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## Book Review

Solak, Ekrem (ed.) (2016). *Teaching Language Skills for Prospective English Teachers*. Ankara: Pelikan Yayıncılık. p. 197, ISBN: 978-605-9029-52-0.

Teaching language skills is an important aspect in language teaching and therefore included as one of the core courses offered in English Language Teaching (ELT) programmes at tertiary level in Turkey. However, textbooks on the ELT market are not without caveats. When teaching such type of skill courses, ELT instructors, for instance, depended heavily on resources written by native speakers of English. Furthermore, they are generally written for English as a second language (ESL) contexts, which are most likely to cause some mismatches with the conditions in English as a foreign language (EFL) settings. Given also the fact that the resources are sometimes not up-to-date related to their content, there is a strong need for alternative up-to-date resources that are written by EFL experts for EFL teachers.

*Teaching Language Skills for Prospective English Teachers* appears to be one of the most recently published books in Turkey on teaching English language skills. This book aims to provide prospective English language teachers with up-to-date information on how to help learners develop foreign language skills. As the title emphasizes, the book addresses tertiary-level students in ELT programmes. The book was produced by the contributions of 14 authors from the field of ELT. The book covers 197 pages and it includes 8 chapters, each of which gives specific information on how to teach a main language skill or a sub-skill. Each chapter begins with a brief item-by-item part of *learning objectives* and goes on with an overview of *historical perspective* on a specific skill. Then the author(s) provide(s) detailed up-to-date information on how to teach the covered skill. Each chapter concludes with sample lesson

plans for prospective teachers that would make the covered information more to-the-point.

“Teaching Reading Skills” in Chapter 1 discusses details about the instruction of reading as a receptive skill. After providing some brief information on the historical background of reading skill, the chapter gives important information about reading types, its sub-skills and strategies. The chapter is then followed by some specific ideas as to how teachers can develop reading activities and how they can assess reading skill in foreign language. At the end of the chapter, the authors also provide two sample lesson plans for English language teachers to use while teaching reading in English.

Chapter 2 focuses on the ‘Cinderella’ skill: listening. It is known as Cinderella because of its secondary importance both in people’s mind (because people generally ask “do you speak English?”) and in English classroom especially when compared to its elder sister: speaking. The chapter starts with a brief introduction and historical background for listening skill. The authors then list main characteristics of a good listening text, types of listening materials, listening sources, macro- and micro-skills for listening, approaches to listening, stages in listening instruction, and current trends in teaching listening skills. As with the earlier chapter, they conclude with a sample lesson plan for listening at pre-intermediate level.

Chapter 3 is written on speaking as a productive skill. After a brief introduction and some historical background on speaking, the author gives detailed information about the classroom practices of speaking skill and gives some various activities. Then, to enhance the

motivation of learners in speaking classes some ideas are also offered. A sample lesson plan is additionally given to address speaking skill at the end of the chapter.

Chapter 4 is about the other productive skill - writing. The chapter begins with an introduction including a historical perspective to writing. Then, the author starts discussing what writing is and what it does mainly cover; and then goes on with main approaches to writing including product-based writing, process-based writing, and genre-based approach. After giving detailed information on L2 writing, the author mentions some current issues such as new types of feedback (especially technology-enhanced forms like electronic feedback) and the contributive role of corpus studies in teaching writing in that the use of corpora and concordancing enables teachers to identify the most-frequently used lexical items and design writing materials accordingly. The chapter is completed with a sample lesson plan based on genre-based approach.

Following the first four chapters which centre upon main skills (reading, listening, speaking, and writing), the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter addresses a problematic sub-skill for Turkish EFL learners – pronunciation. The author begins with an introductory historical background for pronunciation and then presents some ways of pronunciation teaching based on the audio articulation model. The rest of the chapter is devoted to two extensive sample lesson plans – one on teaching /U/ vs. /UW/ sounds, the other on teaching /ŋ/ sound.

Chapter 6 covers teaching another important sub-skill – vocabulary. The chapter begins with an extensive historical background of teaching vocabulary and then provides elaborate information on the scope of vocabulary training, techniques and strategies, the relationship between reading performance and vocabulary learning, vocabulary teaching activities, testing vocabulary, and current trends in vocabulary teaching. At the end of the

chapter, there is a sample vocabulary lesson plan on ‘birds and their relations to human beings.’

Chapter 7 addresses the teaching of grammar. Following introductory information on grammar including its historical background, the authors discuss current trends in grammar teaching and elaborate on different ways of teaching grammar including types of grammar activities like mechanical activities, meaningful activities, and communicative activities. At the end of the chapter, the authors provide two sample lesson plans; one on simple past tense (regular verbs with affirmative sentences), the other on modals verbs (e.g. should).

Unlike the previous ones, Chapter 8 is written on a partly different aspect of language skills – translation and interpreting. Following basic information on the historical background of translation studies, the two terms (translation and interpreting) are discussed extensively. Then, current trends are elaborated. Two sample lesson plans, one on teaching translation skills and the other on teaching interpreting skills, are provided at the end of the chapter.

*Teaching Language Skills for Prospective English Teachers* apparently turns out to be a valuable resource with numerous plus points for both prospective English language teachers and ELT researchers. First, the sequence of the covered chapters is organized in a systematic and reader-friendly manner. The first four chapters discuss the main four skills; while two of these are receptive skills, the other two are productive. The rest of the chapters, except for the 8<sup>th</sup>, focus on sub-skills that are of key importance for language teaching and learning. Another asset of the book is that the content of the chapters is structured taking EFL conditions into account. Resources that are merely based on ESL conditions may not be totally appropriate for EFL teachers and learners. In addition, almost all of the chapters include a part that focuses on current trends or practices about the covered specific skill. One

more plus for the book shows itself in the to-the-point lesson plans given at the end of each chapter. They contribute much to the establishment of a clear link between the theoretical and practical dimensions.

This prominent resource has one noticeable weak point: the mismatch of the last chapter with the rest of the book. Even though English-Turkish Translation and Turkish-English Translation are among the courses offered in ELT programmes at Turkish universities, translation does not constitute a sine-qua-non while learning a foreign language. As a matter of fact, the use of mother tongue is even prohibited in some ELT methods such as Direct Method and Audio-lingual Method. Accordingly, translation is not a priority area for prospective English language teachers. Under the 'Teaching Language Skills' course, pre-service language teachers should focus on what is discussed in the first seven chapters of

the book. Translation and interpreting should be handled in a different context. Despite this problem with the last chapter, the book constitutes a worthy resource for ELT programmes. The systematic and up-to-date content covered in each chapter can be of considerable use for pre- and in-service English language teachers and academic staff who offer such core courses at universities.

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