



Essential English

FOR FOREIGN
STUDENTS

Book **1/2**

**TEACHER'S
BOOK**

New edition



ESSENTIAL ENGLISH

for
Foreign Students

BOOK ONE

by

C. E. ECKERSLEY

revised edition 1970 by J. M. Eckersley

TEACHER'S BOOK

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PREFACE

THE function of a Teacher's Book is, I think:

- (1) to give the general principles of language learning and language teaching;
- (2) to give and explain the various teaching techniques that practising teachers have found useful;
- (3) to give detailed suggestions on how to deal with, expand and drill the material presented in the pupil's book.

All this has been done in the Teacher's Books that accompany the *Essential English* course.

But rather more has been attempted. A textbook for comparative beginners naturally and, I think, rightly aims at presenting merely the *essentials* of the language; but any teacher who is taking his job seriously needs a wider background to these essentials, and so in these Teacher's Books I have provided additional data, fuller treatment of much of the grammar, sketches of recent theories on linguistics, etymological hints, etc. These sections are not intended for transmission to the students except, perhaps, indirectly and as answers to what might be awkward questions for a teacher whose facilities for consulting reference books or keeping abreast of modern developments both in England and in America are restricted. In short, the purpose of these sections is not primarily to help the pupil to learn more English, but rather to aid the untrained, inexperienced teacher, to widen his outlook and, perhaps, add a little to his confidence in himself.

In each Teacher's Book there is a Key to all those exercises where a Key is practicable.

C. E. ECKERSLEY.

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WORD BOOK

It is suggested that each student should get a small notebook and mark it out into sections alphabetically. The Vocabulary at the end of the Students' Book will show how many words there are for each letter and, consequently, how many lines will be needed. Then, as each new word is encountered, he can record it in its appropriate section and add the translation, thus making his own dictionary.

PART ONE

The aim of this book is not to lay down rules or dogmatise on methods of teaching English by *Essential English* or by any other book. Teaching, and especially the teaching of a language, is a highly individual thing and the personality of the teacher is more important than "methods." Besides, methods that might suit one teacher admirably, could be worse than useless for another. The best method of teaching English is one that arouses in a pupil a love of learning English; the worst is one that bores him. Every teacher has his own personality and will develop his own style, and I believe it is essential that he should have freedom to tackle the problems of teaching in his own way, for only so will he have enthusiasm in working them out. Therefore, I hope that no teacher will slavishly follow the suggestions in this book, or in any other book. But enthusiasm for teaching can, I think, be helped by a rational technique and a planned programme of work, and there are certain general methods of approach and certain techniques that I have found successful in the teaching of English to foreign students. These methods I have embodied in the *Essential English Course*, and in the present book I want to point them out and suggest how they may be applied. There will be little here, I realise, that the experienced teacher doesn't already know. But all teachers of English are not experienced teachers and it is to the inexperienced ones that, I hope, the suggestions may be helpful.

Aims

Let us first be clear about our aims. In teaching English the usual aims are to teach the student (a) to speak English

as nearly as possible in the way that English people speak it, (b) to understand English as spoken by English people, (c) to read English with ease, and (d) to write it with accuracy. *Essential English* is designed to further all these aims. Of them I think the first two, i.e., speaking and understanding, are the most important—and the most difficult to achieve. Almost any teacher can teach his students to read English; the text-book practically does the work for him. But to teach the pupil to speak English demands a sure command of English in the teacher and a high standard of skill in the teaching. Language is speech, whereas writing is merely a device for recording speech; and in whatever tongue he may have uttered it, man *spoke* his language (as every child does) long before he wrote it. So, the teacher's preoccupation should be with the spoken language. He must always remember that English is a living language and should not be taught as if it were a dead one. His teaching should be based not on "literary" extracts from the older writers but on the ordinary colloquial speech of people of to-day. It is the spoken word that is the basis of his teaching and, for a considerable time, learning should be by ear rather than by eye. So from the very start the students should hear English and attempt to speak it.

"But," objects a teacher, "what is the use of my speaking English at the outset when my pupils don't know a word of English?" Quite a lot of use. They will hear the English sounds and the English intonation, they will be surrounded by an English "atmosphere." Obviously the sentences you will say must be very simple, they will involve a good deal of repetition, repetition of words and of simple structures, but, as the students listen intently, words will begin to convey meaning, intonation will run through their minds, certain structures will remain in their memories.

"The first condition for good instruction in a foreign

language," said Jespersen, "would seem to be to give the student as much as possible to do with and in the foreign language; he must be steeped in it, not only get a sprinkling of it now and then; he must be ducked down in it and get to feel as if he were in his own element so that he may at last disport himself in it as an able swimmer."¹

That is one reason why the teacher should use the student's mother tongue as little as possible in teaching him English and aim at doing all his teaching in English.

Direct Method

This method (i.e. of using only the language to be taught) is often called, rather loosely, the "Direct" method.² More accurately the Direct method is a method that aims at forming a *direct* association between the new "idea" and the word or phrase that stands for it.

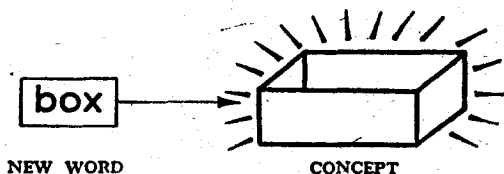
If the idea is an object (e.g., *a box, a window*), an action (e.g., *to open, walking*, etc.), or a quality (e.g., *dirty, heavy, black*, etc.) then the most direct way to show its meaning is to say the word and point to the object, do the action or demonstrate the quality, e.g.

A WINDOW (*pointing to it*) "That is a window. The window is *dirty* (*wiping it with the finger, showing a dirty finger, with an expression of disgust on the face*). I am *opening* the window: now I am *opening* the door. I will *open* my book (*doing so*). Now, *open* your books."

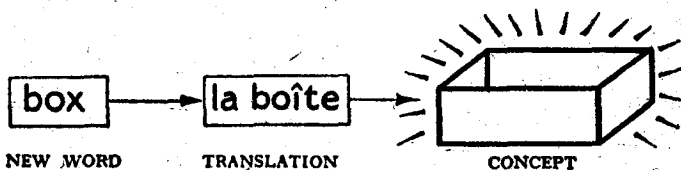
This plainly gives the most direct association between the language unit (word, collocation, phrase, construction) to be taught and the concept (object, action, quality, etc.) for which the language unit stands.

¹ *How to Teach a Foreign Language*, by Otto Jespersen (Allen and Unwin).

² Or the "Reform" method, the "Oral" method, the "Nature" method, etc.

Direct Method. Material Association

But suppose the student learns the word, not by material association, as here, but by translation. Then the mental process is something like this:

Translation Process

As you can see, in the translation process another factor has entered, blocking the direct line between the language unit and the concept that represents it.

Direct method teaching uses three techniques:

(1) The "DEMONSTRATION" (or "ostensive") procedure.

This can be used to show the meanings of things (nouns), of verbs, adjectives, adverbs, prepositions, etc., by direct association. We can teach the words *table, chair, umbrella, tree, etc.*, by pointing to these objects or by pictures of them. We can teach, by the action of walking, "I am walking *quickly/slowly*," etc. If you want to teach such sentences as: "The book is *on/under/near/behind*, etc., the table" or "This pencil is *red*, this one is *blue*," or "This boy is *awake*, this one is *asleep*," you can do it by appropriate actions, by demonstration, by

gestures, mime, or simple sketches on the blackboard, without having any recourse to translation.

(2) Identification by DEFINITION or synonym: e.g.

"An *umbrella* is a thing made of cloth or silk on a metal frame that can be shut up or opened out. It is used to keep off the rain," etc.

Definition, though useful when the students have gained some knowledge of English, is not of much use at the beginning stage.

(3) CONTEXTUAL procedure: e.g.

"It is raining and I want to go out. I don't want to get wet. I haven't a coat but I have an *umbrella*. I'll put up my *umbrella*. The rain is coming down on my *umbrella* but it isn't coming on me. My *umbrella* is protecting me; it is keeping me from getting wet. Now the rain has stopped. I'll take my *umbrella* down. An *umbrella* is very useful when it is raining."

"Yes," you say, "but wouldn't it save a lot of time if you just translated the word *umbrella*?" It would. But translation only supplies the meaning; it doesn't teach the word. In the example just used, the teacher, instead of merely giving the vernacular word for *umbrella*, used the word half a dozen times. He talked about the umbrella, about "putting it up," "taking it down," about it "protecting him from the rain" and "keeping him from getting wet." His students have been hearing English words and phrases and constructions that were probably new but which were used in a "situation" that made those words to some extent self-explanatory. His listeners have been, unconsciously, assimilating English sounds, intonations, words, speech patterns and constructions—and that is not wasting time.

The point I want to emphasise is that it is essential to get

the students "thinking in English" and not translating (even mentally) words and structures which in some cases do not admit of literal translation. A student who habitually resorts to translation will never achieve ease and fluency in speech.

Translation

"Must a student's native language, then, *never* be used in a lesson?" Well, that is a counsel of perfection that the teacher will be wise to keep always before him—but, very occasionally, to disregard, for there are times, despite what has just been said, when it may really save time and prevent misunderstanding to give a translation. Suppose, for example, the word *oak* crops up. The teacher (perhaps in the centre of a city) can't take his student into the country to see an oak tree: his blackboard drawing, for we can hardly expect him to be a skilled artist, might be mistaken for a beech, an ash, or a chrysanthemum; a definition, "a big tree that grows to a great age and has very hard wood" could be elm or mahogany or teak; his contextual procedure about walking among oak trees whose companions had made battleships for Nelson or hidden Charles II would give no real enlightenment. Obviously, however keen he might be on "direct method," he should realise that in a case like this translation is the most direct method. Similarly, when you are describing, for example, English speech sounds, intonation, patterns, or points of grammar (though for beginners the need is not so much explanation of grammar as the drilling in sentence patterns), then a lot of hazy misconceptions can be avoided by giving the explanation in the student's own language.

But, if you have found it unavoidably necessary to translate a word, do all you can to encourage direct association by using and giving practice in the new word or new phrase.

If, for example, you have had to translate the word *since*, then follow it up immediately by drill on *since*, e.g.,

He hasn't seen John	} <i>since</i> {	two o'clock.
They haven't been here		Wednesday.
I haven't smoked a cigarette		last Sunday.
		last week.
		July 1969.
		the holidays began.

For you should always remember that, almost certainly, silent translation is going on all the time in the student's mind. You may give him the English terms, you may have used only English in your sentence, but in the student's mind is the thought, "Oh, yes, our word for that is . . ." "That's what the English say for . . ." This silent translation will continue until the English word or collocation has become completely assimilated and there is "direct association."

There is, of course, a real place for translation in language learning; but its place is near the end of the course, not at the beginning. Translation is of value, and of great value, to the student who has already assimilated the English speech mechanisms, who uses them unconsciously as he "thinks in English" and who is now able to enjoy the subtle pleasure of comparing the structure and idioms of the two languages and of getting a vivid perception of the delicate shades of variation in the languages as he sees how the same thought is expressed one way in his own language, another way in English.

Language Learning a Skill

The teaching of English differs from the teaching of many of the other subjects in the school curriculum. English, at least in its early stages, does not consist, as subjects like history or chemistry do, of a body of information to be imparted by the teacher to the student. There is information

to be acquired, of course, whole libraries of it, information on grammar, on philology, phonology, phonetics, and so on, but certainly not at the stage we are at here. Remember that you are teaching English, not *about* English. A student can know all about English and yet be unable to follow an ordinary conversation between English people or speak half a dozen sentences as English people would say them. The people who only learn (or teach) *about* English make the mistake of regarding "English" as a "subject" (like geography or physics), which it is not, instead of as a "skill" or an "activity" like swimming or tennis, which it is. You learn to swim by getting into the water and swimming; you learn football by going and kicking a ball. And you learn to speak English by speaking it and not by being told about it.

You will, of course, learn to swim or play tennis better and more quickly if you are helped by a teacher who knows the "theory" of swimming or tennis, who realises the difficulties that have to be overcome, the enemy that has to be beaten and who knows the best method of overcoming them. Now in learning a language "the enemy of the language to be learned is the language already in possession."¹ In other words the student always finds that his mother tongue acts as a hindrance in the learning of a new language. For many years he has been accustomed to certain speech habits, habits of sound-formation, of word order, of sentence structure. At every turn the learner is beset with the temptation to follow his natural inclination and, for the speech sounds, stresses, word order and idiom of English, substitute the sounds, order and idiom of his own language. What the teacher has to do is to replace the ingrained language habits of the student's native language by the, perhaps, quite different English ones. Here is another strong argument for

¹ E. C. Kittson : *Theory and Practice of Language Teaching* (O.U.P.).

the "direct method." If the pupil has his own language in the forefront of his consciousness—as he must by the translation method—he cannot escape from the bonds of its language patterns. This influence of the mother tongue can be very subtle and very far-reaching. I remember remarking to a very good student, a German girl living in England, that she was not speaking English quite so well as she usually did. "It's a funny thing," she said, "I received a letter from home this morning, and I have noticed that on the days I get a letter from home my English is worse."

The vital thing, then, for the beginner is not so much instruction as *practice*: practice in listening to English and practice in using English. Learning to speak English therefore is not, or ought not to be, a matter of learning "rules of grammar," but of practising speech patterns or sentence patterns until they become automatic and are no more matters of conscious thought than breathing is. In other words the learner should acquire his English as the child learns its own mother tongue, not by conscious thought about grammar but by imitation.

The "Natural" Method

Don't read more into this than I have stated. I think the whole-hearted devotees of the "natural" method, the method of putting the learner in an environment where he hears nothing but English and leaving him to it, is fallacious. I have known foreigners who have lived in England for thirty or forty years, who have married English wives and lived in English surroundings all that time and yet whose English speech was full of un-English sounds, un-English intonation, un-English stress and un-English constructions. Admittedly the child "picks up" its English like that, but what a slow business it is. "Despite the constant help of nurses and

admiring parents, and despite the fact that the child can devote his whole time to it and despite several years of lessons in it at school, few people ever attain a thorough mastery of even their own language."¹ And where the child has days and weeks, we in the classroom have hours and minutes.

The text-book writer and teacher can improve on nature here by bringing system into the pupil's learning, by controlling the vocabulary he acquires and by seeing that what he hears for imitation doesn't depend so much on chance.

Imitation

There is no doubt that imitation is one of the keys, perhaps the golden key, to success. Language learning depends very largely on the ability to hear correctly the sounds the teacher utters, the skill to mimic them exactly, the patience and perseverance to practise those same sounds and sentence patterns, and a retentive memory to hold them. Correct usage is a matter of habit not knowledge, and a large increase in knowledge, especially where the knowledge has been purely theoretical and divorced from practice, may bring only a very small increase in the ability to use English correctly.

The "Linguistic Sense"

An Englishman speaking English (or a Frenchman speaking French, a Russian speaking Russian or a Greek speaking Greek) will use constructions, verb tenses, agreements, etc., quite correctly but quite unconsciously. If you asked him why he used one particular form rather than another he probably couldn't tell you. He merely knows that what he said "sounded right." He has, by constant hearing of a form and constant practice in using it acquired a "linguistic sense." This is hardly helped at all by grammatical knowledge.

¹ Jespersen: *How to Teach a Foreign Language*.

Grammatical knowledge creates a *critical* sense: it can judge whether the final product is right or wrong, but it does nothing to produce it. Now we are aiming at creating that "linguistic sense" in our students by the same methods, i.e. imitation and practice, but practice on selected material.

Grammar

To a large extent drills in sentence patterns will, in the earlier stages, take the place of instruction in English grammar. With children these drills could almost entirely replace grammar. Children probably find it easier to learn by heart than does the adult student; their verbal memory, "wax to receive and marble to retain," is perhaps superior to the adult's. *Essential English*, however, is primarily for the adult student. His approach to language learning is naturally the philosophic, rational one. He wants to know why and when certain forms and constructions are used. He wants to see how the language works, to examine the structural patterns, noting how they are put together and studying the relations between the words used in them. Consequently, in *Essential English* rather more attention has been paid to formal grammar and "explanation" than would have been the case had the course been intended mainly for children. But new constructions are introduced gradually and systematically and are illustrated in the reading material of the lesson before the construction is explained. For the same reason there is less stress on the saying of nursery rhymes and "activity" and "action-chains" ("walk to the door, open it, go outside, close the door, open it again, go back to your place, stand in your seat, sit down again"). This sort of thing which, though valuable and enjoyable to the child, may cause embarrassment to the adult student. But the grammar given is only the essential grammar, and what there