

## Humanising Your Coursebook

by Mario Rinvolucri

ISBN 0-954198-60-3, Delta Publishing, 2002, 96 pages

**Intended for all, but perhaps most appreciated by those weary souls desirous of teaching the same material but differently, *Humanising Your Coursebook* offers manifold creative ideas and activities designed to breathe new life into the classroom and to motivate students and teachers alike.**

The range of material covers grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing, listening, speaking and exam skills at a variety of levels. They are broadly based on Rinvolucri's belief in the Neuro-Linguistic-Programming tenets that people learn through their senses and that the best way to teach is to make sure that the input and the activities are multi-sensory.

All very sensible and reasonable, or so it seems-and indeed the exercises are practical and most of them require little or no preparation. I did a trial run of one of the less adventurous writing activities (expanding a skeletal dialogue) with a lower intermediate class. The students enjoyed it thoroughly, practised relevant language and were able to personalise the task. Colleagues also found several of the reading tasks to be valuable and interesting, most notably those where students

prepared their own tasks and practised summarising skills.

What the activities do require, however, is confidence in their delivery and belief in their worthiness, as well as no small measure of feistiness in the teacher. Who of us, in the real world, would have the sheer guts to request that students remove their shoes and draw round their partner's foot? Those of us in the not-so-touchy-feely mode may balk at such a suggestion.

Clearly what is most important here is the teacher's confidence in their own behaviour and in setting the atmosphere of trust within the group, as several of the activities involve a degree of risk-taking and, albeit respectful, exposure of the self.

Yet Rinvolucri's style is so reasonable and he is so likeable in his open declaration of "I lost practically half my first ELT class" that he would strike a chord in even the most cynical of us. In this respect *Humanising Your Coursebook* does much the same. It is an appealing and useful book that I think most imaginative teachers would enjoy using.

Sarah Hall-Brindle

## Creating Conversation in Class

by Chris Sion,

published by ENGLISH TEACHING professional and DELTA TEACHING 2001 ISBN: 0 953309 88 6

**This is an excellent book packed full of suggestions to get students talking. There are over 100 ideas and activities organised in seven different sections. Examples of the sections are: "Getting Started", which details many starter activities for the classroom; "Breaking the Ice" and "Talking About People."**

Each activity is clearly set out with details of the level of students it is aimed at, how long the activity should take, materials needed and a list of the language functions students will use in the activity. With most activities the preparation time is minimal and the only materials necessary are worksheets, which are provided. This makes it extremely teacher-friendly and easy to use. Activities can stand alone, for example in a specific conversation or speaking skills class, or can be

integrated and used as part of a "normal" lesson covering all skills. Although most of the activities are aimed at intermediate level of students, I have successfully adapted and used them with different level classes. As well as adapting to different levels of students, many activities can be used with any number of different topics, which makes this a very flexible resource indeed. The section on "Learner Training" provides useful work including work on different learning styles, learning and revising vocabulary and thinking in English.

Altogether this book is a very valuable resource prompting maximum student talk and involvement in various types of conversation such as negotiation, discussion, role-play and questionnaires and has much to recommend it.

Stella Fleming