

Parrish, B. (2019). *Teaching adult English language learners: A practical introduction*. Cambridge University Press: Better Learning. ISBN: 978-1-108-70283-6

Reviewed by Anthea Fester

This book includes a collection of key Adult English Language Learning (AELL) issues that form the core of many teaching AELL programmes or courses. Although I have been a language teacher trainer and mentor for almost twenty years, I feel that for me this book offers tremendous value in terms of the depth of understanding of issues that Parrish relays, and the useful refreshing approaches and suggestions that are made about core aspects of ELT. The explanations, tasks and resources included in each chapter and the addition of current practices related to some shifts in learner groups, such as an increase in low literacy learners and advocating for learners by empowering them, enriches the content.

Following the suggestion of Parrish in the introduction to *Teaching adult English language learners*, I decided to complete six statements related to 'your current beliefs about teaching and learning in adult ESL contexts' (p. 2). This served as a fruitful exercise, leading to constant reflections of my views, and sometimes changing perspective, as I read through the book. It was a clever way for the writer to ensure reader-engagement with the content.

The book comprises ten chapters, with each addressing vital content that needs to be built into language teacher training courses. In the last decade, there has been a phenomenal increase in the global displacement of people. Bearing this in mind, it is timely that a book covering solid teaching practices for AELL starts with a chapter on adjusting to a new country and (factors that are included in) knowing what it means to know a language. Examples of learner profiles are used for the reader to compare and to make decisions about the suitability of the course content for individual learner needs. Focusing not only on their future language needs, but also on the vital aspect of what they bring to the classroom, both in terms of prior language skills and personal experiences. Many of these past experiences may be connected to physical displacement.

The second chapter covers approaches and programme options for AELL. In the first section of the chapter, some approaches available to language teachers are examined. I found the second section of this chapter focusing on *program options*, particularly informative, as decisions around developing and implementing programme content are frequently problematic for teachers and course designers. Covering sound advice on programmes such as those promoting *learner persistence and success, ELA programmes, citizenship integrated English literacy and civics education, family and intergenerational literacy, literacy tutoring, career pathways and distance education*, this section includes tasks for teachers to promote connections between their teaching approaches and programme options. It also provides realistic scenarios, connected to programme choices, for teachers to explore. The following chapter (three) unpacks aspects of an integrated multiple language skills approach to language teaching, with an emphasis on natural use of language and on having an understanding of the needs, wants and strengths of learners.

Currently I am a teacher of Listening and Speaking skills on a pre-university programme and I found chapter four on pronunciation interesting in that it reaffirmed many of my practices

and added some creative material to my repertoire of activities. The chapter provides a succinct refreshing approach to teaching pronunciation that can serve as an invaluable resource to early career teachers who have not taught much pronunciation. The part that was particularly appealing was the section on making a case for pronunciation in your curriculum, adopting a less critical approach to learners' accents, with an emphasis on what is needed within the learners career plans, and advocating for them by helping them with pronunciation to enable them to access jobs and other future aspirations.

In chapter five, the author addresses the complexity of writing and reading, including a variety of approaches and an array of valuable sub-skill development activities for learners. The balanced literacy approach and the possible strategies and techniques for emergent readers and writers described in this chapter have a focus on teaching low literacy adult learners. Initially, when I scanned the chapter, I thought it looked a bit too busy with too many activities. However, when I started to read through the chapter systematically, I realised that the chapter included a wealth of pertinent activities for successfully teaching writing and reading, with each staged activity having a clear purpose for learners.

Chapter six, titled *Planning for teaching and learning*, starts with a good reminder to all who are engaged in adult language teaching, about the complexity of planning for these two interwoven areas. As in chapter five, this chapter has a range of tasks that can be implemented to encourage maximum learner engagement and learning beyond the classroom. There is a useful table of 12 questions to encourage an interactive approach to lesson planning. The next chapter (seven) relates to *managing learning*, with a very comprehensive section on the challenges and potential solutions to managing multilevel classes, as well as providing sound advice for supporting AELLs who have learning disabilities or recognised learning challenges.

*Selecting instructional materials and resources* is the focus of chapter eight and contains tips or tables that can be used to evaluate textbooks, online resources and ways to adapt commercially available material. Appropriate to any textbook on language teaching would be a chapter on assessment and this is covered in chapter nine. The chapter covers assessment types, standardised testing, learners assessing their own progress and teachers integrating self-assessment and reflection. The final chapter in the book, chapter ten, arguably also closely connects mainly with assessment as it addresses issues of standards and accountability. These last two chapters provide a comprehensive resource on strong, accountable assessment practices for relatively new teachers, reaffirmation for experienced teachers, as well as for teacher trainers to include on courses.

The book is comprehensive, and may be used as a standalone textbook for language teacher training courses. Resources and links to useful websites add to the value of this book. Finally, in the *Introduction* to the book, Parrish (2019, p.2) states that "Collaboration is what makes my work as teacher, learner, and colleague rich and rewarding". Commitment to this statement is endorsed throughout this gem of a language teacher training resource as the suggested practices reinforces collaboration, teacher self-reflection and the development of language-empowered, autonomous learners.