

Teachers' Guide
for
Environmental English

Edited by Elena Korshuk

Minsk, 2003



Teachers' Guide for Environmental English

Ed. by Elena Korshuk

The main aim of this guide is to support teachers who are involved in teaching English for Environment Science. The guide describes the course, provides information on how the coursebook is organised and gives some ideas on how the coursebook can help in planning the course.

Course objectives

The necessity of English for Environmental Science course arises from the requirements of the Environmental Science for the Baltic Sea Region and The Baltic Sea Environment courses, i.e. 'sufficient knowledge in English, for communication and writing of exams.'

The aim of the course is to help students use the English language actively while communicating (both orally and in the written form) on environmental topics.

The course is designed for: a) students majoring in environmental science who have lower intermediate to upper intermediate level of English and want to improve their language and communicative skills; b) students and teachers who have good command of English but need to develop their skills in communicating on environmental topics.

What does the course teach

To help students use the English language while communicating on environmental topics, active development and perfection of students' linguistic, communicative and professional competence is needed.

Linguistic competence means that students gain knowledge of the language system and its functioning during the process of communication. As the starting level of English required for the course is at least lower intermediate, there is no necessity to introduce the language system. That is why grammatical areas are covered implicitly, mostly in exercises, which draw students' attention not to the grammatical phenomena themselves, but at most to their functions in particular communicative patterns. This implicit way of language skills development contributes to better adaptation of students in an English-speaking environment and helps them cope with linguistic barriers to communication.

Communicative competence is the capacity of students to organize their speech behaviour (productive and receptive) in compliance with the situation. The course covers a range of everyday language functions, e.g. asking for information, expressing approval, disapproval and assurance.

Professional competence consists in practical skills of interaction with English-speaking audience in the situations of professional communication. The course offers a number of topic areas relevant to students' scientific interests within the main field of environmental science. All the activities are organised to encourage learners to improve and enrich their professional vocabulary.

Underlying principles

Focusing on European English

As far as only Baltic states are involved into the Baltic University project the course uses the European variant of the English language. That is why in the coursebook different spelling of one and the same word can be found (e.g. organization - organisation) and on the videotape representatives of European countries rather than that of native English speakers

Orientation to communicative use of language

English for Environmentalists gives priority to communicative rather than to linguistic skills

development. Irrespectively of the level of a student's English, his/ her communicative intention should be encouraged. The course takes this fact into account and offers activities:

- that stimulate students to express their own ideas
- that encourage students to share their ideas and thus to use English for real communication with one another
- that are open-ended, so that both weaker and stronger students can contribute.
- that can be adapted to different types of class

Learning and acquisition

Communicative approach to language study does not belittle the significance of language system learning. That is why some of the activities offered in the course underscore the correct use of language, that is conscious focusing on particular language items; in others, students practice a more creative use of language.

Functionality

This principle presupposes functional selection and organisation of speech devices useful for professional communication in the situations covered in the course.

Integration of skills

The course develops all types of language skills.

- **Listening**
Listening/ watching activities included into the course involve video episodes of 4-6 minutes for listening comprehension that introduce new topics. Here the aim is that students should understand enough to do the accompanying tasks that mostly motivate and stimulate students to speak up their mind on the issues in quest.
- **Reading**
Reading materials selected for the course are to teach all types of reading skills:
 - Extensive reading: reading for pleasure with emphasis on general understanding.
 - Intensive reading: reading carefully for an exact understanding of text.
 - Skimming: quickly looking through text to get an idea of what the text is about.
 - Scanning: locating specific information in a text.
- **Speaking**
The coursebook provides activities that presuppose individual, pair and group work. To assist students in learning how to produce a monologue, a dialogue and a polilogue each Unit of the coursebook offers a number of conversational formulae and a set of terms that can be used while speaking on the topic covered in the Unit.
- **Writing**
As one of the requirements for students of Baltic University is to take written exams in English, English for Environmental Science is aimed at helping students develop writing skills sufficient enough to pass the exams. The course includes activities that teach paragraph and essay writing. It also provides information and exercises on business writing (resumes, application letters, informative writing etc.).

Contents and organisation of the course

The components of the course are: Coursebook, Videotape and Teachers' Guide.

Virtually the coursebook can be divided into three parts: Units 1-5, Units 6-11 and "Writing skills" section. Though similar, Units 1-5 and Units 6-11 differ in purposes, audience and, thus, structure, which predetermines certain differences in the use of concrete tasks and activities.

The first five Units of the manual are of general character and, thus, can be recommended for general audience. The target skills here are intensive reading, vocabulary and speaking on general scientific topics.

Units 6-11 are meant mostly for specialists for they include texts that cover quite specific fields of the environmental science. This part of the manual presupposes development of reading skills (all four types are trained), grammar drill, vocabulary development, information analysis and speaking in monologue, dialogue and polilogue on specific scientific topics.

Both parts contain references to the "Writing skills" section, which is, however, absolutely self-supporting. It teaches how to write essays (important for passing exams) and business letters (no less important for effective communication in scientific world).

So, it is obviously not necessary to study all the Units in corpora. Each Unit is designed for about 5-7 contact hours. However, depending on the hours available, the students' starting level of English and their interest, you can study the whole of the Unit, paying attention to all the activities offered, or just skim over the material, fulfilling certain tasks only. You can also minimize your course to one of the parts and study only the first five Units, the last six Units, the "Writing skills" section or any combination of them. Due to their independence and self-supporting nature, Units can be organized in any order a teacher finds appropriate.

The coursebook can be used both in class and for independent study.

Unit structure

Each Unit contains a set of tasks grouped according to their function. The groups are marked with the bison sign:



WARM-UP

This group of pre-reading activities opens every Unit. Usually they mean sharing students' background knowledge of the issues covered in the Unit. These tasks are recommended as obligatory ones, for they introduce the new topic and make students feel at ease with the language, creating the English-speaking atmosphere.



TUNE-IN

This set of tasks presupposes video watching. Each Unit (except Unit 10) has a video episode that is connected with the topic of the Unit. TUNE-IN section contains tasks for the episode. The same tasks are also dubbed in on the videotape. These activities are compulsory, as they provide listening comprehension and give students a chance to listen to European English with all the mistakes and peculiarities typical for the representatives of European nations.

Students do not work to understand every word they hear. The tasks are formulated so that even if a student understands nothing from the tape, he/she can try to guess the right answer from the very task. It was done deliberately to stimulate students to speak. However, if students show interest and teachers think it is necessary, it may be a good idea to let students make the script of the episode.



STUDY

This sign introduces reading activities. Usually a Unit contains several texts. The first one (Text 1) is for obligatory reading, because it is the easiest in language and the most general in contents.

The first task here often suggests training skim reading. It gives questions to the text and asks students for an answer. Depending on the group's English level you may treat this activity as pre-reading (first they skim the text and discuss the questions, and then read the text again properly for exact understanding) or post-reading (only intensive reading will be trained).

For the convenience of the students all texts are placed so that it is possible to see the whole of the text at once, without turning pages. Let your students make notes on the margins, they are designed specially for students to write down unknown words, translations, explanations and to make other remarks.



GOT IT?

These are comprehension tasks.

In Units 1-4 and in Unit 6 you can use the first task to train scan reading. This task usually gives a number of words used in the text and offers students to find out their meanings using the glossary. If it is reasonable in the particular group of students you may treat this activity as a pre-reading one. It will give the students an opportunity to learn some words that can be crucial for understanding before reading the text. In this case after scanning the text and discussing the words, students should read the text again properly for exact understanding.



WORK OUT

Here activities are aimed at training vocabulary and grammar skills.

In Units 1-5 stress is laid on special vocabulary and some grammar used in the text. Grammatical rules are reviewed in the sketches, marked with the sign "Look" (look).

In Units 6-11 WORK OUT tasks mean reviewing different language phenomena from all the texts in the Unit.

These activities are significant only in the first five Units, whereas in the Units 6-11 they can be omitted at teacher's discretion.



ENVIRONMENT WIZARDS

This bison shows that the texts marked by it are for optional reading. They mostly cover specific scientific topics. These texts can be assigned for those who made the compulsory reading with ease.

The tasks for "wizards" are mainly group ones and do not require intensive reading. Teacher can use these texts to practice students' extensive, skim and scan reading. Also it is possible to use the texts for individual work if there are only several students trained enough to manage them.



CHECK POINT

These tasks check whether students have learnt the material of the current Unit well. In some Units CHECK POINT activities include revision of the information, vocabulary and grammar from the previous Units.

The teacher can offer students to fulfill these tasks for self-evaluation (it is appropriate in the first 5 Units, where the activities offered are mostly entertaining), or for a final test after each Unit to evaluate students' progress (advisable for Units 6-11, as the tasks here cover the material of the whole course, rather than a separate Unit).



GLOSSARY

Each Unit is provided with a glossary that contains definitions of the main terms used in the texts of the Unit.

Units 1-5 have references to the glossary in some tasks to Text 1. The glossary itself contains the terms that are used in the first text only.

Units 6-11 have additional terms that are connected with the topic of the Unit but can't be found in the texts. It gives teachers an additional possibility to involve students into the discussion of these terms and other notions, phenomena and situations connected with them.

The majority of tasks in this group ask students to make up collocations with the given words and to use these collocations in the sentences of their own. Teachers will have to explain first what collocation is, and then give a sample sentence with some of possible collocations.

This set of tasks appears in the coursebook only in Units 6-11. They are aimed at drilling grammar. However, explanations of the grammatical phenomena are not presented in the book (only a few rules are shown). It is up to teachers to practice this part.