



Review

Developing Listening Comprehension for ESL Students: The Kingdom of Kochen, by Ted Plaister. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1976. Text, \$6.95.

Listening is an omnipresent but largely undiscerned factor in the daily communication process. The importance of developing good listening efficiency has only recently been recognized in the educational community. Ted Plaister's book is designed for improving listening comprehension for ESL students; but it also has demonstrable utility for teaching listening skills to students with any dialectical interference problems.

The book consists of a series of one-page lectures concerning all aspects of a mythical society in Southeast Asia. Each of the 20 lectures includes an overview of the material to be covered, a dictation exercise for practice in sound discrimination and spelling, lecture passages with both unimportant and crucial words identified, model notes, vocabulary words, the lecture itself, and a test over the lecture material. The information is presented in a logical and entertaining fashion, just as an anthropologist might describe a foreign society. The book may be used with accompanying cassette tapes of the lectures or with the instructor reading the lectures. A further advantage of this useful work is its ready adaptability for group or individual study.

One liability, however, is the fact that the sophistication of language increases only marginally throughout the book and therefore does not encourage rapid language acquisition.

A second problem is that while the book does provide a rich source of material that the student can use in identifying central ideas in a lecture, in note-taking, and for practice in focused attention to lecture material, it does not deal with other potential listening problems. Ralph G. Nichols, a long-time listening researcher at the University of Minnesota, lists 10 Bad Listening Habits as the most common and important listening problems.¹ Nichols enumerates the following major listening problems: finding the subject uninteresting, judging delivery not content, allowing excessive emotional involvement, listening for details instead of central ideas, using non-flexible note-taking, paying poor attention to the speaker, being easily distracted, avoiding difficult material, refusing to accept new ideas, and thinking about irrelevant topics.