

## Book Reviews

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***Focus on Grammar. Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1994-1995. (Student's Books, Teacher's Manuals and Cassettes)***<sup>1</sup>

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As the subtitle for each title in this series states (*A...Course for Reference and Practice*), *Focus on Grammar*, was written both as a course textbook and as a reference book. This four-level series (Basic, Intermediate, High Intermediate and Advanced) concentrates on grammar, but also includes four-skills and communicative practices. They are supplemented by workbooks, cassettes and teacher's manuals. Software is also available, but was not examined for this review.

The major grammar structures which are presented and practiced at each level are as follows:

Basic	Intermediate	High Intermediate	Advanced
Be	Verb Tense Review	Verb Review	Verb Review
Imperative	Present Perfect	Passive	Passive
Present and Past Progressive	Adjectives and Adverbs	Gerunds and Infinitives	Adverb, Adjective, and Noun Clauses
Simple Present and Simple Past	Gerunds and Infinitives	Indirect Speech	Unreal Conditional
Future	Articles	Conditionals	Modals
Comparatives and Superlatives	Modals	Adjective Clauses	Adverbials and Discourse Connectors
Modals		Modals	

In general, each unit includes a presentation of the relevant structure (usually a dialogue, which is also recorded on the accompanying cassette, or at higher levels, a reading) often followed by comprehension questions and a list of pertinent vocabulary. Then the target grammar structures are explained and practice is provided. Each grammar section begins with a

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<sup>1</sup> See *References* at the end of the article for complete bibliographic references for the Student's Books.

<sup>2</sup> The reviewer would love to hear from readers. You can also contribute reviews through the following means or by sending them to the MEXTESOL office. Fax: (525) 550-9622. e-mail: [mextslj@servidor.unam.mx](mailto:mextslj@servidor.unam.mx).

brief note which explains the grammar through the use of frames and supplemented by various examples. This is followed by focused practice which leads the student through various types of exercises, from simple recognition practices (often using the cassette) in which the student listens to or looks for the structure being taught in some relevant context, to practices in which the student begins distinguishing when to use the structure and when not to and finally relating the structure to similar grammar points which were studied previously (For example, in the section teaching the past tense of BE in the Basic book, students first listen to and read a dialogue and then write the six sentences from the dialogue which include *was*, *were* and *weren't*; then they do two *fill-in-the-blank* exercises in which they have to choose between the different forms of BE in the present and past tense, Basic: 241-242). After students have practiced with focused exercises they are ready for communicative exercises, which are usually set up for pair or group work. Many of these exercises are open-ended, allowing the students to give their own opinions using the recently learned structure. (For example, *Ask your partner: When you were a child, were you \_\_\_\_? Use the words in the box.*) There are also often writing practices related to the grammar point being practiced. The Advanced level text also includes TOEFL-like exercises, such as error-identification.

Each text also includes several interesting and useful appendices which are related to the cultural items, vocabulary and grammatical structures presented in the book, i. e., maps, numbers, lists of vocabulary such as body parts, US and Canadian Holidays, spelling, pronunciation and punctuation rules, summaries relating to the formation and use of the verb tenses presented in the text along with a lists of common irregular verbs.

The workbooks include many completion-type exercises, as well as more productive types of sentence-creation practices. Many of the exercises are communicative since they are based on realistic materials, such as job application forms, lists of facts, calendars, etc. There is an answer key at the end of each workbook, but the pages are scored for easy removal. A set of tests is also included using TOEFL-like formats. The answers to these tests are also provided so students can use them for self-evaluation.

The teacher's manuals do not include copies of pages from the Student's Books, so they are of a reasonable size to carry around. They include teaching suggestions and cultural notes, tapescripts and a series of diagnostic and final tests with answers. The tests are quite clear, but not very communicative.

These texts would be very useful for grammar-based, language courses or remedial courses. The clear presentation of the structures and the possibility for oral and written communicative practice would permit it to be used quite easily as a class text. However, perhaps, one of the strong points of these books is their utility to the teacher as resources for those times when the course book being used doesn't include all of the exercises the students need. There are a large number of *Fill-in-the-blank* type practices which are either directed at one structure (*present progressive*) or at contrasting related structures (*present progressive vs. simple present*) that can be assigned to individual students needing remedial practice. For this reason, it would be quite useful to have class sets of these books available for supplementary practice in and out of class. They also would be a welcome addition to any school library.

### References

Student's Books:

*Focus on Grammar: A Basic Course for Reference and Practice.* by Irene Schoenberg.

*Focus on Grammar: An Intermediate Course for Reference and Practice.* by Marjorie Fuchs, Miriam Westheimer and Margaret Bonner.

*Focus on Grammar: A High-Intermediate Course for Reference and Practice. Volumes A and B.* by Marjorie Fuchs and Margaret Bonner.

*Focus on Grammar: An Advanced Course for Reference and Practice. Volumes A and B.* by Jay Maurer.