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BOOK REVIEW / CRITIQUE DE LIVRE

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The fourth edition of *Practical Guide to Facilitating Language Learning* by Marguerite Wessels, published by Oxford University Press Southern Africa (2014), is exactly what the title promises: it is very practical.

It is aimed at students in BEd courses and other teacher training diploma students as well as in-service teachers and is written in clear, precise and understandable language with explanations of specific terminology on the page where the terms occur for the first time. Even in the more theoretical sections that are underpinned by appropriate language teaching and learning theories, the practical focus is never lost. Each chapter is preceded by the learning outcome envisaged for that chapter, so that the reader knows what benefit to expect.

Particularly useful are the many and varied activities described to facilitate language learning at various levels. Co-operative learning, active participation of all the learners during each lesson and practical suggestions for activities, feature very strongly throughout this text book. There is a strong focus on the Intermediate and Senior phases, but many of these activities can also be adapted for use in the Foundation phase, as well as for the foreign or second additional language classroom, where the learners are not able to express themselves very well, or may not always understand the instructions. Practical ways of overcoming these obstacles are suggested where appropriate. Nursery rhymes and traditional children's stories are used as texts quite often and lend themselves to be used in different phases, adapting the approach to suit the target group. Many other texts as well as suggestions for constructing texts for use in the language classroom are also given.

The book deals with the teaching of all four language skills as well as language teaching as a discipline. There are many practical solutions offered for challenging aspects of language teaching, such as spelling, and the ideas given on how best to accomplish this necessary aspect of language teaching will go a long way to alleviating the tedium. There is a chapter on each of the language skills with many examples of texts and techniques that can be used. The author emphasises a holistic approach to language learning and teaching.

The teaching of reading as a language skill must include literary texts. The sections on teaching literature are also very practical, giving many different examples of texts that are suitable for all the levels, from the Foundation phase to the Senior phase. The chapter on literature is aimed at more advanced learners, but the chapter entitled Stories is aimed at foundation phase as well as senior learners suggesting ways of introducing them to literature and how to make readers out of them. Cultural relevance in the multicultural classroom is emphasised and there are examples of texts in indigenous languages that teachers who are unfamiliar with will find extremely useful. There is a strong emphasis on the enjoyment of reading and motivating children to become readers.

Assessment of language skills is a time consuming exercise. The author provides many examples of assessments for each of the four language skills, as well as rubrics by which the accuracy of the assessment can be guaranteed. This particular chapter only considers senior and intermediate phase learners.

The detailed index at the back makes the book very user friendly for in-service teachers as well, because they can go to the relevant page without wasting valuable time searching for ideas. Language teaching students would benefit a great deal from studying this book and using it as a resource later on, while teachers who are running out of innovative ideas would find it a good supplementary tool.

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