

FOUR POINT: LISTENING AND SPEAKING 2, ADVANCED BY B. PARRISH

Parrish, Betsy. (2009). *Four point: Listening and Speaking 2, advanced*. K. Folse, (Ed.). Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press. List price \$28.50.

**Reviewed by
Kristin Kline Liu**

Teachers of advanced college preparatory English courses at the high school and post-secondary levels will want to take a look at the latest book in the Four Point series. Minnesota author, Betsy Parrish, has written an academic listening and speaking text that is designed to help English learners transition from a sheltered language classroom into mainstream American academic lecture classes at the college and university level. In addition to listening and speaking skills, it also seamlessly integrates vocabulary study, academic reading, writing, note-taking, presentation, and learning strategies information.

Each of the six units in the book contains two related lectures on topics chosen from different academic fields. Each six to nine minute lecture, contained on accompanying CDs, is preceded by a pre-listening activity. This warm up activity elicits students' background knowledge on the topic, and engages them in using some of the vocabulary and concepts from the lecture. The lectures are based on genuine academic content that students might hear in a classroom, although the speech is not entirely authentic. The language appears to have been adapted somewhat for ESL audiences. The lecturers all speak with a Midwestern accent, enunciate clearly, and use good presentation techniques such as defining terms and slowing down their speech to emphasize key concepts. Speakers stay on topic, and there are no interruptions by students, or other background noise, that might be present in actual lecture situations. Even with the adapted language, English learners have plenty of opportunities to develop communicative competence. One way that students can develop practice at comprehending overlapping speech from multiple speakers is to view the additional video clips on the publisher website. These clips show small student groups interacting during study sessions. Listeners get a chance to observe speaking strategies that students use to interrupt, respond to interruptions, and add thoughts to others' speech during conversation.

In each chapter, students engage in focused top-down and bottom-up listening activities as they hear the lectures multiple times. After the lecture, other skills are introduced and practiced using language and ideas that students have just heard. For example, a common core of approximately 125 general academic vocabulary words and phrases is practiced throughout the lessons. Each chapter also introduces one feature of English speech, such as syllable stress, intonation, or pitch, and it relates these features to academic language from the lectures. The chapters finish with extended speaking activities that allow students to synthesize information they have learned.

One of the strengths of this book is the way that activities are scaffolded to allow students to be successful at comprehending challenging academic material. Students have a chance to repeat listening activities that build on each other, compare their results with partners, and incorporate new information. The result is a high quality, interesting book that would make an excellent addition to a professional library. Teachers can use the book to teach a 10-12 week class on academic oral skills, or integrate a few chapters into an existing English class.

REVIEWER

Kristin Kline Liu is an ESL teacher who is currently a Ph.D. student in Second Languages and Cultures Education at the University of Minnesota. She teaches a listening and speaking methods course for language teachers.