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Seeds of Confidence

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Publisher: Helbling Languages

[Verónica de Andrés & Jane Arnold. London: Helbling Languages, 2009. pp. i + 192. ¥3,750. ISBN: 978-3-85272-200-

Seeds of Confidence is an invaluable teaching resource for the EFL teacher that explores the importance of developing confidence in the classroom. The book is a collection of activities designed primarily with second language (L2) classrooms in mind, but they can also be used successfully in other contexts. The activities are best used as icebreakers for newly formed classes, while others are better suited for established groups.

Seeds of Confidence is divided into five chapters, which correspond to Reasoner's (1982) five fundamental components of Communicative Competence. The chapter introductions provide reviews of the relevant literature, emphasizing the connection between confidence and language learning. Serving as the *raison d'être* for *Seeds of Confidence*, the book posits that self-esteem can be transformed through confidence, leading to success for L2 learners. The authors remind readers that the activities should be used consistently and considered over time.

There should be no doubt that confidence plays an enormous role in learning and using an L2. For Japanese students, confidence is a key to successfully learning English.

Yashima (2002) suggests that reducing anxiety and building confidence in the EFL classroom should increase the motivation of English learners. They need to realize that a perfect understanding of English grammar and an extensive vocabulary will not solve their problems—a lack of confidence. Fortunately, these students, and their teachers, may find help in the pages of *Seeds of Confidence*.

I trialed many of the activities contained within the book in Japan at a junior college and a private English conversational class.

current ESL teaching context in Canada. The feedback from students and the enthusiasm generated from the activity

A great activity that comes early in the book, *My mistake*, encourages students to view mistakes positively. By looking at the quote “The only real mistake is the one from which we learn nothing” (p. 37), it helps instill the belief in students that mistakes in the English classroom is the perfect place to take chances and make mistakes.

Visualization, a technique that may be novel to many teachers and students, is used throughout the book. One such activity is visualizing themselves as proficient English speakers. After some initial hesitation, students really immerse themselves in the activity. The English classroom may be presently surprised with this activity. Visualization is actually used in several activities throughout the book.

Throughout the book, students are also encouraged to use English confidently to speak about themselves and present their work. This activity allows students to bring in pictures they have drawn, play songs they have written, and even perform dances they have created. In my version of *show and tell*, I was surprised at the passion with which students spoke about themselves and their interests. This activity builds confidence in students and at the same time develops their language skills.

In addition to the 68 activities described in the five chapters, there is also a CD-ROM and audio CD, which include audio files, and video files for some of the activities. As teachers use the materials in class, it is important that they reflect on their experiences. Forms that correspond to each chapter are included in the Appendix.

Seeds of Confidence addresses an important aspect of language learning that is often overlooked by teachers and that is the quality that sets learners with similar proficiency test scores apart when situated in real world contexts. The classroom activities in *Seeds of Confidence* build confidence in their students and at the same time develop their language skills. *Seeds of Confidence* should have a place in every ESL classroom.

References

Reasoner, R. (1982). *Building self-esteem: A comprehensive program for schools*. Palo Alto: Consulting Psychologists Press.

Yashima, T. (2002). Willingness to communicate in a second language: The Japanese EFL context. *The Modern Language Association*, 117(1), 1-10.

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