

BOOK REVIEW:

New Ways in Teaching Speaking



Mary Brooks

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Reviewed by Mary Brooks

The latest edition of *New Ways in Teaching Speaking*, carefully edited by Julie Vorholt, is an extremely useful book, suitable for the teacher in training, for teacher educators, and for practicing teachers. The book is organized into five parts according to the specific goals or strategies of over 100 activities. Each activity is introduced by a set of descriptors indicating the level, aims, class time, preparation time, and resources. The reader is also directed to an online source of appendixes and handouts, PowerPoints, and more; the online source's URL is given in the User's Guide to Activities.

The book serves a range of student proficiency levels as warm up activities, as companions to topics, and as an enhancement for career focused materials. The plans can also be adapted for specific classroom needs, levels, and ages. For ease of use, I would like to see a spreadsheet of the topics based on proficiency levels.

The activity "Visualizing Ideal Second Language Classmates" is an example from Part I, Interaction. It provides a clever process for students to come up with their own personal language acquisition goals by talking about an external ideal. The background information is clear and referenced. The procedure is straightforward, well-scaffolded, easy to imagine, and appropriate for multiple levels. A section titled "Caveats and Options" facilitates adaptation to specific groups of students. The section "References and Further Reading" would enhance a teacher's conference presentation.

A variety of useful grammar-based conversation activities is found in Part II: Developing Accuracy. There are activities for using conditionals, question tags, language functions and exercises for finding and practicing new vocabulary. These activities are task-based, engaging, and interactive ways to

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develop grammatical control.

Part III, Developing Pronunciation, draws on segmental, suprasegmental, and key word focus for creative and useful practice.

Part IV, Speaking in Specific Contexts, is rich with critical thinking activities embedded in relevant contexts, e.g., in class statistics and job interviews. These plans provide ways to develop context through technology. The activities encourage students to do self and peer assessment, a critical stage in language learning.

Part V, Speaking and Technology, is a guide to working with authentic conversation through the direct use of technology as a prompt for speaking. Angry Birds, Google Earth, FaceTime, and Skype are all points of interest to help create speeches

and conversation. Peer feedback, self-reflection, PowerPoints, and public speaking are some of the goals of this section.

These wonderful plans still require teacher discretion and adaptation to groups of students. There are some assessment measures built into the plans. However, evaluation in some form would be a valuable addition to those activities built around a topical context. Beginning teachers will find a wealth of ideas in this book. Teachers already initiated will be offered new ideas and new ways to approach compelling topics and settle into the stages of critical thinking.