



Reviewed work:

*International Perspectives on Teaching the Four Skills in ELT: Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing.* (2018).  
Anne Burns & Joseph Siegel (Eds.). Cham, Switzerland:  
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The four main language skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, writing) constitute the basis of most English language teaching (ELT) practices around the world. The sub-skills such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation are also emphasized while teaching English as they form an integral part of the four main skills and their development. Focusing on teaching the four main skills in ELT, *International Perspectives on Teaching the Four Skills in ELT: Listening, Speaking, Reading, Writing* (2018), is a volume that aims to introduce an international perspective about skills teaching with 18 chapters written by experienced authors from 16 different countries in various continents, which forms the basis of the ‘global meets local’ assertion of the book. This edited volume has been published under the *International Perspectives on ELT* series by Palgrave and intends to enable researchers and practitioners in ELT to see diverse cutting-edge skills-teaching ideas, experiences, and research from all around the world and recognize how global perspectives in ELT are gradually shaped by local teaching practices.

The book consists of four parts, which correspond to the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, consecutively. Each part is comprised of four chapters. In addition to the 16

chapters on the four skills, the editors contributed to the opening and concluding chapters of the book. The opening chapter (i.e., Chapter 1) presents an introductory account of the themes and issues on teaching the four language skills. The editors draw attention to the significance of developing the four macro skills in ELT, and briefly present current research on skills teaching. Then, they give an overview of the chapters and discuss the following overarching messages conveyed by the chapters: bottom-up processes and metacognition should be more emphasized in skills teaching; teachers' beliefs and experiences have positive or negative effects on the efficacy of skills teaching; innovativeness is relative and context-dependent; local creative practices add new dimensions to the existing approaches; and sociocultural dimension should not be ignored in skills teaching.

Part 1 is devoted to the skill of listening, and composed of four research-based chapters that focus on teaching listening in different contexts. Chapter 2 presents a comparison between the beliefs and practices of foreign language teachers (French, German, and Spanish) in England and English language teachers in Brazil about listening and its teaching. The authors indicate that comprehension is mainly emphasized in teaching listening with limited focus on collaboration among students in both countries and suggest that more attention should be paid to collaboration and the development of listening strategies, especially metacognitive ones. Chapter 3 examines the current second language (L2) listening practices in China and the authors state that the focus of the recent practices in teaching listening has shifted from product to process, inauthentic materials to authentic conversational language, classroom-based listening to out-of-class listening, and excessive comprehension-based listening to extensive listening practices for fluency in listening. Chapter 4 discusses the development of a listening course for Japanese students at the tertiary level. The suggested course adopts an interactive sheltered model under which decoding and meaning building processes are used to enhance the effectiveness of listening comprehension. Chapter 5 focuses on teaching listening in an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) context, and explores L2 listening in nursing education in Qatar. The authors report that language-based communication errors pose a serious problem for patient safety and put forward the following suggestions: (a) more importance should be attached to listening instruction; (b) the use of authentic materials should be increased; (c) high-frequency profession-specific terminology should be drawn from corpora and incorporated into listening pedagogy; and (d) different varieties of English other than native speaker accents should be introduced to students.

Part 2, on speaking, begins with Chapter 6 that covers teaching English speaking skills in Cameroonian primary schools. The author indicates a number of limitations about the materials and methodology used in Cameroon as well as some promising signs that there are English language teachers who try innovative techniques like rhythmic activities and storytelling. The author also presents some suggestions for curriculum development, materials development, teacher development, and teaching methodology. Chapter 7 introduces inquiry dialogue as a

genre for promoting teacher and student speaking in the context of international students in Australia. This innovative technique is reported to be effective in terms of enhancing student talk and supporting broad participation in speaking classes. Chapter 8 explores teaching dialogic speaking strategies in a Canadian English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program and focuses on the efficacy of the *Six Thinking Hats* approach for speaking. Chapter 9 discusses teaching conversational English to Russian adult learners via Skype. The author puts emphasis on the growing role of online language education and reports that interpersonal factors such as rapport, jokes, agreement, and self-disclosure are quite important for students as well as instructional factors such as materials, webcams, and chatting.

The beginning of Part 3 on reading, starts with Chapter 10 that discusses employing authentic literary texts to promote elementary students' reading in Czech Republic. The author presents two sample reading lessons (one for Grade 5 and the other for Grade 9) into which children's literature is incorporated and then discusses implications for teaching. Chapter 11 covers teaching reading to Indonesian university students to encourage critical thinking and collaborative work through techniques like prediction, jigsaw reading, and deleted text that enable learners to go beyond just the comprehension of texts. Chapter 12 introduces developing autonomy in an ESL academic reading course in Hawai'i through reading communities. The idea is based on student-initiated community building both in and outside the university to promote collective autonomy. Chapter 13 deals with reading as a social practice for adult migrants in New Zealand. The author suggests using authentic texts related to the learners' social and cultural context and facilitating talk around text through meaningful dialogue.

Writing forms the focus of the last part of the volume. Chapter 14 concentrates on promoting descriptive writing through culturally relevant literature at an Israeli university. It shares the idea of connecting the writing class to the learners' own experiences. Chapter 15 discusses using corrective feedback on writing to enhance Vietnamese learners' autonomy. The authors describe the implementation of indirect corrective feedback to promote writing accuracy and learner autonomy. Chapter 16 is on employing a *Showcase Portfolio* approach to promote self-reflection in writing. The author introduces the details of two case studies and discusses implications for teaching in the educational context of Hong Kong. Chapter 17 focuses on the implementation of a process-genre approach to writing in a skills-integrated language program in Brazil. The advantages of process writing and using model texts of different genres are elaborated by the author.

In the last chapter, Chapter 18, the editors present a brief summary of the salient points in the previous chapters and share ideas about the future directions for the four skills.

The volume possesses various strengths in view of its content and organization. First, the experiences shared in the chapters cover a broad geographical diversity including countries such

as Canada, China, Qatar, Czech Republic, Russia, Vietnam, and Brazil. This strong diversity supports the ‘international’ promise of the book. This is also observable in the teaching and learning contexts represented. Various aspects such as different educational levels (primary, secondary, and tertiary), different types of schools (public and private), and different educational contexts (ESP, EAP, and adult migrant education) are addressed in the chapters. Second, the chapters present the current trends in skills teaching and inform the readers about some innovative practices such as inquiry dialogue for speaking, using authentic texts in reading, process- and genre-based writing, indirect corrective feedback, and *Showcase Portfolio* approach for writing. Third, some of the chapters discuss ways to connect skills instruction to other aspects like learner autonomy, self-reflection, and critical thinking that are of vital importance in all realms of education in the 21st century. In addition, the opening and concluding chapters written by the editors empower the whole volume in that they present guiding and to-the-point comments on both the coverage of the chapters and the present and future orientations of skills teaching. A further plus for the volume is that each chapter provides four to five questions for reflection at the end. These questions enable readers to link what they have read to their own contexts of teaching or research.

Alongside its numerous strengths, one possible drawback about the book is the lack of focus on skills integration. In Chapter 1, the editors make it clear that the volume intentionally adopts a skill-by-skill organization to enhance accessibility and convenience for the readers. It is of course justifiable that this type of organization can be more reader-friendly in terms of providing detailed and focused information on each skill separately. Nevertheless, an additional part (Part 5) composed of chapters on integrated skills in ELT would render the volume far stronger and more comprehensive. This would also add a further asset to the up-to-date nature of its coverage.

Overall, with its rich and guiding coverage, this fresh contribution to the skills-related literature appears to be a notable resource for ELT researchers and practitioners and thus should be added to the list of must-have books.

### **About the Reviewer**

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