The tapestry of language learning: The individual in the communicative classroom.

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The Tapestry of Language Learning: The Individual Communicative Classroom

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The Tapestry of Language Learning: The Individual in the Commu

Robin C. Scarcella and Rebecca L. Oxford (1992)
Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle Publishers
Pp. 228. ISBN 0-8384-2359-0 (paper)
US $18.00

The Tapestry of Language Learning is the cornerstone of a new series from Heinle and Heir task-based learning with a concern for students' individual differences' (p. v). The text sets teaching and language learning in a classroom setting. Although the tapestry metaphor is overview of the communicative approach to ESL instruction as it is often practiced in the U

The text is divided into three parts. Part I provides an overview of the Tapestry approach. I second language acquisition theories and learner characteristics. Part III deals with langua

The Tapestry of Language Learning does not focus on language acquisition theory or resear particularly in the adult academic or pre-academic ESL classroom. As an overview, it succe

that concern active ESL teachers. The authors present a consistent viewpoint throughout,
Development (Vygotsky, 1978) and Canale and Swain's (1980) discussion of communicati
advocate integrative skills classes and content- based instruction (although the last half of
Each chapter contains pre-reading questions and post-reading activities that provide usef
My teacher trainees responded especially well to the section on teacher roles.

The text, however, has more breadth than depth. Chapters and sections alike are short. M
giving the reader a rushed, breathless feeling. In spite of the authors' impressive research
results that led them to develop this approach. The skills chapters are particularly thin, wit
learning styles and strategies, which were covered so admirably in Oxford (1990), only bru
development particularly frustrating. The descriptions of competing theories are not thoro
understanding of the concepts involved.
[-1-]

I used the text last year for an undergraduate teacher training class. Most of the students v
While the pre-reading questions stimulated many thoughtful journal entries, the post-rea
to assume a basis of teaching experience that my students lacked. I also felt the students v
some chapters. Most of my students were planning to work with children in bilingual situa
concerns. The book also shows a strong US-Canada bias; teachers who must deal with the
other countries will find little help in adapting the Tapestry approach to their situations.

While I admit to having a bias against 'name brand methods,' the Tapestry Approach is so
interaction can never be strong enough when it is so easy for teachers to fall back on more
stress that communicative competence includes grammatical competence, to the extent o
not other linguistic sub-skills). The textbooks that Heinle & Heinle has published under th
books that won universally positive reviews from my teacher trainees. If this is any indica

However, as a teacher trainer, I wished for more heft in the weave. I would like to see mor
application. A text that advocates a comprehensive approach to language teaching should
out. New teachers are the most open to new ideas, but the least able to put them into prac
when they were language students themselves. They can't always imagine innovative way
don't understand the political or administrative reasons for segregated skills courses (p. 9
in-service training, after teachers have some real-world experience to inform their discuss
administrators who evaluate language teachers, but who are not specialists in language te

I welcome the Tapestry series to the arsenal of ESL teaching materials, and *The Tapestry o*
to ESL teacher training. No text can be all things to every audience, and Scarcella and Oxfo
picture of a language classroom that is communicative, productive, and caring. [-2-]

References

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Oxford, R. (1990). *Language learning strategies: What every teacher should know.* Boston, M

Vygotsky, L.S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes.* Souberman (Eds. & Trans.). Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Marianne Phinney
InfoSoft International
<mphinney@insonotes1.hmco.com>

[-3-]

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The grammar book: An ESL/EFL teacher's course, midi controller pushes travel drama.
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