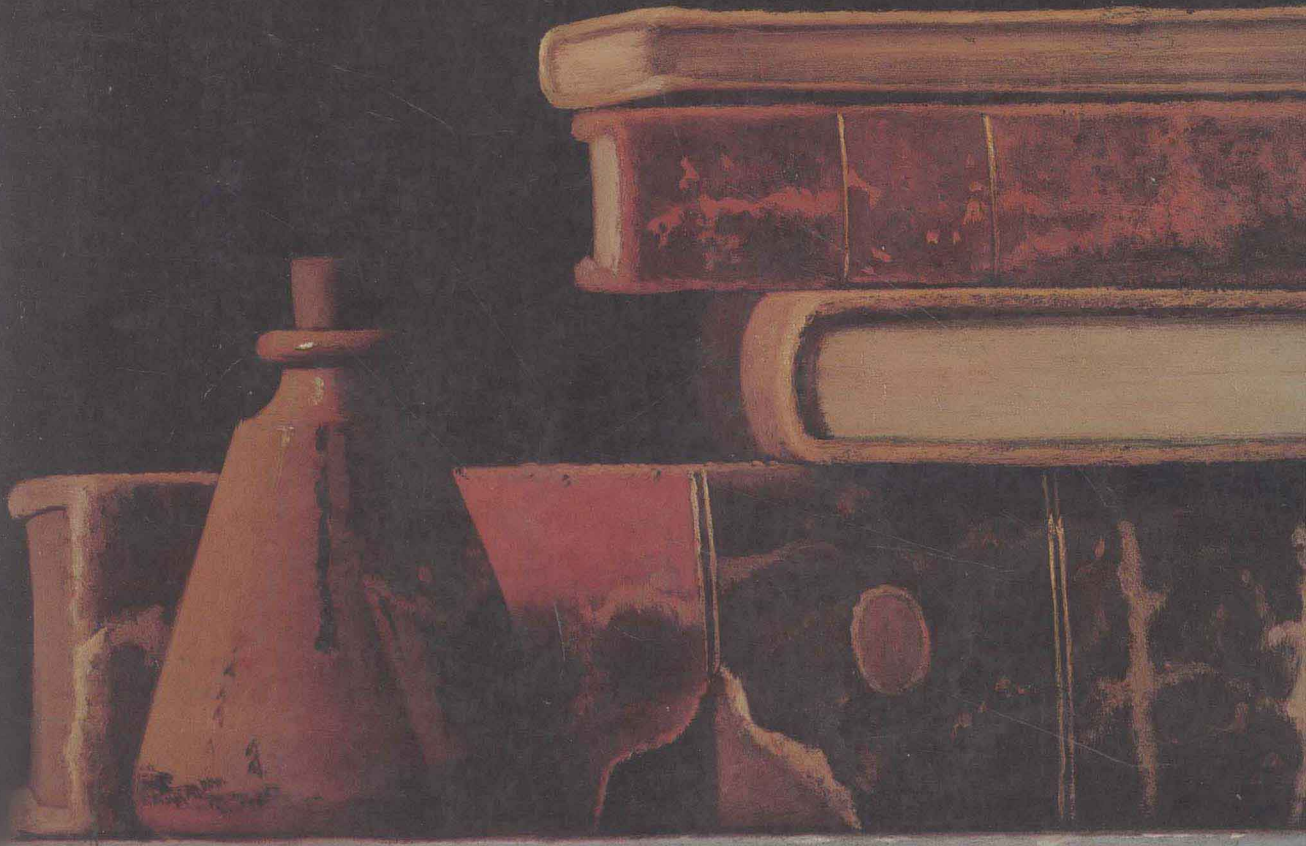


# The Random House WRITING COURSE for ESL STUDENTS

Amy Tucker and Jacqueline Costello



# The Random House WRITING COURSE for ESL STUDENTS

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## THE RANDOM HOUSE WRITING COURSE FOR ESL STUDENTS

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To Steve and Ken



## Preface

This book is designed to take you through a series of basic writing skills that you can draw on in your college work and in your career. We've called the text a *Writing Course*—rather than a handbook, workbook, or guide—because it incorporates all the elements of a composition course: you will be asked, at various times, not only to practice writing and grammar skills but to read, to respond, to analyze, to edit. Each unit is set up as a kind of classroom workshop in which you have the opportunity to work on your own as well as with classmates in collaborative learning activities. The guiding principle of the book is that writers learn by writing frequently, by listening to the comments of their peers, and by responding to the work of others. Accordingly, we have included many excerpts from the writing of our students—ESL students who, like you, are engaged in the discovery of the writing and revising process.

We have designed our course so that each unit leads logically into the next; however, this sequence is not fixed and inflexible. We have included more lessons, readings, and writing assignments than can be covered in a one- or two-semester course so that the users of this book will have an extensive and varied selection of materials to choose from. Different students and classes have different needs, and these needs will determine how you use the book. Not all members of the class will require practice in the same grammar skills; many assignments can be worked on as either journal exercises or group activities; most important, the order in which you study the units themselves can be shifted. These decisions are left to you and your teacher. We offer the following chapters as guidelines, to encourage you to experiment with the widest possible range of prose techniques and voices.

## Acknowledgments

We'd like to begin by expressing our gratitude to our students, whose ideas and essays have had the strongest influence on our way of looking at the process of writing, and whose work is quoted liberally in this text.

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Our love and appreciation go to our parents, for their encouragement. Most of all, we thank our husbands, Steve and Ken, who have helped us at every stage of this project. Their suggestions, support, and indefatigable good cheer made our work on this book possible—and pleasurable.

A. T.  
J. C.

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unit 1

# Communication Up Close





# 1

## Looking into Language

### STUDYING A SECOND LANGUAGE

#### A Note to ESL Students

It has often been remarked that Americans have the unfortunate habit of monolingualism. Consider these items:

- Less than three percent of all American high school students attain foreign-language competence.
- The United States is the only country where you can graduate from college without having studied a foreign language.
- No one in the U.S. embassy in India speaks Hindi.
- In the Soviet Union there are almost ten million students of English, but there are only 28,000 students of Russian in the U.S.
- Luckily, Deng Xiaoping, China's senior deputy prime minister, brought with him an interpreter skilled in English for his talks with President Carter in 1979. The U.S. government, it turns out, does not employ anyone fully qualified to translate simultaneously from Chinese to English.

This linguistic backwardness may be the result of America's geographic isolation or national indifference, or it may be because English has become the primary international language of diplomacy, science, business, and popular music. Whatever the reason, the American educational system runs the risk of turning out students who are, in one educator's term, "globally illiterate."

ESL students have the extraordinary advantage of bilingualism. Over the years we've asked our students to keep notebooks, or journals, in which they record their experiences, observations, and impressions while studying in the United States. Their journal entries show a variety of reasons for learning English and mixed reactions to the problems encountered along the way. Here are a few examples of their comments: