Seeds of Confidence

Posted April 14th, 2012 by webadmin

**Issue:** The Language Teacher - Issue 36.3; May 2012

**Date:** Tue, 2012-05-01

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**Publisher:** Helbling Languages


*Seeds of Confidence* is an invaluable teaching resource for the EFL teacher that explores the importance of developing self-confidence in language learning. It is essentially an activity book with something for every student, from beginners to advanced learners. There is also an abundance of one-size-fits-all activities throughout the book. Although the activities are designed primarily with second language (L2) classrooms in mind, they can also be used successfully across a variety of subject areas and contexts. A majority of the activities are best used as icebreakers for newly formed classes, while others are better suited for established groups.

*Seeds of Confidence* is divided into five chapters, which correspond to Reasoner’s (1982) five fundamental components of self-esteem: Security, Identity, Belonging, Purpose, and Competence. The chapter introductions provide reviews of the relevant literature, emphasizing the connection between self-concept, self-esteem, and learning. Additionally, serving as the raison d'être for *Seeds of Confidence*, the book posits that self-esteem can be transformed through direct instruction, which will then contribute to increased success for L2 learners. The authors remind readers that the activities should be used consistently and considered pedagogically fundamental as the positive effects accumulate over time.

There should be no doubt that confidence plays an enormous role in learning and using an L2. For Japanese students, a lack of confidence might be the greatest challenge to successfully learning English. Yashima (2002) suggests that reducing anxiety and building confidence in the EFL classroom should increase the willingness of Japanese students to communicate in English. English learners need to realize that a perfect understanding of English grammar and an extensive vocabulary will not help solve one of their most serious communication problems—a lack of confidence. Fortunately, these students, and their teachers, may find help in the pages of *Seeds of Confidence*.

I trialed many of the activities contained within the book in Japan at a junior college and a private English conversation school.
current ESL teaching context in Canada. The feedback from students and the enthusiasm generated from the activities were positive.

A great activity that comes early in the book, *My mistake*, encourages students to view mistakes positively. By looking at famous quotes related to mistakes, like John Powell’s “The only real mistake is the one from which we learn nothing” (p. 37), it helps instill the belief in students that mistakes are necessary to grow as language learners, and that the English classroom is the perfect place to take chances and make mistakes.

Visualization, a technique that may be novel to many teachers and students, is used throughout the book. One such activity allows students to bring in pictures they have drawn, play songs they have written, and even perform dances they have studied. This version of *show and tell*, I was surprised at the passion with which students spoke about themselves and their interests. Again, keeping an open mind is essential when trialing the activities.

Throughout the book, students are also encouraged to use English confidently to speak about themselves and present their uniqueness to the class. This allows students to bring in pictures they have drawn, play songs they have written, and even perform dances they have studied. Although this activity sounds more like an adult version of *show and tell*, I was surprised at the passion with which students spoke about themselves and their interests. Again, keeping an open mind is essential when trialing the activities.

In addition to the 68 activities described in the five chapters, there is also a CD-ROM and audio CD, which include files, and video files for some of the activities. As teachers use the materials in class, it is important that they reflect on their own teaching practices. To this end, self-evaluation forms that correspond to each chapter are included in the Appendix.

*Seeds of Confidence* addresses an important aspect of language learning that is often overlooked by teachers and textbook authors alike. Confidence is likely the most noticeable quality that sets learners with similar proficiency test scores apart when situated in real world contexts. The classroom activities described throughout the book will help teachers build confidence in their students and at the same time develop their language skills. *Seeds of Confidence* should have a place in every teacher’s resource library.

**References**


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