Introduction

What interests you as your eye lights on this page? If you want to find out how we feel this book fits into mainstream EFL thinking, then please read section A of this introduction **Where in language teaching?**

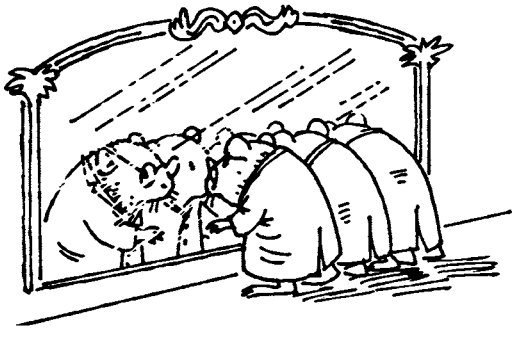
If you would like our thoughts on how the book fits into the progression of humanistic teaching then please read section B **Where in the humanistic tradition?**

If you want an outline of the sorts of practical benefits the exercises in the book will bring to your students and to you, then read section C **Benefits.**

If you want a tour of the book's contents and some of its features then read section D **What's where?**

A Where in language teaching?

In the late eighties EFL teachers began to notice 'Action Research' (A.R.), a movement in general education in which classroom teachers looked into what was going on in their own classrooms. The A.R. movement in EFL came as a reaction against the assumption that classroom research was the exclusive domain of the university. It was as if a generation of guinea pigs decided to put on white coats



and look at their behaviours and beliefs themselves. The proponents of A.R. suggest that a teacher first formulates a hypothesis about some aspect of what is going on in their classroom; and then collects data relevant to the hypothesis. They evaluate the data and either formulate

a new hypothesis or decide on some action they will take in the light of the data. The Action Research practitioner intends it to be a dynamic element in their teaching process. In the hands of pioneers like Melanie Ellis in Poland and Graziella Pozzo in Italy, it is just that.

In a simpler model of A.R., the teacher identifies some area of their own practice that they want to find out more about. The teacher then collects data from their classroom and, in the light of the data, decides how to improve things.

While A.R. wrests power from the hands of the professional gatekeepers (the university caste) and places it in the hands of the teachers, our book goes one step further: it puts this power of self-research into the hands of the students. In using this book with your students, you will be giving them instruments for finding out a lot more about themselves as people, as learners, as foreign-language learners and as members of a group.

The methodology we use to facilitate this student self-discovery does not go along with the hypothesis → data-collection → evaluation model favoured in some A.R., which is perhaps not the most elegant of scientific models to borrow. We have found it more flexible to borrow the 'field study' approach prevalent in a scientific area like geology. Put in simple terms, we ask the student to observe acutely what is there, to direct close attention to areas they have previously given no thought to. The realisations thus arrived at give the student a whole new 'mapping' of the area under consideration. The new mapping may lead to new and different courses of action.

An example of the field study type of methodology as we use it in this book is appropriate here:

1 The group sits in a circle so they can all see each other.

2 Anybody may pick up the ball placed in the centre of the circle, and throw it to another group member who reminds them of somebody from elsewhere in their life. They then explain the resemblance: 'You look / sound / feel to me like X because ...' They also begin to deal with the projection by adding:
'But you are different from X because ...'

This exercise (which you will find laid out in greater detail on page 116 of *Grammar in Action Again*, Frank and Rinvolucri) offers the learner group a first step into the area of projections, those distorting mirrors that dynamically affect life in the classroom. When students discover for themselves that a fair number of people in the group harbour mild to strong projections on other students that they are able to speak about (forget about the ones they are too ashamed of to speak about), the way they belong to the group is immediately

modified. The new mapping of the group that each person gets is dynamic knowledge and over the following days will modify the way the individual relates to other group members.

We believe that awarenesses that suddenly burst into a person's consciousness lead directly to attitudinal and behavioural changes. If you get a detailed representation of your own daydreaming process (p.14), in class or elsewhere, you have the option of changing the pattern. It is possible you will never daydream fully 'innocently' again.

Not learner training

Our book suggests to the students possibilities for finding out about their ways of doing things and avoids any suggestion of what is good for them. This book is a small step towards getting students to chart their own mental processes, their schemata, their representational systems, and so help build up a new body of professional knowledge, researched by the students themselves. We feel that it is useful to help students to find out some of the marvellous ways they *do* learn rather than proposing ways they might learn more effectively.

Teacher development

Section 7 in this book (**Teacher to teacher**) stands away from the rest of the text in that it deals with teacher rather than student process. In our view the exercises in this section are ideal for a teacher development group rather than a teacher training one.

You may reasonably wonder what the differences between a TD and a TT group are. We feel the political/power differences are significant and these have direct repercussions on openness to new ideas and ability to learn.

In a classical teacher development group (as opposed to a teacher training group):

- people meet in their own time, not paid time
- people may leave or join the group of their own free will
- the agenda belongs uniquely to the group
- the meetings are not run by an outside authority/expert
- people take full responsibility for what does or does not happen

Maybe the main difference between TD and TT centres round the question of ownership. A thoughtful colleague at a small school in Cambridge said this in a letter to us in which he summarised his

feelings about three years of fortnightly, obligatory teacher-training sessions:

'It was like being invited to the Director of Studies' party: you brought a bottle of wine and sometimes you got to open it.'

In other words, in teacher training as opposed to teacher development, the group leader is in control of what does and does not happen.

B Where in the humanistic tradition?

This book belongs in the frame offered by Carl Rogers to teachers of any subject. In his last book before his death, *Freedom to Learn for the 80's*, Rogers defines its purpose thus:

' – it aims towards a climate of trust in the classroom in which curiosity and the natural desire to learn can be nourished and enhanced.
– it aims towards a participatory mode of decision-making in all aspects of learning in which student, teacher and administrator each have a part.
– it aims towards helping students to prize themselves, to build their confidence and self-esteem.
– it aims towards uncovering the excitement in intellectual and emotional discovery which leads students to become life-long learners.'

Rogerian thought has had wide influence across the professions. We feel in tune with community architects who believe that they should design for people's expressed needs, and with sports trainers who know that an athlete's physical performance is a subset of his/her mental and emotional state. These workers see their clients with their bundles of needs and wishes as the centre of the professional process, as the protagonists in the action. They do not see their clients as the *objects* of their skills. So humanistic divorce lawyers will do what they can to get the parties to conciliate rather than litigate, despite the good money that litigation brings the professional. In conciliation the couple themselves are the protagonists while in litigation the leading role falls to the lawyer.

With these principles in mind, we have come up with a hundred exercises to help students map their *own* procedures and experiences. We feel that this book, which draws heavily on feeder fields such as counselling and humanistic psychology, firmly places the learners themselves centre-stage, proposing a side-line role for the teacher. We doubt this book would have happened without the influence of Carl

Rogers, the counselling movement, especially co-counselling, the work of Earl Stevick, Caleb Gattegno, and Bernard and Marie Dufeu.

C Benefits

Let's start with the book's strangenesses. As you flick through you may wonder if you are holding a serious EFL book or some uneasy amalgam of philosophy, pop psychology and odd nonsense. Why should students spend valuable class time analysing how exactly they each eat a pizza (p.21)? What has this quaint information to do with learning English?

Benefit 1

Students say things in L2 they have never before said in L1.

Most students have never stooped/stopped to notice how they eat a pizza, how they cope with transitions from one state or event to another (p.27), how they experience the time and psychological distance necessary to correct a piece of English writing they have recently done (p.39). We invite them to think in new areas like these and then to express their thoughts and discoveries in English.

Here you have a major language learning benefit as they are unlikely to have ever expressed these thoughts in any language before. This copes with one of the major problems of the FL classroom which is the constant repetition of things already said in L1 and rehearsal for future use in L2, which often lead to both acute and chronic boredom. When small children learn their mother tongue they are constantly saying thrillingly new things.

Within the frames we offer in this book the students are saying sufficiently new things to one another and to you to stay awake inside as well as out.

Benefit 2

The English lesson is more person-centred than other lessons.

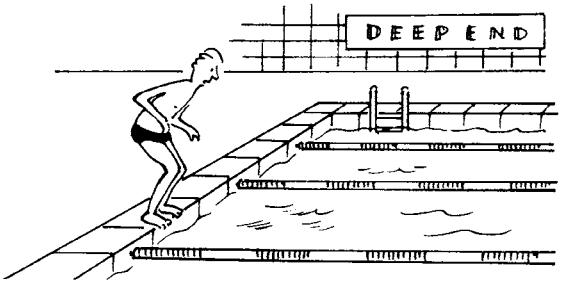
Large parts of this book involve students in exploring the most

fascinating territory that exists: self. If you work in the secondary school system it is likely that only a few of your colleagues in other subjects will manage to endow their topics with personal-to-the-student relevance. So the benefit to the students and to you is that your language classes will stand out from the rest as inherently motivating and interesting. A state of attentive interest is the best garden for plants like grammar and phonology to easily and naturally grow in.

Benefit 3

These exercises reach an appropriate level of emotional depth and do not trespass beyond.

In the literature of humanistic language teaching we have books like Moskowitz's *Caring and Sharing in the Foreign Language Classroom* and Frank and Rinvolucri's *Grammar in Action Again* that sometimes make steep demands on the students in the area of self-revelation.



Some of the frames offered in this book suggest that students look at *how* they do various things. Speaking about *how* you do something can be intimate but it is a lot less threatening than sharing *what* you feel about something. This book carries forward the person-centred tradition of *Caring and Sharing in the Foreign Language Classroom* and *Grammar in Action Again*, but perhaps makes fewer emotional demands on the student.

Benefit 4

Students learn to be surprised by classmates they don't believe can surprise them any more.

In plenty of groups where students have been around together for a long time, there can be a feeling that they know each other pretty well and that old X is a typical this, and old Y is a typical that.

A clear benefit from using this book is that students really give each other surprises. Many people assume that a headache is a headache

(p.18). When a person who has eye-pulsating aches realises how different a millstone-on-your-head ache is, there is genuine amazement.

Old Y is no longer just a typical that. Some of the exercises here have had the effect, in our classes, of getting students to partly emancipate from the limiting belief that 'I am human, so to be human is to be like me'.

Benefit 5

You, the teacher, prepare less, learn more and become more prepared.

The book offers you a collection of firm lesson plans to work within, and so reduces preparation time, but also offers you insights into the student unknown. You go into class with the reasonable expectation that you are going to learn something new about some of the students. Teaching language or any subject can fast get boring – teaching people never can.

Benefit 6

Many of these awareness-raising activities can be done by beginners, as the English they require is quite simple. However, some could also usefully be done in mother tongue. The use of mother tongue is justified, we feel, in terms of student self-awareness. In some situations to tell students to use mother tongue for a small part of the class time makes them feel better about using English the rest of the time. (We

have a colleague, Jim Wingate, who orders his teenage classes to speak mother tongue for two minutes at various points in a 45-minute lesson – this procedure gives him control of which language they are speaking.) Here you have a teacher resource book that caters for beginners as well as higher levels. The best place to look for exercises useful to beginners is in section 2 **Language and learning processes** and in section 3 **Group process**.

D What's where?

With this book, rather than offering you new content, we are suggesting you can generate genuinely interesting text from your students by asking them to explore their own processes in and out of class.

The area has so much potential that you might want to offer process exploration as a self-contained elective course. You might want to run student process exploration as a quarter of the course alongside your current textbook. You might want to occasionally dip into the book for an exercise that is particularly relevant to certain people in your group – a good example would be *Loud and quiet* (p.84), an activity designed to help people notice where they come on a scale from shyness to over-confidence. Often realising that he or she is the loudest in the group has a calming effect on a student.

1 Everyday process

The exercises here ask students to find out for themselves about general processes and patterns in their lives. Let us offer you an exercise to show how straightforward and yet complex the exercises in this section are:

> What are the five to seven last things you do before leaving your house or flat, say in the morning? Is there an invariable order in which you do them? The order must be psychologically comfortable in some way. How functional is it?
>
> Now choose a person whom you know very well and write down the last five to seven things she or he does before leaving home.

Sometimes learners are amazed at how differently from each other they behave, and sometimes they are amazed at the sameness and differences between their last seven things and the other person's last seven things.

When learners do this type of exercise and compare their findings, they discover all sorts of interesting things about their own ideas, values and fears. The exercise above is, incidentally, a natural, free drill for the present simple.

The section includes a lesson on how to discover, analyse and imitate excellence in others (p.17), one on how people shoulder (or not) responsibility (p.22), and one on the pain-shapes headaches take (p.18).

We feel that an examination of routine process is a good way into the area but you may decide it is more relevant with EFL students to launch straight into the second section.

2 Language and learning processes

We believe that language is a way of *being* and not a form of *having*. A person who has learnt Latin academically *has* it but does not *exist in* it: for this person the language is nothing but kilos of possessed exponents linked by intellectually, consciously applied rules.

In *Teaching Myself*, pp.10 – 11, Bernard Dufeu lists the differences he sees between:

A PEDAGOGY OF HAVING	and	A PEDAGOGY OF BEING
hierarchical relationship		empathetic relationship
teacher imposes, controls, demands responses		animator suggests, and responds to demand
vertical transmission of intellectual understanding		horizontal expansion of practical knowledge
teaching on a conscious level		conscious and unconscious learning
language learnt, transmitted by textbooks		language lived, approached through experience

(This is less than a third of Dufeu's complete list.)

If language is *being* then human relationship is a central governing factor. It is just this sort of area we ask the student to work on in *When do I speak well?* (p.69). In the exercise the student is asked to rate each statement given according to how far they agree with it. Here are a few:

- The number of people I am talking to affects my speaking.
- Certain native speakers really make me feel good/bad in English.
- The age of the people I am with makes it easier/harder for me to speak to them in English.
- The sex of my interlocutor(s) affects my performance in the language.

In another exercise in this section students are asked to bring to mind their *Language autobiographies* (p.48), how they speak L1, how many variations of L1 they speak, the different accents they use, etc. From here they move on to their relationship with L2, L3, etc. This information is interesting to each person as many have never put their thoughts together this way, and expressed them to their classmates and to you, the teacher.

The section also offers much more detailed looks at smaller areas, e.g. what happens in the mind during a *Cloze* exercise (p.33) and how to get *Distancing* from a piece you have written so as to be able to correct it successfully (p.39).

3 Group process

This is the longest section in the book and deals with the way people act on each other in the group. The section includes classical exercises taken from counselling like *Group collage* (p.75) and *Group sculpt* (p.83) but has plenty of new ones like *Yolks and whites* (p.106) in which students notice how particular classroom configurations impinge on them, making them feel comfortable or otherwise.

How closely have you asked students in your classes to explore the English punctuation system? In the activity *What are you writing to?* (p.104) they do exactly this, while also thinking about the way in which they see their classmates. Which of these punctuation marks would you want to be seen as and which is the punctuation mark other people may see you as: