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Jim Cummins

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*Language, Power and Pedagogy:  
Bilingual Children in the Crossfire*

Jim Cummins

Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters, 2000

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In *Language, Power and Pedagogy: Bilingual Children in the Crossfire* Jim Cummins marshals the weight of 25 years of research to counter the current threat to bilingual education programs. As the subtitle of his work implies, the debate tends to be emotive and uninformed. This work argues for an informed, objective analysis of current theory and practice that is focused on the learner. It is a highly accessible overview of the author's major linguistic theories on bilingual education, theories that are tested and refined through ongoing dialogue with researchers and practitioners. Collaborative dialogue is presented as a basis for reshaping educational policy and practice that will ultimately support linguistic and cultural diversity.

Jim Cummins has long been a key figure in bilingual education research. His theories regarding the influence of bilingualism on cognitive growth have been seminal, supported by extensive research on the development of academic language proficiency in second language learners. His prolific output has focused on empowerment issues for minority children, challenging current methods for teaching and assessment as irrelevant and inadequate for a significant portion of the North American population.

This publication is written for the professional, teachers and researchers, with the goal of modifying pedagogical practice. The author includes a wide range of examples taken from all levels of education—kindergarten through 12th grade and adult education. It is, therefore, a book with a mission. Cummins passionately believes in the power of researchers and educators to address issues of equity and to influence the direction of education. Why, he asks, do teachers so rarely encourage bilingual students to take pride in their linguistic skills? Why do educators know so little about the linguistic and cognitive benefits of bilingualism? Why do they know so little about the consequences of first language loss? His book addresses those concerns.

The strength of Cummins' work lies partly in his lucid presentation of ideas and in his ability to conceptualize clear, theoretical models and hypotheses. Because of their pedagogical implications, however, these hypotheses have often been misrepresented by both proponents and antagonists. Cummins, therefore, reviews these theories in the early chapters, presenting fresh data and responding to criticism. Nevertheless he warns his readers that his theories are hypotheses, consistent with empirical data, but not necessarily the last word on these issues.

Cummins' theories remain central to the current debate over bilingual education. For example, in his developmental interdependence hypothesis he argues that literacy skills and knowledge may be transferred from the first language (L1) to the second language (L2) through a common underlying proficiency (CUP). According to this hypothesis, content may profitably be studied in either language. After later research indicated that this transfer of knowledge and skills does not always take place, he refined his theory to apply to those learners who reach a certain threshold in their proficiency in both languages. The threshold theory states that bilingual education may have advantages over monolingual education for these learners, a cautious statement borne out by other research but ignored in political moves to ban bilingual programs.

Cummins has frequently stated that the controversial issues surrounding bilingual education can only be resolved if there is an adequate conceptualization of the nature of language proficiency and of its assessment, particularly in relation to academic achievement. He returns in this text to his influential distinction made earlier (1979) between basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). This theory presents a case for more support in schools for English language learners, stating that these learners need five to seven years to develop the academic skills required in the context-reduced, cognitively demanding situation of the classroom. While research supports this finding, it has been criticized as too narrow, focusing on academic skills, and ignoring sociolinguistic factors that affect learning. In response, Cummins claims that the model is valid for the academic context. In its simplicity, moreover, it conveys a message that is vital in arguing for adequate support for the English language learner.

It could be argued that much of *Language, Power and Pedagogy* consists of a recapitulation and defense of Cummins' earlier work. However, this publication has a greater purpose. First, it is timely to produce an authoritative work that synthesizes key research in the field. Second, this publication does more than review relevant research. It presents a strong case for transforming pedagogical policy and practice and provides vision, ideas, and guidelines to bring about change. In cases where the success of bilingual programs is not borne out, Cummins looks for causes for student failure in areas such as issues of status and discrimination. He does not, however, discuss other possible causes of program failure, such as a lack of resources or the quality of teaching.

An area where Cummins challenges current theory is assessment, a crucial issue for minority students. Focusing on testing in the academic context, he presents a case for reconsidering the relevance of John Oller's (1979) theory of global language proficiency. Cummins argues that in the academic context, where tasks become progressively more abstract and the degree of contextualization decreases, there is a case in some circumstances for discrete point testing of certain core skills. Testing lexical knowledge for example, he claims, is more efficient and cost-effective, and can moreover be an effective means of assessing the broader construct of academic language proficiency.

Specifically, Cummins presents a case for considering the testing of lexical knowledge as a core indicator of general academic language proficiency and particularly literacy, although he counsels the need for criteria of validity and "demonstrable correspondence" (Bachman and Cohen, 1998). Given the dangers of focusing assessment on one discrete skill, this approach would need to be thoroughly researched before implementation, although it would be considerably easier and more economical to administer than a full proficiency test.

Developing the theme of *Negotiating Identities* (1996), the final section of *Language, Power and Pedagogy* sets out a blueprint for a "transformative" pedagogy to foster critical literacy and social diversity through collaborative dialogue.

Given its blend of authoritative research, pedagogical vision, practical frameworks to facilitate pedagogical implementation, and lucid style, there is to my knowledge no text more suitable for promoting linguistic and cultural diversity in North American schools.

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*Discourse Analysis in the Language Classroom:  
Volume 1. The Spoken Language*

Heidi Riggenbach

Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press. 1999.

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When you think of discourse analysts, do you immediately imagine university professors or maybe graduate students? Are you able to see students in the language learning classroom (maybe your own classroom) as potential discourse analysts? Perhaps you have already considered how language courses might be enriched by the study of language in use as it extends beyond sentence boundaries. If so, then Heidi Riggenbach's book portends to be a work of great value—providing a model whereby language learners can gain communicative competence through their own language research.

*Discourse Analysis in the Language Classroom: Volume 1. The Spoken Language* is intended to introduce language teachers to class activities in which their students act as “mini-discourse analysts” in order to learn important features of spoken language. Although directed at classroom instructors, the book should also be of interest to materials and curriculum developers.

In the Introduction, Riggenbach provides some background about discourse analysis and the notion of “context.” On the assumption that language is intricate and multidimensional yet systematic, Riggenbach claims that the concept of communicative competence is compatible with a discourse orientation to language learning. Drawing on the model for communicative competence developed by Canale and Swain (Canale 1983, Canale & Swain 1980), she outlines how discourse analysis activities are useful in developing each of the four aspects of communicative competence: sociolinguistic, linguistic, discourse, and strategic.

Riggenbach relates this claim to a variety of pedagogical approaches (notional/functional, grammatical, cognitive, etc.) and learner issues (learner motivation, experiential learning, etc.) Riggenbach also carefully addresses the concerns that teachers might have due to their 1) student population, 2) course/syllabus, and 3) teaching style. Furthermore, the annotated bibliogra-

phy at the end of each chapter is a rich resource for any reader who wants to further pursue the topics discussed in this text.

Having students take an inductive and analytic approach to language using qualitative research methods is the central theme of the book. Therefore, Riggenbach provides a brief overview of the practices that are important for qualitative research along with a description of discourse analysis activities. This approach is summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
**Description of Qualitative Research Practices  
and Discourse Analysis Activities**

<b>Step 1: Predict</b>	Learners make predictions about the target discourse structure.
<b>Step 2: Plan</b>	Learners set up a research plan that will produce samples of the target discourse structure.
<b>Step 3: Collect data</b>	Learners observe and/or record the target structure in its discourse environment.
<b>Step 4: Analyze</b>	Learners analyze the data and explain results/make conclusions.
<b>Step 5: Generate</b>	Learners discuss the target discourse structure or produce the target discourse structure in its appropriate context.
<b>Step 6: Review</b>	Learners summarize their findings or reanalyze the data that they produced, asking whether the data conform to their conclusions in Step 4.

As a prelude to these activities, Riggenbach addresses five key issues in teaching language: 1) the importance of addressing *micro-level* aspects of conversation (turn-taking, fillers, etc.), 2) the importance of teaching micro-level and macro-level aspects of *non-conversational genres* such as giving a presentation in an academic setting, 3) the importance of exploring how macro-level *social constructs*, such as belief systems, are revealed and shaped by the ways people speak and write, 4) the research approaches that figure into the discourse analysis activities in the book (conversation analysis, sociolinguistics, speech event analysis, and ethnography), and 5) suggestions for developing original activities. An overview of these key issues is given in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
**Key Issues in Language Teaching**

<i>Ways of Speaking</i>	<i>Micro Skills: Pronunciation, Grammar, Vocabulary</i>
Turn Taking	Word Stress and Pauses
Fillers and Repairs	Reductions and Contractions
Listener Responses/Backchannels	Linking
Initiating Repairs	Problematic Vowels and Consonants
Openings	Present Perfect vs. Simple Past
Closings	Conditionals
Speech Events	Child Language Acquisition
Discussions	Problematic Structures
Storytelling	New Words
Style	Specialized Words
Informative Talks	Transition Words
Attitudes and Assumptions	Building Words
Language Classroom Research	Building Vocabulary
Belief Systems	

*Discourse Analysis in the Language Classroom* is not without fault. First of all, the methods presented for collecting and analyzing data require students to develop their own transcripts of the spoken data. This activity may be too much of a burden in the context of a language class. Although Riggensch maintains that the discourse analysis activities are highly motivating, the complicated process of transcription might be considered too demanding for language learners. On the other hand, the student transcript in the appendix indicates that learners are able to transcribe spoken data. Moreover, the very process of transcribing spoken data could be very helpful in the development of listening skills.

Other concerns include how this approach would work 1) in English as a foreign language settings where target language speakers are scarce, and 2) in classes with low-proficiency students, since most of the activities suggested in the book would be too difficult for beginning students. Although Riggensch does address these issues briefly, these particular concerns might still prevent teachers in those contexts from incorporating discourse analysis into their language classroom.

Nevertheless, it seems that the purpose of the book is more than fulfilled. Riggensch succeeds in presenting a very innovative and practical application of discourse analysis theory and methods for second language teachers with the goal of developing the communicative competence of language learners. The availability of natural data, technological limitations, and student proficiency levels may require that teachers adapt the suggested activities to their particular situation. But the author anticipates this possibility by offering anecdotes about adaptations teachers have made in testing the approach, thus



indicating that such challenges can be overcome. Also, Riggenbach's experiences suggest that such work will be rewarded by increased motivation and a more subtle understanding of the spoken language on the part of language students. For these reasons, I highly recommend this book.

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***Success in English Teaching***

Paul Davies and Eric Pearse

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000

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Paul Davies and Eric Pearse's *Success in English Teaching* is an informative teacher-training text that novice teachers should find fun and motivating. The strength of this book is definitely its practicality and useful teaching suggestions. Experienced teachers can easily link the situations explained in the book to their own classrooms and implement the authors' suggestions, while new teachers with little or no teaching experience can reflect on their own classroom language learning experiences. As the authors point out, many English as a second language teachers nowadays are non-native speakers of English; this book was written to help and encourage such teachers, especially those with limited teaching experience. In addition, the types of students addressed by the authors range from elementary school to adult learners.

In Chapter 1, the authors define "success in English teaching" as the kind of teaching that produces students who can communicate well in English. A checklist of characteristics of successful English teachers, according to the book's framework, is given at the beginning of this chapter. Throughout the book, the authors emphasize that communication should be the main objective of the language classroom. It is crucial, for example, to establish English as the classroom language, and the authors explain at length why and how this goal can be achieved. Several practical ideas are given for increasing learner participation and motivation. The authors even go beyond the classroom by stating that there should be coordination among teachers, and suggest ways teachers can work together more effectively in a language teaching program.

In Chapter 2, the authors focus on teaching new language items—vocabulary, functions, and grammar—and how to teach these communicatively. They then give more suggestions in Chapter 3 for creating meaningful language practice exercises and activities for those new items, including ways to give feedback to students. Exercises that demand accuracy are distinguished from practice in fluency and automaticity, and oral activities are

discussed separately from written ones. Unfortunately, more weight is placed on the oral activities, which can be problematic for teachers who have to deal more with writing.

Chapters 4-6 cover traditional topics found in most teaching methodology books: vocabulary, listening/speaking, and reading/writing, respectively. However, instead of using the common label "the four skills," the authors prefer calling listening and speaking "spoken communication skills" and reading and writing "written communication skills." But no matter what they are called, the content of the chapters offers sound suggestions on how to teach and practice the four skills, with the integration of all four at the end of Chapter 6.

The topic of language practice continues in Chapter 7, which covers review and remedial work. Here, second language acquisition terms such as "input," "cognitive hypotheses," and "subconscious and conscious processes" are introduced. The activities are, as always, interesting, but unfortunately, the glossary in the back of the book does not include all of the potentially problematic terms.

Chapter 8 is on planning, syllabi, and classroom management; the latter topic is discussed in great detail, which may be useful for inexperienced teachers. Chapter 9 deals with how to select and use textbooks. A typical language textbook is teased apart and teachers are given suggestions on the most effective ways to use a text. The topic of lesson planning is discussed here as well. The authors turn back to teaching materials in Chapter 10 on teaching aids, which range from blackboards, realia, and audio/video to mime and gestures.

The last two chapters are the most theoretical chapters in the book. In Chapter 11 on testing, the authors briefly explain complex measurement concepts like validity and reliability, then turn back to practical issues such as writing and improving tests. The topic of evaluation is touched upon briefly at the end of the chapter. Since the topic of testing can be complicated, the authors' attempt to combine theory with practice in Chapter 11 deserves applause. The book ends with a chapter on an historical survey of language teaching approaches and methods.

As stated above, the book includes a great deal of practical information. Sometimes, teaching ideas are bulleted under a separate heading, but most of the time they are embedded within the text. At the end of each chapter, in addition to a summary of the main points, a project with a clear purpose and set of procedures is suggested for teachers to try with their students. Within each chapter after the end of every major heading, several questions are posed to readers, stimulating them to think about the arguments that the authors make. Even though the book can be considered a "how to" book on teaching, the authors, by asking these questions, show that they do not encourage readers to blindly follow their "recipes." As they answer these questions, teachers can think about the appropriateness of the authors' suggestions for their own students before implementing any of the suggestions.

Even though the book is highly recommended for novice teachers, it is not without flaws. One is the organization of the book. According to the authors, the book is divided into two parts. The first part, Chapters 1 to 7, covers topics relevant to the classroom, while the second part, Chapters 8 to 12, covers broader issues about language teaching. But summaries of each chapter reveal that the book could have been organized in a different way with more related topics together. All topics are more or less related to the classroom, which blurs the line drawn between Chapters 7 and 8. Moreover, the inclusion of Chapter 12 is not very logical. In my opinion, this is the weakest chapter of the book since a complete and updated survey of the field (the history of language teaching) cannot be accomplished in one chapter. The theme of practical ideas on language teaching is carried through Chapter 11, but the last chapter seems better suited to a more theoretical language methodology textbook.

Another, perhaps more serious flaw I see in this book is in regard to the use of classroom communication excerpts. In several places, the authors use excerpts of conversations between teachers and students as examples or support for their arguments. There are no explanations about whether these excerpts are taken from an actual corpus that the authors compiled, whether they borrow them from an existing corpus, or whether these excerpts are simply fictional and crafted by the authors. Notations used in these excerpts such as capital letters and dots are also unexplained. As all the excerpts contain only successful teaching situations, skeptical readers may find them too good to be true. It is crucial for readers to know the source of these excerpts; only then will we truly be convinced by the authors' arguments.





*Targeting Pronunciation: The Intonation, Sounds,  
and Rhythm of American English*

Sue F. Miller

Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000

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*T*argeting Pronunciation is a welcome contribution to the array of texts that address the pronunciation challenges of intermediate and advanced ESL students. This text's strength lies in its effective pedagogy: First, it motivates students to take responsibility for their own learning, then assists them in identifying their own unique pronunciation difficulties and formulating attainable goals ("targets"). The book then takes the students through classroom-tested sequences of lessons in pursuit of those goals.

*Targeting Pronunciation* is intended to serve as the primary text for a pronunciation course. Four audiocassettes, an 86-page teacher's manual, and a Web site supplement the textbook. Although the textbook could be used for self-study, the author recommends that it be used with the professional guidance of an instructor.

The author acknowledges the leadership of pioneers in pronunciation instruction such as Judy Gilbert and Joan Morley, whose influence is apparent in this text's learner-centered approach and in the careful scaffolding from controlled practice to communicative practice. Priority is given to suprasegmentals since, in the author's view, stress and intonation play a huge role in speech intelligibility.

The teacher will find a wealth of exercises in *Teaching Pronunciation*, including listening discrimination, self-monitoring and peer-monitoring, and multi-sensory activities involving the students' hands, arms, and feet. These types of exercises reflect the author's conviction that listening discrimination precedes accurate oral production, that self-monitoring increases the chances of a permanent improvement in the students' pronunciation, and that kinesthetic activity (or movement) reinforces speech rhythms. The vocabulary and topics that appear in practice sentences have been carefully selected for their usefulness in everyday conversational English.

The course follows a carefully designed sequence, starting with word stress and end-of-sentence intonation and ending with complex intonation patterns, while covering segmentals (vowels, then consonants) in the middle of the textbook.

The first sections of this textbook reflect the wisdom that comes from decades of teaching experience. The sections “To the teacher” and “To the student” and Chapter 1, “Improving Your Pronunciation,” are devoted to instilling a healthy perspective toward the accent improvement process. Here the author motivates students to take responsibility for their own progress, yet guides them to set realistic goals. A goals survey, auditory discrimination diagnostic test, speech sample elicitation, and advice on “Making Your New Pronunciation a Habit” are valuable features.

Chapters 2 through 12 raise awareness of intonation, sounds, and patterns in American English speech. Succinct, understandable explanations are reinforced by numerous form-focused exercises throughout each chapter, reflecting the author’s view that a pronunciation course aims to modify speech behavior. Each chapter concludes with a “Finishing Up” section, consisting of a few form-focused exercises for review, self-monitoring exercises, suggestions for communicative practice inside and outside the classroom (“Talk Times”), and homework assignments. These latter exercises encourage the student to incorporate newly-learned pronunciation features into everyday speech. Creative and practical, they are one of *Targeting Pronunciation’s* strongest points.

The first target, word stress, is addressed in Chapter 2. Minimal pairs help students aurally distinguish between words such as “COmedy” and “comMITtee”; guidelines help students predict where word stress falls; and end-of-sentence intonation patterns are covered. Chapter 3 covers the linking of adjacent words, the completion of words and syllables, and the concepts of thought groups and focus words. Chapter 4 introduces the notion of sentence rhythm, stress on content words and focus words, and lack of stress on structure (or function) words.

The first discussion of segmentals (as opposed to suprasegmentals) appears in Chapter 5, in which the reduction of unstressed vowels, the schwa, and the critical difference between “can” and “can’t” are taught. In addition, the 15 “clear” (non-reduced) vowels are briefly introduced. Chapter 6 continues the discussion of segmentals with a look at the vocal tract, an explanation of voicing, and an introduction to stops and continuants. Chapter 7 addresses finer aspects of segmental production such as vowel lengthening before voiced consonants, linking of vowels, and consonant clusters.

The emphasis on suprasegmentals resumes in Chapter 8, in which speech is likened to a kind of song with its own melody. Here the student learns to associate emotions with pitch contours and to recognize when an utterance is finished or unfinished. Chapter 9 discusses the special intonation patterns for compound nouns, descriptive phrases, phrasal verbs, and names. Chapter 10 focuses on important word endings, such as past tense markers, plural markers, possessive markers, and the third-person-singular marker on present tense verbs. Chapter 11 revisits linking across word boundaries, the

reduction of vowels, the dropping of consonants in informal speech, and the flap. The final chapter, Chapter 12, revisits thought groups and concludes with a self-assessment inventory.

Appendix A consists of a glossary of terms, which is somewhat brief but adequate considering how well *Targeting Pronunciation* manages to communicate a wealth of phonetic information without using specialized terminology. Appendix B contains important checklists, charts, and forms presented in the previous chapters. Appendices C and D are supplementary lessons on consonants and vowels, respectively, a welcome addition since segmentals receive rather short shrift in the main chapters. The lack of an index, however, compounds the problem of a vague table of contents; it is hard to locate specific topics in this textbook.

Generally, however, the reader will find the textbook pleasantly readable. The conventions the author has used to represent word stress, voicing, and so forth, are intuitive and effective, and clearly explained in the “Key to Symbols.” The few graphics sprinkled throughout the book serve as useful illustrations to help students visualize certain concepts such as “cluster.”

Besides providing an answer key, the teachers’ manual explains the teaching philosophy underlying the exercises and gives helpful advice about classroom issues such as responding to student errors. The course Web site displays an answer key and additional practice material.

Overall, *Targeting Pronunciation* is a motivating textbook that brings the students into partnership with the teacher. Teacher flexibility may be limited by the unique sequence of the textbook, but the likelihood of students improving their pronunciation is high given the nature of the content, the number of purposeful form-focused exercises, the “Talk Times” suggestions, and the constructive tips that encourage learners throughout the text.







*Our Global Village (2nd ed.)*

Angela Labarca and James Hendrickson

Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace, 1999

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*Our Global Village* is an intermediate-level reader with a strong cross-cultural focus designed to improve students' reading skills, increase their vocabulary, and develop their oral and written proficiency. Arranged into 14 separate chapters, beginning with simpler subject matter and moving towards more difficult topics, the text encourages students to reflect upon their own lives while becoming acquainted with their classmates and the world community. Personal topics such as childhood, family ties, and home entertainment encourage the students to become independent readers; in addition, *Our Global Village* includes activities on the topics of foreign travel, business affairs, and the greenhouse effect in order to engage readers in small-group and community projects.

A distinct strength of *Our Global Village* is its ability to directly address and accommodate the needs of the individual reader, which it accomplishes through a variety of learning activities and reading strategy instruction. For example, the text provides strategies on how to draw out information from a reading; students are asked to identify the main ideas of a reading passage and then to cluster those ideas together with the aid of graphs, tables, and charts. These types of activities help build the students' confidence in reading unfamiliar works in English by reminding them of some of their first language reading strengths. The text also provides opportunities for students to use English to express themselves in conversation and writing. The majority of these learning activities are open-ended, never requiring specific responses, thus enabling students to share their thoughts, feelings, and opinions with their classmates in response to what they have read.

In addition to encouraging individual responses to the content of the readings, *Our Global Village* highlights the necessity of an interactive classroom by incorporating small group discussions on cross-cultural topics. In the text's "To the Instructor" section, Labarca and Hendrickson state that the "readings consist of a collection of interesting slices of life from different

regions of our interdependent world community—our ‘global village’” (p. ix). The readings attempt to represent the various cultural backgrounds that commonly exist within an English as a second language classroom. The small-group discussions encourage students to develop their knowledge and appreciation of other countries and cultures as well as gain greater insight into their own backgrounds.

Another positive component of *Our Global Village* is the strong emphasis placed on vocabulary development. The text contains seven vocabulary reviews—one after every thematic unit. Each review provides five different activities for the words and phrases in the reading selections, ranging from associating words in categories to crossword puzzles. The vocabulary items are also listed at the end of every chapter and divided into grammatical categories (i.e., nouns, adjectives, verbs, adverbs, proper nouns, and expressions). These vocabulary lists are a useful resource for students and teachers alike because such lists support the authors’ goal of encouraging students to become independent and proficient learners of English.

Due to the close attention paid to vocabulary development, some instructors may be concerned that the text strays from its other stated purpose, which is to improve students’ reading, writing, and oral skills. But, we should keep in mind the frustrations of our students that stem from their limited vocabulary. Although the emphasis placed on these three areas of the text may be less than the weight of the vocabulary sections, students want and need vocabulary development strategies in order to improve their writing, increase their reading comprehension, and decrease their dependency on pocket computer dictionaries. These frustrations can be alleviated, and students can strive individually and collectively towards success with the help of *Our Global Village*.



*English Extra*

Grace Tanaka and Kay Ferrell  
White Plains, NY: Prentice-Hall, 1998

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*E*nglish *Extra* is designed to meet the needs of adult students in their daily lives. It is an excellent book for beginning-level students because of the colorful pictures it provides to present vocabulary or initiate conversations. *English Extra* also encourages students to interact with one another through a variety of activities such as interviews.

The text consists of 15 units, beginning with the family and home, then moving into more complex scenarios such as the workplace and the town or city. Every unit begins with a conversation or a short paragraph and colorful illustrations, where students are introduced to new vocabulary via listening and reading activities. Then, each unit's practice sessions lead students to write target vocabulary or practice the conversation collaboratively. Further sections guide the students to work more independently on the content, vocabulary, and language functions for real-life situations, such as filling out forms and applications or making shopping lists. Information gap activities, which have students interact with partners to elicit new information, begin after Unit 6. The last page of each unit helps students check their learning by listing the functions, vocabulary, and forms they have practiced in the unit.

Due to the book's extensive paired conversation practices and cooperative activities, it is an excellent text for teachers aiming to create a cooperative atmosphere in their classrooms. The book also gives students a certain amount of control of the content when teachers allow them to share their real-life stories or experiences related to the topics. Most of the topics are tied to daily life, so students should be very enthusiastic in discussing their own stories or experiences.

*English Extra* comes with an activity book, allowing students to work independently in or out of class. The teacher's manual suggests effective ways of presentation and contains follow-up activities. There is an audiocassette to

enhance pronunciation and listening skills; these supplementary materials help students improve their competence and performance.

The most important strength of the book is the use of authentic words and phrases, in contrast to other beginning textbooks that have overly simplified language. In some beginning textbooks, uncommon or strange vocabulary is often used to simplify the text, which limits communicative abilities. *English Extra* contains ordinary and authentic words and phrases that are used in real conversation; however, it does also provide a few low-frequency words when these words are important for daily life.

*English Extra* has many strengths and should be very effective in the communicative classroom, but it also contains a weakness that teachers need to be aware of. The story or conversation that introduces each unit's presentation of vocabulary or structure might confuse some students if these structures are too complex and students have no prior knowledge of those forms. To work around this, teachers could present the unit's simplest features before the complex ones, so students develop their knowledge without spending too much time trying to figure out unknown words or structures. When students have gained confidence in their basic knowledge, they may then progress to the more difficult elements easily.



***The Basic Oxford Picture Dictionary Literacy Program***  
**—Student Book**

Garnet Templin-Imel with Shirley Brod  
New York: Oxford University Press, 1996

**MONTSERRAT MAS**

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**T**he *Basic Oxford Picture Dictionary Literacy Program* is a complete and versatile course intended specifically for young adult beginners of English literacy and adults who lack basic literacy skills, either because their first language uses a non-Roman alphabet or because they have not participated in formal schooling.

*The Basic Oxford Picture Dictionary Literacy Program—Student Book* and *The Basic Oxford Picture Dictionary* constitute the core of the course. Supplemental materials are available, such as *Picture Cards*, *Wall Charts* and *Transparencies*, as well as *The Basic Oxford Picture Dictionary Workbook* for more advanced beginning students.

The student book opens with a “pre-literacy” section that helps the student develop the ability to visually discriminate shapes and directions. It includes a number of pages that prompt students to trace letters and to follow directional guiding arrows to move from straight, horizontal, and vertical lines to curves needed to form symbols, to reproduce handwriting, and to eventually write on their own. This is an optional section that can be used as student literacy levels warrant.

After the pre-literacy section, the student text is comprised of 16 units, beginning with an introductory unit that focuses on classroom-related language and followed by Units 2 through 16, which introduce the learner to basic skills and topics such as the alphabet, numbers, colors, family relationships, housing, weather, time of day, days of the week, months of the year, form language, and money. Each unit begins with an introductory page that presents that unit’s skill and is then divided into Part A and Part B. As explained in the Introduction to the *Teacher’s Book* (pp. vi–viii), Part A of each unit introduces specific skills and is comprised of a variety of activities: (a) “Practice” pages providing skill development; (b) “Handwriting” pages beginning with numbers and letters of the alphabet and

progressing to words from the units and the students' own vocabulary; (c) "Look and Think" pages asking the student to discriminate among and categorize shapes; (d) "Listening" pages focusing on such practical activities as telephone numbers, prices or spelling of names; and (e) "Form Language" pages giving sequenced practice in filling out forms.

In Part B of each unit, the text provides practical contexts in which students can apply these basic skills. Some of the interesting features of Part B are (a) "Dictionary Skills" introducing vocabulary and useful practice contexts; (b) "Reading" pages permitting the student to apply the material to real-life experience; (c) "Life Skills" pages using the new words in practical situations; (d) "Talk About It" pages that include clarification techniques and practice dialogues; and (e) "Practice" pages providing structured exercises.

In Part B there are also "Working with Words" pages meant to provide students with more challenging and stimulating language-manipulation exercises that the teacher can use for more advanced students or fast learners.

*The Literacy Program* provides ample opportunities to practice all four skills, beginning with listening and speaking; once students have progressed through the process of recognizing shapes, numbers, and letters (the pre-literacy level), they are introduced to handwriting and beginning reading and writing.

*The Literacy Program* promotes a whole-language, competency-based approach with an emphasis on speaking and listening, while also developing student literacy. It is intended to teach practical and reality-based language that prepares students for oral communication in real-life situations. It is student-oriented, eliciting and building on what students already know while introducing new topics and skills in each unit. Some activities are designed to provide students with opportunities to select and add their own words and build their own sentences. Other activities ask students with very limited oral language skills to draw pictures as a means of communication. Another feature that appears in the second half of the text is a sound/symbol correspondence chart of consonants presented in the lesson content.

I have had the opportunity to use *The Literacy Program* during the course of my English as a second language practicum, and I have also observed an effective, experienced ESL master teacher use it successfully in her beginning/literacy adult ESL class. Student response to the topics and the material has been very positive. Generally, students have displayed genuine interest in the activities and exercises and an eagerness to learn and use language that relates to real-life situations. *The Literacy Program*, when used in conjunction with sound teaching methods and a large amount of enthusiasm, is an excellent tool for the beginning/literacy level ESL classroom.