

Communication and Culture

A READING-WRITING TEXT
Second Edition

Joan Young Gregg



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of the City University of New York

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PREFACE

This Second Edition of *Communication and Culture* is designed for advanced students of English as a Second Language/Dialect. It is presumed that these students will have had at least 180 hours or the equivalent of instruction in English grammar, reading, and writing, in either a college/ESL or basic skills program.

The text, which has been successfully used in advanced ESL and English reading and writing skills courses (both credit and noncredit) in community and four-year colleges over the past several years, provides instruction for a minimum of ninety semester hours.

The Second Edition follows the same basic structure as the first, in its literal comprehension and critical reading questions; vocabulary work, including word building; sentence-level writing exercises; and composition. The thematic unity of the reading, writing, and composing sections has been maintained, as their broad subject, anthropology, has proved stimulating and relevant to the readers, both students and instructors, and provides a useful base for college-level discussion and expository writing.

A number of significant changes have been made in the text, however, in response to my experience in its use over the past several years, the very helpful comments of its reviewers, and the many instructors who have spoken to me informally about their experiences with it. The reading selections have all been expanded, ranging from about 1,000 words for the first to more than 2,000 for the last, and they have been revised to include examples of the rhetorical target of the chapter's "Composition Development" section. The vocabulary sections are essentially the same except for the substitution of synonym slotting by more varied and communicative exercises. The "Reading Comprehension Exercises" pay more attention to summarizing, paraphrasing, and outlining—important study skills for academic success and useful elements of composition as well. The "Small Group Assignments" have been retained with only a few changes.

Major improvements have been made in the “Writing Exercises” and “Composition Development” sections. First, in each chapter the “Composition Development” target governs the material in the “Writing Exercises”; that is, the sentence-level structures presented for practice in the writing exercises are unified by their relationship to each other and by their relevance for the composition work of the “Composition Development” section. Second, the sentence-level exercises have been made as communicative as possible by substituting sentence combining, sentence construction, and brief paragraph writing for more mechanical drills.

Each chapter’s “Composition Development” has been substantially expanded and reorganized. More attention has been paid to guidance in the form of suggested outlines, given data bases, sentence guides, and so on. The number and types of practice assignments have been expanded, varied, and developmentally arranged so that by the time the student is ready to work on one of the “Composition Topics,” he or she has a solid foundation in the needed skills. The “Composition Topics” are now largely contextualized, providing a sense of purpose and audience.

The appendices have also been changed. The list of two-word verbs has been replaced by a list of irregular verb parts, since the use of past participles becomes increasingly important for the advanced ESL/ESD writer. Appendix A, “The Composing Process,” and Appendix B, “Basic Terminology for English Language Study,” are substantially the same, however.

ORGANIZATION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR USE OF THE TEXT

Key Concepts

Key terms or concepts introduce each chapter. These should be explored with the students as a prereading exercise, to ensure that the literal meanings of the words are known and to provide an overview of the reading passage. Students should keep key concepts in mind as they read, marking the terms as they appear in the text as a form of note-taking. The “Key Concept Exercises” should be completed before the other exercises are begun.

Vocabulary Exercises

In each chapter a number of words from the text have been selected to form the vocabulary list. These words are the basis for the “Vocabulary Exercises.” Students should be encouraged to use their dictionaries to find synonyms and definitions *that they understand* for these words, and write them in the book. The “Vocabulary Exercises” should be completed before the “Reading Comprehension” and “Writing Exercises” are begun.

It is important for students to become familiar with common word roots, prefixes, and suffixes, which provide clues to word meaning and form. At the end of each vocabulary section is a group of words that share a given root, prefix, or suffix. These words may be incorporated into the lesson in a variety of ways, as time permits.

Reading Comprehension Exercises

This section contains a variety of questions designed to focus the student's attention on main ideas, significant details, relevant illustrations, linking devices, and organizational patterns of paragraphs. These exercises continually direct students back to the text to cite support for their answers. It is important that students respond in *complete written sentences* where asked to do so, as this will give them needed practice in forming the kinds of answers often required in credit-course homework assignments and essay-type examinations. The outline and summary tasks in this section also provide practice in study skills useful in other college courses.

Writing Exercises

These exercises provide practice in constructing and composing correct English sentences in a wide variety of structural patterns. All written work in this section should be done on separate notebook paper and representative items put on the blackboard as often as possible for peer correction. Students should be encouraged to proofread all their responses before an assignment is considered complete.

Small Group Assignment

In each chapter an activity is specially designed for small group collaboration. Students' participation in small group work compels them to exercise oral and aural skills, provides them with practice in analyzing complex, abstract ideas, and builds their confidence in articulating and supporting their points of view.

Composition Development

The material in this section helps students learn to develop, organize, and express their views on given topics in a substantial and coherent way. Each chapter deals with a different aspect of paragraph or composition development. The content of the section suggests a focus for the assigned "Composition Topics."

Composition Topics

A choice of two or three contextualized composition topics, keyed to the chapter's content, concludes each chapter. As time permits, it is suggested that students work through one or more of the composition topics in class through brainstorming, outlining, or group composition as a guide for the individual writing assignment.

Appendix A: The Composition Process

This section includes information about the general requirements of expository writing; a form for composition review, which poses a series of questions for students to consider after writing their first draft of a paper; and a sheet of editing symbols, which allows the instructor to locate and identify errors for the student without correcting them.

Appendix B: Basic Terminology for English Language Study

This section identifies and explains the basic terms used in the "Writing Exercises" and "Composition Development" sections. Student comprehension of this material is essential for the self-correction process and requisite for mastering the concepts involved in language learning. The appendix also includes a verb summary, which students should use to correct verb errors pointed out by the instructor.

Appendix C: List of Common Irregular Verbs with Their Basic, Simple Past, and Past Participle Forms

This section provides the present, past, and past participle forms of irregular verbs. It should be referred to by students for the correction of the verb errors in their written work.

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It gives me great pleasure to acknowledge the many different contributions of my friends and colleagues to this text. First, I wish to express my gratitude to Serena Nanda, without whose engaging and sensitive anthropology text my own book would not have come into being. For the many valuable insights they have provided about second language teaching, and for their valuable comments on the first edition of the text, I thank my colleagues at New York City Technical College's Developmental English-ESL unit and those in the TESOL profession who have communicated with me at conferences and corresponded with me over the years. I also wish to express my admiration of our ESL students, whose persistence and progress in mastering English as a second language deserves our greatest respect.

I am grateful to my editor Kevin Howat for his enthusiastic support of this revised edition. I would also like to thank Robin Lockwood, my production editor, and Betty Berenson, the copy editor. For their most welcome and constructive reviews of the manuscript I thank Jon Amastae, University of Texas at El Paso; Donella Eberle, Mesa Community College; Rosemary C. Henze, Stanford University; Billie Letts, Southeastern Oklahoma State University; Al Luersen, Sacramento City College; Carol A. Puhl, Delaware Technical and Community College; and George E. Settera, California State College, Stanislaus.

To my husband, John Gregg, whose love of language and interest in foreign language learning has always been an inspiration to me, and to Paisley, who has discovered the joy of language, this revised edition is also dedicated.

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CHAPTER ONE

CULTURE AND HUMAN BEHAVIOR



All human cultures mark important events in the lives of their members. In American culture, with its emphasis on individuality, a child's birthday is an occasion for celebration. Which birthdays in a person's life are special occasions in your culture? Discuss some of the activities, the attire, music, food, or other aspects of such celebrations.

KEY CONCEPTS

Culture

Sociocultural system

Cultural constraints as the basis for human development

[1] What does the term *culture* mean throughout this book? As used by anthropologists, the term *culture* means human behavior that is learned rather than biologically transmitted. Any socially transmitted element in human life, whether it is material, spiritual, or psychological, is part of culture. The South African Bushman's method of hunting game, the Navajo's belief in certain curing ceremonies, the ancient Greek's appreciation of tragic drama, and the middle-class American's high school senior prom are all equally elements of culture. Each is part of the collective activity of a particular people. Each cultural act or value has a meaningful relationship to other aspects of the culture, and all of the significant parts of the culture are passed on to different generations not through biological heredity but through "tradition" or social learning. From this standpoint, all human groups have a culture. Culture exists in agricultural as well as in industrialized societies. Culture is not necessarily high or low; it exists in any type or stage of civilization. Ideally, culture is satisfactory both to the individual member and the society to which he or she belongs. There are many types of culture, and an infinite variety of cultural elements. The cultural patterns typical of a certain group communicate the essence of that group. Culture distinguishes one particular group of people from another.

[2] Culture is necessary for the survival and existence of human beings as human beings. Practically everything humans **perceive**, know, think, value, feel, and do is learned through **participation** in a *sociocultural system*. The few well-documented cases on record of children **relatively** isolated from society in the early years of life bear out this statement. One of these cases, that of the "wild boy of Aveyron" is of **exceptional** interest. In 1799, a boy of about twelve was found in a forest near Aveyron, France. He was brought to Paris, where he attracted huge crowds who expected to see the "noble savage" of romantic eighteenth-century philosophy.* Instead they found a boy whose

. . . eyes were unsteady, expressionless, wandering **vaguely** from one object to another. . . . [they were] so little trained by the sense of touch, they could never **distinguish** an object in relief** from one in a picture.

*In this philosophy, primitive people were believed to be more innocent, and therefore nobler, than highly civilized people.

**An object in relief is one that is raised above its background surface.

His . . . hearing was insensible to the loudest noises and to . . . music. His voice was reduced to a state of complete muteness and only a guttural sound escaped him . . . he was equally indifferent to the odor of perfume and the **fetid** exhalation of the dirt with which his bed was filled. . . . [his] touch was **restricted** to the mechanical grasping of an object. . . . [he] had a tendency to trot and gallop . . . [and] an obstinate habit of smelling at anything given to him . . . he chewed like a rodent with a sudden action of the incisors* . . . [and] showed no sensitivity to cold or heat and could seize hot coals from the fire without **flinching** or lay half naked upon the wet ground for hours in the wintertime. . . . He was incapable of attention and spent his time rocking **apathetically** backwards and forwards like the animals in the zoo.**

This description of the wild boy of Aveyron is provided by Jean-Marc-Gaspard Itard, a young psychologist who undertook the education of the boy, whom he called Victor. He believed that Victor's apparent **subnormality** was not due to incurable mental disease or idiocy, but to Victor's lack of participation in normal human society.

[3] There is another case of children growing up apart from human society that also makes fascinating reading, though this case is not as well documented as that of the wild boy. Its implication is the same, however: Participation in human culture is necessary for the development of human characteristics. In the province of Midnapore in India, the director of an orphanage was told by local villagers that there were "ghosts" in the forest. Upon investigating, the director found that two children, one about eight years old and the other about a half year old, appeared to have been living with a pack of wolves in the forest. These children, part of a wolf pack with two cubs, were the ghosts described by the local people. In his diary, the director describes his first view of Kamala (as the older child was named) and Amala (the name given the younger child):

[Kamala was] a hideous looking being . . . the head a big ball of something covering the shoulders and the upper portion of the bust . . . Close at its heels there came another awful creature exactly like the first, but smaller in size. Their eyes were bright and piercing, unlike human eyes. . . . they were covered with a peculiar kind of sore all over the body. These sores . . . had developed from walking on all fours. . . .

*Incisors are the pointed front cutting teeth.

**From Jean-Marc-Gaspard Itard, *The Wild Boy of Aveyron*, trans. by George and Muriel Humphrey. Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962. Reprinted by permission.

[they were] very fond of raw meat and raw milk. . . . they could not stand erect . . . [they were] able to move about a little, crawling on feet and hands. . . . Gradually, as they got stronger, they commenced going on all fours, and afterwards began to run on all fours . . . just like squirrels.*

Many of the other details related in the orphanage director's diary about the wolf-children are similar to those told of Victor. The wolf-children seemed to be continually looking for the cubs and the wolves they had been raised with. They were shy and would not play with the other orphanage children. Even when the others were laughing, playing, or chatting in their presence, the wolf-children would sit apathetically in a corner facing the wall, indifferent to all that was going on. While the other children were active during the day, the wolf-children often slept, and at night they prowled around the orphanage, lapping up with their tongues food and water left for them. They became friendly with only one child, a one-year-old just learning to crawl. But they must have sensed that he was different, for one day they bit and scratched him roughly. Apparently, without early human contact, human beings will not develop a "human nature" that allows them to feel comfortable with others of their species.

[4] People have always been interested in how human beings would develop in a "culture-free" setting. Today it is considered immoral to isolate individuals at birth for experimental reasons, but such experimentation was attempted in the past. The Egyptian pharaoh Psammetichus tried to discover what language children would "naturally" speak if they were reared where they could hear no human voice. He ordered two infants isolated from society and had them brought up without the sound of any human speech. He assumed that they would "naturally" talk in the language of their ancestors, and, to his ears, their babbling sounded like Phrygian, an ancient Mediterranean tongue. King James IV of Scotland, in the fifteenth century, tried a similar experiment and claimed his two infants spoke in Hebrew, the language of the Old Testament of the Bible. Both monarchs were mistaken, of course. As the cases of Victor, the wild boy, and Kamala and Amala, the wolf-children of India, demonstrate, children learn human language in the same way they learn other kinds of human development—by participation in a cultural community. And they learn a **specific** human language as well as *specific* kinds of human behavior, by their membership in a *specific* cultural community. The cases of Victor and the wolf-children are fascinating reading. But, more importantly, they emphasize that human **potential** can only be realized within the structure of human culture and through growing up in

*From Robert Zingg and J. Singh, *Wolf Children and Feral Man*. New York: Harper & Row, 1942.