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## BOOK REVIEW

### **English Language Teaching Today: Linking Theory and Practice**

Willy A. Renandya and Handoyo P. Widodo (Eds). Springer, 2016. Pp. xiv + 307. ISBN 978-3-319-38834-2 (eBook). DOI 10.1007/978-3-319-38834-2

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A quick glance at its title and contents will draw our attention to this fine volume edited by two established Asian scholars, Willy A. Renandya from Singapore and Handoyo P. Widodo from Indonesia. This edited book whose editors and contributing authors are English Language Teaching (ELT) experts and practitioners is organized into two sections: theories and practices. The first theory-based section has seven chapters, including the introductory chapter written by the editors, while the second practice-based section consists of thirteen chapters, each of which offers practical pedagogical approaches for teaching such language skills as listening, reading, speaking, writing, grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation.

As an ELT practitioner myself, I have been familiar with some of the famous names in the field, such as Willy A. Renandya, John Macalister, Brian Tomlinson, James D. Brown, Thomas S. C. Farrell, and many others. Seeing that each chapter in this volume is authored or co-authored by these world-renown and other emerging ELT experts motivated me to begin reading the book from start to finish and write this review. In what follows, a concise and accurate summary of the book is offered, followed by a critical analysis of its quality and scholarship.

Section 1 of this volume, entitled *Theories, Research, and Principles*, starts with an introductory chapter in which the editors strive to set the scene for the book by briefly discussing different aspects of ELT, such as the rise of new varieties of English, the changes to how English is taught, and the growing acceptance of English as a second or official language. The chapter then introduces the aims of the book and provides a brief synopsis of each of the 19 remaining chapters.

Chapter 2, co-authored by George M. Jacobs and Willy A. Renandya, discusses student-centered learning in ELT. What is best about this chapter is that it presents 10 key elements of student centered learning and elaborates

on how each element can be implemented in the classroom. Chapter 3 by Ahmar Mahboob and Angel M. Y. Lin explores the role of local languages in English language classrooms. This chapter explains why local languages are devalued in English classrooms, discusses benefits of integrating local languages in English classes, and outlines a teaching-learning model that offers a place for local languages in English language classrooms. Chapter 4, written by a curriculum design expert John Macalister, examines how research-based learning principles can guide instructions and the use of coursebooks, often accepted by teachers and students as a curriculum, to enhance students' learning outcomes. To this end, the author discusses four key principles which can help language teachers decide how to use the coursebook. These principles include the principle of the four strands, the fluency principle, the frequency principle, and the interference principle.

In the next chapter, Brian Tomlinson, a leading expert in language materials development, turns our attention to the needs and wants of learners of English as an International Language (EIL) and proposes a set of guidelines for developing materials which can cater for the needs of such learners. Tomlinson suggests we consider nine ways when developing materials for learners of EIL. Moving on to chapter 6, James D. Brown introduces us to his area of expertise which is assessment in ELT. In the chapter, Brown discusses 12 assessment types classified into four categories, including receptive-response, productive-response, personal-response, and individualized-response categories. Practical suggestions on how to compare, select and use each assessment type are offered in detail, followed by a useful appendix describing advantages of each assessment type. A contributor to this last chapter (chapter 7) in this theoretically oriented section is Thomas S. C. Farrell, who asks whether regular journal writing promotes reflective practice among EFL teachers. Having explained what reflective practice is, the author reports on a case study with three EFL teachers in Korea by discussing topics generally included in the journals, specifically how journal writing can facilitate reflection and problems associated with writing reflective journals. Farrell concludes the chapter by offering suggestions and cautions for English language teachers so that they can take advantage of this mode of reflective practice.

Section 2 of the book, *Pedagogical Practices*, focuses on pedagogical approaches for teaching various language skills. The first chapter in this section (chapter 8 of this volume) is by Willy A. Renandya and George M. Jacobs who examine extensive reading (ER) and extensive listening (EL) in

the second language classroom. The authors cleverly discuss key characteristics of ER and EL, their benefits for language learning, seven core principles for implementing ER and EL in L2 classrooms, and legitimate concerns preventing teachers from fully implementing ER and EL in their teaching. The next chapter (chapter 9) is from Anna C.-S. Chang who looks at L2 listening in and outside the classroom. This is a really practical chapter which discusses almost everything about L2 listening, including its significance and factors causing difficulties in listening comprehension. More importantly, Chang offers a three-stage lesson (i.e., the pre-listening, while-listening and post-listening stages) for teaching L2 listening and suggests three approaches, namely narrow listening, repeated listening, and reading while listening, teachers can use to promote students' listening practice outside the class.

Chapter 10 by Lawrence J. Zhang is on teaching reading and reviewing skills. This chapter begins by discussing major views on reading and viewing and briefly elaborates on factors which affect reading and viewing success. It then looks at 10 principles for teaching reading and reviewing skills, followed by practical reading and viewing teaching strategies (including the use of the K-W-L chart) that can be applied in the classroom. The next chapter focuses on teaching speaking skills. This chapter, written by Christine C. M. Goh, explores the construct of speaking, including interaction management skills, discourse organization skills, and communication strategies. What is significant in this chapter is a presentation of a comprehensive and holistic approach to teaching speaking, an approach which takes into account learners' cognitive, linguistic, affective, and metacognitive needs.

Chapter 12, contributed by Jonathan Newton, deals with the teaching of English for intercultural spoken communication. This chapter offers a brief background of the field of intercultural language learning and teaching, a set of principles for teaching intercultural spoken communication, and six practical classroom applications guided by intercultural communicative language teaching principles (iCLT principles), a term coined by Newton and his co-authors. The next chapter is by Yin L. Cheung who introduces us to the teaching of writing. Cheung briefly describes paradigm shifts in approaches to teaching academic writing before arguing for a more practical approach to teaching this skill: a socio-cognitive approach. In this chapter, the author discusses various aspects of second language writing, including writing competence, writing process, and strategies for teaching writing, all

of which are to set the scene for implications and pedagogical principles of the socio-cognitive approach to academic writing.

Similar to the previous chapter, chapter 14, by Zhichang Xu, is about teaching academic writing in context. In this chapter, Xu briefly reviews literature on World Englishes, English as an International Language, academic writing as community of practice, and intercultural rhetoric before introducing us to academic writing courses in three different contexts: Beijing, Hong Kong and Melbourne. Drawing on these contexts, a set of pedagogical principles for teaching English academic writing is then discussed. Chapter 15 by Helena I. R. Agustien examines the teaching of English grammar in Asian contexts. Agustien proposes three sets of a form-meaning-use strategy to address problems with the teaching of Finite verbs that Asian learners usually face. The proposed three-stage strategies are for dealing with the absence of Finite, the incorrect use of Finite, and the overuse of Finite. This chapter is interesting in that it looks at the teaching of grammar from the perspective of a systemic functional grammar tradition.

The next chapter in this volume is about teaching vocabulary in EFL contexts, co-authored by Anna Siyanova-Chanturia and Stuart Webb. This chapter touches on several issues which are of significance to learning and teaching vocabulary in the EFL context. It discusses such issues as vocabulary size, types of vocabulary to be learned and taught, vocabulary learning programs, and out-of-classroom vocabulary learning activities which promote indirect vocabulary learning. The following chapter by Cathy S. P. Wong turns our attention to the teaching of English pronunciation. Considering the role of English as a global lingua franca, Wong examines English pronunciation aspects that deserve instructional attention, such as the significance of intelligibility, learners' awareness of regional varieties of English, their ability to self-monitor their own pronunciation, and their understanding of English sound-spelling (arbitrary) correspondences, word stress, and knowledge of phonetics and phonology. Wong also discusses important elements in pronunciation teaching methodology, specifically the role of explicit instruction and the internet.

Mark Wilkinson's contribution in Chapter 18 looks at language learning with ICT (Information Communication Technology). This chapter discusses how L2 learning theories are supported by CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning); it also examines benefits and drawbacks of flipped learning, principles for selecting and evaluating ICT tools, and digital tools,

applications and platforms for L2 classes. The chapter ends with an illustration of how to use digital storytelling, an ICT-infused L2 learning activity, and a discussion on how this activity can be assessed. This chapter will be of great interest to many readers, particularly language teachers who wish to use digital learning tools and activities to enhance their students' L2 learning. The next chapter by Handoyo P. Widodo examines the teaching of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), in particular English for Vocational Purposes (EVP). In this chapter, Widodo looks at needs analysis in ESP, EVP, and seven elements of ESP materials before suggesting three EVP tasks, namely vocational vocabulary building, vocational knowledge building, and functional metalanguage analysis of vocational texts. ESP teachers may adapt and tailor these tasks for their EVP classes.

The final chapter of this volume is contributed by Radhika Jaidev and Brad Blackstone who explore workplace communicative competence by basing their discussion on a professional communication course, called Proposal Communication Project, offered at the National University of Singapore. This chapter illustrates how workplace communicative competence, including some twenty-first century skills, can be acquired through group projects and collaborative web-based tasks.

*English Language Teaching Today: Linking Theory and Practice*, overall, is a great collection which, despite several typographical errors, offers a general overview of recent research and thinking in the field of ELT. The book is certainly an invaluable resource for all ELT stakeholders, particularly teacher educators and researchers. Students and teachers in TESOL programs can also find this volume an excellent source of teaching strategies and principles.

Although it may not be the best successor for Richards and Renandya's (2002) classic collection, *Methodology in Language Teaching: An Anthology of Current Practice*, this volume is a new book which will not disappoint readers who wish to keep up with recent developments in ELT or teachers who need a good language teaching methodology book as a required or recommended textbook for their TESOL classes. In sum, this volume is clearly a welcome addition to a growing body of research and scholarship in the field of ELT.

## References

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