

**An Interactive Approach to Literacy and ESL: The Environment and You.** 114 pp.  
ISBN: 1-55059-035-9

**An Interactive Approach to Literacy and ESL: Who Cares about the Environment.** 106 pp.  
ISBN: 1-55059-034-0

**Tracy M. Derwing and Judy Cameron**  
Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd., 1991.

For second language instructors looking for ways to teach language skills with a content base that is meaningful, current and Canadian, these books are an exciting resource! The authors have taken topics of environmental issues and from them developed a multitude of very functional activities. The result is a wonderful blend of language and content dealing with one of the most current topics of our time—the environment.

As the authors suggest, the books can be used individually or as "companion" volumes. *Who Cares About the Environment?* is suitable for intermediate and high intermediate ESL learners. *The Environment and You* was written for students at a lower level.

The format of the series is clear and easy to follow. The pages are uncluttered with lots of space for notes, etc. The segments of each unit fit together well and form a concise unit of material on each sub-topic. The activities are also such that you could pick one of them out and use it individually.

The format of each unit includes the following sections.

*To the Teacher:* This section provides ideas for initial activities as well as resource materials that instructors might find useful.

*Starting Out:* Questions and discussion topics are provided and could serve as excellent "spring boards" with which to start a unit.

*Vocabulary:* Relevant vocabulary is presented in the context of a unit and vocabulary lists are divided into categories such as verbs, nouns, adjectives and idioms.

*Reading:* Reading passages introduce current issues in clear, everyday English. The units build upon each other, yet could be used independent of each other. There is a variety of language experiences including dialogues, letters of complaint, newspaper articles and stories.

*Comprehension and Discussion Questions:* Each unit contains a set of questions designed as follow-up to information presented in the reading section. These might also provide students with an opportunity to relate their opinions and ideas in a discussion setting.

*Classroom Activities:* The authors have created a wonderful blend of activities in each unit. Many skill areas of an ESL curriculum are addressed in a very functional way. Even more exciting is the idea of taking the students beyond the classroom. Contacting local authorities, taking inventories in their own homes, doing surveys and being involved in the community are activities which will truly begin to empower our ESL students.

The authors are to be congratulated for providing material of this calibre. A wonderful addition to the series would be listening tapes that coincided with the material.

**Christine Bertram**

#### **REVIEWER**

Christine Bertram is an instructor with the Adult ESL Program in Winnipeg.

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#### **A Canadian Conversation Book. Book One.**

**Tina Kasloff Carver, Sandar Douglas Fotinos, Clarice Cooper.**  
Prentice Hall Canada, 1993.  
ISBN: 013-016866-1

In the introduction to the text, *A Canadian Conversation Book*, the authors state that "when students feel invested personally in a classroom that validates their lives, interest and real world, they learn faster and retain more because what they are learning is meaningful and pertinent to them" (p. ix). The commitment the authors feel towards this statement is clearly evident and strongly supported by the suggestions made for conversations generated by and centered on students. The success of the communication activities and exercises relies heavily upon active student participation. With a student-centered approach, the onus is on the student to assume responsibility

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for his or her own input. Students are encouraged to invest in their own learning; facilitators are encouraged to provide on-going assistance and supportive guidance. Classroom facilitators faced with the exciting challenges and rich potential of a multi-cultural, multi-lingual conversation-based class would find this text of interest.

The book presents nine general topics for conversation and cross-cultural sharing. The chapters are entitled: "All About You", "About You and Your Family", "Homes", "Days, Dates, and Weather", "Shopping", "Your Community", "Jobs", "Health", and "Leisure".

Adjoining the listings of chapter content are "Competency Objectives" for each conversation unit. These objectives, valuable to both facilitators and students, specify the skills being focused on in each chapter. Ranging in complexity from ". . . give and respond to simple greetings" in Chapter One, to "Talk about Canadian sizes . . ." in Chapter Five, to "Identify and discuss deductions and taxes" in Chapter Seven, the objectives respond to the wide range of linguistic and cultural proficiencies frequently present in many ESL classrooms. With thematic questions provided as conversation directives, the facilitator has the potential to heighten cultural awareness and foster information sharing. Through an understanding of the cultural differences among students and a celebration of the diversity within the class, perceptions of Canadian culture can logically be presented in a comparative context.

Each chapter presents a variety of creative activities to generate conversation. These activities include: pantomime games, circle dialogues, crossword puzzles, conversation matrices and role-playing activities. Facilitators dealing with culturally diverse classes need to be sensitive to any role-playing suggestions which may be culturally inappropriate. An example of a sensitive issue is a proposed skit activity in Chapter Five, entitled "Shopping for Shoes". For cultural reasons, not all students are comfortable removing their shoes in front of other people. However, as with all curriculum material, it is the facilitator's responsibility to tailor content and presentation of recommended activities to serve the needs of the students.

As the title implies, much of the book's content directs the students to share information about their lives in Canada. Specifically, the proposed "community activities" guide the students to investigate and explore the world beyond the limits of the four-walled classroom. Chapter Seven, which focuses specifically on jobs, would be of particular assistance to facilitators who work with new Canadians interested in entering the Canadian work force. The exercises and activities throughout this chapter offer a useful framework from which to begin discussions of current labour market standards and pro-

cedures. Practical for both students and facilitators is the Appendix, which contains such information as the provinces and their capitals, a list of Canadian holidays, a map of Canada and the Canadian National Anthem. Furthermore, to encourage students to exchange information about themselves, the Appendix contains maps of the United States of America, the Middle East, Europe, Southeast Asia, Central America and South America. (Of concern, the Appendix does not include a map of Africa; no explanation is given for its omission.)

A challenge in selecting suitable material for an adult ESL audience is to find a text which does not confuse the learner with too many visual stimuli. For many students, clear illustrations can be the key to comprehension. Throughout this text, the illustrations which accompany the printed word are consistently well done, as well as being appropriate to the focus of the exercises.

A successful conversation class is dependent upon the enthusiasm and expertise of a skilled facilitator to motivate students to participate. Adept management of the conversation topics suggested would indeed promote both the exploration and sharing of cultural information. Exercises are designed so that "each student becomes a unique resource in the class" (p. ix).

The authors state: "Our goal is for students to develop a way to direct their own learning and feel comfortable in what they DO know so that from their conversation course, they can develop competencies and continue to learn and improve" (p. x). *A Canadian Conversation Book* is a text whose approach to conversation activities both respects and recognizes that each student has something interesting to contribute and valuable to share.

**Anna Marie Robinson**

#### **THE REVIEWER**

Anna Marie Robinson is a Master Teacher and Senior Administrator with the University of New Brunswick English Language Programme. Since 1980, she has worked in ESL with clients from eighteen to seventy-five years of age. At the present time, she is responsible for immersion curriculum development for clients at the beginning stages of proficiency.

## Newspapers: Resource Books For Teachers

**Peter Grundy**

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993. 132pp.

ISBN: 0 19 437192 1

Like other books in both the Oxford University Press *Resource Books For Teachers* and the Cambridge University Press *Cambridge Handbooks for Language Teachers* this is a practical how-to book of teaching activities.

*Newspapers* is divided into six chapters. The first chapter is different from the rest in that it quickly has the reader review previous experiences with using newspapers in the classroom and encourages the teacher to go beyond these conventional ideas and work more creatively with newspapers. As Peter Grundy says,

The rest of this book is not about these conventional ideas: it is more about how newspapers may be used naturally as one of a number of sources of authentic language in a communicative classroom. It is not so much understanding texts that will be important, but the stimulation they provide for learners to think, talk, and write about the things that matter to them. (pp. 24-25)

Grundy writes that:

You may have to get used to not asking yourself questions like, 'What does this lead to?' or 'What grammar points are being taught here?' or even, 'So what?' and instead accept that students are listening, speaking, reading and writing in ways that are natural and authentic. (pp. 16-17)

He feels that:

All too often the newspaper article has been treated as an object for linguistic or cultural dissection and analysis. Such practices can lead to the teacher continuing to squeeze the text dry long after the sap of genuine interest has been savoured by the learners. (p.3)

When Grundy describes the aims of this book he mentions providing practical ideas to teachers, giving students confidence to buy and read English-language newspapers themselves, and getting students to teach themselves, but:

In the classroom, the aim is to get students first reading newspapers and then working with what they have found in their reading. In the activities in this book, 'reading' usually involves looking for something, specific; and 'working with what they have found' in their reading may mean anything from making a collage to crossing out what is distasteful. (p. 5)

This first chapter, Working Creatively with Newspapers, is then followed by five chapters containing descriptions of activities. For example, in the chapter, Building Confidence and Familiarity, students are asked to find an article which may be of interest to classmates and then write short instructions explaining where to find it in which paper. In the chapter, Working With Texts, students are asked to cut and bring one interesting story from the day's papers to class and pin them on the wall. Students are then given as many minutes as there are stories to read the stories (i.e., 20 minutes for 20 stories). Because there isn't enough time, students must put a mark on the story at the point where they lost interest and went on to the next story. After the allotted time, stories can be arranged from most to least interesting (by looking at the marks) and then a discussion about what makes a story interesting or boring can ensue.

There are 100 activities in all. Each activity is described in terms of level, time, materials, skills, type of activity, procedure and, sometimes, variations and comments. Like most newspaper work, most of the activities are suitable for intermediate level students and above; twelve, however, are described as being suitable for elementary or all levels.

The length of time it takes to do an activity varies from 15 minutes to a whole course (i.e., an ongoing project). Many require very little teacher prep, not even the use of a photocopier, other than the three things Peter Grundy mentions in Chapter 1:

- newspapers (which we often have lying around and which an appendix also tells us where to buy in most countries of the world);
  - imaginative ideas (which this book is full of);
  - and "the confidence to allow the students to teach themselves."
- (p. 28)

Because of how flexible these activities are, I think this book is of great value to substitute teachers and to anyone in a last-minute prep situation.

I'm excited by the activities described in *Newspapers*. Many I'd like to do "tomorrow"; even more I'd like to do "sometime"; and very few seem "OK, but for someone else". I particularly Peter Grundy's

emphasis on doing things to generate authentic, natural language; I approve of his activities which try to get students to examine a newspaper's bias or to determine a newspaper's credibility; and I like his overall approach which "puts the learner's interest first and the newspaper materials second." (p.5)

I applaud another excellent *Resource Book(s) for Teachers* in the Oxford University Press series and suggest you all rush out and buy one!

**Margaret Hepler**

#### **THE REVIEWER**

Margaret Hepler is an instructor at Vancouver Community College, King Edward Campus. She has taught both E.S.L. and A.B.E. and is author of *Scanning A Local Newspaper*, published by Vancouver Community College.

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### **Computers in Applied Linguistics: An International Perspective.**

**Martha C. Pennington and Vance Stevens (Eds.)**

Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters Ltd. 1992.

ISBN: 1-85359-119-X

The editors of this book have attempted to bring into sharper focus the opportunities for further development of computer-assisted language training. For many instructors, the importance of training in word processing, spreadsheet, graphics and communications applications is self-evident, but whether or not computer proficiency leads to language or research proficiency is unclear. At an AILA symposium held in 1987, a number of presenters discussed the use of the computer as a tool for language training research and instruction. The book is an outgrowth of that symposium. It is an interesting and valuable reference tool with excellent bibliographies that should help prevent further developers from "reinventing the wheel."

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There are twelve articles in three topic areas: frameworks for computer-assisted language learning (three articles), research of

applications of computers in second language acquisition (four) and analysis tools for a new generation of language applications (five). John Esling and Bernie Mohan, two authors well-known to *TESL Canada Journal* readers, each contributed an article. Esling describes his pioneering work in developing speech inventories; Mohan his research into appropriate uses of computers for language learning. Philip Hubbard describes a useful methodology for courseware development. Catherine Doughty provides a very detailed description of a project in which computers were used to teach relativization. Manfred Pienemann and Louise Janzen provide an exhaustive description of an application they developed for analyzing linguistic data. All are important works that will turn up in reference lists for years to come.

The book is generally well organized, although it would have benefited from a "For More Information" section. One article, "Analyzed Corpora of English" by Geoffrey Sampson, provides information of how to obtain the corpora discussed in the article. It would have been nice to see the same consideration given by the other articles. Contact addresses and mini-biographies of the contributors would also have been helpful. Abstracts for the articles would have improved the book as well.

In summary, it is probably best to view this book as a snapshot of a time before Windows or CD-ROMs, when multimedia applications were financially out of reach and the Internet was just starting up. Readers who are looking for suggestions about how to exploit these sorts of applications had better look elsewhere. So also should readers who are interested in hypermedia, student modelling, knowledge representation in databases and data coordination for the book barely touches upon these areas. Perhaps these topics will turn up in the next publication of *Multilingual Matters*.

**William McMichael**

#### **THE REVIEWER**

William McMichael is program coordinator of the UBC-Ritsumeikan Academic Exchange Programme and vice-president of TESL Canada.