

Key Questions in Language Teaching. Alessandro G. Benati, Cambridge University Press, UK (2020). 220 pp., Hardcover: \$80.54, Paperback: \$31.99.

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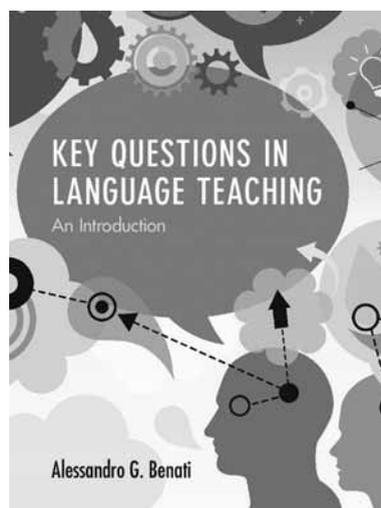
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Key Questions in Language Teaching is composed of seven chapters; you may find glossary and subject index at the end of the book. The volume is largely dedicated to answering theoretical questions through empirical answers, aiming to provide a concrete basis for ambiguous questions in the field of particularly Second Language Teaching. In order to achieve this, the author proposes evidence-based, real-life examples and explanations. The author prefers to use plain language by avoiding excessively technical jargon, which makes the book reader-friendly and easy to follow. The book, which starts from early language acquisition, suggests valuable pedagogical implications supported through compelling empirical evidence for language instructors as well as language learners. This book is a welcome contribution to the existing body of research into ELT studies aiming to improve students' theoretical knowledge through empirical explanations. The book seems to be a combination of pure and applied linguistics and is somewhat comparable to Scrivener's (2011) *Learning Teaching: The Essential Guide to English Language Teaching*, which focuses largely on teaching English rather than general language teaching. Within the continuum of research, evaluation, and theorizing in ELT studies, this book offers authentic descriptions of teaching and learning conventions which have largely remained ambiguous for students thus far.

The book is divided into seven chapters, each of which covers a specific topic with its own references and discussions. Chapter one provides the basic concepts as to SLA while Chapter two concentrates on eliciting the most common language teaching methodologies. Different from the first two chapters, which are based on theoretical perspectives, the third chapter aims to answer the questions regarding the role of communication and interactive tasks by highlighting the skills of writing and speaking. Chapter four, similar to Chapter three, deals with the listening and reading skills from the aspect of how to develop these through comprehension tasks. Chapter five is dedicated to linguistic issues of grammar, vocabulary, and error correction. In contrast to preceding sections, Chapter six mainly describes the procedures of academic writing and research steps such as data collecting and



research designs while conducting a study. The last chapter answers some basic questions that were raised throughout the former chapters.

To detail the chapters, Chapter one presents students with the general linguistic concepts, and then discusses SLA theories that have frequently entailed confusion even among veteran linguists. Another troublesome issue for students discussed is how language functions in brain, and this is explained through examples based on different sentential orders. Additionally, the role of basic linguistic conventions -input and output- are explained explicitly so that students have a clear idea on these long standing issues. No clear boundary was drawn, however, between language acquisition and learning; for instance, while the book addresses second language learners, the chapter largely falls into second language acquisition, creating an impression as if it was for bilingual learning. Chapter two simply clarifies the common methods (8 methods) that are used in SLA. The chapter is ordered from the oldest method to the newest one, although new methods are not fully detailed.

Chapter three questions the efficiency of the question/answer method that is widely used in language classroom to ensure that students have taken fully understood key areas. For the author, communication is much more than mutual question and answer tasks, and instead, necessitates more complicated cognitive and behavioural activities. To achieve this, the author suggests ways in which to set up an active learning environment through task-prompts. Chapter five underscores linguistic parameters of grammar, vocabulary, and error correction, and proposes suggestions on organising the process of learning by taking the nature of language into account. A large part of the chapter is allocated to corrective feedback methods, which are intensively teacher-centred correction. The chapter fails to inform the readers about newly corrective feedback methods such as self-repair and peer-correction. Chapter six introduces students with research methods in second language research. This may be the most essential chapter in the book because students extensively fail to respond the tasks requiring technical research analyses, such as how to collect and appropriately analyse data. The chapter could be much more useful if it had expanded its scope through additions of new sub-titles as to basic statistics. The last chapter was allocated to answering specific language-based questions; however, some of the questions do not appear to be addressing students of language learning.

This book is a helpful source for students to introduce linguistics and language acquisition principles. One useful feature of the book is that the chapters follow a line from theoretical knowledge to practical implementations, which allows readers to obtain background knowledge on language methodologies before real-life practices through dialogues, though there is still room for preliminary explanations. Each chapter ends with a summary, which contributes readers to order the newly-learnt terms and titles in mind. Furthermore, discussion and question sections at the end of the each chapter may reveal whether the reader has grasped what has been related in each section. Additionally, the book successfully creates real-life situations through mutual conversations in order to simplify theoretical linguistic issues for undergraduate students. Thought-provoking questions placed carefully inside the chapters may be of particularly useful in increasing student awareness concerning the discussed points. The book often appears like a detailed, simplified glossary of linguistics; however, it does not provide knowledge on new and novel language teaching methods. I would like to see some informing about post-methods which have been popular in the last decade. Surely,

we should not forget that it is an introductory book. These minor shortcomings should not detract from the positive contribution that this work makes to the field of second language teaching. Teachers of linguistics may freely suggest the book for their students; similarly instructors at universities may benefit from this book in order to promote students' basic knowledge on language acquisition thanks to its empirical thought-provoking activities. The book may also be helpful with its benchmarks in assessing and evaluating the improvement of students' newly-acquired knowledge through the assessment questions at the end of the chapters. Final words: I hope the author will regard my reservations as a welcome addition for the next editions of this valuable book.

REFERENCES

Scrivener, J. (2011). *Learning teaching: The essential guide to English language teaching*. Macmillan Education.