# *Book Review*
# Penny Ur's 100 Teaching Tips: A Handy Teaching Tool

## *Reviewed by David Martínez-Prieto[1], University of Texas at San Antonio*

*Penny Ur's 100 Teaching Tips*. Penny Ur. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016, Pp. viii +120.

*Penny Ur's 100 Teaching Tips* is an easy-to-read book with 100 punctual tips to improve the teaching performance of language teachers. This 120-page pocket book is divided into 18 sections according to different teaching strategies and skills, motivation, class-grouping, games, grammar and the role of the teacher in the language classroom. It is also part of a series of handbooks for language teachers published by Cambridge University Press and the author, Penny Ur, has worked in Israel for more than 30 years as a teacher and teacher trainer. She holds two masters degrees: one from Oxford and one from University of Reading, as well as a Postgraduate Certificate in Education from Cambridge. This book, like most of Ur's previous publications, focuses on practical applications rather than on theoretical analyses of second language approaches and research.

*Penny Ur's 100 Teaching Tips* has a well-defined audience: English language teachers who consider themselves practitioners rather than researchers. Through simple language and concrete examples, Ur explains the strategies, methods, and approaches to language learning that have worked effectively in her teaching journey. This book is designed in a way that each tip is concisely explained in less than 200 words, which is the equivalent of one tip per page. Although in this book the author has mainly used her own personal experience to support her advice to language teachers, an exceptional characteristic of this material is that she has also based many of her tips on the findings of applied linguistics research. To keep the book as a simple and practical language teaching tool, Ur includes references to journal articles and books in the lower margins. This feature facilitates access to the information presented and, at the same time, provides scholarly reference material.

UR divided this book into 18 sections with the idea that "readers don't try to read through the book, but rather browse through it looking for headings that interest them" (p. vii). The sections of the book are: *Beginning and Ending the Lesson*, *The Coursebook*, *Discipline*, *Error Correction, Games, Grammar, Group Work, Heterogeneous Classes, Homework, Interest, Listening, Pronunciation, Reading Comprehension, Speaking Activities, Teacher Talk, Testing and Assessment, Vocabulary Teaching, Writing* and a *P.S.,* in which Ur pertinently claims that language teachers are the ones who know the real needs of their students and must decide what should be adapted to improve the learning process in their own classrooms. Although the book is mainly based on the author's experiences as a language teacher in Israel, one of its most outstanding features is the way her tips can be applicable to a larger number of language teaching situations worldwide. Two meaningful examples on how the book can be used in different teaching contexts are *Tip#30 -- Get students to make meanings*, in which Ur points out the importance of creating meaning as one key point of the language learning process, or *Tip*

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*#64 -- Contrast mother-tongue sounds*, in which the author emphasizes the usefulness of using students' first language. Similarly, in *Tip #65-- Teach international pronunciation*, Ur's pragmatic vision of English as a lingua franca provides a concrete definition of what type of pronunciation should be fostered in the language classrooms, where "teaching international pronunciation can result in a mixed American and British accent, plus mother-tongue influences" (p.77). Ur's practical point of view on this matter can promote self-reflection in language teachers' discussions with students, colleagues and school administrators about the selection of English dialects to be promoted in the learning process. Additionally, novice teachers could benefit from the *Discipline* section, as it provides tips to foster effective group management that are not typically emphasized during teaching preparation courses or college discussions, but rather acquired through years of teaching experience.

Despite its practicality and usefulness, this book falls short in providing tips to incorporate technology into the learning process. The only tip that Ur presented regarding the use of technology was entitled *Using SMS texting in the classroom* (p.99), in which the author suggested the advantages of using a texting application in the teaching process. Although this tip could be significant for teachers working with adult populations, younger generations use smart phones and devices in a variety of ways (not only texting) that could be engaging in their language learning process. *Penny Ur's 100 Teaching Tips* would be even a better reference book for language teachers if it had included more tips in terms of the importance of incorporating technology into the language-learning process, since we, as educators, should be able to adapt to new generations' digital literacies to enrich their language learning journeys.

In short, *Penny Ur's 100 Teaching Tips* is an outstanding reference book for language teachers because the author used accessible, yet meaningful concepts to transmit her teaching expertise and advice. Although it offers little information in terms of the use of technology in the language classroom, this book provides handy and significant tips in different teaching areas for English teachers around the world.