

REACT INTERACT

SITUATIONS FOR COMMUNICATION

**by
Donald R. H. Byrd
and
Isis Clemente-Cabetas**

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Donald R. H. Byrd
Isis Clemente-Cábetas

TO THE STUDENT

In your English classes, you probably spend a lot of time practicing the language in drills or exercises. However, you have your own ideas, opinions, and values. Have you ever tried expressing them in English? This book gives you an opportunity to do that.

You will also have the opportunity to hear and evaluate the opinions and ideas of other students. In many cases, there will be differences between you and others. By discussing these differences, we hope that you learn to use English more clearly and to understand it better. More important, we hope that you learn to clarify and express your own values.

Your opinions and values come from many influences: from your parents, your friends, your past experiences, your teachers, your religious beliefs, your ethnic or national identification, books and newspapers, and from other sources as well. Needless to say, the dynamics of these influences are different from person to person. Consequently, each person is unique with his or her own values.

In order to allow each person to express his or her own unique values, the activities in this book cover many topics. Some concern real-life situations like marriage plans, careers, leaving home, retirement, work and social problems, emergency procedures in a crisis, and many others. Other situations in the book stimulate the imagination, and they include topics like mysteries and science fiction.

Other than expressing your own ideas and opinions, the situations here offer other advantages as well. You can become familiar with the new vocabulary in each unit and use it in your discussions with others in the Oral Interaction sections of each unit. The Written Reaction exercises enable you to reinforce the vocabulary and new language patterns that arise in the oral exchanges.

Of course, we do not know your thoughts, ideas, and opinions, and we do not wish to judge them. Therefore, we do not feel that there is a right or correct answer to the questions in the activities. At all times, we encourage you to be understanding of and sympathetic to the opinions and values of others. Approach the activities in a spirit of sharing, be receptive to learning from others around you and be aware of your influences on them as well.

We feel that the major purposes of the activities are to get you to:

- think about the situation
- express your ideas
- listen to others
- understand and appreciate other people's ideas
- report someone else's ideas to others
- examine your own ideas
- agree or disagree, if you like

Perhaps, too, you will learn more about yourself, others, and the world around you.

TO THE TEACHER

This book has three aims: (1) to provide stimulation for real classroom communication; (2) to expand knowledge of the English language, particularly vocabulary and grammar; and (3) to focus on the diversity of students' own values while sharpening their process of values clarification.

The first aim listed above is most important and requires additional discussion. Many linguists and teachers have expressed dissatisfaction with "traditional" grammatical and situational language activities, charging that such activities do not fully prepare the learner for "communicative competence." The authors have concerned themselves with what is communicated through language rather than with structural or situational foci. As a result, the activities in *React Interact* allow for meaningful communication among learners. This interaction is facilitated by communicative uses (functions). In 1976, D. A. Wilkins described six communicative functions, which Julia M. Dobson later expanded to seven broad communicative functions. These functions include (1) requesting and giving information, (2) expressing thought processes, (3) expressing opinions, (4) making judgments, (5) modifying people's behavior, (6) expressing personal feelings, and (7) interacting socially. Every one of these functions occurs over and over again in *React Interact*. A listing of these communicative functions is included in the table of contents where the functions are given rather broadly. Other times the authors designated the communicative purpose in a more specific manner ('subfunctions'). The result, the authors hope, is a description of communicative activities that teachers and students can readily use.

The twenty-two situations in this book include various kinds of tasks: paraphrasing, summarizing, debating the pros and cons of an issue, reaching a consensus, solving a problem, answering questions, filling in blanks, completing sentences, and matching exercises.

Each unit of *React Interact* has four sections (1) Situation (containing the setting of the communication), (2) Oral Interaction (presenting the individual and group communication tasks), (3) Written Reaction (focusing on and reinforcing grammatical points that arose in the Situation and Oral Interaction), and (4) Vocabulary (containing new words and definitions that are germane to the situation).

The authors would like to offer the following reminders for the effective use of these materials:

- 1 Do you adopt a feeling of acceptance of students' views and encourage students to share that feeling of acceptance among themselves?
- 2 Do you avoid moralizing? (i.e., That's good or That's bad.) "Right" or "Wrong" answers are inappropriate.
- 3 Do you avoid taking sides in the discussion?

- 4 Are your responses and comments clarifying? (i.e., Do you mean this or that?)
- 5 Do your students listen carefully to each other? Do you encourage paraphrasing?
- 6 Do you treat vocabulary in the context of the situation?
- 7 Do you allow enough time for each activity? (Be sure to check the time allocations given in the table of contents.)
- 8 Do you vary the dynamics of the communicative tasks?
 - Some situational tasks should be done first by the individual—not in groups. (e.g., Feelings, Marooned, Pictures at an Exhibition, Careers)
 - Most other situational tasks call for small groups (three or four students) in order to stimulate oral interaction.
 - A variation is to assign each group in the classroom a different task from the Oral Interaction activities.
 - Another variation is to assign a particular task to a single student who could then lead the group discussion.
 - Assign a student secretary for each group to record troublesome vocabulary, to summarize important arguments, to keep notes, or to report the discussion to the whole class.
 - Some situations allow for a debate format; divide the class into two sections representing the pro and con arguments if you like.
- 9 Do you pace the class? Although the situations are engaging, the teacher should monitor the group discussion and not let it wear on beyond its peak.
- 10 Do you keep a separate record of students' errors and treat them later? (Teacher corrections tend to interrupt communication.)

When conducting these communication activities, it is important to deal sensitively with students' emotional intensity; the situations in this book are relevant to contemporary society, but no one should be offended by them. If a situation appears "touchy," it is better not to use it at all. In this regard, the authors feel that teachers can best judge the selection and use of the various units. Since these units are not in any prescribed order of presentation, teachers should feel free to skip around to units that their students find interesting and useful.

Now, a word about time. In the table of contents, each of the twenty-two units has a maximum time that would be required to go through all the Oral Interaction tasks. If the teacher wants to adapt the situations for use in less time, then he or she simply eliminates certain tasks. The Written Reaction tasks, designed as follow-up activities, are not part of the initial treatment of the situation. Ideally, they should be used as homework. The longer situations may be used over two class periods, allowing for a distillation of students' ideas, opinions, and reactions during the time between the two class meetings. For shorter spans of time (five or ten minutes each) the last unit, Bits and Pieces, includes additional topics from which the teacher can select single items for communication. These Bits and Pieces can be used as meaningful fillers for fragments of time that arise in any intermediate or advanced class.

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SOPHIE'S DILEMMA

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Sophie is a beautiful and intelligent young career woman. She works at an international publishing company. Her job is editing writers' manuscripts. Since traveling is an important part of her work, she has already seen many parts of the world. Through her work and travel, she has met many single men who are interested in her romantically. Right now she feels a little troubled because three men, Derek, Winston, and Ethan, want to marry her. She also feels a commitment to continue her career. Her options are as follows:

MARRY DEREK

- 1 Handsome young actor; doesn't have much money
- 2 Expresses his love openly
- 3 Takes her to plays when he can get free tickets
- 4 Gives her lovely gifts for her apartment
- 5 Ambitious and egoistic
- 6 Had many girlfriends in the past
- 7 In excellent physical health
- 8 Wants Sophie to continue working

MARRY ETHAN

- 1 Young, middle-class professor
- 2 Writes love poems to her
- 3 Takes her for long walks and to concerts
- 4 Brings her flowers that he has picked himself
- 5 Quiet, serious, and intelligent
- 6 Had one love affair that lasted five years
- 7 In good physical health; sees a psychiatrist regularly
- 8 Wants Sophie to make her own decision about her career

MARRY WINSTON

- 1 Rich older industrialist
- 2 Always kind to her but never talks of love
- 3 Takes her to chic places
- 4 Gives her expensive jewelry
- 5 Conservative and established
- 6 Two previous marriages; three grown children
- 7 In good health; twenty years older than Sophie
- 8 Wants Sophie to be a full-time wife

CONTINUE HER CAREER

- 1 The chance for leadership with her company
- 2 Exciting and interesting work
- 3 Has her own money in the bank
- 4 Can travel anytime she wants to
- 5 Occasionally lonely
- 6 Loves children but has little time for them now
- 7 Enjoys an active, changing life

ORAL INTERACTION

1 Look at Sophie's options. Decide what she should do.

2 What are the advantages for Sophie

- a. if she marries Derek?
- b. if she marries Winston?
- c. if she marries Ethan?
- d. if she continues her career?

3 What are the disadvantages for Sophie

- a. if she marries Derek?
- b. if she marries Winston?
- c. if she marries Ethan?
- d. if she continues her career?

WRITTEN REACTION

1 There are five realistic options for Sophie. Write four of them.

a. She can marry no one and continue working.

b. _____

c. _____

d. _____

e. _____

2 Which option in exercise 1 did your group choose? Why?

3 In your opinion, what is the best and the worst characteristic of each man?

a. Derek (best) _____

(worst) _____

b. Winston (best) _____

(worst) _____

c. Ethan (best) _____

(worst) _____

4 Describe a typical day in Sophie's life as the wife of Winston or Derek or Ethan.

VOCABULARY

editing	■ preparing written material for publication, especially in a book, magazine, or newspaper
manuscript	■ book or article before publication
troubled	■ worried
commitment	■ promise or agreement to do something
option	■ choice
ambitious	■ having a strong wish to be or do or have something
egoistic	■ self-centered; always thinking of oneself
middle-class	■ of the economic class between rich and poor
psychiatrist	■ medical doctor who treats problems of the mind
industrialist	■ person who makes money from industry
chic	■ stylish and expensive
conservative	■ wanting things to stay about the same; not to change too much or too fast
established	■ successful, settled
advantage	■ benefit; something useful or helpful
disadvantage	■ cause of difficulty, something not helpful

A DISTANT WAR

2