

A Language Development Course

(Cornelia Coșer, Rodica Vulcănescu, *Developing Competence in English. Intensive English Practice*, Polirom, 2004)

This book is a language improvement course that you will find indispensable for both teachers and students whose first language is not English. Its primary aim is to offer plenty of language awareness material preparatory for the Baccalaureate, Cambridge, Oxford or University entrance exams. The book is suitable for independent work as well as for classroom work for students from upper-intermediate to proficiency level.

The structures chosen as the focus for each of the grammar sections have been selected as representing areas that are central to language use and that can also be problem areas. The approach is generally an exploratory one that asks students to rely on and activate their prior knowledge. This approach has been adopted in preference to one that is more explicit in presenting information about grammar. This is because, unlike many EFL students, the readers of this book will normally have studied these grammatical points before and probably do not need to be presented with information about them. Opportunities to reflect on and work out rules of grammar, as well as apply them, can be more valuable for these readers.

Developing Competence in English is organized in two main parts, either of them including as follows:

- *Part I* – Language

Areas:

- check list questions revising the main grammar areas in English;
- language boxes;
- language exercises;
- reflection (“Thinking about”) activities.

- *Part II* – Language in

Use:

- sets of activities on verb forms in context;
- sets of activities on error correction;
- sets of transformation activities;
- open cloze activities.

The book also contains a key to all exercises in Part I and II.

The activities used in all sections of the book vary in that sometimes they concentrate on grammar, sometimes on transformation exercises, sometimes on error correction, etc. Readers are provided with certain opportunities to examine their attitudes to student error, the value and role of error and also how and when to correct students. While doing this, they will also often have opportunities to work on language accuracy.

The Check List at the beginning of each section in *Part I* will introduce the reader to the main points covered in this section. The number of questions that are answered correctly will help the him/her identify his/her level and problem points. In the guide to the exercises the reader is either given the correct answer to the points in the Check List or sent to the rule or exercise where he/she can find it.

Most of the exercises in each section can be solved in the book itself, but for some of them a notebook is necessary. The exercises gathered under the title “Thinking about...” and marked with a T are good practice for advanced learners. They will make them think about the language, increasing their intuition and awareness of how the language works.

In the “Fill in and learn boxes” the learner has to complete the spaces in order to recreate the grammar rule while in the “Choose and learn” boxes he/she has to select the correct information from the underlined words. The literary translation exercises have been chosen so as to require knowledge acquired or revised in each chapter. The translation situations become more complex as the learner progresses through the book.

The activities in *Part II* are based on the reader’s capacity of

inferring meaning from context and of understanding how the language works. They will develop the learner’s awareness and will investigate areas that are a main source of mistakes or confusion for students of English.

As concerns the “Error Correction” section, it investigates main areas of confusion for all those who study English. The learner will be guided through the section, being gradually offered less help and more independence in identifying possible mistakes and becoming aware of the way in which the language works. Finally, the reader can move on to the tasks in the “Transformations” and “Open Cloze” sections which will offer him a lot of models for his future exams and will help him build his confidence in using English.

Generally speaking, *Developing Competence in English* is intended for learners whose language is at good intermediate or a more advanced level. It also focuses on the language that teachers need for use in the classroom, for talking and reading about their work and for furthering their studies in English as a Foreign Language.

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