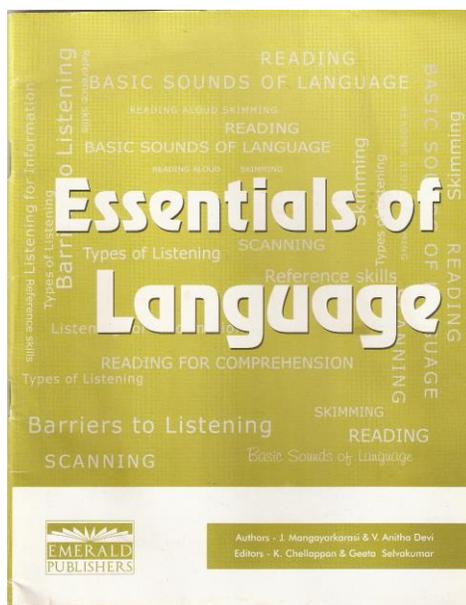

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Review of *Essentials of Language*

A Book by J. Mangayarkarasi, Ph.D. and V. Anitha Devi, Ph.D.

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Review of *Essentials of Language*, A Book by J. Mangayarkarasi, Ph.D. and
V. Anitha Devi, Ph.D.

Essential of Language (Emerald Publishers, Chennai, 2013) is a practical and useful book written by experienced college teachers of English, J. Mangayarkarasi and V. Anitha Devi. It is a short book of 52 pages with useful guidelines, instructions and exercises to improve the writing skills of students and others. The subtitle of the book describes its contents well: *English Language Laboratory Course & Workbook Volume I*.

The book starts with Student Profile. Students are asked to fill in some details of their ability in English. The profile page asks students to write down what they think is the most important thing they want to learn in “this class.”

Editors claim that the workbook “is meant to enable the first year degree students to acquire basic skills of English, listening, reading and reference skills by making them use language in the language laboratory.” To a large extent, the authors meet this requirement in this short book.

The book contains three Units:

Unit I includes a one-page note on what listening is all about, which is followed by three categories: Listening for Information, Types of Listening, and Barriers to Listening. A song from a classic Hollywood movie of yesteryears is presented with the intention to help develop listening among the students. This is an interesting innovation. It will be good to have some information as to how effective this item was in developing listening skill in the classrooms of the authors. Conversational English in face to face, radio and movie situations have been used effectively in most classrooms. Other materials presented are useful and effective to improve listening skills.

Unit II Essentials of Sounds and Reading deals with the following: Basic Sounds of Language, Reading and Reading for Comprehension. Authors’ assumption (not made explicit in the textbook) that linguistic symbols would help read and pronounce the words correctly is valid. However, students should be given adequate exercise in using a standard dictionary which provides linguistic description of the word entries usually in parentheses. There are many online

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dictionaries such as www.dictionary.com which should be introduced to the students and students should be encouraged to go to the online dictionary for meanings, usage, spelling, etc. The authors have made a good beginning in this volume, and I hope that this will be further dealt with in subsequent volumes as well to build up competence.

Unit III Essentials of Language deals with the following: Reference Skills, Locating Sources in Library Catalogue, Search for a Book in the Library or Internet and Dictionary, Thesaurus and Encyclopedia. Detailed guidelines to help students to “hunt” for information in the Internet, assessing the reliability of websites and information provided, methods of citation and preparation of list of references/works cited, etc. would be a welcome source for the next edition of this useful book.

English language teaching and learning is a continuous process and the authors have done well to help our students to proceed further in their effort to learn and use English effectively.

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Language is frequently spoken of as a ' living organism ' ; we hear of the ' life ' of languages, of the ' birth ' of new languages and of the ' death ' of old languages, and the implication, though not always realized, is that a language is a living thing, something analogous to an animal or a plant.Â When people speak of the life of words as in celebrated books with such titles as *La vie des mots*, or *Biographies of Words* they do not always keep in view that a word has no ' life ' of its own : it exists only in so far as it is pronounced or heard or remembered by somebody, and this kind of existence cannot properly.