

# Reviews

## Cambridge English for Scientists

by Tamzen Armer

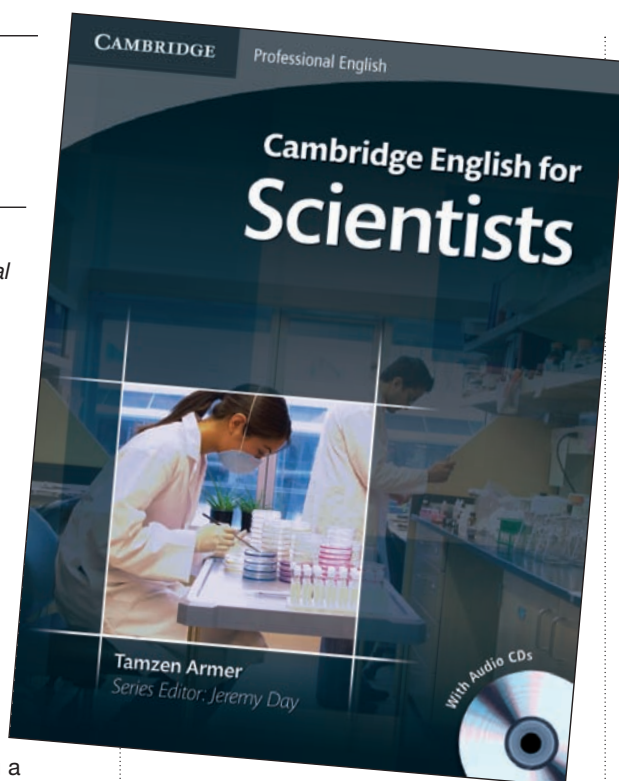
CUP 2011

978-0-521-15409-3

*Cambridge English for Scientists* is the latest in CUP's *Professional English* series. It is aimed at intermediate to upper-intermediate students interested in scientific research. The book covers a range of topics essential for any budding science student. Each of the ten units is jam-packed with a balanced mix of content and contextualised language work, and the book is complemented by two CDs, a tapescript, answers, extra material and a glossary. Representing an estimated 40–60 hours of study time, it definitely gives you a good return on the retail price. There is also a free downloadable teacher's book and extra activities. Go to: [www.cambridge.org/fr/elt/catalogue/subject/project/pricing/isbn/item6479984/Cambridge-English-for-Scientists-Intermediate-to-Upper-Intermediate-Student's-Book-with-Audio-CDs/?site\\_locale=fr\\_FR&currentProject=6479824](http://www.cambridge.org/fr/elt/catalogue/subject/project/pricing/isbn/item6479984/Cambridge-English-for-Scientists-Intermediate-to-Upper-Intermediate-Student's-Book-with-Audio-CDs/?site_locale=fr_FR&currentProject=6479824)

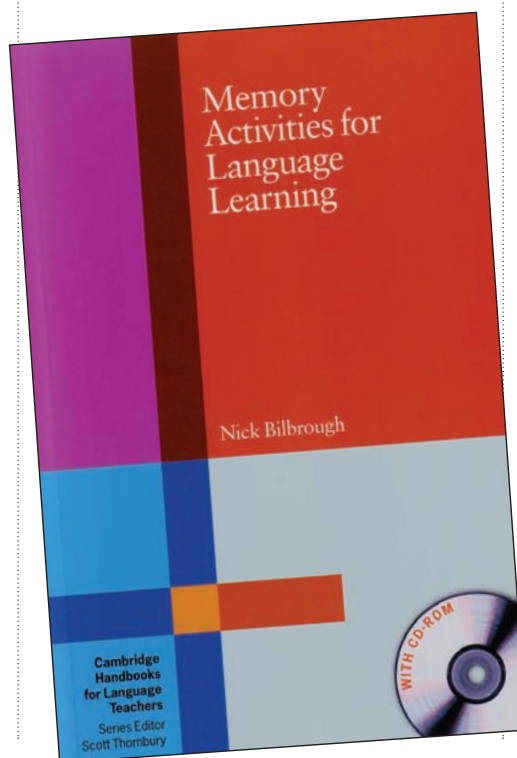
Unlike many other scientific English books which confine themselves to scientific topics, a serious attempt has been made by the author to cover important student-focused topics, from applying for funding to writing up and presenting research at conferences. The inclusion of authentic materials from journals, combined with common student scenarios and examples, really helps relate the tasks more to the student reader and the variety of tasks keeps the units interesting, even for non-ESP teachers or students.

Four of the units are dedicated to scientific research writing and these thoroughly cover all the basics, from introductions to conclusions. Each one is full of essential writing and scientific language, exercises and written samples, which act as great models for student writing. Accounting for almost half of the book, they provide a student with a



better understanding of research writing than many EAP books around.

As with the other books in the series, *Cambridge English for Scientists* is marketed as being primarily for classroom use, though suitable also for self-study. However, from my own experience of using this series in a



classroom setting, the books have been more beneficial for self-study. Class time can then be dedicated to speaking and writing work, with the book acting as a reference.

For a science student from outside the UK about to embark on a research degree in a UK university, I would highly recommend this book as something to study before their arrival and to keep on hand during their studies. It would also make a good accompaniment to a university scientific English course. I also think it could work very well for one-to-one classes, as the student could select areas to work on.

**Phil Wade**  
Bordeaux, France

## Memory Activities for Language Learning

by Nick Bilbrough

CUP 2011

978-0-521-13241-1

As mentioned on the back cover of this new Cambridge University Press title, memory is often referred to as the fifth skill of language learning. Memory skills are vital for language learners. Without means of storing new words, collocations and chunks in long-term memory, students would not be able to progress from an elementary level to intermediate and advanced levels. Therefore, it's quite important for teachers to understand memory skills and how to help students use them effectively.

*Memory Activities for Language Learning* by Nick Bilbrough offers a diverse range of activities that can help students improve retention of new language. The book is based on research on memory and the brain, yet it is extremely practical and useful.

In the introduction, the author justifies the need for a book on memory and language learning and explains basic terminology related to memory. He's careful to avoid getting too technical and relays only the most important information. The introduction also includes tips for making language more memorable and some simple ways of incorporating memory work into everyday lessons.

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Chapter 1, *Mental stretching*, contains some useful activities that give students practice using working memory. Chapter 2, *Making language memorable*, emphasises ways of helping students store more language items in long-term memory. Chapter 3, *Retrieving*, suggests ways of reviewing words and phrases encountered

in previous lessons. Chapter 4, *Repeating and reactivating*, extends the theme of the third chapter by demonstrating how students can review language items on a long-term basis. Chapter 5, *Memory techniques and mnemonics*, shows a number of traditional memory techniques, such as the story method and the keyword technique. Chapter 6, *Learning by heart*, addresses the benefits of memorising entire texts. The final chapter, *Memory games*, offers light-hearted fun for working with memory skills.

One thing I really liked about this book is how it takes concepts from research on memory and shows you how they can be applied to language learning. For example, the first chapter not only explains the processes of working memory (the phonological loop, the visual-spatial sketchpad and the episodic buffer), but also demonstrates how these can be put into practice in lively activities such as 'Delayed TPR' and 'Co-constructed storytelling'.

I also appreciated the colourful texts and images scattered throughout the book. Nick Bilbrough uses an impressive assortment of items for maximum variety, including images, poetry, puns, jokes, magic tricks and quotations. The photocopiable material is all available on a CD-ROM which accompanies the book, making it easy to prepare handouts.

Another winning feature of this book is the substantial number of sidebars on language teaching matters, such as name games, drilling, using a word bag and revisiting a short text. These short sections provide many teaching suggestions, thus making the book even more of a bargain.



Overall, this book is a quite excellent resource. I can highly recommend it for those curious about the role of memory in language learning, as well as anyone looking for some new activities to add to their lessons.

**Hall Houston  
Luzhu, Taiwan**

## FunSongs

[www.funsongs.co.uk](http://www.funsongs.co.uk)

When was the last time your young learners repeated a language exercise again and again outside the classroom just because they wanted to? Probably never, unless that 'exercise' was in the form of a song.

We sing because we love singing and songs help us learn English. Students feel a sense of achievement every time they reproduce a song, even just two lines of it. Songs are multi-sensory, they appeal to both the right and the left hemispheres of the brain, as well as to our desire for pleasure. All of us still remember the nursery rhymes we learnt when we were very young – and good action songs play the same role: students will remember them for ever.

I use *FunSongs* action song modules extensively throughout my courses. I always record the children's voices and play the results back to them. Hearing themselves motivates them to give a better performance when they sing and act out these catchy songs in front of parents, friends, relatives and students from other classes.

There are plenty of songs that children can listen to on the internet but

at *FunSongs* you can easily download the action song packages to play on your computer. Each action song package has one song with a teacher's guide version, a child's version and a video, which shows how the song can be mimed. This is especially useful at home where children don't feel embarrassed to sing in front of a screen.

Each package also comes with graded worksheets which you can photocopy and use to focus the children's attention and work on the four skills. I use them to help my students picture the language chunks in their minds and strengthen memory retention.

When confronting a new class for the first time, I always introduce the free song, 'Time to Play', miming the actions as suggested in the *FunSongs Teacher Guide*. I have successfully used this action song with students from pre-school children through to adults. It really is effective learning, something they will never forget – like learning to ride a bicycle.

Finally, I would like to add that *FunSongs* action songs are also useful for teachers who don't have an adequate command of English – all too common in Italian primary schools. It is hard for children to learn languages in the classroom; we can only expect limited results when trying to get them to respond in English. However, I know many teachers, passionate ones, dedicated to their mission as professionals who can get blood from a stone. This is one way of doing it in a pleasurable way.

**Maria Carmen Triola  
Boston, USA**