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New Ways in Teaching Culture

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New Ways in Teaching Culture

Alvino E. Fantini, Editor (1997)

Alexandria, VA: TESOL

Pp. xii + 236

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US \$24.95 (members \$21.95)

This addition to the *New Ways* series from TESOL offers dozens of short articles, both concerning language and culture in an ESL/EFL context. The book begins with the premise that “language and culture are dimensions of human experience that are inseparable” (p. 4). Fantini goes on to equate communicative competence with language instruction. However, this equation lends only an underpinning to the material that follows.

In Part 1 (Introductory Articles—Conceptual Background for Activities), these premises are explored. The first two articles generally focus on the idea of intercultural competence, its definitions and justifications. The third article is one that seeks to develop a general understanding of culture rather than a particular understanding of a specific culture. While this is probably the most practical approach, it leaves a gap for teachers who are not familiar with English-speaking culture. Further examples of this weakness and its impact are discussed in the following articles.

Parts 2-5 feature individual activities that develop competence in different areas: language culture exploration, and intercultural exploration. Within these chapters, teachers will find been “submitted by contributors from around the world” (p. xii). These activities range from cultural values in U.S. families, to simulations that investigate the general notion of culture

Most instructors will no doubt find something of use within these chapters. However, they may have difficulty implementing, or even understanding, a great number of the activities (particularly with U.S. culture) as a given.

For example, in “Everyday Tasks (Operations)” by Fantini (p. 124), the activity says to “pre- describe some of its cultural context.” In “Guess Who’s Coming to Visit?” (Conzett, p. 135) history of the U.S. civil rights movement.” [-1-]

Other activities seem to presume a U.S.-based ESL situation. In “Exploring Cultural Values” states that it is intended for ESL students in the U.S. in multicultural classrooms only. “Even 148) asks the instructor to “briefly explain the custom of 25th, 50th, and 75th wedding anniversary “show pictures.”

Of course, any of these activities could be adapted or edited to suit a particular teaching situation not be as confident doing so. And, even for more experienced teachers, the reworking of them effort, since the instructions are generally detailed and specific.

Part V of the book has the most substantial activities, that is, activities that encourage students different cultures. “Comparing Cultural Events” (Fitzgerald, p. 174) asks students to compare watching a film that illustrates such a celebration in the target culture. There are also activities experiences with culture shock and miscommunication.

The final part of the book is a 17-page selected and annotated bibliography on works about ranging and up-to-date. It would be helpful if they included a section on culture textbooks

This book is primarily useful for experienced teachers who are in the U.S., or who are very interesting to teachers who want to explore the notion of culture and its dimensions with their

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Dude! You mean you've never eaten a peanut butter and jelly sandwich?!? Nut Allergy as St
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