Book Reviews

Using Student-Centered Methods With Teacher-Centered Students

Marilyn Lewis and Hayo Reinders
Don Mills, ON: Pippin, 2008, 113 pages

Reviewed by: *Linda Feuer*

Children from countries with education systems vastly different from Canada's are often quickly mainstreamed into public school classrooms, immersed in a totally different learning environment and expected to adapt to instruction methods that may be as foreign to them as the language, foods, and customs of their new society.

Using Student-Centered Methods With Teacher-Centered Students has been written for teachers with second-language speakers of English (adults or school-aged children) as students. This practical handbook is composed of eight chapters followed by a nine-page list of further reading. Each chapter is clearly organized and divided into short sections with headings.

In the first chapter Lewis and Reinders make recommendations for easing new students into the classroom and creating a comfortable atmosphere. The teacher could move gradually from structured to more unstructured tasks and begin with the familiar: dictations, memorized dialogues, choral reading, computer labs, or games with rules that have an inherent element of control. The authors emphasize giving students a rationale for learning materials and classroom arrangement. They stress that developing trust is key to smooth integration of new students.

Chapter 2 examines the importance of making students aware of the purpose of activities. The authors suggest posting an outline showing students the larger plan and involving them in planning. They recommend encouraging students to set their own goals and emphasize the necessity of using authentic tasks and content-based teaching. In Chapter 3 Lewis and Reinders demonstrate the various kinds of language that students need to know such as teacher talk, subject-specific language, social language, and language for repairing gaps. They give many sources of language samples. For example, to model the language of varied viewpoints, newspapers, TV, radio programs, letters to the editor, or debates could be used.

Chapter 4 discusses second-language teachers' roles: language-support teacher, one-to-one teacher, disciplinarian, advisor and advocate, community member, and colleague. In Chapter 5 the authors differentiate between strategies that are helpful in learning a task and those that aid in

learning a process. The importance of raising students' awareness of strategies and their potential value is emphasized. For example, listeners will often echo what the student has said while correcting a pronunciation error. Students need to be aware of learning opportunities to repeat and correct pronunciation.

How do we give students a sense of progress? In Chapter 6 the authors discuss informal and formal assessment methods. They stress the importance of building students' confidence through assessment. Lewis and Reinders suggest several ways of assessing comprehension and fluency: paraphrasing passages, completing a dialogue or creating a role play from a scenario, interviewing the instructor, or giving a presentation to a group. They end the chapter by discussing the value of self-assessment and peer feedback and the use of tests and portfolios.

The last two chapters focus on developing learners' autonomy and on the effect of a student's culture on learning. The authors note that autonomy requires freedom of choice, which learners may not have experienced or even want. Inherent in autonomy is employing higher thinking skills and critical reflection: difficult skills to acquire and use. They discuss what teachers can do to develop autonomy and recommend a process-based method of assessing learners' autonomy. The book ends with a reminder that a learner's cultural experience influences his or her ability to adapt to a new learning environment. Chapter 8 cites cultural differences that can create problems such as the use of silence and suggests ways to ease students into the new cultural milieu.

Using Student-Centered Methods With Teacher-Centered Students would be useful to a novice teacher who suddenly finds a student learning English as an additional language placed in the mainstream classroom. If a teacher has no education or preparation for how to best help this student, this book could be of assistance. It is user-friendly, written in layman's language, and therefore easy to read and understand. In addition, it is clearly organized: the issues are presented thoroughly in easily digestible chunks. The book is rich in practical ideas that could be employed in the classroom.

Although beneficial, this book could have been more effective had it appealed to a broader audience. Most activities described are more appropriate for children than for adults. Teachers of advanced-level students will find few new useful ideas. Many of the suggestions provided would be obvious to experienced teachers who have worked with second-language students, children or adults. The author's cautionary note that role-playing might be met with resistance surprised me. I have used role-playing with adult learners many times and have always found that they embraced and enjoyed it.

In conclusion, I would recommend this book to teachers encountering second-language speakers of English in their classrooms for the first time

having had no orientation. It is valuable in giving basic insights in an easy-to-read format.

The Reviewer

Linda Feuer is an instructor with the English Language Centre at the University of Manitoba, where she teaches academic English to international students enrolled in the direct-entry program and administers the CanTEST.

Test it Fix it: Business Vocabulary (Intermediate)
Test it Fix it: Business Grammar (Intermediate)
K. Bourke and A. Maris
Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2006, 88 pages

Reviewed by: *E. Jill Given-King*

Test it Fix it: Business Vocabulary (Intermediate) and *Test it Fix it: Business Grammar* (Intermediate) are two books in a self-study series designed for ESL students. Comprising 88 pages, these texts are not comprehensive, but rather focus on mistakes commonly made by learners in the areas of business grammar or vocabulary. Although focusing on various aspects of business writing, they are virtually identical in structure and method: each contains a contents page, two pages of instructions, and 20 chapters. The texts conclude with a two-page section that presents some of the differences between British and American English, along with an additional page devoted respectively to useful information about dates and currency and to a grammar review.

As the authors note in their brief introduction, the format of these self-study texts is somewhat unusual. Each chapter is constructed around two tests and two answer sets. Students begin by taking the initial test that appears on the first page of the unit being studied and then proceed to the third page for the answer key. The page containing the answer key is designed such that it can be folded back so that the answers can be placed directly beside the test being marked. Once a student has reviewed the results of the first test, he or she can then refer to the fix-it note section for more information about the correct answer. If further elaboration is desired, the review section offers a more comprehensive explanation. The student then takes the second test of the unit and marks this to see if he or she has fixed each mistake. Once again, the student can refer to the designated fix-it note or review page if necessary. The idea underlying the above strategy is that the feedback provided in the fix-it notes and review sections, along with subsequent retesting, should enable the student to learn from his or her mistakes.

With respect to content, chapters are business-theme-based. *Test it Fix it: Business Grammar* (Intermediate) has chapters on making conversation at work, asking questions, agreeing and disagreeing with co-workers, being

tactful, and so on. Similarly, *Text it Fix it: Business Vocabulary* (Intermediate) focuses on a variety of topics including jobs, office equipment, meetings, marketing, and cultural matters. The texts thus provide a content-based way for students to improve their understanding of business English while they learn about how the business world functions.

Provided they are used as designed by students at the appropriate level, these texts have the potential to assist learners in improving their understanding of the business world and of the grammar and vocabulary necessary to function in it. The content-based cyclical approach employed by the authors offers several benefits to students, their focus on the most common errors being of primary importance to improving fluency. In this framework, students have the opportunity to self-test without feeling self-conscious about their mistakes as they might in a classroom. Indeed, students may find it helpful that they can work through the tests in whatever order they choose depending on their particular needs rather than having to proceed in chapter order. Once completed, the corrected tests and subsequent fix-it notes/review sections can provide students with a handy and concise reference guide to business grammar and vocabulary.

As a final thought, although these texts are designed for self-study, there seems to be no reason why teachers could not use them profitably in the classroom context or as a supplement to classroom work, especially as a quick review of business grammar or vocabulary. ESL students who find the texts somewhat above their comfort level or who find the brief instructions insufficient for their needs may find additional classroom support for the materials to be of benefit.

The Reviewer

Jill Given-King has a BA (Honours) in English literature, an M.A. in education, and a TESL Certificate from the University of Toronto. She has worked in a variety of occupations including as an ESL teacher, administrative assistant, and music teacher.

Teaching Other Subjects Through English
Sheelagh Deller and Christine Price
Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2007, 151 pages

Reviewed by: *Chadwick Low*

This is a practical textbook that supports English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers who instruct English-language students through other subjects. The text is based on the new Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach to foreign language acquisition. The book highlights 60 practical, hands-on, multi-theoretical approaches to CLIL teaching, giving clear and concise directions for the implementation of EFL instruction in other subjects. Deller and Price aim the materials at students aged 11-18 who are

learning English in the target language in a cross-curricular model. The authors write the lessons for two types of foreign-language teachers: (a) teachers of English who teach other subjects, and (b) subject-area teachers who must teach English but do not have a strong command of the target language. The book addresses English-language teaching through CLIL in four types of courses: (a) foreign-language teaching for general purposes, (b) foreign-language teaching for work purposes, (c) cross-curricular foreign-language teaching, and (d) subject teaching through a foreign language (p. 7).

The text establishes lessons in the Communicative Approach: Speaking, Writing, Listening and Speaking. However, the lessons are driven by product-based, easily implemented objectives that provide new linguistic knowledge through subject-based methodology instruction. The purpose of the text is to provide ESL teachers with subject-instruction activities that will reduce stress and pressure for both the instructor and the student. The text provides genuine advantages for the instructor, providing real, practical methods for English-language teaching in a content-driven learning environment.

The advantage of this text is that each of the 60 lessons establishes a product-oriented result that could have real, tangible results for the student. Many English-language students around the world have basic competence in the language; thus the text provides new methods for increasing motivation. The lessons focus on producing output through an interactive, natural approach based on a "product-student talking time" (p. 8). The text discourages teachers from dominating lessons through input and focuses student-centered output with clear, hands-on objectives.

Deller and Price use up-to-date learning theory to design these practical, product-driven lessons. They rely heavily on Gardner's Multiple Intelligences model, which incorporates musical, kinesthetic, and logical/mathematical intelligences into the lessons (Campbell, 2003). Furthermore, the lessons are reminiscent of Dewey's hands-on approach, where lessons involve the active participation of students. These lessons allow students to become active learning participants who are responsible for their learning progress.

It is clear that the authors use visual strategies in the creation of these interactive lessons. The lessons stress whole-brain-based learning for the visual learner through graphs, pictures, charts, and diagrams. As well, various activities stress repetition in an applied-theoretical approach. The text also suggests that learning English through other subjects can be applied, as Krashen and Terrell (1983) suggested in the natural method. For the lower grades, the text encourages teachers to use code-switching (p. 9) techniques that allow students to use their L1 to help transfer known language into the target language in other curricular subjects.

Mainly, the advantages of this language-based resource relate to the simplicity of the lesson design. Each of the 60 lessons indicates clear aims for the student, the intended learner's age, and the usefulness of the lesson. Second, the lessons have a clear application to the subject in which the lesson can be most useful. The lesson then demonstrates the subject content and creates a suitable and practical lesson for the EFL teacher to apply readily in class. In addition, a wide range of cross-curricular subjects include mathematics, chemistry, physics, English, sports science, art, music, ICT, business, technology, and even religious studies. The lessons are easily identified and organized into seven chapters: Giving New Information, Teaching and Activating Key Vocabulary, Speaking, Writing, Consolidation and Revision, Using Supplementary Resources, and Project Work. Furthermore, lessons give detailed step-by-step instruction on the level of language proficiency and the time requirements for the lesson, which allows the EFL teacher to organize and plan a lesson in great detail.

Advice is also provided on how to modify and implement each activity and lesson. Each lesson provides suggestions for simplifying the text; making the text more visual; modifying the language level; and adapting lessons through a cross-curricular, practical approach. Also, four appendixes provide the teacher with valuable resources on language to help instructors in the classroom, useful language for students, beneficial Web sites, and useful books. All in all, this valuable resource has something for everyone, teacher and student. The benefits of this text are immense. It gives the EFL teacher of other subjects—native and non-native speakers of English alike—the ability to instruct and help students unlock their potential in a practical manner.

References

Campbell, D. (2003). *Teaching through multiple intelligences*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
Krashen, S., & Terrell, T. (1983). *The natural approach: Language acquisition in the classroom*.
    Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Alemany Prentice Hall.

The Reviewer

Chadwick Low is an ESL specialist and resource teacher at St. Marguerite d'Youville Secondary School in Brampton, ON. He is currently enrolled in English studies at the University of Nottingham, focusing on second-language reading. Chadwick has written literacy policy at the board level and for the Ministry of Education's E-Learning. In addition, he has written articles for TESL Ontario on Dialogic Reading in ESL Secondary Classes.

LINDA FEUER, E. JILL GIVEN-KING, and CHADWICK LOW