

ENGLISH FOR INTERNATIONAL
COMMUNICATION

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A teacher always has to face a problem of choice concerning the textbook he or she is going to use, and this problem becomes crucial when he has to deal with beginners. There are so many books and so much supplementary material for the intermediate and advanced courses that it seems that first level courses have been neglected.

A group of seven lecturers and teachers experienced in the methodology of teaching English as a second and foreign language recently published Book One, the first of a series of six, that deals with the subject. The next two books of the series (also appropriate for beginners) are due to be published within this year. The last three (two for intermediate and one for advanced students) will be on the market in 1978, as the editor promises in the introduction to Book One. It is difficult to find such a complete and well-designed textbook devoted to beginners in our country. This book is a good start since it focuses on the four essential skills.

This review deals with Book One, since it is the only one we have seen so far.

This textbook intended for approximately 100 hours of instruction, conveys all of its material through simple and straight-forward situational pictures evoking internationally understandable situations and actions. It thus represents, in the best possible way, the idea its title underlines: INTERNATIONAL COMMUNICATION which is indeed what this book aims at. This aim is achieved by the organization of the book and the progressive method used throughout. Each lesson has been divided into smaller sections according to the skills to be practised and the material to be covered, entitled: "presentation", "skill building", "interaction", "pattern summary", "pronunciation", "silent reading", "writing" and "reentry". By dividing these activities into small workable semi-units, the transmission and understanding of most ideas and grammatical patterns are made easier than in most traditional textbooks, where all these skills are mixed. Each subdivision is an entirely different activity to be done in class. This is

achieved through a new organization of materials, (grammar at once integrated into the vocabulary paragraphs), and the whole language structure strengthened in the "skill building" sections, where pupils can freely practice the skill in turn.

Thus, the contemporary educational idea of teaching a foreign language as a comprehensive, integrated system, whose end is communication, instead of as an accumulation of separate identifiable skills and discrete grammar and lexical items, becomes a reality in this book and its method. The process of "slow accumulation" through a "spiraling" approach of the material is a new idea as well, and for the first time made here successful and interesting. Thus, the material to be learned is arranged in such a way that, once it has been introduced, it will be reviewed later combined with the new structures in the following lessons.

Indeed, this book is wholly organized on a succession of "centers" of interest for the students which are useful, interesting, relevant and lively situations with a great variety of activities. Instead of presenting a boring list of grammatical and lexical items, it integrates both of these into wider, more useful and more interesting "communication" situations, organized in units such as "Going to Work", "At the Supermarket", "T.V. Recipe", "Dinner at Home". Moreover, this general "interest-based" organization of the book starts from the very first lessons, and is maintained throughout the whole 200 pages of Book One. Often, the method consists of giving suggestions for activities rather than giving a set of mechanical exercises and thus providing the students with an opportunity to use their creative ability, which is certainly one of the best possible motivations for the study of a language. Indeed, students are encouraged to participate much more in this method than in traditional ones. They have the opportunity to develop their knowledge of the language freely, choosing from the content that which most suits their needs and own interests.

The layout of the book is superb. It has been appealingly illustrated by Claudia Karabaic and designed by Maryanne Gladych. The pages are big and easy to handle, and the material: illustrations and grammar content, is distributed in such a way that there is enough space left for the pupils to rest the eye or to write their own notes on. This is another great advantage in the book, since students do not have to deal with a variegated page. The illustrations and drawings are mostly in full color and the size of the letters is big and uniform. There is a group of personalities whose everyday life adventures are depicted in small readings and stories. These people's adventures are to be followed throughout, adding gradually increased interest to the course. By so

doing, the book avoids the problem which characterizes so many impersonal, lifeless books not offering continuity concerning people.

Another remarkable feature of the book is the grading: the grammatical and lexical content is supplied in a gradual building up of the language from easy to difficult. It is clear that the authors do not leave out any important or essential structure. Since language is an accumulation of practice and progressive mastery, all previous material is continually reviewed in small sections called "reentry", where the newly-taught material is incorporated with the previous material. No more than one or two structures are presented at once. During the presentation, the new grammatical items are never mixed with the previous ones in order to avoid possible distractions. This book has notes and a glossary of grammar items as well as vocabulary appendix. The introduction and the list of grammar items to be taught at the beginning of each chapter can help the teacher clarify different points, or detect, in advance, difficulties to be faced. In general, the way to handle this book seems to be fairly easy. It is divided into four main parts plus four preliminary lessons. Each part has got five or six chapters including a review. At the very beginning of each part we are supplied with the "objectives" of the unit, which are the list of grammar items and vocabulary, and the context and situations in which the language is going to be cast into. There are also many synoptic tables which are clear, easy to follow and to understand. The examples and models of items presented are enough for practise, for homework and for the student reviewing by himself. All the exercises are meaningful and are included in lively contexts. These can also be practised by students in groups or by themselves without the teacher's help.

There is a Teacher's Guide, which will soon be available and which should clarify more points concerning the method to be followed.

This textbook will appeal to students with many interests and backgrounds. It is obviously intended for "young adults", which means our students in Preparatorias and University levels. However, the situations contained in it would not be suitable for secondary school students in some rural areas of Mexico. Some situations would be totally out of their context; especially if we take into account their socio-economic background.

I feel it would be worthwhile for teachers who are interested in solving the problem of texts for beginners to look at and examine this book in order to see if it can satisfy their urgent needs.

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