



# World Scientific News

WSN 36 (2016) 109-126

EISSN 2392-2192

---

## **Combining Communicative-Analytic and Experiential Approaches in Teaching Pre-Intermediate Level of General English to Adults at Commercial Language Schools and Centers**

**Oleg Tarnopolsky**

Department of Applied Linguistics and Methods of Teaching Foreign Languages,  
Alfred Nobel University, Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine

E-mail address: [otarnopolsky@mail.ru](mailto:otarnopolsky@mail.ru)

### **ABSTRACT**

In the conditions of today's expansion of English as the global language of international communication, more and more adults who earlier completed their secondary or even higher education start learning it anew at commercial language schools and centers the world over. However, the pedagogy and methodology of teaching and learning at such schools and centers have not been developed yet. The present article is an attempt of solving some theoretical and practical issues of organizing such teaching and learning using as an example a pre-intermediate level course of English developed by the author for his commercial language center in Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine. The way of teaching and learning suggested in the article was developed to meet learners' expectations and, at the same time, to be in full accordance with the latest achievements in organizing adult students' efficient language acquisition. The developed approach was called the communicative-analytic one since, on the one hand, it makes use of the best in communicative language learning for attainment of the final goal of language education for adults – developing their English communicative competence. On the other hand, the communicative approach is combined with learners' analysis, practicing, and consciousness-raising as to separate language forms that students believe to be indispensable for language acquisition. The fundamental feature of the course is the combination in the learning process of the developed communicative-analytic approach with the highest level of communicative language teaching – the experiential approach used for achieving the optimum learning outcomes in communicative skills acquisition. The paper discusses the learning activities characterizing both

approaches and gives practical examples of such activities. The developed course is structured so as to teach both written and oral communication in English in parallel and in an integrated manner, and instances of such teaching are also given.

**Keywords:** Learning English at the Pre-Intermediate Level; Teaching English to Adults at Commercial Language Schools and Centers; Communicative-Analytic Approach; Experiential Approach; Parallel Teaching of Written and Oral Communication

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Globalization processes that are gathering momentum in the world of today require a common language to be equally and efficiently used by representatives of all countries, nations, and cultures. This has enormously increased the demand for learning English, the language that has overstepped the boundaries of being simply the language for international communication (like many others, such as Spanish) but has become the medium of planetary or global communication [1]. With the growing demand, hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of adult people all over the world who need the command of English start learning, or re-learning it even after finishing their studies at secondary or tertiary schools. In this case, they have no other choice but to learn the language at some commercial language schools or centers (there are, of course, cases when English is being learned with a private tutor or totally autonomously, but such cases are not very numerous and they are beyond the scope of this article). Even secondary school and university students, who are not satisfied with the outcomes of learning English as a mandatory subject at their educational institutions, often resume or continue their English studies at commercial centers.

This causes great popularity of commercial language schools and centers in many post-Communist countries of Eastern Europe, such as Ukraine [2]. And not only there; numerous commercial language schools and centers function in the UK (for foreign students only), Austria, Switzerland, Malta, Cyprus, the Netherlands – practically in all the European countries, as well as on the other continents.

However, despite the great spread and popularity of commercial schools and centers, this form of language education remains under-researched or even hardly researched at all. Such research would be very important not only for Ukraine and all the post-Communist countries but also for quite a number of other countries in the world where, as it has already been mentioned, this form of English language training has been spread. Otherwise, there is little hope of making such a form of language education really efficient while its possible inefficiency is harmful to society as a whole because the language training in question embraces great numbers of English language learners and English language teachers the world over.

This was the reason for our conducting for longer than 20 years the research in commercial English language teaching and learning with the purpose of optimizing them for achieving the best possible learning outcomes. The research has been and is being conducted at *The Commercial Foreign Language Center* functioning on the premises and under the aegis of Alfred Nobel University, Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine. That *Commercial Foreign Language Center* (further called *Center*) has been operating quite successfully since 1993, i.e., for longer than 23 years already.

The Center mostly specializes in teaching English at different levels of language proficiency (from the beginner's to advanced) and may be considered as quite a typical one for commercial foreign language schools functioning in different countries. That is why the results of our study and the language teaching program developed in the Center may be of interest to specialists in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) not only in Ukraine but in other countries where English is taught commercially to adult learners.

The functioning of the Center started with potential and actual learners' needs analysis [3,4] that demonstrated what kinds and levels of courses of English the students most needed and wanted to have in the language program. As the result of that analysis, and after quite a long period of development, adjustments, modifications, and improvements, a program of nine autonomous but interdependent and interconnected courses has been developed that is still functioning today. This program includes:

1. A short preparatory introductory course of English pronunciation for total beginners. The course is also designed for learners to develop the most elementary communicative skills, such as greeting, apologizing, thanking, introducing oneself, etc.
2. The beginner's/elementary course of oral communication in English for meeting the requirements of those who go abroad for a short period of time (for instance, tourism). The aim of the course is to achieve learners' level of English A1+/A2 according to the Council's of Europe *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* [5].
3. The course of speaking, listening, reading, and writing in English on the pre-intermediate level with the aim of learners' achieving the level B1 according to the Council's of Europe *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* [5].
4. The course of speaking, listening, reading, and writing in English on the intermediate level with the aim of learners' achieving the level B1+/B2 according to the Council's of Europe *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* [5].
5. The course of training for Cambridge international examination of English FCE/English First (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) – the upper-intermediate level, or level B2+ according to the Council's of Europe *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* [5].
6. The course of training for Cambridge international examination of English CAE/English Advanced (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) – the advanced level, or level C1 according to the Council's of Europe *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* [5].
7. The course of training for international examination of English IELTS (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) – the advanced level, or level C1 according to the Council's of Europe *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* [5].
8. The course of Business English (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) – the level from intermediate to advanced, from B2 to C1.
9. The course of English for Psychologists (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) – the level from intermediate to advanced, from B2 to C1.

This article is devoted to analyzing the third course in the program: *the course of speaking, listening, reading, and writing in English on the pre-intermediate level with the aim of learners' achieving the level B1*. This course is one of the most interesting in the program due to several reasons:

1. Very many learners coming to the *Center* to study English start just with this level because their preceding English studies at school or university allow them to skip the introductory and beginner's/elementary courses.
2. The pre-intermediate level of language studies is the first level on which genuine more or less sophisticated students' target language communication becomes possible (unlike primitive elementary communication for solving everyday problems on the beginner's level). This gives opportunities of varying and diversifying the approaches to teaching such communication and of combining different approaches (one of such combinations is the subject matter of this article).
3. The courses preceding the pre-intermediate one are always more directed at oral communication than at the written one, all the more so that at the beginning of their language studies (the elementary level) students mostly emphasize speaking and listening skills as the most important to them [3,4]. It is only at the pre-intermediate level that proper acquisition of reading and writing skills begins so that only at this stage ways of implementing integrated learning of different communication skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) [6] can be introduced.
4. Due to these reasons, the success of students in the pre-intermediate course to a great extent predetermines their success in the following more advanced courses. This is why this pivotal course in commercial language programs must be developed especially carefully to create a solid foundation for learners' following English studies.

In fact the article discusses two of the above issues. The first one is the communicative essence of the course, or rather the combination of different approaches to ensure the courses' communicative nature, on the one hand, and to meet the students' expectation of how English should be taught at this stage of their foreign language development, on the other hand. The second issue is the integrated teaching in the course of the four basic communication skills, namely, speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

## **2. THE COMMUNICATIVE-ANALYTIC APPROACH TO TEACHING ENGLISH IN THE PRE-INTERMEDIATE COURSE**

The communicative-analytic approach was developed by us for all the courses in our program due to a well-known fact. Though adult learners always learn English for communicative purposes only and that requires the communicative approach for forming their communicative competence [7], they very often believe, more than that, they are frequently absolutely convinced that without analyzing language forms and language form-focused exercises successful language acquisition is totally impossible [8,9]. This is why they usually resist the attempts to teach them English totally communicatively and insist on language form-focused explanations and language form-focused learning activities. Such an attitude of adult students at commercial English courses was confirmed by our interviewing of potential and actual learners [10]. Although the overwhelming majority of our respondents affirm that they like and want to learn the language through communication and the communicative learning activities, at the same time they are absolutely confident that purely communicative

learning is impossible. From 85% to 92% of them believe that focusing on language forms is indispensable, that those forms must be explained in details and thoroughly trained, and all the more so the earlier the stage of learning is and the lower the students' level of English is [10]. The way out of this seemingly controversial situation (the necessity to teach language communicatively and the necessity to meet learners' expectations as to how the language should be taught) was outlined by Nunan [8].

That author recommended starting the language-teaching program with mostly the analytic/formal approach (the abundance of language form-focused explanations and language form-focused learning activities) to meet students' expectations and requirements. Then, gradual progressing towards more communicative learning is advisable when teachers negotiate with students the transition that slowly but surely replaces formal language learning with communicative skills acquisition [8].

Following Nunan's recommendations, we designed the first very short (two month-long) preparatory introductory course of English pronunciation for total beginners as mostly an analytical one in nature since it is focused on explaining and training English pronunciation patterns and some fundamental grammatical forms (e.g., the verbs "to be" and "to have", the imperative mood, etc.). But even in this course not less than a quarter of time in class is devoted to communicative learning activities aimed at students' acquiring some elementary communicative skills (see in the list of courses above). On the basis of just such activities, the teacher tries to show students how much faster and more efficiently they can achieve their goals (e.g., to start speaking English) in communication than in language form-focused exercises.

This allowed designing the second course in the program – the beginner's/elementary course of oral communication in English – as the one in which communicative learning activities aimed at developing learners' skills of speaking and listening are fully balanced with language form-focused learning activities (50% by 50%). Beginning with the pre-intermediate level course, communicative learning activities start to dominate in the learning process (two thirds of all class time), and from the intermediate course they occupy three quarters of class time and then, almost all of it.

In accordance with this, the pre-intermediate course under consideration (designed for nine months of training with two classes per week and two class hours for every class – 144 class hours for the full course) was structured in such a way that out of 67% of communicative learning activities in the course about 35% were those that could be called 'traditional' communicative activities. They are those ones which could be found in any high-quality modern textbook of English used for teaching in the pre-intermediate level course – such as for instance, the textbook by P. Kerr "*Straightforward Pre-Intermediate*" [11] that we most often use in the course under discussion.

The most typical examples of such 'traditional' communicative learning activities for oral communication may be the ones listed below.

Example 1: a speaking activity (dialogue). *Work in pairs. Look at the types of restaurants in the box and discuss these questions:*

- *What type of food have you tried?*
- *Which do you like best?*
- *Which ones can you find in your city/town?* [11, p. 62]  
(communication topic in the course: "*Healthy eating and taking care of one's health*")

Example 2: a speaking activity (dialogue). *Look at the list of rooms and hotel facilities again. Choose the four most important facilities from the list for the following people:*

1. *A family with two children staying at the hotel for two weeks for their summer holidays.*
2. *A business person staying for three nights at the hotel for a conference.*
3. *A couple staying one night at the hotel. They are going to arrive late and leave early the next day [11, p.48].*  
(communication topic in the course: “Vacations, tourism, and traveling”)

Example 3: a speaking activity (monologue). *Work in groups. Describe the teacher that you really liked to your group [11, p. 17].*

(communication topic in the course: “Schooling”)

Example 4: a listening and speaking activity. *Listen to a dialogue in a recruitment agency. Underline the correct information in the notes below.*

**SRT**

**Name:** Miss / Ms Ruby Tuesday

**Qualifications:** none / MA Philosophy

**Interests:** computers / cooking

**Present job:** fast food restaurant / shop assistant

**Ideal job:** restaurant manager / she doesn't know

*Listen to the dialogue again. Tick (✓) the advice that the consultant gives to Ruby.*

1. *Write a fuller CV.*
2. *Get a qualification.*
3. *Mention personal interests on the CV.*
4. *Invent some information on the CV.*
5. *Do a course in computer skills.*
6. *Arrive for interviews on time.*
7. *Improve her appearance.*
8. *Move to another town.*

*Do you agree with the consultant's advice? What would you say to Ruby? [11, pp. 72-73].*

(communication topic in the course: “Work and career choices”)

Such communicative learning activities from the textbook are alternated with language form-focused activities from the same textbook and this regular alternation is the most characteristic feature of the communicative-analytic approach in general. Language form-focused activities, which, as it has already been said, make 32-33% of all the learning activities in the pre-intermediate course, are divided into two categories. The first includes teacher's explanations of language material and practicing it in 'traditional' formal exercises, like the one below:

*Complete the dialogue. Put the verbs in brackets in the past simple or the present perfect simple.*

**A:** \_\_\_\_\_ you ever \_\_\_\_\_ (hear) of Thomas Mapother IV?

**B:** No, I \_\_\_\_\_ (never / hear) of him. Who is he?

**A:** He's an actor. He \_\_\_\_\_ (make) loads of famous films.

**B:** Well, I \_\_\_\_\_ (never / see) a film with him in it.

**A:** What about Mission Impossible? It was on TV last night. \_\_\_\_\_ you \_\_\_\_\_ (see) it?

**B:** Yes, but that \_\_\_\_\_ (be) with Tom Cruise.

**A:** Ah, but Thomas Mapother IV is Tom Cruise's real name. He \_\_\_\_\_ (change) it before he got famous [11, p. 67].

(communication topic in the course: "Work and career choices")

However, unlike the preceding two courses (see the list of courses in the *Introduction*) where only such 'traditional' language form-focused learning activities are used, in the pre-intermediate course the so called *consciousness-raising* [12,13] language form-focused exercises are introduced for the first time. When consciousness-raising as to some language phenomenon is implemented, the task of the teacher is not to give learners the explicit explanations as to that phenomenon but to concentrate their attention on it and create conditions for making their own conclusions about the phenomenon under consideration using their previous target language experience. This is followed by specific language form-focused exercises. Their specificity is in more or less direct communicative orientation as in the two examples below:

Example 1. *Emily's boyfriend does not want her to go. He thinks she will have problems. Make sentences from the prompts.*

1 When she arrives, she won't speak the language.

1 *When/arrive/not speak the language*

2 *If/not speak the language/not make friends*

3 *If/not make friends/feel very lonely*

4 *If/feel very lonely/want to come home*

5 *When/come home/not have any qualifications* [11, p. 81]

(communication topic in the course: "Problems of international communication, intercultural communication")

Example 2. *Work in pairs. Discuss the rules in the place where you work or study. Talk about the topics in the box.*

*clothes, times of work/study, days off, responsibilities, other rules*

*Think about what you discussed with your partner in exercise 2 and try to complete all of the sentences below. If necessary, speak to your partner from exercise 2 again.*

1 I can leave work at 5 o'clock on Fridays and she can, too.

1 *I can \_\_\_\_\_ and she/he can, too.*

2 *I can't \_\_\_\_\_ but she/he can.*

3 *She/he \_\_\_\_\_ but I can't.*

4 *I have to \_\_\_\_\_ and she/he has to, too.*

5 *I have to \_\_\_\_\_ but she/he doesn't.*

6 *She/He doesn't have to \_\_\_\_\_ but I do* [11, p. 109].

(communication topic in the course: “Work and career choices”)

Everything said above shows how the communicative-analytic approach designed for our commercial English language program following the students’ requirements and based on the combination of communicative and language form-focused learning activities functions in the pre-intermediate course and what its modifications are as compared to the preparatory introductory and beginner’s/elementary courses preceding it. There are two important modifications:

1. The obvious prevalence of communicative learning activities as compared to the analytic/form-focused ones. Such prevalence is achieved through gradual progressing from the dominance of the latter in the introductory course via their balance with the former in the elementary course that finally ensures the supremacy of communication over language form analysis in the pre-intermediate course. This is to a great extent also attained thanks to negotiating with the students the advantages of communicative language learning over language form-focused one, and that attainment paves the way to further enhancement of communicative language acquisition’s role in the following courses of the program.
2. Gradual transition in the language form-focused part of the teaching/learning process from ‘traditional’ teacher’s linguistic explanations and formal exercises to consciousness-raising learners’ activities in which form focusing moves in the direction of communication.

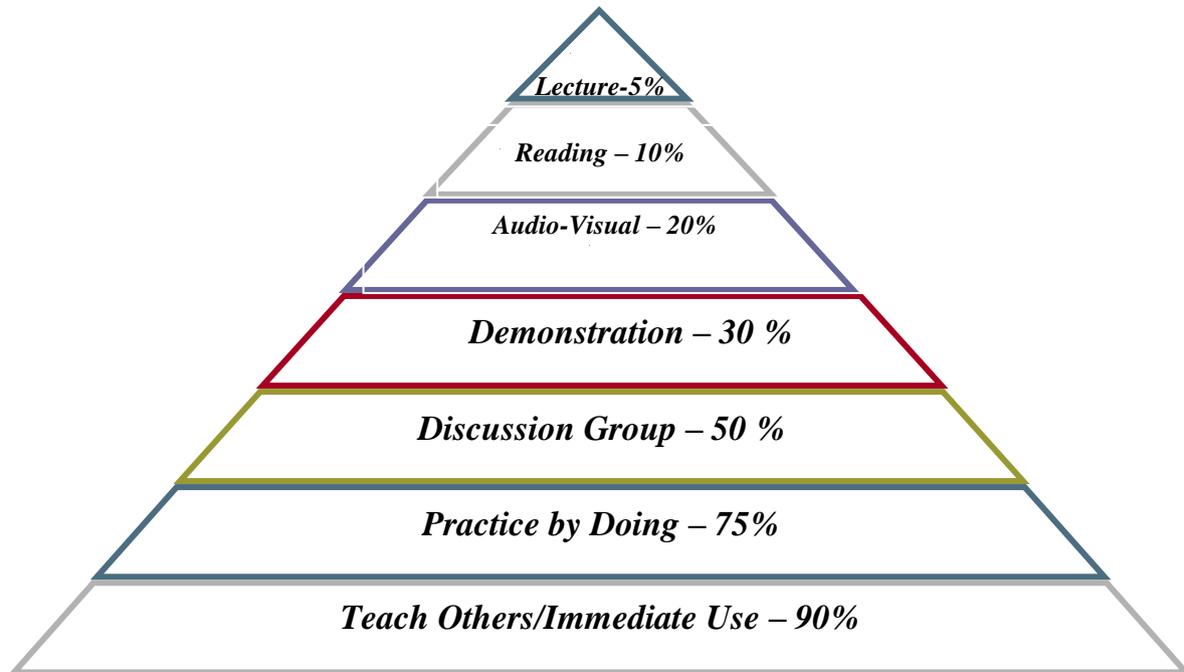
However, it is not the ‘evolutionary’ changes and modifications in the communicative-analytic approach discussed above that make the greatest distinctive feature of the pre-intermediate course under consideration but the introduction of the experiential learning activities in it.

### **3. THE EXPERIENTIAL APPROACH TO TEACHING ENGLISH IN THE PRE-INTERMEDIATE COURSE**

The experiential approach is totally communicative in nature but it is a higher level of communication modeling than in the communicative-analytic approach because communication in the target language becomes quasi-real (virtual) and personalized. The experiential approach, or experiential learning, meaning learning something through experience of practical activities in which learning itself becomes a by-product of those activities, has been well known both in English as a foreign language and English as a second language (FFL/ESL) teaching and in teaching other subjects for quite a long time (c.f., for instance, the works: [14,15,16,17,18]). It originates from the *learning by doing* approach [19]. Actually, the idea underlying experiential learning in ESL/EFL is the same as in learning by doing – teaching languages not through theory but through practical experience that allows knowledge and skills to be not learned, but subconsciously *internalized* (or *acquired*).

The greater efficiency of subconscious internalization/acquisition as compared to traditional learning is most clearly demonstrated in the famous *Learning Pyramid* developed by the National Training Laboratories in Bethel, Maine (the USA). It is shown in Figure 1.

### Learning Pyramid



**Figure 1.** Average student retention rates (Source: National Training Laboratories, Bethel, Maine, USA; drawn on the basis of the Internet source at: <http://images.yandex.ua/yandexsearch?ed=1&text=Pyramid of Learning> as retrieved September 11, 2011)

In this pyramid the upper four layers belong to what may be called ‘traditional’ passive learning while the three bottom layers relate to the active processes of internalization or acquisition (the latter term will be used further since it is the one relevant for ESL/EFL contexts). And it is just the activities that are shown in the three bottom layers that may be considered as representative of experiential learning, including experiential learning in EFL.

That representation of experiential learning activities in EFL concerns even such an activity little known in that area as *Teach Others* (i.e., when students themselves teach language skills to each other). There is no evidence known to us that it has ever been used in ESL but in EFL teaching to tertiary linguistic students (those who are trained for the careers of translators and interpreters from and into English), it has been used more than successfully for a number of years already [20]. There is also some experience in using a similar approach for an ESP technical master’s program in eHealth [21].

What has been said also concerns the layer of *Discussion Group* because when students are discussing some extra-linguistic issue in the target language, they are constructing some new knowledge out of the facts and ideas already known to them, and such constructing is most certainly one of the forms of learning by doing, i.e., of experiential learning, or learning through experience of discussing facts and ideas. In this case, the experience in question is being gained through the medium of the target language. There are other forms of ESL/EFL learning activities that belong to the same category as *Discussion Groups*, e.g., *brainstorming*

*in the target language or case studies done in it.* They can also be included into the list of experiential learning activities for ESL/EFL due to the same reasons that are given above for *discussions in the target language.*

And it is even not required to prove that *Practice by Doing* and *Immediate Use* are experiential activities that can be actively and effectively used for ESL/EFL teaching in a great variety of forms. Those forms can be listed under the two headings above: *Practice by Doing* and *Immediate Use*. The forms undoubtedly include *project work, students' presentations, and writing essays, articles, letters, reports, and such like written documents* in the target language (*Practice by Doing*). They include *role plays and simulations* in the target language done as soon as students have gained some new information in that language. Such role plays and simulations are staged for better comprehension and acquisition of that information (*Immediate Use*) and for processing the obtained information in practical activities (*Practice by Doing*). Finally, they include *search for extra-linguistic information through target language sources (Internet, audio, audio-visual, and printed ones)*. That information is required for doing extra-linguistic learning tasks to be done in the target language – such as the tasks above, like preparing for a presentation or discussion in that language, doing a case study or project work, etc. The search in question is also one of the forms of *Practice by Doing* (practice in the target language through doing an extra-linguistic activity of content information search), as well as one of the forms of *Immediate Use* because the search for information is being done for its immediate use – for instance, when preparing for a presentation.

Most learning activities listed above are those that are considered and further analyzed in this paper as *the basic and principal ones for experiential EFL teaching/learning in the pre-intermediate EFL course at commercial language schools and centers.* All such activities, unlike those representing the communicative-analytic approach, are not taken from the textbook used in the course but are elaborated specially for it by the course's developers. These activities are designed to give learners a real experience of communication in quasi-real (virtual) communicative situations. The first among them are role plays (simulations are not used in this course because they are meant for courses of English for professional purposes). The most important characteristic of role plays which make them really experiential is the fact the outcome of students' intercourse in them, just like in real life, can never be fully foreseen. Two examples of tasks for such role plays are given below:

Example 1. *“I want a full refund ... .”* Role-playing a situation in which a dissatisfied customer wants to get a full refund from a shop assistant for something he or she has bought (communication topic in the course: “Clothes, fashion, and things a person needs”):

*The task for student A:*

*You had bought a skirt (trousers) in a shop but when you brought it (them) home, you found a hole in them. You are so upset that you do not want to change it (them) at the shop but want a full refund. Bring it (them) back to the shop and talk to the shop assistant about the refund. You have kept the receipt, so they cannot refuse. Be polite at all times.*

*The task for student B:*

*You are a shop assistant. A dissatisfied customer has brought you back the skirt (trousers) she or he has bought from you earlier in the day. There is a visible hole in the skirt (trousers) and the customer has a receipt, so you cannot refuse. The customer wants a full*

*refund. But you are going to lose your commission if you give him/her the money back. Try to persuade the customer to exchange the skirt (trousers) for another one (pair) or for something else of approximately the same price. Be apologetic, helpful, polite, and persuasive at all times.*

Example 2. *“I want to have a once-in-a-lifetime vacation ... .”* Role-playing a situation of making plans for summer vacations (communication topic in the course: “Vacations, tourism, and traveling”):

*The task for student A:*

*You and your partner plan to go somewhere together for your summer vacations. All through the year you have collected enough money for that and both of you want to spend a once-in-a-lifetime vacation. You are sure that for having a once-in-a-lifetime vacation you must go on a bus tour of Europe. Try to persuade your partner that it would be the best alternative for you both.*

*The task for student B:*

*You and your partner plan to go somewhere together for your summer vacations. All through the year you have collected enough money for that and both of you want to spend a once-in-a-lifetime vacation. You are sure that for having a once-in-a-lifetime vacation you must go to one of the seaside towns on the Mediterranean coast of Spain and spend your time there lying on the beach, relaxing, and entertaining yourselves. Try to persuade your partner that it would be the best alternative for you both.*

By the end of the first half of the pre-intermediate course, such experiential learning activities as brainstorming and discussions start to be used (case studies are not used in this course because they are mostly meant for courses of English for professional purposes). In brainstorming the goal is to formulate as many ideas as possible concerning some problem or issue and it is not required to prove the logic, feasibility, or practicality of the suggested solutions. An example of such an activity can be the one that follows:

*In group work of four students in a group formulate as many ideas as you can as to what new changes and developments can be expected in transport (communications, medicine, education, etc. – different areas of human activities for different small groups) in the next 200 years. After formulating your ideas, present them to the class (communication topic in the course: “Thoughts about the future”).*

Unlike brainstorming, discussions require coming to a logical conclusion or finding a feasible and practical solution concerning the problem or issue under consideration. That is why in our pre-intermediate course a typical discussion task may be as follows:

*In the small groups of four students discuss the ideas that you have earlier formulated (when doing the brainstorming task) in the same small group as to new changes and developments in transport (communications, medicine, education, etc. – different areas of human activities for different small groups) in the next 200 years. Decide in your discussion what ideas that you have formulated earlier are possible to implement and what are impossible or improbable. Decide why. After finishing your discussion, report your decisions to the class (communication topic in the course: “Thoughts about the future”).*

As it can be seen from the two examples above, in our pre-intermediate course discussions of some problem or issue often follow brainstorming of the same problem or issue. This is the logical sequence of these two activities (first, the ideas are formulated and afterwards their probability, feasibility, and practicality are evaluated, proven, or disproven) that enhances the efficiency of both by making them complement each other. Besides, it can also be seen that both brainstorming and discussion tasks often culminate in students' short presentations.

In general, students' presentations are actively used in our language program beginning with the pre-intermediate course, and not only as final tasks for brainstorming or discussions but also separately from them, like in the two following presentation assignments:

Example 1. *Prepare a 3-5-minute presentation about your personal hobby to get the other students in the group interested in it and, maybe, take it up, too* (communication topic in the course: "Enthusiasms and hobbies").

Example 2. *Prepare a 3-5-minute presentation about cultural differences in communication in your country and in English-speaking countries* (communication topic in the course: "Problems of international communication, intercultural communication").

Preparing presentations, as well as brainstorming, discussions, and, often, even role plays, requires students' reading for getting initial information that is necessary for completing their creative experiential assignments in oral English communication. There are numerous reading and writing learning assignments, both experiential and more traditional communicative ones, used in our pre-intermediate course both to help students do their creative oral tasks and specifically for developing their communicative reading and writing skills. Such assignments are in the frameworks of both the communicative-analytic and the experiential approaches in their combination, and they will be discussed in the next part of this paper.

#### **4. THE COMMUNICATIVE-ANALYTIC AND EXPERIENTIAL APPROACHES TO TEACHING READING AND WRITING IN ENGLISH IN THE PRE-INTERMEDIATE COURSE**

It has already been said that the pre-intermediate course is the first course in our program where proper teaching of English reading and writing skills begins. In the preceding two courses reading and writing only support the development of speaking and listening skills because, as it has also been remarked, at the beginning of their English studies on the elementary level, students always emphasize their primary need in oral communication skills requesting to postpone the development of reading and writing skills until later, when the basic skills of speaking and listening have already been formed [3,4]. That 'later', even according to the learners' needs analysis data [3,4], comes with the pre-intermediate course, and this is why reading and writing skills start to be taught there quite intensively.

Within the framework of the communicative-analytic approach they are taught using more or less 'traditional' communicative learning activities from the textbook chosen for the course (analytical language form-focused exercises will not be considered further because they are just like the ones discussed above since such activities, both 'traditional' and

consciousness-raising ones, are identical for teaching oral and written communication). An example of communicative activities for teaching reading skills is given below.

*How often do you read your horoscope? Do you believe what it says?  
Read the magazine article and choose the best title.*

1. *Horoscopes are a waste of time*
2. *Why you should read your horoscope*
3. *Astrology and the secret police*

(the assignments above are followed by a magazine article of 244 words discussing the reasons why people read horoscopes and whether it is worthwhile to read them)

*The article was badly torn out of the magazine. What is the first word in each line in paragraphs 2 and 3?*

*What star sign are you? Think of three people you know. What are their star signs?  
Now read the star signs for you and for them. Do you agree with the information?*

(the assignments above are followed by an article of 317 words discussing the traits of characters of persons born under all the twelve star signs)

*Work in groups. Discuss the jobs in the box. Decide which are the most important qualities people need to do these jobs and explain why. Use the words and phrases in the horoscope to help you.*

lawyer	police officer	sales person	teacher
--------	----------------	--------------	---------

*Now choose the best star sign for each job [11, p. 70-71].*

(communication topic in the course: “Work and career choices”)

Such communicative textbooks assignments for developing reading skills are always accompanied by experiential assignments requiring learners’ autonomous *search for extra-linguistic information through target language sources (Internet, audio, audio-visual, and printed ones)*. For instance, if several students get the task of preparing a presentation on a certain topic (like horoscopes and star signs discussed in the classroom texts above), each of them gets from the teacher the name of a different Internet site (or several sites) to find the information for the presentation, so that, as a result, every presentation is different from all the others. In the same way, the information search is done when students get ready for brainstorming and discussions, and especially for project work which will be considered further.

The given description of the procedure of teaching reading skills used in the course allows making several conclusions:

1. Teaching reading is more intensified than teaching oral skills. In the given examples this intensification can be seen from the volume of reading during one class period (see above: two texts of more than 550 words in one lesson, and, on top of this, additional texts read in the process of experiential information search). The intensification is introduced because the oral orientation of the preceding courses makes the development of learners’ reading skills lag behind the development of their

oral skills, and, therefore, one of the aims of the pre-intermediate course should be the compensation for that retardation.

2. Doing the tasks above to the texts for reading requires mostly skimming and scanning reading, and this is quite rational at the early stage of teaching reading skills because these are the two types of reading mostly used by people in their everyday practice.
3. In the given examples of tasks reading always culminates in speaking or speaking may precede reading. The same is true of writing, for instance, when after having read some text, students get the assignment of writing its summary. Such transitions between oral and written, productive and receptive communicative activities are quite typical of the pre-intermediate course outlining one of its important characteristics: *integrated teaching of speaking, listening, reading, and writing communication skills* [6].

Teaching writing skills follows the same guidelines as teaching reading skills using both communicative writing activities taken from the textbook and experiential writing activities introduced by the course developers. The examples of 'traditional' communicative writing activities from the textbook are given below:

*Write the rest of the story (the beginning is given as a short text). Use the pictures and questions to help you.*

1. *What did Mr Miller and Alison see?*
2. *What did Mr Miller do?*
3. *What did Alison do?*
4. *What happened when Mr Miller was trying to help the man in the sea?*
5. *Where did Alison go afterwards?*
6. *What did she do?*
7. *What did Alison do with her notes?*
8. *What did she see in the newspaper?* [22, p. 59].

(communication topic in the course: "Thoughts about the future")

*Write a review of a film you like using the points below to help you.*

1. *Make notes about the title, actors, story, setting and your reasons for recommending the film before you start writing.*
2. *Organize the paragraphs into a logical order.*
3. *Use it instead of repeating the subject.*
4. *Use adjectives to make your review more interesting* [22, p. 81].

(communication topic in the course: "Vacations, tourism, and traveling")

Experiential writing assignments (*writing essays, articles, letters, reports, and such like written documents*) are additionally developed for the course and place learners in quasi-real (virtual) situations of writing for achieving some personal goal. An example of such an assignment can be as follows:

*You want to get employed by a new company. At the Personnel Department there you were requested to write a short (100 words) essay about your experience in your preceding job. You need to tell them what it was, what your position was, what you were doing in it,*

*whether you liked it or not and why and for how long you were working in that job. You may write your essay in two or three paragraphs.*

(communication topic in the course: “Work and career choices”)

The writing tasks become especially experiential when they are done in the framework of students’ project work [23,24].

Project work includes all the experiential learning activities that have been discussed above uniting them in a single project task with a single goal and with a definite final result. Project work is based on project tasks, which model real-life productive activities and require relatively long-term fulfillment (from one full class to one or two weeks, from a whole semester, to one academic year, or even longer). Project tasks are assigned to individual students or groups of them, and for fulfilling such project tasks, students need to share their responsibilities and functions, divide the task among themselves, work autonomously in and out of class (with only the consultative assistance of the teacher) to complete the part of the entire project assigned to them. At the end, they report the completion of their part of the project to the other students and the teacher demonstrating the results of that completion in some material form. When the entire project has been completed by all the students in the group, the final results also need to be reported and demonstrated in some material form. For completing the project the students need to do information search, discuss its results, write a final paper representing the entire project (its material product), discuss and amend it, and, finally, report the results of the project’s completion.

In the pre-intermediate course the learning projects are comparatively simple and not too lengthy. For instance, working on the communication topic “Problems of international communication, intercultural communication” students complete a short learning project of writing a two or three page reference booklet “*Cultural DOs and DON'Ts in Communication in English-Speaking Countries.*” First, in group work they search for information, then brainstorm and discuss it, or even role play some situations of intercultural communication, afterwards they write their booklet, discuss and amend it, and, finally, report the results to the teacher and the other small groups.

Thus, it can be seen that project work unites, even *totally integrates*, all forms of communication (reading, speaking, listening, and writing) with writing for presenting the final product as its focal point. It also unites and integrates in itself practically all experiential learning activities bringing students as close as possible to genuine real-life communication in English. This is why project work may be considered as the culmination of all learning activities in the pre-intermediate course.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

The pre-intermediate course of English for adults taught at the above-mentioned commercial language *Center* and discussed in this article has several prominent distinctive features:

1. It is designed and taught in practice on the basis of the communicative-analytic approach that, following the learners’ expectations, combines communicative learning activities with formal language form-focused ones.

2. In the pre-intermediate course, unlike the preceding courses in the program, communicative activities obviously begin to dominate making two thirds of all the learning activities. However, their prevalence over the language form-focused activities is lesser than in the following courses in the program because ousting language form-focused activities by the communicative ones in the language program as a whole should be a very gradual and rather slow process not to evoke learners' dissatisfaction and psychological resistance.
3. Formal language form-focused activities in the course are divided into two categories: purely formal ('traditional' form-focused) exercises and consciousness-raising ones where form-focusing is much more communication-oriented. By the end of the course, the latter exercises start to dominate paving the way to using only them as the only kind of language form-focused learning activities in the following courses.
4. The communicative-analytic approach is combined with the experiential one which includes communicative learning activities only but those ones that are on a considerably higher level of modeling communication than the communicative activities used in the communicative-analytic approach. Experiential learning activities ensure learners' practice for gaining quasi-real (virtual) target language communication experience that allows their communication skills to be not learned, but subconsciously internalized, or acquired. The supreme form of experiential learning is project work which makes the culmination point of the entire pre-intermediate course.
5. The pre-intermediate course, the first among all the courses in the program, provides for the balanced teaching of all the four basic communication skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Teaching reading and writing is somewhat intensified in comparison with teaching oral communication because in the preceding elementary course they are used only as supports for acquiring speaking and listening skills that learners' declare to be their primary English language needs and goals on the elementary level. Therefore, students' lagging behind in the development of their reading and writing skills needs to be compensated for.
6. Reading and writing are also taught by way of combining the communicative-analytic and experiential approaches, and experiential learning activities connected with project work, having writing as its focal point, become the culmination not only of teaching oral communication but of teaching written communication (reading and writing) as well.
7. When doing such an experiential learning activity as information search, learners, completing the tasks given by the teacher, start regularly working on the Internet sites in English to find information required for their creative experiential learning assignments. That gives the pre-intermediate course some features of *blended learning* [25], i.e., when traditional classroom learning is organically combined with students' autonomous learning online. Such features are further developed and become more pronounced in the following courses within the language program taught at the *Center*.

The pre-intermediate course discussed in this paper has been functioning at that *Center* in the described form for more than 10 years already and its unflinching success testifies to the soundness of its design, structure, and methods of teaching and learning used. This gives

ground for recommending those methods, design, and structure to all developers of commercial pre-intermediate English language courses wherever they are organized.

### **BIOGRAPHY**

Oleg Tarnopolsky is Doctor of Pedagogy, Full Professor, PhD. He heads the Department of Applied Linguistics and Methods in Foreign Language Teaching at Alfred Nobel University in Dnipropetrovsk, Ukraine and specializes in research and practical teaching in the field of teaching/learning English as a foreign language. He is also the author of more than 350 publications (books, articles, textbooks) published not only in Ukraine and Russia but also in the USA, the UK, Canada, France, Spain, China, Israel, Germany, Serbia, Austria, Japan, Switzerland, and the Czech Republic. He has made more than 190 presentations at conferences, seminars, and workshops – not only in Ukraine and all over the former USSR but also abroad (the USA, Spain, Great Britain, France, Finland, Switzerland, Poland, Greece, the Netherlands, Austria, Monaco, the Czech Republic, Germany, Denmark, China, and Thailand). Oleg Tarnopolsky is engaged in training researchers in the field of teaching English as a foreign language. He holds the Fulbright Awards (USA) for 1994 and 2005.

### **References**

- [1] D. Graddol, “English Next. Why Global English May Mean the End of ‘English as a Foreign Language’”, British Council, 2006.
- [2] O. Tarnopolsky, “EFL teaching in the Ukraine: State-regulated or commercial?”, *TESOL Quarterly*, vol. 30 (1996) 616-622.
- [3] O. Tarnopolsky, “Teaching English Intensively in a Non-English Speaking Country: Theory, Practice, and Results”, ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 428 579, 1999.
- [4] O. Tarnopolsky, “Writing English as a foreign language: A report from Ukraine”, *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 9, No. 3 (2000) 209-226.
- [5] Council of Europe, “Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, Teaching and Assessment”, Strasbourg, 2001.
- [6] R. Oxford “Integrated skills in the ESL/EFL classroom”, ERIC Digest, EDO-FL-01-05, <http://www.cal.org/ericcll/0105oxford.html>, 2001.
- [7] C.B. Paulston, “Linguistic and Communicative Competence: Topics in ESL”, *Multilingual Matters*, 1992.
- [8] D. Nunan, “The Learner Centred Curriculum: A Study in the Second Language Learning”, Cambridge University Press, 1988.
- [9] J.M. Green, “Student attitudes toward communicative and non-communicative activities: Do enjoyment and effectiveness go together?”, *The Modern Language Journal*, 77 (1993) 1-10.
- [10] O. Tarnopolsky, “Communicative-analytic method in teaching English to adults at commercial language schools and centers in Ukraine”, *International Letters of Social and Humanistic Sciences*, Vol. 65 (2015) 16-26, [www.scipress.com/ILSHS.65.16](http://www.scipress.com/ILSHS.65.16).

- [11] P. Kerr, "Straightforward Pre-Intermediate. Student's Book. Second Edition", Macmillan, 2012.
- [12] W.E. Rutherford, "Second Language Grammar. Learning and Teaching", Longman, 1987.
- [13] W.E. Rutherford, M.S. Smith, "Consciousness-raising and the universal grammar", *Applied Linguistics*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (1985) 274-282.
- [14] Y. Cerdà, Y., S. Williams, "Doing the product: an experiential task-based approach to inspire learners", In T. Pattison (Ed.). *IATEFL 2012. Brighton Conference Selections*, IATEFL (2012) 99-101.
- [15] D.E. Freeman, Y.S. Freeman, "Between Worlds. Access to Second Language Acquisition", Heinemann, 1994.
- [16] M. Jerald, R.C. Clark, "Experiential Language Teaching Techniques. Out-of-Class Language Acquisition and Cultural Awareness Activities. Resource Handbook Number 3. Second revised edition", ProLingua Associates, 1994.
- [17] D. Kolb, "Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development", Prentice Hall, 1984.
- [18] O. Tarnopolsky, "Constructivist Blended Learning Approach to Teaching English for Specific Purposes", Versita, 2012.
- [19] J. Dewey, "Experience and Education", Collier, 1938.
- [20] O. Tarnopolsky, Y. Degtyariva, (2007). "EFL student as EFL teacher: Learning and motivational aspect", *IATEFL Voices*, Issue 196 (2007) 10.
- [21] A. Toechterle, "How about them teaching us?", In T. Pattison (Ed.). *IATEFL 2012. Brighton Conference Selections*, IATEFL (2012) 70-71.
- [22] M. Jones, P. Kerr, "Straightforward Pre-Intermediate Workbook", Macmillan, 2005.
- [23] D.L. Fried-Booth, "Project Work", Oxford University Press, 1996.
- [24] T. Hutchinson, "Project English. Student's Book", Oxford University Press, 1994.
- [25] P. Sharma, B. Barrett, "Blended Learning. Using Technology in and beyond the Language Classroom", Macmillan, 2007.

( Received 03 January 2016; accepted 14 January 2016 )