

# Foreword

The *Collins COBUILD English Course* is a new departure in English language teaching materials. It is a lively and varied Course, using plenty of natural English examples. And it is founded on the very latest evidence of English structure from the COBUILD files.

The authors set themselves a very demanding task. Course materials today attain very high standards of presentation, variety of activity and stimulation to learning. The Course had to meet or beat all these existing criteria, but at the same time it was to be designed around our growing knowledge of the role of the common words in the language.

COBUILD has built up a mass of information from the careful examination of many millions of words, and it offers a new style and balance to a syllabus. Until now it has not been possible to tell which are the most central and typical patterns of the language. Teachers and materials writers have simply not had sufficient evidence, important usages have been missed and some quite trivial material has been prominently taught. Sequencing has been fairly arbitrary, and there is not much agreement between one course and another on what constitutes the first stages of English.

Worst of all there has been for many years in English teaching a loss of respect for the natural patterns of a language. Because of the difficulty of collecting and analysing language that occurs in everyday contexts, teachers have had to accept all sorts of invented or adapted texts. These are grimly defended by some, but there is no virtue in them; they were only made up because it was not practicable to harness real language.

Now it is possible, with a little trouble, to offer the learner plenty of texts in quite natural English, and this Course opens up new experiences in that area.

In particular, the COBUILD Course boldly features spontaneous conversation, language at its most natural. This is the most elusive form of English, and very difficult to get under control for classroom use.

A good course is a remarkable balancing act, and also a miracle of compression. Each activity has to take up only a small amount of space, the vocabulary, grammar, phonology and everything else has to be kept under control, and the whole thing has to vary constantly to keep up the level of interest and excitement. In a series of designing, drafting, piloting and revising stages, the Course has taken shape as a viable classroom instrument.

The ordering of the Course follows a new and carefully designed methodology which has been developed by the authors. In the variation of activities the learner follows a series of steps which give a great deal of learning reinforcement and practice in language skills.

The most precious resource in language teaching is classroom time. Hence it is very important that the choice of what is taught is made very carefully. Using the evidence available from COBUILD, this Course is able to identify the most useful words and patterns, and give the learner an excellent start.

**Professor John Sinclair**

# Introduction

## **Who is this Course for?**

Level Two of the *Collins COBUILD English Course* is the second part of a three-part general English course for adult students. It is designed for early intermediate students, particularly those who have successfully completed Level One of this Course. Level Two takes learners beyond the level of the *Cambridge Preliminary English Test*.

Students who have a good grounding in the basic words and patterns of English will progress rapidly, building up their knowledge and confidence until they can use English to meet a wide range of real needs.

## **The Course is Complete**

Like Level One, Level Two offers a complete package comprising a Student's Book in full colour, with a separate transcript booklet inserted in its back cover, a Practice Book for use in or out of class, a set of cassettes and an interleaved Teacher's Book. The Teacher's Book is designed for easy access by busy teachers, and contains clear and detailed guidance on how the course can be taught, offering a flexible approach to the materials and methodology.

## **Basic Principles**

In devising the methodology for the Course, the authors have adhered to a number of basic principles, which have been at the heart of good language teaching practice for some years. These are:

- 1** People learn a language most effectively by using the language to do things – to find out information, to solve problems, to talk about personal experiences, and so on.
- 2** A focus on accuracy is vital. Learners need time to think about the language they are using.
- 3** As far as possible learners should be exposed to real language.
- 4** Grammar is learned rather than taught. Coursebooks and teachers provide useful guidelines on the language, but learners should additionally be encouraged to think and deduce for themselves.
- 5** Learners need strategies for organising what they have learned – they need rules, patterns, and categories.

The *Collins COBUILD English Course* realises these well-established principles through a new language syllabus – a lexical syllabus – that has been drawn from the COBUILD language research project.

## **The COBUILD Project**

COBUILD is the Collins-Birmingham University International Language Database. Using large-scale computer facilities, an editorial team at Birmingham University has worked for seven years, analysing and recording the patterns of use in millions of words of current English text. The Database holds extensive information about how English is really used, and is an authoritative resource that has proved invaluable in the development of this Course.

## **The Lexical Syllabus**

Level One takes 700 of the commonest words in today's English, covering their most important meanings and uses as identified by the COBUILD Project. Level Two reviews these words and goes on to cover 850 new words.

is that learners become competent in English both quickly and efficiently. Because they learn the English that is really important to their needs they are able to use natural language from an earlier stage.

### **Unit Organisation**

Level Two contains fifteen units, organised in three blocks of five units each. Every fifth unit is a revision unit. Each unit will take between four and six hours to complete.

As with most other courses, there is a gradual shift in emphasis from the spoken to the written form of the language. There is a wide selection of reading material in Level Two, all taken from authentic sources and produced here unchanged. The passages have been carefully selected to provide good coverage of the target language, the 1550 commonest words in English. They are taken from a range of sources to give students experience of the kinds of reading task they are likely to meet outside the classroom. For this reason students are not expected to understand every single word they read. A variety of tasks and exercises accompany the texts and students are encouraged to complete these as efficiently as possible, ignoring any irrelevant difficulties which they may meet.

From Unit 7, the Student's Book features 'The Hitch-hiker' a short story by the well known author, Roald Dahl. The story is broken down into short instalments, each of which is read first for the suspense and enjoyment before being studied more intensively. Students derive considerable motivation from their ability to read and enjoy a short story as written for native speakers of English.

There is a similarly wide variety of written tasks in both the Student's Book and the Practice Book, ranging from single sentence responses to much longer texts. Writing tasks involve the production of stories, instructions, descriptions, summaries, written reports and other forms of writing.

All units follow the methodological cycle outlined above. A detailed description of how to handle this sequence is given in the teacher's notes for Unit 1 (see pages 1T to 3T which follow).

Level Two continues from Level One in encouraging students to think about language for themselves. Again there is a variety of language-focused exercises, to help students to discover the words and patterns of English for themselves:

- **Grammar**

The first five units review the important grammatical features which were covered in Level One. From Unit 6 onwards the grammar work is organised functionally, under headings like *Cause and Result*, *Purpose*, *Time* and *Descriptions*. With few exceptions, the examples illustrating these functional areas are examples which students have seen in context in the Course.

- **Language Study**

These sections focus on other important aspects of the language and examine examples that have occurred in the recordings and written texts.

- **Wordpower**

These sections cover particularly common target words which have a number of important meanings or uses, for example the word **way**.

- **Preposition Spot**

This is a new feature. All teachers know that prepositions are of central importance in English. Level Two treats them systematically, looking at their 'literal' meanings to do with space and time and also at their more 'idiomatic' uses in phrasal verbs, with reference to the particularly important collocations that have been identified in the COBUILD research.

- **Phrase-building**

This section is also new, and draws students' attention to some of the very common patterns in English. These have been identified by the COBUILD Project as being

Unlike traditional syllabuses, the lexical syllabus starts from a description of real language. In taking words and their meanings as the core items, the syllabus offers genuine coverage of the most central and typical patterns of English. It also provides a focus for language analysis, which allows students to develop and refine their awareness of the actual grammar of the language.

In the teacher's notes which follow, the lexical aims for each unit are clearly listed, with examples. This overall guidance appears opposite the final page of each unit, which is always called 'Review Page'. Additionally, each section of teacher's notes includes a 'Lexis box', which gives the words to focus on during the activity concerned.

There is a Full Index of the words covered in Level Two on pages 126T–128T of this Teacher's Book.

### **The Methodology of the Course**

The methodology in Level Two follows closely the cycle that was successfully piloted for Level One. It is a task-based approach to learning which takes full account of the need for accuracy. It contains the following components:

#### **1 Input**

The Course provides a rich input of *real* language, both written and spoken, which is extensively recycled throughout the Course. This language is carefully selected both to provide a contextualised presentation of the target words for Level Two and to confront learners with the kind of communication problems they are likely to meet when they use the language outside the classroom.

#### **2 Task**

Each unit contains several tasks involving both spoken and written language, usually done in pairs or groups. In doing a task learners are primarily concerned with fluency – using whatever language they have to solve a problem, exchange relevant information and so on. The teacher's role is to help them complete the task in English, rather than to make corrections at this stage.

#### **3 Planning and Report**

After performing the task each group is asked to present its findings to the class in a spoken or written report. In preparing this report with the help of the teacher, and in presenting it to the class there is a clear focus on accuracy.

#### **4 Focused Listening**

Students are also given the opportunity to listen to recordings of native speakers performing the same tasks. This provides important language input and also gives useful hints as to how to go about the task.

#### **5 Language Analysis**

Students are engaged in a detailed analysis of aspects of the written and spoken texts to which they have been exposed. This enables them to gain valuable insights into the grammatical and lexical system of English and its basic discourse patterns.

#### **6 Controlled Practice**

Controlled repetition of various kinds involves students in practising useful and very frequent combinations of words in English in order to build up their confidence and their ability to produce groups of sounds and intonation patterns accurately and spontaneously.

This methodology ensures that a good deal of responsibility lies with the learners. The teacher's role is to encourage them and offer precise guidance as their students' knowledge of the language develops. It also ensures constant recycling of language material within and across units. The use of real written texts and real recordings means that the common colloquial forms of English, which have a high communicative value, occur again and again. This tendency is reinforced by a careful selection of material based on the COBUILD Database findings.

vitaly important in English, but many of them are omitted in coursebooks. 'Phrase-building' allows students to practise the uses of words such as **fact, point, problem, thing**, and so on, in patterns like *The point is . . .*, *The main thing is . . .*, and so on.

- **Lexicon**

In Level One, a Grammar Book was included in the back of the Student's Book to provide students with a record of coverage and to initiate important reference skills. In Level Two, there is a Lexicon at the back of the Student's Book, which contains 165 of the target words for Level Two. The main purpose here is to give students a thorough training in dictionary reference skills and the entries in the Lexicon have been chosen with this in mind. In every unit there are exercises which utilise the Lexicon entries.

- **Word Study Boxes**

These coloured boxes – pink for 'Words to look up' and blue for 'Words to guess' – draw attention to other target words and at the same time train students in inference skills, encouraging them to be more independent.

There is lead-in and summary material for each unit, as in Level One:

- **Lead-in Page**

The lead-in page at the beginning of each unit normally uses photographs and other pictorial stimuli to promote informal discussion, focusing on the unit topics. This is an opportunity to assess students' knowledge of relevant vocabulary, and to introduce some of the new words that will be used in the coming unit.

- **Review Page**

Level One had a 'Useful Words and Phrases' section at the end of each unit to provide a summary of some of the important language covered in that unit. Level Two has a review page at the end of each unit, which summarises not only the language of that unit but some of the useful language which has been covered up to that point in the Course.

### **The Cassettes**

The three cassettes at Level Two contain all the recorded material, in the order in which it occurs during the Course. Full tapescripts are given at the back of this book.

The unscripted recordings are an integral part of the Course, and give a very rich input of natural language. Students will rapidly become accustomed to working with them and can also refer to the Transcript booklet as necessary.

Students with time for home study may like to have their own set of cassettes so that they can listen again to the native speaker recordings.

### **The Practice Book**

This book can be used in or out of class and consolidates and extends the Student's Book material. A range of exercises includes items for completion in the book itself. Space has deliberately not been given for longer written exercises, which should be prepared in a separate notebook if possible. There is an answer key at the back of the Practice Book.