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Thinking Beyond the Content: Critical Reading for Academic Success -  
Nolan J. Weil and Raymond Cepko

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***Excellent English 1: Language Skills for Success***

Susannah MacKay, Kristin D. Sherman, Jan Forstrom, Marta Pitt, and Shirley Velasco  
New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008.

**CHRISTINA GARCIA**

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Time is a valuable entity. In today's fast-paced world, who has a lot of time for work and family obligations, let alone going to school? The authors of *Excellent English 1* understand this and therefore offer a lot of straightforward teaching points with repetition for reinforcement.

*Excellent English 1* is a multiskills English as a Second Language textbook for beginner adults that provides 12 units headed by topics such as All About You and My Family. Each unit contains grammar, vocabulary, listening/speaking/pronunciation, reading, math, critical thinking, Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems (CASAS) life-skills competencies, Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills (SCANS) competencies, and Equipped for the Future (EFF) content standards. The material teaches life skills with more academic content, which is very beneficial for students engaged in continuing education. Each unit in the text is sectioned into eight equal lessons that provide corresponding exercises.

*Excellent English 1* would be a good match for the beginning low-level adult ESL class at the community college level. The activities used are easily interpreted and can be connected to teaching points. Students may be more relaxed and confident with the type of exercises that the book provides, and even without the workbook, the text offers a great variety of features.

Many good qualities can be found in *Excellent English 1*. The text offers an excellent sequencing from less complex to more complex skills. The beginning lessons teach basic grammar, such as affirmative statements with "be," while the middle section presents count and noncount nouns. The last sections deal with the future tense with the use of "be going to." Most students at the beginning level should then be able to ask and answer questions pertaining to personal information. The introduction to letters and numbers found in *Excellent English 1* is not something found in all beginning textbooks and so provides a useful source of information.

The text conveniently lists specific test and state standards in their scope and sequence, such as the CASAS life-skills competencies. These can be very helpful for instructors following a curriculum covering the CASAS or EL civics

lessons. The text clearly states where these can be found for the instructor's convenience. The scope and sequence information also displays the appropriate integration of grammar, speaking, reading, and writing skills, and it outlines the math skills that are taught in each unit.

The content of *Excellent English 1* is not too difficult for most beginning ESL students but still challenging. Every unit includes interesting and colorful pictures. Activities on job situations are included in each unit along with engaging picture dictionaries and comprehensive grammar charts. Pictures in the text can be easily interpreted and are very representative of the stories and points being taught. The text also includes a review page at the end of each unit, with objectives at the bottom of each page and a Reference Guide at the back. A CD is also included for listening and pronunciation practice.

On the other hand, *Excellent English 1* does not offer the best of everything. First of all, there weren't as many grammar points as one might need. The grammar charts were also lacking in depth. For classes that demand more explanations of rules, the instructor may find a supplemental grammar text will be necessary. Most of the textbook goes only so far with the activities, which is why the authors offer a practice book. Workbooks are an extra expense and not easily affordable for all students, which may add an extra financial burden. One last feature that could use improvement is one of the sequencing activities found in Unit 1. This activity prompts the students to write sentences before learning about capitalization rules, which are taught in a subsequent lesson. It is unrealistic to expect students to know how to write sentences without the knowledge of capitalization rules.

Overall, there were more benefits than fallbacks in *Excellent English 1* that serve the needs of beginner adults seeking to improve their language skills on a variety of levels.

## **A Response to Fay Ikin's Review of *Destinations 2: Grammar for Academic Success***

NANCY HERZFELD-PIPKIN

I would like to thank Fay Ikin for her generous and thoughtful review of my book *Destinations 2: Grammar for Academic Success* and the editors of *The CATESOL Journal* for allowing me to clarify some points about the book and the *Destinations* series.

The *Destinations 2* grammar text is part of a series consisting of two books per level: *Destinations Writing for Academic Success* and its accompanying grammar workbook, *Destinations Grammar for Academic Success*. While there are no other workbooks available or suggested as additional texts, there is a Web site for each level offering students extensive practice with the vocabulary presented in the writing text and reviewed in the grammar book.

The *Destinations* series was written for nonnative speakers of English who

need to improve their academic English writing skills, as stated in the Preface of the writing books. This can be applied to a number of learning environments, such as community colleges, IEPs, higher-level adult education classes, high schools, and schools in other countries.

The grammar books in this series are linked to the writing texts, as outlined in the To the Teacher of the grammar book. For example, content, vocabulary, and sentence-combining techniques from the writing book are recycled in the grammar text. In addition, the grammar points covered in each unit are meant to be especially useful in writing assignments related to the writing text.

The grammar book is meant to be used as a supplementary text in writing courses or as the grammar text in linked courses, as stated in the To the Teacher. That is, in those writing courses that require both writing and grammar instruction, both books can be used in the same class. For programs that offer linked classes (learning communities), these books provide a consistent set of materials across classes taught by collaborating teachers. For example, in my own ESL program, a reading class is linked to a writing/grammar class, and the Destinations books provide the content-based materials for reading, vocabulary, writing, and grammar across the two linked classes. Similarly, if a program offers separate grammar and writing classes, these two classes can be linked using the two texts.

Again, I thank Fay Ikin for her thoughtful feedback and the editors of *The CATESOL Journal* for their openness to a full presentation of my books.

### ***Speaking of Values and Speaking of Values 2: Conversation and Listening (1st ed.)***

Irene Schoenberg and Robin Mills

White Plains, NY: Pearson Education, 2004 and 2006.

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**S**peaking of Values (SOV) offers a fresh take on ESL conversation and listening skills by showcasing English structures in compelling, theme-based arrangements. Geared toward intermediate learners, the series provides a mixture of culturally appealing topics that highlight the intricacies of contemporary English. By exploring such themes as describing and discussing one's neighbors, and choosing the right gift for the right situation, SOV provides real-life scenarios that equip students with the linguistic know-how to handle themselves in a multitude of situations.

The authors begin in SOV1 (book 1) with subject matter that is accessible yet challenging while progressing toward the more content-based scenarios found in SOV2 (book 2). Each book has been broken down into 12 thematic chapters, with each introducing a range of diverse elements that address conversation and listening in a variety of ways. The overall structure creates a pathway that highlights nuances in the language and allows students to move

away from the hypercontrolled situations that have traditionally graced ESL textbooks toward more free activities in which the learner becomes the driving force. In short, topics become more difficult as the activities progress, creating a plan of growth that gently pushes the student into uncharted language-learning territory.

The chapters of the first book can best be viewed as three cohesively weak groupings: chapters 1 through 4 cover interpersonal intelligences, chapters 5 through 8 embody a more situational approach, and chapters 9 through 12 address topics of an entertainment genre. The subsections of each chapter delve even further into more complex issues. For example, under the listening section in chapter 3, titled Love and Marriage, the concept of blind dates is addressed. After this a pronunciation section follows. An example of this would be the section included in chapter 8 that details the nature of word stress between English nouns and verbs. The chapters then progress to actual native English-speaking newspaper excerpts, followed by an Act It Out section that allows free practice of key terms and phrases. Finally, each chapter ends with a section titled Beyond the Classroom that attempts to link the textbook to students' own real-life predicaments. *SOV2* continues this overall structure; however, the chapters seem more segregated. Indeed, each chapter in *SOV2* focuses on a thematic category that can easily be taught in any given order because of their disconnected nature. Further, the pronunciation section common to *SOV1* has been eliminated.

Several other features also make this series beneficial. The authors' helpful addition of a Words and Phrases appendix and a Conversation Tips appendix cannot be overlooked. Both give the series a less intimidating quality that allows for extended opportunities for accessibility. In addition, each book includes easy-to-follow CDs that allow students recorded exposure to target sounds outside of the classroom, thus furthering the overall reach of *SOV*'s communicative framework. Though the book lacks in both color and visual aids, it is filled with tools that enhance the subject matter at hand. For example, chapter 8 of *SOV2*, which deals with the issue of medicine and treatments, offers an interesting section titled Questions to Ask Your Doctor Before You Have Surgery. Such a section is not only relevant to a student's life, but it is also essential for real-world communicative competence. Additionally, the authors include worldly proverbs and sayings in *SOV2* from a multitude of different cultures. Translated into English they add new twists on American equivalents and open the doors for continued learning.

Despite the series' many enticing features, it has some drawbacks. The most apparent is the relatively large gap between *SOV1* and *SOV2*'s content. For instance, the readings in *SOV1* seem accessible to intermediate learners. In chapter 11, there is a small reading titled San Francisco Citizens to Become "Pet Guardians," which occupies approximately one-third of a page and contains appropriate vocabulary. Compare this to the readings in *SOV2* and a significant discrepancy appears. *SOV2*'s readings are much longer, and their content invokes abstract thinking that could seem difficult even to a native speaker. For instance, in chapter 11 of *SOV2* the reading is titled Drugs Gain

Attention as a Boost to Brain Power, and it occupies nearly two pages. Initially the vocabulary gap is not noticeable; however, upon reading the material one becomes aware that the level of difficulty significantly outpaces that of *SOV1*. Another drawback is the lack of adequate prereading schematic activators. In fact, the majority of the readings have two to three questions that are expected to set the stage for learners to complete the reading tasks. Certainly in regards to such complex issues, more preparatory work would allow for more meaningful communicative output. A final drawback is the time needed to complete the books. *SOV1* does not seem to be problematic in this respect, neither for a quarter nor a semester system. However, the content of *SOV2* seems too heavy to be acquired in such a short time.

To showcase how *SOV2* might be better used, here are several possible adaptations. First, the previously mentioned multiple-quarter/semester extension could be applied. Second, each unit ends with a section on proverbs and sayings, which conceptualizes the discussed topic. Given that learners are viewed as “participants in the negotiation of meaning,” (Savignon, 2001, p. 14), one might move this section to an earlier stage to add schematic connections before actually undertaking difficult tasks. Third, teachers might want to create extra activities in which both target and nontarget vocabulary is highlighted before students encounter it in a jargon-filled context. For example, a minilesson on types of doctors could better prepare students for words such as “neurologist” or “endocrinologist.” Last, instead of waiting to the end of the lesson to introduce the culminating project found in the Beyond the Classroom section, it might be better to break this activity into segments that pepper the unit, offering a compounding rather than climactic effect. That being said, it is also important for individual instructors to remember that each classroom is different, and that “ultimate success or failure can only be determined after trying them [i.e., the materials] in the classroom with real learners” (McDonough & Shaw, 1993, p. 79).

All things considered, *Speaking of Values* offers a complex look at problems and issues that are rarely discussed in a classroom setting but that frequently present themselves in people’s lives. Though it is not perfect, as no text ever is, the authors leave us with a series that incorporates true-life situations into interesting lessons and activities. *Speaking of Values* is a great choice for the teacher dedicated to offering unique classroom experiences and for the student interested in learning about life topics relevant to today’s modern world.

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***Word Strategies: Building a Strong Vocabulary (Low-Intermediate Level)***

Janet Giannotti

Syracuse, NY: New Readers Press, 2007.

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**W**ord *Strategies: Building a Strong Vocabulary* helps expand students' vocabulary and word knowledge through the instruction of vocabulary strategies. This textbook, intended for the low-intermediate-level learner, is one of two books; the other textbook is intended for high-beginning-level learners. The means by which the textbook aims to increase students' vocabulary is by engaging the student in targeted exercises and activities such as word building and vocabulary in context.

The textbook is divided into 10 contextualized lessons, which are then further broken down into 12 sections focusing on activities that expand students' word knowledge (e.g., prefixes, suffixes, antonyms, and collocations). Each lesson features a short reading that introduces a dozen new words; the readings typically cover content that is unique to American society such as U.S. public education and federal government. Lesson components include exercises in definitions, initializations, compound words, word building (prefixes and suffixes), antonyms, collocations, confusing words, context clues, parts of speech, and dictionary use. In addition, lessons end with two review exercises: a crossword puzzle and vocabulary in context. An answer key is provided at the end of the textbook. By going through *Word Strategies*, students will be able to acquire a total of 120 new words aimed at helping them at school, work, and in daily life.

Giannotti's book targets adult English-language learners by providing lesson topics that focus primarily on practical activities for everyday living and coping in the United States. Topics such as entertainment, health care, banking, and transportation are very helpful for adult ELLs, especially if they are new arrivals. However, the text could also be used as a supplement in an academic ESL setting.

The textbook can be used as a stand-alone text and could also be incorporated into a skills-based course (e.g., writing or reading). Since the 12 components are designed to train students in vocabulary-learning strategies, these could be used to introduce new vocabulary during the writing process in a composition course.

In terms of the textbook's strengths, the contextualized lessons provide a strong appeal and basis for student learning. Giannotti was wise to present her lessons in this fashion. Next, the textbook provides useful vocabulary-learning strategies, which are necessary in developing student autonomy. As teachers, it is important to provide students with the right tools for vocabulary learning; teachers cannot always assume students will automatically transfer L1 learning strategies to their L2. Nation (2008) says that next to planning, a teacher's second most important job is to train learners in vocabulary strategies

(p. 3). These include: guessing from context, learning to use word cards, using word parts, and dictionary use. Three of these four strategies are covered in Giannotti's textbook (i.e., context clues, word building, and dictionary use).

Regarding weaknesses, though the text is aimed at providing students with vocabulary-learning strategies, its lessons contain about two-thirds high-frequency words (e.g., public, prepare) while the rest are low-frequency (e.g., compulsory) or technical words (e.g., hardware, spreadsheet). Nation (2008) argues, "When learners are at a stage of working on low frequency vocabulary, the teacher should give most attention to the strategies that are needed to deal with the low frequency vocabulary, not the words themselves" (p. 4). However, Giannotti's lessons mostly comprise high-frequency words that Nation (2008) argues require direct teaching. However, the textbook focuses on strategies learning, not direct teaching.

A second weakness is the lack of assessment activities. There are activities at the end of each lesson (i.e., crossword puzzle and vocabulary in context), which explore whether or not students have learned to use the strategies. While they are good strategic review exercises, they do not help the teacher determine if students have learned the actual vocabulary. Instructors may wish to supplement the text with their own quizzes and comprehension-check activities.

In conclusion, Giannotti's textbook does an adequate job of fulfilling its objective, that is, to provide students vocabulary-learning strategies and thus help them expand their word knowledge. The variety in strategic exercises is a major strength of *Word Strategies*, and it is recommended as a supplement for teachers of writing and reading courses.

## References

Nation, I. S. P. (2008). *Teaching vocabulary: Strategies and techniques*. Boston: Heinle Cengage Learning.

### ***Ventures 3 (Student's Book and Teacher's Book)***

Gretchen Bitterlin, Dennis Johnson, Donna Price, Sylvia Ramirez,  
and K. Lynn Savage  
New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

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**V***entures* is a five-level, standards-based, integrated skills series for adult students. The series is flexible enough to be used in open-entry enrollment or traditional programs. Because of its many enticing and interesting multilevel features, it is especially useful for teachers who work with multilevel students. The core philosophy of *Ventures* is: Hear it before you say it. Say it before you read it. Read it before you write it. The book emphasizes the holistic approach,



which is essential to successful language acquisition and is the foundation of the whole *Ventures* series.

*Ventures 3 Student's Book* is aimed at intermediate-low/high students. Each *Student's Book* contains a welcome unit, 10 topic-based units, plus five review units—one after every two units—and also an additional free self-study audio CD. Each unit has six skill-focused lessons. At the back of the book, teachers and students will find projects, self-assessments, and a reference section.

The units are organized around six lessons, which are self-contained, allowing for completion within a 1-hour class period. The unit opener (Lesson A) introduces the topic, activates the students' prior knowledge, and previews unit grammar and vocabulary. It also provides guided listening and speaking practice, expands topic vocabulary, and encourages learner persistence and autonomy with the self-study audio CD. The unit also builds fluency through focusing on two grammar lessons (Lessons B and C), moves from guided practice to communicative activities, and also includes some useful language notes.

Lesson D on reading follows a three-step approach: before, during reading, and after reading activities. It also highlights reading strategies and skills, uses contexts to introduce the vocabulary, and also integrates speaking, listening, and reading into one lesson. Lesson E includes a process approach to writing that focuses on prewriting, writing, and self- and peer-review tasks. In addition, unit vocabulary and grammar is contextualized. Lesson F familiarizes students with real-life documents, reviews unit content, and provides test-taking practice. This last set of activities encourages students to perform a self-assessment to check their progress, which is an essential part of building up learners' determination in language learning. Self-assessments also help students to reflect on what they have learned and to decide whether they need more review of the material. Unit reviews reinforce the language covered in the previous two units and focus again on reviewing listening, grammar, and pronunciation.

Additional features of the book, except for the unit reviews and self-assessments mentioned above, are projects that students can do as group work or even individually outside of the class. Students find it useful since they feel part of the community. These kinds of activities can be very valuable because they extend students' learning and develop skills to use in a real-world context. The projects are designed to be fun as well as practical, with the goal of helping students become more independent while learning to live in a new culture and speak a new language.

The interleaved *Ventures 3 Teacher's Edition* includes step-by-step teaching notes for each lesson. Since the edition is interleaved, and also includes the answer key, it's very easy to use during the lesson. The *Teacher's Edition*, which contains a lot of teaching tips and expansion activities for both group- or pair-work activities, also places a great emphasis on developing learner persistence by engaging students in community-building tasks. These additional features help to extend the lessons to 2 or 3 instructional hours. Teachers get additional support from a toolkit audio CD/CD-Rom, which contains additional

reproducible material such as picture cards and extended reading worksheets, tests with audio, and self-assessments for portfolio assessment. The CD also includes very useful cooperative learning activities, which reinforce the materials presented and develop social skills for success in the workplace through pair and group work. In the *Teacher's Edition* can also be found the unit, midterm, and final tests, which focus on testing all four skills: vocabulary, grammar, reading, and writing.

Two aspects could be improved in *Ventures 3*. One has to do with providing a bigger variety of activities to introduce and practice listening, especially in pre- and postlistening sections, and also more varied and interesting ways to test students' listening skills in the unit tests. The *Student's Book* uses only two prelistening questions throughout the book in each chapter, such as: Who are the speakers? What are they talking about? There are other strategies that could be used, such as predicting or guessing about what they will hear based on the topic. During listening, the activities are more varied and include checking the correct column, completing the story, matching the events, completing a list or chart with information, or taking notes on a specific topic. On the other hand, postlistening activities ask students only to fill in the blanks with the words provided in the chart to complete a story, to listen and check the answers, which are then followed by one or two discussion questions to develop their speaking skills.

The other aspect that could be improved is the vocabulary. Vocabulary is introduced only in a reading lesson, and there are no exercises in the book that have to do with family words, semantic mapping, word association, or word grids to promote a deeper level of processing. The *Student's Book* emphasizes techniques such as guessing meaning in context based on clues, matching the words with definitions, completing the sentences, and identifying the right definition, but it does not help students develop vocabulary through the use of mnemonic devices or creating vocabulary notebooks. There are also very few exercises that promote learning grammatical or lexical collocations or idioms, not to mention teaching lexical phrases, especially the ones that have to do with social interactions.

In conclusion, this series can be recommended to all teachers who are teaching multilevel students because each lesson is carefully structured and the skills are integrated throughout each lesson. The book is based on high-interest topics and each unit teaches listening, speaking, reading, and writing, giving the students opportunity to develop all these skills. There are also supplementary materials for teachers to use, for example *Add Ventures 3*, which has been designed for use in multilevel classrooms for students who are slightly below, at, or at a higher level than the rest of the students. These tiered worksheets give not only additional practice, but they also address students' individual needs.

## *Thinking Beyond the Content: Critical Reading for Academic Success*

Nolan J. Weil and Raymond Cepko

Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2008.

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Have you ever felt daunted by Noam Chomsky's dense prose style? You might wish that your guides were Nolan Weil and Raymond Cepko, authors of *Thinking Beyond the Content*. In their introduction to an excerpt from Chomsky's (1972) *Language and Mind*, Weil and Cepko warn the reader that the text may be difficult, and they suggest ways to parse Chomsky's prose:

*Form and Meaning in Natural Languages* is written in a highly academic style with long, complex sentences. You might also encounter a lot of unfamiliar vocabulary. Reading it might be hard work. For this reason, the excerpt is quite short compared to other readings. If you get lost in the long sentences, you might try to break them down into a series of shorter sentences and eliminate grammatical connectors and phrases that are just meant as side comments. For instance, the first sentence ["When we study human language, we are approaching what some might call the 'human essence,' the distinctive qualities of mind that are, so far as we know, unique to man and that are inseparable from any critical phase of human existence, personal or social"] can be broken down like this:

1. When we study human language, we are approaching what some might call the "human essence."
2. Human essence means the distinctive qualities of mind that are so far as we know, unique to man.
3. These qualities are inseparable from any critical phase of human existence, personal or social. (p. 60)

Although Weil and Cepko do not elaborate on ways to identify "side comments" or discuss the function of side comments in Chomsky's writing, *Thinking Beyond the Content* contains many instances of such thoughtful, personal guidance addressed directly to the student reader. Designed as a bridge between ESL reading texts and texts used in college courses, *Thinking Beyond the Content* never talks down to its readers.

Under half the price of many reading texts, *Thinking Beyond the Content* is divided into four thematic units: Environmental Issues, Language and Being, Global Health Issues, and Thinking About Sport. Particularly refreshing for an ESL reading text are Language and Being and Thinking About Sport. The former explores the differences between humans and machines through the lenses of artificial intelligence, linguistics, robotics, and medical technology; the latter contains sociological, anthropological, and psychological perspectives on the definition of "sport" and why we are excited by competition.

Each unit is composed of three readings, and each reading is accompanied

by prereading questions and activities, comprehension questions, discussion questions, vocabulary activities, a description of a reading or critical-thinking strategy, and an activity in which students apply the strategy to the reading. Each unit concludes with a list of suggested activities that help students make connections between readings or research a topic in more depth. The concise Teacher's Notes suggest ways to implement activities and provide answer keys. They are available free at <http://www.press.umich.edu/esl/tm/thinkingbeyondcontent>.

Challenging and thought provoking, the readings consist of excerpts from sources such as scholarly book chapters and articles in the *New York Times Magazine*, *Science*, and *Foreign Affairs*. It is interesting that there are no readings from introductory college textbooks, which often form the bulk of readings in ESL and developmental reading texts.

The authors gloss words in the readings that are not among the 2,000 most frequent on lists such as the Academic Word List (Coxhead, 2000) and the General Service List (West, 1953). Each vocabulary activity highlights approximately 15 words from the Academic Word List that appear in the corresponding reading. The first vocabulary activity, for example, teaches students how to use a dictionary and a word map. Subsequent activities ask students to determine which synonyms are closer in meaning to target words and to generate additional word forms, among other tasks.

Interestingly, the comprehension questions appear after the Critical Focus sections and application activities. Although the instructor could assign students to work on this section before they tackle the Critical Focus—and Weil and Cepko at times advocate this in the Teacher's Notes—it is asserted that when students respond to the comprehension questions after doing the Critical Focus, they benefit from having already done several close readings of the text.

The Critical Focus activities are the gems of *Thinking Beyond the Content*. In the activity on making use of citations and references, students compare the references in an article from the scholarly journal *Science* with those in an excerpt from a book of science journalism and reflect on the credibility of the two readings. Students then identify the parts of each citation—author, date, source—as well as the issue discussed in each cited source (e.g., “right whale population and reproduction rate,” “fishing regulations”). Breaking down citations in this manner is a good way to help students understand what citations can accomplish.

Other Critical Focus activities help students identify the tone of a text, learn how to read graphs and tables, evaluate the credibility of a text, compare points of view, trace the steps of an argument, preview a text, and annotate a text. (Although the previewing and annotating strategies are introduced in the third unit, the instructor might want to teach them earlier.) Several Critical Focus activities are reviewed in later units, and the Teacher's Notes provide additional suggestions for recycling activities.

For an unexplained reason, the text does not provide a Critical Focus activity for the final reading in the final unit. Also, in the final reading, the authors add a few comments within parentheses in the body of the text instead

of in footnotes (e.g., a note about how to read the in-text citations). This blurring of the writer's voice with Weil and Cepko's voice might briefly confuse a student. Fortunately, though, it occurs only once in the text.

With its stimulating readings and thoughtful critical-thinking and reading activities, *Thinking Beyond the Content* is an effective way to transition students to college-level reading. The text also could be used in a developmental reading classroom, though it does not include the information on study skills that is common to the genre. *Thinking Beyond the Content's* main drawback is the absence of instruction on writing skills and strategies. We can only hope that Weil and Cepko are at work on such a volume. Noam Chomsky, watch out!

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### *World Pass: Expanding English Fluency*

Susan Stempleski

Boston: Thomson ELT, 2006.

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“I want to improve everything: listening, speaking, reading, writing. I want to communicate with native English speakers more fluently.” Any teacher might hear this student's reply when asked which areas in English he or she would like to focus on. If your students are at a high-intermediate level and hope to increase their fluency in English in all four areas, *World Pass* will meet their needs with carefully designed activities, interactive oral practices, and level-appropriate reading excerpts. *World Pass* not only presents several sections that strengthen their skills for real-world communication, but it also provides some language-learning tips for students who would use the book independently.

Each unit is organized by topics or themes and consists of eight sections around each topic. The first section that opens every unit is Vocabulary Focus, in which topic-related vocabulary items are revealed and dealt with through Vocabulary Builder activities and Ask & Answer tasks. The listening section that follows gives students ample opportunities to improve their listening comprehension skills. Each listening practice is designed with diverse types of materials such as interviews and news reports. To stimulate listening, speaking, and writing proficiency, *World Pass* also provides a Language Focus section that specifically focuses on essential grammar points. This section is made up of a variety of tasks from controlled exercises to more communicative tasks. Speaking and writing sections give more chances to use the target language

forms and vocabulary items in more natural ways. In these sections, a lot of useful functions or expressions are practiced through more controlled exercises so that students can become accustomed to using them. In addition, reading and writing strategies that are presented in the section help students strengthen their oral skills while they are actually performing communication tasks. Communication and Expansion pages usually conclude each chapter and offer additional information and practice on what they have learned. The Communication section consists of several interactive tasks such as interviews and discussions that emphasize meaningful speaking opportunities.

One of the great features of *World Pass* is the fact that the author took the importance of vocabulary development into great consideration. Instead of simply listing target words or phrases in the beginning of each listening or reading practice, this book focuses on diverse aspects of vocabulary such as word families, root words, or compound nouns, so that students can strengthen and expand their vocabulary knowledge. Students and their teachers can also discuss important words and phrases in their own words in the Ask & Answer activity, in which they can freely talk about “vocabulary tools” (i.e., word roots, affixes, derivative forms, etc.) In doing so, students can actively use the vocabulary items to express their own experiences, opinions, and thoughts. Overall, the word items that were chosen for the text are commonly used in real-life situations and therefore are very appropriate to use during classroom activities.

Presenting language functions and their suitable sample expressions with regard to topics is another good attribute of this book. While students are reading a short story, they can easily notice several functions in a story since they are written in a different color. These differently colored phrases are naturally connected to a more controlled practice that also offers students good exercise of the target expressions. In addition, well-designed exercises and oral activities such as role-play and discussions give more opportunities for students to practice speaking what has been taught.

Using a variety of visuals with colorful pictures along with interesting contemporary topics will intrigue students and teachers. Every unit is well organized with colorful pictures and charts that can encourage students’ understanding of new ideas from listening and reading passages. Materials that are chosen for practices are mostly contemporary and may engage students’ attention. For example, for a speaking activity, the author uses a concept of an ogre from the movie *Shrek* and asks students to freely talk about it. Then, any student who has seen the movie can instantly show interest in that topic and promote interactive discussion. In another reading, an excerpt from a movie called *The Joy Luck Club* relates American and Chinese cultural differences and provides an opportunity for students to discuss these interactively while practicing the language forms.

Beside the textbook activities, *World Pass* supplies online CNN video activities in which students benefit from being exposed to an authentic listening resource. At the same time, teachers can use the CNN news video clips for discussion topics. Since each video activity is closely related to each

topic of the unit, it is a significantly powerful way for students to apply what they have learned to more realistic language situations as well as reinforcing their knowledge learned throughout the chapter.

In spite of all of the strengths, this book also has some shortcomings, particularly with regard to the reading and writing sections. Although *World Pass* intends to integrate all four language skills, the reading and writing sections do not contain sufficient activities that can expand reading and writing proficiency. For example, the writing sections lack exercises such as planning, drafting, and editing. Even though there were some writing tasks that could initiate writing, they are not developed enough to further the writing process. Teachers will have to invest extra effort to support their students' writing. However, even with this shortcoming, this book could be beneficial for those who hope to increase fluency in English. Teachers using the materials that this book provides will be able to ensure that their students will make great progress in gaining fluency as well as accuracy in English.

### ***College Writing 1 (Houghton Mifflin English for Academic Success)***

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**C**ollege Writing is an ESL textbook that helps to prepare students for success in academic writing courses at the community college and university levels. The relevant and authentic topics and themes leading each chapter align nicely with the text's well-organized frame and clearly stated exit objectives.

As a text targeted mainly for college-bound ESL students currently at the low-intermediate level, it focuses on writing skills. In addition, speaking, listening, and reading activities are integrated within each chapter. Each chapter consists of a similar framework, which includes writing assignments and the activities and exercises that accompany them. The themes that head each chapter have an authentic flavor for students as they have both a "real-life" focus and an academic focus. For example, the theme of chapter 2 is Learning Styles, an element that is very important for learners to understand at the college level. The theme of chapter 4 is Balancing Responsibilities, which include topics such as credit cards and how to face a dilemma. The relevant themes and topics are the foundation of the writing assignments found in each chapter.

The highlights of this text include its themes, organization, and focus. The themes are interesting enough to hold student interest as writing can at times be daunting for the ESL learner. The organization is clear and easy to follow. It is sequenced in such a way that it builds upon the previous chapter and ushers the student onto the next writing skill, thus building upon a foundation. The focus

of the text is clear and concise. The text is aimed at helping students develop their academic writing and includes attention to grammatical form, structure, and vocabulary. Other strong points of the text are Power Grammar and Master Student Tip sections. These points highlight what good academic writing should look like. Providing a model of academic writing is highly valuable for students learning to come to grips with the genre.

While the text has a strong focus and is clear and concise, a suggestion would be to add more communicative practice such as pair or group work to help the students in the writing process. The text has some communicative activities but it would strengthen the text further if more were included. Another suggestion would be to highlight some of vocabulary found within the themes and topics of each chapter. For students to express themselves clearly and thoughtfully in their writing, more vocabulary, especially academic, should be emphasized.

*College Writing* is an accessible, easy-to-use text that can be extremely useful for instructors teaching college-bound ESL students to improve their academic writing. The text is straightforward to use from a teacher's perspective and manageable to navigate for students. The wording is clear and succinct and the exercises, writing assignments, and lessons are meaningful. The writing models are authentic and provide students with accurate step-by-step processes necessary for academic writing.