

# Introduction: To the Teacher

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Students are the soul of this book, in real and metaphorical ways. I interviewed 13 of my former students about the eight topics that make up the chapters of this book. I wrote the readings and sentences in these chapters based on their answers. Thus, the stories you read are edited but real and authentic.

Metaphorically, these 13 students and the hundreds I have taught over the last 20 years were all before me as I wrote each page. I also thought as I wrote about those students to come—mine and yours.

*Effective Sentences: Writing for Success* targets high-beginning/low-intermediate students with limited English proficiency. These students, both the traditional ESOL students and Generation 1.5ers, come to our classrooms as complex, thinking beings. While these students may write English at a basic level and need our help to produce accurate sentences, they need and want to write with a complexity to match their thoughts. This text strives to answer both concerns.

*Effective Sentences* works with a two-part structure: (1) students first learn to recognize basic sentence structure and closely examine the basic elements to take the mystery out of the English sentence; and (2) then, students will learn about the structures that build on the basic elements to expand sentences—progressing from elements within simple sentences such as adjectives, objects, and prepositional phrases to compound and complex sentence structures.

The grammar presented here is driven by students' needs—and the stories within each chapter. The sequence of grammar is somewhat traditional—simple present tense is presented first, along with subjects and verbs, then past tense, then future—though some of the more complicated grammar points may come surprisingly early. For example, compound and complex sentence structure is introduced in Chapters 3 and 4. Even beginning students come to us using these structures, however incorrectly. In this book, grammar is simple and straightforward but never watered down. Compound structures are limited to sentences linked with *and*, *so*, and *but*, and complex sentences are limited to sentences with *after*, *before*, *when*, *while*, and *because*.

Students are free to concentrate on basic sentence building. Grammar is taught only when it is needed and is presented in an unencumbered manner. Vocabulary is open-ended. The vocabulary presented in each chapter highlights words in the readings that students may find difficult. *This is the vocabulary that students use and need*: words perhaps not on the high-frequency word lists, but pertinent to their lives nonetheless. These more difficult words are defined in the text, either through exercises or glossaries. Teachers may choose to work on these suggested vocabulary items or the vocabulary that appears in their own students' writing, either in the journals or the paragraph that each chapter culminates in. The readings themselves exist to inspire, suggest ideas, and model good writing to the students. They can be used as much or as little as teachers wish.

Paragraph structure is introduced from Chapter 1 because sentences, after all, do not exist in isolation and are always within context. Therefore, some paragraph structure is mentioned at various points in the text. For example, transitions come in Chapter 1 because even simple sentences need some sort of linking in paragraphs. Even at this early point, *however*, *then*, and *also* are introduced as cohesive devices. In later chapters, students learn about topic sentences, general-to-specific movement, and sentence variety within paragraph structure.

It is important to work through the chapters of this text in order because earlier chapters lay a foundation for later ones. As I interviewed students and asked questions about the topics in this book—their families, favorite places, major events, and so forth—I simply wrote down their answers without editing. Later, as I crafted their stories in clear and simple prose, I thought carefully about the grammatical structures they needed to communicate this vital information about their lives. I had to balance the level of complexity of their stories with the traditional sequence of grammar.

Some topics—*family* is just one example—had to come later in the grammatical sequence. Discussing family means discussing past events—when family members moved, were married, were born. Telling about families requires numbers for dates of significant events and ages and comparative adjectives to describe sibling order. These grammatical structures should be taught after more basic topics like subjects, verbs, objects, and present tense are explored. The last chapters deal with the most complex issues for beginning writers: noun clauses, adjective clauses, and future time. It is appropriate to reference these topics toward the end of the book.

I hope you enjoy using this text as much as I have enjoyed writing it. It has been rewarding for me to sit with my students in the quiet of my study and spin their stories for others to continue the web of learning.