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Book Review

The Routledge Handbook of Teaching English to Young Learners

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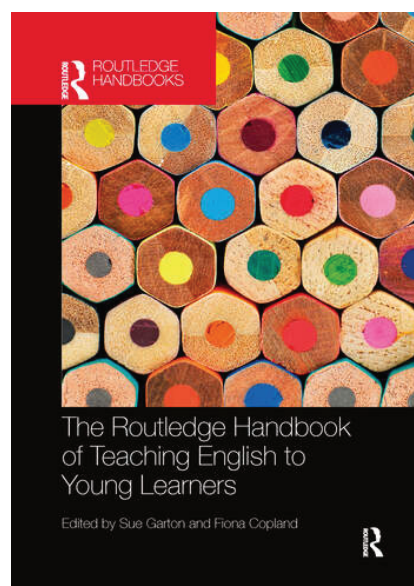
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The edited book 'Routledge Handbook of Teaching English to Young Learners' was published in 2019 by two renowned scholars, Sue Garton and Fiona Copland. The book constitutes 32 chapters and international scholars have written from a wide range of geographical areas of the world; mainly from East Africa, Mexico, the South Pacific, Japan, France, the USA, and the UK. This book focuses on second language acquisition, discourse analysis, pedagogy, and technology. It has given an overview of the current field situation of different states in the different chapters. It also highlights identifying key areas of Teaching English to Young Learners (TEYL). Similarly, it has given an idea and method of teaching in difficult situations and from Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL). Each chapter has given suggestions and a possible solution to shape the future research agenda of TEYL

(Teaching English to

Young Learners) in several countries. It has given practical advice to students, researchers, and teachers. It celebrates the field of 'coming age' in the research area of primary-level, English language teaching.

The volume opens with a list of remarkable contributors who have supported the area of research. Then after the introduction part, it gives a background of researchers how they came together in the same issue, how they got united, and how they became interested in the area of young learners which has become as truly an international perspective. After that writers mentioned the



scope of the volume which addresses two key issues; one is terminology and next is the age of younger children, finally it is decided to call Young Learners (YLS), Early English Learners (EEL) Early English Language Learners (EELL) and English Young Learner (EYL) under the age of 5-12 years children.

The book is divided into six sections. The first chapter starts with the wider circumstances, inspecting areas such as policy and motivation. The second chapter studies the young learner classroom at a more micro level, with sub-chapters on classroom management and teaching through English, amongst others. In the third chapter, the authors find a mainstay of research; pedagogy. The fourth chapter studies the work of curriculum and technology, and chapter five emphasizes researching young learners, including a chapter on involving young learners as researchers. Finally, chapter six explores overviews of EELL (Early English Language Learner) in regions where it is growing in popularity: Africa, Asia, Europe, South America, and the South Pacific.

The summary of the different chapters gives the key findings of Young Learners research. Mainly, the first section discusses new insights and critical issues in the primary school context. It has related it to current policy for example the starting age of, the place of English in curriculum, and the effect on language diversity. According to the researcher, the key implementer of policy is a teacher who could play the role of bridging of gap between policy and practice. Besides that, researchers have recommended that children's motivation for language learning is difficult, unstable, and dynamic so their features must be taken into consideration because most children have few choices about learning the English Language. In these circumstances, bottom-up initiatives can be beneficial with collaborative inquiry-based with both teacher and student

The second section is about the 'YLS classroom' and the researcher recommends that children from linguistically varied backgrounds may need particular involvements to flourish academically because of the context of using English as a dominant or non-dominant language in the classroom. Children who migrate to a country where English is the dominant language, in this situation children develop language skills in English and face difficulties but who cannot get into this environment should be encouraged by bilingualism and build their cognitive power. Similarly, searcher has raised the agenda of Differentiated Instruction (DI) it can be used in TEYL in general and special settings and it can be applied to Young English Learners too. According to the researcher, there is a question; does the teacher use L1 or L2 in the classroom of YLS? According to suggestion collection, the teacher could use language of their own choice. Classroom management is necessary for a new approach which is the school level approach.

The third chapter summarizes the major point of the researcher's suggestion on the area of young learners teaching on pedagogy. The researcher has studied the listening and speaking skills of young learners aged 6-11 years. She states that the problem in teaching listening and speaking skills can be kept in two categories as either it could be teacher-

related or curriculum-related. As the suggestion of the researcher, teachers can apply an integrated teaching approach which can provide a series of activities based on the principles. Consequently, researchers examined the reading and writing skills and they explored the links between literacy and learning to read and write in a second language. To teach grammar effectively, it is necessary to focus on the interconnectedness of grammar and vocabulary. It can be integrated into other activities such as storytelling. The author also examines effective approaches to grammar teaching to young learners. The approaches are practicing the activities and using them in the classroom. Another component of teaching vocabulary is to develop a large vocabulary by focusing on the form, meaning, and use of words. In conclusion, storytelling has become an increasingly popular approach to teaching young learners with some practitioners building a whole syllabus around it. The literature-based approach is effective for YLs by using storybooks, poems, and more factual stories.

The fourth chapter is about technology and curriculum. It has focused on the use of ICT in TEYL such as; the use of technology outside the classroom in the form of gaming and mobile use for both inside and outside in the classroom. They have also given lots of suggestions to integrate new technologies into the English curriculum at the primary level.

The fifth chapter discusses ‘researching YLs’; there have been issues with researching YLs, particularly for early graders. According to researchers, the information collection method should be appropriate for YLs. Due to this, children can also be involved in discussion-making around research design and their participation can make it fruitful for data collection. The last section ‘Regional Perspective’ on teaching English to YLs, discusses different perspectives and looks at how TEYL is being implemented in different regions of the world, specifically, Africa, East Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the South Pacific.

My Analysis and Recommendation

After reading each section and chapter of the book, I found that the structure of the book is well-managed. The content is appropriate for English language teachers and curriculum designers. Every chapter is structured with detailed information, research experience sharing, and recommendation methods for use in the classroom. The conclusion and comment section are briefed in each section. The book has 32 chapters under 6 sections, which have been written by different international writers. Every section clarified the agenda with research findings. Moreover, researchers have mentioned the method of inclusiveness and participation of different types of children in English language classrooms. Teachers could give special concertation to those children who are unable to get academic learning and play the role of bridge between practice and creating an environment for learning. However, in the context of Nepal also some Younger Learners are getting very good exposure inside / outside the classroom but some are not getting the policy. Similarly, the book has given clear guidance and pedagogy for teaching listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary. They have focused on using a storytelling approach by interconnecting grammar

and vocabulary by integrating them into other activities. This approach is also very applicable in our local context and other developing countries. Likewise, new technology, ICT in TEYL; use of Computer Assisting Language Learning (CALL), and affordances of mobile learning inside and outside the classroom for effective learning though in our context ICT may not be approached in some remote areas of schools so teachers should have to be creative for using other teaching materials in the English Language Classroom of YLs.

Similarly, for teaching English to Younger Learners teachers need more support for running their class effective way. In that case, they need constructive training for professional development. Finally, in my view, the context could be different, teachers could be different in different countries but the agenda and issue of teaching English to Young Learners might be the same and it should be raised by policymakers while designing the curriculum. The book has given a comprehensive overview of key issues in the field of teaching English to young learners in the twenty-first century. Similarly, it also presents a credible research agenda for the way forward. The collection is recommended to anyone interested in teaching English to Young Learners.

Reviewer's Bio

Tripti Chaudhary is pursuing an MPhil in English language education at Kathmandu University. She is also working in an international organization, called Save the Children. She has been working in different INGOs for a decade to contribute her knowledge and skills in the education field. The areas of her interest include teacher professional development, parental education, and research in different areas.

Reference

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