

## REVIEW

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## RESENSIE

Diane Larsen-Freeman. 2000. *Techniques and principles in language teaching*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Oxford: Oxford university Press (Teaching Techniques in English as a Second Language seroes). 189pp.

Jack Richards and Theodore Rogers. 2001. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. *Approaches and methods in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

The first editions of these books have long formed a seminal part of courses on methodology for pre-set teachers. They form a good complement: the one practical and highly accessible and the other offering a well-grounded theoretical framework.

Richards and Rogers are not immodest when they claim that the first edition of *Approaches and methods in language teaching* is one of the most widely referred to books in teaching methods (vii). Users of that edition, will find that that second edition has a great deal more to offer. Many of the chapters have been substantially revised and nine new chapters have been added.

The new edition is divided into three parts. Part I is entitled *major language trends in the twentieth century*. In this part, the chapters have been left unchanged. What is new is that the references have been updated.

Part II is called *Alternative approaches and methods* The authors argue that the aspects covered in this part have 'attracted support at different times and at different places ... but have not generally been widely accepted, or, in some cases, have not maintained a substantial following' (VII). Four of the chapters in this part (Total physical response, Silent Way, Community Language Learning and Suggestopedia) have been shortened. The authors argue that these methods are no longer widely used. The five new chapters are on Whole Language, Multiple Intelligences, Neurolinguistic Programming, the Lexical Approach and Competency-Based Language Teaching. Here there could be some disagreement on whether these should have been placed here or in Part II which deals with communicative approaches to language teaching. Here there could be some disagreement on whether some of these are either without a substantial following or not generally been widely accepted. In South Africa, for instance, Whole Language has often been viewed as synonymous with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Whole Language is still widely used in North America and Australasia.

Another contentious area could be Multiple Intelligences which has established itself very firmly in many parts of North America. My own view on Multiple Intelligences is that it tends to be complementary or an enrichment of language teaching/learning rather than a language teaching approach in its own right.

Part III explores current communicative approaches. Two of the chapters, the Natural Approach and CLT. In each case, however, more recent references have been added. In the case of CLT, the final sections have been expanded.

As in the first edition, the descriptive framework used throughout is based on based on the one presented and discussed in Chapter 2 (an adaptation of Antony's model). As is the case with Larsen-Freeman's book, Richards and Rodgers do not intend their book to be viewed as a training manual. Both books aim at teacher development and so encourage critical engagement and reflection.

Richards and Rodgers present the approaches and methods according to their underlying theories of language and language learning, their learning objectives, the syllabus model followed, the roles of the teachers and the learners, the material used and the classroom procedures and techniques that the method uses.

Another strength of the book is that when there is a clear link with a particular second language or foreign language tradition, the authors have attempted to find links with linguistic, psychological or educational traditions.

Like Richard and Rodgers, Larsen-Freeman is concerned to present as objective a picture as possible: the intention is not to promote or denigrate particular approaches or methods. Unlike them her book is written in a very accessible way and she has more personal goals. For instance, her second goal for teachers is

to help you uncover the thoughts that guide your own actions as a teacher. They may not be ones of which you are aware. Seeking to determine which principles of the methods you read about here are most [dis]harmonious with your own thinking will help you to uncover some of your implicit thoughts and beliefs about teaching.

(p. 1)

As a teacher educator, she also sees the book from the perspective of the teacher educator. Her reflections in the prefatory section entitled *To the teacher educator* are a particularly valuable exploration of the role the study of methods and approaches can play in teacher education courses. A further mark of her reflexive approach is that she has taken account of some of the arguments presented by writers who have criticised the concept of language teaching methods. She also acknowledges that the last chapter represents a form of self-indulgence. In this chapter, she shares her views on making informed methodological choices.

The second edition appears to be as popular as the first: by 2001, the book was already into its third impression.

The revision of the book has been painstakingly done. Evidence of this is the fact that she submitted chapters to leading proponents of methodologies as a means of ensuring that her interpretation was trustworthy. This is partly why her book reflects the change in name from Suggestopedia to Desuggestopedia with the concomitant changes in the method, while *Approaches and methods in language teaching* does not.

The layout of the first edition has been retained in the chapters where a language method or approach is presented. First a lesson is given, then there is a guided reflection which

highlights the principles that are being used. The following ten questions are then posed so the principles used can be explored:

1. What are the goals of the teachers who use ...
2. What is the role of the teacher? What is the role of the students?
3. What are some of the characteristics of the teaching/learning process?
4. What is the nature of student-teacher interaction? What is the nature of student-student interaction?
5. How are the feelings of students dealt with?
6. How is language viewed? How is culture viewed?
7. What areas of language are emphasised? What language skills are emphasised?
8. What is the role of the students' native language?
9. How is evaluation accomplished?
10. How does the teacher respond to students' errors?

Next the techniques and materials are reviewed. Finally the readers/teachers are asked to apply the information given in the chapter. There are two kinds of exercises: one is a kind of self-evaluation and the other invites readers to identify possible applications to their own teaching situation.

I was disappointed with some aspects, however. In my view, justice has not been done to the complexity of CLT. Larsen-Freeman oversimplifies the fluency-accuracy continuum, for instance. Furthermore, Chapters 10 and 11 do not do justice to their content (Chapter 10 deals with Content-Based, Task-Based and Participatory Approaches in 21 pages, while Chapter 11 tackles Learning Strategy Training, Co-operative Learning and Multiple Intelligences in 17 pages). Nevertheless, the achievement of the book overall is impressive. I would agree with the assessment made by Campbell and Rutherford (series editors of *Teaching Techniques in English as a Second Language*):

Still evident as before is Diane's gift for being able gently to lead one to examine one's own professional behavior for possible incongruities between one's view of language and the way one teaches it. And still there intensified is evidence of her serious and deeply personal thought devoted to complex pedagogical issues and her incomparable ability to make these matters come alive with great clarity for the widest professional readership.

(Preface)

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