

# INTRODUCTION

Spring has arrived, judging by the number of tourists that have appeared in the streets. Phil has an hour free before his next lesson. Picking out a nice café, he chooses a window table and orders a coffee. After spending a few minutes people-watching, he starts to think about the lesson he's just come out of: his first class with a new group of students at the central offices of a pharmaceutical company. Half the lesson was spent in an informal chat based on the needs analysis, and there seem to be some potential problems. Phil opens his briefcase and takes out his notes.

Jean Claude Duval, Purchasing Manager. Pre-int. Has been studying English for 'many years'. Uses English at work most days in e-mails and phone calls to suppliers, though these tend to follow the same pattern most of the time. Also has occasional face-to-face meetings: wants to improve general communication for these. Has difficulty just chatting during breaks in meetings or over lunch.

Anton Brun, IT Systems Manager. Int. Did three years' English at school. Doesn't currently use English at work, but thinks it will be 'useful for the future'. Mainly interested in social English. Fairly fluent, but some grammar problems.

Marie Nöelle Rousillon, Chief Financial Officer. Pre-int. Studied English at school and university, but didn't use it for years. Has now had to start using English regularly in monthly meetings with the new American shareholders and feels 'completely lost'. And it isn't just the meetings – says she goes to hide in her office during breaks to avoid having to engage in any conversation. Also receives occasional phone calls, mainly to check financial information, but her bilingual secretary deals with e-mails.

Phil knows the company well. There's no way he can move Anton to another group at a higher level: the other classes are all in the research labs outside the city. And, anyway, Anton's warmth and interest in people helped the group to gel and work more productively together. But will he get bored working at a lower level? As long as the topics are interesting enough, perhaps he'll stay focused. And Phil could give him extra grammar and vocabulary work, which he'd really benefit from.

Marie Nöelle's needs are certainly the most urgent, but also the most specialised, and will probably involve lexis the others have no need for. Still, terminology is probably not her main problem. The real challenge is coping with complex interactions. The skills she needs – getting her point of view across, understanding different opinions, dealing with telephone calls, handling social situations – are useful for just about everyone.

Jean Claude's most immediate need is probably to develop self-confidence. Lots of tasks with concrete outcomes, guided conversation on different topics and vocabulary building activities would suit him.

As he thinks things through, Phil begins to feel more confident. Now, what about writing skills?

*In Company* is Macmillan's skills-based Business English series, aimed at professional, adult learners seeking to realise their full potential as speakers of English at work – both in and out of the office – and in social settings. It aims to provide learners with the language and skills they need using motivating and engaging material. Authentic and realistic business stories and situations form the basis for texts, dialogues and speaking activities.

*In Company* Pre-intermediate takes students through 20 progressively more challenging units which include describing your work and company, obtaining and sharing information, networking and travelling on business. The course reflects the need for students at this level to develop their grammatical competence, increase their lexical range and, above all, acquire strategies to communicate effectively in both professional and social situations.

Ten key observations on the teaching of English to professional learners underpin the course:

- 1 Professionals like to be regularly reminded why they are studying and what's in it for them.
- 2 They are used to goal-setting and time constraints and tend to welcome a fairly fast pace.
- 3 They are motivated by topics which directly relate to their own personal experiences.
- 4 They expect to see an immediate, practical payoff of some kind at the end of each lesson.
- 5 It is English, not business, they have come to you for help with (but see 7).
- 6 They want to be able to actually do business with their English rather than just talk about it.
- 7 They appreciate texts and tasks which reflect what they have to do in their job.
- 8 They also appreciate texts and tasks which allow them to escape what they have to do in their job.
- 9 They don't regard having fun as incompatible with 'serious learning' (but see 1 and 4).
- 10 They like to see an overall plan and method behind the classes they attend.

## Practical approach

*In Company* Pre-intermediate is a practical course in how to do business in English. Recognising that people need more than just phrase lists and useful language boxes to operate effectively in real-life business situations, each unit provides a substantial amount of guided skills work to give students the chance to fully assimilate the target language and 'make it their own', before going on to tackle fluency activities.



Topics and skills developed at this level include:

- describing your work and company
- using the telephone
- discussing pros and cons
- making comparisons
- telling anecdotes
- writing e-mails and reports
- obtaining and giving information
- dealing with social situations
- making requests
- discussing consequences
- making plans

## Having something to say

*In Company* Pre-intermediate taps into students' emotions, with the assumption that by focusing on areas which have some human interest or twist, they will have more to say. The classroom is an artificial environment in which imagination plays an essential role. It is unlikely that students will have to use their English in a situation in which they are approached by an executive headhunter (Unit 11, page 73) or discover that a job candidate is a fraud (Unit 14, page 91). Yet situations like these have a dramatic impact which makes the target language memorable.

## This new edition

*In Company* Pre-intermediate has been re-organised into five sections. Each section consists of three 'Topics' units, a 'Speaking Skills' unit and a Case Study.

## Topics

These units deal with topics in three areas:

### *Working issues*

These units are built around themes which are common to all working situations such as work-related stress, business travel, time management, office gossip and working from home. The approach taken ensures that these topics are brought to life. For example, in Unit 14 Hiring and firing, the themes of sacking and labour conflicts have been included because topics like these are likely to generate strong opinion and interest in the classroom.

### *Travel and communication*

Apart from touching on more traditional aspects of business travel and communications, particular importance has been given to the Internet and the role of information technology in present-day business practice. Not only does this reflect the reality of the IT revolution in the workplace over recent years, but it also gives students the opportunity to look at the conventions and language of this world.

### *Company life*

These units include tense work to enable learners to discuss their routines, past experiences, achievements and future plans in relation to their work and their company. Students are also encouraged to think outside the realms of their own experience and use their imagination, for example, by inventing their own startup (Unit 1, page 10) or writing a report on a company with problems (Unit 10, page 67).

## Speaking Skills

Acquiring communication strategies for a variety of work-related and social contexts is the main emphasis of these units. Functional language is presented and practised through dialogues. There is some lexical input, but no grammar focus.

## Case Studies

A new feature of this edition are five Case Studies which have been included to provide further practice for learners in an extended context. The topics and themes chosen provide a base for integrated skills and roleplay. They are based on authentic situations, which provide a background against which learners can contrast their decisions.

There is a Case Study glossary at the back of the Student's Book, which provides extra vocabulary support.

## Vocabulary syllabus

*In Company* Pre-intermediate devotes a lot of attention to vocabulary, which is presented through both written and recorded texts. Students are encouraged to take note of common collocations and word-building, and this is reinforced by the vocabulary section of the Language links which follow each topic unit of the Student's Book. These can either be set for homework or made the basis of vocabulary-building lessons.

## Phrase banks

A new feature of this edition of *In Company* Pre-intermediate are Phrase banks, found in all the topic units of the Student's Book. These are short summaries of the functional phrases covered in the units and can be used for reference and revision.

These phrases are also highlighted in the listening scripts at the back of the Student's Book.

## Grammar syllabus

At pre-intermediate level, although students have met some of the major structures previously, they are



meeting others for the first time. The approach in *In Company* Pre-intermediate is to highlight the grammar as it naturally emerges in the activities. Meaning and concept are made clear through context and example, and provision is made for adequate controlled practice before students attempt to use the language in a more ambitious context. Throughout the course, there is a strong, progressive grammar syllabus, which learners particularly appreciate at this level. This is backed up by 15 Grammar sections within the Language links which follow each topic unit in the Student's Book. These provide more explicit explanation and practice exercises.

## Controlled practice

For pre-intermediate students, the most appreciated parts of the lesson are often those moments when they are asked to produce stretches of accurate English in a controlled context. *In Company* Pre-intermediate places special emphasis on controlled practice as part of the build-up for fluency-based work. For example, students listen to a conversation and then reconstruct it from prompts before going on to act out their own dialogues.

## Class audio CDs

Throughout the course, substantial use is made of audio recordings to input business expressions and grammatical structures. Indeed, very little of the language work is not either presented or recycled in a recording.

The recordings feature both native and non-native speaker accents, providing the students with extensive exposure to real spoken English. There is frequently an element of humour in the recordings which, besides entertaining the students, motivates them to listen again for things they missed the first time round.

There are full listening scripts at the back of the Student's Book. Functional phrases from the Student's Book Phrase banks have been highlighted in the scripts.

### *How can I exploit the dialogues further?*

Distinguish between different types of listening-skills practice. The exercises are initially task-based activities which focus on comprehension. However, it is also important to give learners the opportunity to listen to texts again in a more detailed way. In other words, having understood what was said, you should then give some attention to *how* things are said. Try the following intensive listening techniques:

- Allow students to listen to the recording again in a relaxed way while they follow the script at the back of the Student's Book.
- Pause the recording after questions for students to recall or predict the response. (If they write these down as they go, you can ask them to recall all the questions at the end.)
- Pause the recording after responses to questions and ask students to think of other possible responses.
- Pause the recording in the middle of lexical chunks (collocations, fixed expressions) for students to complete them either orally or by writing them down.
- Ask students to write down a recording as you play it, line by line. If they miss a word, encourage them to look at the words around it and imagine what could go in the gap. Ask students to compare their transcripts to the original. Focus on common errors and spelling problems.
- Ask students to listen to a conversation and repeat it line by line. Then build up the conversation on the board using word prompts. Ask students to re-create the conversation from the prompts.
- Looking at the recording line by line, ask students to 'play' each line in their heads without actually speaking, and then listen and compare to how it actually sounds.

## Reading texts

The reading texts in *In Company* Pre-intermediate have been chosen to involve, entertain and provoke students into lively discussion, as well as to contextualise key target vocabulary. Squeezing a text completely dry of all useful language usually demotivates a class, but many of the longer texts in *In Company* Pre-intermediate are informationally and lexically rich and can usefully be revisited.

### *How can I exploit the texts further?*

Try some of the following:

- Ask students to set each other questions on the text.
- Ask students set you questions on the text, and vice versa.
- Give students several figures from the text and ask them to recall the context in which they were mentioned.
- Read the text aloud but slur certain words/phrases and get students to ask you for repetition/clarification.
- Give students the first half of between eight and ten collocations and a time limit in which to search for the collocates in the text.
- Give students a set of miscollocates and ask them to correct them by referring to the text.



- Read out the text pausing in the middle of collocations / fixed expressions / idioms for students to predict the completions either by shouting out or writing down the answer.
- Read out the text, pausing at specific vocabulary items and ask questions like: *What's the opposite of X? What's the word we learned the other day which is like X? X is a noun: what's the verb form / adjective? X often goes with the word Y: what other words can go with Y? Give me another sentence using X.*
- Ask students to read the text aloud as a pronunciation exercise. Don't look at the text yourself as they read: this will force you to concentrate on the comprehensibility of their output. Ask them to do this in pairs.
- Write key words on the board relating to the main ideas in the text and ask students to reconstruct the text orally.

## Fluency work

In *Company* Pre-intermediate includes two types of fluency activity which draw on both the specific language presented in a unit and the wider linguistic resources of the students. These are:

- roleplays and simulations, where students are given a scenario and perhaps some kind of 'personal agenda';
- 'framework' activities, where students decide on the content for an interview, report or phone call, and the Student's Book provides them with a linguistic framework to help deliver that information.

In order to avoid learner and teacher frustration, sufficient preparation for both types of activity is essential, and it may sometimes be advisable to carry out the actual fluency activity in a subsequent lesson to ensure plenty of time for preparation and feedback.

## Teacher's Book

In this book, you'll find comprehensive teacher's notes which give an overview of each unit, detailed procedural instructions for all the exercises and full listening scripts and answer keys. A new feature of this edition is the **one:one** teaching tips found following every group-based or roleplay activity throughout the procedural notes. The aim of these notes is to offer tips on adapting the material to suit one-to-one classes, which are so common in in-company teaching. This allows the teacher to make better use of the material, in all teaching contexts. The procedural notes also contain Language link highlights, which are reminders of exercises in the Language link pages where students can find grammar explanations or further practice in a particular grammar or vocabulary area. This

allows the teacher to focus students' attention on particular areas of difficulty or interest. The book also features a Resource materials section containing 35 photocopiable worksheets which extend and/or revise elements in the Student's Book. These were written by nine practising business English teachers and provide approximately 25 extra hours of material to supplement the Student's Book. New case-study worksheets allow teachers to extend the topics of the case studies in the Student's Book through additional communicative tasks and classroom discussion or personalisation of the subject.

## Ten 'rules of thumb' teaching tips

- Avoid saying *Let's turn to page ...* when starting a new lesson. Instead, try to generate interest in the subject matter while students still have their books closed.
- Always do the first item of an exercise with the whole class to make sure that students know what they have to do.
- When doing written exercises in pairs, don't let students write to begin with. This will encourage them to speak and to remember their answers for a subsequent feedback session. Allow them to write the answers after the feedback so that they have a written record to refer to at a later date.
- Use drills to give students the opportunity to get their tongues round new language. Most students enjoy well-executed drills (and it's also a way to pick up a flagging lesson).
- Students sometimes complain about not being corrected enough, but rarely about being corrected too much.
- Always revise something from a previous class during the lesson.
- Arrange the classroom to suit your class. In small classes, encourage students to sit near you.
- Avoid asking questions which are impossible to answer. For example, for students to answer *What does X mean?* often requires more complicated language than you're actually trying to teach.
- Plan your lesson backwards. Decide what you want students to be doing at the end of the lesson and work out how to get there.
- Keep a note of ad-hoc items which crop up and common mistakes that students make. Use these as the basis for informal revision and warm-up activities.

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