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***Key Issues in Language Teaching*, Jack C. Richards. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (2015). xxii+ 826 pp., ISBN: 978-1-107-45610-5 (pbk).**

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There is no shortage of books on the market on issues in language teaching and indeed dozens of books are added to already existing publications every year. However, most such volumes fail to provide a comprehensive account of key issues in the field and after reading each, the reader feels s/he was looking for a more detailed coverage or that s/he needs to consult different sources to get an overall picture of what language teaching (and in particular English as a second/foreign language) looks like. *Key Issues in Language Teaching* is the very book that nicely bridges these gaps by treating fundamental considerations in language teaching that survey the status of English as an international language, learners and how they learn an L2, theoretical and practical concerns in teaching language skills and sub-skills, and language teacher education. This mammoth book, written in “response to the need for a comprehensive text that explores key issues in English language teaching today” (p. xx), is most probably the first full coverage of seminal issues in TESOL (encompassing a wide range of territory) intended to be used both as a course book in undergraduate and postgraduate TEFL/Applied linguistics programmes for teaching methods courses or as an independent reference book by practicing teachers (both novice and experienced), or as resource material by teachers in training or those attending teacher education programmes. The book has been written in an accessible, easy to understand language and assumes no prior background in language teaching.

In addition to a chapter-long acknowledgements section, and a short introduction outlining the content of the book, with its 21 chapters, this voluminous book is organized around four major themes/parts: *English Language Teaching Today*; *Facilitating Student Learning*; *Language and the Four Skills*; and *The Teacher's Environment*. The book also includes an extended glossary, a 40-page long list of references, a full list of contributors and a complete index of subjects and influential scholars cited

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in the text. The book comes both in paperback and in the form of an e-book with additional features including a summary and highlights of each chapter by the author and video interviews with teachers and teacher educators on various teaching related issues including classroom management and teaching/testing different skills.

Each chapter is an independent unit (to be followed in any order) and includes various features such as reflective questions, vignettes provided by different teachers in different parts of the world as well as discussion questions (both within the text and at the end of the chapter) meant to help readers make connections between their experience/practice and their theoretical knowledge base. Additionally, some chapters include further advice to teachers in the form of sample lesson plans, case studies, application activities to encourage readers to make the gained knowledge in the chapter practical as well as suggestions for further reading.

Part 1, *English Language Teaching Today*, comprises 4 chapters. *The Scope of English and English Language Teaching* discusses issues such as global spread of English, varieties of English as well as implications of English as an International Language for teaching curriculum in private and public schools. *Second Language Learning* is devoted to theories of behaviorism, cognitivism, performance-based learning as well as interactive, social and strategic processes involved in L2 learning. In *Approaches and Methods*, the author provides a clear account of the differences between these two concepts, summarizing major teaching methods discussed in detail in his co-authored book with Theodore Rodgers (Richards & Rodgers, 2001) in addition to focusing on the distinctions and similarities between specific purpose approaches such as ESP, CBLT, CBI, CLIL, TBI and TBLT. The chapter closes with a sample communicative lesson as well as a sample communicative lesson plan. Then, *Developing Knowledge, Skills and Awareness in Teaching* is devoted to how teachers can develop professional competence as well as the role of knowledge base of language teaching, teacher identity and learner-centered teaching in teacher's professional development. The chapter ends with a case study by an Iranian teacher where he highlights the role of disciplinary and pedagogical content knowledge in teaching.

Likewise, part 2, *Facilitating Student Learning*, is made of 4 chapters. In *The Second Language Learner*, the author considers issues such as the diversity of learners' beliefs and learning as well as classroom participation styles and discusses the role of important learner-related variables such as learner autonomy, learner's age, aptitude, motivation, identity, willingness to communicate and affective factors in the success of learning. Three case studies of successful language learners and a learning styles quiz are appended to the chapter. The focus in *The Language Lesson* is on the structure of a lesson, the teachers' role in the lesson including aspects of lesson planning and how to plan lessons that work as well as how lesson effectiveness can be increased. A sample lesson plan and a detailed lesson observation checklist accompany the chapter. Issues of classroom management are taken up in *Managing Classroom Learning*. The chapter covers the components of an effective lesson management such as giving instructions and managing time and space and offers practical advice on grouping arrangements (such as pair and group work) as well as how to create a supportive classroom climate. A list of good classroom management techniques appear as the appendix. The need for offering different teaching and learning opportunities is highlighted in *Age-Appropriate Pedagogy* where different characteristics, course design options and principles of teaching are discussed separately for different age groups: young learners, teenagers and adults.

With its 8 chapters, one on each skill (*Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing*) and one on each sub-skill (*Grammar, Vocabulary and Pronunciation*), Part 3, *Language and the Four Skills*, is the longest part of the book. There is also a non-skills related chapter, *Discourse and Pragmatics*, in this part to highlight the role of language in discourse and that of discourse and pragmatics in communication. As far as sub-skills are concerned, the chapters discuss similar issues including the nature of the sub-skill, its role in the syllabus and the goals for teaching it, the way it can be learned effectively as well as the approaches and techniques used to teach and test it. Sample lesson plans and activities have been provided at the end of each unit to provide hands-on practice for teachers to apply what has been introduced in the chapters. As for skills, in addition to coverage of similar issues (such as the nature of the skill in questions and approaches to teach and test it), other skill-specific discussions appear in relevant chapters such as one-way and two way listening, cognitive processes involved in reading and listening, reading skills and strategies, genres of writing and spoken interaction, fluency and accuracy in speaking and writing as well as the nature of proficiency in second language writing. The *Listening* chapter ends with appendices on a taxonomy of listening strategies as well as an activity to identify listening skills; the *Speaking* chapter has an appendix on a lesson plan for teaching small talk; and the *Reading* chapter includes a sample lesson plan for teaching extensive reading and activities to identify concepts and the rationale for the sequence of exercises. Similarly, the *Writing* chapter includes appendices on teaching topic writing and identifying teaching approaches and sample writing lessons. The final chapter in Part 3 elucidates the nature of discourse in speaking and writing, offers practical advice to do discourse analysis and discusses implications for teaching pragmatic aspects of discourse. Four appendices at the end of the chapter help teachers with identifying discourse and pragmatic features of relevant tasks.

With its five chapters, Part 4, *The Teacher's Environment*, is perhaps the most distinct part of this volume in that it includes very useful information found elsewhere (as in books on assessment, syllabus design and teacher education) rather than in teaching methods books. *The Language Course, Textbooks, Technology, Testing and Assessment*, and *Professional Development* are the important toolkit without which the heavy toolbox of a language teacher (filled with all other knowledge areas and practical tools) will still lack means to function fully. In addition to a wide coverage of important topics in relevant fields including curriculum planning, adopting and evaluating textbooks, teaching and testing using technology, practical advice on test development and on teacher training and education, these chapters also include useful appendices such as analytic rating scales, classroom activities and a needs analysis questionnaire.

This short review can never do justice to an encyclopedia-length book. The space was only enough to highlight a very limited number of notions tackled in the volume. The book is the product of a 50-year-long academic experience of one of the highly-cited and most acclaimed contemporary authors, researchers and teacher educators in the field of TESOL. This observation in itself speaks for the high value of the book for our profession and there are no other non-encyclopedic books (covering almost any issue on TESOL) which can fill the space this book has set to bridge. More importantly, this book very nicely mixes theory with practice, making it an ideal resource or course book for both practicum and methods modules in any TESOL or SLTE programme. Jack C Richards is to be highly commended for adding another milestone to his previous quality service to the world of second language acquisition and language education.

References

Richards, J.C., & Rodgers, T. (2001). *Approaches and methods in language teaching* (3rd ed.). New York: CUP.