

AN ESL-ABE VIDEO TAPE BANK

A Review

A set of color video tapes developed by Palomar College (San Marcos, California) and dealing with ESL-ABE classroom strategies has recently been made available to other educational institutions. The fifteen tapes, which can be borrowed or purchased, deal with a variety of practical strategies and techniques, from using puppet dialogues to preparing students for job interviews.

The professional quality tapes are well-produced, and all of them follow a similar format. They begin with an introductory discussion of the particular strategy featured in the tape. This introduction (approximately ten minutes long) is followed by what for many viewers will be the most valuable part of the tapes, an actual classroom demonstration of the strategy or technique. The students are real, and the teachers are real—doing a good job generally, but also committing errors in the process. The demonstration is often presented in two or more sections with a discussion or commentary between sections. Each tape ends with a narrative interview with the classroom teacher-demonstrator conducted by another teacher. This final discussion is usually more meaningful than the preliminary one, for the viewer now knows what the discussion is about, having viewed the demonstration. It must be mentioned, however, that in some cases the theoretical discussions do not match the demonstrated practices.

The tapes cover a wide range of strategies and, although experienced teachers could benefit from viewing them, they would be especially good as part of a training program for beginning teachers in the ESL-ABE field. The varied approaches presented in the tapes suggest the great number of possible techniques and/or strategies available to the teacher of adult ESL students.

The fact that each technique is demonstrated by a competent teacher allows the viewer to see not only *what* can be done in the classroom, but *how well* it can be done.

The quality of the demonstrations and discussions varies, of course, with each tape—some are clearly better than others. A subject area index of the tapes, a listing of tape titles (in numerical order as listed by the producer), the running time of each tape (in parentheses), the name of the featured demonstration teacher, and brief comments on each strategy follow.

TAPE INDEX BY SUBJECT AREAS

| | |
|---|--------------------|
| Primary Content of Demonstration Lesson | |
| Structure: | 2, 5, 6, 9, 12, 14 |
| Dialogues: | 3, 8 |
| Pronunciation: | 1 |
| Adult Basic Education: | 4, 10, 11, 13, 15 |
| Literacy: | 7, 11 |
| Coping/Survival Skills: | 10, 13, 15 |

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| Level of ESL Demonstration Class | |
| Beginning: | 3, 6, 7, 9, 14 |
| Intermediate: | 2, 5, 9, 12, 13 |
| Advanced: | 1, 8 |
| Multi-level: | 15 |

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|----------------------------------|--------|
| Level of ABE Demonstration Class | |
| Beginning: | 11 |
| Intermediate: | 11, 13 |
| Multi-level: | 4, 10 |

1. *THRICE Technique for Accent Improvement* (67) Patricia Regdon

An acronym for a set of rules which students then use as a tool to modify their accents themselves, THRICE is an unbelievable monster. It has nothing to do with the number three, and the letter *T* alone stands for "Tongue down, jaw loose, mouth half open, palate control." Another way of talking *about* the language, THRICE may have some value for advanced, linguistically astute students, but its value for normal students is questionable. Translating sentences in Punjabi and English (and a dozen other languages) while analyzing them for vowel value, consonant value, rhythm, intonation, pitch, and voice control is a field linguist's dream, but it would seem to be a

confusing nightmare for the inexperienced teacher and the average ESL student.

2. *Creativity Exercise for Grammatical Structures* (28) Alisa Blatt

A graphic stimulus reminiscent of one of Roger Price's "Doodles"—a simple line drawing such as a semicircle on a line which may be a sunrise, a mountain, or a fried egg viewed from the side—elicits a variety of responses from students following the pattern *It looks like _____* or *It reminds me of _____*. Students working in small groups write down what they say, and the teacher in turn writes these sentences on the chalkboard. Creativity stimulators are not limited to graphics alone, however. Students also write about all the possible uses that they can imagine for a spoon, a shoelace, etc. The technique seems to give the creative student a lot to say (or write), but the teacher must still resort to other methods to help him produce language correctly.

3. *Puppet Dialogues* (37) Barbara Miller-Franklin

An entertaining way to teach and learn English using puppets focuses attention away from the students themselves, lessening any hesitancy they might have to speak. The puppets also provide a situation which makes the dialogues more meaningful and easier to learn and remember. However, many adult students may view the use of puppets as a juvenile activity. Another drawback which should be noted is the use by the teacher of hand gestures which are offensive to members of many Polynesian and Asian cultures.

4. *Individualized Learning Center for Basic Subjects* (25) Tom Miller

This tape presents not a technique but a program—an open entry, open exit laboratory in which the adult student is accountable and involved in non-threatening learning activities. A system for maintaining student progress is also discussed.

5. *Cuisenaire Rods for Structures* (48) Rhoda Pack Curtis

Gattegno would wince at this very loose (but not *all* bad) take off on The Silent Way.

Using oversized cuisenaire rods to cue changes in manipulative pattern drills, the teacher is a facilitator of learning, *not* a model.

6. *Total Involvement—Commands* (38) Alisa Blatt

This technique closely resembles James Asher's Total Physical Response. Students—involved at two levels, mental and physical—must listen to commands, comprehend them, and then respond orally and/or physically. Besides possible cultural kinesic problems with orders such as *Scratch your _____*, the real limitations of this technique are the number of appropriate situations and commands which can be engineered by the teacher.

7. *ESL Literacy* (40) Jack Wigfield

Jack Wigfield enthusiastically and convincingly demonstrates his own technique for aiding ESL students to read and write through the use of literacy dialogues, reading passages, etc.

8. *Situational Dialogues—Conversation Technique* (30) Rhoda Pack Curtis

In this recommended tape students write their own dialogues after a stimulus phrase and situation are provided by the teacher. Later, some students present their dialogues to the class, and follow-up activities are suggested.

9. *Photo and Signal Cards—for Oral Fluency* (47) Yves Jacot

This tape presents a good way for the teacher to direct the students as they generate a variety of structures based on a visually presented situation. The investment in materials (photographs and signal cards) may be offset by the advantages. The teacher does not dominate the class, and the students do not lose touch with reality as they practice English.

10. *Consumer Education—Money Management* (41) Juliet Crutchfield

Concentrating on money management related to the needs and wants of the students, this lesson deals with a topic of great

importance to many ABE students, but it cannot be considered an ESL lesson except as students utilize English in the discussion about budgeting.

11. *RMI—System for ABE Literacy* (50) Kirk Ullery

Using the Reading Miscue Inventory system, the teacher works with a very small group of beginning students as they talk about their interests and experiences. As they talk, the teacher composes their sentences on the board, thus producing a "text" for practice reading in the class. The students copy the "text" for later practice at home. In a second demonstration with an intermediate level student, predictive skills important to reading are developed. (In a class with more than three or four students the approaches presented in this tape would have to be modified considerably, if not abandoned.)

12. *Towards Independent Oral and Written Performance* (40) Sharon Meeker

After the teacher provides a topic ("My Best Friend") and question words (*what, when, how, etc.*) the students come up with appropriate questions which the teacher writes on the board. Errors are indicated by the teacher, but the students themselves correct them, for no model is provided by the teacher. The same questions are asked of different students who respond with a variety of answers. A confusing use of capital letters by the teacher detracts from this otherwise good demonstration lesson.

13. *Job Interview—A Student Centered Approach* (45) Nicholas Kremer

Once again, the students help create the lesson which is built around a meaningful, task-oriented situation. Drawing on their communal pool of knowledge, learning by trial and error, and practicing unrehearsed dialogues, students prepare themselves for survival situations outside the classroom.

14. *Structure The Silent Way* (40) Joseph Hards

A modified Silent Way is presented in

this tape. Teacher modeling is reduced but not eliminated, gestures of approval are used, and teacher comments also break his silence. The demonstration is marred by a crying baby somewhere in the room—a realistic but distracting touch. The introduction to the demonstration concentrates more on *what* is done than on *why* it is done. This attention to the outward trappings and not the substance is a common defect of discussions of Gattegno's Silent Way.

15. *Coping Skills for the ESL Student* (47) Lotte Marcus

Dramatic teleplays about confrontations with immigration officials are presented in this demonstration. The teacher often resorts to Spanish with her homolinguistic class of Spanish speakers. In this non-academic, survival-level class, students learn two things at once, English and immigration regulations. A number of innovative (and sometimes expensive) ways of involving the students are shown.

A brochure to assist users of the taped materials is also available. It suggests pre-viewing and post-viewing activities which complement the viewing of the tapes.

Previously available directly from Janet R. Hafner, project director at Palomar College, the tapes should now be requested from the ICEDS Center in San Diego (Dr. Mac Swengle, ICEDS Project, 5350 University Avenue, San Diego, California 92105). Tapes (available in two formats, ¾-inch cassette or ½-inch reel to reel) may be borrowed and duplicated locally, or they may be purchased. A maximum of three tapes may be borrowed at a time, and they must be returned promptly after the scheduled showing date. Purchase prices for the tapes run from \$118 to \$225 each. If purchased separately, a complete set of fifteen tapes would cost \$2537, but the package price for the complete set is \$2400. If your teacher-training needs (and your budget) are substantial, that price may be well worth paying. Before making such an investment, however, prospective purchasers are advised to preview the tapes themselves.