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Tel / Fax: 021/444.20.91; www.spiruharet.ro

e-mail: contact@edituraromaniademaine.ro

ABSTRACT

The English Practical Course is designed to help the second year students reach and consolidate the upper-intermediate level of English. It is a skill-based approach, tackling abilities like: reading, writing, speaking, listening and also, handling grammatical structures.

The course aims at securing an important progress in the domain of vocabulary and syntactic patterns (at the level of phrases, simple sentences and complex sentences), the acquisition of which should allow the students to efficiently apply their knowledge in various discourse contexts and in a wide range of textual genres. The language chosen as main variety is Standard General English; besides we also introduce the basic core of English for Academic Purposes, as well as the minimal specialized vocabulary of English for Scientific and Technical Purposes and of English for Arts, with particular focus on musical terms.

Our material consolidates the upper-intermediate level of English by covering various other lexical areas. The students' grammatical awareness will be enhanced by applications focused on syntactic structures at phrase, simple sentence and compound or complex sentence types.

The students' competence in the realm of the four skills will be refined by means of complex practical activities including discourse analysis, comprehension checks, reading by skimming and scanning, talking about controversial topics or writing on given or relatively free topics.

By the end of the academic year the students will have acquired the necessary competence in translating fictional and non-fictional texts into and from the target language, in essay writing, and in conversing on topics related to the selected text samples.

The present *English Practical Course* consists of five thematically oriented units (*Educating Man, Physical and Emotional Life, Life and*

Technology, Man as Artist, Man in the Midst of Nature) developed in six units, three per term.

Each unit is made up of two parts: part A, focusing on the selected pilot text, mainly conveying the respective topic, and part B, focusing on the satellite text which is kindred with the pilot one from a thematic point of view. The latter helps the student go deeper into the already introduced subject matter; besides it provides further reading material opening new perspectives.

Every pilot text is followed by reading comprehension, vocabulary practice and grammar practical activities and exercises, all designed so as to consolidate both the semantic and syntactic knowledge stored by the students. Part A also includes a translation section, testing the students' ability to translate from the native language into the target one, as well as a conversation section, aiming at improving the students' speaking competence.

The last section is focused on composition aiming at developing the students' writing skills, their creativeness.

The second part of the unit, part B, reinforces the topic announced in part A, being built on the following sub-sections: the text reading section, introducing the satellite text; the comprehension check-up section, made up of a set of questions testing the students' understanding of the text; the translation section, assessing the students' ability to translate from the target language into the native one; the building vocabulary section providing the students with vocabulary lists of the respective domain; the conversation and the composition sections consolidating and refining the students' speaking and writing skills.

Two revision tests round off each of the two parts. Their role is to check the lexical and the grammatical cognitive material introduced in the respective units.

At the end of the book, in the appendix, there are several grammar and composition synopses meant to function as working instruments, which will help the students' solve their tasks more efficiently. These materials also facilitate exam preparation, by the systematic picture they provide. Linguistic awareness in the domains of grammar and discourse will also be consolidated if these synopses are assimilated by the second year student.

We would like to conclude by referring back to the essential components of our corpus, i.e. the texts we have selected as starting or

final points of each section. Our choice has been deliberately oriented towards fictional discourse as prior and non-fictional discourse, mainly media texts, as secondary. We would like to motivate our option, by stating most openly that in our capacity as discourse analysts we consider, alongside many others discourse specialists that reading a fictional piece of work is tantamount to a new cognitive experience. This experience is actually more striking from a cognitive point of view than a real world experience, since, in most cases it triggers the refreshment or even the building of new mental schemata. Hence, the greater emotional involvement of the students who thus penetrate a captivating possible world in the realm of the imagination. Imaginary worlds activate a richer vocabulary and a very diverse use of language structures.

We also believe that students have to be confronted with informative factual discourse, as used daily in the media.

The resulting effect should be an alternation of perspectives, real and imaginary, hopefully challenging the students' intellect and thus supplying a fertile ground for the acquisition of a rich lexicon and a variety of linguistic patterns.

This book should be, therefore, not only a teaching tool, but also a source of intellectual pleasure.