

R E V I E W S

Jordan, R. and Mackay, R., A HANDBOOK FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE ASSISTANTS: London: Collins, 1976.

Although this book is written specifically for teaching ESL in Europe, it has many valuable suggestions for English teachers in Mexico. In the first chapter there is a long list of possible realia (from newspapers and money to personal photographs of family and special occasions) to carry into the classroom to emphasize the reality of the language and culture being studied.

The book continues in the next ten chapters to give many useful suggestions and wise professional comments about developing oral skills. For example, in the second chapter, there are comments about when, what, and how to correct a student. Jordan and Mackay feel that over-correcting, especially at early levels, impedes the development of fluency, which is the main oral goal. They suggest, then, other ways to get at errors, rather than stopping and correcting individuals at the moment a mistake is made. To beginning teachers or students in a teacher-training course, the practical suggestions contained in these chapters make the book well worth having at hand. Even the experienced teacher will find some new ideas and be reminded of forgotten techniques. The authors stress the need for thorough preparation and go into detailed description of all types of oral activities, from quite controlled picture description to debates and free discussion. There are also illustrations of simple chalkboard drawings, examples of useful songs and rhymes, and a discussion of simple audio-visual aids and their use in English teaching. In the appendix there is a selected bibliography of magazines and books.

The chapters are extremely well organized and clear. An experienced teacher might feel a little frustrated because some sections are superficial and brief, although in such a handbook this would naturally occur. Other sections are very detailed, including all the points an experienced teacher takes for granted, such as the list of recommended techniques for oral lessons on page 28, which begins with the suggestion to smile.

Throughout the book cultural content from Great Britain is infused in the examples. To an American this abundance of unfamiliar references could inhibit his envisioning the use of the techniques in his own classroom. Since the book is so clearly written though, this minor problem should not be a hindrance. A Handbook for English Language Assistants is recommended as a valuable resource book for novice as well as experienced EFL teachers.

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