


***College Oral Communication Series, Books 1-4***

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Part of the Houghton Mifflin English for Academic Success Series, the four texts that make up the *College Oral Communication* collection, like the other three sets in the series (College Reading, Vocabulary, and Writing), are a welcome addition to the body of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course materials designed to help prepare students to enter mainstream courses in North American colleges and universities.

Adapted from material excerpted from a wide range of Houghton Mifflin and McDougall Littell publishers' college and high school level textbooks used in mainstream classes, supported by excerpts from David Ellis' *Master Student Tips*, and piloted in North American high schools, each text contains six well-written, content-rich units designed to introduce EAP students to academic subjects from across the curriculum.

Book	Unit	Focus
1	1	Music
	2	Nutrition
	3	Geography
	4	Biology and Psychology
	5	Psychology, Sociology, and Medicine
	6	Business and Technology
2	1	Humanities
	2	Ecology

	3	Anthropology
	4	Math and Business,
	5	Animal Science
	6	Psychology
3	1	Film History
	2	Computer Animation Technology
	3	Communication Studies
	4	Television Advertising
	5	Media Effects
	6	Ethics and Professional Codes
4	1	History
	2	Psychology
	3	E-commerce
	4	Sociology
	5	Scientific Inquiry
	6	Literature

In addition to *College Oral Communication's* thorough coverage of academic subjects, one attractive feature of this collection is its clear and easy-to-follow integrated structure. Each unit begins by outlining competencies specific to EAP students' roles as both language learners and students who need to learn the skills necessary to participate in mainstream classrooms, and then provides three sections filled with lessons tailored to meet both goals: *Effective Academic Listening*, *Effective Academic Speaking*, and *Assessing Your Listening and Speaking Skills*. In Unit 1 of Book 1, "The Power of Music," for example, the text presents students with several objectives: they should be (1) "able to hear, identify, and pronounce key vocabulary with proper syllables and stress," (2) "listen to a lecture and complete an outline with details," and (3) "retell the main points of the lecture" (p. 1).

After previewing the objectives, students begin the lesson. First, they engage in schemata-building activities similar to those found in mainstream music courses, such as identifying genres from pictures and listening clips.

- Afterwards, students move on to activities in section 1, listening, which are designed to prepare them to meet the first objective. Here, they work through vocabulary and word stress exercises, both isolated and contextualized, to help familiarize them with the vocabulary they will encounter in music courses.
- Next, to meet the second objective, students continue in the listening section and are guided through a note taking exercise where they listen to a lecture given by a North American college professor about the "powers of music" (p. 15). Here students learn to discriminate between teacher talk and the core material of the lecture (before discussing the meat of the lecture, the teacher reminds students about how to access the files of different music genres in the music lab and answers student questions about quizzes) and outline the lecture's major and minor points.
- In the following section, speaking, students expand on the listening portion of the unit and participate in activities related to the third objective. Here they engage in a variety of activities such as checking notes in study groups, asking clarification questions, and summarizing or highlighting points in the lecture to other students.

After students have worked through the listening and speaking sections, they are then guided to an assessment section which provides unambiguous activities students and teachers can use to gauge whether the students have met the unit's objectives or need to work further before moving on.

Students will also find the series' ancillary materials helpful for further out-of-class practice. A CD containing the lectures students hear during the listening portion of the class is available for each book so that students can review their lessons at home. (Of course an instructor might want to tell students not to listen to each lecture until after it's been heard the first time in class.) Four *College Vocabulary* textbooks, one for each level, based on Averil Coxhead's *Academic Writing List* (AWL) (Coxhead, 2000), can also be purchased. Although these books are not thematically linked to the units in the *College Oral Communication* collection, they can provide additional support--at the same level--for students who may need further focused practice in building the vocabulary skills needed to comprehend and use the lexis found in academic environments. Another plus is each book's free online site where students can access the CD lectures' audio scripts, the AWL, and additional activities and quizzes.

*College Oral Communication's* comprehensive coverage of academic subjects, its easy to follow structure, and its helpful ancillary materials make it a package worth considering for teachers who want to help students prepare to participate in mainstream academic courses--but there is more. Teachers also can find material especially designed just for them. Online, instructors can locate a full array of clearly explained teaching notes, sample syllabi, answer keys, audio scripts, handouts, transparencies, and downloadable quizzes to assist them with the day-to-day operation of their courses. Another added bonus is an invaluable seven unit, 150 page, *Essentials of Teaching Academic Oral Communication* text which offers 18 in-depth and no-nonsense chapters devoted to a variety of practical and theoretical aspects of EAP teaching applicable to the pre, during, and post stages of a course.

While I found each chapter well worth reading, I found three especially interesting for teachers preparing to teach EAP:

- The "Before the Course Begins" chapter, for example, encourages teachers to examine themselves, their classrooms, and their programs to see how each is suited to an EAP course and what they can do before the first day to fully adapt to that purpose.
- "Why Are We Studying How to Speak English" assists teachers in building students' "awareness of EAP speaking needs" and answering them when they ask the important question about "why they need the course" (p. 39).
- "Adopt the Attitude of the Exploratory Teacher" prepares teachers for one of the most important parts of teaching, the reflective stage. In this chapter teachers see how important it is to "gather information" about what is happening in the classroom, "examine the information closely," "make informed changes in teaching," "document changes in teaching-learning behaviors," and "share them with others" (p. 133).

*College Oral Communication's* abundant resources for both students and instructors indeed make it an excellent EAP resource, but there's one minor electronic hitch. Teachers and students in some global regions may experience difficulty viewing the

student and teacher web pages depending on which language their Microsoft Windows operating system supports; but this can be overcome with an easy adjustment to Internet Explorer viewing options. If users have trouble making the adjustment, as the instructions for this are not found in the Help section of either the student or teacher web pages, they can contact customer support by either e-mail or telephone using contact information at [http://college.hmco.com/how/how\\_techsupp.html](http://college.hmco.com/how/how_techsupp.html). Aside from this minor technical inconvenience, teachers and students alike will find this collection to be a valuable addition to the body of EAP course materials currently available and a set of materials well worth adopting.

## References

Coxhead, A. (2000). A new academic word list. *TESOL Quarterly*, 34, 213-238.

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