

## *Island English for Micronesia*

**Review by Cliff Benson**

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*ISLAND ENGLISH*. T. Tinkham, Bess Press, 2001. \$19.95, Teachers' Guide \$13.26.

*Island English* is a valuable addition to resources for Pacific learners of English as a second language at senior high school or college level.

A major strength of the text is the wealth of material it contains on the Micronesian countries. Each chapter begins with 3-4 reading passages, and a variety of questions on each. The non-fiction reading passages not only offer information about the countries, but by being in expository (factual) prose, will help the students to acquire the language needed for this genre.

Overall, the book contains a wealth of high interest reading material—and given the potential value of high interest reading material to contribute significantly to language acquisition, this feature alone should make the book attractive to teachers in the region and elsewhere.

Each chapter also contains explicit vocabulary and grammar exercises based on material in the reading passages. This material is also justified by recent language acquisition literature, which supports such explicit lexical and grammatical instruction and exercises. Many learners, especially at the senior level, find such material very helpful.

Finally, each chapter concludes with a legend with a large number of items to be checked, again for lexical or grammatical correctness, and corrected by the students if desired. As with the reading passages, the author suggests that students can do this work prior to class time, so that lesson time is spent on discussion of the material, where students can verify the changes they have made.

This material combines a “reading” approach, where learners acquire language unconsciously and an explicit grammar-based approach, where learners consciously learn grammar and other features of language.

Major strengths, then, of *Island English* include:

- high interest content.
- exploiting the strengths of both meaning-based and grammar-based approaches to language teaching.

potential for maximum student-instructor and student-student interaction, with a wealth of stimulus material as a basis for this interaction.

a large amount of reading and writing activity for each student to become engaged in.

While *Island English* primarily targets Micronesian ESL students, it could be profitably used as a resource in other contexts where gaining knowledge about Micronesian countries and cultures is an instructional goal, or part of a thematic or context-based course or multiculturalism, ecology, or other global issues.

### **About the Reviewer**

*Cliff Benson is Director of the Institute of Education at the University of the South Pacific in Suva, Fiji. He is also the author of 11 language texts and compiler of two Pacific poetry teaching anthologies widely used in the South Pacific.*