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## Book Reviews

**Prabhu, N.S. (2019). *Perceptions of Language Pedagogy*. (Ed. G. Durairajan). Hyderabad: Orient BlackSwan (342 pages)**

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***Reviewed by Vasim Tamboli***

*Perceptions of Language Pedagogy* is a collection of 29 papers by N.S. Prabhu spanning over six decades from 1966 to 2019. The book deals with language education (in general) and English Language Teaching (ELT) (in specific). ELT in India has been enormously vital since the post-independence age, when it redefined the objective of teaching English from 'literary appreciations' to using the language as a tool of communication (p. 4). In this book Prabhu paves the way to rationalize steps in designing and implementing ELT programmes. He addresses the issues concerning ELT—practical and theoretical—within a multidimensional framework.

The chapters provide a rationale for the development of ELT and describe the first prominent phase of educational reform during the time period 1956 – 1966 with an establishment of 10 specialist ELT institutes to bring about better teaching of English. Prabhu discusses educational changes through institutional planning and effort. A series of two lectures delivered in 1995 demonstrates the transitions: In the first lecture, Prabhu provides the chronological overview of this phase – setting up of the institutes, their efforts, and the current scene. In the second lecture, he discusses the global theories of how learning takes place and which methods are available to best promote them. He introduces two methods developed in India – (i) The Reading Method and (ii) Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT). A discussion around the methods find a mention in Chapter 20 (pp. 233-234) according to their significance and provide a firm basis for classroom practices in Indian context and ideas that could be further explored as classroom-based research.

The book covers a range of topics beginning with language education

related problems (e.g. Chapter 1), the need for ELT reform in India (e.g., Chapter 2), combines 'old ideas' with 'new ideas' to present three models in second language pedagogy (e.g. Chapters 11 & 12), incorporates articles exclusively dealing with issues of classroom teaching like language lessons (e.g. Chapter 14) and teacher autonomy (e.g. Chapter 25), to the interplay of teaching and research perspectives (e.g. Chapter 19). Therefore, the book serves as a window to teachers and young researchers who wish to know the progression of ELT in India and the theorisations of languages in education globally. The chapters are arranged chronologically in the book as per the date of their first publication and not according to their thematic categories.

The collection of articles for one's ease of understanding can be divided into three components of language education – *teaching, learning, and evaluation*: Chapters (9, 21, & 22) are related to the classroom context and teaching and they draw extensively from research and theoretical underpinnings. These provide a wealth of information on the role of communicative language teaching (CLT) and the precursor of TBLT from a research project - The Communicational Teaching Project in South India of June 1979 (also known as Bangalore Project, Chapter 28). Prabhu theorises the role of CLT at 3 levels: (i) learners' involvement in a meaning focus activity, (ii) use of language functions to make communication possible, and (iii) course construction based on needs analysis. There are a few papers which exclusively deal with learners' role and efforts in learning languages (Chapters 13 & 20), and evaluation and assessment (Chapter 27). Additionally, in an interesting manner the book supports the importance of lesson planning within a conceptual framework such that it can contribute to teacher growth and autonomy. Finally, what comes across strongly is the fact that methods can be adopted in a combinatorial manner according to the needs of every teaching-learning context. The author's comment sums this up brilliantly: "There is no best method', but there is some truth to every method" (p. 125).

The chapters in the book, written in a lucid style, effortlessly combine 'old ideas' with 'new ideas' to present feasible models for second language instruction. Although it does not give a set of activities for the practitioners to use in the classroom context, it certainly provides a rationale in selecting methods to aid the process of second language learning.