

BOOK REVIEW

Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language 4th edition

Editors: Marianne Celce-Murcia,
Donna M. Brinton,
Marguerite Ann Snow

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By Absorn Meesing*

Overview

The book's 4th edition is perhaps a guarantee for its popularity. It first appeared in 1979, then 1991, and 2001 with a felt need for its 4th edition by 2013. In each edition, substantive changes were made as well as a growing list of contributors and co-editors added who later joined the team. Marianne Celce-Murcia is Professor Emerita of Applied Linguistics at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), and served on the boards of both Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (international TESOL) and the American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL); she also served on the editorial boards of TESOL Quarterly and Applied Linguistics. She has taught and worked in many countries outside the U.S. and has authored and co-authored a number

of well known ESL/EFL method books and English textbooks. Donna Brinton, the 2nd editor, is a retired faculty member of the TESL and applied linguistics at UCLA. And Marguerite Ann Snow is professor of education at California State University, Los Angeles. Grown from 31 chapters with 27 contributors in its 1st edition, the 4th edition contains 40 chapters from 46 contributors with 11 chapters substantially rewritten and 11 chapters still remaining since the first edition.

Contributors are either professors of linguistics, English, TESOL/ESL or professors of education and consultants from leading universities in the U.S. and outside the U.S. (e.g. Hong Kong, Singapore, Canada) such as Singapore N.I.E., Teachers College Columbia University, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Canada, etc.

*Dr. Absorn Meesing holds a Doctor's degree in Social Studies Education from Indiana University, U.S.A. She is currently the managing editor of the ABAC Journal and copy writer of ABAC Today, Assumption University. Previously she was the Headmistress of the International School, Bangkok; Curriculum Developer, and Head of Special Projects Unit at the Ministry of Education, Thailand.

The book covers critical areas of language instruction in 6 units:

1. Foundation of methodology
2. Language skills
3. Skills for teachers
4. Integrated approaches
5. Focus on the learner
6. Focus on the teacher

The target audience of the book is primarily preservice teachers of English as a second language (ESL) or English as a foreign language (EFL). In addition, it is also aimed for ESL or EFL practicing teachers who lack specific training or non-current training in the field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL).

Review

Overall, the book provides comprehensive practical information in the fields of ESL, EFL, and TESOL. It serves its designed purpose to nurture pre-service ESL/EFL teachers as well as ESL/EFL teachers with little or outdated experience. Advanced and experienced teachers of English for non-native speakers might find it containing not enough in-depth information.

In the first unit, the chief editor distinguishes three key terms: *approach*, *method*, and *technique* in language teaching (p.2) which are helpful. Each chapter contains useful subsections, What is ... (key concept addressed) ..., Conceptual Underpinnings, What are current trends, Future trends, ..., all of which are objectively presented, and Classroom Applications, with clear examples, is quite practical and clear for novice teachers.

In the field of language teaching, we have witnessed fads and models coming and going as normal. And even the terms keep changing. Now we have heard ELL (English for Language Learners), EAL (English as Additional Language), EAP (English for Academic Purposes) and so forth. Given the swing of the pendulum in the nature of English teaching and learning, this book does provide a helpful overview of the philosophical and theoretical paradigms, overviews of language teaching methods and approaches and presents a major approach—CLT or Communicative Language Teaching. In the field of ESL/EFL/EAL/or TESOL, we are led to the notion that the communicative approach is dominant since the decline of the traditional grammatical focus. In this book, however, four current practices are given, namely the cognitive approach, the affective - humanistic approach, the acquisition approach and the communicative approach (p.9).

Unit 2 addresses separately how to teach the 4 language skills and grammar and vocabulary. This is useful. To cite one example, the chapter titled “Second Language Listening Comprehension: Process and Pedagogy” gives a detailed discussion on what is involved in listening, including cognitive processes and types of knowledge that support listening comprehension, metacognitive activities and a self-directed listening guide (pp.72-89). Overall, this unit is very helpful to novice teachers.

Unit 3: Skills for Teachers, include tools and teaching techniques, lesson planning, culture in language teaching, and digital technology in language teaching.

Unit 4: Integrated Approaches, include content-based and immersion models, teaching through discourse, task-based teaching, English for Specific Purposes, and Literature as Content. All these provide useful information.

Unit 5, Focus on the Learner, covers motivation, learning styles and learning strategies of learners, teaching young learners, and teaching adult learners. In this unit, while young learners and adult learners are discussed in length, teenagers, especially youth in the digital era, are not explicitly given a clear discussion.

And the last unit, Unit 6: Focus on the Teacher features, classroom research, reflective teaching with PLC – Professional Learning Communities as mentioned, and professional development which are all useful information.

In addition, the language used in the book is apparently written for an ESL audience and hence is clear, forward straight and easy to read and can therefore be a model to readers.

Conclusion

This is a comprehensive, practical methodology book for new teachers of ESL/EFL. It can also be used as reference for interested experienced teachers to look into any particular section of interest. The book offers considerable insight largely based on the American underpinning context, despite some excellent vignettes from around the globe. For serious learners in the field of ESF/EFL/EAL/TESOL, especially those with a keen interest in the communicative approach, and also to

gain a more balanced view, recent methods books by other prominent experts in CLT-Communicative Language Teaching are worth exploring. For a future edition of this book, it would be desirable to add teenagers as language learners in the unit ‘focus on the learner’ as well as giving more indepth discussion on the digital age.