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TRICIA HEDGE
Teaching and Learning in the Language Classroom

Teaching and Learning in the Language Classroom

Tricia Hedge

江苏工业学院图书馆
藏书章

OXFORD
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Great Clarendon Street, Oxford OX2 6DP

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First published 2000
Fourth impression 2003

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ISBN 0 19 442172 4

Printed in China

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To my late father

Peace of the silent hills to you
Peace of the shining stars to you
Peace of the quiet earth to you

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Teaching and Learning in the Language Classroom has developed out of the courses I have taught over twenty-five years to student teachers and practising teachers on BEd, Diploma, and MA courses at Ealing College of Higher Education, Temple University Tokyo, and the Centre for English Language Teacher Education at the University of Warwick. I would like to thank those teachers and others with whom I have worked in seminars around the world for what I have learned from them and for their feedback on the substance of this book. I would also like to thank Benita Studman-Badillo for her help with Website sources, Henry Widdowson for his careful advice, and my editor Anne Conybeare for her unfailing patience and encouragement.

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INTRODUCTION

If we were able to take wing and get a bird's eye view of English language teaching (ELT) in classrooms, study circles, workshops, lecture theatres, and open learning centres across the world, we would undoubtedly see a vast heterogeneity of activity. But behind the variation I believe we would be able to discern a number of persistent concerns in the professional practice of teachers. This is because teachers are decision-makers in managing classroom processes and, whatever our educational setting, whatever its potential and its problems, our working lives are defined by the same issues. What do I set up as aims for my next lesson with this class and what kind of activities will help to achieve those aims? How do I balance its content in relation to what I see of my students' needs for English in the world outside the classroom and in relation to the examinations for which we are preparing? How do I deal with this reading text in class? What amount of out-of-class work can I reasonably expect my learners to do? How do I make best use of a textbook I am not entirely happy with? How can I motivate my learners to be more active? What are my ultimate goals with this class? And can I usefully discuss and negotiate any of these things with my learners? These are just some examples. It is certainly my experience every year that teachers arriving on teacher development courses have these same concerns, whatever their background. In the last two decades, the ELT profession has been able to access and build on a strong and fast-developing knowledge base for effective professional practice, and to look for answers to some of the questions that confront us. It is a knowledge base that derives from research and thinking in a wide range of contributing disciplines: education, applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, pragmatics, cultural studies, second language acquisition studies, curriculum studies, and psychology, to name but a few. Many of these subject areas were in their infancy in the middle decades of the twentieth century but are now vigorous in research and intellectual activity, and able to provide insights of relevance to ELT classroom practice.

The aim of this book is to explore some of those insights, in particular those which can inform teachers on issues of current concern: for example, the design of curricula which have as primary goals the development of communicative ability in learners; the design of classroom procedures for effective development of language skills; the respective roles and responsibilities of teachers and learners; the relationship between the content of teaching and the context of learning; the development of a critical pedagogy; the

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