

## Textbook Review of *Listen Up, Talk Back*, 2019

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### 『*Listen Up, Talk Back*, 2019』 についての書評

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Gillian Flaherty, James Bean & Yoshihito Kamakura (2019). *Listen up, Talk Back*, Book 1, Sebido Publishing Co., Ltd. Tokyo. ISBN978-4-7919-7204-3, ¥2300

*Listen up, Talk back*, Book 1 (2019) is the first installment of a new series of textbooks by Sebido Publishing.

Flaherty and Bean have previously written other textbooks, including *Break Away* (1, 2017), (2, 2018), *Listen to This (Basic, 2004)*, (*Intermediate, 2004*). They have also written textbooks for Korean students and English learners from South Asia.

The cover page, featuring “English for Everyday Communication” above the title, indicates that this series is designed to teach communication skills for situations students would encounter on a daily basis if they were to go abroad. The book is targeting a wide range of students from upper elementary to intermediate level. Some universities in Japan, such as Toyo University in the Kanto area and Otomon Gakuin University in Kansai area, are currently using this textbook in some of their English classes.

The book consists of 15 units, and each can be divided into two lessons. The actual length of the book is just 75 pages, with each unit covering five pages. However, the book nowhere informs either teachers or students about the intended course length. Assuming one standard

class at Japanese Universities of about 90 minutes, 60 minutes can be allocated for the contents and practice of the textbook, while 30 minutes might be used for the correction of students' homework or extracurricular activities. The teachers' manual provides the Japanese translation of the English texts, and the correct answers to the all exercises in the textbook.

All units begin with a “warm-up” activity aided by a visual image connected to the content. The images are realistic, and students can guess what the content of the unit is by just seeing the pictures. For example, if the unit is about transportation in the city, the image illustrates travelers and train. The second activity is listening, followed by tips for communication, providing useful insights into how to generate ideas for communication, for example, how to talk about movies, how to ask for help if you are lost. There are three listening activities in each unit. Talking with a partner focuses on role-play activity mimicking the audio. Each unit focuses on one element of English grammar. The table below shows each unit's title, and the grammar topics dealt with in the book.

**Table: Contents of *Listen Up, Talk Back*, Book 1**

Unit	Name	Grammar Focus
1.	Meeting New people	Gerunds
2.	Home	Comparatives
3.	Family	Reflexive pronouns
4.	Transportation in the city	Will and be going to for predictions
5.	Shopping	How much? How many?
6.	Celebrations	Present perfect tense and for and since
7.	Volunteering	The conjunction so
8.	Staying Well	Passive voice
9.	Pets	The Present perfect continuous
10.	Free-time Activities	Adverbs of Frequency
11.	Music	Tag questions
12.	Eating Out	Adjectives and adverbs
13.	Movies	The simple past tense: regular and irregular verbs
14.	Sports	Conditional sentences
15.	Going on vacation	Definite and indefinite articles

It would have been better if units 10, 12, and 15 were interchanged in terms of the topic rather than grammatical contents with units 4, 5, and 6, respectively. At Japanese universities,

where the academic year starts in spring, students usually go on vacation after the first semester. If unit 15 were at the end of the first semester, it would create an enjoyable scenario for students to describe their plans for their vacation among peers. Similarly, students could be encouraged to do volunteering activities encompassed in unit 7 in their free time or during their summer break.

Though some units such as Shopping (5), Eating Out (12), and Movies (13) all describe Free-time Activities (10), different grammar aspects are introduced in each chapter. The most praiseworthy element of this book is the way it covers English grammar. Students can understand the grammar explanations smoothly since the grammatical aspects are blended with every units' content. For example, the topic of unit 2 is "Home," and its grammar focuses on comparatives; it is easier for teachers to educate students using simple facts or objects that surround students in their everyday lives.

*Language boxes* (memo box) in all units allow students to practice using predetermined language patterns or chunks; however, there is some danger that this practice might keep students from thinking outside the box.

The CD features dialogues and announcements and students are frequently asked to repeat what they have heard. The announcements on the CD are relatively hard for elementary and pre-intermediate students to catch (at once) because of their natural speed. Still, the language and the presentation style will not be hard for students to understand once they get used to it. The speaking activities of the textbook can also be found on the homepage of the publisher. Compared to the textbook *Encounters on Campus* published by NAN'UN-DO and authored by Michael P. Critchley (2018), *Listen up, Talk back, Book 1* (2019) is very compact in terms of width and breadth. Considering this, the book is rather expensive.

It would have been beneficial to teachers and students alike if the textbook featured an index. Furthermore, it would help Japanese students if crucial grammar terms had translations. A glossary would be a potential solution to this problem.

In summary, *Listen Up, Talk Back, Book 1* (2019) lives up to its title. It is a well-designed textbook to brush up students' English communication skills. The authors have undoubtedly put in a lot of effort into developing the contents and layout of the 15 units. The book is precise and clear about its content. However, I would recommend this book to be used in class with some

added contents of the on-campus context.

This book was devised before the Coronavirus pandemic. Since then, classes went online, changing the academic calendar and culture. In the new scenario of online teaching, this book can be used effectively.