

are often comments on linguistic features of register or style that are actually outside the author's conceptual framework for the book. Such comments would be helpful to students trying to improve their own style. A good teacher could also use the book to improve students' writing of letters, summaries, abstracts and short factual reports, and to some extent to teach comprehension.

Prospective users of the book should note that the texts chosen for analysis and as exercises are largely scientific reports or factual reports in newspapers, which would enhance the appeal of the book to students of communication in science and engineering courses, but would switch off anyone else.

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R.A. Close. *English as a Foreign Language. Its Constant Grammatical Problems*. Third Edition. London: Allen & Unwin, 1981. 219 pp. Paperback R14,75.

The third edition of this well-known book constitutes a strong re-affirmation of the role grammar has to play in the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language, in the light of the recent emphasis on notional syllabi and the communicative approach to language teaching. The author stresses that 'there would be no sense in excluding grammar from the curriculum' (p.8) and defines the subject matter of the book as 'the grammatical problems which arise wherever English, as a foreign language, is studied and taught.' (p.8)

The book's selecting and organising principle centres on the notion of grammar as a question of choice. Close posits English grammar as a 'solid core of linguistic facts' surrounded by a more nebulous area in which the choice of the right form is involved with subtle distinctions of thought, personal attitude and context of an utterance. For example, whether to say *I write* or *I'm writing*, *have written* or *wrote*. It is this nebulous area in which the student has to learn to make the right choice which is the subject of the book.

In the first two chapters Close demonstrates, often wittily, the limitations and dangers of over-simplified rules, and presents a number of 'primary distinctions of thought' such as abstract vs concrete, animate vs inanimate, or aspects of space and time. These distinctions are picked up throughout the book, in a series of patterns of arguments running right through, which makes *English as a Foreign Language* an extremely coherent and cohesive exposition of grammatical forms.

Indeed, the next nine chapters unravel with great clarity a number of those 'tricky' grammatical constructions which keep worrying the student of English, with a wealth of well-chosen examples and illustrative diagrams. Thus, the difficulties of the English verb system and the tenses are prefaced by a clear explanation of aspects of activity and of time, and the different points of view from which activity is seen. Similarly, the chapter entitled 'Infinitive or -ing' is sure to help both the student worrying whether to use the infinitive with or without *to*, or the verb ending in *-ing*, and the teacher eager to lead his students to an understanding of the more subtle distinctions such as *It is a great pleasure to be with you tonight* vs *It is a great pleasure being with you tonight*.

The one serious weakness of the book is found in the last chapter 'Functions and Notions' which aims 'to take into account the important work that has been published on those subjects in the last few years.' (p.8) However, the organisation and presentation of this chapter fall disastrously short of the author's intent. Close gives an alphabetical list of one hundred notions such as 'request', 'blame', etc. and under each entry provides examples of grammatical constructions by which the functions associated with the entry are frequently performed. A few of these constructions are labelled 'more formal', 'rather abrupt', 'more polite'. These labels cannot adequately help make the necessary distinctions between the various forms, as in any case the choice would depend so heavily on the relationship between the participants, the context of the utterance and a number of other non-linguistic factors as to make this kind of rash judgment meaningless. It is ironic that some of those subtle distinctions are in fact made, without fuss, in the preceding chapters.

This book, aimed at teachers and advanced students, should prove a very useful work of reference. It is a pity that the author should have thought it necessary to appear to be following recent fashionable trends. If this indeed was the case, as Close's self-justifications seem to indicate, then we should start

seriously re-thinking our whole approach to second language teaching and the current labelling of 'grammar' as a four-letter word.

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Barbara Hollingworth. *Teach English Well*. Pietermaritzburg: Shuter and Shooter, 1984. Paperback R15,75.

Teach English Well, a distillation of the material used in the SSERP project, is a handbook for teachers of English in Black schools. The author specifically states that she has not attempted to cover the whole spectrum of language teaching, but has dealt with those 'topics which teachers themselves have identified as particular problem areas'. However, the book is very wide ranging in its content, dealing with the four skills (LSRW), tense teaching, presentation of lexis, the teaching of literature in the classroom, marking and testing, the problems of E.A.C., the uses of audio-visuals, and the organisation and administration of classroom libraries.

There is an undoubted need for a book on English Language Teaching methodology in this country, where most Second Language teachers are not mother-tongue speakers of English, and where language teaching methodology has been neglected. Black teachers are faced with the considerable problem of overcrowded classrooms, little or no V/A resources few and inadequate textbooks and isolation from contact with developing teaching methodology. *Teach English Well* has attempted to tackle some of these problems and to fill the gap.

The book is disappointing at first glance when one compares it with other such books from abroad but not specifically aimed at the South African market. *Teaching English Through English* by Willis, *The Practice of English Language Teaching* by Harmer and *A Training Course of TEFL* by Hubbard et al appear more inviting and their approach to ELT methodology more exciting. The layout of *Teach English Well* is very functional though dull, but the book is robustly produced and will stand up to the constant handling of a busy teacher. An index and a list of titles for