
Reviews/Comptes rendus

So You Want to Teach English Overseas

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In an ideal world, English would be taught overseas only by educated TESL professionals, but, as we are all aware, this is not always the case. In fact, many of us began our own love affairs with TESL while teaching in such countries as Japan, China, Saudi Arabia, or Poland and would have benefited from listening to the two tapes and consulting the (very brief) handbook contained in *So You Want to Teach English Overseas*, preferably before packing.

Although at first concentrating on the content of these audiotapes proves troublesome for someone unaccustomed to listening without visual support, this difficulty is soon overcome because the tape quality is good, and so is the tone of Warbey's voice. Indeed, the tape format is probably suitable for the intended target audience: people who may have little time before (or after) leaving for their overseas destinations and who may wish to familiarize themselves with some basic English teaching skills on their car stereos or their Walkman headphones.

The tapes are divided into the following seven sections: the first day, teaching listening, teaching reading, teaching speaking, teaching writing, teaching grammar, and classroom management, and are generally directed toward teaching adolescent or adult learners who are educated and literate in their first languages.

Although the language-focused sections of the tapes are based on discrete language functions and do not seem to stress the communicative functions of language (the "teaching speaking" section, for instance, describes the background knowledge and common classroom tasks for teaching pronunciation and intonation), many of the suggested activities actually integrate the four skills and require pair or group work. Moreover, in the classroom management section, Warbey stresses the importance of getting the students to use English in authentic communicative situations, and her seven summary instructions for teaching English overseas include several that are consonant with communicative language teaching principles. In most of the sections, Warbey specifically notes which activities are appropriate for beginner, intermediate, and advanced students; when she has not specifically done this, she instead makes reference to more advanced students by

saying such things as "at some point in their development, students will be able to ..." Listening to the activities and suggestions for teaching writing, I made note of the possibilities proposed and was quite surprised at how comprehensive the list was.

There are, however, a few difficulties that Warbey may wish to address in the future. On the tapes, she often uses field-specific or specialized vocabulary such as *input*, *communicative competence*, *visual realia*, *TPR*, or *phrasal verbs* without explaining these terms either on the tape or in a list of definitions in the accompanying handbook. More worrisome is that she makes untroubled references to controversial issues in the field such as that the best models of English are native speakers of English, that all learners go through a silent period before they begin to speak, or that people who have decided to go overseas to teach without first completing a certificate in TESL deserve to be congratulated for their adventurousness. The handbook too could use expansion, as it contains only a few notes about language and a short list of references, most about grammar.

In summary, *So You Want to Teach English Overseas* is directed to the average university graduate who has decided to peddle his or her native language in exchange for an international experience. It is for the person without TESL training or experience who will soon be leaving for a teaching position overseas. These tapes and handbook provide practical, useful advice about what resource books and materials to pack, as well as some techniques and strategies for teaching ESL.

Sandra G. Kouritzin

New Interchange: English for International Communication

Jack Richards with Jonathan Hull and Susan Proctor

Cambridge University Press, 1997 (*New Interchange 1*) and 1998 (*New Interchange 2* and *Interchange 3*)

ISBN: 0-521-62875-X (*New Interchange 1*), 0-521-62856-3 (*New Interchange 2*), 0-521-62838-5 (*New Interchange 3*)

New Interchange, a revised version of *Interchange*, is a multilevel course ranging from beginner to high-intermediate. *New Interchange* is for beginners and takes students to a low-intermediate level. *New Interchange 2* is for intermediate students and takes them from a low-intermediate to an intermediate level. *New Interchange 3* takes students from an intermediate level to a high-intermediate level.

For the extremely busy ESL or EFL teacher (is there one who isn't?), *New Interchange* provides activities and exercises for the four skill areas and more. The scope of the text is vast. With available cassette tapes or CDs, *Workbook*, *Student Book*, and *Teacher's Edition* text, *New Interchange* is an all-in-one

resource. This may be seen as one of the strengths of the text, for it can be used as a main text for teachers attempting to try a bit of everything, or as a supplementary resource to be incorporated into an already existing curriculum. Various interesting practice exercises are all readily available and related to various themes and grammatical structures.

The *Workbook*, a black and white text, is the student's homework book, which correlates to the units in the *Student's Book* (the main text). Exercises in the *Workbook* have students write to reinforce the vocabulary and grammatical structures learned. The assignments consist of various focus-practice exercises, reading excerpts, and information-gap types of activities. The *Student's Book*, a color text with photographs and hand-drawn artwork, is the main textbook. The *Teacher's Edition* includes a host of classroom activities, grammatical hints, as well as step-by-step instructions on how to carry out each activity in the *Student's Book*. These instructions may be extremely beneficial for new or busy teachers, as the recipe-style manner gives foolproof, simple instructions for the exercises. However, having used the text for some time now, I have found it necessary to alter activities to make them more suitable for a particular class. The *Teacher's Edition*, with numerous optional activity and exercise suggestions, is an excellent resource by itself. At the back of this coilbound book are transcripts for the listening activities, optional activities, answers for *Workbook* exercises, four tests (one for each four-unit block), and test answer keys. These tests and exercises serve only as guidelines, but they are invaluable resources.

The 16 units in each text are divided according to language functions (e.g., shopping, giving opinions, and talking about food). Every unit begins with a "Snapshot," which serves to introduce the theme of the unit. Most of the Snapshot sections consist of charts or diagrams and conversation questions. The section serves as a springboard for the teacher to begin the lesson: a useful tool for all teachers. This section is usually followed by a "Word Power" section that develops students' vocabulary as it relates to the theme. "Word Power" usually has students make word maps or do collocation exercises. Students are given vocabulary that will be used in the unit; they are often asked to brainstorm to add to the word list. The vocabulary exercises are rather prosaic, but supplemental exercises can be developed if needed. The "conversation" that follows serves as a model to introduce phrases and expressions related to the theme for the unit.

One asset of *New Interchange* is the examples of World Englishes in the listening portions. Students from various regions of the world are heard, not only "native-English" speakers. The listening portions present realistic, natural-speed, authentic conversations. Although presenting international English at times on the tapes, the texts fail to do this at other times. The subtitle suggests that the text provides examples of "International Commu-

nication," yet English usage in the text is primarily American English. For example, *New Interchange 2*, Unit 3, has the title "Time for a Change!" which deals with housing. The word for *apartment* is not *flat*, nor is any mention of British or World English terms made elsewhere. In addition, no mention of Canadian spellings is given.

The "Grammar Focus" part presents grammatical structures linked to the overall theme. For example, in *New Interchange 3*, Unit 2, there are two "Grammar Focus" sections: one deals with gerund phrases ("Working in the media could be fun" and "I'd love working in the media"), and one focuses on comparisons ("a landscaper earns more than an intern" or "An intern doesn't earn as much as an landscaper"). These exercises present summaries of grammatical structures that are followed by communicative activities that allow students to use the grammar structure in a personal context. A weakness of the "Grammar Focus" section is that many of the grammar exercises are linked to the theme of the particular unit and thus at times unduly forced into certain parts of the textbook. For example, *New Interchange 2* begins in Unit 1 with a "Grammar Focus" exercise on the simple past and then, in Unit 4, goes back to the simple past tense and contrasts it with the present perfect. This revisiting of grammatical structures may be beneficial as a means of reinforcing earlier learned material. However, leaving a grammatical point for three units and then returning to it may cause difficulties. Another flaw is that the grammatical notes provided in the *Student's Book* and the *Teacher's Edition* are insufficient for teachers attempting to answer those tough grammar-related questions students sometimes pose.

The next portion of the text is the "Pair Work/Role Play/Group Work/Class Activity," which consists of oral fluency exercises providing practice of the newly taught grammatical points and expressions. Allowing students to follow a set pattern initially and then practice with their own ideas is ideal: it provides focus practice and then sets the students free to employ the language. "Pronunciation" exercises concentrate on pronunciation features related to the "Conversation" or "Grammar Focus" area. This section deals with phonetic elements such as stress, rhythm, and intonation. "Listening" activities, often presented with charts or graphs, provide a range of exercises focusing on a variety of listening skills—listening for gist or details and inferencing. "Writing" exercises extend and reinforce the theme and grammatical structure(s) of the unit and give students opportunities to develop their writing skills. The "Reading" exercises, which conclude each unit, are one-page texts with photos and questions adapted from authentic sources. The readings are sure to be of interest to students as the topics cover a wide range of issues and themes.

Finally, each unit has role-playing or information-sharing activities titled "Interchange Activities." These activities have students use the language

independently focusing on certain structures. For example, a situation is provided (your dog is barking and is disturbing your neighbor and the neighbor is angry), and the students develop and act out the situation employing the language structures learned during the unit (asking politely: "Would you mind taking your dog inside?" and answering: "I'm sorry. I didn't realize that he got out"). Thus these activities have students interact and exchange information, vocabulary, and grammatical structures acquired during the course of the unit.

The text covers an international spectrum, not only predominantly English-speaking countries, making it ideal for heterogeneous classes. An important weakness of the text is the superficial manner in which cultural issues are covered. Seeking to be a text for "international communication," *New Interchange* rarely investigates cultural issues beneath surface issues of different types of food served in each country, how people greet each other in various cultures, and so on. The view of language and culture in *New Interchange* appears to be that language is a vessel into which the sociocultural elements are put. Evaluation following the unit concentrates on the language portion of the unit. In such a framework, culture is given a token position, so culture and language are only "engaged." Culture in such an approach is a couch on which to rest the "important" linguistic aspects of a language. As Crawford-Lange and Lange (1987) have suggested, in such texts, "the full processing of language within cultural information and the valuing of culture is not apparent. The focus is still primarily on language and its development" (p. 162). Thus a critical investigation of issues beyond the linguistic is still lacking.

In short, despite a few minor weaknesses, *New Interchange* is a versatile, well-planned, organized text. The activities provided in the *Teacher's Edition* alone are a worthwhile source for ESL or EFL teachers. For teachers with true beginners, *New Interchange* has an introductory text (not reviewed here) geared for students studying English for the first time.

Reference

Crawford-Lange, L.M., & Lange, D.L. (1987). Doing the unthinkable in the second-language classroom: A process for the integration of language and culture. In T.V. Higgs (Ed.), *Teaching for proficiency: The organizing principle*. Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook Company.

Kevin Mueller

The Reviewer

Kevin Mueller, a recent MEd graduate, is an instructor in the Intensive English Program in the Continuing Education Division at the University of Manitoba. He has taught all proficiency levels in the I.E.P. at the University of Manitoba for several years. Before this he taught for three years in Japan and is currently planning to return there.

All About ... Canadian Provinces and Territories

Barb McDermott and Gail McKeown

Reidmore Books, 1999

18228 - 102 Avenue, Edmonton AB T5S 1S7, 1-800-661-2859

ISBN: 1-896132-77-4

Teaching in the content area to beginning ESL students at the upper elementary level can be a challenge! Books relating to content area topics that contain high interest subject material, yet are easy to read, are always in demand with ESL teachers or teachers with ESL students. I can see where the *All About Series* could be beneficial not only to accommodate the needs of the ESL emergent reader, but also to benefit remedial readers and all young readers.

Each book in the *All About Series*, besides containing high interest material, has predictable, informative text; repetitive sentence patterns; clear, bold print; colorful, vivid photographs and maps; a practical table of contents, glossary, and index. The overall design of each double-page spread is attractive and is designed to look like a postcard. The *All About Series* is available on seven topics with 7-14 books per topic. The titles include *Canadian Animals*, *Provinces and Territories*, *Capital Cities*, *Canadian Geographical Regions*, *Famous Canadians*, and *Canadian Sports*.

I found that the layout and organization of *All About ... Canadian Provinces and Territories* permits easy access to the information. Each book contains information relating to location, special facts, population, history, waterways, parklands, attractions or places to visit, resources, and industries of a particular province or territory in Canada. New content vocabulary is easily identifiable as it is in bold type, and the definitions are found in the glossary. Many of the same terms are repeated in each book. The topic headings in each book have an explanation of the term written directly below in easy, comprehensible language. Although the information on each topic is not extensive, the ESL emergent reader is provided with an introduction to some main content vocabulary and enough information to grasp main concepts that are not clouded by extraneous words and information. The maps are simple and clear, and provide important information. The large, colorful photographs are excellent and support the readers in their efforts to decode the text and to comprehend the concepts. Both pictures and maps provide opportunity for much discussion and challenge students in language and curriculum information.

Although the series is well adapted to teaching language and content, it does not come with a teacher's guide. Developing activities to reinforce language structures with subject-verb agreement, appropriate discourse, plurals, comparisons, or whatever you wish to emphasize are all possible, but will, of course, require time on the part of the teacher to prepare. Thus the

series is best suited for the experienced, creative teacher. The books could also be used to aid in project assignments, but once again classroom teachers would have to devise their own projects, for example, using a format similar to that of the book, ESL students could make their own books about their countries.

The books are small in format (24.5 cm by 16.5 cm) and softcovered, making them more suitable for individual classroom use than being placed in a central library where they would probably not hold up as well. Overall, *All About ... Canadian Provinces and Territories* is an excellent nonfiction resource (100% Canadian content) to be added to a teacher's classroom collection at the elementary level. Not only does it give the emergent ESL reader the opportunity to learn about people, animals, places, and activities of Canada, but it also allows them to read, comprehend, and become successful communicators.

Maureen Lodge

The Reviewer

Maureen Lodge is an experienced classroom teacher in elementary and middle years. For the past eight years she has been an ESL teacher of primary and elementary students.

Have Your Say: Intermediate Communication Activities

Irene S. McKay

Oxford University Press, Canada, 1999

190 pages, ISBN: 0-19-541400-4

For programs all across Canada striving to implement the Canadian Language Benchmarks, Irene McKay provides an exciting, new resource, *Have Your Say*. This student handbook focuses on the skill areas of listening and speaking with materials designed to range from Benchmark 5 (Initial Competence in Intermediate Oral Communication) to Benchmark 9 (Initial Competence in Advanced Oral Communication).

McKay bases her work "on the principles that learner-centeredness and exposure to authentic, meaningful language in collaborative activities provide the means and motivation for learners to develop proficiency in oral communication" (p. v).

Have Your Say is divided into five units covering a range of settlement topics that include "All About You," "Health and Lifestyles," "Society and Culture," "Nature and the Environment," and "Explorations." These units are in turn broken down into language functions found in the Canadian Language Benchmarks. The author refers to each of these functions, for example, stating opinions as a "Communication Focus." These functions are clearly stated and easily identified in each unit as they are presented in highlighted boxes. Several examples of the language functions are given, as

well as possible responses, for example, agreeing or disagreeing with someone's opinion.

An excellent feature of the book is the attention paid to sociocultural competence. In "Tips For Talk," the author teaches what is culturally and socially appropriate in North America. Reference is also made to nonverbal communicative factors and social contextual factors. These aspects of language acquisition are evident throughout the five units.

A component of linguistic competence that is presented consistently is vocabulary. Content words, function words, and idioms specific to the content are presented and used in a variety of ways.

Have Your Say is a course in listening and speaking, and as such it provides a wealth of tasks and activities in each of these two skill areas. A listening activity is used to introduce each theme. Pre-listening tasks prepare learners for material found on the listening tape. Learners are then required to focus on listening for both main ideas and details. Final listening tasks give learners the chance to "personalize the information and relate it to their own lives" (p. v). The accompanying tape and transcript provide the classroom with a valuable resource. They include five authentic CBC radio broadcasts and eight scripted listening pieces.

Along with listening activities, learners are presented with a good mix of speaking tasks. McKay acknowledges the different learning styles in the classroom. Students have the opportunity to work in pairs, groups, or as an individual presenting to the whole group. Questionnaires and short newspaper articles are used to spark discussion. Such discussions might evolve not only from the questions listed in the book, but also from a critical reflection on media bias and how reality is portrayed in media such as the CBC and *The Globe and Mail*.

The overall layout of the book is user-friendly, well-organized, and easy to follow. Color coding adds to the eye appeal of the book, and there are some black and white photographs and cartoons. However, there is not sufficient space for student responses in several exercises, for example, Activity 6 on page 104. Moreover, I found myself wanting more teaching visuals throughout the units.

For teachers, *Have Your Say* promises to be a valuable resource in the classroom implementation of Stage Two Benchmarks. This book will garner a wide audience as it proves to be thought-provoking and full of good-sense ideas for the classroom.

Christine J. Bertram

The Reviewer

Christine Bertram teaches in the Adult ESL Program in Winnipeg. She co-authored *Speak English for Yourself* and *The ESL Job Search Handbook*. She also worked as one of the editing team of *Manitoba CLB Core Language Learning Objectives*.