

## Who is Handshake for?

At the beginning levels, all learners of English have much in common. Their problems are similar, and the same things are found to be easy or difficult by a large percentage of students. *Handshake* is a pre-intermediate course, by which time there will be some divergence in students' problems, aims and expectations. Broadly speaking, some students will be going on to study English as an academic subject, while others will be thinking of English as a tool for their world of present or future work. *Handshake* is directed more at the latter group, (though it will also be an ideal bridging course between elementary level studies and the time for making the decision to follow either an academic, exam-oriented programme or English for Specific Purposes - ESP). It is not just a 'business English' course, though we think its direction makes it useful for ESP students, nor is it a standard 'general course,' although it shares characteristics of both.

Situations where *Handshake* will be particularly useful:

- General business and vocational studies at pre-intermediate level.
- For students of business, secretarial studies, travel, tourism, communications studies, hotel and catering etc. who want an obviously communicative setting to their studies.
- As a general pre-intermediate course for all learners, before they decide whether they are going to study English academically or for specific purposes. In most situations it will cover one year.
- As a course for good 'false beginners' who have studied English at some time in the past, and as they recommence their studies need a different approach, one they feel they have not 'failed at'.
- As a revision / remedial course at pre-intermediate level. Because the unit divisions are radically different in *Handshake*, much of the boredom of studying the same things again will be eradicated. Although *Handshake* covers the familiar structural and functional areas at the level, the innovative combinations of topics will make it seem fresh.
- For evening classes where attendance is irregular, and students need a less linear course.
- For short intensive courses in both monolingual and multilingual situations.

## The components of *Handshake*

*Handshake* consists of:

- A Student's Book of 176 pages. This consists of an introductory unit, and eight main units. It has a main syllabus based on communication skills, with sub-syllabuses based on structure and function. The Student's Book includes Language Focus sections, Listening Appendices, Interaction materials, an Active Grammar section and a Glossary in addition to the main units.
- A Workbook which includes further practice material as well as separate components: Thinking About Learning, Skills checks and Grammar checks.
- A Teachers' Book with fully interleaved page by page teaching notes.
- Audio recordings, available on cassette and CD.

(\* A separate audio recording is available with a greater percentage of the neutral situations recorded in American English.)



The Regular and International versions of the *Handshake* audio cassettes.

## Aims of the course

*Handshake* is designed to teach and to improve students' abilities in English, for which purpose it has used a new kind of syllabus. Communication skills shape the course. During the course students will be exposed to a number of communication strategies which they will analyse, compare and ultimately put into practice. As well as teaching English, *Handshake* will increase the student's awareness of communication in a general sense, and should cause them to take a fresh look at their strategies in the mother tongue as well as in the foreign language.

## Culture comparison

Cultural comparison is central to a communication skills approach. There are notes throughout the Teachers Book in the highlighted information sections. In more traditional approaches, culture means 'content culture' and students are given information about life and institutions, and read extracts from literary sources. They might learn about English cream teas, incorruptible British policemen, the origin of Thanksgiving Day, the structure of the American Congress or life in Dickensian Britain.

In *Handshake* we are dealing with something quite different, 'behaviour culture.' Behaviour culture focusses on how we conduct ourselves in communication situations and on everyday cultural differences. Behaviour culture involves far less prior knowledge and each student will be able to bring their own experiences and culture into the ensuing discussions.

## Cultural notes: varieties of English

Throughout we refer to varieties of English, most commonly to British English and American English. We use GB for Britain, and for British English, US for American English. British and American English are the two major perceived groups, and by drawing differences between them we have no intention of excluding other varieties such as Australian, Canadian, Irish, Scottish, Welsh, New Zealand, South African, East African, Indian sub-continent, Caribbean, English and American regions and so on. Where the teacher can add information on other varieties it will always enrich the course.

This is neither a 'British English textbook' nor an 'American English textbook' though the majority of settings are either neutral or British. We have used a number of Americans and Canadians in the recordings, often in neutral or mixed contexts.

## Describing cultures

There is a rich diversity among English speaking cultures, balanced by the effects of international media which brings these cultures closer together. We had to limit the amount of space taken by cultural notes and so largely restricted ourselves to cultural comparison with Britain and The United States. We follow the standard form and call inhabitants of the USA *Americans*, as this is what they call themselves (though of course Latin Americans and Canadians also think of themselves as *Americans*). While there are exceptions, Canadian English is closer to the US model, and Australian English and New Zealand English are closer to the British model.

In comparing cultures, we often use *Europeans* to mean 'non-English speaking Europeans'. While we agree that Britain is part of Europe, this is a common

description. Obviously, broad cultural references to *Asians* or *Latin Americans* or *Southern Europeans* will be as limited as any other broad generalizations. We also refer to *The West* (and *Westerners*) as a blanket term covering European, American and Australasian cultures. We do not want to cause offence but have researched the subject thoroughly in the considerable literature on communication skills, and have followed majority generalizations! Very few of our sources were written about or for the ELT community, most of the sources being academic and popular studies designed for a native speaker audience, usually for business people and international travellers.

# The Student's Book

## Assumed knowledge

It is assumed that students will have covered at least two years of English and are at least at a pre-intermediate level. Students at the lower end of the spectrum may need to spend more time on the Language Focus and Active Grammar sections. Students at the upper end of the spectrum can simply use these sections as reference material.

## Grading

The syllabus of *Handshake* is based on communication skills. However, structure and vocabulary are graded in a progression through the course, so that a subtle progression exists below the surface of the materials.

## Structural grading

Throughout, a receptive knowledge of all the major areas which will have been taught at elementary level has been assumed. But, during the course, the material which students are expected to generate actively is progressively increased in difficulty. For example, the first unit concentrates on present tenses (plus *was / were*), unit 2 has work on present tenses, adjectives, adverbs and prepositions, while unit 3 brings in the simple past and present perfect actively. In unit 4 there is a lot of active work on futures and modals. Unit 5 has more work on modals, contrasts the past simple and present perfect and deals with indirect forms. Unit 6 brings together all the past tenses, including the past perfect. Unit 7 has conditionals, and unit 8 work on speculation and deduction. This is a massive simplification of the structural content, but should show how the course progresses. See the **contents** pages for a detailed summary.

The material has also been tested with students at a full intermediate level, and though they needed much less reference work on structures, they benefited from the focus on communication skills. Because so much of the language content is student-generated the materials can be used at higher levels.

## Vocabulary

Key vocabulary for each section is listed in the Teacher's Notes. In the early sections we have separated out classroom vocabulary, which consists of words used for classroom management, and words which while used in class do not appear in print in the unit or appendices.

Compared to other courses at the level, you will find that vocabulary is high for

conversational and social English and for talking about communication. On the other hand, because *Handshake* does not have lengthy reading and listening materials, and because it has no literary texts, the specific content vocabulary will be relatively light. This makes the material much more adaptable to different business and vocational situations. While spending a great deal of time on a complex text might develop reading comprehension skills (useful if English is seen as an academic discipline in its own right), the actual vocabulary items gleaned from a highly specific difficult text might never be used, nor even encountered again. Above all, we have tried to avoid the situation where teachers have to devote most of their time to explaining obscure and arcane vocabulary items.

Throughout the course, students are asked to bring their own experiences and situations into the lessons, so that they will be deciding on the vocabulary that they need. The extensive information sections in the Teacher's Notes will help you to provide it.

## **Format of units**

There are nine units. Each unit is divided into sections, all of which are either one or two pages long. A Language Focus section follows each unit. The section / page relationship makes the course highly flexible so that teachers and students in some situations will be able to re-order the materials, and to pick and choose.

## **Language Focus**

The Language Focus sections, follow the Introductory unit and each of the eight units of the course.

- They are each designed to focus on one major area of grammar.
- The Language Focus sections are *not* designed to provide a comprehensive view of English grammar.
- They are *not* designed to cover all the structural work in a particular unit.

We have deliberately restricted the vocabulary in these exercises so as to allow students to focus their full attention on the structures involved. We apologise for the number of sentences which use contexts like making arrangements, missing buses, doing homework, talking about the weather and so on. However, there is nothing more irritating for teacher and students alike than to be engaged in the complexities of conditionals while also trying to grasp new and unfamiliar vocabulary.

The Language Focus sections can be used in a number of ways:

- With the average class they can be used following work on each unit, either in class or as homework out of class.
- If a class has obvious problems during work on the unit, they can be referred forward to the appropriate exercises in the Language Focus section.
- With lower pre-intermediate classes they could be used *before* starting work on the corresponding unit.
- With more advanced classes which are focussing on the communication skills, they could be ignored or simply used as a self-checking exercise at the students' discretion.

## Active Grammar

The Active Grammar section contains grammatical explanations, example sentences, paradigms and exercises. They are cross-referenced from the sections of each unit by a reference in red, e.g.

**See Active Grammar: Reason**

The same grammar points may be cross-referenced more than once. Students can also use the Active Grammar as a separate reference resource whenever they choose. By separating out the grammar references, paradigms and exercises, we have been able to keep the student page confined to the communication skill in hand. This means you have more choice about when to use grammar explanation. You can use it at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of the section, or with better classes, not at all. The text book is not dictating how you teach, the order in which you teach or whether your lessons are heavily or lightly structurally biased. We do however advise on the points when we would refer to Active Grammar in the Teacher's Notes.

## Listening

There is a variety of recorded material in *Handshake*.

A symbol introduces material which should be introduced with a recording.

Sometimes this will be a recording of material printed in the corresponding section (e.g. the two dialogues in *Requesting for others* on page 11).

Sometimes this will be material which appears in the Listening Appendix on pages 166 to 173 (e.g. the dialogue in *Room Service* on page 10).

There are also recordings for optional use, which are not marked with a listening symbol in the Students Book. Some passages are designed for reading work, but

we know that some teachers will prefer to have a recorded model, while others would feel that this interferes with the development of reading skills. You have a choice. These optional pieces are referred to in the Teacher's Notes. (e.g. the text on *Proximity* on page 38).

## **Interaction**

At least once per unit students will find interaction materials. These are marked with a symbol .

These materials create an information gap. Students each refer to materials in the Interaction Appendix and have to communicate the contents to their partners in pairs or small groups.

Information gaps can also be set up whenever students work alone to prepare a list, notes or other information which they have to communicate to partners. The essence of an information gap is that the person they are communicating with should not already know the information being given them.

## **Glossary**

Because some of the vocabulary involved in discussing communication skills is unlikely to have been encountered in a general course, we have included a glossary of communication skills terminology. These consist mainly of appropriate extracts from the *Oxford Word Power Dictionary*, which is also the recommended dictionary for use with this course. At points in the Students Book sections, references are made to the glossary.

## **Timing the lessons**

As a general rule, each section can be used to cover one classroom lesson of approximately 50 minutes length. The double page sections would normally take a double lesson (90 to 100 minutes).

However, the sections will vary in importance in your particular teaching situation, so that some may be done more quickly than this and others more slowly. The level of students will also be a major factor.

The material can be extended by adding exercises from the Workbook (suggestions are given in each Teacher's Book section). Timing will also depend on whether you are referring to the Active Grammar during the lesson.

## **Learner training**

Throughout the course we have been concerned with honing and developing



student's learner skills. Learner independence has been the buzz word for a decade, and most teachers are familiar with ways of approaching the learning of vocabulary, the learning of structure, reading alone, making learner diaries and so on.

We were interested in moving beyond this, and in getting students to think about their own styles and strategies more deeply. Each Workbook unit opens with a section called **Thinking about learning** which we would recommend using in class wherever possible.

Each Workbook section ends with a Skills Check and Grammar Check so that students can assess their own progress throughout the course.

## A note on gender

*Handshake* has tried to avoid gender stereotyping throughout the course. One device has been the use of the neutral third person in Students and Teachers materials. For example:

*Each student compares with their partner*

*Ask someone about their job*

We are aware that some people still find this practice disconcerting. We prefer it to the alternative *his or her*. We quote from *On Balance: Guidelines for the Representation of Women and Men in ELT Materials*, which was prepared by *Women in EFL Materials* :

" Use *they* as a singular pronoun, as in 'Ask each person in your group to say their sentence.' Although this is considered incorrect by some people, it is common in spoken English and has a long history of use in written English. (cf. William Caxton, 1470: 'Each of them should make themself ready'; Shakespeare: 'God send everyone their heart's desire'.)"

# The Teacher's Book

## You are the teacher ...

You know your class and your situation. We don't. The responsibility as well as the credit for success is yours. We have written detailed notes for every lesson. Some of you will find them irritatingly detailed, others may wish they were fuller. Do read the notes below. Do try things that you haven't tried before. Above all, be yourself. We all have different teaching styles.

## Teacher talking time

Teacher trainers have spent the last twenty years criticizing excessive teacher talking time, and trainees have sought the elusive goal of increased student talking time. In any classroom the teacher will be the most important model for the target language. In the late eighties and early nineties, interest in learner independence shifted attention away from the teacher in training courses. Stephen Krashen has emphasised the importance of the teacher as a source of **comprehensible input**, and we feel that the pendulum is swinging back towards the importance of the teacher as a model. Studies done in British secondary and adult classes asked students what was the most pleasurable activity in the classroom. The results were surprising but gratifying. The clear first choice was "listening to the teacher". While *Handshake* pays great attention to student talking time and to developing independent learning skills, we are also very interested in promoting the teacher's role as a primary source of comprehensible input. Most of this will be improvised, informal and anecdotal. However, we have also given the teacher a great deal of background information. We chose not to put this on the student page. We don't want to return to the days where teachers lectured on the language while students were passive receivers of information, but we do want to value the teacher's role.

## Information sections

Information is highlighted in **blue** in the Teacher's Notes. This includes information about communication skills, cultural differences and grammar. Being a resource is an important role for the teacher, and we think it is vital for you (a) to have additional information and (b) to decide whether to impart it to the class or not. If you decide to impart some of this information to the class, you will be improvising the necessary language, which will help to expose the class to unscripted real language, rather than to studied text or dialogue. The lesson will also be a more dynamic experience for the class - the teachers are not simply going through the book, but are adding information themselves.

In the information sections we have highlighted key words which we think will be worth teaching to the class. e.g. Unit 1, Introductions:

There is less *respect for your elders*.

## Expansion

Discuss the bulleted paragraphs one by one.

1 Please / thank you.

Ask students how often they say thank you in a simple conversation. Suggest they count for the next day or so and report back.

Saying *thank you* too often is a classic sign of Britishness which Americans notice. This may be a habit rather than extra politeness. You could also point out the habit of adding words to *thank you*:

*Thanks / Thank you / Thank you very much / Thank you very much indeed.* Again, demonstrate that all of these can be said in a friendly or terse way.

2 You're welcome.

Ask students about responses to Thanks in their languages. They can compare any other languages they may know. Practise the stress when *Thank you* is used as a response to thanks. This is easier if you add *No*. i.e, *No ... thank you!* Contrast this with refusing - *No, thank you-* with no pause and no stress on *you*.

Point out the automatic reply in many languages. This is often translated wrongly as *Please* when people speak English: A: *Thank you.* B: ~~*Please.*~~

Be clear that this is not an acceptable response. Check other versions of *You're welcome* - *Not at all / Don't mention it / It's my pleasure* all of which are more formal. You could add *No problem / No hassle* which are less formal. *You're welcome* is being used increasingly in service situations in GB.