What English Language Teachers Need to Know Volume I: Understanding Learning, 2ⁿᵈ edition

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Recommended Citations:

APA

Yu, X. (2020, June 30). [Review of the book *What English Language Teachers Need to Know Volume I: Understanding Learning, 2ⁿᵈ edition*, by D. E. Murray & M. A. Christison]. *The Journal of Language Teaching and Learning, 10*(1), 72-73.

MLA

Yu, X. Rev. of *What English Language Teachers Need to Know Volume I: Understanding Learning, 2ⁿᵈ edition*, D. E. Murray and M. A. Christison. *The Journal of Language Teaching and Learning* 30 June 2020: 10.1 (2020): 72-73.

What English Language Teachers Need to Know Volume I: Understanding Learning, 2nd edition

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Murray, D. E., & Christison, M. (2019). *What English language teachers need to know volume I: Understanding learning*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Currently, a quarter of the world's population (i.e. 1.7 billion) speak English at a useful level. Amongst the English speakers, 750 million are speakers of English as a foreign language (EFL) and 375 million are English as second language (ESL) speakers (Beare, 2019; British Council, 2013). The number of both EFL and ESL speakers is only expected to keep growing, so as their needs in learning the English language. Hence, high-quality English language teachers are in urgent demand. Conforming to such needs, in *What English Language Teachers Need to Know Volume I: Understanding Learning, 2nd edition*, Murray and Christison systematically tackle the essential concepts, theories, and pedagogical strategies in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) to guide novice English teachers in various teaching contexts.

The key question "*What do teachers need to know and be able to do in order for their students to learn English*?" leads the volume. Grounded in theories and empirical research, the authors divide the discussion into four parts, including *Identity and Context* (Chapter 1-5), *Language Awareness* (Chapter 6-9), *Learning* (Chapter 10-13), and *Professionalism* (Chapter 14-15). Each chapter starts with a vignette which is a real-life challenge that language teachers or learners face, this establishes the context of the topic. Meanwhile, besides objective and academic presentation of the topic, reflection tasks and questions are often inserted into each section to help the readers understand the topic from a critical and personal perspective. For instance, in Chapter 14, following the effects and different types of volunteerism, the authors raise reflection questions like "*What unpaid work have you done in your life?*" (p.261). Each chapter ends with discussion questions and additional resources.

Part I and Part II serve as the theoretical foundation for further discussions in the following chapters. Part I (*Identity and Context*) introduces the dynamic nature of learner identities, variations of the

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English language, diverse contexts of English learning around the world, and cultural aspect of English learners and teachers. These chapters not only showcase the dynamic and interdisciplinary nature of the field of ELT, but also provide practical tools which help the teachers critically examine their own and the learners' identities as well as the unique teaching contexts that they work in.

Part II (*Language Awareness*) presents systems of the English language, including the sound and word systems, sentence structures, and organizations of texts. The brief overview of the language systems is not intended to be exhaustive; rather, it means to help teachers develop basic knowledge of the language structure and its application to teaching. However, quite possibly, a novice English teacher may get lost in the overwhelming linguistic terminologies and fail to consider how to apply such knowledge in actual teaching.

In Part III (*Learning*), the authors address theories related to learning, second language acquisition, and classroom teaching and learning. Similar as the previous chapters, contents in Part III are not written to train experts in the field but to provide an overview of essential theories for novice teachers to understand students' learning mechanism, thus offer more effective teaching accordingly.

The volume ends with Part IV (*Professionalism*) which offers practical strategies that teachers can employ for professional development and adapt to a digital world. This update from the first edition is especially valuable as Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has drastically expanded in language education in the last few years. Therefore, it is unavoidable for virtually all teachers to employ digital tools to teach the target language more effectively.

In sum, this volume provides a comprehensive guide for novice ESL and EFL teachers to start recognizing the scope of the field and understanding essential concepts in ELT. With the continuous growing of English learners, high-quality English teachers are urgently in need. The academic and reflective nature of the volume allows it to be used as an introductory level coursebook in TESOL degree or professional development programs. The only drawback is the lack of hands-on activities in some chapters. If the authors could add some specific classroom situations or teaching moments in addition to the theories, novice teachers would benefit more regarding applying the theories in real-life teaching.

References

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