

...with Robert Taferner

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BOOK REVIEWS ONLINE

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THIS MONTH'S column features a review of *Moving On With English: Discussion, Role Plays, Projects*, by Margarete Wells. *Moving On With English* is an integrated course book for intermediate level students.

Moving On With English: Discussion, Role Plays, Projects

[Eric Bray. Tokyo: Nan'un-do, 2007 pp. 73. ¥2,205. ISBN: 978-4-523-17538-4.]

**Reviewed by Margarete Wells,
Kansai Gaidai University**

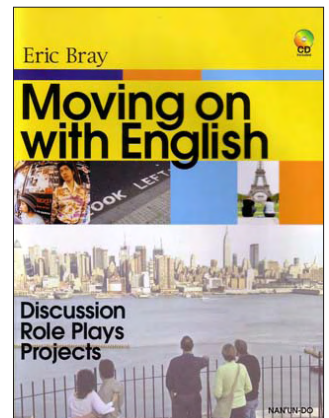
Moving On With English is an integrated course book with a strong focus on speaking. The book consists of 12 units, all following roughly the same pattern. They start with a warm-up activity, usually in the form of questions to think about, to which the students add one question of their own. This is developed into a small group discussion leading to a roleplay with speaking tips, some group activity, or a mini project. Most units also have a useful model conversation. Writing and grammar are emphasized to varying degrees in different units. Finally, each unit has a page set aside for review and reflection. Unit 12 acts as a review of the whole book, including vocabulary, and the appendix offers students the opportunity to evaluate all aspects of their roleplays. A CD is included, along with details of the author's website for further English practice.

Unit 1 sets the tone for the whole book. Inhibitions are broken down, students leave their seats to interview several partners, and thinking on your feet is encouraged. It starts with an excellent icebreaker between the teacher and the class, which is then copied by the students. This is followed by more class-bonding activities, in the form of interviews with an information questionnaire. Students ask each other non-scripted follow-up questions, with the aim of creating richer, more natural exchanges in English.

The situations in the book are a mixture of practical (giving advice to friends), situational (selling inventions to investors), and issues (helping to solve the world's problems), and require gradually more and more sophisticated language. The units provide plenty of scope for creativity and follow-up, and language is reinforced through the integration of skills. The student is given a brief outline of various roles from which language can develop spontaneously, e.g., job seeker and interviewer, inventor, and investor. For example, in the unit You, Travel Agent, students eventually pretend they actually work as travel agents and make posters to advertise their tours. As an extension activity, members of the class then visit classmates' agencies to book a holiday destination for themselves. One of the most interesting units was an interview with an older person outside the classroom, which my students did as group presentations.

The Teacher's Manual, also translated into Japanese, explains the rationale of the book and gives a step-by-step guide for each unit along with further examples of situations, questions, and teaching tips. Bray places great value on not leaving anything that could unnerve the learner unexplained, building up confidence by layering new on old, writing new expressions from the textbook on the board, and erasing them as they are learned. He recommends the same roleplays be practiced several times, with students assuming different characters. With the textbook as a crutch to be gradually dispensed with, learners can become independent at their own pace.

However, along with this concern for guidance and support comes the exhortation to deepen



the level of conversation with additional questions and material, or suggestions like finishing the lesson with a discussion. There is an obvious dichotomy here, and when the language of some instructions and model materials from earlier units was analysed, the Flesch Kincaid grade level was 6.4, which is very high for EFL students. This fact, together with the increased difficulty of Unit 10 (You, Helping Solve World Problems) further supports the feeling that learners whose level is at least low intermediate, but preferably higher, would stand to gain the most in terms of increased confidence and improved proficiency by using this book. The course relies heavily on learners being willing to think on their feet and be linguistically creative, not to mention the heavy stress on question techniques, which would seem to be very demanding for lower level students.

Allowing students so much freedom with ideas gives them more power over the language, but such unscripted spontaneity could mean a heavier burden for the teacher and some frustration or superficiality for the weaker students. While my post low-intermediate students enjoyed acting out variations on the clumsy waiter and awkward customer roles, they needed considerable input in terms of language and ideas when it came to the situations suggested in *Travel Woes*.

In short, as a class textbook in an EFL setting, *Moving On With English* probably tries to cater for too wide an ability range. However, this book does encourage interaction and communication. It contains some excellent ideas and fun activities that are relevant to students' needs and many teachers will enjoy using it for this reason.

RESOURCES • RECENTLY RECEIVED

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...with Greg Rouault

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Books for Students (reviewed in *TLT*)

Contact: Greg Rouault
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- * *Click, Crown, Team, Club, and Current*. Mary Glasgow Magazines. London: Scholastic, 2008. [5 levels of graded content in magazine format printed five times per year, incl. CDs, transcripts, teacher's notes, downloadable content, and printable resources].
- * *Faster Reading*. Malarcher, C., Morita, A., & Harada, S. Tokyo: Seibido, 2007. [3-level read-

ing text incl. CD, unit introduction idioms, and vocabulary glossary in Japanese].

- * *Global Transformation: Insights into Modern Economy and International Business*. Ishii, T., Yamaguchi, O., Matsumura, Y., Koch, T., & Burrows, L. Tokyo: Seibido, 2007. [Incl. CD, task instructions, vocabulary glossary, and grammar points in Japanese].
- * *Impact Conversation*. Sullivan, K., & Beuckens, T. Hong Kong: Pearson Longman Asia ELT, 2009. [2-level conversation course incl. CD, online teacher's manual with teaching tips and unit tests].
- * *Impact Issues*. Day, R. R., Shaules, J., & Yamana-ka, J. Hong Kong: Pearson Longman Asia ELT, 2009. [3-level content-based discussion text incl. CD; online teacher's manual with teaching tips, video clips, and tests].

Books for Teachers (reviewed in *JALT Journal*)

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- Academic Writing and Plagiarism*. Pecorari, D. London: Continuum International, 2008.
- * *Reflective Language Teaching: From Research to Practice*. Farrell, T. S. C. London: Continuum International, 2007.
- * *Teaching Academic Writing*. Friedrich, P. (Ed.). London: Continuum International, 2008.