

***Ventures* Family and Friends Unit: Material Evaluation and Adaptation**

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Context and Learners

These materials are designed for adult learners of English in the United States at the high beginner level. This textbook is used in the non-credit High Beginning 610/620 ESL course at Hartnell College in Salinas, CA. Students may or may not intend to take other courses at the college. The students in this course are primarily L1 Spanish speakers and/or speakers of Indigenous languages and are nearly all from Mexico. The class is majority female-identifying, and some students lack or have concerns about documentation to reside in the US.

Original Materials

Ventures 1 (3rd edition) was published by Cambridge University Press in 2018. In addition to the Student Book (from which these materials are taken), there is a corresponding Workbook, Online Workbook, Teacher's Edition, Class Audio CDs, and a Presentation Plus tool that allows teachers to use and interact with the text on projectors or Smart Boards. In the note to teachers at the beginning of the book, it is described as a "six-level, four-skills, standards-based, integrated-skills series that empowers students to achieve their academic and career goals" (vii). Materials are aligned to National Reporting System (NRS) standards, English Language Proficiency (ELP) standards, College and Career Readiness (CCR) standards, and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requirements, though no specific mention of WIOA standards is made in the textbook materials (see Appendix A for chart of the unit's ties to various standards).

Three exercises from the Unit 3 "Friends and Family" section of the Student Book are evaluated and adapted through the lens of gender equality in this project: Lesson A.1

(p. 32), Lesson B.2 (p. 34), and Lesson E.1.B (p 40). The primary focus of the evaluation and adaptation is on the images used in these exercises.

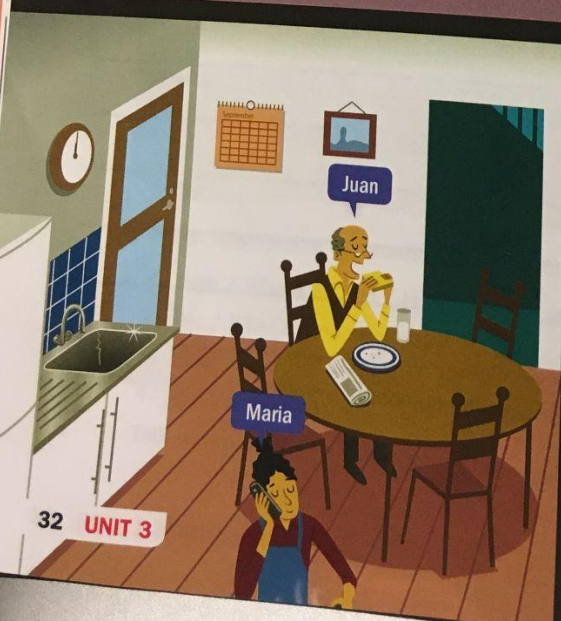
UNIT 3 FRIENDS AND FAMILY

Lesson A Listening

1 Before you listen

A Look at the picture. What do you see?

B Point to: ■ the mother ■ the father ■ the daughter
■ the son ■ the grandmother ■ the grandfather



Lesson B What are you doing?

1 Grammar focus: present continuous; What questions

Use the present continuous for actions happening now.

QUESTIONS

What **are** you

What's **s** he

What's **s** she

What **are** they

doing?

ANSWERS

I'm

He's

She's

They're

reading.

The present continuous =
be + verb + -ing:
read → I am reading.
talk → He is talking.
listen → They are listening.



Watch

2 Practice

A Write. Complete the conversations.



1. A What's she doing?

B She's reading.
(read)



2. A What's he doing?

B _____
(sleep)



3. A What are they doing?

B _____
(eat)



4. A What's he doing?

B _____ TV.
(watch)



5. A What's she doing?

B _____
(talk)



6. A What are you doing?

B _____
(study)



7. A What's she doing?

B _____
(take a picture)



8. A What are you doing?

B _____
(drink coffee)



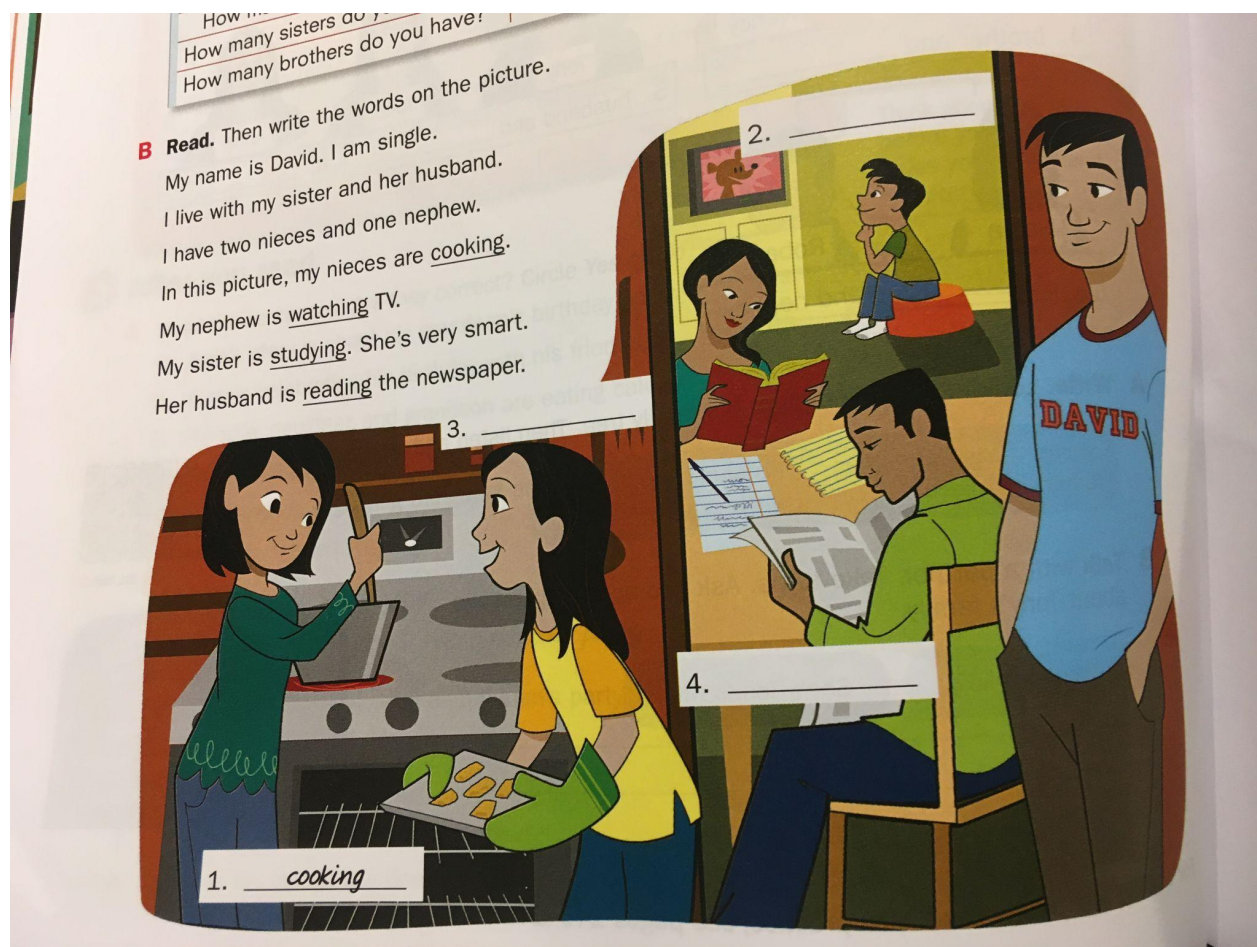
9. A What are they doing?

B _____
(play basketball)

Listen and repeat. Then practice with a partner.



CDL Track 10



Evaluation of the Materials

From the Teacher's Perspective

In my opinion, the images used in this unit present a problematically stereotypical view of gender roles for men and women. The women and girls portrayed are almost always cooking, studying, or shopping, while the men and boys are most often doing nothing or engaging in leisure activities (resting, sports, watching TV, eating chocolate). In Lesson A.1, Carlos's room is messy, while Luisa's room is neat (and pink, with a heart-shaped pillow), and the kitchen sink where Maria is working is literally sparkling clean. If I can assume that the authors believe their image choices to reflect reality, my views on gender and the importance of challenging stereotypical gender roles differ considerably from the authors' views. For example, I am part of a family where my

male partner does the majority of the cooking. It seems likely that the authors assumed the current images make learning vocabulary easier for students (there are multiple “factors” by which to differentiate between the males and females represented) and avoid any potentially controversial conversations.

My co-teacher in my current context also sees this unit as portraying stereotypical gender roles. She also mentioned, however, that students in this course tend to be very socially conservative and might take offense to/be alienated by more progressive representations of families. Certainly there are plenty of families who adhere to the roles pictured in these materials, but personally I find them limiting and far from inclusive, particularly in their representation of women.

From the Students’ Perspectives

The materials are appropriate for my student population in terms of level and relevance of the unit (students will need to be able to describe their families and home life in English). The material may be culturally relevant and reflective of some students’ realities in that they are coming from cultures that produce similar gender stereotypes (particularly the *machismo* that might make it harder for men to challenge stereotypically male roles in the home). There is also an inclusion of grandparents and/or older relatives who appear to live with their children and grandchildren, which may be more common in cultures represented in the class. However, the topic of family will generate different feelings and responses from every individual depending on their backgrounds and various identities, and it is possible that the representations here will further alienate the male-identifying students in the class, as none of the males in the textbook are portrayed studying (studying is, according to the materials, a decidedly female pursuit).

In addition, there is also a confusing question in Activity B2 (p. 34; question 6) that asks students, “What are you doing?” and includes a photo of a woman. This may be off-putting to students.

Praxis

As noted above, the authors do assume stereotypical stances as the norm in designing this textbook. Not only do the images present stereotypical gender roles, supporting the assumption that men work outside of the home and rest at home, while women work in the home, but they also assume that families are made up of heterosexual couples who have two children or more children. Even in the case of David (Lesson E.1.B), who lives with his sister, his sister is married with three children.

Voices that are silenced here include people who are single, live away from their families, and/or live alone, and people who defy gender norms and/or don’t fit in the portrayed categories. The activities also exclude single-parent households. In addition to the images, the text doesn’t leave room for individuals who use the pronouns “they/them” and doesn’t attempt to explain the use of they/them in the singular, though it is likely students will encounter this use at school or in their lives outside of the classroom. No mentions of divorce or remarriage or fostering or adopting are attempted, and neither the text nor the images suggest that single mothers or fathers might exist. The options for students who are asked in one activity to “talk about your family” are limited; the scaffolding for this exercise, focused on who lives with the student, includes only: husband, wife, son, daughter, mother, father, sister, brother.

As such, the unit does not encourage much interpretive or interpersonal communication, but rather carefully limits students to presentational activities.

Adaptation of the Material

The first step in adapting this material was to consider several social justice objectives (the original unit did not include any). In addition to the stated function of “talking about family members,” the adapted material is designed to equip students with the vocabulary and language functions necessary to talk about a variety of family configurations, relationships, and living arrangements. A goal of the adapted material is also to expose students to the types of families and relationships they are likely to encounter in the US. The adaptation also attempts to challenge the stereotypical gender roles students in the class may bring with them from their own cultures and may also encounter in the US by portraying women, men, and nonbinary individuals in a variety of activities and situations. Though the focus of this adaptation is gender equality, the new images also attempt to display a more racially diverse group of people than the current images. The confusing image/question (6) in Activity B2 was also adapted (see question 9 in the adapted materials) to give students an image that presents the view they might have looking down at their own study materials.

This adaptation offers students a more multimodal approach to talking about families by starting with an interactive video for the listening skills portion of the unit rather than an image. The provided video necessarily expands the vocabulary available to students to describe their own and other families and asks them to engage with different types of families. Though the video is designed for ESL students and is not an authentic material, it does follow the recommendation of Canale (2016) in offering diversity of experience and perspective within the culture as opposed to simply giving students one option (“American families are like X”).

Few alterations were made in terms of the text, which was minimal to begin with, other than to introduce additional singular use of “they/them” pronouns with a

corresponding image and to revise instructions for the video. As the unit's main issues lay in visual rhetoric and lack of adequate vocabulary to describe families, this is where the adaptation was focused.

Adapted Materials

UNIT 3, Lesson A (Listening)

1. Before you listen: Read through this list of vocabulary that will be defined in the video. Underline words or phrases that you don't know and be prepared to take notes when you hear them in the video.
 - a. nuclear family
 - b. extended family
 - c. single-parent family
 - d. blended family
 - e. adoptive family
 - f. biological parents
 - g. foster parents
 - h. chosen family
2. Scan the code below to watch a video. Listen for the vocabulary words.



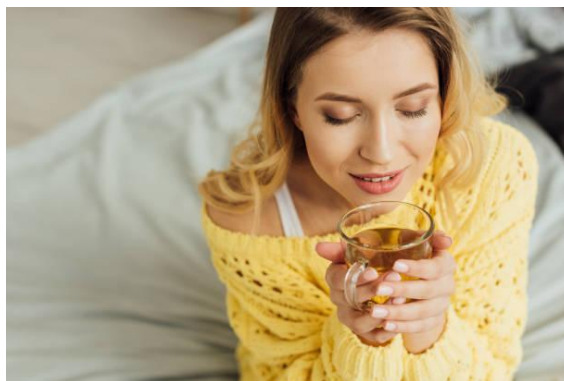
3. After listening and watching: Make note of any additional vocabulary you didn't recognize. Scan the code below to watch the video again with quiz questions. Answer the questions to check your understanding.



UNIT 3. Lesson B (Grammar)

2A. Write. Complete the conversations.

1. What's she doing? (drink tea)



Example: She is drinking tea.

2. What's he doing? (shop)



3. What are they doing? (run)



4. What are they doing? (eat)



5. What is she doing? (work)





6. What's she doing? (take a picture)



7. What's he doing? (take notes)



8. What are they doing? (sleep)



9. What are you doing? (study)

UNIT 3, Lesson E (Writing)

1.B. Write one sentence about what each person in the family pictured below is doing.

Make up names or use personal pronouns for each family member. (Five sentences total.) Share with a partner and talk about your sentences.



Reflection

I revised the adapted materials to include an appendix connecting the existing material to relevant ESL standards and to better accommodate learners by allowing them to watch the video twice: once without any interruptions, and another time with embedded quiz questions. I also created QR codes for video access to bring the adapted materials more in line with the format and layout of the rest of the textbook. In Lesson B.2.A, I revised two photographs, one to clear up potential student confusion about who “you” is in the picture. Though some reviewers suggested additional images for Lesson E.1.B, I decided to keep the one image for simplicity and correlation to the original activity in *Ventures*. Though this adaptation focuses on materials and not a lesson plan, I think the single image allows instructors to pair other related activities with the existing scaffolding, such as having students draw and/or write about their own families or find their own authentic images (in magazines, online) to describe and analyze.

References

- Canale, G. (2016). “(Re)Searching Culture in Foreign Language Textbooks, or the Politics of Hide and Seek.” *Language, Culture and Curriculum* 29(2), 225-243.
DOI: 10.1080/07908318.2016.1144764

Appendix A: Unit Objectives and Relationship of Unit to Standards

(taken from pp. iv-v and xiv-xv)

Unit Title and Topic: Unit 3, Friends and Family (pages 32-43) Topic: Family

Functions: describing actions; talking about family members

Listening and Speaking: asking and answering questions about current activity;
answering questions about your family

Vocabulary: family relationships; daily activities; descriptive adjectives

Grammar Focus: present continuous; wh- questions; yes/no questions; object
pronouns (him, her, it, them)

Reading: reading a paragraph describing a family birthday party; using a passage's title
for comprehension

Writing: writing sentences about your own family; writing number words

Life Skills: reading an insurance application form; using family trees; using formal and
informal family titles

Pronunciation: pronouncing key vocabulary

CORRELATIONS			
UNIT	CASAS Competencies	Florida Adult ESOL Low Beginning	LAUSD ESL Beginning Low Competencies
Welcome Unit Pages 2-5			
Unit 1 Personal Information Pages 6-17	0.1.2, 0.1.3, 0.1.4, 0.1.5, 0.1.6, 0.2.1, 0.2.2, 2.1.1, 2.1.8, 2.4.1, 2.5.2, 2.7.2, 4.8.1, 6.0.1, 7.2.4, 7.4.3, 7.5.6	2.01.01, 2.01.02, 2.01.03, 2.01.04, 2.03.12, 2.03.16	I. 1, 2, 4, 5, 7 II. 9, 11 III. 16, 26 V. 40 VIII. 58a, 58b, 58c
Unit 2 At school Pages 18-29	0.1.2, 0.1.4, 0.1.5, 2.5.5, 4.5.3, 4.6.2, 4.6.5, 4.7.2, 4.7.4, 4.8.1, 6.0.1, 6.0.2, 6.1.1, 7.1.4, 7.4.5	2.01.02, 2.01.04, 2.03.12, 2.03.16, 2.04.01	I. 1 II. 9 III. 15
Unit 3 Friends and family Pages 32-43	0.1.2, 0.1.4, 0.1.8, 0.2.1, 0.2.4, 1.4.1, 2.6.1, 2.7.1, 2.7.2, 6.0.1, 6.0.2, 7.1.4, 7.2.4, 7.4.7, 7.4.8, 7.5.6, 8.1.3, 8.2.1, 8.3.1	2.01.01, 2.01.02, 2.01.03, 2.01.04, 2.01.05, 2.01.06, 2.03.12, 2.03.16, 2.04.01, 2.05.01, 2.05.02	I. 3, 6, 7 II. 12, 13 III. 19 IV. 38

NRS Educational Functioning Level Descriptors	English Language Proficiency and College and Career Readiness Standards
Interpretive: (1, 6, 7, 8) - Identify key words in conversations and a reading about introductions. - Recognize the meaning of common words and phrases about introductions. - Recognize key words in a paragraph describing a student's personal information - Recognize key words in a registration form Productive: (3, 4, 7, 9, 10) - Use possessive adjectives, subject pronouns, simple present of be and contractions - Write sentences giving personal information Interactive: meaning (2, 5) - Participate in conversations about introductions - Gather and record information about popular names	ELP Standards 1-10 Reading Anchors 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10 Speaking & Listening Anchors 1, 2, 3, 4, 6
Interpretive: (1, 6, 7, 8) - Identify key words in conversations and a reading about the classroom - Recognize the meaning of common words and phrases about the classroom - Recognize key words in sentences describing a classroom - Recognize key words in an inventory list Productive: (3, 4, 7, 9, 10) - Use prepositions of location (in, on, under), Where is?, singular and plural nouns, Yes / No questions, This / that and these / those, contractions - Write sentences about the location of items in the classroom Interactive: meaning (2, 5) - Participate in conversations about the classroom - Gather and record information into a chart about school employees	ELP Standards 1-10 Reading Anchors 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10 Speaking & Listening Anchors 1, 2, 3, 4, 6
Interpretive: (1, 6, 7, 8) - Identify key words in conversations and a reading about friends and family - Recognize the meaning of common words and phrases about friends and family - Recognize key words in a paragraph describing a family birthday party - Recognize key words in an insurance application form Productive: (3, 4, 7, 9, 10) - Use present continuous, Wh- questions, Yes/No questions and object pronouns (him, her, it, them) - Write sentences about your own family Interactive: meaning (2, 5) - Participate in conversations about friends and family - Gather and record information about people's birthdays and send an electronic card	ELP Standards 1-10 Reading Anchors 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10 Speaking & Listening Anchors 1, 2, 3, 4, 6