

## CHAPTER 6: Syllabus organisation

### **Aims - coverage and authenticity/spontaneity**

Our aim in writing Level 1 of the *Collins COBUILD English Course* was to provide the learner with exposure to language which would illustrate the meanings and patterns of 700 of the most frequent words of English, to highlight all of those words and to treat selected items in detail. This would mean that a false beginner would, after around one hundred hours of study, have some familiarity with the words and patterns which make up around 70% of all English text. If we could achieve this coverage we would be offering the learner a corpus of tremendous utility. We accepted that we were unlikely to achieve such coverage completely. The target for Level 2 was to cover the next 850 words and for Level 3 the next 950, a total of 2,500 words after three books, accounting for around 80% of all text. We recognised that in order to achieve coverage of 700 words, and afterwards 850 and 950, we would have to include other words from outside this high frequency list. We set out, however, to achieve the best coverage we could with as little extraneous lexis as possible.

Our task was made much more difficult, but also much more meaningful, by our decision to use as far as possible only authentic or spontaneously produced texts. By 'authentic' texts we meant those produced by language users in the course of their everyday lives for some communicative purpose external to language teaching, and not simply produced to illustrate some generalisation about the language. Almost all the written texts we used were authentic in this way. It was also decided that if we were obliged to make up single sentence examples to illustrate specific points about words, we should do so with reference to the data sheets drawn from the original COBUILD corpus, as far as possible reproducing data sheet examples with minimal alterations.

By 'spontaneously produced' texts we meant texts which were unscripted and unrehearsed, but which were produced not in the course of everyday life, but at our request and in artificial circumstances. Most of the spoken texts we used fell into this category. A large number of these were recorded by native speakers of English in a studio, carrying out tasks which would later be performed by learners in the classroom. These texts were not simplified in any way, since participants in the recording sessions were told that they were providing material for a research project rather than material for language teaching. The resulting texts have almost all the features of authentic spoken discourse. These include false starts, changes of subject, requests for clarification and so on. More significantly they demonstrate communication as a cooperative act in which participants work together to achieve an outcome.

In Level 1 Unit 11, for example, learners are set this task:

## 158 Puzzle

a How good are you at logical thinking? Can you work out this puzzle?

Peter, Mary and John all went away last weekend. One of them went to Birmingham one to Manchester, and one to London. One of them went to the theatre, one went to see a relative, and one went to buy a computer. Who did what?

Here are two clues to help you.

- One of them went to London to visit her mother.
- John bought a computer but not in Manchester.

The following is part of the transcript of the native speaker recording:

BG: Right. So Mary went to London

DF: So it's Mary and mother. John bought a computer but not at Manchester, therefore it must be-

BG: John must have gone to Birmingham.

DF: Birmingham. Computer And, er, who's the other one? Peter.

BG: Must have gone to Manchester.

This does not feature the neat turn-taking of scripted dialogues with each turn virtually complete in itself, replying predictably to or commenting explicitly on what has gone before. There are two participants but the text is very much a joint product, and if the text were not laid out neatly with each turn attributed to a particular participant it would be very difficult to separate out the contributions:

So it's Mary and mother. John bought a computer but not in Manchester, therefore it must be -  
John must have gone to Birmingham. Birmingham. Computer. And, er, who's the other one?  
Peter? . . . must have gone to Manchester.

It is indeed true that we have no precise description of language in use. But as I argued in Chapter 1, learners need to find out as much as possible about language in use, and this cannot be done unless they are exposed to language in use. The form of language we use is determined critically by the purpose for which it is used. It is essential therefore to provide learners with language which is genuinely informed with some communicative purpose. This is difficult, expensive and incredibly time consuming, which may explain why there is so little authentic/spontaneous language in coursebooks. If it can be done, however, it brings enormous benefits. It means the language that learners hear and read in the classroom is exactly the kind of language they will be exposed to outside. This brings great advantages not only of economy but also of motivation. The

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satisfaction learners gain from being able to process spontaneous native speaker speech at normal speed constantly enhances and reinforces motivation.

### **Input - from topics to tasks and texts**

The process of writing the coursebooks was inevitably a complex one. The particular syllabus design procedures and the methodology which was to carry the syllabus had never before been incorporated in a published course. There were a number of different strands in the research, design, writing and piloting of the course. All of these processes impinged on one another and a hold-up or failure in one process had repercussions throughout. Things were not made simpler by the fact that the authors of the course were working in Singapore, while most of the research was being carried out in Britain, particularly at the University of Birmingham. What follows, therefore, is a streamlined report of the whole process. It omits false starts, unexpected failures, conference phone calls linking Singapore, Birmingham and London, problems with computers, the difficulties of storing diskettes in a tropical climate, and a host of minor problems which are a part of any major publishing venture.

A good deal of research was undertaken before we began to assemble Level 1. We were provided with the raw material of the syllabus in the form of some 700 data sheets of the kind exemplified by **would** and **any** in Chapter 3. We wrote to a large number of ELT institutions in Britain and overseas in order to build up a list of topics which were felt to be of value and of interest to students. On the basis of this information and of our own experience as teachers, we then identified a series of topics to form the basis of the course and devised a number of tasks based on each of these topics. These tasks were then recorded in a studio using educated native speakers. The recordings were transcribed and concordanced to enable us to define the learner's corpus more easily. At the same time we set about identifying a bank of written text which could be made accessible to remedial beginner learners and which would integrate without too much difficulty with the topics we had identified.

Meanwhile the COBUILD team in Birmingham was assembling the TEFL Side Corpus made up of over twenty of the most widely used ELT coursebooks worldwide:

In early 1984, as part of the preparation for the later Collins COBUILD English Course, the TEFL Corpus was analysed in detail in order to identify the linguistic structures and speech functions which were common to most of its books at the lower levels. This analysis could be said to mirror the 'received' or consensus syllabus for the teaching of English which operates currently . . . (Renouf 1987)

We believed that our lexical approach would provide adequate coverage of this consensus and also go well beyond it. We intended to use the TEFL Corpus to make sure that we did indeed have coverage of the consensus syllabus.

### **Procedure**

Once our bank of texts was assembled, it was ordered according to our

intuitions about the difficulty of the texts and tasks. This intuitive ordering was then subject to a preliminary pilot, which was designed to test not only the accuracy of our predictions as to difficulty but also the validity of our task-based methodology. It was also intended to find out whether elementary students could indeed handle authentic written text and spontaneously produced spoken discourse. In general we were happy with the results of this pilot, even though, inevitably, some tasks and texts had to be abandoned and others had to be reordered. The remaining tasks and texts were ordered, and an outline of the coursebook was put together which included rubrics for the exercises, but not at this stage any language focused exercises.

### Checking the lexical coverage

The texts and rubrics were then concordanced by computer and the concordances checked against the data sheets to see if we had adequate coverage of the main uses of the 700 target words. Basically the coverage was satisfactory. We had sufficient data to present a good picture of almost 650 of the target words. Some of the omissions were words which, though very frequent in themselves, tend to be restricted in range and to occur in contexts which would create considerable problems for false beginners. Among these were words like **community, development, trade and energy**. Some, like **concerned, finally, involved, indeed and unless** were felt to be of high utility and therefore to be serious omissions. In addition to these words we had also missed a few major meaning categories of some very common words. One of these casualties was **would** meaning 'used to'. Nevertheless, since the coverage of frequent words and patterns was our overriding priority, it is not surprising that we achieved a very much more comprehensive coverage than is usually found in an elementary coursebook.

We decided that it would be uneconomical to extend our corpus considerably in order to ensure coverage of the few significant omissions, but we did take careful note of the missing words and meaning categories to ensure that we included them in Level 2. To replace them in Level 1 we chose to highlight around fifty other words of particularly high frequency which happened to be well contextualised in our data. Among these were such words as **telephone, visit, window and station**. To these we added two more sets of words. First were those which were of high utility and occurrence in the classroom situation bearing in mind the methodology we had decided to adopt - words like **teacher, student, group and share**. Secondly there were words which did not qualify for inclusion on the grounds of frequency alone, but which completed important lexical sets. These included such items as days of the week, and a number of adjectives of colour and shape. Together with the 650 words already identified, these made up the target for Level 1. Inevitably a number of other words occurred in the texts, some of them, like **cat, banana, psychiatrist and lining**, of low frequency and utility. We had no intention of highlighting these. The fact that they occurred in the learner's corpus was a consequence of our decision to work only with authentic and spontaneously produced text.

Similar procedures were applied to specify content for Levels 2 and 3. As

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with most language courses, the emphasis and therefore the proportion of text, began to move from spoken to written. In addition to other written texts, Levels 2 and 3 each included a complete short story by Roald Dahl and Level 3 also featured a good deal of newspaper text. When we came to profile the words in Levels 2 and 3, we took account of the fact that profiles become less complex as one moves down the frequency scale and we were thus able to work without data sheets. In profiling words for Level 2 we worked from database (see page 32) and dictionary entries, and for Level 3 we relied on the *Collins COBUILD English Language Dictionary* itself. Of the 1,800 words additional to the 700 in Level 1 we managed to contextualise all but about 200. Texts and rubrics for Levels 2 and 3 were concordanced in the same way as for Level 1.

Like most coursebooks, all three levels went through several rewrites as a result of readers' comments or piloting. The information and advice culled from these processes had to be incorporated, but here again we were presented with particular problems. We could not respond immediately to adverse comments on or reactions to a particular text or task. It sometimes happened that the text in question offered a particularly good context for important words or phrases. Since we were committed to the use of authentic/spontaneous text we could not simply write something else to give us the same cover. We were reluctant, therefore, to drop a useful text unless we could find and exploit a good context elsewhere in the materials or in our text bank. If we did drop the text we had then to identify the items we were losing and go back to the concordances of our material to find other places where these items were covered. A single decision of this kind had considerable repercussions. We did not doubt that our determination to keep the best possible coverage of our target words in the learner's corpus was justified, but sometimes we paid a high price for it.

### Adjusting the learner's corpus

Statistically it was almost inevitable that with some words the picture which emerged from concordances of our texts differed in important ways from the picture derived from the 7.3 million word COBUILD corpus. The word **like** provides an example. The main COBUILD corpus has 11,600 occurrences of **like**. Of these about 60% mean 'resembling, similar or having the appearance of something else; in the same way as'. Typical occurrences are:

People with sensitive skins were beginning to look like lepers. The proprietor's word, like Hitler's, was absolute.

The aim is to run them like nursery schools.

A sub-category of this meaning accounted for around 20% of the remaining uses:

SUCH AS; USED WHEN CITING EXAMPLES OF A PARTICULAR TYPE OR CLASS.

She lived on lovely clean foods like milk, butter, eggs . . .

A private gardener like myself would never get on in nursery work.

The remaining 20% were occurrences like:

I don't like what you stand for.

There's nothing I like better than talking to my colleagues.

and sentences with **would like** such as:

Would he like to inspect the hut now?  
That's what I'd like to know.

In our text data, however, the proportions were reversed in that the occurrences of **like** meaning 'be fond of' and **would like** meaning 'went to' heavily outnumbered the other categories. We made sure, however, that we drew attention to the first two categories no less than the third. In doing this it occurred to us that whereas many coursebooks have whole units dealing with 'likes and dislikes', relatively few of them highlight the more frequent meanings of **like**. In all cases like this we were careful to cover as far as possible all uses which were prominent in the COBUILD corpus, even if there were relatively few such occurrences in our own texts. Obviously we would have been happier with a neat match between our mini-corpus and the main corpus, but the amount of material which would need to have been processed in order to achieve this put it out of the question.

### Language focused work

We felt reasonably confident that at each level, and certainly by the end of Level 3, we had provided learners with exposure to a highly representative sample of English. But we did not want to rely simply on exposure. We wanted to enable teachers to highlight the most important words and phrases as they occurred in the texts to which learners were exposed. For this reason we itemised learning aims, including lexical aims, for each section of each unit (see page 70), and summarised lexical aims for each unit (see page 71). Without guidance of this sort, learners have no way of knowing what is important and needs to be remembered. We were also well aware from our own previous teaching experience that teachers too need to be prompted if they are to recognise which items have high utility.

In addition to this we wanted to provide specific language practice of different kinds. We wanted first to make sure that we covered all items in the consensus syllabus as identified by the TEFL Side Corpus, unless there was a clear reason to omit them. We did this largely through special grammar exercises.

<p><b>200 Grammar words</b></p> <p><b>so</b> 1 marking a summary or a change of subject <i>A: I wasn't in London last weekend. B: So you weren't in London last weekend?</i> <i>BG: I haven't really got anything else planned. DF: So what about the shopping?</i></p> <p>2 expressing amount <i>We were so tired that we went straight to bed.</i></p> <p>3 meaning therefore <i>He saw someone he thought he knew, so he called out and ran after her.</i></p> <p>4 pointing back <i>A: It's very easy. B: Do you really think so?</i></p> <p>5 <b>so that</b> used to talk about result or purpose <i>The British Council helps British participants by helping to pay their expenses so that they can attend the Seminar.</i></p>	<p>6 meaning 'also' <i>A: I've got some money. B: So have I.</i></p> <p>There is one example below of each of these six meanings of <b>so</b>. Which is which?</p> <p>a DF: <i>Will you be going to Nisa this weekend?</i> BG: <i>Yes. I think so.</i> DF: <i>So will I. So that's one possibility.</i></p> <p>b A : <i>It depends if I've got a car or not.</i> B: <i>Right, so you do your shopping by car.</i></p> <p>c <i>Please let me know as soon as you have fixed your travel plans so that I can make sure you are properly looked after on arrival.</i></p> <p>d <i>After so much hassle I'm determined to stay at the top.</i></p>
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The aim was to give a picture of the grammatical behaviour of the very commonest words of the language. These exercises drew almost entirely on material from the learner's corpus as described in Chapter 4, enabling the learners to draw on their own experience of the language. A reference section which brought together these grammatical generalisations and illustrated them with further examples was included at the back of the Student's Book Level 1 and Practice Book Level 3.

### So (200)

#### 1 marking a summary or a change of subject

Okay. So we've got the camel in the sunset next. (171)

So what do you do at quarter to eight? (143)

Right. So Mary went to London. (158)

#### 2 expressing amount

There are always so many tourists.

No wonder you look so tired. (142)

#### 3 meaning 'therefore'

The suitcase looked exactly like mine, so I said 'Excuse me, sir.. .'

#### 4 pointing back

JV: Wouldn't you think Cairo was 1500? DL: Yes, out of the ones given, I would've thought so. (90)

#### 5 'so that' used to talk about result or purpose

It had a thick lining, so that you could practically sleep out in it. (104)

Let me know as soon as you have fixed your travel plans, so that I can make sure that you are properly looked after. (193)

#### 6 meaning 'also'

JV: The woman next to him has orange trousers. DL: So has mine. (38)

David lives in London and so does Bridget.

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#### Look at these examples.

I'm tired.

So am I/So is she.

I've finished.

So have I/So has she.

I'll help.

So will I/So will she.

I like it.

So do I/So does she.

I liked it.

So did I/So did she.

#### Reply to these sentences in the same way.

1 I'm hungry.

2 I enjoyed the film.

3 He always comes.

- 4 They're going home.
- 5 She's done it before.
- 6 He'll have to work harder.
- 7 She was so tired she went straight to sleep.

These exercises provided learners with valuable input. Even more important they encouraged learners to look at language critically to see what patterns words featured in, and to assign meanings to those patterns.

The grammar was, therefore, organised almost entirely lexically in Level 1. This gave us some misgivings to begin with, but gradually we became convinced of the value of this approach. The value of organising things under words is that words are immediately recognisable. We felt that grammarians, coursebook writers and teachers had become used to working with abstract categories parts of speech; verb tenses; semantic labels such as 'conditional'; functional labels such as 'reported speech' end so on. When you have the language, you begin to search for categories to describe it. But learners do not 'have' the language. They are struggling to learn or acquire it. In doing so they are obliged to work from surface forms to perceive whatever recurrent patterns they can. In the case of an almost entirely non-inflected language like English, 'surface forms' means words. In fact we did include in our grammar morphemes such as **-ing**, markers of past tense and the past participle **-ed** and **-en** together with **-s** as a marker of the plural and third person singular, and **'s** as an abbreviation for is and has and marking possession:

### 213 Grammar words

<p><b>-ing</b></p> <p>1 describing something <i>There were two girls eating fish and chips.</i> <i>Write down one or two interesting things about each person.</i></p> <p>2 after <b>am, is, be</b> etc. <i>One girl was carrying a white bag.</i> <i>The S student will be asking you questions about things that you usually do during the day.</i></p> <p>3 after <b>see, look at, hear, listen to</b> etc. <i>Listen to them talking about when they go to bed.</i></p> <p>4 before <b>am, is</b> etc. <i>Dialling 999 is free.</i></p> <p>5 after <b>stop, start, remember, like</b> etc. <i>I remember going to London many years ago.</i> <i>She likes watching television.</i></p> <p>6 after <b>when, before, instead of</b> etc. <i>Remember that when dialling a number from within the same area, you do not need the prefix.</i> <i>Before attempting to break down the door, the man tried. . .</i></p>	<p>Write down five of these things.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>something you like doing</li> <li>something you stopped doing a long time ago</li> <li>something you can see someone doing</li> <li>what you were doing at this time yesterday</li> <li>what you will be doing this time tomorrow</li> <li>something you remember doing as a child</li> <li>someone who is sitting at the front of the class</li> </ul> <p>What categories do these sentences belong to?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a <i>Put in the money before making your call.</i></li> <li>b <i>Listen to David and Bridget discussing the same problem.</i></li> <li>c <i>The conversation ceased and she heard gasping sounds.</i></li> <li>d <i>Using a cardphone is not difficult.</i></li> <li>e <i>You can telephone your family back home without using money.</i></li> <li>f <i>The special cards are available from Post Offices and shops displaying the green 'Cardphone' sign.</i></li> <li>g <i>I really like running. Swimming is nice too.</i></li> <li>h <i>You have quite a long working day, don't you ?</i></li> </ul>
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Once this groundwork was laid in Level 1, we allowed ourselves to reference grammar in other ways. In Level 2 we organised some grammatical entries under functional headings such as 'Cause and Effect':

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<p><b>76 Grammar</b></p> <p><b>Cause and result</b>          In the first examples, the part expressing <i>cause</i> is coloured. The other part expresses <i>the result</i>.</p> <p>1 a sentence  <b>consequently</b> <i>He was very tired. Consequently he fell asleep.</i></p> <p><b>as a result</b> <i>Britain is quite a small country. As a result travel is quick and easy.</i></p> <p><b>that's why</b> <i>...but they're ever so small. That's why rain is thin. .</i></p> <p>2 a clause  <b>because</b> <i>I don't have a journey to work because I work at home. (80)</i></p> <p><b>and</b> <i>John is trying to get a new job, and is busy sending application forms all over the place. (2)</i></p> <p><b>as</b> <i>We chose to go by plane as it meant we had more time in Paris.</i></p> <p><b>so</b> <i>There's no chance of a promotion there, so I'm going to move on. (2)</i></p> <p><b>so . . . that</b> <i>I was so proud (that) I jumped up and down.</i></p> <p><b>since</b> <i>I suppose that would come out the same way since people seem to prefer cats and dogs to snakes and spiders .(25)</i></p> <p>3 a phrase  <b>as a result of</b> <i>As a result of this postcard I think Becky will write back.(33)</i></p> <p><b>because of</b> A: <i>Why can't you starve in the desert?</i>          B: <i>You can't starve in the desert because of the sand which is there. (Can you explain this joke?)</i></p>	<p><b>as</b> <i>As a visitor you can take tax-free goods home.</i></p> <p><b>with</b> <i>Until, mad with energy and boredom, you escaped. (26)</i></p> <p>4 words meaning 'cause' or 'result' :</p> <p><b>make</b> <i>His pointed ears made him look like a rat.</i></p> <p><b>result</b> <i>Shorter periods of use can result in fuel bill savings. (91)</i></p> <p><b>cause</b> <i>What was the cause of the accident?</i></p> <p><b>lead to</b> <i>A serious illness led to his losing his job .</i></p> <p>5 no marker  <i>I don't want that one. It's too expensive.</i>  <i>Until, mad with energy and boredom, you escaped. (26)</i></p> <p>Look at the sentences below. Say which part expresses. <i>cause</i> and which <i>result</i>.</p> <p>a <i>We had never been to Northumberland before. That's why we wanted to go. (29)</i></p> <p>b <i>We went by plane. As a result we had more time in Paris.</i></p> <p>c <i>My favourite was always English because I liked writing stories (58) :</i></p> <p>d <i>It's a very pleasant school, and I'd be sorry to leave it. (2)</i></p> <p>e . . . <i>a woman . . . looking a bit angry as it's one in the morning by then. (78)</i></p> <p>f <i>I can't see the TV with you standing in front of it!</i></p> <p>g <i>He worked hard and did very well as a result.</i></p> <p>h <i>Finally, tired out, they fell asleep.</i></p>
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But this language was still indexed lexically and therefore retrievable by the students using the word as a starting point.

The approach in these grammar exercises, therefore, was to present learners with the raw material of language (almost always language which was already familiar), and to provide prompts of different kinds to encourage learners to analyse and categorise language forms. Other exercises were devised to highlight other features of language.

*Language Study* exercises were used to lead in to detailed study of specific texts, particularly where the immediate context was an important aid in clarifying a point about language:

**70 Language study**

**a Giving advice**

- Read the transcripts for section 69 carefully. Pick out seven useful phrases you might use if you were starting to give advice to someone.

e.g. *Well, I actually did that last year. We . . .*

We included *Wordpower* exercises which focused on important words and showed how the frequent words in the language often have a number of meanings. This again led learners to think analytically about words, and often made the point that abstract meanings are by far the most frequent:

<p><b>195 Wordpower</b></p> <p>thing</p> <p>1 replacing another word or phrase  <i>She likes to eat sweet things.</i>  <i>Think of three things the driver might ask the hitch-hiker next. (97)</i></p> <p>2 referring to the situation in general or life in general  <i>Hi! How are things with you?</i>  <i>Business is bad. Things don't look good.</i></p> <p>3.1 introducing an idea that you want to develop  <i>But tell me just one more thing: what do I do with my husband and the three kids?(188)</i>  <i>I think the first thing he might say is 'Do you know what seed you were doing?(136)</i></p> <p>3.2 highlighting the importance or the important aspect of what you are saying  <i>The thing is, he has a skilled job.</i>  <i>The silly thing is, the car was parked at the time.</i></p>	<p>Look at these phrases using the word <b>thing</b>. Do they belong to category 1, 2 or 3?</p> <p>a) <i>The news is bad today. Things are very worrying.</i></p> <p>b) <i>We went out in a boat one day and saw seals and things.(29)</i></p> <p>c) <i>Has any of these things ever happened to you?(103)</i></p> <p>d) <i>The important thing is you must report the accident.</i></p> <p>e) <i>Could you bring it first thing tomorrow?</i></p> <p>f) <i>The awful thing is, I had totally forgotten her name.</i></p> <p>g) <i>I'm afraid I've got no time. Things are very busy at present.</i></p> <p>(Note: cartoon illustrations omitted)</p>
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In Level 2 we introduced *Phrase-building* to highlight common language patterns. Again the phrases were associated with words rather than with abstract patterns:

<p><b>196 Phrase-building</b></p> <p>Here are some other words which are used in the same way as <b>thing</b> category 3 (see section 195).</p> <p><b>a</b> Make up five sentences and try to remember them.</p> <p><b>b</b> Now make up some similar sentences about things in your country.</p>	<table border="1"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">The</td> <td style="text-align: center;">fact point trouble problem</td> <td style="text-align: center;">is</td> <td>living in London is more expensive. transport's easy in Central London. it's difficult to park your car. shopping is such fun, you spend too much. you can find whatever you want.</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">The</td> <td style="text-align: center;">question trouble problem</td> <td style="text-align: center;">is</td> <td>how to get home after 11o' clock. where to park. what to eat and where.</td> </tr> </table>	The	fact point trouble problem	is	living in London is more expensive. transport's easy in Central London. it's difficult to park your car. shopping is such fun, you spend too much. you can find whatever you want.	The	question trouble problem	is	how to get home after 11o' clock. where to park. what to eat and where.
The	fact point trouble problem	is	living in London is more expensive. transport's easy in Central London. it's difficult to park your car. shopping is such fun, you spend too much. you can find whatever you want.						
The	question trouble problem	is	how to get home after 11o' clock. where to park. what to eat and where.						

At Level 3 we incorporated exercises of a similar type and went on to develop exercises which would draw attention to the structure of such common text patterns as 'situation - problem - solution – evaluation':

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<p><b>78 Looking at adverts</b></p> <p><b>a</b> Look carefully at these items from the <i>New Horizons</i> catalogue. Which things:          are ideal for people who travel a lot?          could be classified as containers?          are made of the same material?          would be the best gift for an absent-minded person?          might be useful for a person who lives in or travels to a cold climate?</p> <p><b>b</b> Which adverts do these phrases come from?  <b>The fold-away handle makes for easy pouring and storage wearing a jacket. a pushhutton light top quality hand-made this new version This is the one they use, warmth and comfort</b></p> <p><b>c</b> Find the word <b>but</b> in the left-hand adverts. What does it signal ? Think of other words like <b>but</b>.  <b>78d</b> Which of the adverts are Edmund and Elizabeth talking about here? What do they mean: There you've killed two birds with one stone?</p>	<p>Note: in the original version this column contains five facsimile advertisements for:</p> <p>Leather Jackets</p> <p>Time folds flat</p> <p>The unbreakable flask</p> <p>Designer shirt wallet</p> <p>Keyminder</p>
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**79 Language study**

SITUATION—PROBLEM—SOLUTION—EVALUATION

Notice the structure of these adverts. Read the notes in the table carefully, then suggest what words or phrases from the texts could go into the empty spaces. Then continue building up the table with notes from the other adverts.

Situation General topic	<i>Leather jackets popular and comfortable</i>	<i>Men often carry a wallet</i>	<i>Car keys</i>		
The problem is that...	<i>In winter, don't keep cold out (too thin)</i>	<i>when not wearing a jacket(too bulky for shirt pocket)</i>	<i>(people lose them)(difficult to use in dark)</i>		
The solution is to...	<i>line jacket with sheepskin</i>	<i>Slim leather 4X 2,5, fits in shirt pocket</i>	<i>Bleper device when you whistle light</i>		
Evaluation	<i>Warmth and comfort combined with style</i>				

All of the exercises reinforced the same methodological approach. They encouraged learners to look critically at the corpus, and to make generalisations about the language to which they had been exposed. We also encouraged learners to refer back to the language they had experienced earlier. All of the target words at each level were listed alphabetically in the coursebook with references to the sections in which they occurred. Levels 1 and 3 contained a grammar section referenced to items in the corpus. Levels 2 and 3 incorporated lexicon or dictionary entries to encourage the development of reference skills, with exercises to reinforce this. The aim throughout was to develop familiarity with a carefully selected and weighted corpus of language, and to enable learners to exploit that corpus to good effect. While the basic methodology was taskbased with a focus very much on outcome, the language associated with those

tasks was examined in great detail in the light of a precisely specified syllabus. The problem of ordering was solved partly by recycling. This recycling is naturally built into a corpus which relies on natural language. It was reinforced by the way we selected items from the corpus for illustration and analysis. Finally, learners were able to use indexes and reference sections to recycle for themselves.

### Grading and ordering

It is clear, therefore, that our decision to adopt a task-based methodology and to restrict ourselves almost entirely to authentic/spontaneous text had implications for grading and ordering language material. We wanted first to build up a learner's corpus, and then gradually to increase the learner's familiarity with and conceptual understanding of significant parts of that corpus. In order to achieve this, we began by ordering not language items but tasks. At first this was done intuitively by identifying those tasks which we thought would present relatively few problems for elementary learners, usually because the outcome was highly predictable. We then checked our intuitions during our own piloting, and then against feedback from other pilot runs. This led to some reordering, until we had a sequence of tasks which the learners could reasonably be expected to handle both receptively and productively.

The very commonest forms of English occurred not only in the earliest tasks, but again and again right through the corpus. We were able, therefore, to draw attention to the present tense of the verb *be* and to common question forms in the very first unit:

#### 8 Language study

##### 's, is, 're, are

Read these examples. They are all from Unit 1. Find all these words: 's, is, 're, are.

1 What does 's mean?

2 When do we say **is** (or 's) and when do we say **are** (or 're)?

*Who's that?*

*Do you know where they're from ?*

*Tell him or her where you're from.*

*This is -. She's from-.*

*Where's David from?*

*Who's Chris? What's his surname?*

*Who are these people? What are their surnames?*

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### 11 Language study

Asking for addresses and phone numbers

11 First read the questions below and then listen.

David, Bridget, Chris and Philip use eight of these questions. Which questions do they use?

*What's your phone number?*

*Have you got a phone number?*

*And your phone number?*

*Have you got a phone? What's your number, then?*

*Can you give me your address?*

*Could you give me your address?*

*Can I have your address?*

*What's the postcode?*

*Sorry, could you repeat that?*

*Sorry, how do you spell that?*

*Can you spell your name for me?*

*Can you tell me how you spell your name?*

We did not believe that in Unit 1 these would be learned in the sense that learners would be able to produce them with consistent accuracy. The first stage was simple awareness raising. We knew that these items would occur again and again until they were finally incorporated in the learner's repertoire. Unit 2 built on questions marked by intonation, and drew attention to inversion:

### 20 Language study

#### **a have got**

Look at these examples from the recordings of Bridget and David.

There are no full stops ( . ) or question marks ( ? ).

1 Which examples are questions?

2 What is the word 've'?

3 Which words come before and after **got** ? :

DF: Have you got any brothers and sisters

BG: Yes, I've got one sister called Rosemary

DF: Okay

BG: And have they got any children

DF: Mhm. Two children, two girls

BG: Yes

BG: and you've got one sister called Felicity

DF: Mhm

BG: And they've got two daughters called . . . Emma :

and...

DF: Sarah

BG: Sarah

DF: Mm

**20 b** Listen and repeat each phrase. Then practise saying some of these phrases with your partner. Listen for two stresses in each group of words.

*Have you got any **brothers** and **sisters**?*

*I've got **one** sister called **Rosemary**.*

***Two children**.*

***Two girls**.*

Question forms occurred again when the models and auxiliaries were treated:

### 132 Grammar words

#### do

What is the difference between sets 1 and 2?

#### Set 1

*Ask your teacher if you don't understand.*

*How do you know?*

*It doesn't matter.*

*What does Chris say?*

*I didn't get up until 8.30, so I was late.*

*Did Chris give good directions?*

#### Set 2

*I usually do the cooking and cleaning in the morning.*

*My husband does the gardening at weekends*

*He did the meals when I was ill.*

*What are you doing?*

*All right. You do it first, then it's my turn.*

-----

-----

These examples are a mixture of sets 1 and 2.

Sometimes both types appear in the same sentence. Which is which?

a *What does your brother do?*

b *Did you do your homework?*

c *No, I didn't, because I had a lot of other things to do.*

d *Who's going to do the dishes?*

e *Which bus? A 62 or 63 will do just as well.*

f *Is this yours? No, it's nothing to do with me.*

g *Have you done your homework?*

h *It doesn't matter.*

Look at the Grammar Book. Which categories do the last eight examples go into?

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and again with **wh-** words. Finally, certain sections in the Grammar Book reference section summarised the use of questions:

**can, could** (93,138)

### 1 ability/possibility

What things could you describe as sort of reddish? (37)

What other questions could I have asked?

Can you explain the answers? (46)

How much can you remember? (48)

She ran awe' as fast as she could. (198)

Ten twelve. That could be the time. (78)

Oriental definitely. It could be Thailand. (171)

---

What can you see?

I couldn't hear what he was saying.

---

**Look at the picture on page 58.**

**Make three sentences starting:**

*I can see...*

---

### 1.1 'could' for suggestions

You could look in the newspaper.

---

### 2 permission

You can go out now, but come back in ten minutes.

Could I do it tomorrow instead of today?

### 3 offer / request

Can you give me your address? (11)

Can you spell your name for me? (11)

Can I speak to Dr Brown please? (89)

Can I take a message? (89)

Can you tell me the time, please? (94)

Can you tell me how long it takes?

Could you give me your phone number please? (11)

Could you look after the children for me? (97)

There was, then, massive coverage of question forms. But generally they were treated from a lexical starting point. This not only gave the opportunity for recycling, but also highlighted holophrastic forms such as 'Can I . . . ?', 'Can you . . . ?', 'Could you . . . ?'. The Grammar Book also gave learners an opportunity to retrieve items from their corpus and (as they were referenced to sections of the text) to go back and retrieve the original contexts in which they occurred.

Some forms were more difficult to retrieve. The word **by**, for example, was not highlighted until Unit 8, because it was not until then that we had a context

for all of its common meanings:

### 111 Grammar words

#### by

1 who/what did it

*Do you think this would be said by a teacher?*

2 how

*She begins by asking what time they start.*

*I do my shopping by car.*

*I come to work by bus.*

3 when

*I've got to finish this by tomorrow.*

*It opens at eight, so I'm there by eight.*

4 where

*There's a phone box by the school.*

*It's over there by the post office.*

---

Find examples for each category.

a *She starts by asking what time they begin work.*

b *She usually gets back home by 9 a.m.*

c. . . *handicrafts made by people in the Third World.:*

d *Come and sit here by me.*

e *Guess what your partner's number is by asking 'Is it under 50. . .'*

f *I think I left it by the telephone.*

g *I have to finish this by tomorrow.*

Compare the examples in each category with the examples in the Grammar Book.

This too was further exemplified in the Grammar Book:

#### by (111)

##### 1 who / what did it

Wally is awakened by the phone ringing. (91)

Handicrafts made by people in the Third World.

(104)

Is that a magazine published by Macmillan? (146)

##### 2 how

You solve it by elimination. (158)

English by Radio. (146)

London is only 55 minutes away by train. (179)

Find out by talking to people.

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### **3 when**

Everyone helps to clear away after dinner. By then it's about 7.15 or 7.30 p.m. (113)  
Even though the Forth River is only 66 miles long, by the time it reaches Edinburgh it is over 4 miles wide. (179)

### **4 where**

Behind the chair? Of the person sitting by the desk?  
(72)

Just by the bus stop. (122)  
On the wall by the entrance was a notice. (173)

This strategy affords the teacher and the learner a great deal of flexibility. First of all an item is not highlighted until they are able to refer to examples of use. Secondly, most of these items will occur again and again. If they continue to cause problems they can be located in text either by referring to the Grammar Book or by looking at an index which references some of the sections in which the items occur and further exposure or practice is given. Finally, the commonest items are summarised in the Review pages and in the Grammar Book. The Grammar Book entries can be used for intensive practice and pattern drills if the teacher or learners feel this to be necessary. The stage at which this might best be done can be determined by teacher and learner rather than imposed by the coursebook writer. What is offered is a learner's corpus together with the wherewithal to exploit that corpus to the maximum advantage.

Problems of grading were obviously less acute in Levels 2 and 3. But here again the same strategy was employed. Learners were given the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the corpus in a principled way. To enable them to do this it was necessary to use the word as the reference point. The lexical basis on which the course was built became a valuable part of the methodology. At first this caused some concern. We were reluctant to lose well known and loved structural labels such as the passive, the second conditional and reported speech. As we worked with our lexically based grammar, however, we became more and more convinced that this outcome, too, was more than justified.