



Edited by
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Materials reviews

In this selection we have reviews of photocopiable resources for teaching grammar through games, and two dictionaries for Information Technology users. We also have two extremely thought-provoking practical resource titles. Both deal with the whole person: one concerns mother-tongue use; the other deals with a neglected aspect of language learning.



Using the Mother Tongue

Sheelagh Deller and Mario Rinvolucri

English Teaching
Professional/DELTA Publishing,
2002

96 pp ISBN 0-954198-61-1

The most impressive thing about this book is its willingness to deal with a topic that has been more or less taboo among language teachers for a long time. We have all come into greater or lesser contact with students' first languages, and some of us may have utilised them in the classroom – but then kept quiet about it because it is largely proscribed by all the known ELI methodologies. That is the contention of the authors of *Using the Mother Tongue*, who believe that an important pedagogical resource is being overlooked.

To be fair, some EFL coursebooks such as *Headway* have dipped their toes into the L1 reservoir already, particularly nearer the elementary end. Where this book goes further is in its exploitation of the L1 background for more than just translation. The first part of the book, for instance, focuses on classroom management, with activities for icebreaking, vocabulary recording, even for diagnosis of too much mother tongue presence.

Like *The Minimax Teacher* in the same series, reviewed in these pages in the December–January issue, there is a lot of familiar material here, but it is re-slanted with the general aim of encouraging cautious teachers to build an intercultural context for learning, and of bolstering students to the point where they can let go of their first language with confidence but still have it there as a linguistic tool.

Out of 115 activities contained in these pages, about 30% require zero teacher knowledge of the students' mother tongue, and about 37% are suitable for multilingual classes. Much of the rest, however, need only a working knowledge of the host language and therefore should be useful to native-speaker teachers living abroad and working with monolingual classes.

Where *Using the Mother Tongue* should really find favour is with the many non-native-speaker teachers of English working in a domestic setting. They in particular can benefit from all the activities gathered here, so, given sufficient international distribution, this book should have every chance of filling a big gap in the market.

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Games for Grammar Practice

Maria Lucia Zaorob and Elizabeth Chin

Cambridge University Press, 2001
ISBN 0-521-66342-3

This resource book of grammar games contains forty-two activities, each designed to promote interactive and individual practice for learners of all ages and levels of competence. The emphasis on cooperation and peer correction aims to facilitate fun-filled, meaningful practice. Items covered are clearly labelled by topic, level and time needed, as well as the language focus covered. It's not, of course, an exhaustive list, but contains many areas with which learners commonly have difficulties: for example, the unit on modals includes a game contrasting 'like' and 'would like' in the realistic context of opinions about food and inviting a friend to a restaurant.

There are many board and card games, such as 'Who's got my message?' which practises reported speech. Once again the context is realistic. No single teacher will find all the activities suitable for their own classroom but most include suggestions for adaptation of either the grammar focus or the lexical area employed. The book does, however, seem to be suited to older learners; if you have a monolingual class you may need to work harder to help your students with the metalinguage and may have to monitor carefully to ensure maximum practice in English. 'Competition' is a vexed question: added spice or a recipe for friction? Either way, the competitive element can be played up or down as teachers see fit. 'What's something you are really scared of?' struck me as a rather odd question, when 'What are you scared of?' a more natural sounding question, invites the required answer.

There may be only very minor quibbles in what is undoubtedly a useful book and is of the high quality we have come to expect from the Cambridge copy collection. The photocopiable material is well presented and graphically pleasing. It is set to grace many teachers' rooms, I am sure.

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