
Pathways 3: Listening, Speaking, and Critical Thinking

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From the title alone, readers see that *Pathways 3: Listening, Speaking, and Critical Thinking* is clearly a textbook designed for a listening and speaking English as a Second Language class. The textbook is appropriate for high school and college classrooms in non-native-English-speaking countries, such as the Philippines and Japan. The inclusion of the critical thinking skill is an advantage to English-language learners because this component helps them learn to process information and develop analytical thinking.

The themes of the book are based on photographs and topics from National Geographic publications. As a result, students who are interested in global issues or who are preparing for a major related to a particular field (such as one of the natural sciences, geography, history, or archaeology) are incentivized to participate in the learning process. The authors present issues in a manner in which, obviously, listening and speaking skills are forefront: Chase and Johannsen provide conversational skills, pronunciation tips, lecture or video note-taking strategies, and grammar structures relevant to oral language. Indeed, the *Pathways* series takes an integrated oral skills approach to teaching academic English.

One particular chapter focuses on the theme of traditional and modern medicine. On the first page, the authors present learners with a large photo spread and text inserts, inviting the learners to think about and discuss the photo. Within the chapters, learners are encouraged to more deeply explore themes by answering questions and completing linguistically focused lessons. This particular chapter on traditional and modern medicine has two lessons (Lesson A and Lesson B), which help learners develop academic listening and speaking skills while engaging with the chapter's theme. All lessons include vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation mini-

lessons related to the listening and speaking tasks. Additionally, each chapter has an academic video file (available on DVD) related to the topics and tasks of that chapter.

In Lesson A, learners are taught the strategy of determining meaning from context. This learning happens as the students read a short report (the audio transcript is available on CD) and identify the meaning of highlighted words from the passage; the learners are then encouraged to complete blanks in a dialogue by using those same words. In the Listening Skills section of Lesson B in the chapter on traditional and modern medicine, the students are instructed to listen for details, make inferences, and link vowels with /j/ and /w/ sounds. In the Grammar section of that chapter, learners understand the real conditionals and quantifiers using specific and general nouns. After viewing the academic video, learners are expected to write sentences based on the video while employing the real conditional if statements—the particular grammar topic of that lesson. Here is one example: “If scientists observe animal behavior, _____”. Lessons also include critical thinking components that encourage learners to apply the material to contexts beyond situations presented in the textbook. This particular chapter invites learners, while in small groups, to evaluate the quality of argumentative statements about public wellness or to predict the value that wildlife observations can have on improving human health. Each chapter closes with a summative speaking task, such as a group presentation or a formal critique, which requires learners to integrate the content they have discussed throughout the chapter.

Overall, *Pathways* is an effective resource for academic English learners. The series draws from a variety of issues and topics (such as fashion, entrepreneurship, and psychology), so there is something to interest a wide range of learners. The series includes four proficiency levels, so one program can use a similar curriculum for multiple courses. The companion reading and writing books could effectively provide a four-skills approach in an English language program.

The *Pathways* series would be best complemented by a variety of language tasks related to the topic of each lesson. As an English as a Foreign Language instructor, I recognize the importance of motivation in Eng-

lish language learning, so I make it a habit to regularly include activities in my teaching. Some of my favorite activities, including letter tile spelling and collaborative writing, could easily be incorporated into the *Pathways* curriculum and would better increase excitement and interest for students. I would also recommend that more phrasal verb instruction be included, given that phrasal verbs are used frequently in spoken English, even in academic contexts. Even so, the textbook's shortcomings are minor and can be easily addressed through additional activities to accommodate the style of the teacher and the needs of the students.

About the Reviewer

Laarni has a bachelor's degree in TESOL and has taught ESL in the Philippines, the United States, and Japan to all ages – from pre-schoolers to Adult professionals. She's currently finishing her Masters degree in English Language Studies at the Western Mindanao State University, Philippines.

