

where we are going, and how, and even why". What we teach depends on why we are teaching it. Thus he concludes that the only lasting motivation on the part of pupils is "the knowledge that the skills they have learnt can be used to some personal profit". He identifies several shortcomings in previous language courses (e.g. "the lack of personal involvement of the learner"), stressing the need for course differentiation. Some important issues raised are the role of grammar ("it seems clear that the long-term learner will need an explanatory framework of grammar, whether his course materials are explicitly organized to help him develop this progressively or not") and the comparative importance of the spoken and written word ("almost all language teachers would agree ... that ability to use the written word for all except a tiny minority of learners is a goal useless in its own right").

In the second chapter: *The Historical Ball and Chain*, Rowlinson criticises those who hold the "progressive" view that modern language teaching practice is automatically an improvement on what has gone before. He demonstrates that much of what is supposedly "new" is often merely a variation of an older method, and concludes that "methods and materials are necessarily a reflection of aims and purposes which in turn lie in the changing structure and values of the society around us".

Chapter three, on the role of language learning in the school curriculum, suggests various contributions that a second language course should make to the pupils' overall education, such as the development of an aesthetic sense and the elimination of cultural chauvinism.

It is, however, in the second part of the book, *Means*, that Rowlinson addresses himself to practical considerations of second language teaching. He devotes separate chapters to a discussion of three second language (French) courses: the language experience course, the specialist course, and the more advanced 'sixth form' course. In the first of these, he suggests a basic functional approach consisting of three overlapping stages: input, reproduction of new material and autonomous use of new material. He also provides examples of pair work and language games for use in the third stage.

The specialist course should aim at making English a usable tool for students, and the author outlines various ways of achieving this goal. The advanced course, he feels, should introduce the second language as it is spoken by mother-tongue speakers, and the student should now use the spoken word not just for everyday exchanges, but also to express ideas, put forward opinions and sustain an argument.

In the chapter on the problems of language testing, the author advocates tests based on listening and oral communication, in order to bring the examination system more into line with the objectives of language teaching. He also discusses the merits of using intensive and extensive reading in this regard.

The chapter on classroom aids, although relevant, offers nothing original and its inclusion is hardly justified. In the last chapter, various ways of putting language to use beyond the classroom are suggested.

*Personally Speaking* is a book which should prove useful to new and experienced teachers alike, but especially to those who have lost perspective and need some of their old beliefs re-affirmed, while at the same time extending their vision. No biographical details concerning the author are supplied, but I can recommend his work for its sensible ideas and logical arguments, presented clearly and concisely in carefully linked chapters. In short, a very readable and thought-provoking book.

J.J. Swartz

#### Michael Swan

*Basic English Usage*. Oxford University Press: 1984. (Paperback, 288 pp.)

*Basic English Usage* is a shortened and simplified version of Michael Swan's *Practical English Usage*. The author describes his book as "a practical guide to common problems in English grammar and usage" for use by "foreign students who would like to know more about English, and who want to avoid mistakes". It contains 370 short entries which attempts to explain, in fairly simple language, those parts of English grammar and

vocabulary that ESL and EFL students are most likely to find confusing.

After reading the author's introduction, in which he explains his aims and the organization of the book, I was a little sceptical about whether this volume served any need that had not already been catered for by previous publications such as Eckersley and Eckersley's *A Comprehensive English Grammar for Foreign Students* or Thomson and Martinet's *A Practical English Grammar*. However, a study of some of its articles convinced me that this book has a great deal to recommend it. Firstly, it is not a grammar at all, but a dictionary of problems. The items are listed alphabetically (from *Abbreviations* to *Would rather*) and not presented in chapters under such general headings as 'Nouns', 'Conjunctions' or 'Tenses'. Any apparent disadvantage that this approach may cause is more than offset by careful cross-referencing and an extremely detailed index. For this reason, articles on *specific* problem areas can quickly be found (there is also a complete list of entries at the front of the book). For example, students who have problems with the use of the subjunctive will easily find an article on the general use of this mood, with cross-references to articles on the specific use of *wish* and the use of *if* with 'ordinary' and 'special' tenses. Each explanation is clearly illustrated with several example sentences.

A second difference between this volume and conventional grammars is the author's minimal use of grammatical terminology. The terms he has used are explained in a brief glossary at the front. A phonetic alphabet has also been provided.

A special feature of this book is its attractive design. This is achieved by the use of two colours, different type-settings to highlight specific points, and simple but clear illustrations. Where functional, the author has drawn attention to incorrect

usage and placed such examples next to the correct forms.

On first impression, the book appears to be no more than a handy reference work for ESL teachers, covering a large number of anticipated problem areas. However, I am convinced that its particular format will appeal also to students and that they will be both willing and able to use it unassisted.

On the other hand, therein may also lie one of the book's weaknesses. As a result of over-simplification, some of the articles leave questions unanswered and problems unsolved. Inevitably certain areas have been treated too superficially to be of real use to the student. In this event, the student is referred to Swan's more authoritative volume: *Practical English Usage*.

The author is careful to distinguish between British and American English and between formal and informal language use. In addition to the many useful examples illustrating regular language forms, many examples of relevant exceptions have been included, especially in the various articles on prepositions. Where necessary, problems of pronunciation have also been elucidated.

The word 'basic' in the title indicates at what level an ESL student would find this book useful. Teachers will appreciate the painstaking effort that has gone into its preparation and its extensive coverage of problem areas. A book of exercises giving practice in the various points explained in this volume, is soon to be published.

In sum, the book lives up to the expectations created in the introduction, and ESL teachers at various levels should find it a very useful aid in their approach to remedial work.

J.J. Swartz