

College Oral Communication Series

Review by Qing Xing

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COLLEGE ORAL COMMUNICATION: HOUGHTON MIFFLIN ENGLISH FOR ACADEMIC SUCCESS. Series Editors: Patricia Byrd, Joy M. Reid, and Cynthia M. Schuemann. Houghton Mifflin Company. \$34.76 per volume.

College Oral Communication is one of four strands in the Houghton Mifflin English for Academic Success series. Like the other three, this series is written for ESL students attending colleges or universities in the United States. It consists of four volumes, each of which targets one of four proficiency levels: low intermediate, intermediate, high intermediate, and advanced. Listening material comes in CDs or cassettes, and the instructor's manual can be accessed online.

The structure of the series is carefully planned. A broad theme relevant to academic study serves as a connecting thread that runs through the six units in each volume. The respective themes of volumes one to four are

1. people and human behavior.
2. connections between humans and animals.
3. communication and media.
4. economics and business.

The units in each volume are built around topics of interest to students and relate to academic study. For example, in volume four, topics include the history of money, conditioning and advertising, e-commerce, cultural differences, love, science, and health. Subject fields covered include history, psychology, business, sociology, literature, and biological science.

As its title suggests, this series focuses primarily on the development of academic speaking and listening skills, including fluency and accuracy in speaking on diverse academic topics, pronunciation, stress and intonation, oral presentation, and analytical listening skills on academic lectures. Each unit comprises three closely related parts: effective academic listening, effective academic speaking, and assessing academic listening and speaking skills.

The first part contains a short reading, which provides relevant background information and prepares students for the listening activities that follow. Listening

activities are built around an authentic academic lecture and divided into multiple sections, each supported with comprehension questions and note taking exercises. The second part of the unit requires students to use notes taken during the lecture to engage in speaking activities such as group discussion or a short oral presentation. In part three, students reflect on their learning, and their progress in listening and speaking is evaluated.

Even though the primary focus is on listening and speaking abilities, *College Oral Communication* incorporates other skills that are valuable for academic study, including reading and higher order thinking abilities such as summarizing and analyzing. It also encourages the development of academic vocabulary, making it a good choice for college level communication classes or integrated skills classes.

About the Reviewer

Qing Xing is a Ph.D. student at the University of Utah, and she teaches ESL courses there. Last year, she used College Oral Communication Four in both undergraduate and graduate level advanced communication classes for ESL students.