



Improving Language Teaching through 6 Principles: A TESOL Book Review

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In a world wherein speaking two or more languages is considered an advantage and an integral component for successful careers, teaching English as a second language has become both a challenge and a necessity in molding learners into linguistically and communicatively competent individuals in an increasingly globally-competitive society. As an English teacher, it is of great importance to become a model of language proficiency. Numerous researches and studies have proven how students try to be as proficient as their teachers. Teachers’ proficiency and overall linguistic knowledge significantly impact on the learners and cannot be overstated. It is then imperative for language teachers to understand how second language acquisition and development takes place and how to be exemplary in teaching the English learners.

The book entitled: *The 6 Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners* (2019) taught me different concepts that I can integrate in teaching English as a second language in a classroom where other languages are utilized. The book provides essential information that teachers should know about English language development, along with the 6 feasible examples of how these principles can be enacted in ESL/EFL classrooms. Inside its 209 pages, divided into 6 chapters, are ideas about mobilizing students’ home languages as cognitive resources to enrich the language education of language learners. Being able to engage our students in their native tongue creates a comfortable environment for them to speak English efficiently and successfully.

We, at first, doubted the credibility of the authors, but upon further research, their repertoire seemed to exceed ours. Deborah J. Short, the lead writer of the book, was apparently the President of the TESOL International Association, built around “professionals advancing the quality of English language teaching through professional development, research, standards, and advocacy,” according to their website, www.tesol.org. Other contributors, Helene Becker, Nancy Cloud, Andrea B. Hellman, and Linda New Levine, also have interesting backgrounds spanning from directing various English programs in different places in the US and other countries in teaching students with diverse cultural backgrounds that can hinder their second language acquisition. Even the writer of the book’s foreword, Professor Jim Cummins, has a sizable number of theories and studies about language education, earning him a name in the language research community. Their personal experiences in dealing with learners from different environments lead them in publishing a book that can help other English language teachers like us in integrating learners’ vernacular roots in learning a second language.

The first chapter, *A Vision for Exemplary English Language Teaching*, describes the authors’ motivation in writing the book. The chapter starts with a situation where the young second language learners use their first language to complete a project that requires verbal usage of English. Unfortunately for them, a group member of theirs is not that fluent in English. Nevertheless, they manage to teach their friend the language through contributing to their project. The chapter further explains the need for the 6 Principles amid a growing subgroup of English learners in the United States. Alongside the lack of strategies for teaching reading to English learners to new teacher candidates, the authors observe the importance of concepts that detail on how to teach a second language and relevant skills necessary for their subject areas to learners new to English. They masterfully wrote the different factors that affect language acquisition and the reasons why new ideas are useful during these times.

Next, Chapter 2 discusses the important background information to further specify what needs to be taught language-wise. *What Teachers Should Know About English Language Development to Plan Instruction* differentiates between social and academic language. The authors explained where these different usages of speech are developed, with social language coming from informal communication with lots of listening and speaking and academic language hailing from formal communication through reading and writing. Deeper in the chapter, standards for English proficiency and levels of English development provide substantial guides as to how to identify the magnitude of mastery my second language students have. There are also listed factors and conditions that can affect language learning, making me more aware of the needs of learners.

The 6 Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners, the third chapter, finally talks about the 6 different recommended practices an English teacher should consider, the six core principles of exemplary teaching: 1) Know your learners, 2) Create conditions for language learning, 3) Design high-quality lessons for language development, 4) Adapt lesson delivery as needed, 5) Monitor and assess student language development, and 6) Engage and collaborate within a community of practice. Reading the elaborations the authors have in each principle, the details mentioned in Chapter 1 and 2 made sense. Without knowing your students, we would not be able to adapt in accordance with their language needs, inefficiently educating learners in the second language. Studying the chapter made me reevaluate and reaffirm our teaching methods, making sure that we are doing well in teaching English towards second language students.

Chapter four, *Additional Roles for Teachers of English Learners*, illustrates the different roles of teachers of English learners. It streamlines the four most important tasks of teachers of English. As *mentors* or *counselors*, teachers of English serve as pillars that ensure stability in the process of learning inside the classroom, no matter what the backgrounds of their learners maybe. They also serve as *advocates* for the learners, prioritizing key areas in academics, social and emotional needs, access to programs and opportunities, support for families, and societal and legal issues. Being reliable *resources* of colleagues is also a role that champions collaboration and cooperation in the workforce. With this kind of engagement, everybody wins in the process of teaching English. Teachers of English are regarded as active *participant* in



the development of curricula, and other locally-designed materials. All of these add to the value to the profession and teachers of English may benefit from the satisfaction that these responsibilities may bring.

The last chapter, *Establishing a Culture of Shared Responsibility*, highlights valuable recommendations to all contributors to the teaching of English. From the district curriculum directors to the instructional coaches and from school principals to school psychologists, everyone is enjoined to look into the lens of culture of shared responsibility and examine their individual roles in helping learners of English achieve their full potential. Although this chapter is for school-based professionals, other professionals complement in the process as well, creating a greater impact in the education of learners of English. As this chapter shows, if all practitioners do their part, the whole school becomes responsive to the needs of learners, parents and guardians. Chapter 5 serves as the very important synergy of all professionals involved.

After reviewing the entire book along with its principles, the reviewers highly recommend it. Because of its emphasis on schools collaborating with everyone in the school community, the book creates opportunities to prepare teachers of English to various challenges hampering the academic and linguistic growth of their learners. The basic, but very timely and crucial principles, are potential catalysts for change, if schools implement them. From knowing your learners to engaging and collaborating within a community of practice, this book is systematically written for all professionals in the learning community. At most, this should be in the library for anyone who has a part in the teaching of English.

Reference

TESOL International Association (TESOL) (2018). *The 6 Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English learners: Grades K–12*. Alexandria, VA: Author.