

## Book Review/Recension d'ouvrage

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### **Teaching ESL in Canada**

by Xuemei Li, Johanne Myles, and Pamela Robinson  
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### **Reviewed by/ Revu par**

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With the increasing number of English as a Second Language (ESL) learners in Canada (Faez, 2012), more ESL teachers will be needed. The Canadian government has stressed the importance of language proficiency in its immigration process as a key factor in immigrants' integration in the workplace (Government of Canada, 2012). Although some language schools worldwide simplify English language teaching to 'nativeness' (Mahboob & Golden, 2013), Villalobos Ulate (2012) argues that it is a profession that requires qualified teachers who are "professionally and personally prepared to perform the demanding task of educating others" (p. 56).

*Teaching ESL in Canada* is a comprehensive guide for both novice and experienced English language teachers with a focus on the Canadian context. Early on, the book sets the tone of how teachers can help learners integrate in the Canadian society, workplace, and/or educational system in terms of the language skills they need. To support the content of the book, the authors offer questions for reflections at the beginning of each of its twelve chapters, activities, and a summary followed by issues for consideration at the end. The book has a tripartite structure where every four chapters make up a unit.

The first four chapters discuss the information and knowledge teachers need to embark on ESL teaching. Chapter 1 sets the context of language learning across Canada. The authors explain how the Canadian society is characterized by its multilingualism and diversity of cultures because of the increasing immigrant population in the country. To meet the diverse needs of the newcomers, provinces require their English language teachers to hold certain certifications. Chapter 2 discusses the cultural element of English language teaching and argues that teachers should be able to negotiate the integration of

culture in their classrooms to be able to respond to the culturally based learning style(s) of their students and then create awareness of the Canadian culture. In the third chapter, the authors set the theoretical background for teachers to be aware of. It explains the transitional status of the students from using their L1 into the interference in L1 while using L2. The book presents a number of teaching methods that can be used to enable learners to use the English language effectively without relying on their L1, stressing the importance of varying methods in teaching. Chapter 4 is concerned with designing the syllabus and lesson plan around the needs of the learners. Analyzing the needs of learners is the first step toward building the right syllabus, which should include everything in the course from objectives to course materials to assessments, etc. The authors break up the components of a lesson plan and explain each of them.

The middle chapters examine the teaching of the four language skills. Chapters (5-8) describe how to teach the four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Each of the chapters explains how the skill can be developed and what materials teachers can use to improve their learners proficiency in that skill. The authors list specific strategies and activities that aim to facilitate the role of the teacher in incorporating each of these skills in their teaching. The four chapters present the challenges learners may face in learning each of the skills. They also explain the process of how individuals normally develop the acquisition of these skills so teacher can be aware of how to respond their students' learning process. The listening chapter (5) emphasizes contextualizing Canadian idiomatic language so that learners create a feel of what chunks of words could mean when put together. The authors distinguish between accuracy and fluency-based communication in chapter (6). The next chapter presents reading strategies, taking into consideration the fact that some learners may have come from an oral culture or who have never read in any language, or have used a non-Roman alphabet. In chapter (8), the authors argue that teaching writing to native English speakers is not the same for ESL learners whose first language writing norms usually interfere. The chapters also discuss how teachers can correct learners and give them constructive feedback.

The last four chapters are further skills required of teachers, should they wish to make their ESL teaching more effective. The 9th chapter of the book is about the integrated skills approaches. Integrated approaches are those in which students are required to use the language to accomplish a task or present a project. These approaches put the students in real-life like circumstances so that they can learn the language in context, rather than learn the rules of the language and then try to apply them as two separate practices. Chapter 10 illustrates the different types and purposes of assessment. Then, it explores the points to consider while designing assessment. A number of English language tests are used/ accepted in Canada for immigrants and international students, some of which are locally designed and others are designed in the US, the UK, and/ or Australia. This chapter gives an overview of these tests, their formats, and the differences between them. Teachers learn in this chapter how to design a test for their classes and create rubrics to assess the four skills. Chapter 11 examines the use of technology in

language education. Computer assisted language learning (CALL) provides a more interactive learning in terms of authenticity although this would require students to be computer literate. Computer based tools can be divided into offline ones that do not require Internet connection and online tools. Films can also be considered a technology that facilitates authentic language learning so teachers should choose films that promote Canadian content with easy-to-follow stories. In the last chapter, the authors discuss the dynamics of the classroom. A supportive environment fosters positivity and enthusiasm toward learning; especially in terms of the students' language adaptation to the new Canadian experience. Grouping the students and using various approaches enhance the learning experience in different class contexts.

What is interesting about this book is that it introduces the internationally common issues of teaching ESL and focuses on the Canadian specificities (policies, teacher preparation context, language requirements for ESL learners in Canada, dialects, etc.) to familiarize the teacher with the needs of the linguistically and culturally diverse Canadian ESL classroom. For the novice teacher, the book provides appropriate examples, graphics, tables, scenarios, and illustrations. Being oriented toward the practice of ESL teaching, this is a user-friendly book that is designed for an academic and teacher preparation course but it is suitable for any ESL teacher.

### References

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