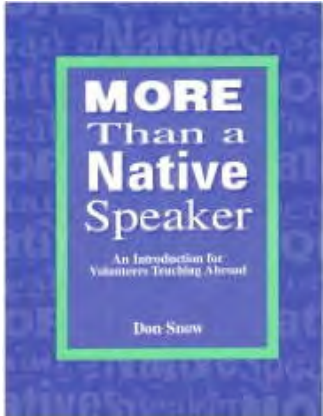


<p align="center">More Than a Native Speaker: An Introduction for Volunteers Teaching English Abroad (Rev. Ed.)</p>			
Author:	Don Snow (2006)		
Publisher:	Alexandria, VA: TESOL		
Pages	ISBN	Price	
Pp. xi + 363	ISBN 978-193118532-5	\$27.95/36.95 U.S. (Member/Non-Member)	
			

Recounting his first experience teaching overseas in Taipei in 1979, Don Snow mentions the distinct awareness he had that “knowing how to speak English was not the same as knowing how to teach English” (p. v). As the number of people learning English as a second or foreign language continues to grow toward its projected peak of 2 billion (Graddol, 2006), it is probable that many more native speakers of English with little or no formal training in TESOL will come to the same realization during their initial experience teaching abroad. *More Than a Native Speaker* is a book specifically tailored to the needs of these people, whom Snow refers to as Volunteer Teachers (VTs), providing them with a solid introduction to English language teaching and learning, practical activities for the classroom, and insights on how to adapt to life and work in a foreign culture.

The main aim of Snow’s book is to accelerate learning the craft of language teaching through a nontechnical introduction to that craft. There are three parts:

- Part I, Preparing to Teach (Chapters 1-6), includes chapters on the principles of language learning and teaching, basic course and lesson planning, evaluation and grading, and classroom survival issues
- Part II (Chapters 7-14) presents in detail various aspects of teaching English
- Part III (Chapters 15-16) discusses issues specific to living abroad as well as future paths for those VTs who become interested in English teaching as a profession

The text is easily accessible through (1) clearly structured chapters; (2) a relaxed, enjoyable writing style; and (3) examples and anecdotes from the author's extensive personal experiences as an English teacher abroad. The chapters on classroom teaching found in Part II each has a common structure: goals and challenges of a skill are presented, a variety of in-class and out-of-class tasks are detailed, and the skill is evaluated. Snow's presentation of language teaching is guided by the theoretical assumptions of a communicative, student-centered approach, and these are readily evident in Chapters 7-14. That being said, Snow's topic organization follows a rather traditional structure, with individual chapters on listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar, vocabulary, and culture. In so presenting the material, Snow reinforces a piecemeal approach to language that is contrary to the overall theoretical assumptions of the book. Snow is aware of this, providing the rationale that "many of the schools and students with whom VTs work will tend to think in terms of these categories, and volunteers who are learning a new craft in a new environment would be wise to begin from what is familiar to both them [from experience in previous foreign language classes] and the students" (p. ix). This emphasis on being aware of local norms and expectations, and adapting to them without abandoning one's own beliefs and methods, is a key theme throughout the book. It can be questioned, however, whether the beginning VT can be expected to defend a more holistic development of skills over knowledge accumulation when presented such a conventional EFL model.

While the chapters focused on classroom teaching described above provide extensive procedural detail, those in Part 1 are more general, and often leave the reader wondering how the ideas presented could be put into actual practice. While Snow does expand on some of his suggestions, I noted several instances where recommendations were made, but the practicalities of executing them in class were not clear. This is also the case for helping beginning students create goals for their Language Learning Projects. And wisely, Snow points out the need to discuss directly with students the discrepancies between one's language teaching approaches and the students' language learning expectations, suggesting "You can not assume that students share your assumptions, so be sure to explicitly communicate them to students" (p. 18). This is, of course, vitally important. However, the difficulty is in how to do it in practice with students who have a limited command of English. Concrete examples of how to lead such a discussion with beginning and intermediate learners would benefit the beginning teacher greatly. The breadth of coverage, as opposed to depth, in these initial chapters left most of my students, a group of adults from a variety of professions preparing to teach English in Eastern Europe during the summer, uncertain how to put the ideas presented into action. This shortcoming, however, is more than made up for in the other two sections of the book.

One particularly useful addition to this revised edition is the inclusion of a section at the end of each chapter labeled "Thought, Discussion, and Action." In these sections, the reader (or instructor) will find a set of activities designed to encourage reflection on, and application of, the chapter content, with particular emphasis on beginning the process of actively interacting with the host culture. The activities would be most appropriate as self-study tools for readers either already in a country or who know where they will be teaching. Another useful addition

is an expanded appendix of culture-based activities for teaching oral skills courses or culture courses. The nearly 90 pages of activities are organized into modules corresponding to broad areas of culture (Daily Life, The Cycle of Life, Relationships, Our Nation, Society, Arts, Entertainment, and Media, and Teaching and Education). The activities are at varying levels of difficulty, and the first three within each unit include specific learning goals along with step-by-step procedural notes. This appendix was by far the most popular and useful section of the book for my students.

The focus of these activities, and much of Snow's book, is on the teaching of language through discussion of culture, both the VT's and the students'. Chapter 13, "Teaching Culture," presents an excellent discussion of what culture is and the role that shared knowledge plays in communication and language learning. Snow suggests that cultural discussions within the classroom are a useful means for engaging and motivating students, and an excellent source of material for authentic communicative activities. In many countries this is still an acceptable practice; however, methods that separate the learning of English from the learning of Western culture and values are gaining prominence. These include Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), Content Based Instruction (CBI), English as a lingua franca (ELF), and English as an International Language (EIL) (see, e.g., Graddol, 2006; Kirkpatrick, 2007; Lyster, 2007; McKay, 2002). As Graddol (2006) writes, "'English as a Foreign Language' . . . seems to be giving way to a new orthodoxy, more suited to the realities of global English" (p. 82). Such a movement means that English will less frequently be taught as a subject on its own, requiring English teachers (in this case VTs) to develop an additional skill set. Readers of a guide such as Snow's would benefit from a chapter focused on these new trends in English language teaching, as many VTs are likely to be asked to participate in them.

Independent of how they will be teaching English, all VTs will need to adjust to living and teaching in a foreign culture, and discussion of these issues is what sets Snow's book apart from other introductory texts on learning and teaching English. The special attention paid to the circumstances of native-English speakers teaching abroad (VTs), and to their need to adapt to the expectations, goals, methods, and resources of an unfamiliar educational system and culture, is invaluable. Throughout the book Snow promotes a common sense ask/observe approach to learning about the host culture that is reinforced in the activities at the end of each chapter. He suggests that as a VT, one should teach and live in such a way as to make a positive contribution to the host country while simultaneously learning about the people and culture. The concepts are supported with examples drawn from the author's own experiences, mainly in China and other parts of Asia. While these generally resonated with my experiences working in Africa, Europe, and the Middle East, the fact that more "voices" are not presented in the book detracts from its overall impact. The book might make an even greater impression on new VTs and have a broader appeal if it were to include the experiences of VTs from a variety of English teaching contexts across the world.

More Than a Native Speaker provides beginning teachers (VTs) with a solid foundation in the knowledge, skills and ideas needed to present quality, engaging lessons. Its only shortfalls are

in the limited voices presented and the lack of discussion of new trends in English language teaching abroad. Also, a bit more concreteness in Part 1 would go a long way. Aside from these, the book is a real success in terms in meeting head on the issues and challenges faced when teaching overseas, and providing clear ideas on how to make the experience most rewarding. As such, this book would be a valuable resource not only for anyone preparing to teach English overseas, but also for the libraries of those programs that regularly employ VTs.

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