
Book Review

Teaching and Learning Languages: Selected Readings from Mosaic (3rd ed.)

Anthony Mollica (Ed.)

Soleil Publishing, 2008, 609 pages

The content of *Teaching and Learning Languages: Selected Readings from Mosaic* (3rd ed.) derives from articles that have appeared in the first nine volumes of *Mosaic: The Journal for Language Teacher*.¹ Given the origins of the material in the heritage classroom, it should be no surprise that the chapters address topics that include, but also go beyond the ESL classroom. At 609 pages, this text may at first seem daunting; however, as a survey text, it is not designed to be read cover to cover.

In his preface, Mollica succinctly describes and sets out his goals for this text:

These fifty-one practical and theoretical chapters, written by distinguished North American second-language scholars, are invaluable professional readings for both beginning and seasoned teachers. Our purpose with this third edition is to make *Teaching and Learning Languages*, the basic textbook for language teaching and learning. Of great interest to researchers are not only the interesting and helpful articles but also the copious bibliographical references at the end of each chapter. (p. x)

On a more philosophical level, the content of this text reflects Mollica's view of monolingualism "as a type of cognitive disease" versus multilingualism as a path to greater tolerance, harmony, and ultimately peace (p. 12).

As noted above, many of the contributors Cepeda, Danesi, Krashen, and Mollica, to name just a few will be familiar to experienced and novice teachers alike, and their contributions to this volume focus variously on the practical and theoretical, whether the merits of reading for pleasure or the application of "conceptual fluency theory" (p. 239). Certainly some chapters in this collection may resonate more strongly for the ESL classroom teacher than others: "Eight Approaches to Language Teaching" (Doggett), "The Good Language Learner" (Mollica and Nuessel), and "Language Anxiety and How to Manage It" (Donely) may seem to be of more immediate relevance than "Teaching French Using Mnemonic Devices" (Janc) or "French, German, Italian and Spanish Tongue Twisters in the Classroom" (Mollica). However, one of the benefits of exploring such a collection is that it presents

the opportunity to extend one's reading beyond an immediate pedagogical interest and so reflect on and expand one's teaching strategies.

Although Mollica's pedagogical and philosophical goals for this text are entirely serious, I think it worth noting that one can find some unexpected and welcome humor in this text. Both "Gestures and Language: Fair and Foul in the Language Classroom" (Wilcox) and "Language Learning: The Key to Understanding and Harmony" (Mollica) offer the reader a glimpse into the potential misunderstandings that can result from inadequate translation: a sign advising customers to "drop your trousers here for best results" (p. 485) would probably give L1 English-speakers a chuckle, but could have entirely different results were an L2 learner to take it literally. Underlying this humor, however, is a serious plea by both authors not only for better translation skills, but also for teachers and learners to understand the interweaving of language and culture and the benefits that accrue from multilingualism.

In conclusion, *Teaching and Learning Languages* has much to offer the second-language teacher in ESL or otherwise who wishes to delve into a topic of interest or to explore new ground. The bibliographies in themselves are a valuable resource for those who wish to research a topic more deeply. Although it is not in my capacity to address whether Mollica's text has become the "basic textbook" for the language-teaching endeavor (p. x), the scope of the subject matter with its focus on both practical and theoretical issues of the second-language classroom makes this a valuable survey text.

Note

¹ *Mosaic* was first published in 1993 in response to the needs of heritage international language teachers for a reader-friendly publication that addressed issues pertaining to both theory and practice. This journal is still in print and is currently co-published by the Department of Language Studies at the University of Toronto Mississauga and Editions Soleil. For further information, see http://www.soleilpublishing.com/professional_readings/books/journals.php.

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