

Mabel P. Victoria. 2014. Review of *Elementary Tagalog: Tara Mag-Tagalog tayo*. By Domigpe, J. and Domingo, N., Tokyo/Vermont/Singapore: Tuttle Publishing, 2012. xiv + 320.

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**REVIEW OF: DOMIGPE, J. AND DOMINGO, N.
ELEMENTARY TAGALOG: TARA MAG-TAGALOG TAYO.
TOKYO/VERMONT/SINGAPORE: TUTTLE PUBLISHING,
2012. XIV + 320.**

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It is widely acknowledged that to learn a language also means to learn the culture of the native speakers of that language. The book being reviewed here, *Elementary Tagalog: Tara Mag-Tagalog tayo* (Come on, let's speak Tagalog) by Domigpe and Domingo does a good job of presenting the readers/learners with helpful information regarding the Filipino culture, nicely woven into the lessons. As the authors mention in the introduction, Tagalog is the language whereby the national language of the Philippines, Filipino, is based. English is the medium of instruction used in the teaching/learning of Tagalog in this book.

According to the authors, this introductory textbook is aimed at true beginners or those who have no prior knowledge of Tagalog and heritage learners or those who might have a passive knowledge of the language having grown up in Filipino-speaking families or communities. The book comes with an MP3 audio CD to help with the pronunciation of new vocabulary items and idiomatic expressions introduced in each lesson. The CD also contains the audio for listening comprehension practice.

The authors state that the sequencing of grammar in the book follows 'the order-of-acquisition principle, which holds that there is a natural order in which first-and second-language learners acquire and learn different grammatical structures' (p. ix). The lessons - all twenty-four of them in eight units - end with the practice section covering all four skills; speaking, reading, writing and listening and reading.

The major themes covered in the eight units are About Self (*Tungkol sa Sarili*), Family (*Pamilya*), Activities (*Mga Gawain*), Home (*Tahanan*), Kalusugan (*Health*), Food (*Pagkain*), Travel (*Paglalakbay*) and Popular Culture in the Philippines (*Kulturang Popular sa Pilipinas*). It can be gleaned from the sequence of these units that this is not 'survival Tagalog' for the tourist. *Elementary Tagalog* is written for the serious learner keen to master the speaking, writing, and reading of Tagalog.

Each unit begins with some cultural notes or explanations of Filipino cultural practices as they relate to the particular unit. Relevant Filipino sociocultural norms and values are presented in order to make language learning more meaningful. For example in Unit 1, the authors talk about the importance that Filipinos place upon harmonious social relations, solidarity and 'utang na loob' or sense of reciprocity.

The units are sub-divided into lessons which are introduced via a one-page overview. This overview presents, at a quick glance, the contents of each lesson: objectives, vocabulary, dialogue and dialogue comprehension, activities, grammar and practice in speaking, reading, writing and listening. The vocabulary section familiarizes the learners with lexical items that will be used in the dialogue or in the reading comprehension exercise that follows. The dialogue section is an exchange/conversation between two or three people talking about a particular topic related to the overall theme. The dialogue shows how the vocabulary items and idiomatic expressions presented earlier in the vocabulary portion are used by the speakers in natural conversation. What follows is the dialogue comprehension section which usually consists of a true or false test or a question- and- answer activity. In some lessons, a reading text is presented instead of a dialogue. In lesson 13, for example, what follows the vocabulary is an excerpt from a health-related leaflet. The reading comprehension exercise that follows asks questions about the text. After the dialogue or reading comprehension, three types of activities are introduced in order to further help with the learning of the newly acquired Tagalog terms and expressions.

The grammar section which is the centre piece of this grammar-oriented textbook has four parts: definitions of terms, examining form, grammar presentation and grammar notes. The grammar structure which is being focused in each lesson is clearly explained with accompanying tables and diagrams to highlight form and pattern of usage. The practice section comes after grammar. It includes exercises or activities covering the four skills - speaking, reading, writing and listening. A Tagalog-English and an English-Tagalog glossary is found at the end of the book for easy reference and recycling of vocabulary.

For the really interested learners with time on their hands, the textbook comes with a workbook, which is available separately, and not part of this review. It serves as a supplement to the textbook for those who feel the need for further practice.

Elementary Tagalog is to be commended for its coverage of a wide range of everyday topics. The suggested activities and practice drills are fun and engaging, and they portray real-life situations where the language is commonly used. Elementary Tagalog will be most useful in a teacher-mediated classroom, not for the independent, do-it-yourself learner. A number of activities require speaking with a partner. There is no answer key provided so it is probably safe to assume that the learner needs a teacher or a language expert to check the answers, specially the written exercises.

While Elementary Tagalog does not require a prior knowledge of Tagalog, it does require a very good grasp of English and the different parts of speech (verb, noun, adjective, and so on). The use of technical-sounding terms (e.g. aspect, inflection, pseudo-verb, transitive/intransitive, enclitics, etc.), although clearly defined, can be daunting for the beginner. Another thing that might be unnerving for some learners is the vocabulary list in each lesson which contains 30 to 50 items or more. The instruction on the page says '*memorize* the vocabulary words before proceeding to the dialogue (my emphasis).' Unless the learner has already acquired exceptional learning strategies, this can be a really huge and overwhelming task. In other words, if the book is principally targeted to hardworking learners who is fluent in English, want to speak Tagalog fluently and correctly, and learn about contemporary Filipino culture at the same time then this book is for them. For the teacher using this book, it is well-written and comes with activities and practice tasks that make the teaching and learning of Tagalog quite enjoyable.

Jedson R. Domigpe, Nenita Pambid Domingo. This is the leading beginner Tagalog textbook and language learning package. Elementary Tagalog's comprehensive approach will help students master Tagalog, the language of the Philippines, also known as Filipino or Pilipino. From learning to read Tagalog words and pronounce Tagalog sounds to using correct Tagalog grammar, communicating in Tagalog dialogues and building Tagalog vocabulary, learners will be surprised at how quickly their skills develop. The expert guidance in Elementary Tagalog is ideal both for true beginners and heritage learners 2014. Review of Elementary Tagalog: Tara Mag-Tagalog tayo. By Domigpe, J. and Domingo, N., Tokyo/Vermont/Singapore: Tuttle Publishing, 2012. xiv + 320. Journal of the Southeast Asian Linguistics Society (JSEALS) 7:i-ii Received and accepted 14/5/14, published May 2014. URL: <http://hdl.handle.net/1885/11711> ISSN: 1836-6821 | Website: <http://jseals.org> Asia-Pacific Editor-In-Chief Dr Paul Sidwell | Managing Editor Dr Peter Jenks Linguistics Copyright vested in the author; released under Creative Commons Attribution Licence www.jseals.org | Volume 7 | 2014 | Asia-Pacific Linguistics REVIEW OF: DO...