

FUTURE: ENGLISH FOR RESULTS (LEVEL 5) BY B. DIAZ, R. MAGY, AND F. SALAS-ISNARDI

Diaz, B., Magy, R., & Salas-Isnardi, F. (2010). *Future: English for Results (Level 5)*. New York: Pearson Education, Inc. List price: \$19.50.

**Reviewed by
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For any English learner, particularly an adult learner, every minute counts. A glimpse at the cover of *Future: English for Results (Level 5)*, and one can readily capture this message as if he can hear the ticking of the clock. As the last volume in a six-level, four-skill series with a targeted user range from literacy-level beginners to low-advanced learners, *Future* prepares adults with low-advanced English proficiency for transition to further education or career advancement.

Revolving around an everyday scenario, such as goal setting, job hunting and trip planning, each unit starts with a full-page photo and a list of goals, and then continues with nine lessons, including grammar, listening and speaking, reading, writing as well as life skills. It ends with a summary lesson divided into four parts: grammar review, act-it-out activities, problem-solving tasks and community-building assignments. All units correlate to major standards related to adult ESL education, including CASAS Listening and Reading Basic Skill Content Standards, CASAS Competencies, Los Angeles Unified School District ESL Standards, and Florida Adult ESOL Standards.

Reading lessons occupy the largest chunk of *Future* with the purpose of elucidating civics and American culture from authentic materials, such as the beginnings of the United States, the importance of paying fines, worker's rights to a safe workplace and so forth. Students first reflect on the topic and then deal with comprehension questions. They also practice reading skills step by step from previewing content and summarizing ideas to identifying purposes and making inferences. An innovative activity is *Word Work*, where students prioritize and record new words in their own vocabulary logs. Finally, they discuss pertinent real-life issues in a *Make-It-Personal* section. For example, in a unit about safety, a prompt is given, "What are some reasons people might not want to complain about unsafe working conditions? What advice would you give them?"

Another key skill of the book is targeted in the process-based writing lessons. A *Before-You-Write* section introduces a genre (personal narratives, autobiographical essays, cover letters, etc.) and its relevant tips each time; for example, imperatives are commonly used in giving instructions. Prior to writing, students brainstorm ideas on the topic and analyze a model. They then practice strategies in the *Think-on-Paper* section, where graphic organizers are employed to clarify key points and supporting details. A checklist is available for self-editing at the end.

As Future aims at catering to adult learners' functional needs in today's world, it not only addresses language skills but also learning strategies. Throughout the units, a Persistence Curriculum encourages students' consistent efforts independently and collaboratively. Several themes important to life-long learning, such as exploring expectations, identifying strengths and countering challenges, are first examined by individuals and then discussed in groups, through which the awareness of being a responsible and strategic learner is nurtured and reinforced in students.

An added bonus to Future 5 is the rich resources available to students. The Practice Plus CD-ROM, attached to every student book, covers the entire class audio program and supplementary listening exercises. In addition, the well-organized appendices, including writing models, grammar references, audio scripts, a functional résumé and a glossary, are highly conducive to those who want to extend their learning beyond classroom or make up what they miss in class.

Though each unit is richly layered with original content, various skill areas are randomly ordered. On the one hand, this lends some autonomy and flexibility to teachers when planning the lesson sequence; on the other hand, it may be difficult for students to switch from one skill to another without a routine to follow as they browse through various units. Thus, teachers have to seek a balance while prioritizing certain skills. One of my biggest impressions of the book is its bewildering array of colors within every unit and lesson. Perhaps if each skill area were assigned a theme color, for instance, green stands for "grammar" while yellow signals "reading", students would find more predictability in the contents.

Overall, Future: English for Results (Level 5) is an integrated, effective textbook with a strong focus on practical skills and learning strategies. Furthermore, the appealing articles, diverse activities and handy appendices all render it a good choice for adult learners to acquire real-life English in pursuit of a better future, as is promised by the title.

REVIEWER

Dongming Yang has worked as an EFL volunteer teacher in China. She holds a B.A. in Interpreting and Translation Studies, and is currently enrolled in the M.A. in ESL program at the University of Minnesota. She would like to thank Anne Lazaraton for her guidance, support and care.