

FOREWORD

We often hear teachers in North America say: “Why is it that so many students who have passed the TOEFL or GRE can’t speak English?” Or, “I don’t understand why my students try to use long, awkward sentences with big words when they could say the same thing in very simple English.”

We also hear ESL students say: “I have been studying English for over six years, but I still can’t understand (English) movies without subtitles (in my own language).” Or, “I speak English slowly and always have to think about grammar before I speak.”

Unlike native English speakers, ESL students, by definition, lack the cultural and contextual perspectives necessary to effectively integrate what they are learning in their ESL classroom with the realities of day-to-day English conversations outside of the classroom.

It is only natural for ESL students to use the vocabularies and grammar rules from their academic textbooks to “invent” their versions of spoken English. For example, an ESL student might say something like “Let’s compete by running to the gymnasium together, and see who arrives there first” when a native English speaker would usually just simply say “I’ll beat you to the gym!”

Additionally, more often than not the rules of grammar contained in non-Latin based languages bear little resemblance to those in the English language. Non-Latin languages often don’t contain verb tenses, or a singular/plural distinction for nouns. As well, their sentence structures can be, and usually are, quite different.

While this is manageable in reading, writing and listening, where students have time to contemplate and process before responding, it is much harder in real world interactions, where meaningful conversations require real-time performance. By the time ESL students are able to compose a sentence, they have frequently lost the momentum of the conversation. Frustrated? You bet. This explains why it’s hard for ESL students to stay in a conversation for more than two or three exchanges.

Some may argue the practicality of teaching spoken English by saying that in most ESL countries, people don’t have much chance to actually “speak” English. However, spoken (i.e., informal) English is used everywhere. It is not just the language for tourists; it is used in international movies and TV programs, newspapers and magazines, and on the Internet, as well as in business communications such as emails, memos, brochures, and even business letters. Nowadays, when business people want to move away from the formality and awkwardness that often exists even between established business

associates, informal English is what they use in both speech and writing.

Since a knowledge of vocabulary and grammar alone do not result in fluent spoken English, the teaching of students who already have several years of academic experience with English should move beyond teaching new vocabularies or more grammar rules. We need to teach students how English is used in everyday communications by teaching the expressions commonly used in the language. These common expressions are not just slang or idioms; they are the very basic and useful sentences that any ESL student should be able to speak or respond to without thinking too hard or consciously composing.

The goal of this book is to help ESL students establish a good-sized memory bank of spoken English in order for them to make connections with the world. We believe the more they can speak or respond “off the top of their heads,” the more confidence they will have in using the language. And the more confidence they have, the better their spoken English will become over time. We hope English education doesn’t stop after passing a TOFEL or TOEIC test; rather, with the help of multimedia, we want to see more ESL students benefit from being bilingual.

To assist ESL students in their journey toward better spoken English, this book offers the following:

1. *A considerable number of commonly used expressions*

These common expressions are presented naturally through in-depth dialogues that form the basis of every lesson. From the dialogues, students can see that they themselves should be able to carry out similar conversations in depth, just by knowing how those words work together. To ensure students have enough exposure to these common expressions, they are utilized not only in the dialogues, but also throughout the book. Every exercise the student completes will also reinforce, to varying degrees, what has gone before.

2. *Useful sentence patterns*

To maximize their spoken knowledge base, students have to move beyond memorizing and reciting “set sentences.” They need to be able to build on these basic sentence patterns, for instance, extending “I’ll beat you to the gym” to “I’ll beat you to the cafeteria” or “I’ll beat you to the language lab” as the situation requires. The exercises in this book aim to demonstrate the flexibility and diversity of the language so that students can apply the same structures and concepts in varying contexts. Once students learn these skills, they will have a much better foundation for inventing their own sentences without sounding too alien.

3. *Grammar subtlety and implication*

An innovative part of our approach is that instead of teaching grammar rules per se, we provide insight into the message and intention behind a native speaker's choice of words. For example, students learn that a response of "I wish I could go" to an invitation indicates that the speaker is declining the invitation, even though this message is not inherent in the words it contains. Similarly, when someone says, "I should have called him," we can safely deduce that the speaker didn't make the call and probably also that it is too late to call now.

4. *Assessable conversation exercises*

In a classroom of 20 or more students, instructors usually have to leave the students to their own devices when doing the conversation exercises; i.e., the teacher must trust that the students will do the small-group discussions in no language other than English, and hope that they practice nothing but the "designated" topics. By requiring students to report on the results of small-group activities to the class at large, this series offers a way to better assess what students are practicing while also motivating students to follow the instructions and practice the conversations as required.

To some it may appear that new vocabulary words introduced in this book are too few, and the dialogues too long. However, that is exactly the point we are trying to make here. This book is not about teaching ESL students to memorize more vocabulary and rules. Rather, it is about teaching them to use the language they already possess more effectively, thereby enabling them to communicate better and to interact in English with increased comfort, subtlety and depth. If they are not already doing so, then this book can certainly help.

At Lynx, we wish you a very pleasant and rewarding semester.

INTRODUCTION

Classroom: 16 lessons, 90 minutes per lesson. Each lesson is intended for a 90-minute classroom session (or two 45-minute sessions). Alternatively, the instructor may opt for a combination of 45 minutes in the classroom and 30 minutes of home study, since the majority of exercises can be completed by a single user at home.

All the exercises are designed for the purpose of learning and practicing. For better results, always **ask students to answer a question by reading out the full sentence**, rather than just giving the answer number (a, b or c).

Combined words like “You are” becoming “You’re” “I am” becoming “I’m” etc., are a matter of habit and familiarity. **Don’t force students say the contraction if they don’t feel comfortable enough yet.** In time they will naturally switch to the shorter and more fluent way of speaking. Let them do it at their own pace.

Help students relax into the language by closing an eye to their mistakes. It is preferable to **place students’ enthusiasm for participation before pronunciation or grammar accuracy at all times.**

Exercises

In **Book One**, most of the questions in the exercises are asked in the present tense, like the way we discuss a play or a story.

In **Book Two**, we ask questions as if these dialogues were happening around us. This allows students to practice the way verbs are used in everyday, real-life contexts.

Preview and Preparation

The vocabulary table in each chapter provides a quick preview of what vocabulary to expect in that unit. Ask students to look up the meaning of any unfamiliar words or phrases before the class begins.

Listening Practice

Try to capture the main ideas in the dialogue by listening to the audio program or by conducting student role-plays.

- Play the **audio program** a few times until the majority of students are able to answer most of the four questions in this section correctly. This trains the ears.
- Assign students to **role-play** the dialogues from their seats using their books. Repeat, using different students each time, until students are able to answer most of the four questions correctly. This involves training in pronunciation as well as ear training.

The **cartoon** is not necessarily always in line with the content of the dialogue. The purpose of the image is to inspire imagination and provide a place to rest the eyes while listening to the dialogue.

Dialogues

The dialogues are not too formal, nor are they too casual; they are about everyday situations in an everyday context. The main characters are a couple of young people interacting with people at home, at work or in the street.

It is strongly recommended that students read the dialogues aloud several times for a thorough practice.

Study Guide

The Study Guide is to be used as supplementary material to the dialogue introduced in each unit. It explains grammar nuances, as well as providing similar common expressions for comparison.

Grammar points given in this section serve as a tireless mother reminding her young children how to say what they want to say. Help students read and understand it but do not make them memorize it. **Do not let grammar spoil the fun of speaking by making them think too much and inhibiting spontaneity.** For students who are not ready to take in additional information, feel free to skip any part of this section at any time.

For a complete grammar explanation, students need to go back to a grammar book.

Comprehension Practice

The purpose of this exercise is to help students learn how to read between the lines and to catch the connotation and implication of a statement, the emotions of the speaker, and/or the message delivered through grammatical usage (**Book One**). Through this process students will come to better understand what's been said and how to use it and respond to it in a similar or extended situation (**Book Two**).

In Other Words

In addition to expressions introduced in the dialogues, this exercise provides students with many more common expressions, which again include idioms, slang, and short or even long sentences that are frequently used by native English speakers. The purpose is to help students make connections between these expressions and, through interchange, become familiar with their practical applications while, at the same time, coming to understand the subtle differences in seemingly similar expressions.

Many common expressions introduced in this practice may still be new to the students. Try to make this a learning experience through discussion and practice rather than a test of any sort.

In Another Context

This exercise is designed to help students diversify the usages learned from the book, and to apply them in various social situations and contexts. Its purpose is to inspire the students' imagination and creativity. This exercise is both about getting the most out of the students' existing knowledge base and about getting the most out of their own natural creativity.

Students need to make at least one new sentence in their own words for each sentence pattern. Encourage students to make creative and playful sentences. Allow them to bring their "true colors" into the classroom. This will make it easier for them to claim the language as their own when they walk out of the classroom and into their own world.

Although it may be challenging, students at any level will benefit greatly through any attempt at formulating their own sentences, even if all they do is change a pronoun or the tense of a verb.

Conversation Practice

Book One is designed for students who are still timid or clueless about spoken English. In order to help them break-in and start-up, students are required to recite a short passage and to role-play. Then, in a similar fashion, students get to make up their own dialogues in a guided situation. This hand-holding experience helps students gradually growing into the idea of speaking English. If time allows, encourage students to read aloud their dialogues to the class or in a small group.

In **Book Two**, students are challenged to express themselves in their own words in various situations and contexts. Each unit has a special scenario set up for this practice and includes a way to assess the results of the students' participation. The purpose of the assessment is not to keep track of any grammatical errors individual students may have made. Rather, it is to evaluate the amount of effort they have personally put into the conversation.

Teaching Aids:

- An **Audio Program** covers all dialogues in both books. **MP3 available online.**
- An **Answer Key** is provided in the back of each book.
- Visit us at www.lynxpublishing.com or write to mail@lynxpublishing.com for additional teaching/learning support.