

Book Review



Title	Practical English Language Teaching: Young Learners
Editor	David Nunan
Author	Caroline T. Linse
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Reviewer	Wareesiri Singhasiri

In the final chapter of the book ‘Practical English Language Teaching Young Learners’, the author Caroline T. Linse mentions that “teaching ESL or EFL to young learners is an evolving field, and many efforts are being made around the world to improve the process for both teachers and students.” Cameron (2001) also supports that “teaching languages to children need (s) all skills of the good primary teachers in managing children and keeping them on task, plus knowledge of the language, of language teaching, and of language learning.” From this, it can be said that teachers of young learners require both practical and theoretical knowledge for teaching their students and increasing the quality of learning. To seek for that knowledge, this book may provide what teachers are looking for.

The aim of this book is to explore the issues which directly relate to teaching of English to young learners who are five to twelve years of age. In chapter 1, “The child as a language learner”, Linse provides a brief overview of child development and ways to learn about children’s development and interest. The differences between language acquisition and language learning are also discussed. Chapters 2-5 provides the principles of teaching of each skill area – listening, speaking, reading and writing. In these chapters, classroom techniques and activities are also included. Chapter 6, “Teaching vocabulary to young learners”, explores vocabulary instruction for young learners and how to promote vocabulary development. Chapter 7, “Assessing young learners”, provides information on how to assess both oral and written language skills. Chapter 8, “Working with parents of young learners”, explains the importance of working with parents as well as strategies which can be used to create a positive home-school connection. In the final chapter, “Key issues in teaching young learners”, the author raises the vital points that teachers of young learners should be aware of i.e. classroom management, special needs, multiple intelligence, tutoring, technology and professional support.

There are several notable aspects of the book worth mentioning. First of all, the theoretical aspects which have been discussed in the chapters have been well-written as they are quite easy to follow because the author provides the fundamental background of the theory. In addition, when any terminology is introduced, it is defined with simple language and with clear examples. For instance, in Chapter 1 the concepts of 'language acquisition' and 'comprehensible input' are explained clearly. The second point is that the activities with extract materials provided in chapters 2-6 are very practical with clear explanation such as in Chapter 3, pp. 64-65, and Chapter 4, pp. 89-93. Teachers can apply those in their classrooms because the author elaborates how a teacher could use examples in steps of teaching. This may stimulate ideas and inspire novice teachers to try out new teaching techniques. The extracts of teacher and students' interaction are shown to help readers get a clear picture of how to teach students. As can be seen from page 105, the author suggests that prewriting can be used as a drawing activity which can lead to discussion between teachers and students. The extract of the dialogue between the teacher and students on page 105 may help the readers learn some questioning or elicitation techniques when teaching writing skill. In terms of useful resources, at the end of the chapter, readers can find suggestions for books, articles and websites offered for additional up-to-date information.

This book not only introduces how to teach the four language skills, but also provides a chapter about assessment. The chapter begins with an overview of assessment and different aspects of assessment. If the readers are novice teachers who lack experience in learning assessment, this chapter may be useful. The scoring systems of different language skills and portfolio assessment are provided as can be seen from pages 149 and 154-157. There is only one area where the book could have been stronger. That is, various assessment forms and rubrics of every skill could be provided and probably categorized based on different levels of learners.

Another part which is worth discussing is Chapter 8 "Working with parents of young learners". It is a section which may help teachers understand why having a good relationship with parents is important because creating a teacher-parent relationship can develop a partnership with parents. Although this chapter seems not relevant to language learning, the author clarifies that in English language classrooms the children often talk about their families. As a result, it is worthwhile for teachers to understand the learners' family background so that they could support the learners in their learning and overall development.

All in all, the book is very readable, informative and thought-provoking. It should be recommended to novice language teachers and students in the disciplines of TESOL and EFL.

References:

Cameron, L. (2001). *Teaching Language to Young Learners*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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