

INSIDE OUT (INTERMEDIATE)

Sue Kay and Jones Vaughan

Oxford: Macmillan Heinemann, 2000.

(by Ana Almagro Esteban. Universidad de Jaén)

177

The extensive array of teaching materials in the field of English for General Purposes allows for a choice of textbooks for every student profile. It is however important to make an informed textbook selection and evaluation so that the most suitable book can be chosen in line with the educational context you are involved in.

Inside Out provides over 90 hours of teaching material. It is made up of 16 units which are thematically organised. The themes include general topics (such as friends, relaxation, dates with friends, adrenaline, children, the news, etc) of interest to students of different ages, especially adults and young adults. Each unit has a similar format, from eight to sixteen pages long, with the exception of units eight and sixteen, which revise the preceding units and which are of five pages each.

The four linguistic skills (writing, reading, listening, and speaking) are introduced and integrated. Theoretical notions on grammar are also included, as well as a large variety of activities centred on the four skills and the different linguistic components (grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation). The integration of theory and practice makes for easy comprehension of the contents and the implementation of the activities and, at the same time, is a way of maximising the linguistic and communicative competence of the student.

We will go on to describe the organisation of the units of this textbook and the type of activities it offers.

Each unit introduces and integrates the four skills. The writing skill focuses mainly on genres such as emails, informal letters (to friends and family), reviews of films and books, semi formal letters (accepting and declining invitations), formal letters (job applications), surveys, and reports. The reading materials also offer a wide variety regarding genres (articles from the press, web pages, fragments of novels, etc), types of texts (with linguistic and communicative purposes), length, themes (directly related to those of the units), and the required reading strategies (intensive reading –identification of the main idea and location of specific information– and extensive reading –detailed comprehension, guessing the meaning of unknown vocabulary from the context, etc). The textbook *Inside Out* is accompanied by a cassette for developing the listening skill. Apart from offering a variety of accents and registers, it also uses the voices of people of different ages in the different situations presented. The themes of the speaking activities are very varied, linking in with the topics of the units. The recurrent role in the oral interaction activities is that of a friend.

The linguistic components are given an important focus, fulfilling both linguistic and communicative purposes, and thus the grammatical, lexical, and phonological aspects which are introduced in each unit are a means of enhancing the communicative competence of the student. In addition, linguistic aspects are not presented in isolation, but are directly related to the theme of the units. Each of them includes fixed sections for grammatical questions (*Close Up* and *Language reference*)¹ and vocabulary (*Lexis*), while the section dealing with phonetics (*Pronunciation*) appears in most, but not all of the units.

The contents are supported by a vast gamut of activities generated from the four skills and the three linguistic components, activities which have linguistic and communicative purposes and which, at the same time, involve the use of the different skills. In line with the foregoing, there follows a more detailed description of the type of activities to be found there.

Writing

- Read some e-mail messages, justify orally which ones are the most and least interesting, and then write an e-mail with a message about yourself.
- Read a letter written by one of the people who appear in a photograph and decide who wrote it. Next, find spelling mistakes and missing capital letters.

Finally, write a letter similar to the one previously read introducing yourself to a penpal.

- Write a review of a film you have seen based on information such as title of the film, type of film, name of the director, whether it is based on a book, where it was filmed, main actors and which characters they play, summary of the plot, and what you particularly liked or disliked about the film.

- Write a letter to a friend using a list of expressions provided.

Reading

- Match the headings of a web-page to the information provided.

- Put the verbs in brackets in the most appropriate verb tense.

- Correct sentences which summarise the content of a text previously read.

Listening

- Write questions for the answers provided and compare these questions to the ones on the recording.

- Listening and note-taking.

- Complete texts such as dialogues, lyrics of songs, etc, comparing your version with the original text which is recorded.²

- Listen to and read a conversation at the same time, underlining anything which is different from the recording.

Speaking

- Discuss a great variety of topics taking as a starting point photographs, recorded conversations, etc for which words, expressions, and other cues, are provided.

Grammar

- Put the words in sentences in the correct order and add auxiliary verbs when necessary.

- Match answers to questions.
- Underline adverbs of frequency while listening to and reading a tapescript.
- Match words and expressions with possible synonyms, verb tenses with their use, etc.
- Match the words and expressions underlined in a tapescript with words and expressions provided that are closest in meaning.
- Ask questions designed to elicit information about different issues.
- Identify expressions in a text which make certain critical comments less direct.

Vocabulary

- Complete expressions from memory and compare them with a partner. Then look at the article previously read again and check these expressions.
- Find expressions in an article with a similar meaning to the underlined words, comparing them with a partner and, finally, look back at the article to check.
- Complete sentences with words and expressions given and change the grammar of these expressions when necessary.
- Complete sentences referring back to an article previously read and discuss with a partner whether you agree with the statements contained in this article.
- Match words from a list to form compound adjectives which fit certain descriptions.

Phonetics

- Listen to different questions and underline the strongest stress in each question.
- Listen to words and match the sounds to the phonetic symbols.
- Think up words containing the twelve English vowels and check these words in the dictionary.
- Read and at the same time listen to some sentences. Then practise those sentences in which all the schwas have been marked.

Together with the variety of activities, an ample range of strategies and techniques associated with the four linguistic skills are described. Complementary activities

are also provided in the *Inside Out* workbook (Kerr, 2000), where each unit, of four to six pages, includes a good variety of activities of similar characteristics to those in the text book itself, a novelty being that the exercises are accompanied by the use of a cassette. Other additional materials are the Teacher's Book and a resource pack, which includes photocopyable worksheets linked to the student's book.

It is worth indicating at this point that this textbook could usefully be complemented in various ways:

- 1) Its grammatical sections could be completed by relating them to the corresponding language functions. This would help the student know when to use any particular structure.
- 2) The reading activities, based on a broad range of texts, determine the use of different reading strategies. However, these strategies are not expressly mentioned, which means that the texts have to be read carefully in advance to determine which strategy the student needs to apply in the reading of each text.
- 3) While the majority of the activities generated for the practice of speaking skills are meant to be carried out with a classmate as the interlocutor, it would be convenient to carry out some of these activities by means of simulations where the students have to assume different roles.
- 4) The writing activities should be based on the theoretical aspects of planning and organising what is being written. In this respect the textbook *Successful Writing* (Evans, 2000) would be helpful.
- 5) Finally, it would be beneficial to encourage extensive reading based on complementary materials, which would be selected according to the level of the students and the themes of the readings.

As can be seen, the positive aspects of the textbook *Inside Out* far outweigh its limitations, which in any case can be easily overcome. It could be used with students of different ages, as well as at different stages of education, mainly secondary and university levels (first-year courses of areas such as *Diploma in Primary School Language Teaching* and *Degree in Hispanic Studies*, among others).

Notes

1. The title of these sections is indicated in order to locate them in the textbook under scrutiny.

2. Most of the activities, both for the linguistic skills and linguistic components, require the use of spoken English.

Works cited

EVANS, Virginia. 2000. *Successful Writing*. Newbury: Express Publishing.

KERR, Philip. 2000. *Inside Out (Workbook)*. Oxford: Macmillan Heinemann English Language Teaching.