
Authentik auf Deutsch. Zeitschrift und CD für den Deutschunterricht mit Fortgeschrittenen.

AS/A2 Reading Comprehension Practice Tests 2007. Ed. Ina Bennewitz. ISBN: 1-905275-20-x; AS/A2 Listening Comprehension Practice Tests 2007. Ed. Ina Doyle. ISBN: 1-905275-06-4; and, AS/A2 Grammar Practice Book German 2006. Ed. Meike Sommer. ISBN: 1-905275-23-4. Dublin, Ireland: Authentik Learning Resources, 2006.

At first glance, the *Authentik AS/A2 Level* series appears to be an attractive contribution to the field of German studies, since teachers and students will not be burdened by the price or the weight, for that matter, of these three volumes that deal with reading, listening, and grammar comprehension, respectively. However, a closer look at the title raises some questions for those German language educators who are unfamiliar with the meaning of the AS/A2 level. A brief investigation reveals that A-level is short for Advanced Level, which refers to the general certificate of education in the United Kingdom, which is usually taken by students during the optional final two years of secondary school. Hence, this series seems designed for students of the German language who are embedded within a particular educational system, pursuing specific language learning purposes and attempting to satisfy certain educational expectations. The overriding question, therefore, is whether or not this language tool can be useful to German language educators not teaching within a British-influenced school system and can be adapted for a wider audience and more general language learning goals.

A review of the *Authentik AS/A2 Level* series shows that these three books aim to test rather than to improve German language skills. These books can either be used as additional testing material in conjunction with other materials used in intensive language classes at the intermediate level or they serve as good assessment tools in preparation for exams, for study abroad, or for professional purposes. Each of these books can be utilized individually or in tandem with the others.

The *Reading Comprehension* book consists of fifteen tests and is divided into three sections, thereby establishing the level of difficulty for the students. The first section consists of tests 1-6, which are geared toward students at the AS level; the second section, the transitional one, is made up of tests 7-9 for students at the AS/A2 level; and the third section contains tests 10-15 for students at the A2 level. The texts of these various test-chapters deal with current topics of interest such as the Internet, the environment, immigration and integration, and violence in schools. All topics are informative and relevant to the cultural, political, and social environment of German-speaking countries.

The reading texts of each test chapter become gradually lengthier and more difficult. In the first section, the texts contain about 300 words, whereas the texts in the third section have twice as many. With each chapter the level of difficulty increases in terms of grammar, vocabulary and content. Each text is followed by various exercises, such as: answering content questions, inserting words from the

text into new passages, and translating by summarizing. It is clear that each chapter aims to test comprehension, reading, and writing skills.

The *Listening Comprehension* book has the exact same sectional division as its *Reading Comprehension* counterpart. Instead of reading, students are required to listen to a variety of interviews, news segments, and advertisements which cover any topic from wine harvesting to education in Germany. While listening to the different oral exercises, students are allowed to take brief notes to process some of the information presented. Afterwards students are asked to identify vocabulary, to answer content questions, and to summarize parts of what they have heard. At the end of each chapter test, students will find an answer key, which enables them to review their answers and correct them if need be.

The *Grammar Practice* book is divided into twelve units that deal with different grammar topics (e.g., strong versus weak verbs, conjunctions, prepositions). Although the authors focus on some of the most important grammar structures, the review is by no means comprehensive. At the beginning of this book students are asked for self-assessment, which might prove to be effective as they reflect on their language proficiency and their grammar skills. This method of assessment might help students to determine their language skills and help them track the progress they are making as they move through this book.

Each of the units is divided into three sections. The first section, *Patterns and Rules*, focuses on very brief grammar explanations in English. The second part, *Practice*, is designed to test the student's understanding of the reviewed grammar structure and to examine his or her ability to apply the grammar structures within a specific textual context. The third section of the unit, *Exam Focus*, builds on the actual A-level exam and uses testing techniques such as translation and free writing tasks, which the student will need to perform during the final AS/A2 level exam.

In summary, all three books have a valuable function. However, they can serve only as a review tool, whether for students taking the A-level exam for German or for those who desire a quick review in preparation for other goals. Some books might be better designed for review activities than the *Authentik* series, as they are not intended for a specific target audience and offer more in-depth review of Grammar structures. The value of this series of books for the German language student can be determined only by learners themselves, as they may best assess how and what they need to master. If the student is looking for a quick yet focused review and is preparing for the A-level exam into the bargain, this might be the right book!

Simone Schlichting-Artur
Department of Culture and Communication
Drexel University
Philadelphia, PA

Publisher's Response

We are delighted to respond to Professor Schlichting-Artur's detailed and thorough review of Authentik's *German Exam Practice Series*. As Professor

Schlichting-Artur points out, these books were initially designed for students preparing for the AS and A2 exams in the United Kingdom. However, the UK curriculum is by no means unique in placing authentic texts from the foreign language press and radio at the centre of teaching, requiring students to demonstrate in their final exams that they can understand and respond confidently and meaningfully to various authentic input materials.

Students preparing to meet the challenges of authentic print and audio texts need constant exposure to a variety of writing styles, topics, and levels of difficulty in print and to a mixture of accents and delivery speeds in the spoken language. The *AS/A2 Level Reading Comprehension Practice Tests* contain 15 authentic articles from 9 different German and Swiss newspapers or magazines. The *AS/A2 Level Listening Comprehension Practice Tests* contain authentic radio items from four German radio stations alongside a number of interviews with German native speakers from all walks of life. This rich collection of authentic input materials makes the book a valuable tool for a wider student audience, for example, for learners preparing for their AP or IB exams.

The *AS/A2 Grammar Practice Book* differs from the AS/A2 Reading and Listening Comprehension Books in that it offers more scope for language teaching as well as testing. In the first section of each of the 12 units, students are asked to infer grammar rules from guided observation of authentic language and to review their grammatical knowledge before practicing the grammar points in various tasks.

As all books in this series are offered as reproducible copy masters, teachers can photocopy the tests for their students as often as required; this license does not extend to other schools, however. The *AS/A2 Level Reading and Listening Comprehension* titles are published annually; in November 2008, the new editions will be available as downloadable PDFs and MP3s, in French, German, Spanish and Italian.

Barbara Sudrow
Operations Manager
Authentik Language Learning Resources, Ltd.