

An ESL Miscellany

Book Reviews by Sunny Lam, Venny Lai, and Mark James

Pro Lingua Associates is a new venture started in 1980 by three long-time staff members of The Experiment in International Living's School for International Training in Brattleboro, Vermont. Ray Clark, Andy Burrows, and Pat Moran began by offering curriculum design and materials development services and planned to publish some books whose ideas fit in with their broad, practical approach to TESL.

They all started as classroom teachers, so they know firsthand what it's like to be locked into a text that doesn't fit students' needs, and what it's like to wing it under pressure, making up materials as you go along. They wanted to publish books full of ideas--new ones and good old ones--and resource books full of useful information, that would save teachers a lot of time and make learning/teaching more interesting. Their goal was to bring out some easy-to-use materials which would free teachers to be more responsive and inventive.

Their first three titles were *The ESL Miscellany*, *Index Card Games for ESL*, and *Language Teaching Techniques*. A review of each of these books follows:

THE ESL MISCELLANY. Raymond C. Clark, Patrick R. Moran, and Arthur A. Burrows. Brattleboro, Vermont: Pro Lingua Associates, 1981. \$12.50.

Just thumbing through *The ESL Miscellany* is enough to tell that this book would be a valuable addition to any teacher's personal library of resources. Further inspection confirms intuition.

The book is absolutely full of ideas, lists, and raw materials about American English and culture: folk songs, famous quotes, U.S. Historical milestones, capitals, holidays, national parks, heroes, government agencies, road signs, immigrants, presidents . . . you name it!

Another section of the book includes lists, charts, and review lessons for a number of hard-to-find grammar points, and a sequential checklist of English grammar for teachers who may have to teach from their own materials. There are also vocabulary lists, 63 in all, each centered around a specific notion to aid in the development of communicative activities.

The latter portion of this book is a compilation of photographs by Peg Clement. The photographs illustrate the kinesics or body gestures which often accompany certain ideas or emotions in an American cultural setting.

According to the authors, *The ESL Miscellany* was designed as an aid to teachers in supplementing the texts they use. All in all, it should do well as such. It is a veritable encyclopedia of material that many ESL teachers should find useful as part of their personal resource library.

—Mark James

INDEX CARD GAMES FOR ESL. Raymond C. Clark. Brattleboro, Vermont: Pro Lingua Associates, 1982. \$6.00.

Index Card Games for ESL provides students with fun and excitement in a language classroom. Specifically, it is designed for students to practice pronunciation, spelling, vocabulary building, questioning, sentence and paragraph structure, and conversation. More generally, it is a book for playing in and with English. An important purpose of the approach is to provide relief from the pressures and difficulties which usually accompany the learning of a language.

The book has six different kinds of index-card activities: matched pairs, sound and spell, scrambled sentences, categories, cocktail party and who's who. Each activ-

ity is accompanied by a brief description of the game, its purpose, and necessary preparation. The explanations are easy to understand, and students can get the hang of each game in a short time. Once the activity gets going, the teacher and students can participate in it and have fun together. The games in this book can be adapted for most all levels. I recommend it to those teachers who are looking for a game book that will add a few more activities to their repertoire of ideas to make learning English more enjoyable for their students.

—*Sunny Lam*

LANGUAGE TEACHING TECHNIQUES.
Raymond C. Clark. Brattleboro, Vermont:
Pro Lingua Associates, 1981. \$6.50.

Language Teaching Techniques contains a collection of twenty-six language teaching activities for adult ESL learners. These activities are divided into two categories which represent the two objectives of this handbook. Thirteen of the activities are designed to improve communicative skills, and the rest are designed to improve grammatical accuracy. The author believes

such a division is necessary in order to distinguish between communicative competence and linguistic competence. By doing so, he implies that the difference lies in the focus of the activities. A communicative activity focuses on oral output, kinesics, and cross-cultural awareness. The other kind of skill activity emphasizes linguistic knowledge (e.g., vocabulary and verb tenses).

The author attempts to follow a natural approach in teaching ESL, which is essential for successful language acquisition. The activities, however, may not fully satisfy the ambition of the author. Often they are manipulative. Although variations of each activity are suggested, they do not seem to relax the teacher's control or allow more creative opportunities for the students to explore the target language.

This handbook is perhaps most helpful to ESL teachers with little or no training in foreign language instruction. It may also serve as a reference book of activities which experienced teachers can use as supplementary material, provided they revise and adapt the activities to their individual classes.

—*Venny Lai*