

BOOK REVIEWS

IN TOUCH A BEGINNING AMERICAN ENGLISH SERIES (Books I, II & III).  
 Oscar Castro  
 Victoria Kimbrough

Longman, Inc. and IMNRC, 1980

IN TOUCH is a three book series based on the functional approach to language teaching and learning. Since its goal is to present authentic language in realistic contexts, the techniques are more varied and the vocabulary more colloquial than what is usually found in texts with a grammatical focus. In class, the student immediately finds himself expressing functions such as asking for and giving information, agreeing and disagreeing, expressing approval and disapproval and making suggestions. Grammatical structures as well as functions are systematically presented and practiced throughout the series. Grammar is "recycled", that is, a structure introduced in one unit will be presented again in later units. This gives students additional opportunities to practice and learn the structures they need to express the functions they wish to express.

Each book of IN TOUCH contains twelve units and two review units. Each unit has four main sections.

1. Conversation. The conversation establishes the theme of the Unit and presents the new language (functions and grammar) which will be practiced orally. The Conversation is followed by oral written exercises which focus on functions and grammar.
2. Expansion. The expansion section contains reading and writing practice as well as additional oral and listening practice.
3. How Much Do You Know? The evaluation exercises in this section consolidate the language from the unit and allow students to see how much they have learned.
4. Language Summary. The language summary contains the functions and grammar that the students have practiced and lists the new vocabulary occurring in the unit.

The functional approach demands more from the students and greater creativity on the part of the teacher, but involves both teacher and learner in a fun-filled and challenging learning situation. By the time the student has finished the first book he is able to converse on various subjects in different situations and, above all, is beginning to be able to express his own personality in oral and written communication. In the classroom students are constantly involved in direct communication with the teacher and each other and -- this creates a pleasant, friendly atmosphere rarely found in other methods. Student participation is the name of the game and many of the practices can be done in pairs or small groups, thus giving the students greater opportunity to talk.

IN TOUCH provides students with more reading practice than most basic courses do. In each unit students read authentic texts such as letters, notes, newspaper and magazine articles. After each reading passage, there are two or three exercises designed to help the students develop reading strategies. These reading strategies are systematically presented and recycled throughout the three books. This extensive reading component is especially helpful for students who need to read English for their other courses or professions.

In conclusion, IN TOUCH is an exciting and stimulating series which allows the student considerable freedom to learn and which will challenge the teacher. The tapes are good tools for listening comprehension and the Student's Workbooks provide additional grammar practice. There is also a Teacher's Manual which offers suggestions for teaching each unit, as well as additional activities and pronunciation, grammar and culture notes. Both teachers and learners will find that these texts offer a logical and coherent method whereby beginning students learn the functions of grammar and vocabulary that enable them to express themselves in English.

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