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On: 06 February 2013, At: 05:58

Publisher: Routledge

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International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rbeb20>

Becoming a language teacher: a practical guide to second language learning and teaching

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Version of record first published: 05 Feb 2013.

To cite this article: Taghreed M. Al-Saraj (2013): Becoming a language teacher: a practical guide to second language learning and teaching, International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, DOI:10.1080/13670050.2013.764062

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2013.764062>

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BOOK REVIEW

Becoming a language teacher: a practical guide to second language learning and teaching, by E.K. Horwitz, Boston, Pearson Education, 2012, 312 pp., 2nd Edition, US\$81.60, ISBN 9780132489980

This book has eleven chapters, which are organized into four parts. Part I, *What do language teachers think about?*, looks at the foundations of language teaching. Part II, *How do you teach a language?*, describes teaching approaches to assess students' listening, reading, speaking, and writing abilities. Part III, *How do I know what to teach?*, focuses on adapting teaching practices to specific teaching settings (e.g., choosing appropriate classroom activities to keep students motivated and engaged). The final section, Part IV, is entitled, *Where do I go from here?*, and is designed to help teachers to see what language teaching entails from personal development to the evaluation of their own teaching; this section gives support to help teachers become the best they can be in their teaching. As Horwitz states, 'there are no "perfect" textbooks' (237), and teachers must not be overly dependent on textbooks. Teachers must supplement their textbooks in order to keep students interested in the class and to challenge the students. Horwitz offers a variety of suggestions for choosing materials and activities to motivate the students, such as group activities, information-gap activities, task-based activities, and whole-class activities.

This book is the second edition of what is considered a must-read book for novice language teachers as well as a great graduate-level textbook. The content is organized very clearly with 'teaching checklist' sections. These sections summarize important points from each chapter and can facilitate reflection and self-evaluation for teachers as well as serving as quick reference guides to teachers planning their own classes.

The clarity of writing in this book, and the ease with which the key TESOL/TEFL terminology is identified and explained, will make it easy for language teachers to follow. Consequently, readers will be able to understand the key concepts in language teaching as well as the theories of second language acquisition. (It should be noted that, although TESOL/TEFL language is introduced, the content and principles of the book can be used to help in teaching any foreign language.) The book also discusses how the various theories of second language acquisition differ as related to important language teaching issues (see Chapter 2). Chapters 4–7 provide teachers with some concrete, useful guidelines for developing in-class activities and for assessing the four components of language learning: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Complementing the text and providing guidance for readers to seek more information, Horwitz provides reading references at the end of each chapter.

In addition to being a method book for language teachers, this book can be used as a main textbook for graduate students in TESOL/TEFL programs. It provides a thorough overview of language teaching, including what language teaching entails, and the issues language teachers should be aware of in their class. As Horwitz says, 'This idea called *willingness to communicate* (WTC) reminds language teachers that

anxiety and motivation should be considered together' (10). She goes on to explain that students with higher level of anxiety are less willing to communicate in the target language. These concepts – language anxiety and motivation – are crucial in the language classroom, but are often overlooked in teacher education, in textbooks, and by language teachers. The book's appendix presents the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) and the Teacher Foreign Language Anxiety Scale (TFLAS), which Horwitz shares in order to give teachers the tools to assess their students' anxiety related to learning a language and their own anxiety related to teaching the language. Horwitz also offers suggestions for activities that can help to reduce students' anxiety and advice for teachers about how to talk with their students and acknowledge the students' feelings. Among Horwitz's suggestions is advising teachers to talk to students about setting realistic expectations for their own learning. If language teachers are more aware of these issues and equipped with methods of supporting students, then language students will ultimately be helped to achieve the goal of language acquisition.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2013.764062>