

### Teaching Languages to Students with Specific Learning Differences

Judit Kormos and Ann Margaret Smith  
Multilingual Matters, 2012  
232 pages  
ISBN 978184769619 9

*Teaching Languages to Students with Specific Learning Differences* is the answer to many of my questions regarding learners who need differentiated assistance. There are nine chapters, each devoted to a specific learning difference found in the classroom. The text ends with a unit on transition and helping students to develop outside the classroom as well. Some of the areas focused on are: dyslexia, associated learning differences, such as Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), accommodating differences in the classroom and using different techniques for teaching these learners.

I was delighted to see that much of what we already teach regarding learning styles and learner preferences is covered in these chapters and that we have not been adding to the learners' frustration, always a concern when you are working with students who perceive things differently from the majority. I was also relieved to read that many of these strategies are actually helping—simplifying instructions and making feedback visual; using colours and cut-outs for students when they read so they only see part of the test, etc.

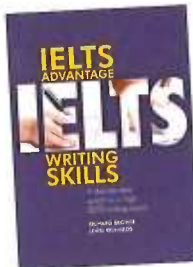
Mostly what I loved about the book was the statistics that support what we have been doing in the ESL classroom for decades. Using a variety of frameworks and multi-sensory teaching techniques and lots of repetition in a variety of forms really does assist these learners. Combining the drills of an audio-lingual lesson with visuals and then reinforcing them with a kinaesthetic activity and then adding a rhyme or two is particularly helpful to learners with specific learning needs (SpLD).

According to the authors, learners with SpLDs generally need explicit grammar explanations as opposed to the more guided methods because it is difficult for them to hold the rule in their memory long enough to use it. Rules and repetition help. Makes sense to me! The other thing I had suspected is that phonemes are deeply connected to understanding reading texts and are essential for learning spelling rules. I learned to spell as a child first with individual phonemes, then lots of repetition, visuals and colours, touchy-feely tasks and by physically breaking words into syllables and singing lots of rhymes. I do this with my learners who struggle with spelling, and it really works.

We also have to deal with affective factors. Helping learners to feel comfortable with the atmosphere of the room is especially important for these highly sensitive learners. They can also be affected by the physical aspects of the classroom—heat, light, smell, etc. As educators, we also need to work on their belief system as many learners with SpLD are very anxious about learning. Finding out about their preferences is a good place to start ... '(t)he way in which people respond to everyday tasks and challenges reveals the way in which they see the world' (p. 86) ... and so true.

A fascinating book ... and I know what kind of workshop I am going to do next at my school.

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### IELTS Advantage Writing Skills

Richard Brown and Lewis Richards  
Delta Publishing 2011  
129 pages  
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*IELTS Advantage* is an excellent tool for upper-intermediate and higher students who currently achieve a six on IELTS writing, to improve their score. It has been put together for use in the classroom; however, due to its logical order and supplied answers, it could also be used for self-study. Teachers will find this book to be an excellent resource with easily adaptable activities for different classroom settings. As for self-study, the activities can be followed with ease throughout the book with answers and comments provided for self-reflection. It is important to note that this book is specifically for academic writing. There is no indication of this on the outside cover.

Brown and Richards have focused on the key writing issues that can make the difference between a band six or seven and there are many useful tips throughout the book. Model answers are supplied for each unit. At the end of each is an additional essay question which has a sample answer with comments.

*IELTS Advantage* is divided into Task 1 and Task 2 of the academic writing paper with the focus being on Task 2 as it weighs more heavily in the final score. Task 2 has three different essay types, with two units for each. Each unit begins with an essay question. Once the student has written their essay, the unit then focuses on generating interest in the topic by introducing useful vocabulary and tips on how to write the different essay types. Each key essay structure is examined in depth and appropriate language is introduced as well.

The final three units focus on Task 1. This text carries less weight in the final score, but can often lead to some confusion on what exactly is being asked. Brown and Richards have identified the three styles of Task 1 questions and have broken them down into how to structure the answer properly and how to use the language appropriately.

The layout of the book is clear and easy to follow, with coloured pages highlighting the key areas. I wish I had had a copy of this book when I was teaching Academic IELTS writing!

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