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### **Teaching English Worldwide**

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*Teaching English Worldwide* is targeted at the early or pre-career teacher of English, mapping first steps towards the profession. The chapter topics are clear and unambiguous and its organisation has intuitive value for the teacher making a first encounter with language teaching. It moves from the macro-areas of classroom management, to the 'first port of call' – vocabulary, meaning and grammar, and then towards language skills, lesson planning, correcting errors and testing. Each chapter is clearly organised with an opening list of sub-categories to help with navigation. Mainly the discourse is framed as tips, advice, and truths that the reader might adopt as a kind of 'guidebook' to teaching, but there are some invitations to the reader to make judgements and evaluations of their own. There are also sample tasks and exercises, and teacher suggestions for readers to see what teaching might look like in practice. As guidebook, it offers quick checklists of do's and don'ts (for example, lesson planning, using songs), lists of key points (such as what it means to know a word) and of activities (such as language learner study skills), and ends with review questions to check understanding. There is the opportunity for a contained follow-up after each topic, with three or four suggested readings at the end of each chapter. There is a safety in this systematic approach, and the transparency and clarity of the advice would make the book extremely user-friendly for the targeted audience: "those thinking about teaching English, planning to take a TESOL or CELTA training course, or just beginning to work in a language school."

However, there are several omissions inevitable in a book which aims to present knowledge as clear-cut and watertight. The book does not quite deliver for those wishing to push forward their understanding towards a more complex, sophisticated or theorised base: but then this is not what it claims to do.

Although the claim from the title is 'Teaching English Worldwide', there is largely a U.S and Anglocentric world view. Several assumptions are made which may not be easily translatable outside this setting. For example, Lindsay contends that "a beginner's motivation tends to be high" – but will this be the case in large classes of state school children learning a compulsory second language? In another section he mentions "students are usually assessed on entry and placed in one of four levels" (p. 6): but which setting specifically is being referred to here? The text examples in the reading sections are also lacking in contemporary reach: Thomas More's *Utopia* at lower-intermediate level would be an unlikely choice in most 21<sup>st</sup> century language classrooms. There is a reference to readers of a non-Roman alphabet, but this is dismissed rather quickly without solid support for the teacher in this situation. What is missing, are references to real teachers, learners or settings to locate the advice in real-world settings. The names given in exercises are fictional and very Anglo-specific such as Sue and Bill; and all the sample lesson plans suggest similarly 'western world' settings with teachers Faye, Joe and Chris in unspecified locations. As a result the advice needs to be taken on trust and translated for the reader into their own setting.

Secondly, the 'guidebook' approach works well when the road is clear and straightforward, but it misses the complexity of the classroom experience, and the need for teachers to treat truths with caution. The author tends to advise the teacher with many 'should' statements that close down the possibility of different responses. Teaching is presented as uncontentious, so the novice teacher is less likely to understand that it entails problem-solving and decision-making in constant cycles of reflection. For example, the lesson plan examples are rather idealised and decontextualized: we are not quite sure where they are set, or what the constraints are on the teacher. In real world settings the teacher is pulled in several directions by learner needs, institutional constraints, the coursebook and exam, and their own beliefs about good teaching. Each setting and context will require a different finely-tuned response which cannot be captured simply in checklists of do's and don'ts.

A third proviso is that the digital revolution and its effect on language learning and teaching has been virtually omitted from the discussion. CALL is briefly mentioned in the book, but 21<sup>st</sup> century teaching has gone beyond the notion of CALL as an 'add-on' skill of the teacher. The chapter on writing suggests emails but this is only one of many 'new' kinds of writing that are changing the distinction between written/spoken language and rules of correctness. Text messaging, blogging, twitter, social networking, are not mentioned as ways in which learners are interacting in natural settings outside the classroom. This omission is apparent in certain rather 'dated' references, for example to self-access centres, and to visual aids. Both of these acquire an entirely new slant when we acknowledge that learners carry a virtual self-access centre with them all the time in the form of smartphones, iphones and ipads. Learners are likely to be informing their teachers about the new social networks, twitter or youtube updates, rather than vice versa. An updated edition of any ELT methodology really needs to take account of this major way in which the classroom has changed, as has the ownership of its resources.

Fourthly, the references are rather dated and do not suggest a real 'updating' of this edition to take account of changes in a 21<sup>st</sup> century world view. Most of the suggested readings are prior to 2000 so many major areas of thinking are missing. Some of these are: the role of corpus in vocabulary and grammar teaching, which is embedded into all the core chapters in Hedge (2000), and in Spiro (2013); the increasing recognition of the first language in second language classrooms, as in Cook (2008), albeit with a central focus on the synergy between language teaching and insights from second language acquisition; pragmatics and social/cultural functions of language, included in Larsen-Freeman's new edition (2011) and richly developed by Kumaravadivelu (2006); language varieties and the 'English as a lingua franca' research that is given attention in all these core books and more, for example Hall (2011), Richards and Renandya (2002 and 2010); discourse approaches to language and multiple intelligences also built into the Larsen-Freeman (2011) edition, Spiro (2013), Hedge (2000), Hall (2011) and Richards and Renandya (2002/2010). These are all broad-based and accessible overviews of language teaching written both for the newly arrived and the refreshing teacher, and all have found room within their broad remit to address these debates. They are debates which make a significant difference to the way English is taught in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

As a final point, there is a surprising lack of authenticity in the examples and language samples. Where real teachers and learners are drawn upon to identify the qualities of the good learner and teacher (pp. 11, 12), the book leaps into life; but more frequently the language samples are fictionalised with rather wooden language samples and dialogues, such as Bill and Sue's example of husband/wife changes in intonation (p. 115).

Having mentioned these omissions, the book does deliver for the target audience it aims for. As a first encounter with the profession, it is safe, systematic and accessible. Its information is, mostly, sound though the reader would need to search beyond the references given to find answers to more searching questions. The book will satisfactorily answer the question: what shall I do on a Monday morning? but will be less satisfactory in answering the question – why? Why does it work? As checklists, it will provide ample and rich information, but less information on where these checklists actually come from, within the literature of practitioners and language professionals. Finally the book will be helpful for the teacher within the four walls of the classroom, but less so in bringing the outside world into the classroom, with all its diversity of contexts, cultures, settings, technologies, attitudes and values, learner experiences and needs. But perhaps, as with any book, it is the reader who will bring in that diversity, as they apply the book to their own setting and interpret it through the lens of their own experience.

## References

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## The Reviewer

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