

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

further reading would have been a welcomed addition. Furthermore, the appearance of the book will not 'frighten off' the teacher as it looks very much like a pupil textbook.

The methodological approach to *Teach English Well* has been very much determined and circumscribed by the need to implement the D.E.T. syllabus and is therefore exam orientated. One commends the author for keeping her feet on the ground, a tendency of some being to theorize on methodology with little thought given to applicability in the classroom, but I feel that a more adventurous approach to Second Language teaching could have been taken. There are a number of important omissions made when discussing certain issues, though much sound and practical advice is given. Let me illustrate this with two examples:

1. In chapter 2, 'Oral English Lessons', the author advocates group work and emphasises the point that 'oral lessons should be a pupil centred activity.' However, there is no mention of the various patterns of classroom interaction that can take place, a crucial point if teachers are to set up pupil centred activities. A mere mention that group work is advocated in the syllabus followed by one small unit under item 5 is not enough. Teachers must know how to set up groups, what kinds of group work and material are needed for such oral activities, how to arrange the classroom to maximise pupil talking time, what problems they are likely to encounter in oral group work activities and how to solve these problems. If such issues are not dealt with, then it is unlikely that teachers will engage in oral group work and that pupil centred activities will ensue. There are many kinds of interesting activities to encourage oral fluency and accuracy; activities that involve and motivate pupils and elicit meaningful and purposeful language. Techniques such as problem solving exercises, information gap activities, games and simulations are given no mention, yet these can be adapted to conditions in Black schools and demand little in the way of resource material. The suggestions given in *Teach English Well* (picture descriptions, recitations and mini debates) are activities that teachers already know of though they may not make much use of them. However, a book such as *Teach English Well* should seek to enlarge the teacher range of techniques in order to encourage and improve oral work.
2. Chapter 8, 'Teaching four basic verb tenses', and chapter 9, 'Teaching the present perfect tense': Tense teaching is done 'ad infinitum' in classrooms throughout the country, and yet it still presents a problem. Pupils who have been

taught a particular tense from Standard 3 onwards appear unable to integrate that item into the general body of their language, or if they do, have a very narrow conception of the uses of that tense. The reason for this is that (a) little adequate practice is given after the presentation of a tense, (b) the same function of a tense is mechanically presented without any attempt to list and grade the functions and to introduce them gradually as the pupil progresses through the school, and (c) there is an over emphasis on the accuracy of form. The practice exercises given in the yellow sheets of *Teach English Well* are inadequate and serve only to perpetuate the problems. The exercises are of a discrete item form and rarely contextualised and they fail to give a sense of purpose, do not test meaningfulness and emphasise mere grammatical 'usage'. In the chapters, there is no attempt to grade the functions and to indicate at what level these should be presented, or even what knowledge pupils need before they can tackle that particular tense. This is especially needful in remedial teaching where the teacher must discover why a pupil has a problem with the conceptual use of a tense.

The chapter on 'Marking' will be of particular help to teachers. The sheer volume of papers to be marked is a constant problem. I have attended workshop sessions given by the author on this aspect of language teaching and can say that the teachers who attended were given not only practical advice on the various marking procedures which improved the quality of their marking, but were also helped to lighten their marking load. The two chapters on controlled and guided composition writing are very thorough in their treatment though once again the range of techniques given is limited. I realise that in a book of this nature space is a problem, but I would have thought it important to provide guidance to teachers on how they could help pupils to make the transition from guided composition writing to free writing. The act of writing can best be described as the 'act of juggling a number of simultaneous constraints.' The language skills necessary to express ideas correctly and coherently is only one of the constraints that a pupil is faced with.

I am unable to comment on the literature section of this book as this is not within my field.

The author has tried to cover too many aspects of ELT in this book, the result being that many of the issues and problems dealt with are treated in a superficial manner. The dividing

line between being too general or too detailed is a difficult one to determine. The author has my sympathies on this issue.

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