

Teaching English in the Primary School.

A task-based introduction for pre- and in-service teachers

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As a lecturer of English Methodology at the *Pädagogische Hochschule Zug* in Switzerland, I welcome this book with open arms. It has the potential to fill a long-lasting gap in the training programmes of primary English language teachers.

As the subtitle indicates, this book is intended for both pre- and in-service teachers. It is a very useful introduction to English Methodology at primary level and can be used both as an accompanying course book for modules at the *Pädagogische Hochschulen (PH)* or for self-study. As mentioned by the authors themselves, the focus is on Germany, where primary school covers grade 1 to 4 (ages 6 – 10).

Both authors, Annika Kolb and Marita Schocker, are professors of English Methodology at the *Pädagogische Hochschule Freiburg* in Germany. In their view, it was time to write a comprehensive update of the book with the same title, published in 2009 by Michael Legutke, Andreas Müller-Hartmann and Marita Schocker-v. Ditzfurth. A lot has changed in the primary classrooms since then, and a wide range of new research has been done. Even though the topics and the order in which these topics are presented have been kept mostly the same, the current book puts a much stronger emphasis on the teaching practice. It contains a lot of practical examples of tasks, activities and different forms of supporting the learners. Moreover, the download section at the end of the book provides a variety of links to practical resources for the classroom.

One of the main aims of the authors is to show pre- and in-service teachers that research and theory are indeed relevant to them and can enhance the quality of their teaching practice. Moreover, they stress the importance of reflecting on one's own teaching. Therefore, every chapter starts out with a reflection task about a real classroom situation or issue. In the following discussions, the authors incorporate relevant, up-to-date research and theory as well as consequences for practice.

At the heart of the book lies the task approach to language teaching, putting the learner into the centre. Almost all the important topics for training primary English teachers are covered: the context of teaching English in primary, research in primary ELT, use of tasks, classroom management, receptive and productive competences, learning to learn, focus on form, working with children's literature, cultural learning, media, integrating subject matter, course book materials and finally assessment. It is not difficult to relate the various chapters to the different parts of the Swiss German *Lehrplan 21*.

A big asset of this book is how well the authors have managed to constantly interweave practice and theory, always putting practice first. The initial reflective tasks are a great way of getting us readers actively involved, in particular as at the end of the chapter, the authors often take us back to our initial notes, asking us to complement them by what we have learned in the chapter. These features make the book a very engaging coursebook for a pre-service training module or a companion for self-study or self-organized learning as well as flipped classroom settings.

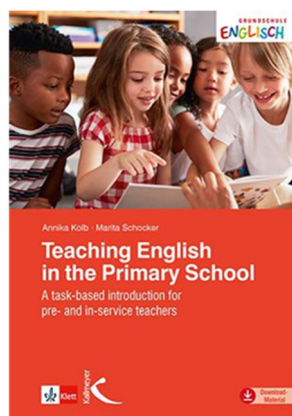
The language is accessible, but of course requires a certain level of English from the reader. The monolingual glossary which covers 6 ½ pages will certainly prove helpful for a lot of students and teachers. Similarly, the extensive bibliography, which contains a lot of the “big names” of the field, is very useful.

For the Swiss context, the strong focus on Germany represents a certain disadvantage, as our primary schools go up to grade 6 (age 12). This means that for use in Switzerland, this book will have to be complemented by material relating to grades 5 and 6 as well as articles specific to the Swiss context. An aspect that surprised me was that the Content and Language Integrated Learning approach (CLIL) was introduced only towards the end of the book (ch. 10). In my view, it should be introduced alongside the task-based approach (ch. 3), taking into account the teaching of cross-curricular topics within the English lessons, as implemented for example in Swiss coursebooks like *Young World*. In addition, songs and games do not really get the attention they deserve in a book on primary English. And finally, also this methodology book neglects an important topic for primary teachers, namely the question of how to challenge fluent and native English speakers in the beginners’ classroom.

I am looking forward to using this most valuable book in our new personalized and individualized study programme at PH Zug which will entail a lot of self-study. This book might be ideal.

Sylvia Nadig

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I hereby confirm that I have written this review specifically for the Young Learners edition of the ETAS journal and have not published it anywhere else.