

BOOK REVIEWSHOW TO MAKE AND USE YOUR OWN
VISUAL DELIGHTSBoone Brinson
Richard RomoDELTA
1980

The task of making visual materials for language classes is certainly one of the most time consuming activities that language teachers engage in. Veterans of the profession know the importance of choosing proper visuals to support their teaching. The problem for even these veterans is first, how to best organize time and materials available, then, how to get the most out of what has been made. In their book, VISUAL DELIGHTS, Boone Brinson and Richard Romo have set forth ideas for visuals which they consider both practical and easy to make. The most reassuring advice the authors give is that "anyone can". They point out that good planning rather than artistic ability is the key to success.

VISUAL DELIGHTS is divided into nineteen units, each one representing a particular visual aid with the exception of unit thirteen, which gives instructions for the use of stick figures, signs and symbols. Within each unit, the first section is an explanation of the visual to be made. The second section tells how to make it. Finally, there is an extensive section which gives possible uses for the visual which one has just made.

Aiming for the budget conscious teacher, the authors have selected visuals which, on the whole, can be used for several structures or functions. By no means are all structures covered. Attention is given to items normally seen in beginning and intermediate levels.

In the preface, the authors state that "our ideal visual was one that could be adapted to every level and lesson we taught". From an economic standpoint, this is certainly sound philosophy. However, putting this notion in practice is pedagogically questionable for a number of reasons. First, the background of the group to be taught should be considered. While a given visual may be ideal for a group of primary school beginners, the same visual may fizzle with a group of adolescent beginners. Second, there is a well founded argument that "recycling" a visual, that is, using it for one grammatical structure then using the same visual later for a different structure with the same group, tends to confuse the students. The reader should beware of this pitfall. However, the visuals themselves are quite workable if the teacher sets them to his/her situation.

The "How to make it" section is quite valuable for the visual aid do-it-yourselfer. The instructions are generally clear and concise. There are diagrams to illustrate the steps in making each of the visuals. The materials suggested are inexpensive and readily available so that anyone could make these visuals with a minimum effort.

Probably one of the most valuable units is that which deals with stick figures, signs and symbols. This section provides ideas that can be utilized in a variety of visuals: posters, the chalkboard, flash cards etc. The great advantage they have is that they can be drawn in seconds and can represent nearly any idea, no matter how complex it may be.

VISUAL DELIGHTS offers practical ideas and demonstrates that a lot of money and talent are not necessary to make effective visuals. The book provides many ideas which a group of teachers could build on. VISUAL DELIGHTS would be a good addition to any English teacher's library. It is especially good for the teacher who considers himself all thumbs.

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