

Book Reviews

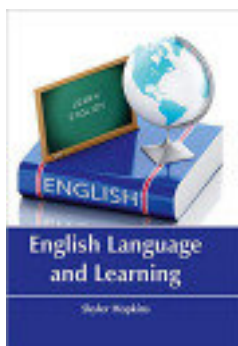
English Language and Learning

New York: Larsen and Keller Education. (354 pages)

Skyler Hopkins (Ed.). (2017).

ISBN: 978-1-63549-107-4

Reviewed by: **Khushbu Kumari**



Language learning has come a long way in the last couple of decades. There is an increasingly common understanding in academia that a new language cannot be mastered unless it is acquired. Rote learning methods which were part of early school learning are now becoming obsolete. In the present scenario, the task/role of a language teacher is to present the target language to the learner in a way so as to engage her/him in learning. Language learning is a continuous process and it cannot be fixed in a time frame. In fact, to learn a language in a limited time frame is not possible. So a teacher's role is to develop an understanding, a flavour for the language. The book *English Language and Learning* by Skyler Hopkins addresses this issue quite technically.

Chapter 1 "Introduction to English Language", begins with the history of English and gives a brief account of the language from its Proto-Germanic form to Modern English. The author then moves on to the current geographical distribution of English and talks about the global as well as the local spread of English. The introduction presents an overall view of English, from its origin, spread, variety and growth across the globe. All of this is done through a very brief

introduction to phonology-to-syntax of English. The discussion is not extensive but is fairly exhaustive, and touches on all the relevant grammatical concepts. The latter half of the chapter deals with differentiating between old and middle English, and British and American English. The chapter ends with a description of the status of English across the world.

Chapter 2 "Understanding Learning" deals with the process of multi-level learning in a diverse setting. The chapter includes some of the most influential learning theories. The author also looks at formal and informal learning through different types of conditioning, habituation and sensitization, with a view to provide a psychological understanding of the process of learning, which can then be applied to a heterogeneous classroom.

When it comes to writing or reading a grammar book, the first impression that comes to mind is that the book will follow a formal pattern of using minimum description, and the concepts will be illustrated with the help of examples for each grammatical category. But Chapter 3 entitled "English Grammar: An Integrated Study" is written in a style wherein concepts such as open and closed class, tense, mood, clause construction, and voice are explained through mitigating boundaries. Contrary to the traditional way of placing grammatical categories in a fixed setting, the writer has described them in her own peculiar way.

Chapter 4 titled "Challenges in Learning English as a Second Language" addresses the basic issues of learning a second language. It takes into account the problems related to vocabulary, pronunciation and sentence formation. The chapter also includes topics such as English as a Second/Foreign language, first language, and second-language acquisition.

In chapter 5, “Language Acquisition: Methods and Tools”, the writer talks about mental faculty and language acquisition. She then moves on to how statistical methods such as perceptual magnetic effect and distributional learning could be helpful in language acquisition. Software based learning such as Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), and Babbel and Smigin find a detailed mention in this chapter. In this the author takes cues from natural language processing, although she does not go into too much detail. Writing aids such as dictionary, thesaurus, spell check, etc., have been mentioned under the topic “Foreign Language Writing Aid”.

Chapter 6 “Evolution of English” in a sense is a recapitulation of Chapter 1. The writer chooses to end the book on the same note that she started it on, with the only difference that in the last chapter, the writer includes a descriptive note on the phonological aspects of the evolution of English as a language. The end of the book is therefore in sync with the beginning, which is a good thing, and I am certain that the reader will find the text a coherent read.

Books on language learning are different from traditional grammar books. It is assumed that such books focus on the learner rather than on the teacher. A teacher who has acquired the skills of learning can use the techniques to make the learning process easier.

In the end, I would like to add that all the chapters in this book are very detailed. Each chapter is divided into sub-topics, and each sub-topic deals with a new concept. The arguments are compartmentalized, which helps the reader to understand the text comprehensively. Language learning is not an isolated process, it comprises of lexicon, grammar and structure of the language. In this respect, Hopkins’ book presents a comprehensive account of language learning. Even though the book is about English language and learning, the insights and

observation should make a good supplement to the literature of all languages, not just English.

Khushbu Kumari is a research scholar at the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, IIT Roorkee. She is currently working in the area of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). She has done her Masters from the Department of Linguistics BHU, Varanasi.

khushaboobhu@gmail.com.

Succeed in TEFL: Continuing Professional Development.

John Murray Learning,
Hachette. (300 pages)

Riddell, David (2015).

ISBN: 978-1-444-79606-3



Reviewed by: **Kalyanee Rajan**

Succeed in TEFL is a remarkable book on many counts: its approach, scope, presentation and content are so well etched out, that the reader is hooked to its every word, every page and every illustration. Marketed as the “ultimate guide for developing your career as an English Teacher”, the book is truly as a complete roadmap to the professional development of an English teacher as it covers most of the significant aspects of the job. These include observing, teaching exam-focused classes, becoming a trainer, working out action research, using various online resources, writing and publishing, becoming a good manager, to name a few. The book has twenty-two chapters divided into four neat sections, in which Riddell generously pours out over thirty years of his experience of working in the field in varied capacities—teacher, trainer and on-line management tutor, Cambridge Joint Chief Assessor of CELTA courses for ten years and