



with DVD

The Practice of English Language Teaching

Jeremy Harmer

FOURTH EDITION



PEARSON
Longman

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by

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A guide to teaching the English language covers such topics as English as world language, methodologies, grouping students, educational technology, lesson planning, testing and evaluation, and learner autonomy.

Introduction

In a few days (as I write this) I will be going to a large English teachers' conference in the USA which has the title 'Tides of change'. A couple of weeks after that it's Poland and a weekend called 'New challenges for language teaching and learning in the changing world'; and then there's a 'changes' conference somewhere else, and then it's off to another country for a conference on ... changes and how to deal with them! And as the year goes on – and who knows, through into the next year and the years after that – there will continue to be meetings, seminars and articles about how to deal with the pace of newness and innovation in a world where increasingly sophisticated technology is only one manifestation of the way things just keep on moving and developing.

We can only be grateful for this fitful march forwards (and, of course, sometimes sideways and occasionally even backwards). It keeps us on our toes, insists on our engagement with new ideas, technologies and techniques and, whilst occasionally bewildering and unsettling us, makes the world a brighter and more invigorating place. And it demands new editions of a book like *The Practice of English Language Teaching*.

Since the last edition of this book, different new ideas (or shifts in emphasis) have come to prominence and so they are reflected in this fourth edition. There is much more on educational technology, of course, both in Chapter 11 and throughout the rest of book. There is a re-examination of the place and role of English in the world (and about the competing claims of Global English and the newly-observed phenomenon that is sometimes called ELF). The fourth edition of this book is far more concerned about context-sensitive teaching than its predecessors, describing different learning contexts in Chapter 7, and teasing out native-speaker and non-native-speaker teacher issues in Chapter 6 (though, as it happens, I dislike that terminology). The place of the students' mother tongue is examined in more (and more sympathetic) detail than in previous editions, and the discussions on learner autonomy and teacher development in the last two chapters of the book have been extensively re-thought.

But what makes this new edition significantly different from its three predecessors is the inclusion of a DVD of lesson 'stories' (edited-down versions of filmed lessons), together with teacher interviews in which the teachers discuss issues ranging from pronunciation teaching to role-play, from coursebook use to the importance of instructions, from grammar teaching to repetition and correction. These lessons and interviews illuminate much of the content of the book better than my own prose can ever do.

The fourth edition of *The Practice of English Language Teaching* is offered as a record of where English language teaching is right now. But underneath the surface, changes are bubbling away as we speak. Watch this space!

Acknowledgements

Since this book started its (now) long life, it has been informed by the help and counsel of many people through its four editions. From the very beginning I would have been incapable of writing and re-writing it without the encouragement, engagement and critical responses of the many people whom I now wish to acknowledge with very real appreciation and gratitude.

The **first edition** of *The Practice of English Language Teaching* was informed by the input and reactions of teacher colleagues and students at the Instituto Anglo-Mexicano de Cultura, both in Mexico City and Guadalajara. I was given help and advice (and more) by Walter Plumb, Jean Pender and Richard Rossner, and had excellent reporting from Donn Byrne and Jane Willis. Tim Hunt commissioned the book and guided me through it, and Judith King edited it.

For the **second edition**, I was inspired by comments from Richard Rossner, Julian Edge and Nick Dawson, and spurred on by publisher Damien Tunnacliffe, who, together with Helena Gomm and Alyson Lee, saw the work through to its completion.

The **third edition** kicked off (and continued) with advice, encouragement and robustly helpful criticism from Martin Parrott. It benefited enormously from reporting by Sally Blackmore, Hann Kijowska, Katie Head, Kip Tellez and David Bowker. Many people answered questions or helped me out in other ways, including Paul Cane, Chris George, Roger Gower, Kenny Graham, Peter Grundy, Michael Rundell, Michael Swan and Douglas Workman. As with the previous two editions, Anita Harmer provided counsel, support and a sharp and challenging assessment of many ideas I was working with as the book progressed and I was lucky enough to have Brigit Viney as my editor.

When this **fourth edition** of *The Practice of English Language Teaching* was first discussed, Jacqui Hiddleston commissioned some really terrific reports by Guy Cook, Leslie Anne Hendra, David Valente, Lindsay Clandfield and Michael Manser. I think it is safe to say that I could not have got going without reading what they had to say about the things they thought needed to be done. Of course, as with all reporting, I have not always done what they suggested or expected (though I often have), but a real engagement with their various points of view was an absolutely essential part of the thinking that has gone into this book.

Later on, Guy Cook, in the most helpful and invigorating way, again provided really useful comments on a part of the manuscript as it emerged, and Jeff Stanford gave some absolutely crucial feedback on one particular chapter.

In my visits to schools, courses and conferences around the world, learning and teaching are always, of course, the main subjects of discussion. I would love to be able to list the literally hundreds of names of the participants in those discussions. But I can thank the following people for various specific kinds of help and comment: Martine Allard, Stephen Bax, Kosta Dimeropoulos, John Evans, Kenny Graham, Clare Griffiths, Philip Harmer, Ian Jasper, Mary O'Leary, Michael Swan and Penny Ur.

It has been extremely exciting (and comforting!) for me to have Helena Gomm working on this edition (as she did on the second edition some years ago). Her firm and experienced hand is evident in every page. However much of a cliché this is, it is important to say that the book would never have made it without her. But without publisher Katy Wright's driving encouragement and her significant engagement with this fourth edition, it wouldn't even have got started – and it almost certainly wouldn't have got finished on time either. All writers deserve to be blessed with a publisher like Katy.

When Katy Wright and I approached Vic Richardson at Embassy CES to see about the possibility of filming teachers who work for that organisation, his immediate openness and support for our ideas was both crucial and inspiring. Thanks to him, we were able to film a number of lessons and conduct in-depth interviews with a range of exceptional professionals. I do not think I can say thank you forcefully enough to express my gratitude to the teachers (Allan Bramall, Barbara Gardner, Bill Harris, Eleanor Spicer-Lundholm, Kit Claxton, Laura Hayward, Ross Wainwright, Rolf Tynan, Tony Rapa, Silvana Richardson and Vanessa Harrison) for allowing us to film them, edit them, cut large chunks from their lessons, interview them and generally disrupt their lives. I hope they will realise how important their contribution has been to the way in which the project has finally turned out. I also want to thank David Rowland, Steve Barratt, Andy Quin and Reg Veale for making it all possible. Luis España's kind counsel was invaluable in the film editing process, and heartfelt thanks are due to Amy Weaver for responding so constructively to being 'thrown in at the deep end'. And finally, as always, once the book got into the hands of production controller Jane Reeve, it really started to move! How would we ever manage without her?

I have wanted to describe the practice of English language teaching as it exists right now. All of the people listed above have helped me enormously in that endeavour. And I pray that they will think I have got it right. If I haven't, it's my fault. If I have, well it's thanks to them.

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