

Reviews

English360

www.english360.com

The English360 platform plays an integral role in the activities of my company, City Professional English. It is the means by which we deliver our linguistic and non-linguistic didactic material, and also our central administration point. It has allowed us to offer innovative pedagogical material in a timely and efficient manner, saving costs and hence improving our financial returns in an industry not known for its ROA (return on assets)!

As City Professional English is a bespoke company, all our materials are written by our language coaches for each client project. It is essential, therefore, that we have the means to develop and thereafter present these materials in a professional manner to our clients. After founding the company we looked into developing a system ourselves but the inherent time lag in development, as well as the high costs involved, encouraged us into the market place to search for a readily available system.

English360 immediately caught our attention. Literally within minutes, one can begin to create activities on the system using traditional formats, such as gap-fill, matching and multiple-choice, to name but a few. The platform is simple and easy to interact with, which is testament to the ability of the software designers. For instance, one can have hundreds of students all diligently doing their homework, but who will mark all their work? English360 does the marking instantaneously and provides reports at the click of a button. It therefore saves a great deal of time.

Of course, the system is not perfect; there are areas that need improvement. There could be a greater range of



exercise formats to allow for more intricate activities. There is also not enough flexibility given to the school in deciding what a student will see on their homepage. But probably the most significant problem is the limited range of coursebook material on the system that can be used instead of creating original exercises and courses. Most schools use coursebooks and although Cambridge University Press, which is represented on the English360 platform with over 9,000 activities from 35 titles, is an excellent source of high-quality course material, there are several other excellent publishers not present on the system.

However, in my opinion, English360 overcomes all these problems in a convincing manner by offering the most important element for a school owner

in this regard. This gives me great confidence that they will continue to strive to overcome difficulties and improve the system.

To evaluate the English360 platform, go to www.english360.com and sign up for a free Educator account where you can try your hand at creating personalised courses for your learners.

Mark Olding
Verona, Italy

Check Your Aviation English

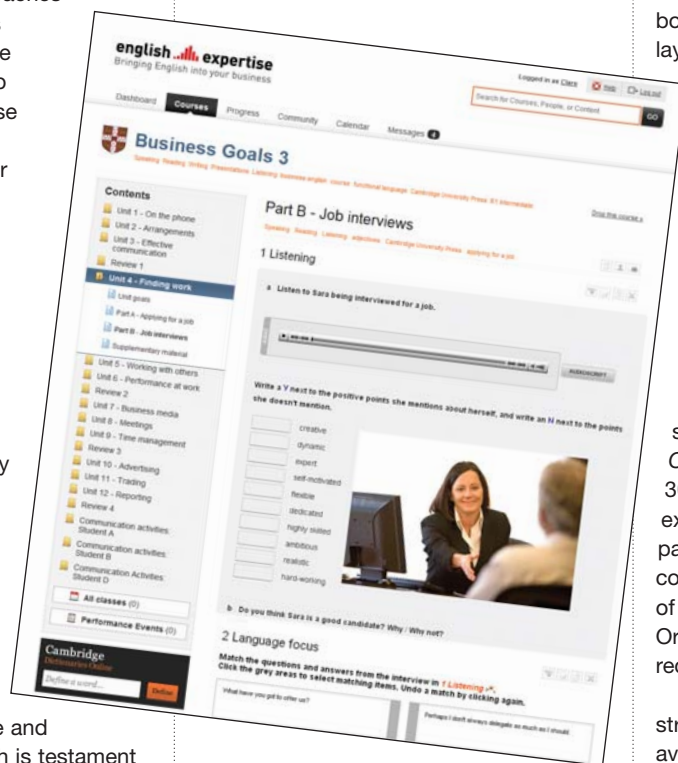
by Henry Emery and Andy Roberts
Macmillan Education 2010
978-0-230-40205-8

Apart from its use in training students who work in the aviation industry, this book provides fascinating insights for the lay person into the behind-the-scenes workings of airlines and airports.

Many of the units are necessarily based on the more dramatic incidents and special situations that occur in the aviation world, as these are the ones where communication between those involved needs to be spot on, with no room for any kind of misunderstanding. As a result, the recording scripts at the back of the book alone make gripping reading.

Designed for classroom use as a supplementary text or for self-study, *Check Your Aviation English* provides 30 units of listening and speaking exercises to help aviation professionals, particularly pilots and air-traffic controllers, achieve and maintain Level 4 of the International Civil Aviation Organisation's language proficiency requirement.

The units all follow the same structure, beginning with a photo of an aviation-related incident, which the students are required to describe and interpret. Helpfully, the accompanying CDs (attached to the inside back cover) contain sample answers to these opening activities as well as recordings for the subsequent listening comprehension exercises; these give practice in the twin language focus of 'plain English' and 'ICAO phraseology'. The second exercise in each unit is based on a recording related to flight operations and is aimed



who is contemplating making an investment in infrastructure: high-quality service. I have spoken to people at all levels in the English360 organisation, from the owner to the developers to the client service department to the accounts department, and every single person has been at all times professional, highly competent and polite. All business is about people and communication, and the people at English360 are exceptional

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at improving plain English proficiency. First, the students are asked to identify the main theme of the recording and then a second part focuses on the details. The third activity involves listening to a radiotelephony exchange containing a mixture of plain English and phraseology. Students have to answer a number of questions about what they hear. The fourth exercise practises clarification techniques. Students in a class will work in pairs to roleplay a dialogue. Those working independently are advised to think about what they would say in the given situation and can then check their answers at the back of the book. The fifth exercise checks the main vocabulary the students will need to talk about the subject of the unit. First they have to match items to definitions, and then

Anyone who flies would be comforted to know that those in charge of the plane had the language skills taught and practised in this book in order to deal with any emergency or non-routine situations that might arise!

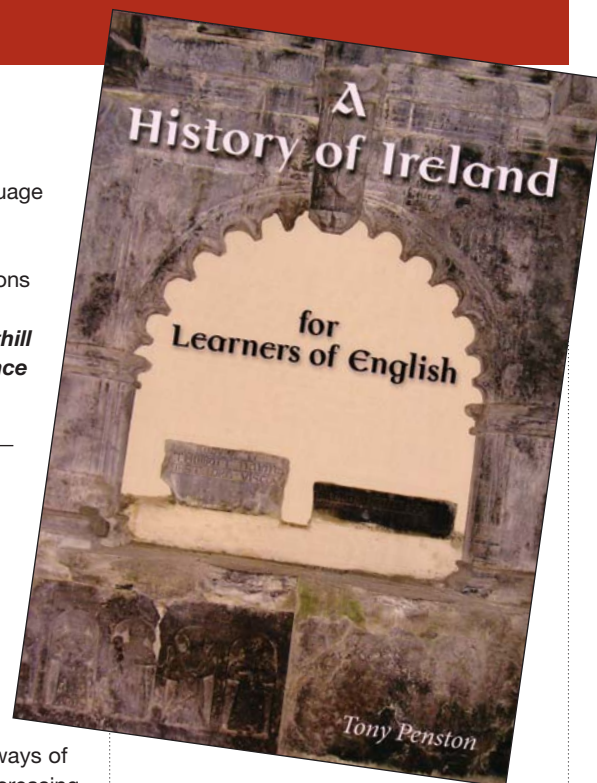
Lorna Amphill
Vendôme, France

A History of Ireland for Learners of English

by Tony Penston
TP Publications 2010
978-0-9531323-2-4

Most major publishers of ELT materials produce series of graded readers to promote extensive reading and engage learners in enjoyable ways of practising their English and increasing their vocabulary. The main attraction of such readers is that they are generally short and largely fictional, either simplifications of works of literature or original stories written specifically for learners. Students can read them fairly quickly, thus gaining the satisfaction of reaching the end without too much effort, and can easily tell if something is going to interest them or not – and if the reader they have chosen, or which has been chosen for them, doesn't appeal, they can move swiftly on to another one.

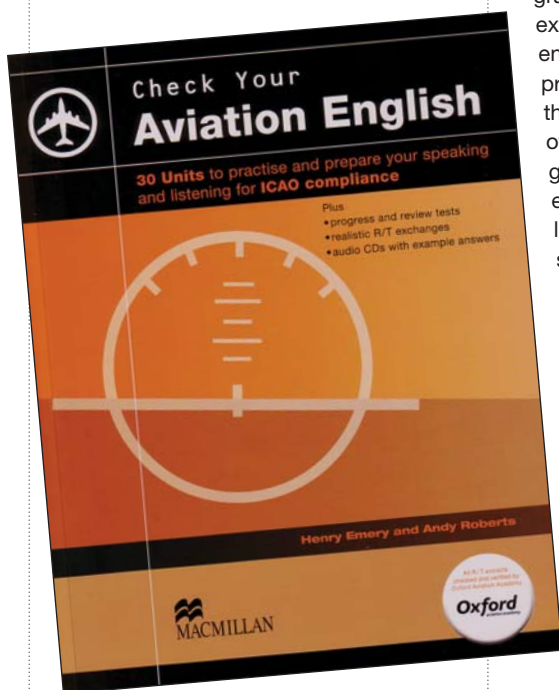
So it is that, when faced with a 120-page, self-published book on the history of Ireland, presented as a reader for learners of English, and with a very dull, almost monochrome cover, my heart sank a little. My first reaction was that a student would have to be very interested indeed in Irish history to want to plough through this. The catch-all phrase on the back cover '*would also be enjoyed by native speakers who prefer a less formal style of English*' rang alarm bells, too: writing graded readers is a skilled business, and although the aim is to produce a text which sounds natural as well as being simple enough for learners to understand, I have come across few that would be genuinely satisfying for any native speaker of the language.



Nevertheless, having undertaken to write a review, I began reading and was pleasantly surprised. This would not be an easy read for students, even those at intermediate level (for whom it is intended), but it would be a rewarding one. The language is not all that simple, but the book is divided into small manageable sections with useful vocabulary exercises, quizzes, etc to break up the text. It is also extremely well illustrated with historical and contemporary photographs and maps. I still think students would have to have quite a strong interest in the history of Ireland to want to read it to the end, but there is a pleasant mix of straightforward historical narrative and more personal stories about the characters involved, and the text is interspersed with some fascinating and quirky facts. I personally learnt a lot from it.

Language students actually studying in Ireland and keen to find out the historical background of their place of study, and those with an interest in politics, would probably get the most out of reading the book, and its structure would allow for dipping in and out and focusing on the parts of main interest if reading from cover to cover was not an option.

Helena Gomm
West Meon, UK



they use the target words to complete a text. The unit ends with a discussion activity. There are progress tests after every five units and the full recording scripts and answers to all the exercises are available at the back of the book.

Presumably this book has been produced as a supplementary text to Macmillan's own coursebook *Aviation English*, also written by Henry Emery and Andy Roberts, but it could be used in conjunction with any other course aimed at aviation professionals.