

Teaching Listening Comprehension

Book Review by Mere Meha

TEACHING LISTENING COMPREHENSION. Penny Ur. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984, pp. 173. \$22.95 hardcover, \$8.95 paperback.

Teaching Listening Comprehension is one of a series of books from Cambridge University Press entitled *Handbooks for Language Teachers*. (Following this review is a list of other titles now available in the series to date.) Inspection of this book immediately reveals the vast amount of experience that Ms. Ur has had in the field of teaching English as a second language.

Teaching Listening Comprehension is divided into two major parts. The first is entitled, "Understanding Spoken English," and is concerned with the function of English in everyday conversation, the difficulties ESL learners often face, and how teachers can best prepare learners to cope with and be aware of those difficulties. One chapter is set aside for discussion of each of these three areas. Chapter one is introductory. In the other two chapters, the author proceeds to analyze the problems encountered by the language learners and discuss any considerations involved when making adjustments to lesson plans.

The second major portion of this book deals with actual suggestions for classroom activities. A page or two is devoted to each type of listening activity. Again, Ms. Ur is careful to suggest how lessons can be adapted to suit the level of the students.

The format of the book itself is excellent for teachers, and is written for those who are somewhat new in the field of foreign language instruction. It deals first with essential background material which every FL/ESL teacher should know; and with activities for the classroom. It is a very practical book. One strength is its discussion of the possible difficulties encountered in the ESL classroom. Some very constructive and helpful suggestions are made on how to overcome each of them.

Another selling point is the bibliography. In most books the bibliography is merely a list of works the author has used as resource material. In this book, however, Ms. Ur has very conscientiously listed her sources under topic headings: Headings such as listening comprehension, games, listening for perception, songs, role plays, etc. This is of special interest to the teacher who is dealing with a particular area of listening. By referring to the desired topic, a list of sources is readily available.

Also worthy of special mention is the index which consists of a list of all the various listening suggestions and activities mentioned in the chapters. The index can quickly give the pages on which are found information or examples of a particular type of activity. Judging from this feature and others, it is obvious that the book was written in a thoughtful manner with classroom teachers foremost in mind.

Other titles to date in the Cambridge Language Teaching Library:

Discussions that Work: Task-centered Fluency Practice. by Penny Ur. (\$6.95 paperback) 1983.

Drama Techniques in Language Learning. (New Ed.) by Alan Maley and Alan Duff. (\$19.95 hardcover, \$8.95 paperback) 1983.

Games for Language Learning. (New Ed.) by Andrew Wright, David Betteridge, and Michael Buckby. (\$21.95 hardcover, \$14.95 paperback), 1984.

Once Upon a Time: Using Stories in the Language Classroom. by John Morgan and Mario Rinvoluceri. (\$19.95 hardcover, \$7.95 paperback), 1984.

Mere Meha, from New Zealand, is a senior majoring in TESL at BYU-HC.