

BOOK REVIEW

Chakrakodi Ravinaryan (2016) *Learn English Teach English: English Skills for Teachers*. New Delhi, Oxford University Press. ISBN 019946636-X (pp viii + 144) Price Rs 240/-

Teacher training has undergone a tremendous change in the last four decades. The focus that existed largely on skills of teaching (craft model) has progressively moved to equipping the student teachers with knowledge (applied science model) and later to develop their attitudes to imbibe professionalism in their work (reflective model). However, what remains important to note is that along this path of progress and modifications in teacher development, there haven't been books to meet the demands of the learners. Under such circumstances when we come across a book serving such purposes, one obviously is filled with a sense of satisfaction. The book under review is one such.

In June 2015, a landmark change was ushered in the teacher education programmes offered in India. The B Ed programme which had remained a one-year course was made a two-year course. Two major reasons that prompted change are relevant to the book under review. The first change is seen in the increase in practice teaching sessions, and the second change ushers in content cum methodology as the main pedagogic process.

Apart from a few books that helped a student teacher to cope with content cum methodology, there have been no books in the last two decades. There was a vacuum and this is now being filled by the book

under review.

What does *Learning English Teaching English* do? This is a book meant for helping teachers to develop as better teachers of English. This can be used both by in-service as well as pre-service teacher education institutions. My reasons for saying this will become clear before we get to the end of this review.

Let us begin with the structure of the book. The book has six units and each unit has been structured with great care where a balance has been struck between theory and practice. Each unit begins with a task. Later there is a discussion on the rationale for the task and the theoretical support that the task demands. This in many ways reminds one of a process called conscientization, or in simple words helping one become aware of what one already knows. This is specifically what is needed in our teacher development programmes. The book happily moves away from being didactic to being inductive.

The first three units focus on three important language skills i.e. helping the reader to become 'Efficient' reader, listener and speaker. Why not a writer? One may ask. Writing has been taken up at a later stage with an intervening chapter on developing Grammar and Vocabulary. Grammar and Vocabulary are needed to

support one's writing which is a more complex and an integrated skill. Finally, the book ends with a chapter on 'Clear Pronunciation'.

All units have a similar structure and this is done with a purpose. A similarity of structure helps the reader to become familiar with the structure as well as anticipate tasks and explanations while reading a new unit. This is once again a difficult job, but commendably executed by the author. Ravinarayan has provided ample samples of authentic texts for reading, listening and exercises for speaking and writing. On an average there are 10 exercises for each of the skills and helpfully the book carries a key to all the tasks. This is largely to ensure the users to do the task and verify whether they are on the right path of progress.

There are two chapters that focus on content matter 'Grammar and Vocabulary' and 'Pronunciation' Ravinarayan has provided tasks that can be worked in pairs and groups in these chapters. By mixing tasks with theory, the book strikes a healthy balance between the two. This is in keeping with objective of fulfilling the content cum methodology mentioned earlier in this review. The Foreword by Richard Smith makes this point clear, and I quote:

This book aims not only to enhance the language proficiency of future English language teachers but also to orientate them towards important issues and methods in English Teaching. The challenges of bridging theory and practice in the initial

teacher education are well-know and at a time when the curriculum preparation of future teachers is being renewed across India.

The book has yet another quality which needs to be mentioned here. It can be used in the classroom by a teacher and each unit in itself provides a lesson plan for the teacher. The instructions for the tasks are given very clearly and having given the task, the teacher has enough support to discuss the answers as well as provide clarifications. This being the case, a good learner can also use it as a self-study material and stand to benefit. This design further reinforces the objective of providing for content cum methodology as well as catering to the needs to both in-service and pre-service teachers under training.

The book is not without its follies. But these are far fewer compared to the merits and hence can be ignored. Before the book goes for a reprint, I am sure the author will take care to have it properly proof-read. He also needs to check the phonetic symbols with the latest version of IPA symbols as provided in OALD or the latest edition of *Everyman's Pronouncing Dictionary*. With these two changes, the book is sure to find a prominent place in the libraries of all teacher education institutions and more importantly the student-teachers' desk.

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