



Reviews

Nuria López
Reviews Editor

Thanks to all our contributors we are again able to offer a varied collection of reviews that we hope will be of interest to all our readers. First of all, you will find reviews of historical studies that cover different periods of Spanish history and different regions. Some of them deal with political and social issues of the past, such as *The Birth of Modern Politics in Spain* and some parts of *Catalonia. History and Culture*; others focus on issues still very relevant to present-day Spain, such as the books on Catalonia and Euskadi. Next, you will find the section on course books, which contains reviews of material for all levels of competence and types of learners, from high intermediate to beginners and from children to adults. We are very glad to have the contributions of Marisa Kimie Morita and Fatima Cande, who have reviewed two Portuguese textbooks for primary education. Also of special interest for primary education teachers will be the review of the *Mini Modules* by Ginny Parker. The last review deals with a book of relevance for all teachers looking for ways of encouraging oral practice in their classes.

We have recently received new material which we would like to review in the next issue of *Vida Hispánica*:

Spain Transformed. The Late Franco Dictatorship, 1959-75 Más es Más. Sociedad y Cultura en la España Democrática, 1986-2008

Salpicos 2. Livro do Aluno and Livro de Actividade. (Portuguese textbook for primary education)

If you are interested in reviewing any of these books, or if you have suggestions for material to be reviewed, please get in touch with me at: nuria.lopez.fernandez@gmail.com. Reviewers will be sent the material to be reviewed as well as guidelines on writing reviews. I look forward to hearing from you.

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL STUDIES

The Birth of Modern Politics in Spain: Democracy, Association and Revolution 1854-75

Guy Thomson

Palgrave Macmillan, 2010, 361pp, £65.00
ISBN 978 0 230 222 2 1

Do not be fooled by the main title: this work in excess of 300 pages focuses on 20 years of Andalusian history. As such, it requires a serious deceleration of pace to process the mundane municipal events that Thomson cites in favour of his revisionist view of Spanish history, arguing that Spain was modernising itself just as much as its European counterparts. Though the scholarly and thorough introduction lists several aims, I hope I will be forgiven for highlighting three of the main arguments that appear in his study.

The first argument, emphasised by the title, is that, contrary to popular historical discourse, Spain did indeed develop a modern political outlook in the late 19th century. When Spanish people started creating political social bodies (public or clandestine) such as reading groups, conspiratorial networks and *carbonari* societies, the seeds for the 'democracy, association and revolution' of the book's title were sown. Thomson successfully argues for these as proof of Spain's 'precocious rural politicization' (p.4) and the beginning of a new, politically conscious and modern Spain.

The second argument is that local research like Thomson's is key in helping us understand and write accurate history. Here, the revisionist optic recasts the Revolution of Loja in 1861 not as an uprising resulting from poverty and hunger, but as an organised political and ideological rebellion (p.123), and it is Thomson's focused research that allows him to convince us. It is almost totally persuasive: certainly the meticulous regional research allows us really to perceive the growing change in attitude to politics in the towns, particularly Loja. Thomson helps us understand the workings of the municipalities and we gain a thorough sense of the main figures of this period and how they feel and how they adapt. However, I repeatedly caught myself wondering what other towns and regions in Spain were doing. The word 'microcosm' is used (p.249). There must be

a danger in taking the conclusions of one area and applying them to an entire country, and so I would temper Thomson's enthusiasm for localised research by advocating that sample studies be taken from several different areas if a nationwide argument is to be formed.

Linked to the enthusiasm for localised histories is the third central argument, which promotes the idea that Spain was not a collection of introspective and fragmented regions, but that it was a country increasingly influenced by other European countries (particularly France and Italy) and with strong internal links that allowed it to emerge as 'a modern nation state' (p.298). Thomson implies that his research on Loja, Alhama and Antequera is representative of the emerging Spanish nation state as a whole. Spain has always been considered a classic example of a fragmented European country, but I was ready to be convinced otherwise. Thomson does effectively show the influence of other European countries on socialist Spain, adding weight to the principal argument that Spain was following a course of modernization. However, because of the lack of detailed case studies from other areas, I remain unconvinced that 19th-century Spain was a united nation state.

In a work this long and detailed, I would have hoped for some more personal anecdotes to bring the key players to life and add some diversion to the book. Perhaps personality-centered historical writing is out of date. Or perhaps it is that I am too frivolous-minded to make it as a history scholar. There are exceptions: I was moved by the account of Rafael Pérez del Alamo's death in the book's epilogue, and the section (pp. 112-19) on the Loja Revolution provides a day-by-day account of events, although this narrative deviation fails to deliver the gripping political tension and immediacy that I had hoped for. The text otherwise reads like a thesis, and its density is not helped by the repetition of key arguments and a high number of spelling and punctuation mistakes.

I would recommend this book to graduates (or extremely conscientious undergraduates) or to those interested in Andalucía and revisionist history, particularly for the account of the 1861 Loja revolution and its wealth of information on Rafael Pérez del Alamo (the key Democrat of the study and the catalyst for the Loja revolution) and on his neighbour and rival Ramón María Narváez (Moderado first minister and favourite of Queen Isabel).

JOSEPHINE BERGANZA

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Catalonia. History and Culture

John Payne

Five Leaves Publications, 2009 (Second Edition), 339pp, £10.99
ISBN 978 1 905512 82 9

This book provides the reader with a comprehensive guide to many aspects of the region of Catalonia. The book starts with an in-depth delve into Catalan history, covering the pivotal events of the past 1000 years. Part two is devoted to the culture of Catalonia, incorporating religion, art and tourism, and part three covers the more modern issues surrounding Catalonia, such as the other regions which have a close link with Catalonia and the impact of the region on a global scale.

The book is aimed at a general adult audience with a keen interest in this fascinating Spanish region. It is split into three definite areas, making it easy for readers to pick out their particular area of interest should they use the book as a reference tool. I feel that the language and style used is on the whole appropriate for the intended audience, although on some occasions in my view some of the terms used particularly in the earlier sections pertaining to the ancient history of Catalonia would have benefited from further explanation. For me the first section covering the history of the first 1000 years of Catalan history was quite confusing and seemed to endeavour to cover an enormous amount of content in a relatively short section. It is clear that the author is well read in this area, but I found myself reading this section several times in order to follow the narrative and pick out the key events. The chapter on the Spanish Civil War of the 1930s however was much easier to follow and gave a good account of the events and their effect on Catalonia. I also enjoyed the inclusion of the links with England and the Spanish Civil War and also the quotations from Orwell, giving another view of the events that took place.

I found part two, culture, the strongest section, and the author has clearly spent long periods of time observing and learning about the background to the culture of the region. I read the chapter about the architecture in Barcelona with great interest, but felt that the reader would need some previous knowledge of Barcelona and its layout in order to fully appreciate this section. This was something I thought often throughout the book, that there was a distinct lack of either maps or pictorial examples, which would have helped greatly to enhance the reader's understanding. The chapter covering 20th-century artists and musicians highlights the wealth of talent that has arisen from this region, including artists such as Miró and Picasso, and gives the reader a good insight into the background to their work.

The final section covers issues in today's Catalonia, the strength of feeling for the Catalan language and the

region's political status in Spain. Also briefly covered are the other regions of Spain which use Catalan as their language (Valencia and The Balearic Islands).

I had hoped to gain more from this book and to be able to use it as a tool for teaching an A level cultural topic on Catalonia but I concluded that it would be unsuitable for this purpose, as it is a little too complex in its approach and the reader would need to have some background knowledge of the region. That said, for those who already have some knowledge of Catalonia this book might be a suitable starting point for further in-depth study and therefore may be of particular interest to those in further education.

JOSEPHINE WEBSTER
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Euskadi: Crónica de una Desesperanza

Antoni Segura
Alianza Editorial, 2009, 408pp, £29.95
ISBN 978 8 420668 53 6

Antoni Segura has written this book to narrate the history, from the early 1950s until March 2009, of the conflict that has existed, and still exists, in the Basque Country. It describes the birth and development of the armed organisation ETA and its relationship with Basque society and with the other Basque and Spanish political parties.

This book in Spanish would be a particularly valuable source for those lecturers and undergraduate and postgraduate students, ideally taking Spanish or Politics, who have a desire to understand more about the complicated subject of the Basque conflict and who wish to penetrate the secretive world of armed organisations, secret services and intelligence, of international collaboration between countries, and of the negotiations that led to the several attempts at agreement and pacification.

Using several sources, such as other writers about the Basque conflict and journalists, sometimes the very same people who were themselves actively implicated in the armed struggle, the author attempts to clarify various significant, and often obscure, episodes of the last decades. He gives the reasons that each side would adduce to justify their position, arguments and justifications that are often misunderstood by the other side.

The internal dynamics and the history of the political and violent conflict unfold in a linear and easily read narration free from digressions that would hinder the readability of the text. Some of these facts and themes are then drawn on in another of the 11 chapters of the book, which in any case always try to follow a linear account through the years. It is a narrative that encompasses the role of political parties,

secret services, individual politicians and persons engaged in the armed struggle, intellectuals, church ministers, journalists, extremist organisations, judges, prisoners and law enforcement agencies, in addition to the electors and the community at large.

Part of the fascination of this book is that is concerned with a contemporary issue and narrates events that have unfolded in recent years, many of which we are likely we have lived through or, at least, to have read about or seen in the television news. There is no space in the book to chronicle each single commando-like attack or bombing, but the author selects those moments which he thinks are the key to an understanding of the history of the conflict and which, possibly, have changed the direction of history.

Although the book tells the reader of the many failures to reach an accommodation over the Basque issue, such as the contemporary frustration of the Plan Ibarretxe, and although the title of the book refers to 'hopelessness', Segura's thesis is that the end of the tunnel of the conflict is in sight. Highlighting the errors on each side, he points to the best way to follow for a peaceful resolution of this long political conflict.

As the author is an expert in international conflicts, it would have been interesting if he had drawn on different international experiences such as the Irish, which he mentions, or more appropriately on other conflicts similar to the Spanish-Basque situation, such as that between the Italian Republic and South Tyrol, which he does not mention, in order to see if a suggestion for solution can be borrowed. He focuses instead mainly on the internal difficulties of ETA (loss of support among Basque society and setbacks caused by detentions by the Spanish state) to suggest that the conflict may be nearing a peaceful solution.

Nevertheless, this volume will be very important for those scholars who want to deepen their understanding of the modern Basque dispute and will serve as a starting point from which to develop further research on matters which are still obscure or need additional investigation.

VOLFANGO RIZZI
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El Otoño de un Ideal. El Republicanismo Histórico y su Declive en el Exilio de 1939

Ángel Duarte
Alianza Editorial, 2009, 407pp, £32.95
ISBN 978 84 206 8268 6

The aims of *El Otoño de un Ideal*, as described by the author, are to provide the reader with an understanding of how the ideals of *el republicanismo español* withered during the

long years of exile, mainly across the Atlantic, after the end of the Spanish Civil War. Duarte tells what he describes as a sad story in great detail and places it in the context of what he sees as a century-long battle for democracy (c.1840–1939). He also examines how the return of those keeping these ideas alive supported the Transition after Franco's death.

Duarte has arranged the material into four parts. The first part, 'Una larga travesía', examines the history of *el republicanismo español* as a movement and how the ideas which define it developed over the century preceding the Civil War. In the second part, 'El naufragio', he considers the period between the beginning of the exile and the immediate aftermath of the Second World War and the perceived lost opportunities to remove Franco's regime from power. He also discusses the impact of exile on the Catalan and other nationalist movements. Next, in 'Al paio y en mares lejanos', he considers the effects on the culture and ideas of *republicanismo* and the lives of those in exile of the Cold War and of the societies in which they found themselves – particularly in the Americas. Finally, in 'Desenlace y conclusión', he considers the legacy of *republicanismo* in the context of Spain today and the ways in which the movement influenced the Transition and continues to influence Spanish society. He also speculates on the possibility of a resurgence of *republicanismo* in the future.

Duarte takes an almost psychoanalytical approach to describing the personality of *el republicanismo español*, indeed he uses terminology from this discipline at various points throughout the book. His well researched and considered study allows the reader an insight into the nature of *republicanismo*. He does not see it as an ideology represented by a single political party (indeed he devotes much space to careful explanation of which political parties and groupings formed the movement in exile). Rather the reader comes to understand *republicanismo* as a series of shared values or a state of mind, one whose culture eventually bonds so fully with the self-image of its *militantes* as to become a defining part of their identity. Duarte takes this further in his description of the way that the movement splintered after their period of exile ended, seeing it in terms of a dissociation between concepts of republic and democracy in the first instance and then into smaller political groupings, at times in bitter opposition to each other.

This is a very agreeable book. It is well informed, easy to read and a valuable resource to academics specialising in the area of political and social history. It is also a profoundly sad tale of people forced into exile and their struggle to keep their ideas and hopes alive.

JAMES LLOYD
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COURSE BOOKS

Aula Internacional 1. A Spanish Course for English Speakers

Jaime Corpas, Eva García, Agustín Garmendia and Carmen Soriano

Difusión, 2009, Book and CD, 191pp, €19.95
ISBN 978 085048 200 3

This textbook/workbook offers an innovative and creative means of learning Spanish. The textbook is interesting, as it does not follow the usual pattern of language learning as seen in everyday classrooms. It is well presented, colourful and has text that is clear and accessible. It also introduces a large number of native Spanish speakers and cultural activities to pupils who may not come across these normally. The target audience of this textbook would be pupils in further and higher education or adult learners.

The introduction to the book is clear, shows the learner what each unit is about and what will be involved within it. This approach is continued throughout. All instructions are clear and easy to follow. There are a large number of activities that engage the whole class, enabling the student to gain confidence as well as giving them a supportive environment in which to develop their speaking skills. The activities encourage a lot of spontaneous speech from the pupils, and therefore I believe that this book would benefit from a section on Spanish phonetics.

While the activities on the whole are varied, there does not seem to be a lot of differentiation or support for those who might find language learning a challenge, and also some of the activities seem to require prior knowledge or teacher input to provide the phrases necessary to complete the activity. A number of activities rely on the teacher presenting the vocabulary which would be needed before the commencement of the activity. However, there are fantastic and innovative approaches to learning languages in a practical way, such as for example the setting up of market stalls. This allows the pupil to utilise the language that they have learnt in a practical day-to-day scenario, which I believe is a stepping stone to further teacher creativity. The activities in the book promote all four language skills. There is a high volume of written tasks throughout the textbook, although they are neither mundane nor taxing. Again, the activities designed to encourage written work are creative and imaginative.

The 'Más Gramática' section provides comprehensible and good examples of Spanish grammar. It will support teacher-led grammar activities. In terms of grammar, there is again

a need for teacher input and, as there is a conjugation table provided, the book might benefit from further exercises for independent learning or to gauge understanding.

The CD included at the back of the book features native speakers, which enhances pronunciation opportunities for pupils. The CD is clear and of a good pace. It is easy to understand for those who are not used to hearing Spanish.

The book provides a glossary of words, Spanish to English, with unit and exercise number at the side so that pupils are able to relate the words back to the activities. The maps at the back of the book are colourful and clearly show different regions of Spain as well as the various Latin American countries.

All in all, this book contains a lot more information than the average textbook, especially in the 'Más Cultura' section. The book encourages pupils to expand knowledge and research for themselves beyond the classroom. It is enjoyable and inspires a more creative approach to teaching and language learning.

VICTORIA BATES
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¡Ponte al Día!

Mike Thacker and Mónica Morcillo Laiz

Hodder Education, 2008 (Second edition). Student's book and CD, 306pp, £25
ISBN 978 0340968 61 1

¡Ponte al día! is a one-volume Spanish course for AS/A2 level students. The textbook comes with a CD-Rom (single user licence) and is part of a teaching set. There is also a teacher's resource book (£80), an audio CD set (£85 + VAT) and the Network Edition of the CD-Rom, at the time of writing at half price (£250 + VAT). Only the *Student's Book with Dynamic Learning Home Edition CD-ROM* was available for review.

The book is divided into 13 units (six units each for AS and A2 and one transition chapter). Each unit opens with an introduction identifying its main content and grammar points. There is a variety of activities throughout the unit aimed at developing all four language skills. The grammar points are clearly identified, with explanations in English and examples drawn from the unit they are found in. There is also extra information available on all of the grammar points in the 'Grammar Summary' section at the end of the book. The most useful and innovative content I found in this book is a section called '¡Fijate!': a way to highlight a variety of bite-size points. These can be on grammar, culture or the use of Spanish – a simple, yet effective way of visiting and learning certain aspects of Spanish, normally overlooked whilst teaching or learning.

The CD-Rom is easy to install and the content matches the book. You need to have broadband internet connection to be able to use it. Nevertheless, trying to gain access to its content has proved more difficult despite having all the required hardware. When trying to download any of its PDF content, all I get is an error message requesting the firewall or antivirus software to be changed to grant full access of Dynamic Learning files to the computer. Despite having done so, I still cannot access its full content. I explained to an IT technician at college what I had to do, and he agrees that, if the process is necessary for the CD-Rom to work, is far too fiddly a resource to be used at home.

The audio content that I was able to access is part of the textbook anyway and the specific activities indicated in the book to be done with the CD-Rom are taken from the original version of *¡Ponte al Día!*. This has allowed some de-cluttering and bigger print for the texts in the original book, as well as a less crammed 'Grammar Summary' section. Bearing in mind that one of the main contributors is also the author of well established teaching resources such as *Palabra por Palabra* and *Acción Gramática*, I can't help but wonder if there is anything new where vocabulary lists and grammar are concerned. I would like to keep reminding the reader that I am still unable to access or download most of the CD-Rom content, including the grammar and vocabulary files.

The book is no more than a revamp edition of the original: different pictures but the content is pretty much the same. Basically, the employment unit has been moved to AS and the environment unit to A2, a couple of new titles given to the technology and the global world unit, and some activities moved to the CD-Rom to free up space. Not enough to justify what, in the current economic climate, is an expensive textbook. There is nothing in the CD-Rom that cannot be found for free on the internet with some time and dedication, or in other teaching material.

If all you want to do is save yourself some time, your initial investment for a five student group will be close to £300. Is it worth it to replace your existing teaching material? In my opinion, no, but if I were starting to teach A level Spanish as a new subject in a school or college, I might consider it as a resource amongst other textbooks.

MARTIN CORES ORTEGA
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Novo Português sem Fronteiras 1

Isabel Coimbra and Olga Mata Coimbra

Lidel, 2009, Student's book with 2 CDs, 215pp, £25.25
ISBN 978 972 757 530 5

Novo Português sem Fronteiras 1 is an elementary level textbook of European Portuguese as a Foreign Language. Two CDs come with the textbook. There is also a teacher's book, but it was not available for this review. According to the publishers the aim is to facilitate the acquisition of basic communicative competence, allowing learners to interact in everyday simple and concrete situations, expressed in the present, past and future.

This book is divided into 20 units, with a review chapter following every fifth unit. Also, there is a multiple-choice test of grammar and vocabulary items followed by five appendices. These appendices contain the following: 1. conjugation of some regular and irregular verbs in the present and past tenses; 2. conjugation of some auxiliary verbs; 3. the imperative form; 4. personal pronouns; and 5. the formation of plural of nouns and adjectives. There follows an alphabetical lexical appendix which is divided into two parts: a list of words and a list of collocations (*expressões*). Then, all the words of the book are translated into German, Spanish, French and English. Finally, there is a table of the contents of the CDs.

Each of the units begins with a presentation of grammatical and structural items. Each unit starts with a dialogue followed by two sections, namely, 'Vamos lá falar' (*oralidade*) and 'Vamos lá escrever!' (*compreensão* and *escrita*). At the end of each unit there is a summary of the functions and the vocabulary of the unit. This is very useful for revision and for finding the functions and the vocabulary of each unit.

The format and the illustrations of the book are very attractive. The use of everyday language in the dialogues and the listing of the new words and expressions in each unit are two of its strengths. All the collocations are also listed in the summary at the end of each unit and in the lexical appendix. This emphasis on collocations is valuable, as they are very difficult to acquire. There are no grammar instructions, which is taught indirectly without any explanation, but the examples are very clear and concise.

In spite of these advantages, the book does have some weaknesses. There are very few activities that enable learners to interact. All the activities of *oralidade* are mere repetition of verb conjugations or sentences focusing on an item of grammar. The dialogues are recorded, but there are no listening comprehension tasks. There are no speaking activities either. It seems that the authors assume that learners will understand and speak Portuguese merely by listening to the dialogues and the sentences. The written activities (*escrita*) are preceded by a reading passage. Some of these passages are interesting, with some cultural information, but most of them are based on dialogue, which is more appropriate for oral and aural tasks. All are followed

by questions to check comprehension. There are no activities focusing on reading strategies. Most of the written exercises consist of grammar practice. Some of them would be more appropriate as oral tasks. For example, 'Unidade 8, Escrita 2' is about asking for information about locations. Would it not be more realistic to do it orally? The authors have tried to update the book, for example by asking students to write an email in 'Unidade 15, Escrita 2', but they missed a good opportunity to make the task more meaningful for the learners. Instead of being asked to describe their own lives, learners are asked to write in the name of Joana to her grandparents telling them about her long weekend.

In short, in *Novo Português sem Fronteiras 1* there is very little space for learners' own output, and a particular response is expected in all the activities. Thus, the activities do not provide the communicative language learning claimed by the authors.

MARISA KIMIE MORITA
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Timi 1. Português Língua Estrangeira/Português Língua Segunda

Isabel Borges, Teresa Goja and Martina Tirone
Lidel, 2008, Student's book and CD, 146pp, £18.95
ISBN 978 972 757 470 4

Timi is a set of manuals for teaching Portuguese as a foreign and second language to primary school children between 5 and 10-years-old. There are four different levels. The particular manual discussed in this review is *Timi 1*, which is aimed a children from 7 to 8 years-old. It includes the student's book, audio CD, and a teacher's book. However, this review is based only on the student's book.

The aim of *Timi 1* is to teach Portuguese language in a communicative, creative and entertaining way, presenting grammatical content with illustrated vocabulary gradually and systematically, so that children learn the language in a practical and stimulating way.

The book is divided into nine units: 'Introducing and School'; 'The Family and the House'; 'Food'; 'School Resources'; 'Leisure'; 'Clothes and Colours'; 'The Human Body'; 'Transports and Shops' and 'Animals'. The activities proposed in each unit start with illustrated vocabulary, followed by speaking, writing, comprehension exercises, and consolidation. In many of the activities students are asked to observe, listen and repeat. For language practice, the students are given exercises based on games, drawings and songs to develop speaking, listening, reading and writing skills in an effective and exciting way.

The activities in the book are innovative and appropriate for the target audience. The songs fit in with the themes of each unit, including vocabulary and structures studied, a good way of aiding students in their revision. The authors include images of Timi, a turtle, for different activities at the top of the page, so that students can identify the activity to be undertaken. However, for some activities, the guidelines are very poor, particularly in the exercise and consolidation pages. I assume that these guidelines are fuller in the teacher's book.

At the beginning of each unit, extensive vocabulary is presented along with the structures to be studied. The distinction between the vocabulary and structure is made with two different colours - blue for vocabulary and red for structure. However, I think that there is too much information on some of the pages introducing units (pp. 50-51, for example), which can lead learners to be distracted, given the age group in question. As a suggestion, this area could be further divided into two sections, where one would cover vocabulary and the other would deal with the structure.

The illustrations are colourful drawings which accompany the text on all pages, sometimes even overlapping. Images are representative of a reality known to children of this age group, which allows easy identification with their world. This is to encourage communication through contact with subjects that are part of their daily lives, in the company of the turtle Timi and a group of children with whom students will enter into dialogue throughout the book.

It is clear that the authors of *Timi 1* have set out to represent the traits of the characters portrayed by bringing them closer to current reality in Portugal. In general, the different characters represent a multicultural society, but they also introduce elements from the natural environment, such as trees and animals.

The final part of the book offers eight pages of appendices which contain activities for working with clippings, painting, sorting and games and are a bonus. The thematic units are separated by different coloured bars at the top of the page, facilitating identification of the units.

In conclusion, *Timi 1* presents themes and learner-centred activities, encouraging children to work through a range of exercises, which match the aesthetic level and psychological characteristics of students in this age group.

FATIMA CANDE
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TEACHING RESOURCES

Mini Modules. Storytelling Series

Patricia Dobson and Hilary McColl

MLG Publishing, 2009, CD, £20 + contribution to post & packing (10% reduction for Linguascope subscribers)

ISBN 1 85831 312 0

Mini Modules is marketed as a CD resource for primary school language teachers who may not necessarily be trained linguists. It is based on the sound principles of teaching a foreign language to younger learners through the medium of storytelling. There are currently two modules available: *The Week Before Christmas* and *Please Can I Have a Pet?* These are available in Spanish as well as German, Italian and English (EFL/EAL). Each CD consists of: a short story narrated by a native speaker with accompanying images on a PowerPoint presentation, teacher's notes, a resource bank and a picture bank. The materials are aimed at Key Stage 1 and 2 children, and the authors claim that the materials have also been used with secondary school pupils to practise story telling.

The stories will appeal to young children, and there are a wide range of accompanying resources that can be used in a flexible manner, either as a short scheme of work or alongside another scheme to be used as and when. Unfortunately I did not find the CD easy to navigate. I would prefer an initial index file on the CD or perhaps an accompanying booklet containing an introduction and an index.

The Mini Modules CDs provide sound files so that the teacher can practise reading the text before using the resource in the classroom. I think this is an excellent way of supporting teachers who are not linguists, as correct pronunciation is often an area of anxiety for non-specialist teachers. However, as the resource is aimed at non-linguists, the authors could have included a direct translation of the story as perhaps not all teachers of Spanish in primary schools would be familiar with some of the expressions, such as 'no le hace gracia'.

Regarding the supplementary materials that are part of this CD, the authors have obviously considered the needs of time-pressed primary school teachers by including a range of accompanying materials that can be printed off and used in a variety of ways, such as pictures to use for flashcards, an A5 booklet form of the story and other activities, for example a play script for *Please Can I Have a Pet?* and Christmas card templates for *The Week Before Christmas*. The pictures for flashcards are black and white and very simple, which may appeal to some, but I would prefer something more interesting and colourful. In addition, the teacher's notes have lots of suggestions and ideas as to how the stories can be used and developed: a suggested teaching

sequence, follow-up activities, creative activities and ideas on how to develop the use of the target language in class.

A foreign language continues to be an entitlement in primary schools and, while a few schools have a language specialist on their staff, many do not. Therefore a resource such as *Mini Modules* designed to support non-specialist teachers in teaching a language through the medium of story telling is a welcome addition to the materials currently available.

GINNY PARKER

Stanhope Primary School, South Shields

Tú y yo. *Actividades de Interacción Oral y Escrita*

David Vargas

Edelsa, 2009, 128pp, £19.95

ISBN 978 84 7711 569 1

Tú y Yo is published in a hard wearing shiny A4 paperback with a photo of two attractive young learners on the cover. It is for learners of Spanish as a foreign language and consists of the 'Actividades de interacción oral y escrita' of the subtitle. It is the first in a series of three volumes.

In a very useful and interesting prologue the author explains that he wrote the book in response to a variety of questions facing the foreign languages teacher: how do we ensure oral expression in the classroom without sacrificing time for other skills; how do we give every pupil the opportunity to speak even if the class is large; how do we motivate pupils who feel awkward when they have to speak in front of the class? In this book he offers a variety of activities to be used in the classroom at all stages of learning which address both linguistic and socio-cultural areas.

120 activities are set out in 19 sections with a well laid out index. You see a clear indication of the skills, the vocabulary to be covered, the grammar and the language objective. Each activity is split clearly into an A and a B side on one page to ease photocopying. Once copied and cut in half, the sheet can be stuck neatly on a normal size exercise book page. The topic and likely duration time are indicated at the top.

The book is published in Spain and is destined for all learners of Spanish as foreign language, so all the instructions are in the target language. This volume covers a lot of good basic topics from the fundamentals of the alphabet and numbers to professions, daily activities, food and traveling. Grammar topics are also included with extensive coverage of the past tense. The resource can be put to good use certainly in Key Stage 4 with near beginners or pupils with up to three years of Spanish, and some of the activities may also be suitable in Key Stage 3.

There are a varied activity types including gap fills, role plays, debates and interviews. The gap fills appear to be the easiest activities to use at the start as they do not require preparation or a lot of creativity on the part of the learners. The first time I gave my pupils an activity, they enjoyed it but felt a bit at sea, but over the next few activities they got used to the layout and how to tackle the tasks. From the outset they could see the benefit and told me that it enabled them to use the Spanish they knew in a new context.

These activities assume good linguistic dexterity and over time would develop it further. The book is excellent for developing questioning techniques, which can be a weak area if answering seems more important. The pupils will also gain some cultural background. A handful of the activities require either rather precise prior knowledge or specific teaching, for example the task requiring the pupils to give a biography of a famous person from the Spanish speaking world and guess who their neighbour is speaking about. Of the eight characters included, my Year 10 pupils are only likely to have heard of Diego Maradona and Che Guevara. There are also a few activities that would be likely to engage adults rather than teenagers, such as the discussion on which places of interest to visit in Cordoba. However, the vast majority of the activities are suitable for all, and you would have trouble exhausting the book even over an entire GCSE course. For the interest it will give your lessons and the time it will save you, it is a resource highly worth the investment.

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