Suggested Readings

Beyond Training: Perspectives on Language Teacher Education
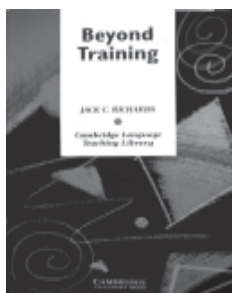
By Jack C. Richards

Cambridge Language Teaching Library Series

Cambridge University Press

First published: 1998

Second printing: 2000

Pages: 208

ISBN 0-521-62680-3 (Paperback)

Beyond Training examines the nature of second language teacher development, and how teachers' practices are influenced by their beliefs and principles. Conventionally, 'training' reflects a very technical view of teaching practices whereas Richards, in concerning himself with the beliefs, theories, knowledge and practices of second language teachers, tries to provide a more holistic view of teacher development by focusing on the notion of the *teacher as a critical and reflective thinker*. Until the second half of the 1980s, education was essentially defined as training or delivery of what was known or thought important in teaching second languages. By 1990, the emphasis had shifted to *second language* teacher education. From then on, a distinction was drawn between second language as the *content or subject matter,* and the *processes* of teacher education, within which were the allied processes of

teacher training and development. As noted by Freeman (1998/2000) in his Foreword to the book, "*…training* meant teaching people how to do the work of teaching. Underlying the various surface aspects of delivery, however, lay a rich and complex learning process, the process of learning to teach" (p. vii).

Richards' book takes over from this, and adds further direction by not only explaining the conceptual tools and schemes, but also setting interlinked ideas within an overall structure of development. In the first chapter, he defines the scope of second language teacher education (SLTE) or what has been called the *knowledge base* of second language teaching. The rest of the book is divided into four parts covering i) theories of second language learning, ii) perspectives on teacher thinking, iii) examining teacher education practices, and iv) entering the field of language thinking. Of these parts, the first (chapter 2 and 3) examines two different types of teaching theories that influence teacher beliefs and practices; and also discusses various science-research conceptions, theory and value based conceptions, and art-crafts models of teaching. Chapter 3 particularly examines teacher's implicit theories of teaching, and introduces the notion of 'teacher maxims' (personal working principles that teachers develop, that account for their interpretation of good practice and provide the source for many interactive decisions that teachers make while teaching). The second and the third parts address the nature of teacher thinking (teacher cognition, pedagogical reasoning skills, teachers'

use of lesson plans, etc.), and practices (use of textbook vis-à-vis creative teaching etc.) respectively. The final part of the book describes a study of five novice teachers and the experiences they faced in their first year of teaching, while also offering practical suggestions for the kinds of activities that can be used in teacher-education programmes. Although targeted for teacher trainers in language schools and universities, teachers themselves will also find this book useful given the importance it accords to the knowledge, beliefs and attitudes that underlie all teaching practices.

Pictures for Language Learning

By Andrew Wright

Cambridge Handbooks for Language Teachers
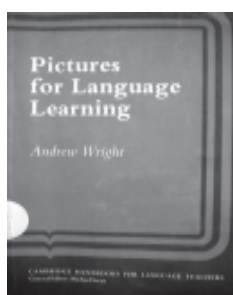
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This resourceful and innovative book provides an immensely valuable insight into the importance of pictures and other visual materials in language teaching. In demonstrating the vital role of pictures in a wide range of language learning situations, the book also underscores the crucial role played by teachers in using innovative and effective teaching methods that can be adapted by them to suit any kind of learner needs. Such innovative use of pictures and visual material in language teaching also requires limited resources in terms of time for preparation and money or equipment. This richly illustrated book gives concrete examples (chapter 1), of how, for instance, the same picture can be used to emphasize five very different language concepts in teaching (example: grammatical structures, vocabulary, different functions such as requesting, expressing likes/dislikes, etc., describing situations, and honing the skills of listening, reading, writing and speaking).

The book is divided into four parts with a total of 16 chapters: Of these, the first section discusses the contributions of visuals towards improving the communication skills of students. Section B emphasizes speaking and writing, and section C stresses listening and reading; together, they have over 200 practical suggestions for picture-generated language work. Section B has various sub-sections dealing with 'mechanical practice', communication, and mini dialogue and role-play/simulation. Section C focuses on meaning-making aspects of pictures that can be used to hone listening and reading skills. Wright's examples are practical in that they make use of readily available visual materials, and where illustrations have been used, these can be easily applied by the teacher.

The final section of the book suggests easy ways in which to set up a 'picture library', and offers guidance on how to look for visuals, categorize pictures and how to store pictures so that they can serve as future teaching tools. Language teachers in particular will find the book useful because the activities that Wright describes can be integrated into different levels of language teaching process. Moreover, he provides several pointers as to how to creatively adapt ideas to suit different teaching environments. Chapter 14 lists the types of pictures and their uses (single object pictures, pictures of famous people, pictures of people in action, pictures from history,