

## 6 Supporting Materials

Depending on how comprehensive a course is, it may provide some or all of the following: visual material; recorded (taped) material; a teacher's book; an index of grammatical items, functions etc.; a vocabulary list; tests.

### 1 Visual material, tapes and other aids for the teacher

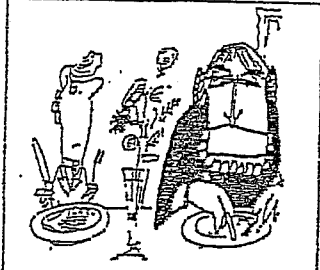
#### 1.1 Visual material

Visual material includes pictures in the coursebook, flashcards, wall charts, film strips, slides, videotapes and even 16mm sound film. Effective visuals should be usable: it should be possible to teach with them and through them. It is very important to distinguish between visuals which can be used for teaching an item such as a new verb form (e.g. visuals depicting a series of actions in progress and then completed) and visuals which serve only as illustrations, to make the page look more attractive, and do not form an integral part of the teaching material. It is usually easy to distinguish between the two, as in the former case exercises and other activities will direct the students' attention to the appropriate visuals and require a verbal response based on information provided visually. An example of a visual which is largely illustrative is reproduced in Figure 6 below, and an example of visuals which are integral to the course and are an essential part of the teaching material is shown in Figure 7 opposite.

**40. Food and Talk**

Last week at a dinner-party, the hostess asked me to sit next to Mrs Rumbold. Mrs Rumbold was a large, unsmiling lady in a tight black dress. She did not even  
 5 look up when I took my seat beside her. Her eyes were fixed on her plate and in a short time, she was busy eating. I tried to make conversation.

'A new play is coming to "The Globe" soon,' I said. 'Will you be seeing it?'  
 10 'No,' she answered.  
 'Will you be spending your holidays abroad this year?' I asked.  
 'No,' she answered.  
 15 'Will you be staying in England?' I asked.  
 'No,' she answered.  
 In despair, I asked her whether she was enjoying her dinner.  
 'Young man,' she answered, 'if you ate more and talked less, we would both  
 20 enjoy our dinner!'



*a large, unsmiling lady*

Fig. 6. (From *Practice and Progress* by L.G. Alexander (Longman))

## Practice

What	am	I	painting
	are	you	doing
	is	he	cleaning
		she	making

I	am	painting a picture.
You	are	reading.
He	is	cleaning his car.
She		cooking a meal.

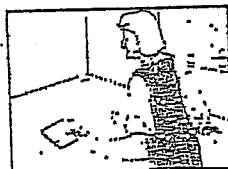
Make questions and answers for these pictures.

Example:

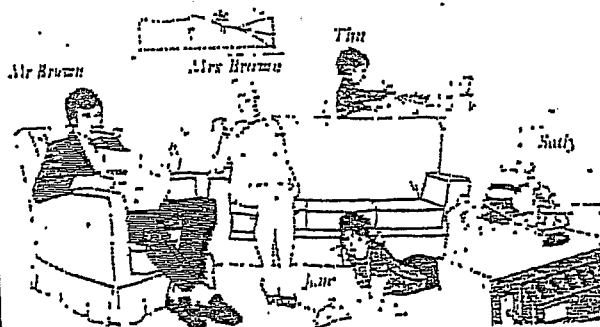


You write:

What's Brian Ford doing?  
He's cleaning his car.



Look at this picture and then answer the questions.



- 1 Where are these people?
- 2 Where's Mr Brown sitting?
- 3 What's he reading?
- 4 What's he smoking?
- 5 What's Mrs Brown doing?
- 6 What's the little girl's name?
- 7 Where is she?
- 8 What's she doing?
- 9 Where's Tim sitting?
- 10 What's he doing?
- 11 Where's Jane?
- 12 What's she doing?

Fig. 7. (From *English Alive* by S. Nicholls, P. O'Shea and T. Yeadon (Edward Arnold))

Where visuals are both attractive as illustrations and integral to the course as teaching material, we have a bonus. Attractive presentation is certainly important, but it is of primary importance that visuals should be rooted in the teaching material rather than superimposed on it.

**Videotaped material** holds a good deal of potential for the language teacher as it allows presentation and practice of language in a very well contextualised manner. It has the advantage over 16mm film of being easier to handle and more versatile, and an obvious advantage over audiotape for language presentation is that the students have both visual and aural input and can make use of all the contextual clues provided by the gestures and facial expressions of the speaker and by the situation in which he is speaking. We are often guilty of underestimating the difficulty faced by learners when they are asked to listen to a disembodied voice coming out of a tape recorder. Using videotape certainly makes the students' task not only easier but also more realistic.

A very few courses, such as the *Follow Me* series produced by the BBC, make use of videotaped material as an integral part of the package. However, at the present time, the cost of making extensive use of videotaped courses is still prohibitive. But there will almost certainly be very important developments in this area in the not too distant future and videotape is a resource that language teachers should be thinking about very seriously in order to exploit fully its obvious potential.

## 1.2 Audio material

Recorded material is more and more frequently provided on cassette, although material on open-reel tapes is still widely available. Records (discs) are rarely offered nowadays and are not to be recommended as they lack a pause and review facility when played on standard turntables. What is recorded on tape is generally available in printed form as a tapescript, but it is necessary to listen to the actual tape to determine among other things the clarity of the recording and the kinds of voices used. Some tapes, mainly for listening comprehension, contain authentic material recorded on the spot, but by far the majority are recorded in a studio, often by professional actors and actresses. This may result in tapes which are in a sense 'overpronounced', where weak forms are stressed and the rhythm of speech is distorted. It is important to check that the spoken English on the tape is a fair representation of normal, colloquial, spoken English. Figure 8 opposite is an example of a tapescript.

## 1.3 Teachers' Books

A teacher's handbook is becoming a standard part of most courses now, although some still appear without one. Teachers' Books vary tremendously in the amount of assistance offered to the teacher. Some simply reproduce the student's book with a few additional notes for the teacher indicating the objective of each unit and suggesting ideas for one or two supplementary exercises. Others go into great detail and take the teacher step by step through every stage of every unit to the extent that every visual to be drawn on the board is given, with accompanying details of exactly what the teacher has to say at each given moment. The Teachers' Books for *Contact English* (Granger and Hicks, 1977) give very detailed instructions to the teacher along these lines and an extract from Teacher's Book 1 is reproduced in Figure 9 on page 54.

It must be said that it is better to err on the side of giving too much help rather

Five.  
 Doctor: I mean ... well ... er ... something ...  
 something makes me nervous.  
 Patient: But what makes you nervous?

## PRACTICE 4

Now you must ask both sorts of questions. Like this.  
 Listen.

Doctor: Something seems strange.  
 Patient: What seems strange?  
 Doctor: When I look at you, I notice something.  
 Patient: What do you notice?  
 Now you do it. Ask the questions.  
 Doctor: Something seems strange.  
 Patient: What seems strange?  
 Doctor: I notice something.  
 Patient: What do you notice?  
 Doctor: When I look at you, something happens.  
 Patient: What happens?  
 Doctor: When I look at you ... my heart ... it ...

It does something.

Patient: What does it do?

Doctor: I mean ... I want ... I want to do  
 something.

Patient: What do you want to do?

Doctor: But ... er ... something worries me.

Patient: What worries you?

Doctor: Your eyes ... they ... they do something  
 to me.

Patient: What do they do to you?

## Phase C Further Practice

## PRACTICE 5

And now for something different. You're the doctor.  
 You're talking to another doctor on the phone. Listen.

(Dialling)

Doctor: Doctor Barnes here.

Doctor: Hello, Doctor Barnes. This is Doctor ..  
 Grant. I had one of your patients here yesterday.

Dr Barnes: Yes.

Dr Grant: And I want to tell you what he said ...  
 and what happened ... and the questions  
 he asked.

Dr Barnes: I see. Go on.

That's the situation. You're the doctor. You're  
 telling the other doctor what the patient said. Like  
 this.

Yesterday the patient said this:

Patient: I'm very nervous.

So you say:

Dr Grant: He said he was very nervous.

Now you do it. Begin each sentence with "He said".  
 One.

Patient: I'm very nervous.

Dr Grant: He said he was very nervous.

Two.

Patient: I have headaches.

Dr Grant: He said he had headaches.

Three.

Patient: They worry me.

Dr Grant: He said they worried him.

Four.

Patient: I get them every day.

Dr Grant: He said he got them every day.

Five.

Patient: They're terrible.

Dr Grant: He said they were terrible.

## PRACTICE 6

You're the doctor ... you're still talking to the other  
 doctor. But now you must tell the other doctor all  
 the things you told the patient. Like this.

Yesterday you said:

Doctor: I know something about it.

So now you must say:

Doctor: I told him I knew something about it.

Now you do it. Begin each statement with "I told him".

One.

Doctor: I know something about it.

Doctor: I told him I knew something about it.

Two.

Doctor: It isn't serious.

Doctor: I told him it wasn't serious.

Three.

Doctor: Doctors know about this.

Doctor: I told him doctors knew about this.

Fig. B. (From *Kernel Lessons Plus Tapescript*, R. O'Neill (Longman))

than too little, as a more experienced teacher can always disregard what he finds to be superfluous, whilst the detail in Teachers' Books such as those for *Contact English* can be of enormous help to the inexperienced or untrained teacher. A slight danger is that the experienced teacher might find it difficult to disregard the detailed instructions and as a consequence might feel that he is being forced into a mould that cramps his style. Certainly one would not wish to encourage a teacher in the belief that teaching consists largely, if not exclusively, of closely following minutely detailed instructions.

Some Teachers' Books compromise and provide detailed plans for teaching one or two units, and follow this up with more abbreviated notes for the rest of the units in the book. This schema would appear to satisfy the need of inexperienced teachers for a good deal of support, whilst encouraging them to become gradually more independent and decide for themselves how to use the material provided in the Students' Book.


# 9

## New Language

## Long Present





he, she

**Blackboard drawings**




**Introduction**

Build up the first drawing, stopping to ask questions as you draw:

	What's this?	A head / A face.
	Is it a man or a woman?	A woman.
	What's this in her mouth?	A cigarette.
	What's she doing?	She's smoking.
	What's she smoking?	A cigarette.


**Presentation**

Present the other drawings in the same way, e.g.:

		He's smoking a pipe.
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**Practice**

Write a name under each picture—let the class invent names if they don't recognise the faces:

	What's her name?	Matilda.
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Write *Matilda*.

Then let students make statements about the pictures:

	Matilda's eating a banana.
	George is drinking beer, (etc.)

Fig. 9. (From *Contact English* by C. Granger and T. Hicks (Hainemann))

Every teaching/learning situation is a unique combination of context and personality, and we should not expect to see materials used in exactly the same way, with dull uniformity, in all sorts of different situations. Ultimately it is up to the teacher to find his own way of teaching, one which suits the teacher and the class. With experience, the teacher's range of techniques will widen and his perception will sharpen. He will become less dependent on outside support, whether from colleagues or from books. So a Teachers' Book, whether brief or detailed, should be seen as a useful guide offering suggestions and advice. It should not be considered as a set of prescriptive instructions to be followed unquestioningly.

#### 1.4 Vocabulary lists and indexes

Of particular use to the teacher are indexes and vocabulary lists, whether they occur in the Teacher's or in the Students' Book. An index of structures and/or an index of functions, preferably both, allows the teacher to locate quickly and easily any particular item for reference, or for remedial work. A vocabulary list should list all the vocabulary items used in the course up to the stage in question. For example, Book 3 of a four-stage course would list all the vocabulary used up to the end of stage 3 and additionally would indicate the unit in which each word was first introduced. With this information at his disposal the teacher who wishes to prepare some supplementary material of his own, to use a text from another source, or to write some test items can check quickly and easily whether a particular vocabulary item is already known to the students.

### 2 Materials for testing

The first question for consideration, clearly, is whether or not any materials for testing are included in the course. Very often they are not, in which case the teacher wishing to test the learners' performance will have to either write his own tests or use test materials from other published sources.

Where materials for testing are provided, we should consider their purpose, that is, what the tests are to be used for. In the context of a general course we might expect to find materials for *entry testing*, *progress testing*, and *achievement testing*. The purpose of the entry test is to determine whether the student's English is of a high enough standard for him to begin using the coursebook. (A beginners' book would not of course have an entry test!) An entry test may also have a diagnostic function in that it shows the teacher where a particular student's strengths and weaknesses lie and provides the teacher with a profile of the student's abilities.

Progress tests are given periodically during a course and are related directly to what has been taught in the preceding units, allowing the student to gauge his progress and the teacher to monitor the student's performance. Achievement tests also relate to the content of the course and would typically come at the end of each coursebook, corresponding to, say, a year's or a term's work.

Tests are valuable in that they tend to increase student motivation by providing a short-term goal and a means of checking one's own progress. They also provide the teacher with useful feedback which will help him to become more aware of the learning difficulties faced by the students. In this way the teacher can improve his own teaching performance.

The two main approaches to testing at present are, firstly, *discrete point*

*testing* and, secondly, *communicative testing*. Discrete point testing concentrates on testing separately different language items and language skills (e.g. grammar, sound discrimination, listening with comprehension, writing) and by combining the results of a number of separate tests or test items builds up a picture of the student's level of English. This may be expressed as a single score or as a profile with a different score for different skills as shown in Figure 10 below.

STUDENTS' NAMES	LISTENING	SPEAKING	READING	WRITING	GRAMMATICAL ACCURACY
Françoise FAURE	6.3	5.4	6.1	4.8	5.9
Ayşe ZOLTAN	7.1	4.5	5.4	3.6	4.1
Kees ALLES	8.2	8.8	7.8	6.9	8.7
Lotfi BEN BRAHIM	8.1	7.4	7.9	5.3	5.6

Fig 10. Results of discrete point tests expressed as student profiles.

Discrete point testing can give a good idea of a student's performance in individual skills but it tends to neglect the fact that in communication we combine skills in a variety of ways, often with a severe constraint in real time. Communicative testing attempts to take account of this by testing a student's ability to perform in a communicative situation, using whatever combination of skills and abilities is necessary. The scoring will tend to be more subjective, as a global assessment is arrived at by making qualitative judgements according to a number of criteria such as *accuracy*, *flexibility* and *speed*.

Rather than breaking up the ability to use language into a large number of sub-skills, assessing them individually and adding up the scores, communicative testing assesses larger and more complex chunks of language, using *global tests* such as *cloze* and *dictation*, and relying on the subjective judgement of the tester aided by checklists of performance descriptions.

In general, we may ask two main things of tests which form part of a general course: they should relate well to the course itself and test what is taught in the course material, and they should reflect closely the learners' communicative needs by testing the sorts of abilities that the learners will need to use.

### 3 Other considerations

#### 3.1 Teacher input

In general terms we may ask ourselves how much support the material provides the teacher with. Is a high degree of teacher input required, for example in supplementing the existing material, adapting it for presentation or working out the correct answers to difficult exercises, or is the material 'teacherproof', in other words so complete and self contained that it almost teaches itself, requiring the teacher simply to do what he is told? Another question is whether the material is easily taught by non-native speakers (surely the majority of EFL teachers fall into this category, although we sometimes tend to forget this fact) or whether the teacher would require a highly-developed native-speaker intuition to teach it. Some of the coursebooks which aim to teach communicative abilities, and in particular the appropriate use of stylistic variation, fall into

the latter category because they rely on the teacher to recognise and often to produce English at different levels of formality in order to match the social context. Not only does the teacher have to perceive the social context correctly, he also has to select his language accordingly and make a number of very subtle and very difficult judgements. This is something that the native speaker can usually do well enough, but without very detailed support the non-native speaker may not be able to cope. Even across dialects of English the task is a difficult one, to the extent that British speakers of English often have difficulty in performing this kind of operation in American English, and vice-versa.

### 3.2 Equipment

The physical constraints imposed by a course may be considerable and in the absence of the necessary equipment some courses become virtually unusable. With inadequate equipment, the strain on the teacher can be immense, diverting his energies from the central task of teaching to fiddling around with machinery which he does not really understand. Some of the rather grandiose audio-visual courses of the 1960s are weak through their very sophistication. The fact that they need sophisticated equipment severely limits their application. There are, after all, many schools and colleges where even blacking out a room is a major problem. In this context we might ask ourselves if the material can still be used if certain items, such as filmstrips, are left out.

### 3.3 Subject matter

A very important consideration is the content, or subject matter, of a course. What do the dialogues contain? What do the reading passages actually tell us? What does the practice material actually relate to in the real world? If we are to get away from the claustrophobic situation of using language for its own sake, we need to see that the materials which we adopt make use of language in order to convey information; express opinions, etc. which are of genuine intrinsic interest to the learners. If through a reading passage the learners not only get exposure to English but also become interested in the subject matter, their motivation will be increased and they will see more purpose in learning the language. In this way the whole learning process will be enriched.

Unfortunately little general course material at present provides subject matter of genuine intrinsic interest, although it can be found in readers and in some listening materials, as well as in ESP courses. *Kernel Lessons Plus* (O'Neill, 1972) goes some way towards this goal in choosing a number of topics of general interest to adolescents and adults, and this approach surely must have contributed to the enormous popularity of the book. Many general courses today can be justly criticised for containing far too much fictional or fictitious material, lacking any literary merit, and not including enough interesting factual material for learners to get their teeth into.

### 3.4 Overall impression

Evaluating the overall composition of the material is a matter for personal judgement, taking into account the nature of the students and the type of teaching involved. The amount of visual material included in a coursebook, for example, can vary enormously from one course to another. What we should look for is a good balance between visual material and written text, so that each supports the other.



### Summary

Most general courses include supplementary materials of various kinds and we should evaluate these individually and also as part of the whole package. We also need to know how much support is provided for the teacher and whether the material can be easily used by a non-native speaker. Some sophisticated courses require access to projection equipment and rooms with blackout facilities and this may be a limiting factor in many schools and colleges. Finally, we should consider the subject matter of the course to see whether it is of some intrinsic interest to the learners.

### Exercises and activities

- (a) Take a general course and see how many of the items listed in 6.1 in Chapter 10 it contains. Do you consider any of the omissions that you discovered to be serious? If YES, what problems would they cause, and how could the problems be overcome?
- (b) Identify what testing materials there are which accompany your course-book. What purposes could the testing material be used for? If there is no testing material, can you find any published tests which would be suitable? (See all the questions under 6.2 in Chapter 10.)
- (c) If your course has a Teachers' Book, discuss how useful it is and the extent to which you use it. What would you like to see in it that isn't already there? Is there anything in the Teachers' Book that you consider unnecessary?