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## Review

# Dynamic Presentations

Michael Hood. Tokyo: Longman Kirihara Shoten,  
2007. (pp. vii + 118).  
ISBN: 978-4-342-54970-0

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### What It's Got

Every presentations textbook has its own style and focus. While some look at the organization, professionalism or the materials of the presenter, others focus on body language and gestures. Michael Hood's *Dynamic Presentations* (with DVD), centers on the western business presentation structure (introduction with a theme statement, support, and conclusion) and the presenter's vocal skills to add emphasis to their speech. Hood's 18-unit textbook is designed for the intermediate or higher English language learner although the low-level learner can gain from the extended speaking activities incorporated in this textbook.

The first 17 units comprise seven components each: Communication Skills, Speech Building Strategies, Performance and Purpose, Sound Pronunciation, Stress for Meaning and Clarity, Grammar Review, and the DVD. Unit 18 is a review of the textbook's objectives. The accompanying DVD demonstrates a different presentation for each unit. Also available is a class set of audio CDs which focuses on the speaking tasks found in the textbook and a Teacher's Manual which provides the tape scripts to the DVD and CDs.

## **Where It's Weak**

There are, as with many first-edition language textbooks, a number of problems that hopefully will be addressed in the second edition. One problem that needs consideration is with the use of Japanese influenced phrases. For example, "Wedding Party," (p. 1) is referring to the party and not the wedding group. From my viewpoint, this phrase is not problematic. However, not all agree as I learnt from one instructor also using this textbook. Those who disagree argue that a language textbook's value is in its authenticity. While it is normal and even expected for the author not to notice some mistaken cross-cultural phrases, a little more care at the editorial level can mitigate this problem. Otherwise, credibility with the textbook may be lost along with the learner's chance to build his/her overall language ability.

Another issue deals with the poor sound quality on the DVD. Basically, with the volume of my computer or TV at full, the sound echoes, and is fuzzy, tinny and just barely audible. A lapel microphone alone would do wonders to improve the sound quality of the presentations and this, in turn, will make the whole textbook a more professional product.

Yet another issue, also concerning the DVD's production, is the lack of PowerPoint or realia interaction in the presentations. The DVD falls short of its potential due to its weak attention to necessary detail. Ideally, the DVD should show the student how the presenter manages the stage in a "normal" office setting. Further, it could include presenters using OHP and Flip-charts as they are still widely used and, depending on the venue, very effective.

## **The Final Call**

The first thing I noticed with this textbook, and something I have not seen in others I have referenced, is the structured outline of the presentation (p. 2). The "introduction with main theme, support, and conclusion" style is almost exactly what I studied in my university

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communications classes. Indeed, a quick check in my old textbook, *Public Speaking* (Dance & Zak-Dance, 1986, p. 26) confirmed my recollection. Hood's continual reinforcement of this structure throughout his textbook is appreciated. Although there is far more material on the audio CD than I can reasonably fit into my classes, packaging the CD with the textbook and DVD would alleviate my classroom logistics problem and would allow my students more practice time by being able to study on their own. I would add, as a request to the publisher from some of my students: package the CD and DVD as an .mpeg and/or audio files for computer playback or iPod use. I recognize that this may cause a problem with copyright, and I am not an expert in this field, but allowing the student to use these materials as they can when they can, would greatly assist their learning the skills that this textbook endeavors to teach.

*Dynamic Presentations* provides exactly what my international students need: a model of how to structure a presentation; follow-up exercises that help them understand how each component fits within the presentation's basic structure; visual examples, as seen on the DVD, of what a presentation can look like and emulate; and voice exercises that are effective and beneficial in helping student's use their voice more effectively in front of an audience. Complaints aside, I have found this text to be far more effective than other texts on the same subject of presentations (Comfort, 1995; Harrington & LeBean, 1996; Mandel, 2000) and have no hesitation in recommending it to others looking to build their students' presentation skills in the western business style.

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