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Practical English Language Teaching
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Being a good English language teacher encompasses a multifaceted understanding of teaching and learning processes which starts with having a good command of the knowledge of the subject area; namely the English language itself, pedagogy and culture. These three aspects are so tightly interwoven that one cannot be considered separate from the others, and all of them are of approximately equal importance. Of these three aspects, *Practical English Language Teaching* basically focuses on language teaching pedagogy and subject area in order to assist both novice and experienced teachers.

Written by 15 world class specialists, Practical English Language Teaching is an edited book consisting of three main sections and each section is divided into chapters. The sections and chapters are basically designed in a set format, which makes it quite convenient and practical for its readers to anticipate what is to be encountered after each single part. Each chapter provides an introduction to the subject concerned, background for the theme, principles, suggested classroom techniques and tasks, implementations and conclusion parts. In addition to these, parts for further readings, helpful web sites and references are included for further studies. Further readings and helpful web sites offer additional and up-to-date resources for information about the subject dealt with.

The first section, *Exploring Skills*, gives information about language teaching methodology with regard to the four basic language skills: speaking, listening, writing and reading. The section starts with the methodology chapter which frames a basis for the whole book and sketches out the last forty-year overview of methodologies by focusing particularly on the contemporary approaches, such as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) in the field.

The four basic language skills which are needed to be covered in language teaching are dealt with in the following four chapters. By using a pure and clear language, crucial points as the definition of notable concepts, bottom up/top down processes, the difficulty and authenticity levels of the tasks or texts given to the learners are comprehensively addressed. The subjects elaborated in the chapters are introduced in such a way that almost any reader can benefit from the book without being overloaded.

In the second section, *Exploring Language*, four components of language (pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and discourse) are handled to provide readers with a deeper understanding of how language is used for communicative purposes. Pronunciation, as being one of the commonly overlooked elements of language teaching in the actual practice period, is considered crucial and therefore readers' attention is driven to this issue. Within the chapter, such points as intonation, stress, fluency, accuracy, speech intelligibility and so forth are focused on by offering some classroom implementations to highlight the significance of pronunciation.

In the following chapter, one of the most indispensible components of language learning, vocabulary, is presented. In order to progress in a foreign language, learners

need to be able to understand what they are hearing and reading. In this chapter, some suggestions about how to focus on the most useful vocabulary in the most appropriate way are given.

Chapter eight explains grammar, which is considered as the most important unit in language education by teachers, learners and authorities. Since students are frequently exposed to grammar questions in examinations, it occupies a large space in language learning. Following the background and context; selection, adaptation or creation of grammar learning opportunities are mentioned in the chapter. The author describes the key principles of grammar teaching effectively by articulating the importance of its connection with communicative purposes following the new trends in language teaching.

In the final chapter of the second section, the writers point out the significance of discourse. In social sciences, discourse is regarded as a formalized way of thinking that can be imparted through language. In the chapter, teaching discourse in classrooms is clarified by referring to two approaches that analyze discourse: the study of exchanges and conversation analysis. These approaches are explained to entail students to be able to use English effectively in real life with regard to cultivating a command of discourse items such as initiating, responding, following up, turn-taking and so forth.

The final section of the book, *Supporting the Learning Process*, yields to content-based instruction, the place of coursebooks in ELT, computer assisted language learning, learning styles and strategies of the learners, autonomy in classroom and classroom-based assessment. It is supposed that these subjects were chosen for the book due to the fact that they were considered as the most common and applicable ones.

In chapter ten the development of content based instruction (CBI) is discussed from the first times it has appeared to its "prototype" forms as theme-based, sheltered and adjunct instructions. Each of them is exemplified with some scenarios to make them more comprehensible. Some classroom extracts which can be adopted and adapted to the lessons illustrate the integrated skills focus of CBI. This way of providing examples from/for the real teaching experiences incline readers to relate the theoretical information to real life, and thus making the abstract information more down-to-earth.

Notwithstanding the idea that coursebooks are 'strait jackets' that curtails initiative and creativity in the classroom, and that they will gradually become redundant, it should not be forgotten that 'the coursebook not only survives, it thrives' (Hutchinson and Torres, 1994: 316). Warning against being strictly adhered to each page of a coursebook, the writer of chapter eleven advocates an acronym referred by Acklam (1994: 12) 'SARS' by explaining 'S' for selecting, 'A' for adapting, 'R' for rejecting and 'S' for supplementing. Since every individual is unique, each classroom needs a special way of instruction. Therefore, it is teachers' responsibility to be aware of the needs of his/her learners and choose the best suited coursebook for them. However, it should not be forgotten that coursebooks are not the masters, but the servers of teachers in language classes (Cunningsworth, 1984).

In the following chapter, computer-assisted language learning (CALL) which is a new and thriving approach to language teaching is presented as a "quickly evolving discipline" (p. 265). The writer touches upon the development of CALL from behaviorist to constructivist perspectives, advocating that inclusion of it may offer a great deal for what can be done in English language classes, for instance e-mail penpals, chatlines, thesaurus, companion web sites, and concordance.

Chapter thirteen deals with learning styles and strategies by suggesting the differences and connections between them. Brown (2007: 119) defines style as "the characteristics of intellectual functioning that belong to you and differentiate you from others." However, strategies are described as "… characteristics we want to stimulate in students to enable them to become more proficient language learners." (Oxford, 1990: ix). The chapter highlights the key points of learning styles and strategies by offering the primary taxonomies to enable its readers build a visual schema of them. Since each learner's learning styles and strategies differ from one another, teachers are entailed to consider such points and design the flow of lessons according to this diversity. By presenting some classroom implementations of learning styles and strategies, the book aims to assist its readers with a notion of how they are applied in language learning environment.

Chapter fourteen, Learner Autonomy in the Classroom, elaborates the issue of learner autonomy. Little (1991: 4) defines learner autonomy as "a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making, and independent action". Fostering learner autonomy, which is a fundamental component of learning, requires teachers building the knowledge of some approaches as to how it can be handled in learning environment. McGarry (1995: 1) notes that "the majority of students are still being taught in ways which promote dependence and leave them ill-equipped to apply their school-learnt knowledge and skills to the world beyond the classroom". Therefore, learners have a lot of difficulties in relating the school-learnt knowledge to real life. Teachers, particularly language teachers, are demanded to assist their learners in cultivating a sense of how to control their own learning. In other words, learners are required to take charge of their own learning (Holec, 1981: 3). With regard to this notion, the book offers the theoretical background of the subject and some techniques and classroom applications in order to guide the teachers how to deal with the issue.

The focus of the final chapter, and thus the book, is on classroom-based assessment. Assessment in ELT means to discover what the learner knows and can do at a certain

stage of the language learning process. Broadfoot (1987) suggests the purposes of assessment as follows: a) to give feedback to the learner, b) to certify the learner's capabilities and c) to inform the other parties about the achievements of the learner. After suggesting the overall definition and purposes of assessment, the chapter introduces basic types of assessment in accordance with their historical development. The readers are provided with some classroom implementations of assessment and evaluation in order to make the theoretical information more tangible.

The book is also supplemented with a glossary part in which the key terms pertaining to language teaching and learning are introduced. Following the glossary, an index part in which the alphabetical list of names, subjects, and so forth are presented with their page numbers takes place in the book. At the end of the book, there is credits part specifying where the photos and texts used in the book are taken from.

Practical English Language Teaching, offers a fundamental yet tangible overview of language teaching methodology for prospective teachers and teachers in training. It includes a balance between theory and practice. Key issues in concerned theories are presented by referring to the primary principles of them. In addition, the classroom applications provided in every chapter show not only how theories can inform classroom practices but also how the practical realities of language learning and teaching can inform theories. The book is also enhanced with illustrations, reflection and action parts which give readers some tasks to clarify the topic concerned by guiding them to consider the theoretical information in a more down-to-earth perspective. Written by the specialists of their fields, the book offers critical, up-to-date issues addressing to the target strategies and tips and addresses the current developing needs. .

As the book does not touch upon every requisite point in ELT, it should not be seen as a main course guide for how to teach language. Instead, it can be regarded as an

amazing resource for students who are just starting their study of ESL teaching and a great refresher or guideline for teachers who have been teaching for a while. This collection of papers reveals the writers' thinking over the current issues of the field *practically*, as the title of the book suggests.

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