

Book Reviews

Teaching English: A Practical Guide for Language Teachers

Graeme Ching

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The demand for qualified, trained, and competent teachers of teaching English as a second language (TESL) is growing on a global scale. To meet the need for additional resources, Graeme Ching (2019) provides a comprehensive and practical guide for novice and veteran teachers alike in *Teaching English: A Practical Guide for Language Teachers*. This textbook serves as a training manual and reference guide for language teachers and administrators, rendering complex theories and methods accessible by eliminating the use of complex terminology. The book is divided into two parts: Chapters 1–7 offer an overview of language teaching, while Chapters 8–18 offer more specific information by focusing on language skills, subskills, linguistic factors, and intercultural communication. While this textbook is limited in contributing new information to the field of language teaching, it does provide a neat compilation of pedagogical approaches and perspectives in a relatively short format. Rather than referring to several theoretical texts, teachers and practitioners can access materials related to course design, class management, lesson planning, and assessment in one useful and practical guide.

Ching provides teacher and student case scenarios from both Canadian and overseas situations through which readers can identify and connect various classroom environments and student levels of learning. Theoretical application is also provided as the author draws on various frameworks including behaviourist, constructivist, social interactionist, and sociocultural theories to analyze and explain second language acquisition (SLA). The author also compiles resources in the appendices that include sample lesson plans, classroom activities, worksheets, assessment tools, phonology charts, lists of common lexical items, verb tense charts, and a language level instruction guide which are excellent for quick reference.

The first and second chapters introduce us to eight teachers and eight students, respectively, enabling the reader to access and challenge preexisting assumptions of the ideal language teacher and the typical language learner, which prompt the reader to be receptive to differing methodologies and perceptions. Beginning with these introductory chapters, each topic is explored using three steps: inform, reflect, and practice/apply. This strategy mirrors active learning as the author guides the reader through a scaffolded journey of language teaching and learning.

Chapter 3 highlights various teaching approaches and methodologies. Ching (2019) suggests that “we now live in the ‘post-method’ age of language teaching” (p. 61) and recommends a mix-and-match approach to pedagogy. To emphasize this approach, the author presents a progression of pedagogies as they evolve through practice over time, including grammar-first and fluency-first methods with an emphasis on communicative language teaching (CLT). Next, comprehension-first methods are explored by critically evaluating the natural approach. While this method has been largely criticized, it is helpful to appreciate the theoretical framework and its adaptability of application over time, especially when considering its influence on the communicative approach which is a popular choice in contemporary application. The chapter closes with highlights on learner-centred methods and teaching with technology. Ching features course goals, textbook usage, activities, and differentiated lesson objectives in Chapters 4 and 5 that help support the practical use of various methods. The author also offers a useful checklist that can be employed to ensure lesson plans are effective in language acquisition rather than setting boundaries that limit student learning and teacher facilitation.

Ching broadens his approach to course planning in Chapter 6 by exploring classroom management. He concentrates on a comparative analysis of common error correction and evaluative feedback techniques that are instrumental in creating a supportive environment. Reflective practices, teacher identity, and cultural considerations for students are explored before bridging to assessment in Chapter 7. A variety of assessment tools are explored, and the author reminds the reader that assessment should support student learning and teacher growth.

Part 2 of the text focuses on teaching language skills and subskills with emphasis on linguistic application and intercultural communication. Chapters 8, 9, 10, and 11 spotlight listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Effective teaching practices are exemplified through student case scenarios that emphasize the importance of well-planned, authentic, and accessible tasks. English language learner (ELL) progress is enriched through these tasks as well as through effective vocabulary teaching as highlighted in Chapter 12. Ching introduces terminology used in practice, and highlights the most relevant concepts in semantics, such as lexical ambiguity, synonyms, and idioms, to enable language teachers to better support ELLs through the process of SLA. In Chapters 13 and 14, Ching stresses grammatical structure as a fundamental component in language acquisition and highlights syntactic rules and key morphological terms as the primary means by which grammar is understood and taught.

Chapters 15 and 16 explore phonetics. Ching provides effective resources and explanations that enable teachers to identify common issues language learners struggle with when learning English. Additional linguistic factors are explored in Chapter 17 by first introducing interlanguage and language

fossilization. Knowledgeable insight into these linguistic features stimulates effective teacher feedback that supports, encourages, and nurtures student growth. This awareness is complemented by an examination of intercultural communication, sociolinguistics, and discourse analysis in Chapter 18. Ching offers detailed explanations to prepare teachers for a variety of cultural expression that may occur in a diverse classroom. He emphasizes that intercultural competence is necessary for teachers to successfully facilitate respectful communication in the language classroom. The text concludes with frequently asked questions presented in Chapter 19, followed by a concise glossary of terms, extensive appendices, and instructor supplements. Furthermore, a companion website is also available with links to practice activities and web resources.

Teaching English: A Practical Guide for Language Teachers is available electronically and in print. The wealth of additional resources included with this textbook renders it extremely useful for synchronous and asynchronous teaching. Written in plain language, this text is aimed at readers who have limited training as language teachers, so it can be useful as a systemic overview for new teachers, but also as an in-depth reference guide for experienced teachers and administrators. Regardless of skill level, this text is a valuable resource for all language teachers who are looking for quick answers to common questions and for those who want to improve their practice in an ever-changing global landscape.

The Reviewer

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