

Lise Bell

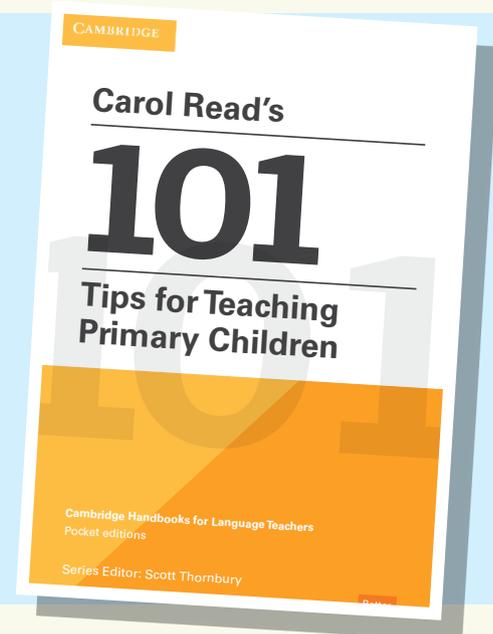


Reviews

Carol Read's 101 Tips for Teaching Primary Children
(Cambridge University Press, 2020)

Reviewed by Lise Bell

As an experienced ELT teacher educator involved with primary teacher training projects for many years, I have long been familiar with Carol Read's valuable contributions to primary English language education. I have had many opportunities to draw on her work in primary teacher education and also to recommend it to primary English teachers. My own particular favourite is Read's [website](#) which is worth exploring for a wealth of useful information about and resources for teaching English to early years and primary learners. The rich collection of ideas is firmly based on Read's own extensive classroom teaching and teacher education experience, and as primary English teacher education is my passion, I was excited to hear about the publication of *Carol Read's 101 Tips for Teaching Primary Children*, which I am delighted to review.



As the title suggests, this book is a collection of 101 tips for teaching learners of English aged 6 – 12 years, available in a range of versions including paperback and different e-book formats. As stated in the introduction, the main purpose of this book is “to unpack the range of knowledge, skills, attitudes and professional qualities that are needed to teach children” (p.ix, 2020) and Read does this expertly by drawing on her experience as a classroom practitioner, a teacher educator working with primary teachers and as a parent, as well as based on her own research and reading. This book can clearly play an important role in the upskilling of both primary teachers and teacher educators.

The overall book structure is highly reader-friendly. The contents list provides a very useful at-a-glance overview, which is ideal for guiding a reader who wants to dip into the book to explore a particular topic. Also, it is clearly divided into 26 topic-based chapters, one for each letter of the alphabet, and covers the essential areas you would expect to find in a book on teaching primary children English. These include classroom

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management, lesson planning, developing the four skills, teaching grammar and vocabulary, storytelling, songs, rhymes and chants, arts and crafts, project work, mime and drama, CLIL and assessment. The book also has sections on current primary ELT focal areas, including learning-to-learn, life skills, thinking skills, inclusion and diversity, multiliteracies and intercultural competence. In my view, such a comprehensive range of topics widens the appeal of the book so that it may benefit a range of teachers from those who are embarking on a career in primary ELT to more experienced primary teachers and teacher educators who are interested in the integration of these key areas into classroom practice.

The 26 A-Z sections follow the same clear format. Each opens with a brief, single page introduction explaining the importance of the topic, and ends with a list of four core tips to consider. This is very useful, as you can see what is included in the section without having to refer back to the contents page. My favourite sections are the ones on projects and developing thinking skills. In the projects section, Read discusses some key considerations for setting up and managing projects and provides very useful tips for these with her '4 Ms' (Motivation, Modelling, Monitoring and Mileage) and an extensive list of suggestions for exploiting projects for other skills work. The section on multiliteracies also includes very useful suggestions for integrating digital media, using multimodal texts and developing visual and critical literacy.

Each tip is then expanded on with a brief rationale, followed by an explanation of how it can be implemented in the primary English language classroom. Many of the tips include classroom activities and procedures, providing sound advice and a clear balance of underlying theory and principled classroom practice. An aspect that I found particularly useful was the cross-referencing to guide the reader to find out more about the connection of topics to the other sections of the book. This is done using either the letter of the alphabet to indicate the section or the number of the tip it relates to. This makes it very easy for the reader to focus on an area of interest and see how it is interlinked with the other topics. For example, the section on inclusion and diversity gives an excellent tip on differentiating instruction and tasks. In the suggestions, the reader is directed back to specific tips in previous sections to show ways in which this can be done, such as using graphic organisers like choice boards and KWL charts, differentiating questions and varying both the success criteria and learning outcomes.

Throughout the book, terms referred to such as *translanguaging* are given in bold and featured in an alphabetical glossary, along with references to find more information about each topic. This is very helpful for teachers who may not be familiar with the terms and would like to deepen their knowledge with additional reading. A list of recommended further reading is provided at the end of the book and includes both theoretical and practical methodology titles. It is therefore very comprehensive in terms of topic coverage and the book certainly lives up to its title as it does indeed give readers a bumper 101 tips!

Providing effective tips for the entire age range of 6- to 12-year-olds is quite a challenge due to the obvious cognitive and behavioural differences, but Read has clearly indicated how activities can be adapted for different age groups. For example, in the section on learning strategies, she refers to the importance of modelling with all primary learners and suggests using a puppet as the best way to introduce new language to lower primary learners. She also reminds teachers to use their own judgements about what would be most suitable for their learners' needs, interests, stages of development and also their learning contexts. This, for me, is a vital point

as there is no one-size-fits-all solution, given the diverse range of global contexts and learning environments primary English teachers are working in.

Given the number of tips, it is not possible to support all of these with step-by-step examples of practical classroom activities. However, as an experienced practitioner, I found the tips really inspired me to think of other sources for activities I am familiar with which could be used to implement the advice. Teachers who, on the other hand, are new to primary teaching might need guidance from teacher educators, mentors and more experienced colleagues to find suitable resources to implement some of the suggested tips in their classrooms. In this way, the tips act as a real springboard for crucial idea-sharing in the staffroom and possibly even for the focus of peer observations in the classroom.

I highly recommend this book as a great addition to primary English language teachers' professional libraries. Although it is definitely relevant to any ELT practitioner with an interest in working with primary learners, I feel it is probably most suitable for teachers who already have experience of teaching primary English to extend their practice based on sound principles. It is also an excellent resource for teacher educators of primary English teachers when crafting teacher development workshops, and as such, should become core background reading for primary ELT in-service training. All in all, *Carol Read's 101 Tips for Teaching Primary Children* makes an excellent contribution to primary ELT and I thoroughly enjoyed reading it. Going forward, this book will certainly be a 'go-to' for me and I will be recommending it to the primary English teachers I work with in the future.

Lise Bell is an education consultant with over 20 years' experience as a teacher educator working with English language teachers and early career trainers in a variety of contexts, including in Australia, Central Asia, East Asia, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East and North Africa, North America and Sub-Saharan Africa.



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