
Bridges to English

Book Review by Dorothea Heberle

BRIDGES TO ENGLISH. Protase E. Woodford and Doris Kernan. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981. Six levels. Student texts, \$3.20 each. Teacher's manuals, \$1.50 each. Workbooks, \$2.82 each.

Bridges to English is an ESL series for adults which, in addition to textbooks, includes teacher's manuals, workbooks, cassettes, and tests. However, because the budget in our school district is limited, we use only the student texts.

Each lesson begins with a short reading and questions about relevant situations, such as renting a house, visits to the post office, etc., which a foreign visitor might encounter in this country. An abundance of substitution and transformation drills precedes each grammatical generalization. This is followed by a dialog, a reading selection, and questions, all containing the new vocabulary and structures. Review exercises provide oral and written practice at the end of each lesson.

In the teacher's manual, the authors state that each level can be mastered in 25 to 40 class hours, "depending on the abilities of the students and the amount of beyond-the-text material presented." However the series has been successfully adapted to our adult evening course of twenty two-hour classes, meeting once a week. Since most of our students are at a low-intermediate level, we use Book 2 in the fall term and Book 3, which intro-

duces regular and irregular past tense forms, in the spring. Each book contains eight lessons, and we cover one lesson per class. Since most of the students are already acquainted with the material, I skip the repetitive pattern drills and use the more difficult "Writing Practice" exercises for oral classwork.

The main advantage of this series is its emphasis on conversation and pronunciation. Pattern drills provide controlled practice with formation of questions and negatives. New nouns and verbs are grouped together, according to their endings, in separate lessons. Each lesson is developed with simplicity and visual appeal. Grammatical structures are presented concisely on charts, and photographs and drawings stimulate conversation.

The main disadvantage that I find in this series is not enough inclusion of personal, meaningful questions or chain drills, that would allow more interaction between students. However I believe that the authors achieve their purpose of aiming for "rapid acquisition of the listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills necessary for effective communication"; and I shall continue to use this series, adapting it to the needs of my own ESL class.

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