

BOOK REVIEW

Developing Fluency in English

Price: \$4.95 Paperback

by Ruth Crymes, Gary James, Larry Smith and Harvey Taylor
Prentice-Hall, 1974

This book is appropriately advertized as being designed for high-intermediate to advanced students of English as a second language as the average readability level of the nine reading texts in the book is twelfth grade. (This is the grade level required for *complete* comprehension according to the G. H. McLaughlin readability formula. The corresponding Dale-Chall level would be about tenth grade since Dale-Chall uses a less severe criterion: "The grade at which a book or article can be read with understanding.")

There are several features that should make this a useful text for the more advanced student. The book is divided into two basic parts: *Performing in English* and *Developing Competence in English*. In the first part, communication activities for reading, listening, and speaking are emphasized without explicit attention to rules or structural models. The authors focus on what is said rather than on how it is said. Each of the nine lessons is centered around a single topic such as proverbs, nonverbal communication, propaganda, etc. The topics are well suited for stimulating discussion across cultures among college age students.

An innovative feature of this part of the book is the Discussion Text. In each lesson the topic is presented in a brief summary, then amplified in the reading text, and finally paraphrased in a listening text. The latter uses the spoken forms of the language in the mode of a somewhat informal lecture. In contrast, the Discussion Text presents an unrehearsed, unedited discussion of the lesson topic including the false starts and pause words that are typical in natural conversation.

This seems to provide a useful kind of listening practice that is usually ignored in ESL texts. Each lesson also includes a list of five or six speaking activities for the class and a vocabulary study section.

The second part of the book is primarily concerned with helping students become proficient in combining sentences through nominalization and embedding. This latter part of the book is made up of nine sentence study sections corresponding to the nine lessons in part one. The sentence combining practice is intended to help students add more information to their sentences through productive use of the full resources of the language. Students learn to turn sentences into subjects, objects, complements, and passives in various ways. Along with the sentence-combining exercises, each of the study sections has an excellent exercise called *What About Meaning?* Completion of this exercise requires the student to carefully consider the precise meanings communicated by the embedded sentences.

The second part of the book would be improved by providing students with an explicit procedure for identifying the characteristics of sentences which make it appropriate or inappropriate to apply one of the sentence-combining rules introduced by the authors. Without such a procedure, students may attempt to nominalize and embed sentences for which a given rule was never intended. (See the article in this issue of the *TESL Reporter* "Two Causes for Misapplication of Language Rules.")

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