

shows how different theories account for the raised issues and the mechanisms of SLA, and Part 3 provides further elaboration on the theoretical constructs and research findings. Third, the authors take a neutral position throughout the book: they present different or opposing perspectives, report disparate evidences, and acknowledge controversies without making arbitrary, unfounded claims. Accordingly, the reader is able to obtain an objective view of the status quo of SLA research.

The book also has several limitations. One is the lack of an index, which is particularly important for an encyclopaedia-type book that covers a large number of topics; this issue is exacerbated by the lack of details in the brief table of contents (with only four subheadings listed, barring the Introduction). Another aspect that can be improved is the recommended reading list, which could have been compiled topically rather than alphabetically. A third limitation concerns the trade-off between breadth and depth, that is, due to the effort to include as many topics as possible, the authors are unable to delve deeply into any of them. However, as the authors acknowledge, the primary purpose of the book is to discuss the basics of the research and theories on SLA, and it does not seek to provide an exhaustive review on every topic. Despite the minor issues, the book is a must-have for all rookie researchers, or anyone who wants a quick overview of the field of SLA.

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**Richards, J.C. (2015). *Key issues in language teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. (826 pp). ISBN 978-1-107-45610-5 (pbk); 978-1-107-66906-2 (ebook).**

This especially wide-ranging text adds to the many other valuable book publications authored by Jack Richards over the past forty years. The “key issues” referred to in the title have arisen through recent changes and developments in L2 teaching as well as perennial topics of discussion and debate, and the contexts, teachers and learners that feature in the text are both numerous and diverse. As Richards points out in the Introduction, the past few decades have seen not only a significant expansion in the use of English in fields such as business and trade, media, tele-communications, media and pop culture, but also in graduate-level programmes that use English as the medium of instruction - both in English-speaking and non-English speaking countries. The knowledge base now required of teachers is one that is broad and responsive to change. Since L2 teachers are a group with varied qualifications and experience, with varying degrees of commitment to professional learning, Richards states an intention to present content in broadly accessible way, and to provide overviews, summaries, case studies, reflective questions, and descriptive accounts by teachers.

The book is divided into four long, theme-based parts: *English language teaching today*, *Facilitating student learning*, *Language and the four skills*, and *The teacher's environment*. The first part (104 pp) provides introductory content through four chapters on the scope of ELT, theories of second language learning, approaches and methods, and developing knowledge, skills and awareness in teaching. The second main section of the book (120 pp. approx.) focuses on the second language learner, the language lesson, managing classroom learning, and age-appropriate pedagogy. The third main section (300 pp) covers grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, listening, speaking, reading, writing, discourse and pragmatics. In the fourth and final part of the book (150 pp), the language course, textbooks, technology, assessment and professional development are discussed. The book is also available as an eBook, and this version adds video interviews with teachers on a variety of classroom teaching-related topics.

Each chapter begins with a brief overview, followed by paragraph-length information on a number of key topics. The main content of each chapter features quotations from authoritative texts, a number of questions for reflection, and short texts presenting the views of experienced and inexperienced teachers from a range of English-speaking and non-English speaking countries. Each chapter ends with a list of discussion questions and a short bibliography for further reading. Teachers will find additional value in the Appendices that close each of the chapters. To cite some examples, the chapter on *Approaches and Methods* includes a sample lesson plan, the chapter on *The language lesson* provides a sample lesson-plan template and a lesson observation form, the *Grammar* chapter gives a sample lesson plan for teaching the passive, *Vocabulary* provides two lesson plans for teaching affixes and word families, and *Managing classroom learning* includes a list of classroom management techniques. The following chapter features an interview with an Iranian EFL teacher about his personal principles of practice. An inventory of learning styles and case studies of three successful language learners (who are also teachers) can be found in the chapter that focuses on second language learners. Appendices present sample extracts from commercial textbooks for analysis and evaluation.

The book concludes with a general glossary (22 pp), brief profiles of the 40 teachers whose vignettes have appeared in the book, and a reference list for the print texts and weblinks that have been cited. Overall, the most striking features of this book would have to be its comprehensiveness, the clarity and accessibility of its content (both in terms of actual content and layout), and the bridge it establishes between practice-based theory and theory-based practice. Richards and his scholarly sources provide the former, while the teacher and learner vignettes provide accounts of principled classroom teaching. Overall, the text has much in common with Penny Ur's invaluable text (2012), although in size and scope the Richards volume is more like a handbook. Classroom teachers and language teacher educators alike will find this book reliable, readable and highly informative. It will appeal as a "one-stop shop" for teachers wanting basic information about essential topics such as planning, methodologies, materials and assessment, or extended definitions of core concepts

such as *blended learning, constructivism, global teaching approaches, pragmatics, strategy training, willingness to communicate, or the zone of proximal development*. The book would be an invaluable library resource for use by staff or graduate students in any kind of L2 teaching institution, and I am happy to recommend it without reservation.

#### Reference

Ur, P. (2012). *A course in English language teaching*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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**Chomsky, N. (2016). *What kind of creatures are we?* New York, NY: Columbia University Press. ISBN 978-0-231-17596-8 (hbk.) 167 pp.**

**Berwick, R. C., & Chomsky, N. (2016). *Why only us: Language and evolution*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press. ISBN 978-0262034241 (hbk.) 215 pp.**

Sixty years after *Syntactic Structures*, Noam Chomsky remains highly influential and astonishingly productive. But with most of his recent publishing in political analysis, these represent his first book-length works in linguistics since 2012. And they are classic Chomsky: ambitious, authoritative, frequently surprising, at times demanding, and undoubtedly genuine contributions to the field.

*What kind of creatures are we?* addresses four philosophical issues. For applied linguists, the first chapter may be the most relevant: a valuable, up-to-date account of Chomsky's central views on the nature of language and reflections on their wide ranging implications. He outlines what he calls the Basic Property of language: hierarchically structured expressions that are interpreted at both the external interface and the internal, conceptual interface (p. 4). He argues that the main function of language is to enable thought, while the view that it is to enable communication is "virtual dogma that has no serious support" (p. 14). Particularly interesting are areas in the study of language that Chomsky identifies as being under-explored, and what he considers to be appropriate research agendas. Also presented are brief summaries of the minimalist program in syntax and its crucial operation *Merge*.

The second chapter concerns the scope and limits of human understanding imposed by the biological properties of the brain. He points out that certain questions, and even the ability to formulate them, may be beyond human cognitive capacity. Language is again a key concern and there is extended discussion – and rejection – of referential semantics. Also discussed are the atomic elements of thought, which appear not to be possessed by other animals. The third chapter shifts to issues of social justice, and it is here that Chomsky's writing is at its most accessible and