REVIEWS
COMPTES RENDUS

Adult ESL Program Evaluation Guide[1]

Mary Selman
Victoria, British Columbia: Province of British Columbia Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology, 1991. 73 pp.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS

Adult ESL Program Evaluation Guide is an extremely practical and helpful publication that would be of enormous value to anyone attempting to evaluate their adult ESL program. It takes the mystique out of program evaluation, and provides instruments for carrying out an evaluation and coming up with substantive and specific findings. It can be used as the basis for ongoing internal program evaluation as well as for external review, and Selman claims that the data can be gathered within a few days.

What is more, it provides a relatively objective basis for comparison of similar programs because, using the forms and questionnaires it contains, it is possible to make meaningful comparisons—the most frustrating part of reading most program evaluations is that the methodology and/or criteria used to achieve the evaluations varies so from evaluation to evaluation that to compare them is like comparing apples and oranges.

This *Program Evaluation Guide* is intended primarily for "participatory evaluation; by those involved in a program, and is aimed at providing data which will identify steps to be taken for its improvement. The introduction includes a clear and detailed example of a plan of action that could be followed if, for example, the evaluation showed that there should be more cross-cultural content in the program.

At the core of this *Guide* is what Selman calls the eighteen "Good Practice Statements" contained in the "Program Questionnaire". In addition, there is: a "Personnel Basic Information Sheet"; a "Program Questionnaire" including "Open Comments"; a "Summary of Ratings"; a "Learner Questionnaire"; a "Learner Evaluation of the Program": a "Learner Questionnaire Tally Sheet"; an "ESL Program Planning Form"; and a "Program Profile".

THE GOOD PRACTICE STATEMENTS

The following is Selman's definition of the Good Practice Statements:

> These are statements that ESL specialists have agreed are typical of high-quality programs. They provide a standard against which you can measure your program. They represent an ideal to work toward. Realize that no one has a perfect program, but we can aspire to excellence (p. 7).

They are statements relating to eighteen different aspects of an ESL program: philosophy; internal and external involvement and linkages; planning; awareness activities—recruitment, public relations, advocacy; access; facilities and equipment; administration; participation; personnel; pre-service and in-service development; instructor and tutor support; learner assessment; learner support; instructional strategies; content; materials; program evaluation; and funding.

Examples of these statements:

> *Planning* A high-quality adult ESL program regularly plans and sets goals and objectives consistent with its philosophy. It carries out these activities with the involvement of learners, instructors, administrators, tutors (where applicable), interested community representatives, and other stakeholders on a regular basis (p. 11).
>
> *Pre-service and In-Service Development* A high-quality ESL program offers personnel development programs appropriate to their needs (p. 13).

Clearly, each of these statements reflects certain basic assumptions about what is "good". They together cover most of the main features that I believe one would look for in an adult ESL program. What is more, a close reading of each of them shows that there is nothing substantive that any ESL professional could object to. The only reservation that may be noted is that certain features such as community involvement may not be applicable.

THE PERSONNEL BASIC INFORMATION SHEET AND LEARNER QUESTIONNAIRE

These two brief questionnaires elicit basic information about the personnel and students taking part. For example, personnel are asked such things as their position in the program, how many learners they instruct, etc., and students are asked for background information about themselves.

THE PROGRAM QUESTIONNAIRE

This section is the main part of the evaluation instrument. It is divided into the eighteen sections according to the good practice statements, and each statement is printed at the beginning of that section, serving as the basis for the questions and the yardstick against which that aspect of the program is being evaluated. The initial reaction I had to this questionnaire was that it is quite daunting, and that personnel would balk at filling it in. However, although the eighteen sections span no fewer than 34 pages, most of it is "yes/no" or "circle a point on a five-point scale" format. While such questionnaires can be answered fairly quickly, it still seems to me to be somewhat excessive. For example, each respondent is asked to answer 11 questions about the existence and content of the program's mission statement, when these are objective facts; a similar criticism holds for several of the sections, for example, the "Instructor and Tutor Support" section, where several questions are related to the basic information on that feature, and does not need to be filled out by everyone. Apart from this reservation, the questions are, on the whole, clear and important.

This eighteen-part questionnaire is followed by two open-ended questions abut how satisfied the respondents are with the program, and calling for comments on anything not covered in the eighteen sections. Finally, there is a sheet on which each rater summarizes their ratings in each of the 18 areas.

LEARNER EVALUATION OF THE PROGRAM

This is a thirteen-question questionnaire covering many aspects of the program from the perspective of the learner. They include questions on such matters as the learner's perceived progress, course content, problems, etc. Selman correctly points out that this questionnaire might be linguistically too difficult for many of the students in a particular program, in which case alternative formats such as interviews would have to be used.

The questionnaire is followed by a tally sheet, like the personnel questionnaire.

THE ESL PROGRAM PLANNING FORM

This is a chart listing the eighteen areas addressed. For each of these, there is space to list objectives, priorities and who will take the initiative for change.

THE PROGRAM PROFILE

This final document which, it would seem, should be filled out by

the program coordinator, summarizes the essential facts about the program such as the percentage of paid time that personnel work in the difference aspects of the program, volunteer involvement, numbers of students, etc.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The only major reservation that I have concerning this excellent *Adult ESL Program Evaluation Guide* is the citing of the Good Practice Statement at the beginning of each section of the questionnaire. While, as I stated, I have no objection to any of the eighteen statements, and clearly their spirit is reflected in the questions asked, I worry a little that their actual presence on the questionnaires, reminiscent of proverbs or "Ethics of the Fathers", might inhibit respondents or at least tunnel their vision and response.

In conclusion, as I have intimated throughout this review, I see this *Guide* as being extremely valuable and useful. Its existence makes it more possible to expect ongoing evaluation of programs, which can only lead to better programs. Where this *Guide* may not be appropriate for all particular programs, it can still serve as a model and a basis for the creation of similar instruments. It is my hope that readers will acquire copies and increase the level and quantity of program review by using this excellent *Guide*.

Mary Selman's *Adult ESL Program Evaluation Guide* is a very valuable addition to any ESL program's library of resources!

NOTE

1. Copies can be ordered from: Provincial Curriculum Publications, Marketing Dept., Open Learning Agency, P.O. Box 82080, Burnaby, B.C. V5C 5P2.

David Mendelsohn

THE REVIEWER

David Mendelsohn is an Associate Professor of ESL at York University and trains ESL teachers. His main interests are teaching Speaking and Listening Comprehension and training teachers. He has co-authored *Functioning in English–Student Text plus Teachers's Manual* (1984), with Rose Laufer and Jura Seskus, and *Real Writing* (1988) with Joan Bayers, Michael Carrier, Maureen McNerney and Marian Tyacke. He has recently completed the following book: *Learning to Listen: A Strategy-Based Approach for the Second Language Learner* (in press).

AIDS Education for English Language Learners: A Guidebook for Teachers[1]

Sarah Stevens
Winnipeg: Planned Parenthood Manitoba, 1991. 179 pp.

Few teachers relish the thought of discussing potentially embarrassing topics that may generate a range of emotional reactions from students. Nonetheless, there are a few issues that warrant attention simply because they are of overwhelming importance to all individuals. The book *Aids Education for English Language Learners* by Sarah Stevens addresses one of these issues and encourages concerned teachers to consider introducing a difficult topic in the adult ESL classroom.

The AIDS epidemic is a global concern. Many health professionals suggest that the illness is increasing at an alarming rate. Today, there is a growing recognition that public education on AIDS is crucial. For K-12 students, AIDS education is now an integral part of the curriculum in most schools in North America. For English speaking adults, facts about AIDS are available through health centres and the news media. Many adult ESL learners, however, are unable to access these resources and for them, the ESL teacher may be their only source of information. What should ESL teachers know about AIDS? How can they deal with this important and sensitive topic in their classrooms? *Aids Education for English Language Learners* is concerned with these questions.

The aim of AIDS education in the adult ESL context is to inform students about AIDS transmission and prevention, to decrease irrational fears and beliefs, and to encourage students to understand and feel compassion toward those who are infected with the virus. ESL teachers are not expected to become experts on the subject of AIDS. They should, however, familiarize themselves with services and resources in the area in order that they may enable students to openly discuss the topic and access the information they need. For this reason, *Aids Education for English Language Learners* is a valuable resource. It provides ESL teachers with facts about AIDS, guidelines for introducing the topic in the classroom, interesting quotations and anecdotes from ESL classes, sample exercises, and a wealth of information about resources, services, and local and national AIDS organizations.

The book consists of four chapters and an appendix. Chapter one outlines the purpose of the guidebook and discusses the role of the ESL teacher in AIDS education. The author stresses the importance of placing AIDS education within the broader context of health and sexuality issues. In addition to covering vocabulary associated with health concerns, it is emphasized that many newcomers would benefit from a general orientation to the medical and legal concepts and practices that surround health services in Canada.

In chapter two, *AIDS Education: A Primer*, basic facts about AIDS and AIDS education are presented. The most important points are highlighted in the section "Key Messages about AIDS". The author makes it clear that teaching about AIDS is not a simple, straightforward exercise. ESL students come from diverse backgrounds and their beliefs, attitudes, and willingness to discuss sexuality and sexual behavior may vary considerably. Discussions about AIDS may trigger any number of controversial issues and concerns. Stevens suggests that ESL teachers need to be aware of the complexities that may arise when teaching about AIDS and be prepared to discuss sensitive issues such as homophobia, racism, violence against women, and poverty.

An in-depth discussion of several of the issues educators will face when teaching AIDS in a multicultural context is the focus of chapter three. Teachers are encouraged to examine their own values and to consider how students' cultural backgrounds, religions, and personal experiences may impact their understanding of AIDS and health education.

The last chapter discusses the many ways teachers can provide students with knowledge about AIDS. Topics include tips for preparing for a guest speaker or field trip, a discussion of the teacher's role as an information and referral agent, guidelines for obtaining and using print and audiovisual resources, and forms for evaluating available resources. Advice is given on how to promote student participation and several suggestions are offered to help make teachers feel comfortable about dealing with AIDS and topics of sexuality in their classroom. Teachers will find the section "Teaching AIDS in the ESL classroom" particularly useful as the author presents specific teaching strategies and exercises that can easily be used with ESL students. Two questionnaires that assess students' knowledge of AIDS are provided as activities that can be used prior to introducing the topic. Terms that need to be defined and explained are discussed, and details on how to plan a program, develop an outline, and present information are described. The chapter contains several summaries of important facts about AIDS; teachers may choose to use these as student handouts.

The book ends with a series of appendices. Included are a number of excellent exercises designed to increase students' sensitivity to cultural and individual differences. Not only are these useful classroom exercises but they serve to illustrate how teachers can modify and adapt other AIDS and sexuality material for ESL students. The appendices also include drawings of the male and female reproductive systems, a glossary of terms, suggested readings, a list of AIDS organizations across Canada, and an extensive inventory of print, audiovisual, and video resources.

Overall, *Aids Education for English Language Learners* is a well written document that provides thorough coverage of an important, relevant topic. Personally speaking, after reading this material, I would use this guidebook and teach about AIDS in the ESL classroom. The only difficulty I foresee is that many ESL teachers want a quick and easy lesson plan that can be used effectively in a one-shot presentation. The intention of Steven's guidebook, however, is to make teachers aware that AIDS education requires informed knowledge and careful planning and preparation.

This review is based on an early draft of the manuscript. Although many of the ideas had not yet been field tested at the time of this review, my own feeling is that *AIDS Education for English Language Learners* will prove to be an extremely useful resource for ESL teachers. In short, I am favorably impressed with this guidebook.

NOTE

1. *AIDS Education for English Language Learners* is available for $20.00 plus postage from Planned Parenthood Manitoba, 206 - 819 Sargent, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R2E 0B9.

Judy Cameron

THE REVIEWER

Judy Cameron is an assistant professor in the department of Adult, Career and Technology Education at the University of Alberta. She has been involved in the development of educational materials for instructors and students in citizenship education and ESL/literacy. Her research interests include learning and motivation.

Canadian Concepts 2

Lynda Berish & Sandra Thibaudeau
Scarborough, ON: Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., 1992. 120 pp.
ISBN: 013-117052-X

Take Part: Speaking Canadian English. Second Edition.

Lucia Pietrusiak Engkent & Karen P. Bardy
Scarborough, ON: Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., 1992. 130 pp.
ISBN: 013-882275-1

Words We Use

Barbara Bowers & John Godfrey
Scarborough, ON: Prentice-Hall Canada Inc., 1992. 130 pp.
ISBN: 013-964016-9

The above three books are exciting additions to any ESL classroom because their content is totally Canadian. It is certainly the right time for publishers to encourage Canadian authors to produce culturally meaningful materials. There has been an increase in the number of new Canadians who learn their English in Canada. These texts present cultural themes, and help these learners understand their new country.

All three books include Canadian themes which emphasize survival and cultural topics. Learners are encouraged to participate in Canadian Society by becoming informed and being active. The texts encourage learners to work cooperatively while developing language skills.

CANADIAN CONCEPTS 2

Canadian Concepts is a six book series geared to students studying English in Canada. Each level has a student workbook, a teacher's manual, and an audio-cassette. The fifteen cultural and survival themes are recycled throughout the series becoming more difficult at each level.

I found it very exciting to work with the second book of the series. The first unit on "Names" was an instant success with my learners. There was lots of cultural information, sharing of information from learners, and a multitude of communicative activities.

As an instructor, I especially appreciated the little symbols in the margin which denote group and paired activities, listening, reading, and writing activities. It was so easy to skim down the page and pick out the activities that suited the class. The unit on "Names" included a listening activity, a partner activity, a comprehension passage and

questions and a short written composition. The learners' backgrounds were explored and incorporated into the lesson as much as possible.

In this unit, as in the others, there is a "Community Contact Task" in which learners can practice their English in real-life situations outside the classroom. Instructions, suggestions, and student worksheets for the contact tasks are offered in the text. Most are partner tasks and are enjoyable for the learners. My learners and I found this "contact" section very appealing and lots of fun.

I did find some of the reading passages were heavily loaded with facts—almost to the point of turning-off the reader.

All in all though I feel *Canadian Concepts* is an excellent publication and a useful one in ESL classrooms.

TAKE PART: SPEAKING CANADIAN ENGLISH. (Second Edition).

This text is intended for Intermediate to Advanced ESL learners from Grade 7 up to adult. It was developed as a 40-hour intermediate conversation course for adults who have studied English before coming to Canada. Many of these adults have acquired formal English but have had little practice with a more informal register. There are no writing assignments in the text because it focuses on informal, conversational English, and explains how it is different from more formal English.

The sixteen units in the text deal with topics of everyday conversation. The themes are cultural and linguistic and include such topics as health and fitness, leisure activities, and travel. Each unit is complete and the units can be studied in any order and easily integrated into other ESL curricula.

The units include dialogues and text with definitions of new words, and language notes to explain the structures and expressions used. Communicative activities like games, jig-saws, simulations and problem-solving are included in this new addition. There is also an instructor's manual and audio cassettes to accompany the text.

Cute little cartoons introduce and accompany the texts and dialogues. There are suggestions for paired dialogue. I found the text full of cultural notes and certainly an excellent resource for learners who want to acquire "Canadian English." The cultural notes emphasize the diversity of Canada, and provide information.

The text gives information on shopping, food, weather, government, marriage customs, health and fitness, employment, and geography in Canada. It also conveys some of the unwritten codes of behaviour without belittling other values or customs.

An excellent sample unit on using the telephone begins with a reading passage. This is followed by thirteen sample telephone

dialogues. Personal calls, appointments, reservations, and emergencies are a few of these. The Language Notes explain telephone spelling, numbers and common expressions. The Culture Note reflects on telephone etiquette. Then there is a wonderful activity where half of a telephone conversation is heard and learners work on groups to reconstruct the full conversation, filling in the other party. Finally additional vocabulary, activities, discussion topics, and assignments are given to complete the unit.

I recommend this text as an excellent resource for teachers who wish to have more Canadian content in their classrooms.

WORDS WE USE

Words We Use is intended for intermediate and advanced ESL learners at the high school or adult level. The text takes a communicative and meaningful approach to learning new vocabulary. However, it should also satisfy those learners who enjoy memorizing lists of vocabulary.

Listening, speaking, reading and writing are integrated in a variety of exercises. Each of the 18 units is based on a reading passage that describes some aspect of life in Canada.

A sample unit (2) entitled "Road Safety" is introduced with a catchy cartoon showing a driver passing on a curve and driving in an unsafe manner. Fourteen vocabulary words are introduced in a reading passage, their pronunciation and definitions follow. Activities offer learners practice in identifying parts of speech, using the new words in sentences, and an opportunity to apply new vocabulary to common experiences.

The best part is at the end of the unit when groups form and solve related problems. There are discussion suggestions and role-play activities. The newly-learned vocabulary gets a real workout as all the topics relate to road safety. A writing exercise winds it up when the learner is asked to write up an accident as if they had been a witness.

This text encourages learners to develop the important skill of new vocabulary in a relaxed, co-operative way. The activities encourage lots of speaking practice. I recommend this text, and the changes in the new edition make it very Canadian.

Myra Thorkelson

THE REVIEWER

Myra Thorkelson teaches Methodology of TESL at the University of Prince Edward Island. She is currently on a year's leave, and awaiting a posting as a United Nations Volunteer.

Whole Language for Second Language Learners

Y. S. Freeman and D. E. Freeman
Portsmouth, NH: Heineman, 1992. 257 pp.
ISBN: 0435087231

Whole Language for Second Language Learners, a very readable and inviting text, addresses issues from the whole language perspective on language and language acquisition, as they relate across the continuum of second language learners. The term "whole language" has become widely used and unfortunately as a result, seems to have become unclear. Amongst language educators there is a concern that the philosophy of whole language is in danger of becoming "misunderstood, misapplied and therefore unjustly maligned" (Weaver, 1990, p.1). Freeman and Freeman address this concern up front and have provided in the text a succinct description of what whole language is and what it is not. They have supported their points with current and reliable research and have made it very practical by integrating demonstrations of effective practice and implementation strategies that support this perspective.

Although the title suggests that the text is about whole language for all types of second language learners, almost all of the examples are framed within the American context and are inherently English as a second language situations. We believe that they are different from the Canadian contexts of core French, English as a Second Language in Quebec secondary schools, or ESL withdrawal classes. This is not a major problem, however it is distracting because the reader has to make this cross border leap. For example, when the authors refer to bilingual education, it is often English Spanish bilingualism within the "melting pot" philosophy, whereas when most Canadians think of bilinguals, images of French immersion or heritage language programs come to mind.

The book is divided into seven chapters each focusing on a different whole language principle. The authors then contrast the principles with seven assumptions referred to as "commonsense" the way Mayher does in his 1990 book *Uncommon Sense.* For example, the first principle is that learning proceeds from whole to part. This is contrasted with the commonsense assumption that learning proceeds from part to whole. The following six principles follow this pattern: 2) lessons should be learner centred because learning is the active construction of knowledge by the student; 3) lessons would have meaning and purpose for students now not just at some future time;

4) learning takes place as groups engage in meaningful social interaction; 5) in a second language, oral and written language are acquired simultaneously; 6) learning should take place in the first language to build concepts and facilitate the acquisition of English; and 7) learning potential is expanded through faith in the learner.

Throughout the text is a pattern established wherein these holistic principles are illustrated through practical examples which demonstrate their effectiveness and contrast the examples with situations that embody the commonsense assumptions. In this way the reader who is a practitioner is exposed to important theoretical concepts in context and without threat. This pragmatic and experiential support for the theory includes samples of student writing and talk, excerpts from second language teachers' conversations and journals, descriptions of second language classrooms, a variety of lesson plans and units, second language students' responses to a range of activities and more. The examples illustrate the fundamental, but often subtle differences between the seven commonsense assumptions and the seven whole language principles described. Although these examples are relevant to second language teachers, they are so well embedded in the text that they are not easily accessible to the reader who would like to come back to them when actually designing a new program or planning a lesson. In addition, throughout the book, many new terms are introduced and defined. There are so many new terms or terms that have developed some misunderstandings that a glossary would be of assistance to the reader.

While the Freemans respond to many of the common criticisms made about whole language teaching, they do not fully acknowledge or address the concerns of high school second language teachers trying to implement whole language practices in a highly balkanized and structured environment. Elementary school and adult education teachers also face this challenge but to a lesser degree. For these reasons, a chapter focusing on strategies to ease the transition from a "commonsense" classroom to a whole language classroom would have been welcome. Both students and teachers need support and guidance in making this important transition.

Reading, reflecting on, then discussing together and collaborating on the writing of this review of *Whole Language for Second Language Learners* contributed to our professional growth and was exciting. Besides raising new questions to explore, this text provided an excellent lens through which we looked at and affirmed the work we had been doing with pre-service first, second and third language teachers. Our goal has been to break down the barriers that exist between the worlds of first, second and third language education by

team teaching within the framework of a program intended for future teachers of English, English as a Second Language, French, German, Italian and Spanish, that emphasizes how theories and practices developed in first and second language teaching contexts often complement each other. We have asked students enrolled in our program this year to read *Whole Language for Second Language Learners* because we liked it ourselves and we believe it illustrates quite well how first and second language teaching/learning theories, which often overlap, can be meshed to provide practical guidelines for working with language learners.

We feel that both English and ESL/ESD teachers would find this book useful in dealing with the changing nature of students in the Canadian multicultural context. Other second and foreign language teachers might also find this book helpful if they are able to extrapolate from examples embedded in contexts different from their own. We believe that this book would be most useful for pre-service/in-service language teachers within the framework of a course, seminar or series of workshops where opportunities for interaction and reflection could be provided.

REFERENCES

Mayher, J. (1990). *Uncommon Sense: Theoretical Practice in Language Education.* Portsmouth, NH: Heineman.

Weaver, C. (1992). *Understanding Whole Language.* Portsmouth, NH: Heineman.

Linda Cameron and Antoinette Gagné

THE REVIEWERS

Linda Cameron is an assistant professor at the Faculty of Education at the University of Toronto. She has been teaching since 1967 and much of her research has involved the reading writing connection in students' learning.

Antoinette Gagné is an assistant professor at the Faculty of Education at the University of Toronto. She is interested in the implementation of innovations in second language classrooms as well in the development of more effective programs for the education of second language teachers.

Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know

Rebecca L. Oxford
New York: Harper Collins, 1990. 342 pp.
ISBN: 0838428622

"Learning strategies are operations employed by the learner to aid the acquisition, storage, retrieval and use of information." (Oxford, 1990, p. 8)

"It takes better teachers to focus on the learner." (Strevens, 1982 in Oxford, 1990, p. 1)

Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know reflects the shift in interest in the 70's from teacher-centred methodology to learner self-directed methodology. The book focuses not only on the outcome of language (the what) but also incorporates the process (the how) by which learning occurs. Oxford addresses her book to teachers of second and foreign languages as well as general readers interested in understanding language learning strategies. She explores the ways in which language learning strategies contribute to the goal of communicative competence which can be defined in four parts – grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence and strategic competence (Canale & Swain, 1980, p. 231).

She sets out to achieve two purposes within this framework: 1) to help new teachers understand learning strategies; and 2) to show them how "to train their students in using better strategies in the context of a communicative approach to language learning" (p. x).

In terms of organization, the book is superb. From a general overview of linguistics in the Introduction, Chapters 2 and 3 look at three kinds of *direct* strategies for dealing with a new language and how to apply them to the four language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. She states that *direct strategies* require mental processing of the language such as memory, cognitive and compensation strategies. Similarly chapters 4 and 5 examine three kinds of *indirect* strategies for managing learning and how they are used in developing all language skills. Oxford suggests that *indirect strategies* support and manage language learning without always directly involving the target language. Chapter 6 presents techniques for language learning strategies as well as a model for training with these strategies. Chapter 7 examines language learning strategies in a global

context while the Epilogue encourages the reader to continue exploring the author's line of thought.

Each chapter includes exercises to do with your learners as well as exercises for teachers reading the text. In this way, Oxford helps readers to understand the concepts mentioned and to examine their own learning strategies.

In terms of relationships between teachers and learners, Oxford doesn't support hierarchical authority which has been the popular base for their relative status since the mid-twenties. Instead, she prefers that teachers become facilitators or guides while the learners take more responsibility for their learning.

Oxford discusses nine other features of language: problem orientation, action basis, involvement beyond just cognition, ability to support learning directly or indirectly, degree of observability, level of consciousness, teachability, flexibility and influences on strategy choice. I was particularly interested in the feature "involvement beyond just cognition" because it deals with metacognitive functions like planning, evaluating and arranging one's own learning, as well as emotional (affective) and social functions. In a recent research paper from the Toronto Board of Education (1991) a survey substantiated Oxford's view that many non-linguistic factors affect the proficiency of second language learners. Consequently those factors should be assessed for placement purposes and for curriculum planning which involves language learning strategies.

The main criticism for the first part of this book, is the author's continued use of expressions which suggest research but provide no proof. Support for her views in the main text as well as a more rigorous approach to citing references would have had a positive impact.

Oxford proposes an original thesis which is a general overview of the system of language learning strategies. The strategies are divided into the two major classes previously defined: direct and indirect (see Appendix 1). These two classes are subdivided into a total of six groups (memory, cognition and compensation under the direct class; metacognitive, affective and social under the indirect class). One can see that direct and indirect strategies support each other and that each strategy group is capable of connecting with and assisting every other strategy group.

According to Skehan (1991), several other researchers in the 70's and 80's were also interested in gathering information about learning strategies to identify the profile of a "good language learner". Through a variety of techniques, some of which Oxford mirrors in her text (Chapter 6), researchers used semi-structured interview techniques for

learner reflection (cf. Naiman, Frohlich, Stern & Todesco, 1978), questionnaires to try to assess how much individual learners were using particular strategies (cf. Politzer & McGroarty, 1985) and group interviews with ESL high school students (cf. O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzares, Kupper & Russo, 1985). The questionnaire-based measures showed very little relationship to subsequent language learning success. However, in terms of the categorization of learning strategies and the application of strategy training, Oxford's proposal fits quite well with Rubin (cf. 1981) who introduced the distinction between direct and indirect strategies. In addition, O'Malley et al. (1985) used only three classifications for strategies—metacognitive, cognitive, and social. Skehan suggests that Oxford's six global strategies could fit into those three (cf. O'Malley & Chamot, 1985) by placing her cognitive and memory strategies within their cognitive category, and her social and affective strategies as an extension of their social category. The main distinction is Oxford's compensation category. For the moment, there is no consensus regarding classification of learner strategies.

Many creative exercises for learning and fun which support Oxford's major thesis are offered for teachers and learners alike to try. However, with indirect strategies, one wonders how credible some exercises are in terms of language learning strategies. Exercises such as "Calm Down Through Meditation and Music" (p. 185) and "Taking Your Emotional Temperature: A Checklist for Language Learners" (p. 188) are meant to show how certain tasks trigger particular feelings—an interesting proposition which needs to be supported by adequate research.

Chapter 6 "Language Learning Strategy Assessment and Training" discusses techniques for exploring the language learning strategies learners use and when they use them. Primarily, the author is interested in teachers evaluating their own language learning strategies and knowing how to help students "learn how to learn" if possible. However, there is existing contradictory research which investigates the trainability of strategies. They report only marginal gains as a result of short-term training (O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Mangares, Kupper & Russo, 1985).

Although Oxford suggests a number of strategy assessment techniques, many of them would be difficult even for a student with high proficiency. For example, "*A Guide for Think–Aloud Interviews*" (Hosenfeld, Arnold, Kirchofer, Laciura, & Wilson, 1981) list 20 strategies that a learner might use for the teacher to check off. A learner performs a language task and describes what s/he is doing to accomplish the task. How many ESL learners are sophisticated enough to be able to give information which lets the teacher know that

they are using "a variety of context clues"? The same criticism can be made of her semi-structured interviews in that they would only be successful with learners at a very high proficiency level. By trying one of Oxford's simpler activities (p. 119) which provides for both language interaction and fun, we can see it also presupposes a proficiency level where a student can describe the strategies used. A very important question therefore remains as to how training can be most effectively accomplished to help people become "good language learners".

In addition, her suggestion on how to use the results of strategy assessment in group settings rather than dealing with students privately, contravenes an unwritten agreement between the adult teacher/facilitator and the adult learner that many adult educators follow–that is, they only share results of "tests" with the owner unless explicit permission is given otherwise.

CONCLUSION

This book should be recommended to language teachers with learners beyond a beginner proficiency level. The teacher would need to be willing to accept Oxford's thesis as far as it goes, in order to make the best use of her explanations and creative exercises for both teachers and learners. That is, a teacher would have to recognize Oxford's overview of the system of language learning strategies as a descriptive thesis. The question of the links between her scheme and a sound theoretical basis must still be explored. In addition, she does not look into whether the flexibility and appropriateness with which strategies are used (Chamot & Kupper, 1989) influence language learning or how to improve the decision-making capabilities of learners.

Consequently, a philosophy which supports learner-centredness, teacher as guide, and learning activity as reflection, would help facilitate the understanding and implementation of Oxford's ideas. For those of us who would like to be convinced about the credibility and validity of her thesis, the research is missing. Overall, however, "Language Learning Strategies: What Every Teacher Should Know" is worth exploring and implementing in the ESL classroom.

REFERENCES

Canale, M., & Swain, M. (1980). Theoretical bases of communicative approaches to second language teaching and testing. *Applied Linguistics, 1*(1), 1-47.

Chamot, A. U., & Kupper, L. (1989). Learning strategies in foreign

language instruction. *Foreign Language Annals, 22*, 13-24.
Hosenfeld, C., Arnold, V., Kirchofer, J., Laciura, J., & Wilson, L. (1981). Second language reading: A curricular sequence for teaching reading strategies. *Foreign Language Annals, 14*(5), 415-422.
Karamanova, L. (1991). *Non-linguistic factors affecting the acquisition of ESL by adults and their relevance to the referral and placement process*. Unpublished Research. Toronto Board of Education.
Naiman, N., Frohlich, M., Stern, H. H., & Todesco, A. (1978). *The good language learner* (Research in Education Series, 7). Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.
O'Malley, J. M., Chamot, A. U., Stewner-Manzares, G., Kupper, L., & Russo, R. P. (1985). Learning strategies used by beginning and intermediate ESL students. *Language Learning, 35*, 21-46.
Politzer, R. L., & McGroarty, M. (1985). *An exploratory study of learning behaviors and their relation to gains in linguistic and communicative competence.* Unpublished manuscript, Stanford University.
Rubin, J. (1981). Study of cognitive processes in second language learning. *Applied Linguistics, 2*, 11-18.
Skehan, P. (1991). Individual differences in second language learning. *Studies in second language acquisition, 13*, 275-298.
Stern, H. H. (1990). *Fundamental concepts of language teaching.* New York: Oxford University Press.
Strevens, P. (1982). In P. S. Green, Review of H. B. Altman & C. W. James (Eds.). (1980). *Foreign language teaching: Meeting individual needs*. Oxford: Pergamon. *System 10*(3), 291.

Sheila Dermer Applebaum

THE REVIEWER

Sheila Dermer Applebaum is a doctoral student at OISE. As administrator of Adult ESL programs at the Toronto Board of Education, she is involved with teacher development and program implementation.