

New publications ... Nuwe publikasies

Reviews

Lynn Dhority

Acquisition through creative teaching (ACT): The Artful use of Suggestion in Foreign Language Instruction

Sharon, MA: Center for Continuing Development, 1984.

This book is the account of a teacher and researcher in quest of answers to the challenge of "how students learn best and how we as teachers can best facilitate the learning process".

Neurological, psychological, didactic and philosophical considerations are investigated in order to explain the development of the ACT approach which Dhority describes as seeking to provide a holistic model for teaching and learning. The research especially of Krashen, Asher and Terrell is singled out as part of the basis on which ACT has been built, together with the contribution of Lozanov's Suggestopedia.

The ACT Approach strives to optimize learning by tapping unused potential of learners. The most important factor utilized to achieve an optimal learning environment is *suggestion*. Positive suggestions enable the students to transcend their limiting self-concepts, beliefs and fears and thus liberate them to realize their learning capacity more fully. Details of optimal learning are sketched: physical, psychological, social, ethical, aesthetic and didactic aspects that require particular consideration within the framework of holistic teaching.

In the actual ACT teaching sequence the material is presented in a relaxed, global and multi-modal way, in accordance with the Suggestopedic cycle: Prelude – Concert I – Concert II – Activation. Dhority emphasizes the *way* in which the concerts are presented and the importance of *music* in creating a synergetic learning effect. He indicates various ways of improving *group rapport* and of

heightening the appeal to students' *imagination* (props, games, singing, dancing, miming, dramatization, etc.) Underlying all considerations about this teaching method is one important realization: The "supportive atmosphere which encourages spontaneity and risk-taking" is a prerequisite for success, for the accelerative snowball-effect. Aspects like "error-correction", "homework" and the introduction of grammatical patterns and paradigms should contribute to the improvement of the students' self-image and confidence.

The second half of the book (chapters 13 and 14) contains the documented results of two experiments:

- courses at the University of Massachusetts/ Boston
- the Fort Devons Experiment.

Details are supplied of the objectives, statistical data (students, class format, facilities), teaching materials, method of presentation and the means of evaluation used. Especially the account of the Fort Devons Experiment can be recommended as a thorough document on a well-planned pilot programme in which Special Forces personnel achieved better results in a foreign language course (German) in a shorter time period than with the existing programme of the Defence Language Institute. A precise description of the DLI's skill levels (pertaining to speaking, listening and reading) is included in an appendix.

Included also is the first "act" of a German suggestopedic text ("Wollen ist können" by Charles Schmid) and a bibliography on Suggestion and Education, The Brain, Foreign Language Pedagogy and Topics of General Relevance.

The appearance of Dhority's book is a welcome contribution to the relatively new field of Suggestopedia in the Western world. It should prove valuable to all educationalists (teachers and researchers alike) who are seeking new ways of improving the effectiveness and the quality of their teaching,

who are probing new avenues to facilitate their task of leading students into the challenges of the new world more appropriately.

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S.D. Krashen & T.D. Terrell

The Natural Approach: Language acquisition in the classroom. Oxford: Pergamon, 1983. (Paperback, 191 pp.)

Stated simply, this book is based on the theory that language acquisition occurs when messages are understood. The objective of beginners' classes is to supply much input and by so doing, bring the learner to the point where he/she can understand language outside the classroom. In *The Natural Approach: Language Acquisition in the Classroom*, Krashen and Terrell attempt to put into practice their theoretical ideas on second language acquisition. It is based on an empirically grounded theory of second language acquisition, which is supported by a large number of scientific studies in a wide variety of language acquisition and learning contexts (p. 1).

Krashen and Terrell state two purposes for their work: to offer an introduction to the Monitor Theory and to provide a handbook for instructors who wish to use a communicative based approach in the classroom. This work offers practical applications of the model for foreign and second language teaching.

The first part of the book gives an overview of Krashen's theory. For those unfamiliar with Krashen's theory, this summary achieves its purpose i.e. to introduce the reader to the Monitor Theory. A background to what is termed "Traditional and Non-Traditional Approaches" to Language Teaching is included.

The latter part of the book is devoted to practical considerations for using the Natural Approach. This includes ways of organizing the syllabus and managing the classroom. Included also are valuable techniques to develop listening and speaking skills as well as the roles of reading, writing, grammar, error correction and testing.

In line with Krashen's Input Hypothesis that language acquisition can only take place when a message which is being transmitted is understood, many of the activities emphasize listening comprehension without extensive speaking. The emphasis is on *what* is being said rather than on the form of the message.

Krashen and Terrell do not believe that acquisition is affected by conscious learning or productive practice. Teachers are advised therefore that learning exercises such as drills or other controlled practice are not necessary for developing communication skills (p. 148). This implies therefore that teachers should abandon traditional techniques and concentrate on exercises which provide more input. Exercises in this book are most valuable and diversified.

This book is written very clearly and to the point. It is interspersed with various examples to help the teacher understand. This work will serve as resource material to both beginners and experienced instructors.

In *The Natural Approach: Language acquisition in the classroom*, the joint effort of Krashen and Terrell has made it possible for theory (i.e. Krashen's) and practice (i.e. Terrell's Natural Approach) to interact. The authors provide a practical formulation of the theory. They have adapted it to a variety of situations for different types of learners.

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