

Textbook Analysis

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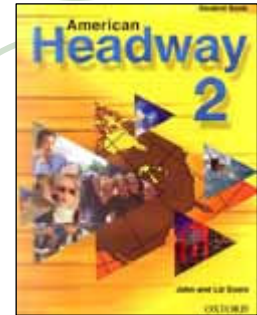
COURSE: The Communicative Approach

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Textbook analyzed: American Headway 2
by John and Liz Soars - Oxford University Press



American Headway 2 is considered an intermediate-level textbook, and it is divided in 14 units. We've decided to analyze Unit 10 whose title is "Scared to Death" and whose main grammar focuses are on the use of the structure *used to* and verb patterns

Analyzing this unit and the book as whole, we may consider this textbook's approach as quasi-communicative. In Unit 10, the learner first goes through a warm-up activity, then gets the input (it happens here through a reading activity which students can listen to check their answers), then practices the new structure (through reading comprehension questions) and finally is invited to systematize the new structures and come up with grammar rules (through a series of simple questions and activities named "Grammar Spot"). After that, there are some very controlled writing activities focusing on form and usage. Aside from the first activity which integrates reading and listening skills, all the others are focused on a very specific skill. Most activities here cannot be considered task-based since the commands are very straight to the point, starting with verbs and phrases such as "listen to Jim talking", "read the text", "make sentences", "ask and answer questions", not requiring any communicative language use.

First two pages of Unit 10




10 Scared to death

Verb patterns 2 • manage to, used to • -ed/-ing adjectives • Exclamations

STARTER

1 What are these people afraid of? How do they feel?



2 What are you afraid of? Why?

A WALK WITH DEATH
Verb patterns and infinitives

1 Look at the photograph on page 75. Does the path look safe to you? Read about Paul Lay's adventure. How did he feel at different times in the story?

2 Complete the text using these words.

began to feel started aching
know what to do went camping
decided to stand up

T 10.1 Listen and check.

3 Answer the questions.

1. What is Paul Lay's hobby?
2. What did he use to do with his father?
3. Does he go to the same place every year?
4. Is the King's Way in good condition?
5. Why couldn't he take a rest?
6. Why didn't he enjoy the walk?

Don't look down

Paul Lay dances with death in the mountains of southern Spain

I have always enjoyed walking. When I was a boy, I used to go walking on weekends with my father. We (1) _____ and climbing together. I try to visit a new place every year. Last year I decided to walk a path in Spain called *El camino del rey*, which means the King's Way. It is one of the highest and most dangerous footpaths in Europe. It used to be very safe, but now it's falling down. I took a train to the village of El Chorro and started to walk toward the mountains. I was very excited. Then the adventure began.

The path was about three feet [one meter] wide, and there were holes in it. It used to have a handrail, but not any more. I didn't (2) _____ should I go on my hands and knees, or stand up? I (3) _____ and walk very slowly. At times the path was only as wide as my two boots. I stopped to take a rest, but there was nowhere to sit. I (4) _____ very frightened. It was impossible to look down or look up. I was concentrating so hard that my body (5) _____. There was no thrill of danger, no enjoyment of the view. I thought I was going to die. I finally managed to get to the end. I was shaking, and I was covered in sweat from heat and fear. I fell to the ground, exhausted.

GRAMMAR SPOT

1 Are these verbs followed by the infinitive or -ing in the text?
enjoy try decide start begin manage

2 Find the examples of *used to* + infinitive. *Used to* expresses a past action that doesn't happen any more.
I used to play games with my brother, but now I don't.
Notice the pronunciation /jʊstə/.

3 Complete these examples from the text.
I used to go _____ on weekends.
I didn't know what _____.
I stopped _____ a rest.
It was impossible _____ down.
There was nowhere _____.

▶▶ Grammar Reference 10.1–10.4 p. 149

PRACTICE

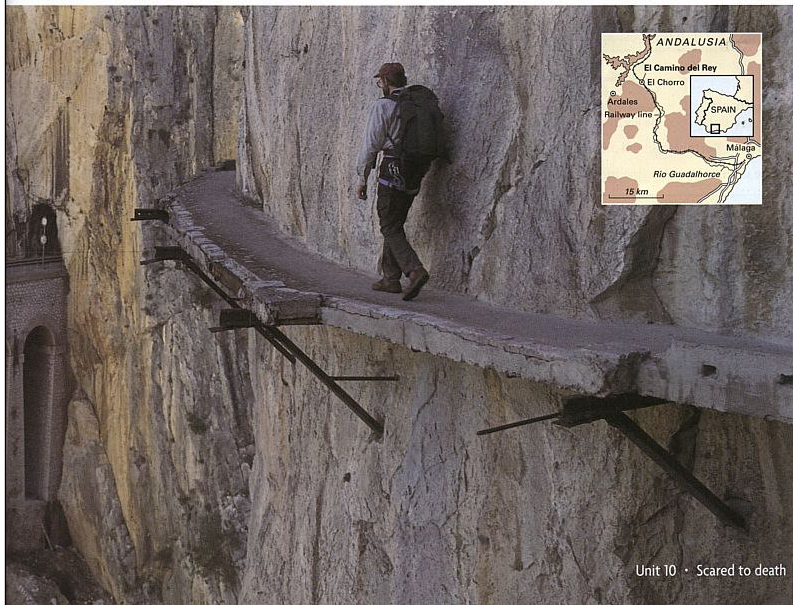

Discussing grammar

1 Complete these sentences with the verb *ski* in the correct form.

1. I go skiing every winter.
2. I started _____ when I was six.
3. I tried _____ down the mountain, but it was too steep.
4. My instructor made me _____ down the steep mountain.
5. I enjoy _____ very much.
6. Dave used to _____ when he was younger, but not anymore.

2 Choose the correct form.

1. I decided *stop (to stop) stopping* smoking.
2. I managed *find / to find / finding* my passport.
3. Let's go *shop / to shop / shopping!*
4. I tried *understand / to understand / understanding* what he was saying, but I couldn't.
5. Would you like something *eat / to eat / eating?*
6. I need a recipe for a cake that's easy *make / to make / making.*

The next activity in the unit integrates listening, writing and speaking skills. It starts with a listening activity in which learners are expected to fill in a chart. Students are here exposed to narrative oral genre as they listen to a man telling about his past habits and how his life has changed. There are not pre-listening questions which could help students have an idea of what they were going to listen in order to have a better understand of it.

This listening activity is clearly pedagogically created. The man's narrative is divided in parts which are numbered and match the questions on the chart. Furthermore, there are few characteristics of the oral genre since the talk presents long highly-structured sentences and no hesitations marks or fillers. These facts make the listening activity sound extremely unnatural once learners know from their experience that real oral communication does not happen that way. The main focus here is on use since there is a contrast between the simple present form to describe routines in the present and the *used to* form to talk about old habits.

Finally, there is a speaking activity in which students are expected to work in pairs and talk about their lives in the present and their lives as children. Though it may be a good way to practice the new structure learned, it is still very controlled and there is very little room for students to communicative freely. Learners are supposed to answer the same questions the man responded in the listening part, giving no room for creating new ones. Besides, there are also some models inside speech bubbles which students are expected to copy, using repeatedly the same structures - "I usually" to talk about the present and "I used to" to refer to the past.

Listening activity

When I was young, I used to ...

3 **T 10.2** Listen to Jim talking about his childhood and his life now. Complete the chart. Write one sentence with *used to* for each question.

	Life as a child
1. What/do on weekends?	
2. What/do in the evening?	
3. Where/go on vacation?	
4. What sports/play?	
5. What TV programs/like?	
6. What food/like?	

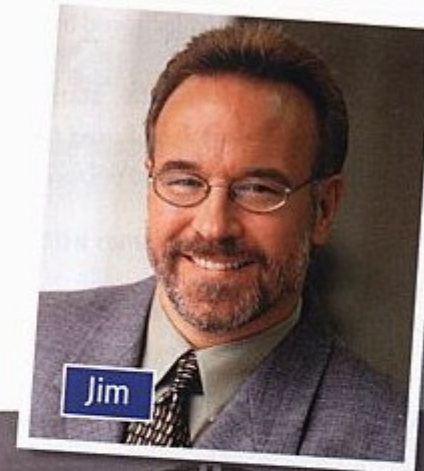
With a partner, ask and answer the questions above about your life now and your life as a child.

What do you do on weekends?

I usually go shopping and ...

What did you do when you were a child?

I used to play with my friends and ...



Listening script

T 10.2 I used to ...

1. Nowadays I usually go shopping on Saturday, and on Sunday morning I do yard work or play tennis. When I was a child, I used to play sports on Saturday morning. On Sunday the whole family used to get together for Sunday dinner.
2. I used to watch TV and do my homework in the evening. Now I read, or I go out with friends.
3. We go to a hotel somewhere hot and just do nothing. When I was young, we used to go camping. We went to lots of national parks—Yosemite, Yellowstone, the Grand Canyon ...
4. I was very athletic. I used to play everything. Baseball, basketball, tennis, swimming, ice-skating. Now I just play tennis. Oh, and walk the dog!
5. I like documentaries and sports. When I was a kid, I used to like cartoons, action movies, and Westerns, you know, like Clint Eastwood or John Wayne.
6. I liked all the usual things that most kids like: ice cream, pizza, candy, soda. I used to love french fries. Still do. Now I eat everything. Except peppers. Really don't like peppers.

At the end of Unit 10, there is another listening and speaking activity which seems much more communicative than the previous ones. This activity does not focus on a particular structure and it gives students a chance to communicate more freely than.

The listening activity starts with some pre-listening questions in which the topic is approached, giving the students an idea of what the listening activity is about - UFOs (Unidentified Flying Objects). As a pre-listening activity, learners are also asked to write questions they would like to make to a man who says he has seen a UFO. This can help students create a kind of expectation of what they are going to listen to, and it also fosters motivation, having learners interested in the content of the story since they will be anticipating whether their questions are going to be answered.

The genre here is the oral interview and it seems to be an authentic material, though there is no source mentioned. It is a long interview and we may notice many characteristics of oral language such as the use of speech acts, conversational strategies, turn taking, and hesitation markers. Although these features are present in the audio track, the activities do not involve any practice of them. The fact that this material seems authentic helps learners to be in touch with real language, giving them the chance to compare and contrast that genre in English with the same genre in their native language.

While learners listen to the interview, they are supposed to perform an activity of putting some pictures in a chronological order. This is a very good activity for a first time listening to the interview once it gives learners a general comprehension of the story that is being told. After that, it is time to listen for details: students listen to the whole interview again but this time focusing on specific issues. First, learners should check whether the questions they have made were answered or not, then they are supposed to understand what some phrases and words from the interview refer to. This entire process of pre-, while, and post-listening questions makes it easier for learners to deal with the listening activity once they pay attention to the audio track with a clear aiming mind.

Finally, there are two activities involving speaking which are still related to the interview students have listened to. The first one presents two questions demanding students to think critically about the listening activity by giving their opinions on some particular issues. Once this topic is rather controversial, this activity may encourage a debate in the classroom which gives students the opportunity to express themselves freely and interact communicatively between themselves. Last, learners are asked to role play some situations in pairs. Here, students have the opportunity to deal with the matter of sociolinguistic - the language you use when telling a story to a neighbor will not be the same as if you were telling it to someone from the government or a reporter.

Listening activity

LISTENING AND SPEAKING

It came from the sky!

- 1 Some people say they have seen UFOs (Unidentified Flying Objects).
- What do they say UFOs look like?
 - What stories do you know about flying saucers?

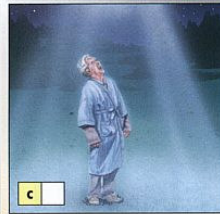
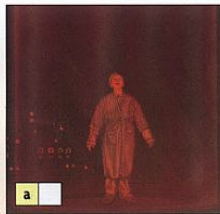
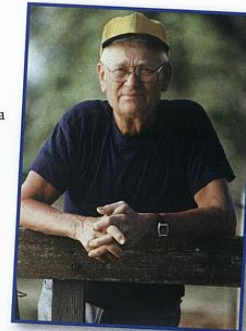
- 2 Work with a partner. You are going to listen to a man who says that he has seen a UFO, spoken with the aliens in it, and been inside their spacecraft. Write five questions you would like to ask him.

Where were you?

What did the aliens look like?

- 3 **T 10.6** You will hear a man named Peter Cooper describe his encounter with a UFO. Listen to the interview and put the pictures in the right order. Check that you know these words.

metallic government agent helmet visor to land to take off



- 4 **T 10.6** Listen again. Did Mr. Cooper answer any of your questions from Exercise 2?
- 5 What do the following refer to in the story?
1. about a year ago
He saw the UFO about a year ago.
 2. one o'clock
 3. full
 4. green
 5. a machine
 6. 45 feet
 7. shiny
 8. black
 9. a minute
 10. seventy-four

What do you think?

- Do you think people will believe Mr. Cooper's story? Why or why not?
- The government agent told Mr. Cooper, "Don't tell anyone about this." If UFOs were real, do you think the government would tell us? Why or why not?



Role play

Work with a partner. Role-play one of these conversations.

- Mr. Cooper talking to a neighbor
- Mr. Cooper talking to someone from the government
- Mr. Cooper talking to a reporter

Listening script - Part 1

T 10.6 It came out of the sky

I = Interviewer C = Mr. Cooper

- I** Mr. Cooper, you claim to have seen a UFO. Is that right?
- C** Yes, that's right. It happened about a year ago.
- I** And where was this?
- C** It all took place near my home in Nevada.
- I** And what time of day was it?
- C** It was about one o'clock in the morning. I was having trouble sleeping, so I was awake watching TV.
- I** What was the weather like?
- C** It was a warm and clear night and there was a full moon.
- I** So, Mr. Cooper, what exactly happened?
- C** Well, like I said, I was watching TV. Suddenly—all the lights went out. And instead, there was this bright light shining in the windows from the backyard. So I got up and went over to the window to see what it could be.
- I** And what did you see?
- J** I saw a bright light up in the air, coming toward the house. It was coming closer and closer and getting bigger and bigger. Then it started to land. It landed behind some trees.
- I** Did anyone else see it?
- C** No. I live alone. So it was just me.

I What did you do?

C I went outside to see what it was. Maybe it was an airplane or a helicopter or something—I couldn't tell. Anyway, I saw two forms, you know, two aliens, coming toward me.

I What did they look like?

C They were pretty small, about the size of children. They were dressed in green suits, and they were wearing green helmets with red visors so I couldn't see their faces.

I Did they speak to you?

C Yes. The one on the right said, "You must come with us."

I Weren't you scared? I mean, weren't you surprised that they spoke English?

C They spoke English with a funny accent. It sounded more like a machine talking than a person. At first, I was amazed and very, very scared. But then they touched me and suddenly I wasn't scared anymore. I don't know why. Then they carried me toward the light. But we didn't really walk, we just glided over the ground until we came to the spaceship.

I And what did their spaceship look like?

C It was about 45 feet across. It was silver and it

Listening script - Part 2

was very, very shiny. And there were round windows all around the sides.

- I Did you go inside?
C Yes. A door opened and there were steps. So we went in.
I What did it look like inside?
C It was all black with lots of colored lights all around. I couldn't see any seats or controls or anything. All there was was a central column going up from the floor to the ceiling, right in the middle of the room.
I Then what happened?
C Suddenly, one of the aliens pointed and said, "Stand over there." So I went over and suddenly a bright red light started to shine on me. After a minute or so, the alien said "What is your age?" And I answered, "74." He said, "Turn around." So I did. After a few more minutes, the alien said, "You are too old for our purposes. You may leave now." So the two aliens carried me back outside.
I Then did the spaceship take off?
C Yes. I heard a very high-pitched noise, almost like a scream, and the spaceship took off straight up in the air—zoom!—and disappeared!

- I So, what did you do?
C The next morning I called the police and told them what happened. Then in the afternoon, someone from the government came to my house to interview me. He never told me his name.
I What did this government agent want to know?
C He asked me lots of questions about the spaceship and about the aliens. And he said, "Please don't tell anyone about this. It must remain a secret." I thought this was strange, but I didn't say anything to anybody.
I So, Mr. Cooper, why have you decided to tell everyone about it now?
C Because I want people to know what happened to me. I think the government is trying to keep UFOs a secret. People have a right to know the truth.
I Thank you very much, Mr. Cooper, for sharing your story with us.