

BOOK REVIEW

New Horizons in English, Texts, Teacher's Guides and Workbooks, Levels 1-5

Lars Mellgren and Michael Walker. Addison--Wesley Publishing Co., 1973

The final books in the series *New Horizons in English*, by Lars Mellgren and Michael Walker, have just been published. The whole set (six units in all) of student books, workbooks, teachers' guides, tape recordings, and charts is thorough, carefully planned and presented, and eminently entertaining. It is easily the best set of ESL materials I have seen.

In a note at the beginning of the student books, Mellgren and Walker say that their object is to teach English so that it can be used "in everyday situations. . . . The language should be used--and used in a meaningful way."

To make the students *use* English, the books, and accompanying teachers' guides, emphasize dialogues. The teacher is instructed to break the class up periodically into pairs or small groups and then to monitor discussion. There are many games and activities which involve dialogue, many questions to be answered, many situations contrived to evoke student response.

As I mentioned earlier, these materials are entertaining. So much of the dread of learning a second language is based upon the nagging rote that is involved--the monotony of the language lab, the memorizing, the sifting through of bi-lingual dictionaries to figure out the end of a story you weren't interested in anyway. Some of this is surely involved in all second language study, but *New Horizons* plays it down.

There are drawings, hundreds of them, in both the texts and workbooks. Stories are illustrated with provocative scenes that the students will want to read about. Much of the material is humorous or strange

(there are ghosts and monsters in these pages).

The accompanying tapes have many voices and appropriate background sounds (traffic, weather, party noises); and there are nuances in the voices that express meanings the books themselves only hint at. There are many good jokes and comic endings to stories. (Since humor is such a cultural thing, this could be thought a weakness because the teacher would often have the apparently hopeless task of explaining the punch line. I see this as valuable, however, because of the acculturation that must result. To really understand a culture is to be able to laugh at its jokes.)

Before I convince you that *New Horizons* is a set of comic books, let me point out that these trappings are there to benefit the student. This makes the instructor's job a little more fun, but no easier. The teachers' guides are very extensive, and as long as the texts. Every possible suggestion to improve class work and to sustain student interest is explained in detail. Even a novice in the TESL field can have success if he follows the guides closely. But he must familiarize himself with the program, read aloud the prose and pronunciation sections, take an active roll in games and dramatized dialogues, and test the students continually (self-tests for students come after each two chapters, but there are many other tests and quizzes which can be given).

The teacher must, in short, work almost as hard as Mellgren and Walker have in presenting this excellent ESL series.

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