

Textbook Evaluation: Overview & Chapter Evaluation

Scope & Sequence Evaluation

The ESL textbook evaluated is the *Ventures Transitions*, 2nd edition student book written by Gretchen Bitterlin, Dennis Johnson, Donna Price, and Sylvia Ramirez and published by Cambridge University Press. The *Ventures* series includes levels 1-4, followed by *Transitions*. As a textbook for advanced English learners, it is being used in a classroom of college-aged students preparing for their future careers. The evaluation is based on integration of 5 components: communication, culture, connection, comparison, and community. Communication encompasses education of language structure and practice of various language skills while culture incorporates relevant topics of the target culture. The component of connections relates the content to multiple disciplines while comparisons encourage learners to assess their home culture with the target culture. Lastly, the aspect of communities provides examples of how language can be practiced outside the classroom. The textbook enhances communication in the English language by providing a set of varied activities in which students can engage with a unit's topic. Aspects of American culture permeate the lessons as images depict scenes of car inspections and people on their cell phones (Bitterlin et al. 92), although students are rarely asked to address their own cultures. In one of the few occasions, the textbook encourages comparison of American culture with students' home cultures by prompting discussion on the norms of their own cultures (53). Additionally, cross-disciplinary themes are explored in the various contexts of role playing such as using small talk with strangers at the grocery store (52).

One area in which this textbook performs exceptionally well is the area of communication. Each unit follows a structure that allows students to practice communication with newly learned vocabulary and grammatical constructions in a balance of listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities. For instance, unit 3 lesson A introduces the topic of volunteering by asking students about their volunteer experiences (22-23). Lesson B teaches indirect statements with a role play activity involving speaking with a volunteer coordinator (24-25). Lessons C and D check reading comprehension of articles on volunteering while at college (26-29). And lastly, lesson E prompts students to write a summary about the volunteering article from lesson D (30-31). These activities are perfect for a classroom of college-aged students because they allow students to use language in topics they may already be interacting with in their daily routines. Featuring a variety of language skills allows students to determine which skills (e.g., writing, speaking) they feel most comfortable with and which ones they feel need more improvement. With adequate practice offered in each unit of the textbook, students can enhance their language skills to reach their individual goals.

One area in which *Ventures Transitions* could improve is the area of cultural and linguistic comparisons. While much focus is placed on how English is used in the context of American culture, students do not have many opportunities to personalize information by comparing how language is used in their own cultures. The few mentions of culture are present in Unit 6: Small Talk when the textbook poses a question of what topics are appropriate to discuss in the student's home culture (53). Teachers may need to supplement the textbook by adapting or adding questions to address cultural variances and encourage students to compare their native languages. This could be done in a group discussion, practicing oral skills, or as a

writing activity. Language comparison in this context will allow students to personalize the information.

In the context of a classroom of college-aged students preparing for future careers, this textbook serves well. Unit topics are relevant to the stage of life the target students are in and use activities that reflect situations they are likely to experience beyond the classroom. The tasks provide students the opportunity to enhance different language skills for each topic addressed. Professional writing prepares students for resume building, reading articles prepares them for formal papers such as contracts they may need to interpret, and discourse skills prepare them for workplace conversations. With each unit enhancing each skill in a variety of possible contexts, students are sufficiently well-informed and well-practiced to achieve a goal of using English in their future careers.

Work Cited

Bitterlin, Gretchen, et al. *Ventures Transitions*. 2nd ed., Cambridge, 2014.