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978-0-521-49773-2 - The Self-Directed Teacher: Managing the Learning Process

David Nunan and Clarice Lamb

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For B.T., Harriet, and José, for teaching us the value of self-direction
and for giving us opportunities for learning to make informed choices.

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Series editor's preface

The Self-directed Teacher offers a unique perspective on how language teachers manage the complex array of instructional and interactional decisions they confront in every lesson. Rather than considering teaching from the perspective of methods or methodology, Nunan and Lamb examine the *processes* of teaching, in particular, the decision making used to create effective contexts and conditions for learning in second language classrooms.

The book begins with a consideration of the contextual factors which shape the environments in which teachers work, including the curriculum frameworks, syllabuses, texts, and resources that serve as a backdrop to teaching. From there the authors move to an examination of a rich range of issues that are central to the life and success of every language classroom, such as classroom interaction, classroom dynamics, grouping, resources, monitoring, and evaluation. Each issue is presented through the use of authentic classroom extracts and is followed by tasks which enable readers to explore further the points raised and apply them to their own contexts.

Evident throughout the book is the view that teachers are managers of a complex thinking process, one which involves them in ongoing monitoring, assessment, problem solving, hypothesis testing, and goal-oriented improvisation. Teachers are aided in these processes by their understanding of themselves, their learners, and their classrooms, as well as by information derived from theory and research. Therefore, classroom teachers will find this book to be an excellent resource for examining their teaching and the decision making which underlies it. By examining their own assumptions and practices, teachers will also find ways of becoming more effective managers of their own teaching processes.

Jack C. Richards

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Preface

This book is written for teachers and teachers in preparation. It is designed for use in both pre-service and in-service teacher preparation programs in a variety of flexible ways, as well as for use by individual teachers in self-study mode. Moreover, the book complements other volumes in the Cambridge Language Education series, in particular, discussion on reflective teaching in second language classrooms.

The most difficult part of writing a book is formulating a title. In our struggle with this most challenging of tasks, we came up with our own “pet” working title: “Claos: The Art and Science of Classroom Management.” It was born out of late-night phone calls and faxes across several continents, and desperate writing sessions in hotels and airport lounges. It does, however, reflect a central truth of this book: that teaching, while complex and difficult, is, as chaos theory suggests, ultimately capable of being understood, particularly when the understanding comes from the inside, as both an art and a science.

In the final analysis, all teachers have to develop and refine their own teaching style. In a sense, the methods debate is a dead issue because there will be as many methods as there are classroom teachers. It is our hope that the ideas and resources in this book will help less experienced teachers to develop their own distinctive teaching style, and prompt more experienced teachers to reflect on and refine theirs. In this way, all teachers might ultimately be self-directed.

David Nunan
Clarice Lamb