

A Report on the University of Manchester Approach

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1. Details of the course

A course in techniques for English teachers, organized by the British Council, was held at the University of Manchester from July 12-31, 1982. The course was designed for experienced teachers of English as a Foreign Language. Its aims are several, being divided into theoretical and practical. The former are

a) to illustrate techniques of developing a pedagogic grammar by exploring the nature of communicative function, linguistic contextualization, physical situationalization, usefulness and ease of learning,

b) to set up a generalized model of linguistic form and function with regard to factual-type language as the basis of a syllabus *suitable*, with various shifts of emphasis, for all learning situations and relevant for all levels of learning,

c) to establish a framework for integrating the receptive skills of listening and reading and the productive skills of speaking and writing. In this framework, the learner practises his receptive skills to gain information of which he demonstrates his comprehension by producing some non-verbal summary of that same information which, in turn, is used as a means of eliciting a linguistic response from the learner as he practices his productive skills.

The practical aims of the course are

d) to demonstrate generalized teaching materials based on the theoretical principles established.

e) to help participants develop the skills of devising such teaching materials.

f) to help participants develop the skills of using such materials in the classroom.

g) to help participants develop additional ways of exploiting their own teaching materials using the principles previously discussed and illustrated.

The Director of Studies was Dr. Pat McEldowny, Lecturer in Teaching English (Overseas), Department of Adult and Higher Education at the University of Manchester. Course tutors were Paul Barry, Mike Beaumont, Lewis Gorjanc of

the University of Manchester, John Burgess of Huddersfield Technical College and Graham Frank-Keyes of Manchester Polytechnic.

The course was particularly useful in providing an opportunity for experienced EFL teachers in many different countries to catch up on new theories and practices and to exchange ideas and expertise. The fifty participants came from Algeria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Ecuador, France, Federal Republic of Germany, Ghana, Greece, Hong Kong, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Mexico, Poland, Portugal, Singapore, Spain, Sudan, Syria, Thailand, Venezuela and Yugoslavia. Most of these teachers are natives of the countries where they taught.

The core content of the course is handled in two cycles.

1. The simple verb group is used to establish a basic framework suitable to any teaching situation. This accounts for about 70 % of all English verb usage.

2. The complex verb group is used as a means of illustrating how more sophisticated language items and more specialized courses can be developed from this general framework.

In each of the cycles, work moves from a discussion of theoretical principles to the illustration of general teaching materials to the development of individual teaching materials specially designed for each participant's own situation. The first stage is done in a plenary session while the last two are done in tutorials.

In addition to the core content, several peripheral options are offered, each of which explores core principles from a different point of view.

The Noun Phrase and Prepositions both illustrate how other grammatical items are dealt with in the contexts provided by the general basic framework based on verb grammar.

Prosodic Features focuses on how stress and intonation can be fitted into the basic framework established.

Teaching Aids focuses on the use of non-verbal transition devices in the integrated cycle of language learning. It includes reference to the language laboratory and focuses on the place of the laboratory in providing facilities for the verbal input and output stages of an integrated cycle of learning.

English for Special Purposes, Literature and Authentic Texts focus on how general principles discussed can be developed and modified for specific learning situations and for non-factual types of language.

Language Evaluation focuses on how the pedagogic principles discussed can be applied to testing learners' proficiency in English.

Much of the benefit gained from the course derived from the discussions done in and outside the classroom among participants and between participants and tutors, as well as from the actual teaching demonstrations and material preparations done by fellow participants. All these benefits cannot be adequately described in this

article. However, I will try to summarize some of the major pedagogic points in this approach that may prove useful to the reader. I will also present a unit of material which I have prepared using this approach.

2. Major points in the approach

2.1 *English as the medium of study*

The type of English taught in this approach is more of the expository, neutral, transactional type that is the medium of education in English-speaking countries and also at some higher levels in non English-speaking countries than of the conversational, idiomatic type used in social interactions. It has been emphasized over and over again that English should be regarded as a medium through which studying in the students' specialized subject is done. English language teachers are, then, involved in developing the tools for learning rather than in developing a body of content. The term 'tools' refers not only to grammatical items and structures but also to vocabulary, pronunciation, stress, intonation, etc. The content is what the student learns from his experience and need not be taught in the language class. What needs to be taught here is how to find out about the content and get it organized in the most appropriate way. In reading and listening, for example, the tools are some knowledge of grammatical items and vocabulary, and how to associate this knowledge with the student's own pragmatic knowledge (i.e. knowledge about the world). To illustrate this point, let's look at text 1.

Text 1.¹

Among the *weavers*, the *whydahs* are very interesting.

Of all *birds*, the whydahs are to be.....

In spite of the unfamiliar words such as *weavers* and *whydahs*, from their positions in the sentences, we can tell that these two words are nouns. From that, and also from the meanings of words like *of all*, and *among*, we can tell further that the *whydahs* belong to the *weaver* family and that both the *whydahs* and the *weavers* are birds. This set of relationships among the content items comes from our grammatical knowledge together with our pragmatic knowledge. This sort of tools is what the student must be equipped with in order to deal with their specialized subject.

2.2 *Teaching in Context*

Providing the student with the tools necessary for understanding and producing the language is not all there is in language teaching. The student must also learn to use these tools effectively to manipulate the language in the appropriate context and situation. The term 'context' here refers not to the linguistic environment of a certain grammatical item but to the setting in which the language is used. The student should be taught to be responsive to the context and situation rather than to certain linguistic signals. For clarification on this point, let's look at text 2.

Text 2.

John_____custard now. (eat)

This is a very common put-in-the-correct-form-of-verb exercise for EFL students. The students have usually been taught to be so sensitive to the linguistic signal 'now' that they automatically put 'is eating' in the blank space. But doesn't this mean that 'John *eats* custard now', 'John *ate* custard now,' and 'John *has eaten* custard now', which do exist in certain contexts, are incorrect?

Not only should the student be taught to be responsive to the context and situation rather than to linguistic signals but he should also be made aware that language performs a certain function in a certain context and these functions determine the language forms. Consider text 3 as an example.

Text 3.

Civilization_____(begin) in four great aquatic basins. First, a Chinese civilization_____(grow up) on the Yellow River. Then Mesopotamian civilization_____(develop) in the Tigris-Euphratis Delta. A little later the Egyptians_____(gain) control of the Nile and a large community_____(be) established.

The passage being taken as a historical account, all the verbs in parentheses are to be put in the past tense form. However, the present form of the verbs is not only possible but more appropriate if the passage is given as a lecture to go together with a slide show or as a description of a series of pictures. The verbs can also be in the future tense if the passage performs a function of prediction of a series of events. This shows that language form changes as its context and function change.

In this approach, the context and function of language are considered to be essential in effective language teaching and learning. It has been suggested that in order to minimize the difficulties in EFL language learning, an association of language form and function should be established and this establishment should always be done within appropriate contexts. In the learning of the function of connected sets of instructions together with a certain form of verbs, for instance, the students may be asked to carry out instructions of how to use various machines, or to give sets of instructions to others for how to make a paper bird, how to prepare a certain dish etc. In teaching the positional-directional instructions, on the other hand, plans and diagrams may be used in connection with how to get from one place to another. (For further details and sample units of material for teaching instruction and description, see McEldowney, 1975 and 1977, respectively)

2.3 Verb Forms and Functions

The English verb phrase is one of the most difficult areas in ESL learning. In this approach, the main emphasis with respect to language form is on the verb phrase. From the pedagogical point of view, the English verbs can be divided into

two distinct categories: finite and non-finite. From these categories emerge six verb forms. These are finite stem (eat), finite stem + s (eats), finite stem + ed (ate), non-finite stem (to eat), non-finite stem + ing (eating) and non-finite stem + ed (eaten). These forms can be used singly or in groups, the largest groups consisting of 5 items (could have been being eaten).

For pedagogical purposes, language functions are divided into 5 types: the functions of description, instruction, narration; process and narrative padding. They are called core functions, each being marked by a particular group of language items, and are claimed to be typical of the widest possible range of expository English. Some of these functions can be divided further for more effective language learning. The function of instruction, for instance, can be subcategorized into positional/directional instruction, connected sets of instruction and reasoned instruction.

It is suggested that the easiest way to deal with the verb phrase in English is to isolate the functions, to associate a clear function with each verb form and to organize teaching in such a way that a simple pattern of form and function occurs. Even though it is true that there is no clear one-to-one relationship between a verb form and a function, it is more effective, pedagogically speaking, to establish one function for one verb form and to always deal with the verb form in the classroom in conjunction with this particular function. The function of instruction, for example, can be associated with the stem form of the dynamic verb in basic sentence patterns V, VO and VOO, as in

Come
Write a letter.
Give me the paper.

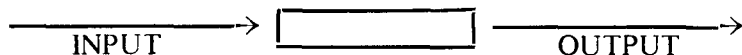
The function of narration, on the other hand, can be associated with the stem + ed form of the dynamic verb in basic sentence patterns SV, SVO, and SVOO as in

The man smiled.
He approached the girl.
He bought the girl a red rose.

At no time should the practice of the stem form verbs in V, VO and VOO patterns be isolated from the function of instruction, nor should that of the stem + ed form verbs in SV, SVO and SVOO be isolated from the function of narration. All of the tasks to be carried out in a unit of materials should aim at establishing in the student's mind the concept of use and usefulness of a certain verb form. This serves as a strong motivation for language learning, for the student will immediately see the purpose of his learning of the particular form. (cf. McEldowney, 1976 for sample texts representing each function)

2.4 Organization of a Unit

In organizing a unit of materials, a language teacher usually uses the following framework.



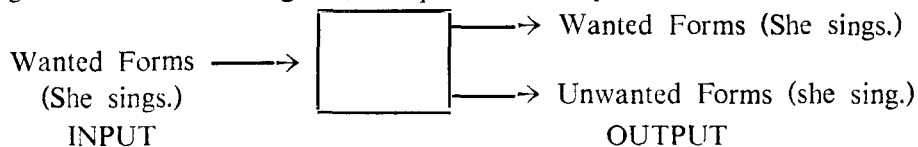
That is, with some model (in form of a structural pattern, a reading text, a listening passage etc.) given as an input, the student is expected to produce as an output a mirror image of the model. If a student is given the form 'She sings beautifully', he will be expected to produce the same sentence as an output, as in the following diagram :

She sings beautifully. —→ [] —→ She sings beautifully.

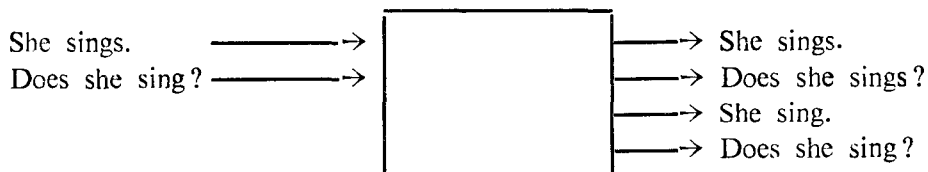
The belief underlying this framework, which leads to the mirrorimage expectation, is that the learner can and should :

1. receive the messages exactly.
2. store them exactly as received.
3. be able to produce them on demand exactly as received and stored.

But what actually happens in a real language classroom is that, given the model 'she sings.', the students sometimes produce 'she sing' interchangeably with 'she sings'. In form of a diagram, the problem is represented as follows :



Furthermore, when given 'she sings.' and 'does she sing?' as models, they sometimes produce 'she sing' and 'does she sings?'

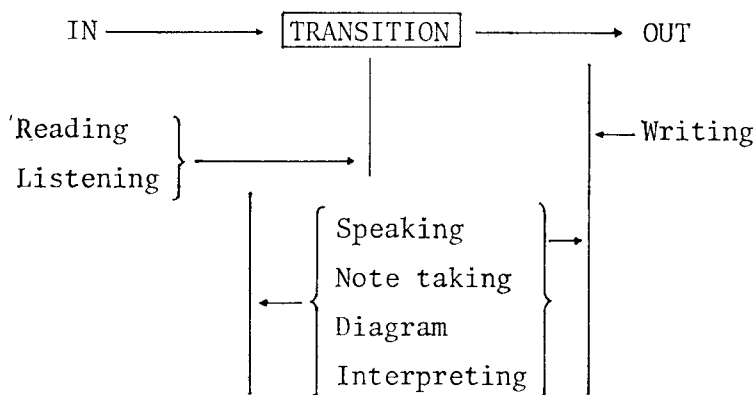


Language learning seems to involve more than just giving an input and expecting a similar output. It seems to involve also registration and remembering. Experiments indicate that memory is not a mirror image of an input but is reconstruction (McEldowney, 1980). It has also been found that interferences, which distort the reconstruction process resulting in unwanted forms, usually occur through cross association among items to be remembered, the students' previous knowledge and their ways of rationalization. Therefore, it is suggested that a teacher, faced with more than one item listed together as a teaching part, should ask himself the following questions.

1. Will presenting these items together make learning easier or harder?
2. Will the presentation of a certain item now hinder later learning?
3. Will the presentation of a certain item now undermine previous learning?

2.5 Skills

An integration of different skills (reading, listening, speaking, writing, note-taking, diagram interpreting etc.) in a unit of material is recommended. These skills should not be regarded as being separate from one another. On the contrary, they should be regarded as being means of presenting a piece of material and of associating a verb form in the material with its function. However, the degree of emphasis of each skill may be different, as is the order in which each skill comes in to picture in an actual language classroom situation. Using the IN→ → OUT framework, a suggested organization of skill in a unit of material is



From this diagram, the student starts out by receiving some information, either aurally or visually. From this receptive stage, the student learns to transfer the information he gets to a productive stage via a transitional stage using the skills of speaking, note-taking etc. After sufficient practice in the transitional stage, the student should be able to produce a language of his own through the skill of writing.

It should be noted that the integration of skills in a unit of material is advantageous in many respects. First, it brings varieties into a could-be-boring language class. This, in turn, keeps the students alert at all times. It also gives the teacher more opportunities to try out various activities, some of which may motivate the students to come to class. Even more important is that it is compatible with the real-life functions of language. In actual uses of language, all skills are applied in an integrated way.

It should be noted that although all the skills are integrated in the organization of material, a distinction is made between receptive and productive language skills with respect to the teacher's expectation. In language learning, it has been found that receptive skills usually grow more rapidly than productive ones. That is, a

student can understand much more than he can produce. Therefore, the teacher should not expect the student's production to be as complicated as the input text.

3. Sample Unit of Writing.

3.1 I have prepared a unit of writing on the process of titration of acids and bases for the first year medical science students, Faculty of Science, Mahidol University, adopting the Manchester approach. This sample material is presented here to show how the approach works in the context of English for specific Purposes. This unit was made in October 1982, about two months after the course was finished. It was taught in December 1982 to 6 groups of first-year medical science students, each group having about 40-45 students, by six instructors, one being a native speaker of English, the rest being Thais. The whole unit took about 2 hours, the grading of papers and correction not included. About one week before the actual teaching, a brief summary on the Manchester Approach and a teaching demonstration of this unit of material were given by myself to the other instructors so that they would understand the basic concepts in the approach and all the teaching steps. Everybody in teaching team seemed to find an interest in the approach and some reported to have done a rehearsal before actual teaching. After the teaching periods, the result has proved to be positive. I was quite satisfied with the reactions from the students in my group as well as the paragraphs they wrote. Results from other groups have been reported to be quite satisfactory also.

3.2 The description of a process differs from other types of description in that the sequence of events is important and also dynamic verbs rather than stative verbs occur. Another essential difference is that most of the verbs in the process description are in the form of finite stem + s (is, are) followed by non-finite stem + ed (mixed). The small number of the verbs uses finite stem and stem + s forms (undergoes), as in the following text.

Text 4

Glass Making

In the making of any glass item four basic steps can be established. First, the basic ingredients are mixed together to make frit. Then they are melted at very high temperatures to produce the molten glass which is then processed by one of a range of methods to produce whatever glass object is required. It then undergoes the important process of annealing which entails reheating the glass and cooling it very slowly and carefully. An infinite variety of detail occurs within this basic process depending on the purpose for which the glass is being made.

Therefore, in this unit, these verb forms will be taught in connection with the function of process description. It should be noted that heavy emphasis is placed on the verb forms and their sequence in relation to one another. The content, on the other hand, receives a very little emphasis since the students have made at least one titration experiment in the chemistry lab (though not these three particular experiments) and they have also learned about the reactions of acids and bases. The input is given through listening and reading; the transition is done through speaking and diagram interpreting and the output task is paragraph writing.

Slips to be put in envelop-2

_____ are removed by _____ _____ through _____	_____ is filled with _____ _____ .
_____ appears.	_____ are squeezed to get _____ .
_____ are added _____ .	_____ are recorded.
_____ are cleaned _____ _____ .	_____ is filled with _____ _____ .
_____ are calculated.	_____ disappears.
_____ is swirled.	_____ is run into _____ _____ .
_____ is dropped _____ .	_____ is added until _____ .

Teacher's Notes

Step 1 Give out worksheet 1

Ex. I Students skim-read about titration to answer questions. This exercise is an introduction to get students to be familiar with the vocabulary used in titration and to make sure they understand the basic concepts in this process.

1. It's a process we use in measuring the concentration of a solution to a measured volume of a solution of the other reactant until the end point is reached.

2.3 : A solution of known concentration (a standard solution), a solution of unknown concentration and an indicator.

3. A buret.

4. Normality (N)

Step 2 Give out worksheet 2 & 3

Ex. II Students look at diagrams of equipment and materials needed for a titration experiment in determining acetic acid in vinegar.

Step 3 Students listen to a talk given by teacher on the description of a titration experiment in determination of acetic acid in vinegar. Meanwhile, students circle names of equipment and materials used in this particular process on worksheet p. 2.

Step 4 Teacher writes names of equipment and materials needed in this experiment in 2 columns on board.

equipment	Materials
2 burets	Na OH
1 flat. bottomed flask	Vinegar Phenolphthalein

Do not erase this until step 8 is done.

Ex. 2 is to suggest that equipment and materials are two important factors in describing an experimental process.

Step 5 Students look through the list of verbs on worksheet 3.

Ex. III

Step 6 Students listen to the talk again, this time for verbs, and arrange them in correct sequence in which they really occur in the process. (not in the order in which they hear them)

Step 7 Teacher writes on board the list of verbs *in correct order*.

are cleaned
is filled with
is filled with

is run into
 are added
 is dropped
 appears
 is swirled
 disappears
 is added
 does not disappear
 are recorded
 are calculated

Ex. III is to emphasize the finite stem/stem + s followed by nonfinite + ed forms of verbs in connection with the description of the process, as well as the significance of the correct sequence of verbs.

Step 8 Students make up sentences from these verbs by putting subjects and objects/adverbs in front of and after these verbs. In order to do this teacher should ask leading questions such as what is cleaned? with what? etc.

The first sentence on board should be

Two burets are cleaned with soap-solution.

This part is very flexible. Teacher chooses to make the sentences simple or complicated depending on the level of students. Do not expect the output to be as complicated as the input talk.

Step 9 Students use appropriate sequence connectors to join sentences and

Ex. IV make up a paragraph.

Step 10 Teacher erases parts of the paragraph. Subject and objects/adverbs should be erased first. Student orally practice describing the process using the clues on the board.

Teacher erases more, still leaving the verbs on board. Students practice again orally, one by one.

Then teacher erases the whole paragraph and has students say each sentence one by one.

By this time, students should be able to describe the process orally by themselves.

Step 11 Before doing this step, make sure there is nothing left on the board.

Ex. V Students get into small groups (of 4 or 5)

Teacher gives out envelop

Each group studies the pictures in the envelop, finds out what the process is, name the equipment and materials used, then arrange them in correct sequence.

Step 12 Teacher gives out envelop 2

Students match pictures in envelop with slips in envelop 2.

Step 13 Each group writes up a paragraph, using the slips in the two envelops as clues.

Step 14 Teacher gives out worksheet

Teacher makes sure students have learned that in describing a process, the equipment and materials are important and the verbs must be finite stem/ stem + s or finite stem/stem + s followed by non-finite + ed forms and that the verbs must be in correct sequence.

Ex. VI Each student works on his own, using the diagram given on The worksheet write a paragraph describing a titration process in determining the purity of baking soda.

Notes

1. All of the sample texts given in this article have been taken from McEldowney, 1980

References

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