
Book Reviews

From the Classroom:

Grounded Activities for Language Learning

Miles Turnbull, Jill Sinclair Bell, and Sharon Lapkin (Eds.)

Toronto, ON: *Canadian Modern Language Review/La Revue canadienne des langues vivantes*, 2002; 202 pages

This bilingual volume is a collection of 17 teaching activities (six in French, 11 in English) originally published between 1995 and 2002 in the section *A Touch of Class* in the *Canadian Modern Language Review/La Revue canadienne des langues vivantes*. As editors, Turnbull, Sinclair Bell, and Lapkin have selected a wide range of theoretically sound and classroom-tried techniques for second-language (L2) teaching—most originating from an FSL teaching context—described by experienced L2 teachers. The description of each activity details a theoretical rationale for its use and intended purpose and includes a step-by-step procedure for its implementation. Cognizant of the varied student needs and the multiple contexts in which Canadian L2 teachers work, the editors have “identified the key objectives for each suggested activity, and provided adaptations that make the activities suitable for a wide range of programs” (p. vi). To this end they have developed a conceptual and organization framework in which each pedagogical technique is classified for its primary and secondary foci. This descriptive classification system, based principally on Stern’s (1983) and Stern, Allen, and Harley’s (1992) multidimensional approach to curriculum design for L2 teaching, includes communicative/experiential, language, and cultural foci, plotted against the four skill areas and language and learning awareness. The bilingual Introduction to the volume provides a clear and comprehensive description of this framework.

Each activity begins with the editors’ classification, brief notes on the applicability of the activity to particular grade levels and programs, and an editors’ abstract of the activity (in English only). Although these notes initially appear useful as a type of index, readers will be wise to read through the complete description in order to give adequate consideration to how to use and adapt the activity to their context. When relevant, the authors supply support documents (i.e., questionnaires, Web addresses, references) and reflect on modifications for future implementation. Following each original description, the editors outline two adaptations (in English only), each of which involves a change in the focus of the technique (e.g., from writing to speaking, from language to culture) or a modification making it more suitable for another age or language group. These adaptations, albeit brief,

are intended to encourage teachers to evaluate their own learners' needs and to consider how a good teaching idea in one context may apply just as well to another.

This volume is recommended as a resource for novice teachers and teachers seeking to add a new dimension to their teaching, and it includes many popular techniques (e.g., bookmaking, reading buddies, journal-writing, portfolios, media studies, newscast analyses). The activities range from those with a focus on a single skill (e.g., effective error correction for writing) to multidimensional foci (e.g., a unit on the culture of love). For teachers already experienced in teaching in an experiential and communicative approach, a few innovative ideas offer slightly varied ways to apply familiar techniques.

The editors are successful in presenting a useful and theoretically sound collection of L2 teaching activities. Although almost all the ideas originate from FSL teaching contexts, the proposed adaptations allow all L2 teachers to explore worthwhile modifications in order to meet their students' needs. Two observations about this volume include: (a) given the bilingual content of the volume, it is surprising that the title appears only in English; and (b) the order in which the activities are presented appears random, thus reducing the practicality of the volume as a reference book. Furthermore, although the editors' classification of each activity is insightful, this information might also have been indexed in summative form, which could have provided a complete list of the content, allowing readers to identify readily and recall those activities with similar classifications and relevance to their context.

This Canadian resource may not apply directly to all L2 teaching contexts, but most if not all of the activities can be adapted through experience and a creative outlook, always bearing in mind one's own teaching context and specific students' needs. At first glance, the volume appears to be simply a reprint of *A Touch of Class* articles from *CMLR*, but in fact it is much more: it provides ideas for varied Canadian contexts for L2 teaching, including adaptations showing a full range of possibilities.

References

- Stern, H.H. (1983). *Fundamental concepts of language teaching*. London: Oxford University Press.
Stern, H.H., Allen, P., & Harley, B. (Eds.). (1992). *Issues and options in language teaching*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press

Jennifer St.John

The Reviewer

Jennifer St.John has taught ESL to adults at the Second Language Institute of the University of Ottawa for over 20 years. Her focus includes teaching pronunciation and accent awareness skills, teaching and testing oral communication skills, and developing pedagogical tools to access students' multiple intelligences with a view to enhancing learning outcomes.

English for Academic Study: Vocabulary Course Book

Colin Campbell

Reading, MA: Garnet Education, 2007, 195 pages

This textbook is organized for independent study to provide students with knowledge and practice in using words correctly and to improve and increase vocabulary. It is divided into three main parts: Introduction to Vocabulary Development, Academic Word List, and the Appendix.

Part One consists of five units designed to develop skills in identifying, understanding, and using multi-meaning words, word classes, word families and word parts, collocations, and word grammar. This section of the text uses vocabulary from approximately "150 of the most important General Service List word families" (p. 5). These sections and exercises provide students with basic vocabulary understanding.

Part Two focuses on applying the knowledge from Part One to the first five sublists of the Academic Word List. Through exercises that require them to put academic words in sentences, to match words with their definitions, and to complete sentences, students review skills previously learned in units one to five. The vocabulary and examples come from a variety of subject areas including the environment, education, health, business, and science. At the end of each section is a vocabulary list categorized according to the topics in that unit.

Part Three provides all the words for each word family of the five sublists, highlighting the most frequently used word in each family. Both British and United States spellings of the words are included. The appendix provides an achievement test that could in fact be used as both a pre- and a post-test. Answer keys for all the exercises in the text and for the achievement test are also provided.

The introduction to this text clearly states the aims and purposes of the book. It breaks down the structure of the text and provides suggestions as to the most effective way to use it by providing a brief question-and-answer section. Throughout the text, study tips and language notes provide students with extra support and information about the best way to learn specific vocabulary or how to apply certain rules. There are plenty of examples and explanations at most points throughout the book.

Still, a few reservations may be appropriate. For example, students should use a good dictionary for many of the exercises in the text, and so because this text is suggested for self-study, a brief explanation of what constitutes a good dictionary, how to use one, and a suggested dictionary list would be beneficial. Also, I found the different colors for each section in Part One a little overwhelming and at times difficult to read. Moreover, a summary of the study tips and language notes in the appendices could bring everything together and make the entire package more accessible. In some

exercises reference is made to other texts published by the same institution for more detailed information or examples; perhaps an example illustrating this idea and then just supplementing it with the alternate text as a reference would better facilitate learning.

Overall, this text can give students plenty of background information on strategies for learning vocabulary as well as helping them increase their academic vocabulary. It is my experience that many students do not know some of this basic information and that their only goal is to memorize vocabulary instead of learning vocabulary in order to use it. This text would be most appropriate for intermediate- to advanced-level students and would probably be most beneficial with some in-class lectures to support the basics of learning vocabulary.

Tracey Giesbrecht

The Reviewer

Tracey Giesbrecht is an instructor at the English Language Centre in the University of Manitoba. She also coordinates the Part-Time Courses Program. Her research interest is in international students and use of the Internet.

Linguistic Diversity and Teaching

L.N. Commins and O.B. Miramontes

Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2005, 204 pages

Linguistic Diversity and Teaching is an excellent study that addresses important issues about students from divergent linguistic backgrounds. Through case studies involving not only mainstream teachers who have non-native students in their classes, but also school administrations and parents, it explores challenges arising in linguistically diverse United States schools. Commins and Miramontes contextualize their own views of the issues around linguistic diversity in school against a background of engaging and insightful comments and insights from a variety of educators, including prospective and experienced teachers, school administrators, graduate students, and others.

The book is divided into three parts. In Part I the authors introduce four case studies that examine typical issues that can arise in US public schools due to changing demographics. Each case study richly documents the challenges that Euro-American teachers may experience when teaching linguistically diverse students, exploring such issues as teachers' lack of knowledge on how to teach linguistically diverse student groups, teachers' perceptions of both immigrant students and their parents, the lack of an organizational structure to serve these students, and questions about appropriate standards and assessments for linguistically diverse student populations. Following each case is a *Reader Reactions* space for readers to write their thoughts and reflections about the case. Next comes *Reactions*, presenting observations,

insights, and suggestions based on reactions to the case from a range of educators, administrators, and scholars, again followed by another space for readers to note their own reactions to the previous section. Finally, treatment of each case ends with a summary and additional questions, where the authors provide readers with additional thought-provoking perspectives on the case under study.

Part II, entitled *Public Arguments*, presents three alternative views about teaching students from varied linguistic backgrounds. The first view is that "English is the Glue That Holds our Nation Together"; advocates of this outlook assert that success in the US depends on learning English, and so immigrants and their children should immerse themselves in the language. By so doing they will have the "opportunity to participate in the richness that is the American life" (p. 110). Arguing in favor of English-only, they observe that bilingual education can be costly and even detrimental to students. The second argument posits that "Bilingual Education is a Must"; proponents of this viewpoint place great value on speaking more than one language and stress that for their own educational benefit, immigrant children should receive instruction both in English and in their primary language. The last argument supports "A Pragmatic Approach," which pinpoints advantages as well as problems associated with the other two perspectives and emphasizes that there are no absolutes in deciding on the best teaching strategies for non-native students. After each argument the authors include a *Comments* section that draws readers into these difficult, but important debates through a set of questions. Overall, each case study is examined through the lenses of the above-mentioned arguments. By considering all three of these arguments about linguistic diversity in school, readers have an opportunity to examine their own values and beliefs about the issues.

The last part is entitled *Final Arguments and Some Suggestions and Resources for Reflection*. In this section Commins and Miramontes draw on the existing literature on linguistic diversity to present an overview of beliefs about and interpretations of the critical issues previously presented. A helpful and practical section is provided under the heading *What Can Be Done?* Here the authors offer valuable instructional strategies for everyday practice by educators that they explain in detail. In the final section of this part they suggest exercises for further reflection.

At the end of the book the authors provide a glossary of terms and references, but they do not stop there: they do not leave the reader with merely a references section; they provide a valuable bibliography organized by topic, which is an excellent resource for those who wish to read further on these important issues. Thus this is an excellent book for inservice and experienced teachers, teacher trainers, researchers, and administrators. It

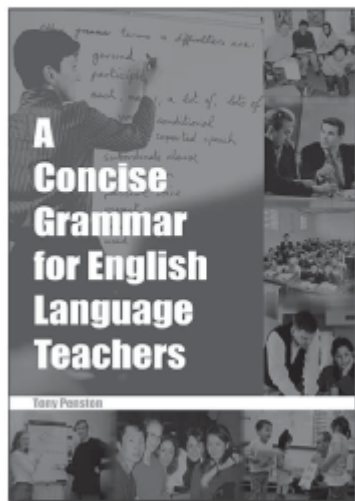
could also make an excellent course book at either the graduate or the undergraduate level.

Aylin Bunk

The Reviewer

Aylin Bunk has taught ESL/EFL for 11 years both in the US and Turkey. She is pursuing her doctoral degree in educational leadership at Portland State University in addition to teaching ESL at a local community college.

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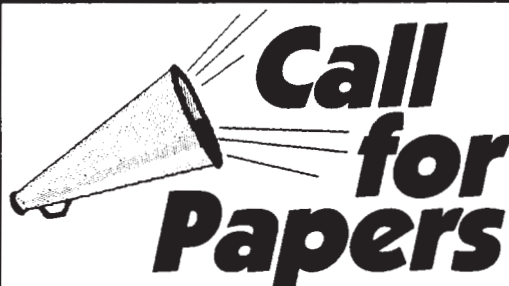
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