Teachers research

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Teachers research

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Bullock, D. & Smith, R. (2015). *Teachers research*. Kent, UK: International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL) Publisher.

Teachers research is a collection of works presented at the *IATEFL Teachers Research* event in 2014, edited by Deborah Bullock, publications manager of IATEFL and Richard Smith, a reader from the University of Warwick. Unlike other research books of highly academic and formal writing style, this book comprises of stories transcribed from presentations in a very friendly way which ensures its high accessibility to readers. The book covers a wide range of topics such as using technology in EFL education, balancing exam – oriented learning and meaningful practicing, enhancing learners' language skills, and reflecting EFL pedagogies.

In the first part of the book, Richard Smith states the need to get EFL teachers together and share their research work. This get-together is seen as an expression of teachers' own experience in EFL education, current EFL educational issues, and teaching innovations. This is believed to be more effective and relevant to teachers' professional development since teachers, despite teaching in different contexts, encounter both shared and distinct difficulties in teaching. Therefore, they may find someone with the same problems for further experience exchange or learn from someone with new teaching approaches. The rest of this section describes the conference programs with diverse activities including paper and poster presentations, discussions, evaluation, and a creation of a forum for sharing excellent works of EFL teachers at the conference.

The following part is written by the two editors emphasising the need for a new kind of research materials for EFL teachers. Unlike highly formal research texts, there is a preference for a new genre of personal stories which teachers transcribe their conference presentations and reflection of their teaching experience to written personal stories. The idea of using stories is seen as an informal and friendly way to approach a

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wider range of readers. However, those stories are ensured to obtain academic relevance, uniqueness, and innovations in EFL education.

The first story is from Jessica Cobley and Becky Steven emphasising the use of technology in enhancing students' oral fluency. An illustration of mobile applications and web-based tools is provided to help learners engage in speaking activities, keep track of their works, and make self-corrections for improvements. The two mobile apps *iCounterClick* and *AhCounter* allow the speakers to manage their speech rate through showing the number of words they speak in a certain amount of time and the number of fillers involved in that speech. Self-recordings are used for students' tracks of their practices. Then, an online pronunciation bank *IDEA accent achieve* is introduced with numerous recordings worldwide which can be used as samples of different kinds of accents and speech rates for students self-check and practice. The use of these pieces of technology has shifted the traditional teaching methods to a more engaging ones that can motivate students in practice speaking and improve their fluency.

The second story requests a combination of teaching for exams and conducting meaningful activities. Cynthia James presents the IDCA model standing for Inspiration, Definition, Creativity, and Acquisition. In Inspiration stage, teachers need to firstly motivate themselves so that they are willing to work with students and help them tackle the problems. Then, the Definition stage refers to identifying what problems students have and what teachers want to teach. Creativity means the appropriate design of classroom activities which can help learners develop their language competence for assessment. The final stage of Acquisition is the assessment of learners' learning to further suggest measures to assist students in their learning. All four elements in the model work together to increase learners' interests in learning, high exam results, and teachers' independence from textbooks.

The third, fifth, and seventh papers focus on teaching writing and presentation skills. For writing, Elena Ager applies the method of stressing students by making them work with new partners. Group discussions on a given topic and a following group argumentative essay are employed. The experiment indeed shows the positive sides of learning new ideas from new colleagues and developing interpersonal skills through extensive negotiation with new partners. Suggestions on effective collaborative writing are also given. On the other side, Akile Nazim adopts a six-stage cycle in teaching presentation skills to learners in which students continuously practice their presentations and receive formative assessments. The action research is done in four weeks after which students respond positively about their improved presentation skills in a limited time frame. Katie Moran authors the seventh paper about French classrooms with the same idea of frequently practicing presentations in front of peers for feedback. Both presenters and listeners then show improvements in oral presentations through listening to their peers' talks and constructive feedback.

The fourth, sixth, and eighth papers are reflections of teaching and learning processes. Oriana Onate carries out surveys with 102 students who report their successes and failures in learning and the implied reasons. The teacher then collects the responses for a collection of learning strategies and an experience exchange among students for better teaching and learning. Yasmin Dar and a group of educators apply Exploratory Practice (EP) model asking the What — Who – How questions to identity the problems, the

individuals involved in causing and fixing the problems, and the solutions. The model has shown its effectiveness in solving classroom-based problems and is suggested for an expansion to other contexts.

Deborah Bullock makes the conclusion of the need to have informal but authentic experience sharing among teachers and calls for more attention to teachers-research for sustainable good teaching practice.

In general, the book with a synthesis of teachers' personal stories has shown its values in terms of practical application and accessibility. Many commonly issues in EFL classes are properly addressed with helpful guidance to improve EFL education quality.