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Editor's Note

In this issue of the CATESOL Journal three teaching texts and a book on the value of pleasure reading are reviewed. Two are reading texts, one for secondary learners and the other for university students. The third is a grammar text suitable for adult learners in a variety of settings.

All four books consider meaningfulness to be an important aspect of L2 pedagogy. In McCloskey and Stack's *Voices in Literature* (reviewed by Linda Sasser), literature selections provide the context for language and literacy development at the intermediate level and beyond. Lites and Lehman's *Visions* (reviewed by Helen Sophia Solórzano), uses communicative, meaning-based activities to promote preintermediate grammar for older adolescent and adult learners. The third text, Linda Bates' *Transitions* (reviewed by Laurie Betta), integrates reading, writing, and grammar at the high-intermediate and advanced college level. Readings have been specifically chosen for their relevance so as to make lessons interesting and engaging. Finally, in Krashen's *The Power of Reading* (reviewed by this editor), an argument is put forth that meaning-driven pleasure reading can be a great asset when developing literacy in both children and adults.

These longer reviews are followed by Book Bytes, each focusing on a different teacher resource: first, an intermediate level communicative black-line master activity book for secondary to adult learners; next, a compendium of quick starters and fillers for a variety of levels and ages; then, a black-line resource which blends English language development with critical thinking skills for elementary school students; and finally, a thorough compilation of lists which will provide the basis for many lessons at all stages of L2 development. This last selection may have particular utility to instructors planning to teach outside the USA where materials may be lacking. ■

Voices in Literature

Mary Lou McCloskey and Lydia Stack.
Boston: Heinle & Heinle. 1993. Pp. 211.

LINDA SASSER

Alhambra School District

If you are a middle school or secondary ESL teacher trying to integrate literature into your program, indulge for a moment in this guided imagery exercise.

...in 15 minutes the first bell of the day will ring...you are racing to the copy machine...in your head are echoes of last summer's writing project... "literature stimulates and motivates student learning—literature provides a target language model as it sets imagination free"...you clutch in your hand a favorite poem...or a folktale...a fable...a myth...now you round the corner to the copier...and find yourself third in line...the person using the copier is making three sets of a four-page handout...you think to yourself, Is this trip necessary?

Has this happened to you? Did you find yourself wishing for a hard cover anthology designed for your mid-level ESL classes? While you were wishing, did you want it to look like a "real" English class anthology yet meet the specific needs of your students? Such a volume has arrived.

Called *Voices in Literature*, the first volume (silver) immediately attracts attention by its appearance. It's a pretty book, one which looks like the books mainstream students use. So many of the student books in our field look like ESL textbooks—softcover with black and white photos or cartoonish characters or pastel illustrations—that my adolescent students soon become sensitive to the appearance of their books, unwilling to carry them around, unwilling to be labeled as different. I don't think they will feel embarrassed by *Voices* with its fine art illustrations (a sampling: Matisse, Van Gogh, O'Keefe, Hopper), its classic photographs (Muench, Rowell), its color scheme of teal and brick, its bordered pages. Though we all know better than to judge a book by its cover, appearance is nevertheless impor-

tant. And in this era of funding limitations, the durability of a hardcover book is an important consideration.

Voices is organized around five topics and themes—Beginnings, Origins, Friendship, Wishes and Dreams, Generations—and the selections within each unit come from several genres. McCloskey and Stack “sought authentic and rich texts that provide real, high quality language models,” consistent with their belief that if the text is carefully selected there is no need to adapt or water down the language. Consequently, within these pages, readers will find authors of children’s and adolescent literature (including Byrd Baylor, Bette Bao Lord, Antoine Saint-Exupery, Sandra Cisneros), poets (including Adrienne Rich, Langston Hughes, William Carlos Williams), lyricists (George Harrison, Paul Simon), a scene from a screenplay (“Driving Miss Daisy”), and a scattering of other stories, poems, myths, legends, and folktales from cultures near and far. These choices, organized around ideas which interest young people, help us understand what it means to be human and help us realize how similar we all are beneath our surface differences.

In an introduction addressed “To the Teacher,” the authors mention several strategies which are featured in the text: interactive and collaborative activities, as well as an *into-through-beyond* approach to the integration of literature with the skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The activities in the text itself, however, are addressed to the student. Here, for example, is a chart-making activity from the first unit:

When you finish your discussion, your class or group might make a chart to show how people in the class begin the day. Below is a sample chart that one class made. What can you say about your class based on your chart? Do most people get up early? Do they eat a big breakfast?

Although a teacher’s manual is mentioned, a copy is unavailable for review, so support for the teacher must be inferred from the text. Support for the inexperienced teacher or the teacher who is departing from topic- or grammar-focused approaches will be absolutely vital to the success of this mold-breaking ESL text. Without a rationale for developing a framework for the literature selection, some teachers may perceive charting or other activities as insignificant and limit themselves to the truncated samples depicted in the text. And though the uses to which such teachers put the literature may afford students practice with the language, I am certain that if the structure of the lessons in *Voices* is followed rather closely, students will grow in multidimensional ways—personally, cognitively, and linguistically. And this, of course, is the goal of education.

To demonstrate how the into-through-beyond model works in *Voices in Literature*, let me walk through two selections from the third unit, “Friendship.” Background notes (p. 96) tell the reader that two poems follow: one an anonymous poem from the first century B.C. China, the other Paul Simon’s lyrics from “Bridge Over Troubled Water.” A section labeled “Before You Read” asks students to explore their own experience with the idea of friendship:

What is a Friend?

Think about someone who is a good friend. Write down words and phrases that describe how you like your friends to act. Compare your list to other people’s lists, and discuss what the most important qualities of a friend are. (p. 96)

This *into* has been carefully designed to activate students’ thoughts about the qualities of a friend. It smoothly integrates writing (those of us preparing students to take the CLAS[CAP] could toss in an open mind organizer at this point), collaboration, and discussion skills. The good teacher will use an entire class period for these ideas, extending it by asking groups to report their lists and assisting students with the invitation to compare. For homework, I might have my students prioritize a list of five qualities which emerged in the group work and discussion and reinforce that by sharing those lists the next day.

Thus prepared, students read (or are read) the two poems. Bold Chinese calligraphy of the character for friendship, a graphic by Keith Haring, and a photograph by Mike Mazzaschi invite further exploration as the two poems are experienced. Though there are no specific suggestions for using these visuals, they invite us in. For example, a photographer’s shadow falling across two young people sitting on the edge of a red boardwalk invites speculation—what is the photographer thinking about these two people? Write the dialogue between the friends. Put yourself in the photograph; what are you feeling?

Although the *through* occurs in a section called “After You Read,” teachers might discuss some of the questions as the selections are read. Postreading, students are asked to think about the two selections and discuss ideas with classmates and teacher. The questions include a nice mix of factual, inferential, and application; they ask students to make comparisons and once again invite students to go beyond the text and make connections with their own lives. Having seen the model presented in the prereading activities, teachers can easily move other questions into small, collaborative groups to encourage more discussion and to process the decisions in a reporting format involving the whole class. Despite the absence of vocabulary lists, some words and phrases are glossed, and the teacher is free to

develop vocabulary—perhaps as I do, by asking students to choose a word and map it, or to enter four new words in their “wordhunter” notebook (noting its use in context, its contextual meaning, and the student’s own use of the word in an original sentence).

The activities for *beyond* are entitled “Try This,” “Learning About Literature,” and “Writing” (pp. 102-103). They incorporate a poster-making idea; a sketched-out lesson on imagery, simile, and metaphor; and a patterned poetry-writing idea. Only eight pages of this very rich text have been described here—and if we did all that has been suggested, these eight pages could easily fill a two-week period. Isn’t that what we were dreaming of, standing in line before the photocopier?

Overall, I have almost no criticism and only a few minor complaints regarding selections. Why, for instance, include a selection from *Forestville Tales*, another commonly used ESL text, when so many rich myths are widely available? And I’m not particularly fond of the inclusion of a scene from “Driving Miss Daisy,” without activities designed to discuss the issues it raises in my mind (of stereotyping, tone of voice, religion). But these weaknesses are balanced by the inclusion of unusual pieces by Arthur Miller, Leroy Quintana, Martin Luther King, Jr., and others.

Teaching with this text will require a teacher who can approach literature holistically and utilize collaborative strategies in the classroom. But without the support manual, many teachers may find it difficult (or impossible) to use the volume because it is a radical departure from texts in our field. Though *Voices* is rich in language activities, though student schema is activated before reading, and though writing assignments are carefully thought out, this text does not have vocabulary lists, end of chapter quizzes, or skill-based activities. This is not to say that I want these to be included—I don’t. But as I hinted at the beginning of this review, I am ready for a text which will be attractive to my students and which will support my classroom approaches to literature and language. I find those trips to the copier frustrating, and it is time consuming to invent my own approaches all the time. However, even I would like a teacher’s manual to browse through, to learn from.

From my perspective, *Voices in Literature* is compatible with the needs of California’s English language learners. It is an excellent first anthology, and I am eager to see the promised second volume. Those students fortunate enough to be exposed to these rich and authentic literature selections (as well as the language activities suggested by McCloskey and Stack) will be well prepared for mainstream English classes and statewide assessments of their developing English language skills. I assume they will demonstrate success in these situations, thereby validating the inclusion of a literature-based approach to strategies which promote English language acquisition. ■

Visions: A Preintermediate Grammar

Emily Lites and Jean Lehman.

Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Regents. 1990. Pp. xxii+310.

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Until recently there have not been many grammar textbooks that follow a format for presentation and practice which fits within the new communicative classroom. A communicative approach advocates the presentation and explanation of a grammatical structure in context, followed by practice focusing first on form, then meaning, and finally real communication (Celce-Murcia and Hilles, 1988; Larson-Freeman, 1991; Ur, 1988). Often textbooks provide little or no context to introduce a form, jumping instead immediately into diagrams and explanations of the rules. Exercises have little cohesion except that they offer practice in the same grammatical structure. Students move disjointedly through sentences about meaningless situations and characters, and may suddenly be asked to answer questions that no one cares about. Because of the lack of context, most practice exercises involve only mechanical manipulations of form that “give little or no practice in making meanings with the structure (and are therefore, incidentally, usually not very interesting)...[and] have limited usefulness” (Ur, 1988, p. 8). Consequently, the burden for creating context and cohesion falls mainly on teachers, and it often feels as if we are fighting against the book rather than being helped by it. The secret weapon of many grammar teachers has been Penny Ur’s (1988) *Grammar Practice Activities* from which we have pulled communicative activities to supplement our grammar textbooks.

However, new books are emerging that are consistent with current grammar pedagogy. A good example of this is *Visions: A Preintermediate Grammar* by Emily Lites and Jean Lehman. It is an excellent book for the frustrated Penny Ur aficionado because it provides contexts and a multitude of practice exercises from which to pick and choose. It has an excellent

teacher's manual and is very easy to use. (It also has a companion text, *Visions: An Academic Writing Text*.)

The audience for *Visions* is low-intermediate, university-bound, foreign students. The text has 12 chapters that focus on simple present and past, progressive present and future, articles and quantifiers, and modals. Structures are recycled throughout the text; past tense, for example, is presented in chapter two and is then returned to in more depth in chapters seven and eight. Each chapter is based on a theme, and within the chapters are three contexts that take the form of a dialog, letter, or short narrative. The themes, such as "Telephone Conversations," "Entertainment," and "Applying to the University," are relevant to preuniversity international students. New characters are introduced in each chapter, and we follow them through the three contexts as a little story unfolds. These characters also appear in some of the listening and writing exercises. The contexts are not very profound, but the dialogs and situations are realistic and contain colloquial language that a student will actually hear and use.

After the context is set, questions check comprehension and elicit the desired grammatical structures. Then there is a grammatical explanation and a recognition exercise, followed by a selection of practice exercises. Often there is another, lesser, grammatical point made in the middle of the exercise section. Finally, each chapter ends with a short related section entitled "Social Language." This focuses on general functions like making suggestions and checking information and specific activities such as taking phone messages and ordering a meal. The information is presented in a context and followed by practice exercises.

Since the grammar practice exercises in *Visions* are plentiful and diverse, a teacher can pick and choose depending on the needs, objectives, and time constraints of the class. In general, sections begin with mechanical exercises and move to more communicative ones, including games, information gap activities, role plays, structured interviews, and discussions. The exercises are evenly mixed among those to be done individually, with the whole class, in pairs, and in small groups.

Many of the exercises are for speaking and writing, but each chapter has several listening exercises as well. These exercises include listening clozes (in which students listen for and fill in missing words), a series of questions, sentence combinations, and situations that the students hear and make statements about. For example, to practice *how much/how many*, the teacher reads: "Julia's planning a party after final exams. You want to know the number of people she is inviting." Students respond with the appropriate question. Such exercises develop the students' grammatical competence in listening, which is usually one of the weaker skills of international stu-

dents at low proficiency levels. Students need to be taught how to listen to these exercises, but there are scripts in the back of the student book which can be used until students are accustomed to the task.

The book is well laid out and easy to look at. The directions for the exercises are clear, and good examples are provided. The teacher's manual in the instructors' edition is one of the best I've ever used. It provides hints about grammatical points, additional mechanical exercises, instructions for setting up pair and group work, and scripts for the listening exercises. For each grammatical presentation the manual provides a script for eliciting the grammatical rules from the students. Here is an excerpt of the script to present a *yes/no* question:

Is this a statement or a question?

In a question, the speaker wants some information.

What's the subject? The verb? Is the verb before or after the subject?

Be comes before the subject in a question.

The sequences of questions and statements are well-conceived and complete, so it is possible to base an entire presentation on them. This is particularly helpful to a new teacher or a teacher who has not taught much grammar.

There are some drawbacks to the book. One is the omission of the past progressive tense. It seems strange that the book teaches the present, simple and progressive, and the future, simple and progressive, but only the simple past. Secondly, while there are several writing exercises in each chapter, they function mostly on the sentence level. I've often wished for long, mixed-tense narratives or dialogs in which students choose the correct tenses and more conversation completions, in which students write questions to complete a dialog.

Finally, although we instructors understand the pedagogical value of communicative exercises, our students do not always agree and may think the book is too much "fun." They want lots of charts and rules, and they don't make the connection between learning past tense and interviewing a classmate about his last vacation. The source of this problem isn't so much the book as it is the gap between student expectations and our pedagogical philosophy. It requires that we educate our students by drawing clear and constant connections between our classroom activities and what we know about the acquisition of grammar. However, the problems I've mentioned are minor. On the whole, *Visions* is a very effective book, and I hope we see more like it in the future. ■

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Transitions: An Interactive Reading, Writing, And Grammar Text

Linda Bates. New York: St. Martin's Press. 1993. Pp. x+368.

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*T*ransitions is a challenging, high-interest text for composition students. It can be used at the intermediate to low-advanced level in college, university, or preuniversity intensive English programs. Divided into three sections, it offers an abundance of writing practice based on a range of themes, including arranged marriage, the role of women, and the value of ethnic studies. These themes are presented in a series of readings contributed by professional and student writers.

The first section focuses on description and narration, guiding students in the writing of clear, unified paragraphs on personal topics. The second section gives students a chance to develop their expository writing skills through the exploration of such topics as special places and important events; again, the focus is on personal experience and paragraph structure. In the third section, students progress to writing multiparagraph essays on abstract topics, learning to support thesis statements with evidence.

Various rhetorical modes are highlighted in the text, including comparison/contrast and cause/effect. Clear, concise explanations of each rhetorical mode are provided along with a variety of prewriting strategies, such as freewriting, brainstorming, and clustering. Each strategy is accompanied by a graphic illustration giving students an example of how it can be used to generate and organize ideas. Students are encouraged to experiment with each strategy and choose the one that seems to work best for them. Peer review is a central part of the writing process as set forth in the text. Each writing assignment is accompanied by a tailor-made set of discussion questions for peer review. Additionally, there are student writing samples in each chapter that allow students to gain practice in analyzing and evaluating the work of their peers. Each stage of the writing process, including the

drafting of thesis statements and supporting subpoints, is subject to peer review. By obliging students to plan the content and structure of essays, the text provides a way for them to overcome the tendency to argue weakly or digress.

As a reading text, *Transitions* offers prereading as well as postreading discussion questions in addition to vocabulary instruction in the form of a glossary. While some students might be distracted by the use of boldface type to highlight new vocabulary words, most will benefit from the opportunity to use English definitions to confirm their guesses about unknown words. Unlike other reading textbooks, *Transitions* offers very little in the way of subskills practice or comprehension exercises. The readings are used primarily as models for composition and sources of ideas for writing.

As a grammar text, it limits its scope to the most common problems that students have with composition, such as verb form and tense, the use of logical connectors to achieve coherence, and sentence structure. The grammar exercises are related to the composition tasks of each chapter. This can help students avoid the frustration of not being able to apply their grammatical knowledge productively in writing. Furthermore, the grammar exercises are carefully sequenced and related to the theme of each chapter.

For these reasons, it seems that *Transitions* would be most effective in an integrated composition and grammar class. With the focus on composition in each chapter, it is difficult to see how it could be used alone as a reading text. However, the teacher's manual explains how teachers can adapt the textbook to separate reading, composition, or grammar classes. It also explains how all three areas of instruction can be integrated and how the text can be used in either quarter or semester terms.

Transitions seems ideal for self-starters who appreciate a clear, step-by-step approach to composition. But we all know that there are students who lack the motivation to read through explanations in a textbook, no matter how clearly written they might be. Therefore, the teacher must find ways to bring the material alive, perhaps by presenting much of it in the form of dynamic, interactive discussion with students.

Most of the text's themes serve to increase cross-cultural awareness, which is a valuable asset in any language course. One of its nicest features is a map of the world on the inside back cover. Whenever a country is mentioned in a reading, students are directed to find it on the map.

One possible drawback is related to the emphasis on peer review. Teachers will have to contend with students who consider such procedures to be worthless. These students will require more convincing than is offered in the textbook before they can contribute productively. Yet overall, *Transitions* is an excellent resource for providing students with stimulating content and helping them move from the simple paragraph to the far more daunting essay. ■

The Power of Reading: Insights From the Research

Stephen Krashen. Englewood, CO: Libraries Unlimited Inc. 1993.

Pp. x+119.

ELIZABETH LEITE

Mt. Diablo Unified School District

The Power of Reading explores just that. It examines the research on reading and extrapolates from the data. Numerous studies are included and eventually interpreted. Some conclusions are drawn as to what may actually be most beneficial to improving literacy in children and less literate adults. The book addresses issues which are intrinsic to reading instruction in general and, accordingly, will be of interest to researchers, educators, publishers, and parents.

While the studies which have been selected are not primarily of second language learners, the book can be useful to second language teachers. In the first section, *The Research*, studies are described on various aspects of free, voluntary (pleasure) reading. Some schools implement a program of sustained silent reading (SSR) during which all students and the teacher read for a set time each day. It appears that the more students read in actual minutes and pages each day, the better they perform on comprehension tests. They also write better and improve their vocabulary, spelling, and grammar.

In addition, studies done with second language readers on amount of reading and its effect on spelling indicate that L2 readers can learn to spell by reading if they are exposed to a word enough times. Read-and-test studies, in which students gain new lexical items through reading an unfamiliar passage, provide similar data. Pleasure reading, be it in school or at home, will increase comprehension, improve spelling, enhance grammatical competence, and build vocabulary.

While formulating the above conclusion (labeled the *reading hypothesis*), Krashen is quick to be critical of the data itself. Other factors may affect increased skill development, such as what else these readers may or may not be doing. They also may not be reporting their own reading patterns accurately. Yet the evidence seems to hold.

The alternative to free voluntary reading is direct instruction. Two processes—skill building through what we typically call *learning* (studying, practicing) and error correction—are explored in the research. Three arguments are presented as to why direct instruction is not necessarily accountable for reading competency: literacy and language development are too complex to proceed a point at a time; competence may occur without instruction; the impact of direct instruction actually appears to be small.

In the second part of the book, *The Cure*, Krashen attempts to address some important issues about reading, including the significance of a print-rich environment, the value of reading aloud, the role of libraries, the value of rewards and encouragement, and the effects of light reading. Studies have shown that greater access improves skills. One study is particularly revealing. When comic books were placed in a school library, general checkouts increased simply because the students were entering the library to read the uncirculated comics. Reading behaviors transferred as familiarity with the library rose. Comic books and other light reading, such as teen romances, are highly motivating because they are engaging, with readability rates varying from about second to seventh grade (for comics) and fourth to seventh grade (for romances). They help young people become more efficient readers by supplying input that students enjoy processing.

The third section, *Other Issues and Conclusions*, examines ancillary issues, such as the limits of free voluntary reading and the effectiveness of direct instruction. We are told that direct teaching can help students learn what they miss by simply reading. Good readers don't attend to every word or every punctuation mark, so teachers are still needed to instruct in writing mechanics and style. Further, direct instruction may be efficient for older students. In other words, reading instruction is valuable, and free reading will enhance that value. We need to orchestrate opportunities for our students to read frequently and with interest.

The insights drawn from *The Power of Reading* follow from Krashen's previous hypotheses about the nature of language acquisition: the tremendous importance of sufficient, meaningful input; the significance of affective variables; the relative unimportance of direct instruction until the intermediate stages of language development. The 16 pages of bibliographical data can be examined by those knowledgeable in the research practices of applied linguists. I can only comment on what I see to be valuable to ESL reading pedagogy.

The book is slim, short, and to the point. Main ideas have been restated along the margins. Bold-faced headings describe topics. The book is thus very easy to read; it is also quick to convince. I now see an important place for a free reading program within my curriculum. Clearly, though, ESL students must develop sufficient competency to work with text, even

at the second- or third-grade level. I will, therefore, continue to use reading texts, design reading lessons, and attempt to develop good reading practices. I will also seek to find relevant material—content and literature—which speaks to my students.

Some thoughts which arose as I read the book specifically deal with L2 readers. While the included studies point to the value of encouraging free reading among our students, ESL teachers (like K-2 teachers) often have to instruct in the most basic mechanisms of literacy. We often find that our students can decode but cannot comprehend. Accordingly, it is crucial to remember that the readers described in this book have developed oral language. We should not abandon the necessary literacy work that we do. (This could be seen as an implication of the book although I believe it is not intended).

A second concern has to do with unguided reading. While native speakers may increase reading skills by being avid comic book fans, our L2 learners will not necessarily have the cultural and formal schema to interpret illustrations and text in meaningful ways. And, if ESL students can read at the sixth or seventh grade level (the high end of comic book vocabulary) they will probably have been removed from ESL classes long ago. I can only hope they are still reading elsewhere.

A larger concern I must raise has to do with the value of reading instruction itself. I am not talking about "kill and drill" but rather a whole language approach to second language teaching, in which the reading becomes the vehicle for listening, speaking, and writing activities. Clearly such a reading-centered approach is useful, valuable, and pedagogically appropriate at even advanced stages. It seems to me that while free reading should be encouraged, we need be careful not to denigrate valuable instructional modes.

What is more, educators are learning that explicit instruction enhances the power of our teaching. Students can be taught to be efficient readers, to develop metacognitive strategies, to skim, to scan, and to locate topic sentences. Such important strategies should not be discounted (if only by implication) because they may help our students survive in content area classes with a language level far above their own. This training may neither endear our students to books and reading nor make them "readers" in a larger sense, but it may help them pass biology and government by creating attack strategies for gaining information.

I would encourage you to examine this book and explore its relevance to your own classroom needs and your experiences with L2 learners. *The Power of Reading* offers us insights which are vital to educators. You may alter what you do in some way because of this book. I certainly will. ■