

BOOK REVIEWNOTION BY NOTION
BEGINNING ESL PRACTICE BOOK

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Beginning students often lack opportunities for meaningful communication with their classmates. In NOTION BY NOTION, the author provides a combination of exercises designed to give students the necessary practice in correct language usage while leading them to situations in which they may use the language to interact with their peers. The book offers forty self-contained units of American English, best used as supplementary material in beginning or intermediate ESL courses for secondary or adult students.

The text is organized on three levels and therefore may be easily used by teachers following a grammatical, situational, or functional-notional approach. The grammatical structures begin with the verb BE and ascend in difficulty to reported speech and present real conditionals. Each unit may also be viewed as a set of functions, and as more material becomes available, there is a shift in emphasis from the grammatical to the functional. The teacher who wishes to use this as an occasional supplement to the text will find it easy to locate the material relevant to his immediate needs.

Each unit begins with a chart, an illustration, or some other stimulus. In many cases this stimulus merely establishes the topic and presents related vocabulary. Functions and grammatical structures are practiced in the exercises that follow.

One of the advantages to this book is the diversity of its exercises. There are individual exercises as well as exercises designed to promote communication in pairs or small

groups. These activities are especially good for exchanging information and opinions, as well as solving problems and reaching agreements through communication. There are also ample opportunities for practicing speaking, reading, and writing skills in different formats. There is, however, no material specifically designated for listening practice, but the students have the opportunity to develop this skill in the context of conversational exchange.

Another strength of this book is the topical organization which makes it an excellent source of conversation stimuli. Some of the topics are very similar, such as "Characteristics" and "Personality Traits". As conversation topics they can be used together, but each one illustrates different functions and grammatical structures. Therefore, the teacher must decide the most appropriate use of these materials to best meet the students' needs.

The particular needs and limitations of the learners will also determine the amount of time to be spent in developing vocabulary. Due to the topical organization of the text, a large number of new words is introduced in each lesson, and many are never seen again in the units that follow. Furthermore, many new vocabulary items not included in the stimulus material appear in the exercises, so each teacher must decide how much time to devote to vocabulary explanations and review.

The author of NOTION BY NOTION suggests that the book may also be used as the basic text for a short survival course. This suggestion seems quite inappropriate. Used in this way, the book contains too few exercises to practice the many structures presented here. Also, the present text assumes that the students have been presented these structures previously, and the teacher's guide does not include sufficient information on how to best use the book for initial presentations.

NOTION BY NOTION is recommendable as a flexible, stimulating supplementary text, if not as a basic text, and it will help those who wish to introduce a notional-functional aspect to a structurally oriented course.

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