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### Book Review

**What Should Every EFL Teacher Know?** by Paul Nation, Compass Publishing, 2013, 235 pp., \$20.00 (US), ISBN 978-1-59966-266-4

Professor Emeritus Paul Nation's *What Should Every EFL Teacher Know?* is a how-to book that aims to cover a wide range of important areas, such as how to design lessons and courses that provide a well-balanced range of learning opportunities, which every teacher of English as a foreign language should know about. The book focuses on the English as a foreign language (EFL) teaching context. It is based on the author's extensive experience of training teachers of ESL/EFL for over forty years, and his extensive experience of teaching in various EFL countries such as Indonesia, Thailand, and Japan.

The main idea the author wants readers to get from this book is that the main job of an EFL teacher is to plan and run a well-balanced course that provides a range of opportunities for learning across what he calls "the four strands" of (1) meaning-focused input, (2) meaning-focused output, (2) language focused-learning, and (4) fluency development. A well-balanced course should contain these four strands in roughly equal amounts. In order to help teachers put these strands into practice, Nation presents what he considers to be the twenty most useful language teaching techniques (p. 14), and explains how to use them effectively throughout the book. He also discusses what he considers to be the most useful changes that teachers can make when applying the four strands to a course. These changes are, in order of usefulness, as follows: (1) add a substantial extensive reading (ER) program as part of their course, (2) introduce a fluency development strand, (3) make sure that there are plenty of meaning-focused listening and speaking activities, (4) have plenty of listening input at the right level for the learners, and (5) encourage and train learners to learn vocabulary using bilingual word cards (pp. 18-19).

Nation avoids citing and discussing research and he avoids the use of jargon and technical vocabulary, aiming to keep the book as brief and practical as possible. Instead, he focuses on how to apply teaching techniques in practice and provides useful references to more detailed information where relevant. For example, in the chapter on teaching vocabulary, there is a step-by-step explanation of how to train learners to use one of the most useful techniques called "the word card strategy", including a reference to another book (Nation, 2008), which includes more detailed guidelines on using this strategy. Although the book does not cite a lot of research, it is based on plenty of research which is described in the author's previous articles (e.g., Nation, 2007) and books (e.g., Nation, 2001). The principle of the four strands, for example, is based on research investigating the Input hypothesis (Krashen, 1985), learning from extensive reading (Nation & Wang, 1999; Waring & Takaki, 2003), and the Output Hypothesis (Swain, 1985) (for a brief review of these hypotheses and studies, see Nation, 2007).

Each chapter begins by clearly identifying the main idea in that chapter, aiming to make the book easy and enjoyable to read. Each chapter also contains clear and concise headings that help the reader to follow the text. Figures, tables and illustrations are also used effectively throughout the text, enabling readers to visualize the techniques, ideas, and information presented. Furthermore, each chapter ends with a review, highlighting the material that readers should have learned. At the end of each chapter, advice on further reading, Internet resources, and practical things to do are included for additional learning and practice.

One point that could be criticized about the book is that Nation claims that it is very easy to make improvements on EFL teaching and curriculum, such as adding a substantial ER component to a course (p. 19). In theory, it is very easy to add an ER program. In practice, however, it is not always easy, particularly when there are institutional constraints in many EFL teaching contexts, such as entrance examinations within Japan's public junior high school system where I used to work as an assistant language teacher and tried but failed to add an ER component. That said, as Nation compellingly argues—and I completely agree—adding a substantial ER program may indeed be the most important improvement a teacher can make to a language course. This book provided much inspiration and guidance for me to successfully set up an ER component in my current university EFL teaching context, where I feel very satisfied having done so.

In conclusion, this very practical book has helped me learn how to better plan and implement a well-balanced language course. It is marvelously readable and contains very practical advice as well as numerous useful ideas and techniques that can be put into practice immediately. Therefore, it is worth its weight in gold and deserves to be perused by every EFL teacher. I highly recommend it.

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