful and methodical oral training is necessary long before it is possible for a language student to join in a discussion of a topic of general interest. If the student is asked to take part in a discussion without adequate preparation, he is being encouraged to make mistakes. He will ultimately adopt bad speech habits which may prove impossible to eradicate.

The method for oral training adopted in this book is based on carefully graded questions and answers. A full explanation is given in the Foreword to the Teacher. All the questions to be asked are closely related to a context so that the student's response will never be purely mechanical.

### THE AIMS OF THIS BOOK

- 1 To train the student to understand spoken English.
- 2 To train the student to read aloud with correct stress and intonation.
- 3 To train the student to answer and to ask all types of questions and to establish the foundation of good speech habits.
- 4 To lead the student by stages to free oral expression so that he can take part in a discussion on topics of general interest.
- 5 To prepare the student adequately for the Cambridge First Certificate Examination.

### LEVEL

This book may be begun by adult or secondary students who have been learning English for a year or less. It will bring them up to the level required by the Cambridge First Certificate Examination. Preferably, the book should be used as supplementary oral material to accompany any intermediate course. It may, for instance, be used effectively as a companion volume to *Practice and Progress* and *Developing Skills* and should be commenced after Unit One of *Practice and Progress* has been completed. The book should be used over a period of two years with students doing intensive courses, and over a period of four years with students learning English as part of a general curriculum.

### ARRANGEMENT OF MATERIAL

*Question and Answer* contains six chapters each of which consists of eight passages followed by graded oral exercises. The book is prefaced by a

Introduction

detailed introduction to teachers, outlining the methods employed. Each chapter is preceded by a summary of the question forms that can be used.

## GRADING

The language content of Chapters 1-4 corresponds, with a small number of exceptions, with the Structural Tables which have been devised to accompany the Longmans' Structural Readers Series. Chapters 5 and 6 are more steeply graded to bring the student up to F.C.E. level. The whole emphasis has been on grading *structures* and *questions forms* rather than vocabulary. Each passage is situational, usually consisting of dialogue with connecting narrative, but is, at the same time, structurally controlled. This means that in each Chapter the student will be required to work within certain well-defined limits.

## AUDIO MATERIAL

Each of the passages has been recorded on tape and is followed by fifteen mixed questions. Indication of how the mixed questions fit into the general scheme is given in the exercises that follow each passage. In Chapters 1-4, the speed of delivery begins at approximately 120 words per minute and is gradually increased. Pauses at natural breaks are longer than those which would be encountered in normal speech. These pauses may help the student to assimilate what he has heard. In Chapters 5 and 6, delivery is at normal speed. If the teacher has no tape-recorder, he may read the passages to the class, following the procedure suggested in the Foreword.

## STRESS AND INTONATION MARKINGS

The passages in Chapters 1-5 are marked in such a way as to 'support' the tapes. The recorded texts follow the printed markings exactly. It must be emphasised that the markings are only an indication of the way the passages might be read, as obviously the pattern of stress in any statement is often a matter of opinion.

Complex systems of notation, forms of diagrammatic representation and phonetic symbols have been deliberately excluded, as they tend to confuse and intimidate overseas teachers and students, making the exercises look far more difficult than they really are. Only three marks have been used: the heavy stress mark: ' (usually on nouns, verbs and adverbs) and two pause marks: / and //. The single stroke indicates



a brief pause; the double stroke, a longer pause. Though these markings cannot possibly convey subtle variations in stress and intonation, they may help the student to read whole phrases rather than individual words. They will also serve to remind him of the reading he has heard on tape or from the teacher and thus provide him with sufficient information about the *sound* of each passage without encumbering him with a complex (and typographically unsightly) system of notation. Pause marks are not given in Chapter 1, as the printed statements in each passage do not exceed the learner's eye-span. The passages in Chapter 6 have not been marked in any way.

The value of reading aloud has been questioned by some linguists, as it is rightly claimed that a student of a foreign language is rarely if ever called upon to read aloud in a real-life situation. This is undoubtedly true. On the other hand, reading aloud may provide the student with extremely valuable practice in intonation. As Mr Roger Kingdon puts it in *English Intonation Practice*: 'Any weaknesses in intonation are particularly noticeable in reading aloud. In extempore speech one instinctively uses the stress and intonation that best convey one's meaning and express one's feelings, but in reading aloud one is attempting to render someone else's thought, and it is therefore less easy to find the right expression.'

## THE NEW EDITION

While the essential features and objectives of *Question and Answer* remain unchanged, the new edition contains a number of modifications designed to bring the book into line with current theory and practice in oral teaching, while at the same time maintaining its effectiveness for First Certificate students. Changes are as follows:

- 1 The number of texts in each Chapter has been reduced from ten to eight to make room for the addition of new exercises.
- 2 Multiple Choice Comprehension Exercises relating to each text have been added (page 117) and a key provided (page 145).
- 3 Sixty brief descriptions of situations have been added (page 135) to provide opportunity to practise particular language functions. There are twenty such functions, each of which is recycled. Thus, Situations 1, 21 and 41 deal with 'accepting invitations' and so on. Situations 1-40 are labelled; 41-60 are unlabelled. Possible appropriate responses are supplied (page 141).



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# FOREWORD TO THE TEACHER

## How to use this book

### THE FORM OF EACH LESSON

A teacher is obviously free to use a book in any way that suits him best. The notes given below should be taken as suggestions only.

Each lesson may fall into seven parts, the last of which may be included at the discretion of the teacher:

- 1 Listening
- 2 Listening and Silent Reading
- 3 Reading Aloud
- 4 Listening and Understanding
- 5 Extensive Reading
- 6 Oral Exercises
- 7 Dictation

Two further stages may be added in the first ten lessons (Chapter 1). These are: Chorus Repetition and Individual Repetition. The two additional stages could come after Intensive Reading. The teacher should read the passage sentence by sentence and get the class to repeat each sentence after him, first in chorus, then individually. The students should not refer to their books when doing repetition work.

### 1 LISTENING

**Aim:** To give the student practice in listening to spoken English and understanding as much as possible of what he hears.

**Procedure:** Books shut. Play the recording or read the passage once without interruption. The students should listen only. At this stage, the students must not be allowed to listen to the recorded mixed questions which follow each passage.

### 2 LISTENING AND SILENT READING

**Aim:** To enable the student to match the sound of what he hears to the printed word.

**Procedure:** Books open. Play the recording through once or read the passage without interruption. The students should read silently while the recording is being played or the passage is being read. At this stage the students must not be allowed to listen to the recorded mixed questions which follow each passage.

### 3 INTENSIVE READING

**Aim:** To ensure that the students have understood what they have heard.

**Procedure:** Books open. The passage should be played or read to the class in small units. During each pause, explain unfamiliar words and constructions. Rather than give direct explanations, try to elicit as much information as possible from the students.

#### 4 LISTENING AND UNDERSTANDING

**Aim:** To allow the students to hear the passage once more in the knowledge that they will now be in a position to understand it completely.

**Procedure:** Books shut. Play the recording or read the passage without interruption. The students should listen only. Again, the students must not be allowed to listen to the recorded mixed questions which follow each passage.

#### 5 READING ALOUD

**Aim:** To enable the students to practise reading aloud with correct stress and intonation.

**Procedure:** Books open. In a single lesson, it will, of course, be impossible for *every* student in the class to read. Individual students should read about five lines of the passage at a time. While a student is reading, do not interrupt him. After he has completed his reading, comment (or, better still, get the class to comment) on the quality of stress, intonation and pronunciation. Phrases which have been read incorrectly should be repeated several times. The stress and pause marks should be observed as closely as possible. The students should be trained to read *whole phrases* rather than individual words.

Alternatively, groups of five or six students at a time may be asked to read in chorus. The combined effect is usually more correct than individual reading. Students can be trained, as members of an orchestra or choir can be trained, to listen to others while "playing" themselves.

#### 6 ORAL EXERCISES

##### **General Remarks**

The oral exercises will form the main part of each lesson. The students should by now be sufficiently familiar with the passages to work with their books shut. On some occasions, however, the teacher may require the students to keep their books open so that they can refer to the printed version of a question when they have failed to understand it orally. The questions have been carefully graded to elicit particular

types of response. The purpose of each exercise should be clearly explained to the students so that they fully understand what is required of them. Attention should be paid to the following:

**Pace:** During the first lessons, questions should be asked fairly slowly and the students should be given ample time to answer. Once the class has become thoroughly familiar with the techniques employed, the questions may be asked at a brisk pace. The student should be trained to give an accurate and automatic response to each question. The amount of time he is given to do this should be gradually reduced.

**Pronoun changes:** Where a passage is written in the first person, the student will be expected to identify himself with the character or characters taking part in the dialogue. This use of 'you' is slightly unrealistic in the circumstances, but cannot be avoided. Do not confine yourself to questions printed in the text. Where the printed questions aim at eliciting a third person response, supply questions which will elicit a first person response and vice versa.

**Tense changes:** The tenses used in the questions will be found to vary considerably. This may be a little confusing at first, but the intention has been to make the students listen very carefully to each question.

**Complete and incomplete answers:** In the past, teachers insisted on complete answers to all questions in the belief that this enabled the students to practise using verb forms. Full answers to questions, however, often amount to a complete distortion of natural speech. Students should be trained to give *natural* answers to all questions, that is, answers which would normally be expected.

For instance, if the question is:

Why did you leave at 4.0 o'clock?

The answer could be:

Because I had to go to the dentist.

Not:

I left at 4.0 o'clock because I had to go to the dentist.

More often than not, it is unnatural to incorporate part of the question in the answer.

**Question grading:** The questions following each passage have been graded as follows:

**A. Yes and No Tag Answers (All Chapters)**

*Aim:* To train the student to listen to the *first* word in each

question and to use the *same* word in his answer. (There are a limited number of exceptions to this: e.g. *Are you . . . ?* Yes, I am. *Were you . . . ?* Yes, I was. There are certain instances, also, where a tag response would be impolite: e.g. *Would you like to have dinner with us tomorrow?* No, I wouldn't.)

**Procedure:** Explain the purpose of the exercise to the students. Tell them that you want them to listen to the *first* word in each question and to use the same word in their answers:

Q. *Is* Miss Green in the library?

A. Yes, she *is*.

Q. *Can* you see her?

A. No, I *can't*.

Where two types of tag answer are possible, the student should be trained to use both of them: e.g. No, he isn't, No, he's not; No, it isn't, No, it's not; No, I haven't, No, I've not; etc. In Chapters 5 and 6, the student should be trained to vary his tag answers:

Q. *Isn't* it warm today?

A. Yes, it *is*.

A. Yes, it *is, isn't* it?

A. Yes, *isn't* it?

#### **B. Questions with 'Who'** (All Chapters excluding Chapter 1)

**Aim:** To train the student to supply the correct auxiliary verb in his answers.

**Procedure:** Explain that an auxiliary verb is often used in answer to questions beginning with *Who*. In most cases, the auxiliary verb is contained in the question (e.g. *Who is . . . ?* *Who was . . . ?*). When the question is in the simple present or simple past, however, the student must supply *do/does/did* in his answer:

Q. *Who is* in the library?

A. Miss Green *is*.

Q. *Who likes* detective stories?

A. I *do*. Mr Jones *does*.

Q. *Who went* to the library yesterday?

A. I *did*. Mr Jones *did*.

**C. Double Questions Joined by 'Or' (All Chapters)**

*Aim:* To train the student to give complete and accurate answers.

*Procedure:* Explain that the correct answer is contained in the question itself and that you want a complete answer to each question:

Q. Did Inspector Jones go to the library or to the police station?

A. He went to the library.

**D. Other Question Words (All Chapters)**

*Aim:* To elicit short or complete answers to general questions beginning with words like *When, Where, Why*, etc.

*Procedure:* Explain to the students that they should learn to associate a particular type of response with different question words:

*What . . . ?*—Short or complete answers:

Q. What did you buy?

A. A book.

Q. What did he do?

A. He went to the library.

*Where . . . ?*—Prepositions of place (at, in, on, etc.)

Q. Where's Tom?

A. (He's) in the garden.

*Which . . . ?*—Short answers often with *one* as a pronoun:

Q. Which do you prefer?

A. The blue one.

Q. Which film did you see?

A. Cleopatra.

*Why . . . ?*—because/to infinitive:

Q. Why did he go to the library?

A. Because he wanted to borrow a book.

A. To borrow a book.

*When . . . ?*—Time phrases (yesterday, this morning, etc.); prepositions of time (at, on, in, etc.)

Q. When did you first meet him?

A. Last year.



Q. When is your appointment?

A. At 4.0 o'clock.

Q. When did you arrive?

A. On April 14th.

*Whose . . . ?*—Possessive pronouns. Apostrophe 's'.

Q. Whose is this coat?

A. It's mine/Tom's.

*How . . . ?*—Complete answers or *by* + *-ing*.

Q. How did you arrive at this figure?

A. I added up all these numbers.

A. By adding up all these numbers.

*Who . . . ?* (in place of *Whom . . . ?*)—Short answers:

Q. Who did you get this from?

A. My aunt.

**E. Mixed Questions** (All Chapters. Chapter 6 consists entirely of Mixed Questions)

*Aim:* To elicit the correct response to a variety of questions.

*Procedure:* These questions have been recorded after each passage. The recorded questions should be played to the class after the preceding exercises have been completed. The tape-recorder may be turned off after each recorded question is heard. There is a three second pause after each question.

**F. Asking Questions** (All Chapters)

*Aim:* To train the student to ask questions.

*Procedure:* The questions the student will ask are given in pairs. The student first asks a question using an auxiliary verb. Then he asks *precisely the same question again* preceding it with a question word:

Teacher: Ask me if he went out.

Student: Did he go out?

Teacher: Ask me when he went out.

Student: When *did he go out*?

Alternatively, the students may have their books open and ask each other questions.

### **G. Extended Oral Exercises (Chapters 4-6)**

**Aim:** To give the student practice in free oral expression.

**Procedure:** The following exercises have been given:

#### **1 Imaginary Dialogues**

Two students at a time should conduct a dialogue based on information given in the passage. They should be encouraged to reproduce orally as many as they can of the phrases and expressions they have heard.

#### **2 Oral Reproduction**

Two or three students should be given the opportunity to reproduce orally in reported speech the main ideas of the passage they have studied. To enable them to do this without stumbling, you may write key words and phrases on the blackboard to remind the students of the main sequence of events in the passage.

#### **3 Free Discussion**

This exercise is introduced in Chapters 5 and 6 only. The subject matter for these discussions is related to material contained in each passage. Abstract and argumentative topics have been excluded. At this level, the student should be trained to make statements on everyday subjects (travel, careers, holidays, etc.).

#### **Dictation**

If there is time at the end of a lesson, two or three lines of dictation should be given from a passage that has already been studied. Dictations may be delivered by the students themselves.

## **THE NEW EDITION**

Exercises added to the new edition (described on page 14 of the Introduction) may be exploited as follows:

### **MULTIPLE CHOICE COMPREHENSION**

**Aim:** To develop and test the students' ability to understand the texts.

**Procedure:** Invite the students to tackle the multiple choice exercises