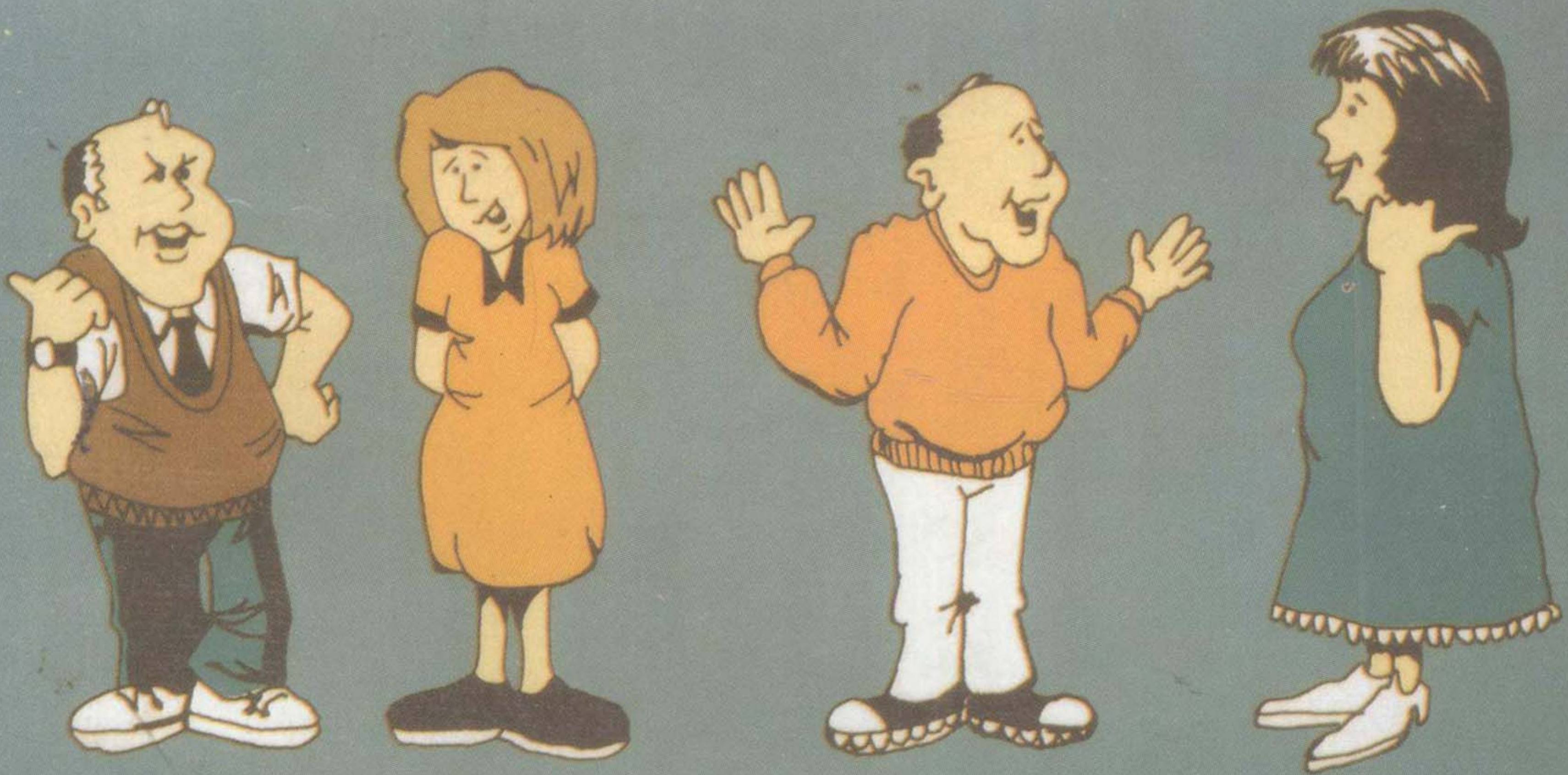


SIDE BY SIDE

English
Through
Guided Conversations

1



Steven J. Molinsky
Bill Bliss

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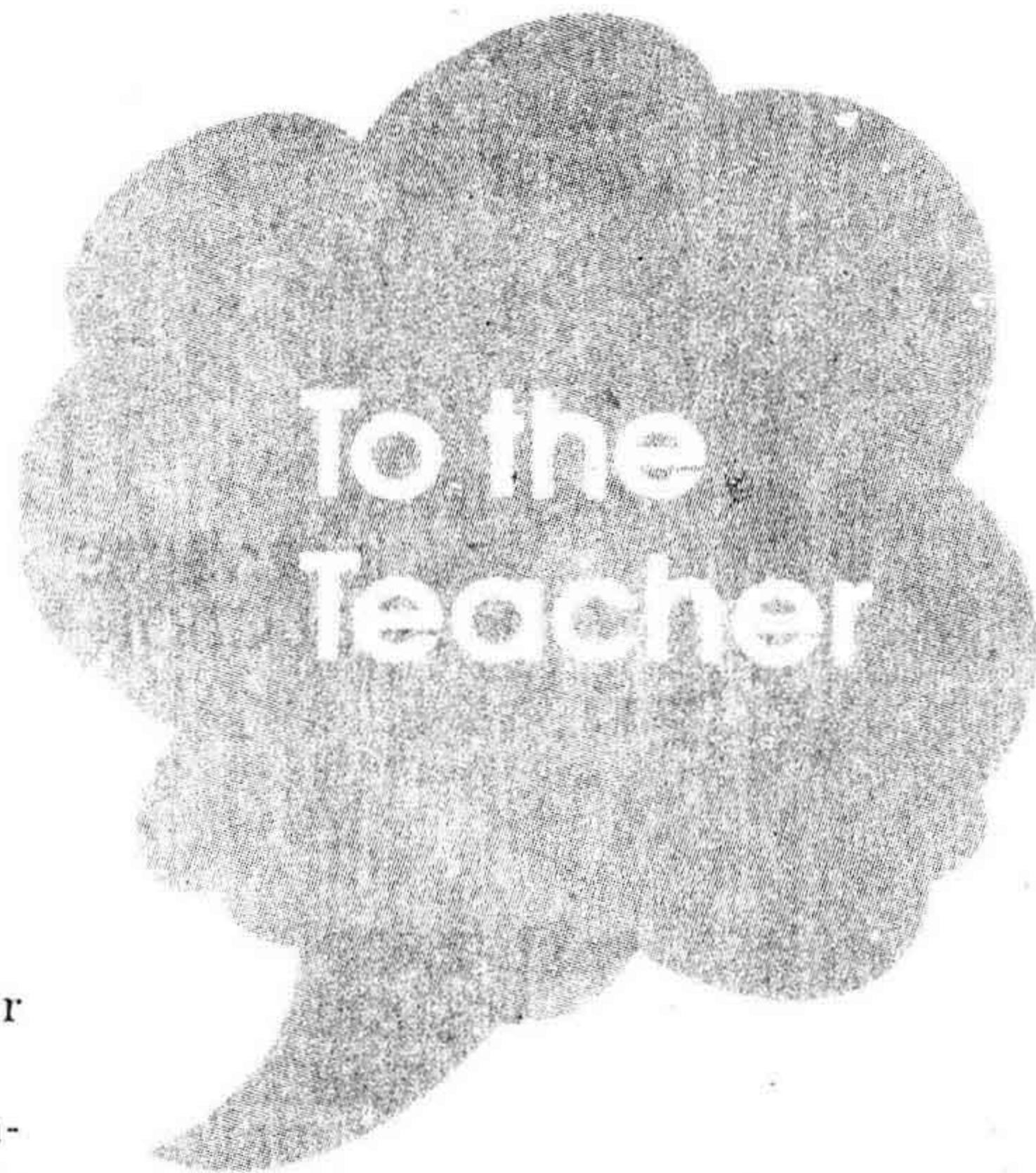
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Side by Side is a conversational grammar book.

We do not seek to describe the language, or prescribe its rules. Rather, we aim to help students learn to *use* the language grammatically, through practice with meaningful conversational exchanges.

This book is intended for adult and young-adult learners of English. It is designed to provide the beginning student with the basic foundation of English grammar, through a carefully sequenced progression of conversational exercises and activities. Teachers of nonbeginning students will also find these materials to be effective as a rapid, concise review of basic structures of the language.

WHY A CONVERSATIONAL GRAMMAR BOOK?

Grammar is usually isolated and drilled through a variety of traditional structural exercises such as repetition, substitution, and transformation drills. These exercises effectively highlight particular grammatical structures . . . but they are usually presented as a string of single sentences, not related to each other in any unifying, relevant context.

Traditional dialogues, on the other hand, may do a fine job of providing examples of real speech, but they don't usually offer sufficient practice with the structures being taught. Teachers and students are often frustrated by the lack of a clear grammatical focus in these meaningful contexts. And besides that, it's hard to figure out what to *do* with a dialogue after you've read it, memorized it, or talked about it.

In this book we have attempted to combine the best features of traditional grammatical drills and contextually rich dialogues. We aim to actively engage our students in meaningful conversational exchanges within carefully structured grammatical frameworks. And we encourage our students to then break away from the textbook and *use* these frameworks to create conversations *on their own*.

While we have designed this text for the beginning student, we are also concerned about the nonbeginner. Although this student has made progress in understanding and using the language, he or she often needs more practice with the basics, the "nuts and bolts" of elementary English grammar.

(Intermediate-level teachers often tell us that even though their students

are doing beautifully with the present perfect tense, they still have trouble with such “early” structures as the third-person singular -s or the difference between the simple present and present continuous tenses.)

This book offers nonbeginners the opportunity to use their richer vocabularies in open-ended conversational exercises which focus on the basic grammatical structures of the language.

AN OVERVIEW

GRAMMATICAL PARADIGMS

Each lesson in the book covers one or more specific grammatical structures. A new structure appears first in the form of a grammatical paradigm, a simple schema of the structure.

These paradigms are meant to be a reference point for students as they proceed through the lesson’s conversational activities. While these paradigms highlight the structures being taught, we don’t intend them to be goals in themselves.

We don’t want our students simply to parrot back these rules: we want them to engage in conversations that show they can *use* them correctly.

GUIDED CONVERSATIONS

Guided conversations are the dialogues and the question and answer exchanges which are the primary learning devices in this book. Students are presented with a model conversation that highlights a specific aspect of the grammar. In the exercises that follow the model, students pair up and work “Side by Side,” placing new content into the given conversational framework.

How to Introduce Guided Conversations

There are many alternative ways to introduce these conversations. We don’t want to dictate any particular method. Rather, we encourage you to develop strategies that are compatible with your own teaching style, the specific needs of your students, and the particular grammar and content of the lesson at hand.

Some teachers will want books closed at this stage, so their students will have a chance to listen to the model before seeing it in print.

Other teachers will want students to have their books open for the model conversation or see it written on the blackboard. The teacher may read or act out the conversation while students follow along, or may read through the model with another student, or may have two students present the model to the class.

Whether books are open or closed, students should have ample opportunity to understand and practice the model before attempting the exercises that follow it.

How to Use Guided Conversations

In these conversational exercises, we are asking our students to place new content into the grammatical and contextual framework of the model. The

numbered exercises provide the student with new information which is “plugged into” the framework of the model conversation. Sometimes this framework actually appears as a “skeletal dialogue” in the text. Other times the student simply inserts the new information into the model that has just been practiced. (Teachers who have written the model conversation on the blackboard can create the skeletal dialogue by erasing the words that are replaced in the exercises.)

The teacher’s key function is to pair up students for “Side by Side” conversational practice, and then to serve as a resource to the class, for help with the structure, new vocabulary, and pronunciation.

“Side by Side” practice can take many forms. Most teachers prefer to call on two students at a time to present a conversation to the class. Other teachers have all their students pair up and practice the conversations with a partner. Or small groups of students might work together, pairing up within these groups and presenting the conversations to others in the group.

This paired practice helps teachers address the varying levels of ability of their students. Some teachers like to pair stronger students with weaker ones. The slower student clearly gains through this pairing, while the more advanced student also strengthens his or her abilities by lending assistance to the speaking partner.

Other teachers will want to pair up or group students of *similar* levels of ability. In this arrangement, the teacher can devote greater attention to students who need it, while giving more capable students the chance to learn from and assist each other.

While these exercises are intended for practice in conversation, teachers also find them useful as *writing* drills which reinforce oral practice and enable students to study more carefully the grammar highlighted in these conversations.

Once again, we encourage you to develop strategies that are most appropriate for your class.

The “Life Cycle” of a Guided Conversation

It might be helpful to define the different stages in the “life cycle” of a guided conversation.

1. *The Presentation Stage*

The model conversation is introduced and practiced by the class.

2. *The Rehearsal Stage*

Immediately after practicing the model, students do the conversational exercises that follow. For homework, they practice these conversations, and perhaps write out a few. Some lessons also ask students to create their own original conversations based on the model.

3. *The Performance Stage*

The next day students do the conversational exercises in class, preferably with their textbooks and notebooks closed. Students shouldn’t have to memorize these conversations. They will most likely remember them after sufficient practice in class and at home.

4. *The Incorporation Stage*

The class reviews the conversation or pieces of the conversation in the days that follow. With repetition and time, the guided conversation “dissolves” and its components are incorporated into the student’s active language.

ON YOUR OWN

An important component of each lesson is the “On Your Own” activity. These student-centered exercises reinforce the grammatical structures of the lesson while breaking away from the text and allowing students to contribute content of their own.

These activities take various forms: role-plays, interviews, extended guided conversations, and questions about the student’s real world.

In these exercises, we ask students to bring to the classroom new content, based on their interests, their backgrounds, and the farthest reaches of their imaginations.

We recommend that the teacher read through these activities in class and assign them as homework for presentation the next day. In this way, students will automatically review the previous day’s grammar while contributing new and inventive content of their own.

“On Your Own” activities are meant for simultaneous grammar reinforcement and vocabulary building. Beginning students will tend to recycle previous textbook vocabulary into these activities. While this repetition is clearly useful, beginners should also be encouraged to use other words which are familiar to them but are not in the text. *All* students should be encouraged to use a dictionary in completing the “On Your Own” activities. In this way, they will not only use the words they know, but the words they would *like* to know in order to really bring their interests, backgrounds, and imaginations into the classroom.

As a result, students will be teaching each other new vocabulary and also sharing a bit of their lives with others in the class.

CLASSROOM DRAMAS

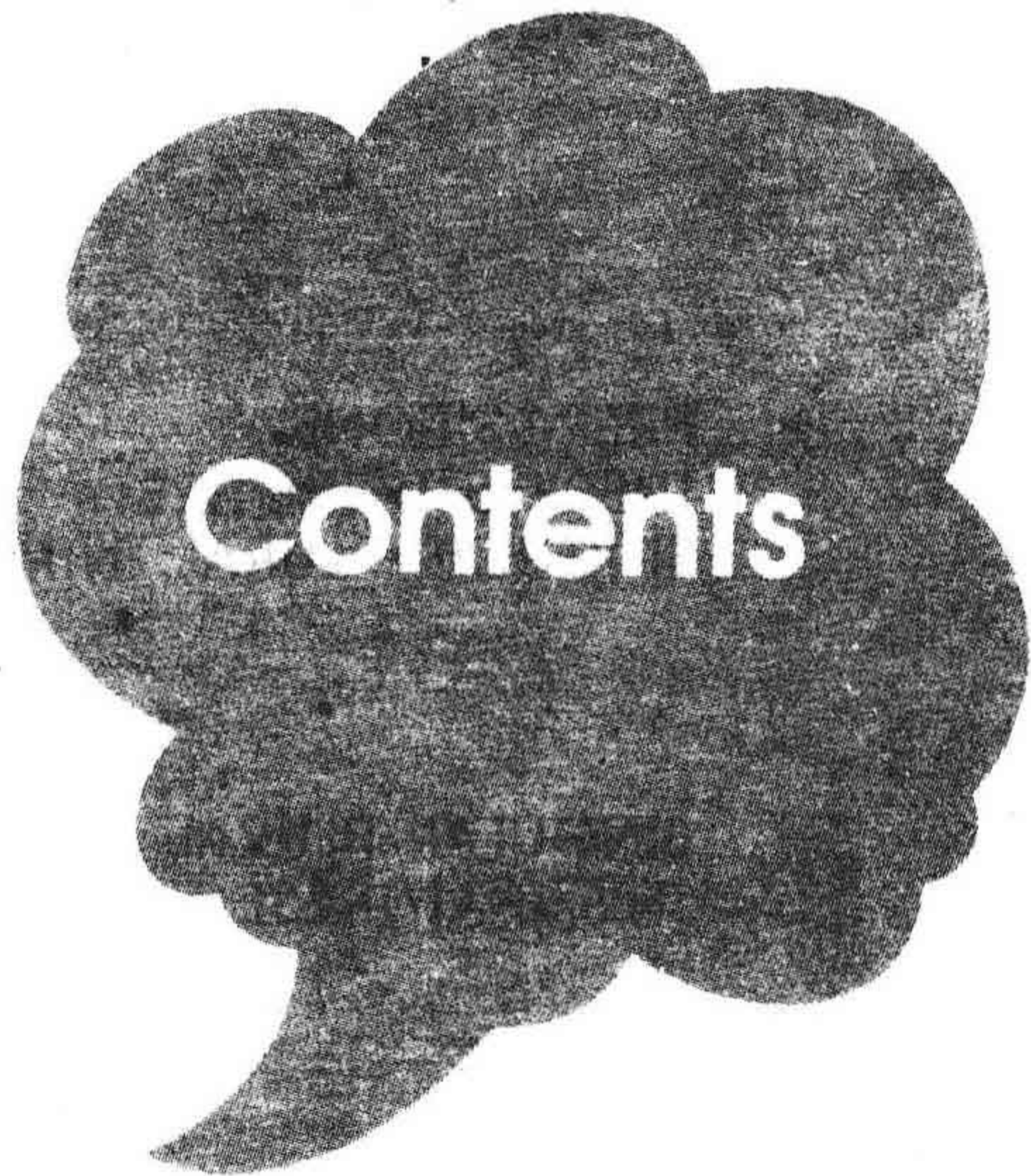
“Classroom Dramas” are the full-page comic strip dialogues that appear every once in a while throughout the text. The goal of these dialogues is to tackle a specific grammatical structure and give students the opportunity to rehearse this structure in a short, playful classroom conversation.

Some teachers will simply want to read through these dramas with their students. Others might want to act them out, using students in the class as the characters.

Students enjoy memorizing these dramas and using them frequently throughout the course. In fact, they often break into these conversations spontaneously, without any prompting from the teacher. (Our students, for example, like to impress visitors to the class by confidently performing these dramas as though they were really happening for the first time.)

In conclusion, we have attempted to make the study of English grammar a lively and relevant experience for our students. While we hope that we have conveyed to you the substance of our textbook, we also hope that we have conveyed the spirit: that learning the grammar can be conversational . . . student-centered . . . and fun.

Steven J. Molinsky
Bill Bliss



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To Be: Introduction

Read and practice.



Answer these questions.

1. What is your name?

2. What is your address?

3. What is your phone number?

4. Where are you from?

Now ask the other students in your class.

*Pronounce: two thirty-five.

†Pronounce: seven four one, eight nine "oh" six. (For the complete list of numbers, see page xii.)

ON YOUR OWN

Interview a famous person. Make up addresses, phone numbers, and cities. Use your imagination. Role-play these interviews in class.



- A. What is your name?
B. My name is _____.
- A. _____ address? .
B. _____.
- A. _____ phone number?
B. _____.
- A. Where are you from?
B. _____.
- A. Thank you very much.
B. You're welcome.



a famous actor



a famous actress



a famous athlete



*the president/prime minister
of your country*

