

# BOOK & ARTICLE REVIEWS

## Writing for Speaking: Engaging Students through Speed Dating

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**Breaux, G. B. (2019).** *Writing for speaking: Smoother speaking. Conversation-Based Learning.*

*Summary:* This book review provides an overview of *Writing for Speaking: Smoother Speaking* by Gunther Breaux. The book focuses on practical English communication skills through speed dating, speaking activities, and writing assignments. An overview of the major components of the textbook is provided as well as how it can be used in the classroom. A critique of the book is also included.

*Keywords:* English language, speed dating communication, writing activities, writing for speaking, ESL, EFL

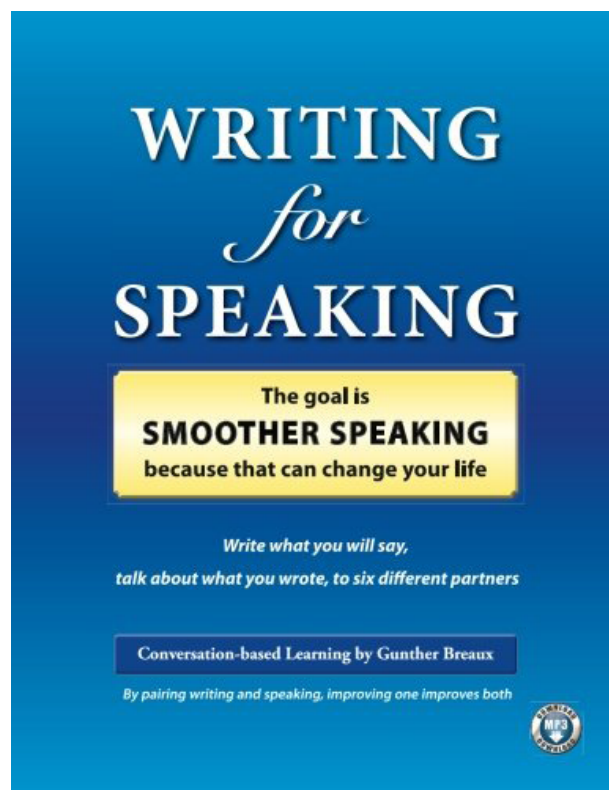
In many English conversation classes, the four skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) are often included in the curriculum, which can limit opportunities for students to focus specifically on practical speaking and conversation skills. Additionally, grammar activities are frequently incorporated into conversation classes. *The Writing for Speaking: Smoother Speaking* textbook by Gunther Breaux helps to foster confidence and improve fluency through practical speed dating activities for adult learners and university students. This approach de-emphasizes grammar instruction and traditional methods of language learning. The textbook is centered on speed dating speaking activities that are conducted in the classroom and supplementary written activities that are assigned for homework.

### Summary

*Writing for Speaking: Smoother Speaking*, the first in a series of books that includes *Writing for Speaking: Campus Conversations* and *Academic Conversations*, consists of a wide range of topics that are beneficial especially for beginner and low-intermediate students. However, the textbook can also be used with upper-intermediate and advanced students and be supplemented with more challenging activities and vocabulary. The units include family and favorites, weekend and hobbies, school days, mass media, food and fitness, and summer breaks. Furthermore, the textbook provides practical, engaging, and authentic speaking and writing activities that students need to communicate in the real world. (A sample unit of the textbook is available.) Each unit includes 12 pages

of speed dating speaking activities conducted during regular class time and written activities to be completed as homework.

Based on instructions in the teacher's manual, students sit in pairs and switch partners every 6 to 10 minutes. This is the speed dating approach that is central to the textbook. Sometimes it is ideal for students to sit with partners who are of a similar level. It can also be beneficial to pair



students with a classmate who may be at a lower or higher level. The students practice the speed dating activities as described in the textbook, and they get extensive practice through repetition.

The teacher’s guide includes detailed instructions on how to use the textbook. The end of the teacher’s guide provides sample feedback from students who have had success through the *Writing for Speaking* textbook. In addition, the [website for the course](#) offers numerous practical resources to enhance the course. Support materials include pair pronunciation worksheets as well as other activities to encourage effective interaction. There are also activities centered on giving directions, describing people, and guessing the names of movies. Class management resources are also included for course scheduling and test grading. In addition, course templates, semester surveys, answers to frequently asked questions, and attendance sheets are supplied. Guidance regarding class activities,

homework, and tests is also provided. Adaptations can be made based on student needs, instructor preferences, or the time span of the class.

## My Impression

The *Writing for Speaking* series is a unique approach to speaking and writing, especially in a market dominated by four-skill textbooks that often include substantial grammar exercises. Spending excessive time on grammar, listening, and reading takes away the time that students have to speak and engage in practical conversations. This engaging approach to conversation and speaking classes can benefit students who may desire a change from traditional textbooks that may lack ample speaking activities. Furthermore, repetition can be beneficial in improving fluency and confidence as students practice the same questions and topics with other classmates during each class period. The resources provided on the publisher’s website are particularly useful in providing additional support for instructors who may not be familiar with this teaching style.

The textbook’s approach fosters a welcoming and comfortable environment for students and reassures them that it is okay to make mistakes. Students should feel at ease while speaking in the classroom. Providing students with a positive learning environment where they feel comfortable communicating is critical for language development and confidence. Textbooks that are loaded with grammar activities and rules can be intimidating to students who may be fearful of making mistakes or are not confident in their speaking ability.

Although this book aims to foster communication through practical speaking activities that deemphasize grammar, it may be beneficial to still include some brief grammar instruction for further explanation. In addition, although students may like the speed dating style of instruction, it could be useful to have some standard partner or group work from time to time since some students may not always enjoy this approach, which includes frequent movement. Nevertheless, this is a practical and engaging textbook that can benefit students in improving English fluency, confidence, and overall proficiency.

### Conversation Skill

2:08

These skills are used in most conversations. You'll use them repeatedly in this book.

KIND OF

Are your parents strict?

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Sort of. Kind of.</li> <li>2. Kind of.</li> <li>3. Sometimes.</li> <li>4. Half and half.</li> <li>5. It depends.</li> </ol>	<p><i>If I make a B, they give me a long talk. Blah blah blah.</i></p> <p><i>I get punished about once a month. But, usually not for too long.</i></p> <p><i>But usually they are OK. I just have to come home on time.</i></p> <p><i>They are strict during the week, but not on the weekends.</i></p> <p><i>If my grades are OK, they are OK.</i></p>
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FAVORITES

LIKE to DISLIKE (or, if you are emotional) LOVE to HATE

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. love</li> <li>2. enjoy</li> <li>3. so-so</li> <li>4. don't care for</li> <li>5. hate</li> </ol>	<p><i>I love Jennifer Lawrence. She's so talented.</i></p> <p><i>I enjoy spending time with my family on the weekends.</i></p> <p><i>Last weekend was so-so. I just hung around the house.</i></p> <p><i>I don't care for my father's cooking, but I'll never tell him.</i></p> <p><i>I hate people who gossip about me behind my back.</i></p>
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<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. My favorite</li> <li>2. I prefer</li> <li>3. I like . . . the best</li> <li>4. I'd rather not</li> <li>5. My least favorite</li> </ol>	<p><b>FOOD</b></p> <p><i>food is pizza.</i></p> <p><i>crispy chicken.</i></p> <p><i>spaghetti the best.</i></p> <p><i>eat greasy chicken.</i></p> <p><i>food is chicken feet. Yuck.</i></p>	<p><b>SPORT</b></p> <p><i>sport is soccer.</i></p> <p><i>winter sports, such as skiing.</i></p> <p><i>watching baseball the best.</i></p> <p><i>play goalie. It's too boring.</i></p> <p><i>sport is sumo wrestling.</i></p>
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Morning person
Evening person




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