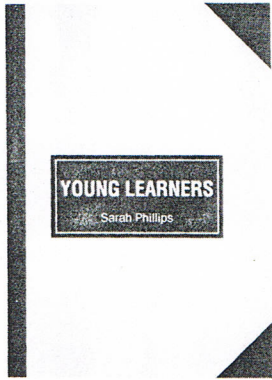


## YOUNG LEARNERS

Sarah Phillips  
Oxford: OUP, 1993



Sarah Phillips works in Galicia with the MEC and the *Xunta* and is involved in materials writing for the *reforma*. As the author of *Young Learners*, another in Oxford's series of 'Resource Books for Teachers' edited by Alan Maley, she is typical of many of the others Maley has 'discovered' in that she teaches in the field she writes about..

*Young Learners* takes the familiar, accessible format of the other titles in the series. Activities are presented in 'recipe' style with step-by-step guidelines to their use. Headings cover things like: three clearly-defined levels Beginner, Elementary and Pre-intermediate (pp15-16); three age groups: 6 to 8, 8 to 10, and 10 to 12); aims: linguistic and 'other'; variation(s); and follow-up(s). Predictably, its ten chapters cover the four skills, grammar and vocabulary, songs and chants, and games. The longest chapter is 'Creative activities', offering *trabajos manuales* with an EFL angle to them, as well as more scientific activities; there's also a chapter on video, both viewing and making.

Chapter ten is a teacher-training input session entitled 'Putting it all together'. It offers nothing new to the trained, experienced teacher, reminding us of some things we take for granted - classroom routines, timing, or offering our learners a balanced diet - and of others we can easily forget - like trying things out on yourself first; using background music to boost unconscious learning; or always displaying childrens' work around the room. Some of the advantages of this book are the nearly thirty pages of photocopiable worksheets linked to the activities offered; the chapter-by-chapter annotated 'Further reading' list; and the neat, cross-referenced index by 'Topic', 'Language', and 'Cross-curricular' themes.

The more than sixty activities are simple, achievable and stimulating. Most work is orally-based and there are lots of opportunities for games, songs with actions, Total Physical Response, and the kinds of colour-cut'n'stick activities which go on in Spanish in the rest of the curriculum. Sarah Phillips emphasises again and again the importance of using the classroom opportunities arising in order to teach the communicatively valuable interactive language of 'Can I have that pencil?', 'It's my turn to use the scissors', and so on. One important feature is the idea of using regular feedback sessions to ensure efficient and economic learning. Sensibly, the author recommends using Spanish as the medium for conducting these, and offers a set of nine exercises which underscore the teacher's role as that of listener not participant.

Among the 'cross-curricular activities' we find things like 'Growing seeds' (pp 127-8) one of the 'creative activities'. This is indexed as involving Mathematics, Observation, and Science. It is timed to run over two weeks, initially, and then for a further four to six weeks. Linguistically it involves following instructions and keeping a written record of the growth of bean plants. In order to do this children observe them as they germinate and grow, measure them, and make notes and drawings.

One of the 'Listening' activities will give a good idea of the 'fun' factor which runs through the book. 'Make an instructions machine' (pp30-3) is a straightforward lesson in following spoken instructions with a stimulating, fun objective. It gives the teacher scope to introduce lots of vocabulary and to produce a toy children will treasure. It is clearly a winner you can adapt to other language points too.

SCAN IN PART OF THE INSTRUCTIONS FROM 31-3?

Curiously, one of the 'Reading' activities gives us an unexpected showcase example of 'political correctness'. 'Making greetings cards-read and draw' (pp 52-4) begins with the topic of Mother's Day and introduces the teacher -via the 'In class' notes to the roles of mothers and other carers *as some children are not cared for by their mothers but by fathers, grandmothers, foster parents or childminders*. While I have no doubt as to the wider virtues of political correctness, and fully endorse the

introduction of cross-cultural contrasts through the language class I do wonder if the particular emphasis placed on this topic here is not a little out of place. In a country like Spain where the extended family is still, by and large, alive and kicking, teachers know best: they will know what to do with this introduction. The notes on the back cover mention *the principle that primary teachers have a much wider responsibility than the simple teaching of the language*

*system.* While some of the narrowing-down aspects of this premise are clearly questionable - Don't all teachers share the same 'wider responsibility' in one way or another? - it is developed throughout the book on sensible lines showing teachers how to tie in their language teaching with the stages of development primary children pass through, and with other aspects of their curriculum. Sarah Phillips writes for a wide teacher readership, but those who

can most benefit would seem to be the non-native, fully trained Primary teacher who is not necessarily an EFL specialist. To these teachers, totally familiar with the intellectual, physical, emotional, and social development of Primary children, the book offers a valuable source of supplementary material which they can integrate into their coursebook-based lesson planning.

*Bryan Robinson*

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