Introduction: A Self-Development and Methodology Guide

The Audience for This Book

This book is a teacher development and methodology book. It can be used by those of you who are learning to teach English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL) as a part of your pre-service teacher education program. It can also be used as a teacher development text in in-service teacher development programs as a source for experienced EFL/ESL teachers who would like to refresh their knowledge and improve their teaching. In addition, this book can act as an exploratory text for those who are simply curious about teaching EFL/ESL or by those who have accepted an EFL/ESL teaching position without the benefit of a formal teacher education program and are unprepared to take on all of the responsibilities of being a teacher.
The Purpose and Content of This Book

This book provides ways for you to work on the development of your teaching and classroom practices. It offers ways that you, as an EFL or ESL teacher, can develop your teaching through a process of exploration. This book also provides discussion on the different English teaching settings around the world and teaching issues associated within them. It also provides discussions, examples, and illustrations of how EFL/ESL can be taught as interaction among people; how classrooms can be managed; how teachers and students can make use of authentic teaching materials, media, and technology; and the significance of culture for both students and teachers. In addition, this book shows how EFL/ESL teachers teach students to comprehend spoken English, to converse in English, to read for meaning, and to process writing.

This book is based on questions EFL/ESL teachers, including myself, have asked about teaching and learning over a number of years, and each chapter begins with a set of questions related to the content of that chapter. As such, one way to use this book as a part of your development is as a reference for ideas based on the questions posed at the beginning of each chapter and answered within it. This book also has a list of recommended sources at the end of each chapter and includes references to professional books and articles as well as EFL/ESL textbooks. The appendices contain information on publishing companies and academic and practical journals on teaching EFL/ESL. These additional sources will help further your own development as an EFL/ESL teacher.

The end of each chapter includes a set of self-development tasks that are an integral part of this book. The purpose of these tasks is to offer opportunities to work on your development as an EFL/ESL teacher by observing, talking about, and writing about teaching. I encourage you to spend time on these tasks. I realize that finding the time to do these tasks is not necessarily easy because of busy teaching schedules. However, I encourage you to find the time to systematically think about your teaching in new ways and to stretch your imaginations through the teacher development tasks.

I want to point out that this book is not, and was never meant to be, a book that neatly fits into what is known as "reflective teaching." I point this out because one reviewer (Rodgers 1998) mistakenly reviewed the first edition of this book alongside two other books that are clearly within the "reflective teaching" category. The reviewer took issue with the book; as she put it, "A reflective book it is not" (p. 611). As the title tag A Teacher Self-Development and Methodology
Guide indicates, this book was created so that readers can work on their own development as teachers by understanding what other teachers, including me, believe about teaching and do in their classrooms. In short, reflection is an important part of learning to teach, and I do offer chances for teachers to reflect on teaching in this book. However, the focus of this book is much broader in scope than just reflection on teaching.

Comments about the Second Edition

My approach to this second edition was based primarily on feedback from readers, including those who took the time to write formal published reviews in journals, students in my TEFL/TESL Methodology class, and people I have met at conferences or online who offered feedback on the book. I have taken this feedback to heart, and I have done my best to incorporate what I have learned from you, the readers, into this edition.

The basic structure of the book has not changed. It still includes three parts. The first provides background to my understanding of self-development, as well as ways you, as teachers or prospective teachers, can explore teaching to work on your development. Part 2 still includes knowledge and experience related to teaching language, and Part 3 is about teaching language skills.

However, while maintaining the same three parts, I have used readers’ feedback to make several changes in the book. To begin, I have added an additional chapter, EFL and ESL Teaching Settings (Chapter 3), to Part 1 to highlight the variety of teaching settings where English is taught around the world—teaching EFL in K–12 schools, in public language institutes, and in the private business sectors; and teaching ESL in such settings as K–12 schools, university intensive language programs, and in refugee programs. I have also revised Chapter 2, Exploration of Teaching, by providing a wider view of ways teachers work on the development of teaching beliefs and practices.

As with the first edition, Parts 2 and 3 include a variety of example activities, materials and media, and teaching strategies/techniques for use in the classroom. However, in line with my discussion on teaching contexts, I include examples across a wider range of teaching settings, such as in K–12 ESL, ESL intensive language institutes, Peace Corps, and university EFL classrooms.

The second edition maintains the use of the discussion on exploration of teaching from Chapter 2 by providing teacher self-development tasks at the end of each chapter. I have also updated and
expanded the Recommended Teacher Resources sections at the end of each chapter so that interested readers can locate up-to-date articles and books to help them to continue to develop their skills. Likewise, I have updated the information on journals and on publishing companies in Appendixes A and B. The endnotes for each chapter have also been updated and expanded.

As the world becomes ever-more technologically advanced and teachers need to make use of modern technology, discussions of technology have been added throughout the book. In Chapter 6, EFL/ESL Materials, Media, and Technology, I include a technology continuum related to teaching, which ranges from very low technology (e.g., writing in the air or using sticks to write on the ground), traditional technology (e.g., using chalk and blackboards and paper and pencils), to electrical technology (e.g., overhead projectors, VCRs, audio-cassette players and radios) through very modern technology (e.g., satellite television, high-speed Internet, and e-mail). Of course, not all teachers and students have access to high technology, and it’s important to note that high technology does not equal a more advanced culture or better learning opportunities. Any technology can be useful to teachers depending on how they use it. Examples are provided as to how teachers in different settings can make use of different levels of technology. In addition, the chapters on teaching language skills include ways teachers can make use of modern technology, including examples of creative activities.