

**Centre for English Language Studies**  
University of Birmingham

Masters in Teaching English as a foreign or second language

Analysis of three units of three different course books

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**Question: SM/09/04**

Make a collection of a total of three different units, one unit from each of three different EFL/ESL coursebooks, and identify:

- the main teaching points
- the main teaching methodology/methodologies employed in each unit
- the type of syllabus employed by the book
- the syllabus fit i.e. how the content of the unit relates to the content of preceding and succeeding units
- the intended learner/teaching situation

Evaluate the content of each unit.

- describe the strengths and weaknesses of each of the units
- how well does the material achieve the stated aims of objectives?
- how well does the material fit the stated learning situation?

Would you use any of the units you have chosen in your own teaching situation?



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## 1 Introduction

Coursebooks frequently form the basis of instruction, providing the structure and destination of courses (Sheldon, 1988, p. 238). In addition, as Cunningsworth (1995, p. 1) argues “Learners are becoming more sophisticated ... [t]hey ... expect textbooks to make learning easier and more enjoyable”. However, coursebooks should also be favoured by the teacher, since they deliver the material. Therefore, a coursebook should meet both the needs of the students, and the beliefs and approach of the teacher “as closely as possible” (Cunningsworth, 1995, p. 7). These dilemmas serve to accentuate the need for effective evaluation systems and make clear the fact that most coursebooks offer a compromise. The three units chosen for this question were all compromises for my working context, offering a balance between all the issues discussed above. They are:

1. Unit 2, *Ready for FCE* (First Certificate in English), Roy Norris (2008)
2. Unit 4, *Straight Forward Upper Intermediate*, Philip Kerr and Ceri Jones. (2007)
3. Unit 12, *New Headway Beginner*, Liz and John Soars (2002)

These units were selected because I had strong opinions of their effectiveness, based on their use in my classroom and I was interested to understand more clearly those opinions.

To facilitate answering the question, I undertook a formal evaluation of the units using an existing framework, as the authors of the materials had not always explicitly outlined their syllabus type, approach or methodology, and since my impressions were unlikely to

be objective, given my experience of using them. The next section will look at the system utilised and the rationale behind my choice.

## 2 Coursebook Evaluation

McGrath suggests three options when undertaking a close evaluation “borrow and adapt”, “originate” or “research”. (2002, pp. 40-41) The latter two clearly fell outside the scope of this assignment, so I chose the first.

According to Littlejohn (1998, p. 191), many existing frameworks can be extremely useful, however their weaknesses, he argues, relate to the fact that

they usually involve making general, impressionistic judgements on the materials, rather than examining in depth what the materials contain. Typically, they also contain implicit assumptions about what ‘desirable’ materials should look like.

This seems valid in that, if a framework simply requires value judgements based on intuition, it may not provide an accurate insight. Littlejohn (ibid.) identifies aspects of analysis to consider when evaluating materials. These aspects are itemised in Figure 1 below.

Fig. 1: *Aspects of analysis of language teaching materials* (Littlejohn, 1998, p. 193)

## 1 Publication

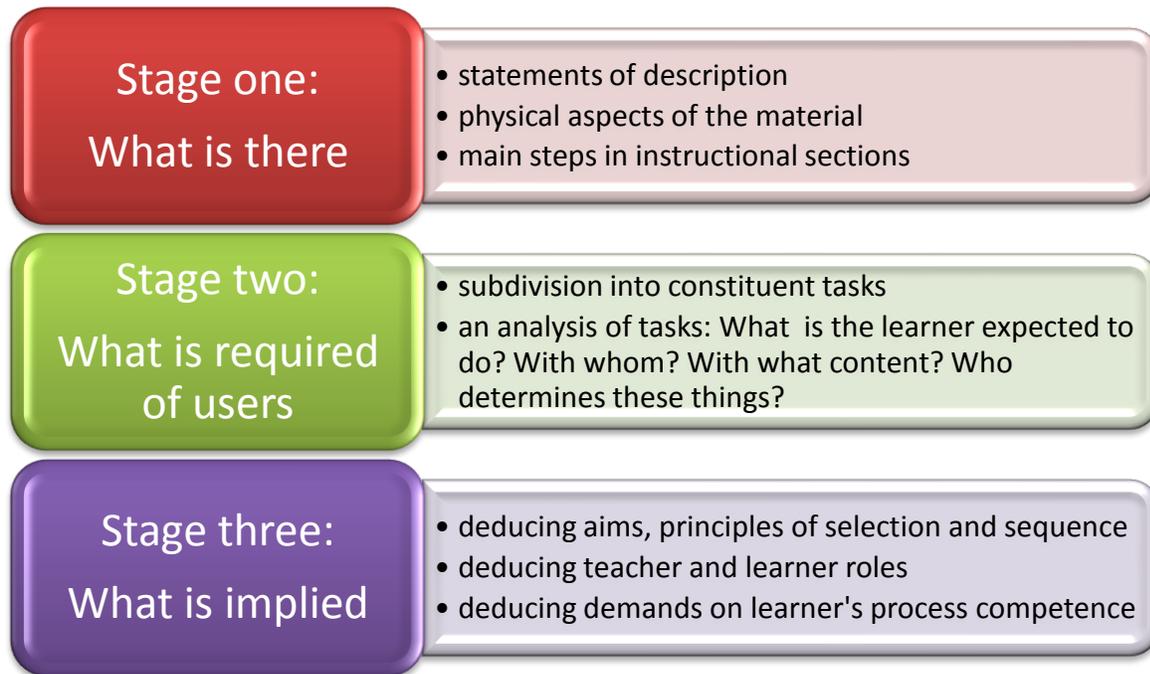
1. Place of the learner's materials in any wider set of materials
2. Published form of the learner's materials
3. Subdivision of the learner's materials into sections
4. Subdivision of sections into sub-sections
5. Continuity
6. Route
7. Access

## 2 Design

1. Aims
2. Principles of selection
3. Principles of sequencing
4. Subject matter and focus of subject matter
5. Types of learning/teaching activities:
  - what they require the learner to do
  - the manner in which they draw on learner's process competence
6. Participation: who does what with whom
7. Learner roles
8. Teacher roles
9. Role of the materials as a whole

However, he argues these factors alone are insufficient, as deciding the '*types of learning activities*' for example should occur before drawing conclusions on the '*principles of sequencing*'. He suggests, therefore, using a three tier system (Figure 2 below), where easier to identify elements precede more complex and opinion based elements. (Littlejohn, 1998, p. 195)

Fig. 2: Levels of analysis of language teaching materials (adapted from (Littlejohn, 1998, p. 195))



McGrath (2002, p. 48) criticises this system arguing that it is based on the belief, among other things, that “materials evaluation ... can be a value-free undertaking”. I would challenge this claim, given that Littlejohn (1998, p. 192) suggests that

[w]hat is required ... is a framework which separates assumptions about what is desirable, from an analysis of the materials. We need ... a general framework which allows materials to ‘speak for themselves’ and which helps teacher-analysts to look closely into materials before coming to their *own* conclusions about the desirability or otherwise of the materials.

In my opinion, he does not suggest that evaluation is value-free, rather it should be free of the values of the framework writer so that the teacher-analyst can form their own personal view of the material based on their analysis of the content.

I, therefore, chose Littlejohn’s system as a basis for my own framework, as it allows objectivity, helping me draw useful conclusions to answer the assignment questions.

Stages one and three of my evaluation are shown in Appendices 1 and 2 respectively. The remainder of this assignment will examine each element of the question and provide an analysis for each coursebook in turn.

### **3 Main teaching points**

This section identifies the main teaching points within the units. The amount and type of material covered in each unit reflects the level the course aims at. To avoid overload, *New Headway* provides a limited amount of essential material, with extensive practice, whereas, *Ready for FCE* and *Straight Forward* both provide extensive material, the grammar of which should be familiar, but not yet mastered, at these levels. In addition, the amount of skills work in the latter two books, reflect an attempt to encourage student autonomy.

#### **3.1 Ready for FCE**

Unit 2 of *Ready for FCE* consists of ten pages of course material, a two-page review section and eight workbook pages. (For details see Section 2.2, Appendix 1.1 p. 28/29) It represents approximately three ninety-minute lessons with the workbook and review designed as homework. The main teaching points are:

- indirect questions, gerunds and infinitives,
- Vocabulary: music, sports, suffixes for people and prefixes for negative adjectives.
- Skills: writing, reading, listening and speaking

### **3.2 *Straight Forward***

Unit 4 of *Straight Forward* consists of four double-page lessons, representing ninety minutes of classroom time each. There is also a single-page review section and seven workbook pages, designed for independent study. (For details see Section 2.2 Appendix 1.2 pp. 30-31) The main teaching points are:

- present perfect vs. past simple; present perfect simple vs. continuous
- expressing reason
- Vocabulary: word building; personality adjectives; homophones
- three syllable word stress
- Skills: speaking, listening, reading

### **3.3 *New Headway***

Unit 12 of *New Headway* comprises four double-pages designed for approximately ninety minutes of teaching each, plus five workbook pages and two optional communicative activities (See section 2.2, Appendix 1.3 for details p. 33). The principle teaching points are as follows:

- *want, would like and like.*
- Vocabulary: food and drink.
- ordering a meal and shopping
- Reading skills

## 4 Methodology

Brown (2001, p. 15) defines methodology as “pedagogical practices in general ... [w]hatever considerations are involved in how to teach.” In coursebooks, this is reflected in the type of activities chosen and the way the learner is expected to learn. The methodology used in the respective units will be considered in this section.

### 4.1 *Ready for FCE*

Most modern coursebooks, according to Cunningsworth, view their audience as intelligent individuals, who are capable of thinking for themselves (1995, p. 101). This is reflected in *Ready for FCE* when Norris (2008, p. 8) states:

Students at this level will already be familiar with the majority of the grammar areas which are required for the First Certificate examination. Most Language focus sections, therefore, do not simply give students the grammar rules, but encourage them instead to apply their existing knowledge to example sentences and work out rules for themselves.

Norris adds that this is achieved by asking questions about examples or matching examples to rules, the answers to which can be verified in the grammar reference. His approach to grammar, therefore, is inductive, but rules are also given explicitly, so less confident students can also benefit.

My analysis revealed that this coursebook makes maximum use of material with extensive recycling within the unit. For example, some of the vocabulary relating to music (p. 14) is required to answer the examination listening task (p. 15) that follows. In addition, the examples for analysis in the grammar sections (pp. 16, 20 & 22) are taken from listening (pp.15 & 21) or reading texts (pp. 18-19), which have already been processed for meaning. Moreover, vocabulary is presented with its most common

collocations (pp. 14 & 23) and students are encouraged to learn them as whole phrases, which reflect their natural language use. This approach reflects Ausubel's second language acquisition theory, which argues that learning has to be meaningful for acquisition to occur. ( (Anderson & Ausubel, 1965) cited in (Brown, 2000, p. 83)) In other words, in order to learn, new language has to be linked to existing knowledge. Norris's cyclical approach within the unit, therefore, maximises the opportunities for acquisition.

## **4.2 *Straight Forward***

Kerr (Scrivener & Bingham, 2007, p. viii) outlines the principles behind *Straight Forward*, arguing that "the grail of the 'perfect' approach was elusive and unobtainable." and that no one methodology can work for all students. So, he (Scrivener & Bingham, 2007, p. viii) suggests:

The best approach to any language teaching situation will be eclectic, drawing on a multitude of approaches and techniques, choosing and shaping them in ways that are appropriate to our own particular classrooms.

My analysis indicated that the majority of the activities are meaning focussed (65%), and this, combined with authentic reading and listening materials, the teaching of pronunciation, despite the upper intermediate level, and the fact that vocabulary is taught in context, all indicate a communicative methodology. However, grammar is taught deductively, comprising 29% of the activities in the unit. Although grammar should not take a central position in communicative methodology, to teach rules in such a traditional way appears contradictory. Nonetheless, this contradiction confirms the authors' preference for an eclectic approach.

### **4.3 *New Headway***

*New Headway* (Maris, 2002, p. back cover)

combines the best of traditional methods with more recent approaches to help students use English accurately and fluently. ... It provides a solid introduction to the structure of the language, gradually building students' understanding of basic grammar, equipping them with key vocabulary, and giving them skills to deal with simple social situations.

Having undertaken an evaluation, a traditional presentation - practice - production approach is evident with language first being presented in the form of non-authentic model dialogues. These dialogues are then manipulated in controlled practice or drilled chorally with pairs of students repeating the conversations verbatim. The final production stage involves creating more similar conversations using substitution. Grammar is given as a fixed set of rules, which learners then need to apply, in order to successfully complete the production stage. The only element of real communication is given in the teacher's resource book where, in this unit, the students are required to order food in a restaurant.

## **5 Syllabus**

Richards (2001, p. 2) defines syllabus as "a specification of the content of a course of instruction and lists what will be taught and tested". Material writers may consider a number of options when deciding on the syllabus. According to Richards (2001), syllabi might be situational, topical, functional, structural, lexical, task-based, skills based or integrated. The last, he (2001, p. 164) suggests, will have "a number of different syllabus strands" which are organised on different levels. This section identifies the syllabus used by the materials.

## **5.1 Ready for FCE**

The teacher's book (Norris & Thomson, 2008, p. 7) states that the goal of the materials "is to prepare students for the Cambridge First Certificate ... examination." However, no explicit reference to what is included in the syllabus is made. My evaluation revealed the materials are based on several syllabus elements including grammar, topic, vocabulary and skills which led me to conclude that the syllabus is integrated. It is most likely that the initial consideration of syllabus design was the grammar the author viewed as either easiest (unit 1 expressing habitual behaviour) or most important, (unit 2 the gerund and infinitive). Talking about habits rarely causes difficulty at this level and it is essential that this is principally mastered to pass the examination. Gerund and infinitive, on the other hand, often causes problems. Nevertheless, it is commonly tested at FCE level and students who can use some of these forms improve their chances of passing. The secondary consideration for syllabus design was likely the need to incorporate common examination topics, whereby the topic was probably selected on the basis that it maximised opportunities to use the grammar of the unit. Vocabulary was then probably chosen on the basis of a combination of what useful chunks of language could be taught, given the near-authentic texts and the problem areas often encountered at this level. Finally, skills were most likely added to each unit to ensure an even distribution throughout the book.

## **5.2 Straight Forward**

In this material the syllabus is, as stated in the teacher's book (Scrivener & Bingham, 2007, p. ix), functional/situational with an element of skills added as a secondary consideration. Richards (2001, p. 154) defines a functional syllabus as one which takes,

as its primary focus, the standard language used when performing “communicative functions” such as inviting, refusing or disagreeing. This syllabus, Richards argues, is now seen as one element of a communicative approach (2001, p. 156). A situational syllabus, on the other hand, is a means of organising the content of a course around the situations that one might encounter, for example going shopping or in a restaurant (Richards, 2001, p. 156).

However, my analysis of the unit did not seem to reflect the writers’ claim. There is one functional language section for expressing reason in lesson 4a, (pp. 36-37) while lessons 4b (pp. 38-39) and 4d (pp. 42-43) centre around grammar, comparing the past simple and present perfect in the former and the present perfect simple and continuous in the latter. Lesson 4c (pp.40-41) covers reading and speaking skills. Moreover, I was unable to see the link to the situational syllabus as the situations chosen were obscure and would be unlikely to reflect situations encountered by students, especially lesson 4b on a gladiator course and 4d a snake owner’s convention. Based on my analysis, I would argue that the syllabus is integrated combining grammar, functions, skills and vocabulary elements.

### **5.3 *New Headway***

*New Headway*, on its back cover, itemises elements of its syllabus including grammar, vocabulary, functions/situations and skills (Maris, 2002). It, therefore, offers an integrated syllabus with grammar as its guiding principle. The syllabus is limited to the needs of absolute beginners with emphasis on “usefulness for survival” (Maris, 2002, p. 5). This was confirmed in my analysis. In unit 12, only a limited amount of grammatical content is offered, namely *want* and *would like* and then a comparison of *would like* and

*like*, which causes problems for many students. The functional/situational element of the syllabus was selected on the grounds that these situations would give the learner the maximum opportunity to use the structures taught.

## **6 Syllabus Fit**

Having decided on the elements of a syllabus, course designers must also map out how that material will be divided and sequenced within the course. According to Richards, (2001, p. 165) “planning the organisational structure in a course involves selecting appropriate blocks and deciding on the sequence in which they will appear” in order to make teaching and learning easier, provide material that goes from easier to more difficult and offer a coherent structure for teachers to follow. A course with a coherent syllabus fit allows learners to pass logically from one section to the next. On the other hand, many believe materials with ‘stand-alone’ units allow teachers the flexibility to choose a sequence that meets their learners’ needs. The syllabus fit of each unit will be discussed in this section.

### **6.1 Ready for FCE**

Each unit represents one grammar element that the writer considers essential to prepare for the FCE examination combined with one topic and its associated vocabulary and, therefore, acts like an island. This is often perceived as an advantage as teachers are not obliged to follow the writer’s path through the material. Nevertheless, when taken as a whole, the individual units constitute a comprehensive preparation course for the FCE examination. With regard to skills, the material gives extensive advice in both the teacher’s and student’s book regarding strategies to employ when undertaking

examination tasks at the beginning of the book. In addition, in relation to examination tasks, these are varied from unit to unit, giving learners a complete and balanced range of practice throughout the course.

## **6.2 *Straight Forward***

With these materials, it is difficult to see the syllabus fit. The previous unit covers relative clauses and participle clauses, and the following unit narrative tenses, while the unit in question compared the past simple to the present perfect and then the present perfect simple and continuous. The combination of grammar within the unit seems logical, going from easier to more difficult, but the fit from unit to unit is difficult to perceive. With regard to topic, despite evaluation, I find it difficult to discern a thematic link between the lessons within the unit, let alone a continuous flow from one unit to another. However, providing units that appear to stand alone may have been the authors' intention as they (Scrivener & Bingham, 2007, p. viii) state that

[p]articular students, particular classrooms and particular schools vary too greatly for it to be possible to provide one 'route map' that will be appropriate to everybody. For this reason the ... teacher's book provides a wealth of suggestions for adapting, extending and abridging the material.

## **6.3 *New Headway***

In *New Headway*, the link between the unit analysed and the previous one seems clear. Unit 11 covers *can* for ability and for requests. It seems logical, therefore, that unit 12 provides another way of expressing a polite request, using *would like*. The subsequent unit then covers the present continuous, providing the penultimate element of the grammar syllabus, and although it has no direct link to the unit analysed, it does provide a logical progression within the syllabus as a whole.

## 7 Intended learning/teaching situation

According to Cunningsworth (1995, p. 7),

[t]he aims of the coursebook should correspond as closely as possible to the aims of the teacher, and both should seek to meet the needs of the learners to the highest degree.

In other words, it is essential to choose coursebooks whose intended learning / teaching situation reflects as closely as possible learners' needs and teacher style. This section outlines both the intended teaching/learning situation of each of the courses, as defined by the author, and whether the material is suitable for that learner.

### 7.1 Ready for FCE

*Ready for FCE*, which is designed for a two semester course with two lessons a week, clearly states that its intended learners are adults taking the FCE examination, which is set at the Council of Europe's Common European Framework (CEF) level B2, and its intended teaching situation is to prepare students for the examination. This was reflected in my evaluation which found that the material covered the complete range of skills and language, commonly tested at FCE level. In addition, excellent examination results have regularly been achieved when using the material in my classroom, which reinforces its suitability for its intended teaching situation. Moreover, students' post course comments have generally been positive.

### 7.2 Straight Forward

The back cover of *Straight Forward* claims that it is a general English course for adults and young adults at CEF's B2 level and my analysis revealed that it is a course offering a great deal of focus on communication, particularly speaking. It is, therefore, suitable

for learners wishing to improve their communicative competence, not those requiring in-depth grammatical analysis. Moreover, the teacher's book offers a wealth of ideas and approaches, including methodology boxes, language notes for all reading, listening and vocabulary exercises and optional resource material. This makes the material particularly suitable for non-native or recently qualified teachers.

Evaluation revealed that this target audience was principally catered for although I would argue, having used this material with a group of adults that, it may be more appropriate for learners in their late teens, on the grounds that the topics chosen were too obscure for the adults I taught. Nevertheless, with a group of teenagers it may provoke interest, as unusual is often deemed exciting rather than ridiculous. Furthermore, in my view, many of the listening exercises are too easy for the level, as they require students to listen for a word or phrase seen in the coursebook rather than providing practice of matching spoken utterances expressed in one way with a written expression with similar meaning.

### **7.3 *New Headway***

*New Headway*, too, is a general English course, aimed at adults with no previous experience of English. Although it is traditional in approach, it provides opportunities for controlled practice to build learner's confidence, as well as real communication in the resource book materials. This would appeal to learners who are used to learning a foreign language through grammar, but still want to learn how to survive outside the classroom. My evaluation concluded that the material is extremely suitable for learners that lack experience of the language, given the range of grammar, functions and vocabulary taught.

## **8 Strengths and weaknesses**

As O'Neill (1982, p. 108) admits "[n]o textbook can expect to appeal to all teachers or learners at a particular level". This means that within any one teaching or learning context, material will inevitably display both strengths and weaknesses in relation to that context. This section will examine the positive and negative aspects of the material within my working environment.

### ***8.1 Ready for FCE***

As discussed in Section 4.1, one of the main strengths of this coursebook, in my opinion, is the re-cycling of material within the unit, giving learners maximum opportunity to acquire language. Moreover, the inductive approach to grammar allows students to hypothesise about language rules, while having them clearly stated in the reference section means they experiment, confident in the knowledge that the "correct" rule is available. Another strength of *Ready for FCE* is the use of pre-reading/-listening/-speaking activities, which ensure students draw on existing knowledge before undertaking the main task. In addition, the skills required to pass the examination are actively developed, in the form of strategies and procedures for learners to follow when tackling tasks. Furthermore, both the workbook and review sections offer extensive practice and revision of the material encountered in the coursebook. Finally, the student's book comes with an answer key which allows independent study.

*Ready for FCE's* main weakness, in my opinion, is the quantity of material. Given most examination courses constitute 70 lessons, it is impossible to cover all the material. However, as an answer key is provided, surplus material can be set for homework, without class time being lost reviewing answers.

## **8.2 *Straight Forward***

This material displays a variety of strengths. Firstly, the extensive speaking practice gives learners ample opportunity to express opinions and ideas on a variety of topics and the authentic listening and reading texts help learners overcome the difficulties encountered with real-life discourse. In addition, this material is one of the few coursebooks at this level that provides a range of writing units, and pronunciation practice, which is consistent with its communicative methodology. Moreover, as discussed in section 7.2, the teacher's book offers excellent support. Finally, a useful double-paged reference section in the coursebook provides students with grammar explanations and vocabulary relevant for each unit.

Despite the strengths, the material also displays some weaknesses. As briefly mentioned in section 4.2, there appears to be a contradiction between the materials' general communicative methodology and its deductive approach to grammar. In my working context, many students feel learning fails to occur if grammar is not extensively covered and an inductive approach, which exploits the relationship between form and meaning, may have provided a useful compromise. Furthermore, the topic choice is often unorthodox, resulting in students having little to say in discussions.

## **8.3 *New Headway***

Despite *New Headway's* traditional approach, it does, in my opinion, display strengths. Firstly, the syllabus fit is extremely logical, not only from unit to unit but also within the unit. In addition, the limited amount of material avoids overload but still ensures learners have the opportunity to develop enough skills to survive in most situations. Moreover, all the answers the learners have to provide have been supplied by the material, which

avoids speculation about answers, therefore building confidence. Finally, most learners find its predictability reassuring.

In contrast, the material's weaknesses are also evident. Its approach of mimicking contrived language may equip students for the classroom but could cause problems in the real world. Finally, many teachers may find this material limiting as everything is pre-determined and there is little scope for adaptation and creativity.

## **9 Are aims and objectives met?**

As coursebooks often dictate what occurs in the classroom (Littlejohn, 1998, p. 190) it is essential that claims made by the publishers about objectives are met, if learners and teachers are to achieve what is required of them. In this section, I will identify the aims and objectives revealed by my evaluation and consider how well these objectives are met.

### **9.1 Ready for FCE**

In my opinion and experience, all of the aims identified by my evaluation of *Ready for FCE* have been achieved. Figure 3 on p. 23 summarises these aims and how I believe they were achieved. To give some examples, indirect questions are introduced inductively (pp. 16-17) and this grammar can then be used in an examination type writing task, which encourages learner autonomy, raises awareness of register and prepares the students well for the examination. Furthermore, the *How to go about it* box (p.18) provides students with a strategy they can use when tackling the examination reading task to improve their reading skills. The language, which has already been processed for meaning, is then used to illustrate the grammar (p. 20) which, according to

Willis, is more likely to lead to learning (1996, p. 50). This means students are likely to achieve the objective of increasing knowledge of the language.

## **9.2 *Straight Forward***

The majority of the aims, shown in Figure 4 on p. 23, in my opinion, were achieved (shown by green boxes) while the pink boxes indicate where I felt aims were not fully achieved. I would argue, in fact, that the deductive approach to grammar affects not only the aim to 'review grammar' but also 'improve fluency', because learners at this level have failed to fully master the grammar they have been taught, and therefore, stating rules, which students do not really understand, and expecting them to use them may affect their confidence, which in turn may influence their fluency.

## **9.3 *New Headway***

Figure 5 on p. 23 summarises the aims outlined by *New Headway* and how they were achieved. Although I may not be an advocate of traditional approaches, having used *New Headway*, I have found it very successful in helping learners to communicate in basic survival situations, at least in the classroom, even if they invest little time at home. I would, therefore conclude that the material does indeed meet its aims and objective.

Fig 3: Ready for FCE aims and how they were achieved.

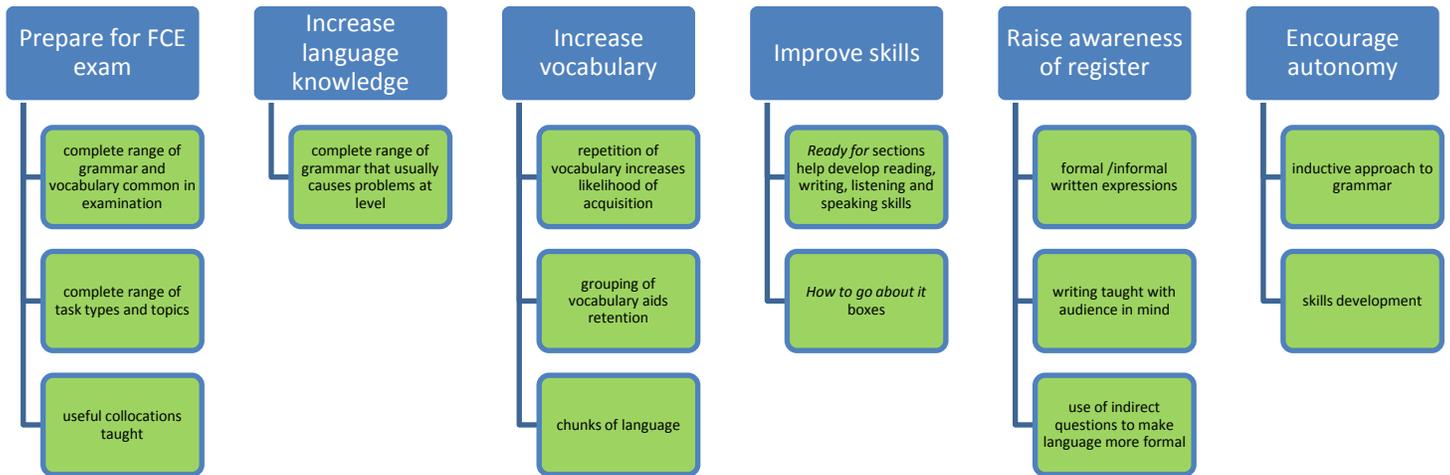


Fig 4: Straight Forward aims and how they were / were not achieved.

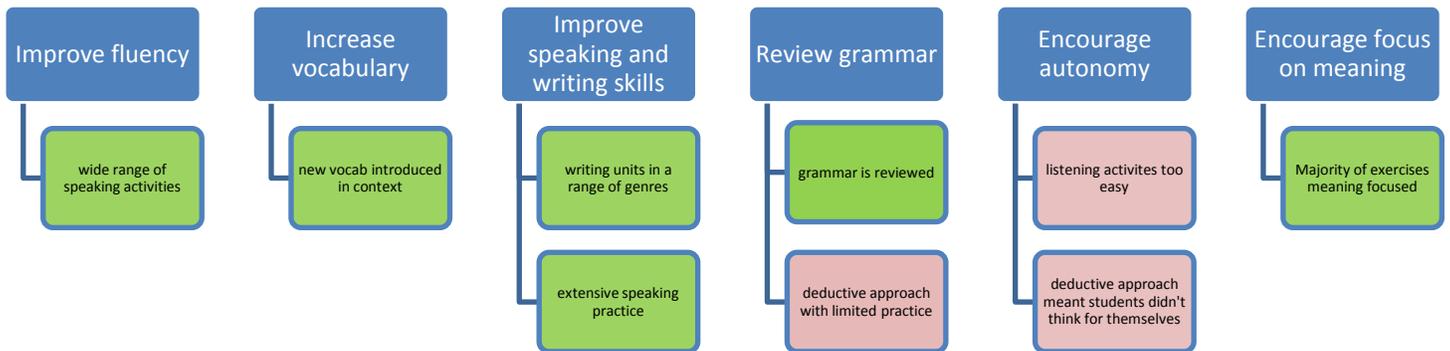
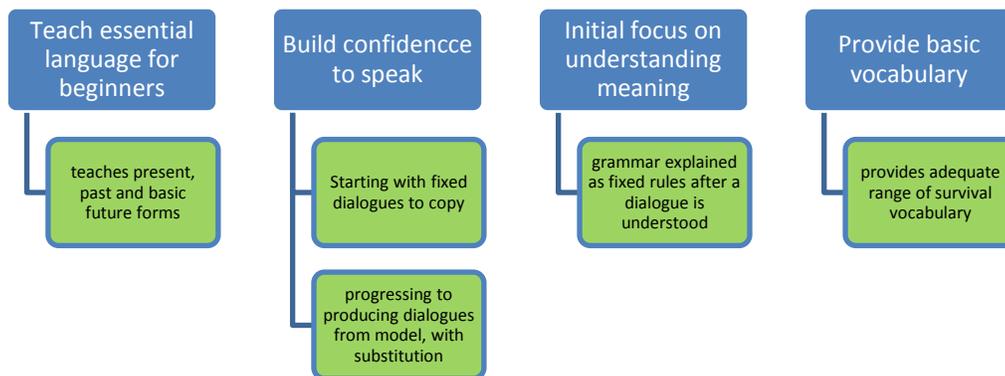


Fig 5: New Headway aims and how they were achieved.



## 10 Would I use the materials in my own teaching situation?

The coursebooks were all used in my working context. *Ready for FCE* I chose myself, have used many times and would use again, *Straight Forward* I also chose, used once, and would not reuse and *New Headway* was selected by my school.

The analysis of *Ready for FCE* revealed that, not only was maximum use of material made, it was also inductive, allowing learners to think for themselves. In addition, the wide range of skills work and useful strategy advice encourages students to become independent, an essential skill in the examination. Moreover, from my experience of using *Ready for FCE*, I know that students who invest adequate time and effort achieve success in the examination. This success, my evaluation revealed, may have been due to the fact that the materials were well balanced, 44% of the tasks focussed on meaning, 21% on form and crucially 35% covered the relationship between form and meaning and these factors aided the full achievement of its aims. It is these features that make the material successful and therefore one I would reuse.

On the other hand, *Straight Forward Upper Intermediate* was exposed as an amalgam of different approaches and therefore posed contradictions in its overall philosophy. For example, it offered a largely communicative methodology which I found appealing as a teacher. However, its approach to grammar, being deductive, meant that my students felt insufficient opportunities to 'learn' had been given. This dissatisfaction affected motivation and consequently I decided to discontinue using *Straight Forward* in my classes.

Finally, *New Headway beginner* with its traditional methods was shown to deliver on its promises. Although *New Headway* would not be my material of choice, given that students appear to perform reasonably well in the classroom with relatively little work at home, it still represents a coursebook that I can work with. However, I have little experience of how students, who have been taught using these materials, fare when exposed to real life discourse.

## 11 Conclusion

In this assignment, I have evaluated three units of three EFL coursebooks, namely Unit 2 of *Ready for FCE*, Unit 4 of *Straight Forward Upper Intermediate*, and unit 12 of *New Headway Beginner*, using Littlejohn's (1998) framework for evaluation. The analysis of the units allowed me to draw conclusions about the methodology used, syllabus and syllabus fit, the intended learner as well as identify the materials main strengths and weaknesses and whether they achieved their aims and objectives. Finally, although I did not alter my view about whether I would use them again, an understanding has been gained about the reasons behind my opinions. In addition, I believe that undergoing such detailed analysis of material provides essential insight not only to help them select but also to utilise the materials in a way that maximises their potential.

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## 13 Appendix 1: Coursebook evaluations Stage 1

### Analysis using Littlejohn's framework (1998)

#### 13.1 Appendix 1.1: Ready for FCE

**Title:** *Ready for FCE*

**Author:** Roy Norris

**Publisher:** Macmillan

#### 1. Book as a whole

**1.1. Type:** Special purpose FCE Exam preparation course, class use or self study

**1.2. Intended audience:** Adults or young adults wanting to take FCE

#### 1.3. Extent:

a) Components: Student's book (SB), workbook (WB), teacher's book (TB) photocopiable vocabulary worksheets, additional tests

b) Total estimated time: not specified but ideally 50 x 90 minute lessons (3 x 90 minute lesson per unit and 1 x 90 minute lesson for each *Ready for* unit; minimum 35 x 90 minute lessons

**1.4. Design and layout:** Full colour SB 275 pages; 2 colour WB 142 pages; 2 colour TB 230 pages

#### 1.5. Distribution:

a) <u>Material</u>	teacher	learner
coursebook CD's	[ x ]	[ ]
listening script	[ x ]	[ x ]
answer key	[ x ]	[ x ]
guidance on use of class materials	[ x ]	[ ]

#### b) Access

wordlist	[ x ]	[ x ]
detailed content list	[ x ]	[ x ]
section objective	[ x ]	[ ]

#### 1.6. Route through material

Specified	[ ]
Unspecified	[ ]
Implied	[ x ]

## 1.7. Subdivision

15 units with special exam advice and practice sections (one for each exam paper) after every third unit

Each unit contains at least one vocabulary section, relating to the topic of the unit; one or more grammar sections; one or more exam type reading tasks, with general introductory activities and follow up speaking activities; one or more writing sections covering one of the FCE exam task types; one or more *Use of English* exam task types; one or more listening sections covering the exam tasks; speaking practice for exam tasks

2 page review section at the end of each unit.

Workbook reviewing material covered in coursebook

Additional vocab exercises

Test at end of every three units and final test with sample exam paper and complete speaking paper

## 2. Overview of an Extract

**2.1. Length:** One unit (unit 2:- topic: leisure activities) 6.67% of coursebook

### 2.2. Sequence of activity

*Vocabulary 1:* Music p.14: 1. Speaking on topic in pairs; 2. Elicit musical instruments with class; common music collocations matching; 3. Learn by heart and test in pairs; 4. Speaking role play.

*Listening 1* p.15: 1. Discussion, pairs or small groups; 2. Students read *what to expect* box and predict info in gaps in pairs; exam task; speaking relating to topic

*Language Focus 1* p.16: Students read example sentences and decide what the rules are for indirect questions then practice making them alone.

*Writing 1* p.16/7: 1. Students read exam task; 2. Students decide on register (whole class) for the task and read sample answer with closed cloze exercise (pairs); 3. Students answer questions in pairs; 4. Students do similar writing task alone

*Reading* p.18: 1. Students practice part 2 of speaking using pictures; 2. Students read text for gist; 3. Exam task with strategy; 4. Speaking giving personal opinions about topic

*Language Focus 2* p. 20: 1. Students read examples from reading and match to the sport; 2. Students match the examples with an explanations for their use; 3. Students identify the verb forms after the words in bold;

*Practice:* 1. Closed gap fill; 2. Ordering verbs of likes and dislikes; 3. Matching adjective to preposition; 4. Students write sentences about likes and dislikes using vocab; 5. Speaking in pairs

*Listening 2* p. 21: 1. Students speak, in pairs, in preparation for task; 2. Students read instructions and *what to expect...* box and decide on correct answer to question 1 and why; followed by full listening task followed by speaking activity giving opinions on topic

*Word formation* p. 22: 1. Word building activity: suffixes to make word for people; 2. Word building activity prefixes to make negatives; 3. Students decide meaning of affixes

*Language Focus 3* p. 22: 1. S deduce meaning from examples; 2. Students discuss difference in meanings between pairs of sentences;

*Vocabulary 2* p. 23: 1. Students name the sport and match to the verb that it collocates with; 2. Students match the location words to the sports; 3. Students work out name for person that does the sport; 4. Students match verbs to collocates;

*Writing 2*: p. 23: Writing task relating to topic of sport with help with planning

*Review*: Review of word formation; grammar gerunds and infinitives; music vocabulary;

*Workbook*: Review of: music vocabulary, indirect questions, gerunds and infinitives, prepositions, *sentence transformations* with vocab from unit, word formation;

*Additional practice*: words used as verbs and nouns/adjectives and their collocates/fixed expressions, writing asking for info – informal

## 13.2 Appendix 1.2: *Straight Forward Upper Intermediate*

**Title:** *Straight Forward Upper Intermediate*

**Author:** Philip Kerr and Ceri Jones

**Publisher:** Macmillan

### 1. Book as a whole

**1.1. Type:** General purpose class use

**1.2. Intended audience:** Adults or young adults

#### **1.3. Extent:**

a) Components: Student's book, workbook, CD-Rom, teacher's book

b) Total estimated time: 50 x 90 minute lessons

**1.4. Design and layout:** Full colour SB 175 pages; 2 colour WB 96 pages; 2 colour TB 258 pages

#### **1.5. Distribution:**

a) <u>Material</u>	teacher	learner
coursebook CD's	[ x ]	[ ]
listening script	[ x ]	[ x ]
answer key	[ x ]	[ ]
guidance on use of class materials	[ x ]	[ ]
b) <u>Access</u>		
wordlist	[ x ]	[ x ]
detailed content list	[ x ]	[ x ]
section objective	[ x ]	[ ]

**1.6. Route through material**

Specified	[ ]
Unspecified	[ ]
Implied	[ x ]

**1.7. Subdivision**

12 units each with 4 lessons (a-d); each unit theme related.

Each unit contains 2/3 grammar sections, 2-4 vocabulary sections, one functional language section, one pronunciation section, 4-7 speaking skills sections, 2 reading skills sections, two listening skills sections, one "Did you know?" section.

Writing section linked to the topic of the odd numbered units

One page review section in coursebook

Workbook: 1 page review for each lesson and one double page reading practice exercise

4 additional activities (one for each lesson) or games to practice the language or grammar in the lesson

CD-Rom with extra practice and language games

**2. Overview of an Extract**

**2.1. Length:** One unit (unit 4) 8.33% of book

**2.2. Sequence of activity**

Unit 4a: Living in Fear pp.36-37

*Speaking:* 1. general lead in; 2. listening to people discussing one of questions and answer questions; 3. general discussion

*Reading:* 1. lead in discussion; 2. Matching; 3. Put sentence back in text; 4. General discussion

*Vocabulary:* 1. fill in table; 2. Use words from table in sentences; 3. Students make sentences from 2 true for them and then tell partner

*Functional Language:* 1. Look at examples and fill in the missing words; 2. Gap fill; 3. Discussion to define on situation for role play; 4. role play

*Revision:* workbook unit 1a

*Extra activity:* Speaking game with cards. Students give explanations for why the things in the pictures happened (pictures not very clear)

Unit 4b: Gladiators pp. 38-39

*Speaking:* 1. divide words to describe character into groups; 2. Students speak about person using words given; speaking about selves using same situations as in 2; 4. discussion recent experiences

*Listening:* 1. Listening for gist and explain connection to picture; 2. Who said sentences exercise; 3. Deduce meaning from context; 4. General discussion on topic of listening (two words from speaking used in listening but topic not people's characters; also talks about fears)

*Grammar:* 1. Closed verb tense exercise (choice given) with sentences from tape script. 2. Open cloze verb tense exercise either past simple or present perfect; 3. Students match time expressions to tense; 4. Controlled practice: Students write sentences using time expressions and correct tense; Grammar explanation.

*Did you know?:* 1. Discussion based on text not related to theme of unit

*Revision:* workbook unit 1a

*Extra activity:* Students make sentences using time expressions and recycling some of vocabulary from unit 4a and 4b

#### Unit 4c: Land of the brave pp. 40-41

*Speaking and Vocabulary:* 1. Speaking topic: freedom; 2. Closed gap fill; 3. Discussion expressing agreement/disagreement to sentences in 2; 4. General discussion expressing opinions

*Reading:* 1. Reading for gist to answer questions; 2. Students decide if sentences are true (sentences not in chronological order); 3. Closed gap fill; 4. General discussion on relating to topic;

*Revision:* workbook unit 4c

*Extra activity:* Students turn nouns into verbs or adjectives, or verbs into nouns, or adjectives into nouns.

#### Unit 4d: Southern snakes: pp. 42-43

*Listening:* 1. ordering actions, based on criteria given; 2. Students look at pictures and anticipate what is happening; 3. Students listen for gist and check ideas; 4. Students listen and make notes; 5. Students discuss the questions;

*Grammar:* 1. Read text and change 4 verbs from present perfect continuous (ppc) to present perfect simple (pps). No reference is made to the Grammar explanation given in the coursebook with examples from listening; 2. Students think of a ppc and pps response to situations given in pairs; 3. Students write 4 true and 2 untrue sentences about self using ppc followed by speaking in pairs; Students guess untrue sentences

*Vocabulary:* homophones: 1 closed cloze, one of pair of words in listening; 2. open cloze, using the other word of the pair; 3. Discussion in pairs

*Pronunciation:* 1. Divide letter snake into words and put them into the syllable pattern; 2. Students think of more words that fit pronunciation pattern; 3. Students find three syllable words in the listening script and assign a pronunciation pattern.

*Speaking:* 1. Describe a pictures in groups to put them in order (task)

*Revision:* workbook unit 4d

*Extra activity:* role play with preparation stage; additional reading task in the workbook

*Review* gives additional practice for material in unit

## 13.3 Appendix 1.3: *New Headway beginner*

**Title:** *New Headway Beginner*

**Author:** John and Liz Soars

**Publisher:** Oxford

### 1. Book as a whole

**1.1. Type:** General purpose course for absolute beginners

**1.2. Intended audience:** Adults or young adults with no previous knowledge of English

#### 1.3. Extent:

a) Components: coursebook, workbook, teacher's book, extra activities in teacher's resource book, tests

b) Total estimated time: not specified but 51 x 90 minute lessons

**1.4. Design and layout:** Full colour SB 142 pages; 2 colour WB 95 pages; 2 colour TB 147 pages; 2 colour Teacher's resource book 79 pages

#### 1.5. Distribution:

a) <u>Material</u>	teacher	learner
coursebook CD's	[ x ]	[ ]
listening script	[ x ]	[ x ]
answer key	[ x ]	[ ]
guidance on use of class materials	[ x ]	[ ]

#### b) Access

wordlist	[ x ]	[ x ]
detailed content list	[ x ]	[ x ]
section objective	[ x ]	[ x ]

#### 1.6. Route through material

Specified	[ x ]
Unspecified	[ ]

#### 1.7. Subdivision

3 6 pages units and 9 8 page units; containing starter, presentation of new language; practice; vocabulary; skills work; every day English

Workbook

Tests every four units

Extra activities: usually game or pair work format

## 2. Overview of an Extract

### 2.1. Length

1 unit (unit 12) 7% of book

### 2.2. Sequence of activity

*Starter:* matching activity;

*Presentation:* 1. Speaking activity in pairs; 2. Students listen and complete conversations; 3. Drill then pair work drill conversations; Grammar spot; 4. Listening for gist then practice conversations.

*Practice:* 1. Speaking practice; 2. Listening and note taking; 3. Speaking practice; 4. Discussion in pairs; Grammar Spot; 5. Listening and matching exercise; 6. Students identify the correct sentence.

*Vocabulary:* 1. Matching exercise; 2. closed gap fill; 3. Listening for who says what; 4. Controlled Practice of conversation; 5. Free practice using menu;

*Reading:* 1. class discussion; 2. Free-speaking with class; 3. Reading for gist; 4. Matching questions and answers with open gap fill; controlled speaking practice with sentences

*Everyday English:* closed gap fill listening; controlled practice leading to free practice of similar situations

*Workbook:* reviews of all elements from coursebook

*Extra activities:* controlled practice with *would like*; free practice with *would like* and *don't have*; free practice role play in a restaurant; sorting activity; extra reading and grammar practice

## 14 Appendix 2: Coursebook evaluations Stage 3

### Analysis using Littlejohn's framework (1998)

#### 14.1 Appendix 2.1: *Ready for FCE*

##### A. Publication:

###### 1. Place of learner's materials in the set.

- Provides comprehensive preparation for FCE examination
- Could be used independently as answer key given
- Learner's materials form focal point of class work.
- Some need to supplement due to some exercises being simply guess work – contextualised examples help weaker students.

###### 2. Published form of learner's materials

- Monolingual throughout
- German vocabulary companion available (online link)
- Realistic examination materials therefore durable
- Relevant input material for current examination

###### 3. Subdivision of learner's materials

- 15 topic based units
- Each task type given adequate coverage throughout book
- Each examination paper given extensive coverage

###### 4. Subdivision of units into subsections

- Useful symbols and task titles common to all units make it easy for students to follow
- Review and work book recycle language and skills to provide additional practice

###### 5. Continuity

- Topics cover all main subjects common in examination
- Grammatical items start with the "easier"/ "most tested" and move on to the "more difficult" / "less tested".
- Topics appear to have been chosen on the basis of the topic area that gives the most opportunity to use the grammatical item contained in the unit.

###### 6. Route

- Route not explicitly given but implied by as more strategies for exam tasks given at beginning of book

###### 7. Access

- Contents map

- Word list
- In teacher's book content's overview

## **B. Design**

### 1. Aims and objectives

- Prepare students for FCE examination
- Develop language knowledge
- Increase learners' vocabulary
- Improve reading, listening, speaking and writing skills
- Raise learners' awareness of register
- Encourage learner autonomy
- Encourage learners to focus on meaning as well as form

### 2. Principles of selection

- What is needed to pass the examination, topic, topic related vocab, grammar, skills and task types
- Grammar from easiest or most tested to more difficult /less tested at first level, topic at second level
- Each unit covers all examination papers
- Even balance of task types throughout book

### 3. Principles of sequencing

- Tasks: topic vocabulary combined with speaking comes first followed by either listening or reading to provide contextualised examples then grammar then writing or speaking to provide opportunities to use language learned. Sequence usually repeated twice in a unit.
- Content: Topics appear to have been chosen on the basis of the topic area that gives the most opportunity to use the grammatical item contained in the unit.
- Language: Not explicitly stated but given personal experience of the examination probably defined by a combination of what is frequently tested in FCE and problematical areas of grammar that need to be rectified if students are to pass examination come first less important /more difficult come later

### 4. Subject matter and focus of subject matter

- Typical FCE examination topics
- Suitable for adult audience
- Reading and listening tasks interesting to most students

### 5. Types of teaching and learning activities

- Learners draw on existing knowledge before doing task
- Materials organise classroom interaction for both learners and teachers if followed
- Learners are encouraged to think for themselves
- Complete range of examination tasks

- Grammar tasks all similar approach: matching rules to / answering questions about /hypothesising about contextualised examples then written cloze/matching/or transforming controlled practice then sometimes free speaking activity to encourage use of structure
- High frequency of collocation type activities, grouping of vocabulary to either use or meaning.
- All five skills practiced equally
- Great deal of emphasis on meaning /system relationship (35%) or meaning focussed (44%)

#### 6. Participation: who does what with whom?

- Pair or group work (45%)
- Learner works alone (34%)
- Teacher led - elicits info from Students (21%)

#### 7. Classroom roles of teachers and learners

- Teacher facilitator / guide
- Students encouraged to become independent/think for themselves
- Learners draw on existing knowledge before attempting task

#### 8. Learners roles in learning

- Learners deduce or hypothesise about rules to form system for themselves
- Learners deal with meaning as central focal point and learn to use system to express meaning

#### 9. Role of materials as a whole

- Provide structure for course
- Provide essential vocabulary and grammar and skills practice for FCE
- Help students become independent
- Provide opportunities for learners to understand rules for themselves and then use them in meaningful (examination related) ways

## 14.2 Appendix 2.2: *Straight Forward Upper Intermediate*

### A. Publication:

#### 1. Place of learner's materials in the set.

- Provides review of basic and more advanced grammar appropriate for upper intermediate level.
- Could not be used independently as no answer key given. Also too much speaking in pairs making it unsuitable for use alone
- Learner's materials form focal point of class work.
- No need to supplement as course material provides a full range of material, including writing, games and tests

#### 2. Published form of learner's materials

- Monolingual throughout
- Not sure how durable these materials are as the topics discussions reflect political correctness of today this will change in a few years and will appear dated

#### 3. Subdivision of learner's materials

- 12 topic based units divided into 4 lessons
- Skills not given equal coverage. Emphasis on speaking
- Some element of grammar included in most lessons

#### 4. Subdivision of units into subsections

- Each unit divided into 4 double paged lessons designed for 90 minutes of teaching time.
- Review and work book recycle language and skills to provide additional practice

#### 5. Continuity

- Topics in lessons are loosely linked to overall topic of unit.
- Grammatical items start with the "easier" and move on quickly to the "more difficult"
- Topics appear to have been chosen because they want to provide something different and more provocative. This may be good for teenagers who wish to show they are individuals but for adults it might not work so well

#### 6. Route

- Route not explicitly given but implied by default

#### 7. Access

- Contents map
- Language reference
- In teacher's book Lesson summary

## B. Design

### 1. Aims and objectives

- Improve fluency
- Review grammar already covered in lower levels
- Increase vocabulary
- Improve speaking and writing skills
- Encourage learner autonomy
- Encourage learners to focus on meaning

### 2. Principles of selection

- Not clear. There doesn't seem to be a clear principle of selection
- Grammar generally from easiest to more difficult
- Uneven balance of task types throughout the book.

### 3. Principles of sequencing

- Tasks: Speaking then reading or listening followed by focus on grammar or vocabulary that came in reading or listening. Speaking at the end not necessarily linked to earlier part of unit
- Content: No clear principles within the unit. Could be that they have found interesting texts and then built everything around that
- Language: generally easier to more difficult

### 4. Subject matter and focus of subject matter

- Topics are often somewhat obscure
- Suitable for teenage rather than adult audience
- Reading and listening considered bizarre by many adults

### 5. Types of teaching and learning activities

- Learners are given written prompts and are expected to talk about the topic.
- Materials organise classroom interaction for both learners and teachers if followed
- Learners are encouraged given their opinion on the topic
- Grammar tasks use similar approach: read the rules and students do open or closed cloze exercises. Grammar in coursebook is inadequate as simply tells students rules and then says now use them. Additional notes are given in the teacher's book which help teachers understand the problems learners might have but no indication of how to integrate them into the materials are given.
- Emphasis on speaking skills
- Reading and listening skills not developed enough for level – tasks involve finding exact words or simple comprehension

### 6. Participation: who does what with whom?

- Pair or group work (49%)
- Learner works alone (43%)
- Teacher led - elicits info from Students (8%)

#### 7. Classroom roles of teachers and learners

- Teacher guide
- Students encouraged to become fluent but expects them to be able to use grammar given
- Learners rarely have to draw on existing knowledge before attempting task

#### 8. Learners roles in learning

- Learners given rules and expected to apply them
- Learners deal with meaning as central focal point and learn to communicate without thinking about system. Not favoured by Swiss adults who at this level would like to have more focus on the relationship between form and meaning

#### 9. Role of materials as a whole

- Provide structure for course
- Help students become more fluent

## 14.3 Appendix 2.3: *New Headway Beginner*

### A. Publication

#### 1. Place of learner's materials in the set.

- Provides essential English for beginner. First book in series going up to advanced
- Could not be used independently as no answer key given. Given level also not advisable
- Learner's materials form focal point of class work.
- No need to supplement for grammatical content as material provides practice extensive practice and resource book provides additional practice

#### 2. Published form of learner's materials

- Monolingual throughout
- First of six level course designed for absolute beginners
- Focal point of classroom work

#### 3. Subdivision of learner's materials

- 14 units
- 6 pages in first three units and 8 pages thereafter.
- Format for units similar; earlier units omit reading/writing/speaking section where more extended discourse is used

#### 4. Subdivision of units into subsections

- Everyday English sections provide real-life language useful for students
- Workbook recycles language to provide additional practice

#### 5. Continuity

- Topics cover all main topic areas suitable for beginners
- Grammatical items limited to essential for the level
- Topics appear to have been chosen on the basis of needs of beginners

#### 6. Route

- Route specified as later units build on what has been done in earlier units

#### 7. Access

- Contents map
- Word list
- In teacher's book language aims and possible problems outlined for the teacher

## B. Design

### 1. Aims and objectives

- Teach essential structures for absolute beginners
- Provide learners with basic vocabulary
- Build confidence and encourage speaking within language constraints
- Initial focus on understanding meaning followed by understanding the form to produce that meaning

### 2. Principles of selection

- Survival topics come first (i.e. starting with introductions, talking about self etc.)
- Grammar introduced in relation to topic (i.e. verb 'to be' first then personal pronouns etc)
- Survival skills

### 3. Principles of sequencing

- Tasks: contextualised introduction of language followed by closed drills/practice followed by open drill and open practice
- Content: most common situation comes first
- Language: simple to more complex within survival level

### 4. Subject matter and focus of subject matter

- Uses fictional/real people as examples which can then be personalised
- Guiding principle is needs of beginners to survive in English speaking environment

### 5. Types of teaching and learning activities

- Drills to focus on pronunciation after meaning is understood
- Materials organise classroom interaction for both learners and teachers
- Learners are encouraged to copy language given using substitution and occasional opportunities to extend
- Grammar (structure) is explained using Grammar Spot boxes limited to the form/meaning relationship
- Resource book offers tasks which allow free use of language learnt
- Workbook gives extra opportunities for controlled and free language use

### 6. Participation: who does what with whom?

- Pair or group work (53%)
- Learner works alone (39%)
- Teacher led - elicits info from students (8%)

### 7. Classroom roles of teachers and learners

- Teacher guide/model/provider of language (through coursebook)
- Students encouraged to model language given to build confidence
- Free practice of survival skills given

#### 8. Learners roles in learning

- Learners mimic form given
- Learners deal with meaning as central focal point relate system to meaning/function

#### 9. Role of materials as a whole

- Provide structure for course
- Provide essential vocabulary and grammar to survive in English
- Build confidence so that learners can communicate in basic situations with limited language