

EFFECTIVE WRITING

Jean Withrow
C.U.P. 1989.

This is a reasonably competent adaptation, for the American-English market, of the original, British-English version (1983), by Coe, Rycroft and provides solid, if stolid, practice, at both the "micro" and the "macro" levels of text production, covering punctuation, "logical linkers", paragraphing, sequencing, etc., and dealing with a useful range of genres.

One's only quibbles with this generally serviceable book might be as follows:-

--- As is so often the case, in this type of book, nearly all the texts are rather dull examples of "T.A.L.O." (Text as Linguistic Object), contrived for the valid purpose of demonstrating linguistic rules but having little intrinsic interest or imaginativeness. More input from unadultered authentic texts, accompanied by more authentic tasks, might have been welcome.

--- If the anthropomorphism displayed on page 18 of the book ("Where are you going asked the rabbit", etc, as exercises for reported speech) is mildly questionnable (given the type of audience at which the book is, presumably, aimed), it would appear to be

carried to extremes elsewhere. Does one really begin a letter to the "Financial Aid Office" of an academic institution with the words "Dear Financial Aid Office"? (The rather Orwellian corollary might, perhaps, be the answer subscribed "Yours sincerely, the Financial Aid Office".)

--- While the author presents several reasonable exercises in the use of punctuation, her own writing (like that of many E.L.T. professionals, alas!) is by no means flawlessly punctuated, or well constructed. Instructions preceding the exercises are often sloppily written (e.g. "Correct the incorrectly used apostrophes". Pg. 10), and some of the texts offered as examples of "effective" writing are, to my mind, ill-written and minimally "effective".

--- Though there is a good deal of practice with "link-words" ("therefore", "because", "while", etc.), little or no attention is given to the other elements of text cohesion.

This book is a solid, and, generally, well-ordered one, which can be recommended for use, with intermediate students, by the teacher who is resourceful enough to supplement it with other materials, and ingenious enough to brighten up its rather "flat" activities. However, in this case,

as in so many others, in the crowded world of E.L.T. materials, one cannot help wishing that a textbook which aims at teaching "effective writing" showed more affinity, in its own instructions and examples, with well-formed, rather than minimally viable, communication, and admitted more good, non-E.L.T.- generated texts into its rather restricted world.