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ESL/EFL Teaching: Principles for Success

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ESL/EFL Teaching: Principles for Success

Yvonne S. Freeman and David E. Freeman (1998)

Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann

Pp. xix + 292

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US \$25.00

Overview

With *ESL/EFL Teaching* Yvonne and David Freeman provide an expanded and updated revision of *Language Learners*. As in the original edition, the authors provide an explanation of second language acquisition, numerous classroom examples. The reader gets a perspective on education, a philosophy of language learning. In the first edition of the book, the authors saw their role as interpreters of an exciting philosophy of language learning. The whole sociopolitical context has changed: "Rather than being embraced as a solution, some classroom practices associated with it, are being rejected" (p. vii). In this context, the authors provide a clear explanation of what whole language is because of the concern among whole language advocates that it is being increasingly misunderstood and misapplied.

The general aim of this book is to demonstrate that whole language is good education that learners. The book is directed toward teachers, teacher educators, and also school administrators. Classroom teachers have been so active in developing and promoting whole language. The book describes the underlying the successful practices that many whole language teachers follow. These principles apply to first language acquisition, second and foreign language teaching, and bilingual education.

The examples and explanations that teachers said were helpful have been kept from the first edition. New examples have been added and many of the references have been updated.

Description

The basic organization of the first edition has been retained, with one chapter devoted to content-based language teaching. This edition includes two chapters on the importance of developing and valuing students' first language. The book also includes research available in the area of bilingual education. The [-1-] book's ten chapters address the importance of communication of ESL and second language students. The first chapter, "Contexts and Orientations," describes the process whereby the teaching context determines the methods a teacher uses. Whatever the context, it is based on a set of assumptions, or an orientation, about teaching and learning generally and about language learning specifically. These different orientations (grammar-based orientation, grammar-translation method, direct method, audiolingual method, notional-functional approach, Suggestopedia, The Silent Way, and Total Physical Response) are discussed. A conclusion is drawn to focus on content-based language teaching from a constructivist view of learning, with particular emphasis on the learners' intellectual interaction with the language. Learning about language—oral or written—is easier when learners are presented with whole, natural language.

The second chapter, "Teaching Language Through Content," presents case studies, each illustrating a different approach via content-based instructional methods. "Because people learn language as they use it, it is more effective to have them study meaningful content, rather than to have them study the English language as a separate subject" (32). Data collected for the case studies include authentic message corpora, questionnaires, and classroom observations like.

In the third chapter, "Learning Goes From Whole to Part," many examples show that teachers can teach reading and other subjects whole to part. Complete and demanding texts are rich in meaning and provide a context for learning. Knowing that school days are fragmented and that in some places, part-to-whole instruction is necessary, it is clear that an important part of learning is the process of constructing meaning by determining what the whole is.

Chapter 4, "Lessons Should be Learner-Centered," supplies the readers with activities that illustrate how these approaches are described to overcome intimidating daily routine in classrooms that do not provide meaningful learning activities. When teachers center their curriculum on their learners' experiences and interests, they can expand the potential of English language learners in a natural way. [-2-]

Chapter 5 is entitled “Lessons Should Have Meaning and Purpose for Learners Now,” and situations in which people learn those things that are meaningful to them. Learners attend to problems. It is the learners who decide what to learn, contrary to what happens in traditional classrooms and the selections. The examples direct our attention to future-oriented curricula and to “The Wonderfilled Way of Learning” (p. 138). Different learning activities, a wide range of teaching with meaning and purpose emphasize the importance of pair work and group work. Learners make choices and to set their own purposes.

“Learning Takes Place in Social Interaction” (chapter 6) develops the history of language contact, social interaction, authorities and well-known quotations. The descriptions of activities that promote social interaction include letters, long-distance book exchanges, cross-age tutoring, literature studies, and cooperative learning. Social interaction cannot be denied. “These classes buzz with a kind of controlled noise. Students interact with their teacher using the language or the languages they possess. They learn as they engage in social interaction.”

In the seventh chapter, “Lessons Should Include All Four Modes,” the authors deal specifically with reading skills and of oral and written proficiency. It really is important that students have opportunities to learn a new language in order to reach academic competence as well as communicative competence.

The next two chapters, “Lessons Should Support Students’ First Languages and Cultures,” and “Lessons Should Support Students’ Second Languages and Cultures,” discuss how students can learn readily in their first language and then understand them in their second language. In other words, students can be transferred into the new language. These sections of the book plead for providing bilingual education and by helping students take pride in themselves and realize their potential. Effective bilingual education provides cognitive and affective advantages. But not all bilingual programs are equally beneficial. The book offers a sensible discussion of the continuing debate over bilingual education in academic circles and focuses on concentrating on features of effective programs for English language learners. Teachers should be encouraged to become academically and to become contributing members of our complex, multilingual, multicultural world.

Chapter 10, “Faith in the Learner Expands Student Potential,” draws conclusions for practical implications and appropriate evaluation instruments: “Standardized tests of all kinds tell educators what students can do, but what they can do” (pp. 250-251). The curriculum should be organized around big questions and big content. The importance of the faith in the learner principle for teaching all students, especially those who are at risk, is estimated.

All the principles are put into practice in a brief epilogue that shows how students come to be academically competent, ready for citizenship in a multicultural world. Literature references, professional references, and subjects arranged in alphabetical order) round out the book.

Summary and Evaluation

The major features of the book include a readable discussion of orientations to language t
The authors deliberately summarize common beliefs and repeat known facts in order to p
wide resources of the second or foreign language. Especially helpful are rich classroom sc
checklists, and lesson ideas for teachers to use in planning and evaluation. It should be po
the curriculum for and with the students, to meet their needs and engage them in learning
essentials from the curriculum guidelines. Learners should engage in meaningful pursuits
satisfying projects. Teachers should provide scaffolding for learning in many ways. Assess
are doing from day to day in their target language. Comprehensive portfolio assessment v
learners' efforts, but on the learning processes as well, along with progress in meeting agr

The Freemans have succeeded in collecting classroom examples (50 percent new material
which contribute arguments for needed changes. Useful bibliographical recommendatio
for readers who are as yet unfamiliar with whole language education, but also for those w
book affords a vivid insight into research recently done in the United States on the subject

The strengths of the Freemans' work are manifold. In describing phenomena of thematic
immense complexities of teaching and learning processes. The Freemans make us aware
roles and responsibilities, and attitudes as well as stereotyped projections. Let us hope th
balanced statements, and their fully convincing arguments will help teachers to "leave the
students are engaged in real-life tasks. This book performs a service for the student and th
looking for information and evaluation judgments. The whole language philosophy can be
school system level, but this process definitely requires a sustained, long-term effort by al

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