

An A-Z of ELT: A dictionary of terms and concepts used in English Language Teaching

By Scott Thornbury, Macmillan: Oxford, 2006

Pages (vii & 256), Price Rs. 700



An A-Z of ELT is a completely new dictionary of terms and concepts used in ELT. It is also an encyclopedia where each entry provides a short summary of the major issues, debates and practical implications associated with each concept, as well as making connections between related concepts. One can gain a more wide-ranging understanding of a specific topic of interest by reading around a topic. The book covers the topic areas that are required for the development of professional skills of a language teacher. The main topic areas that are covered in the book are the following:

Language-related topics

Discourse, including pragmatics, functions, grammar, linguistics, phonology, sociolinguistics, vocabulary

Learning-related topics

Psycholinguistics, SLA (Second Language Acquisition)

Teaching-related topics

Methodology, professional development, testing the list of entries includes terms that are of central importance to language teaching. The book also has an Index at the end which includes all the terms and names that are used in the entries. Entries are cross referenced using an arrow for the benefits of the users. The book also provides further reading suggestions for those who wish to have further information in the field of their enquiry. The entries have been kept non-technical and readable for the users who have very little or no specialist knowledge. The definitions are accurate, authoritative and yet easy to understand, and examples are provided to make the concepts/terms clear to the user.

It is a very useful reference book for practising teachers of any language and more specifically for teachers of English as a second or foreign language. It should also be useful for students of Applied Linguistics. It will be immensely beneficial for those who are involved in teacher training. This book should be in the possession of anyone who is interested in the professional development of language teachers.

TESOL Announcement

TESOL Macedonia-Thrace, N Greece 18th Annual International Convention.

Thessaloniki, 19th – 20th March, 2011

Theme

“Education: light my fire!”

Confirmed plenary speakers:

Lindsay Clandfield

Antonella Sorace

Nik Peachey

“Pecha Kucha Evening”

to be hosted by **Lindsay Clandfield**

For more information including Call for Participation:

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FORTELL Announcement

Articles are invited for May 2011 issue

Guest Editors:

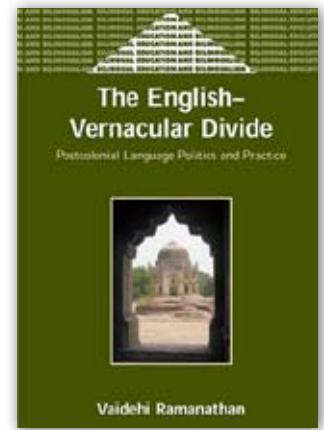
- Prem Kumari Srivastava
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Last date for submission of articles:
February 28, 2011

Send your contribution to **Dr. A.L. Khanna**, Coordinating Editor at
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The English-Vernacular Divide: Postcolonial Language Politics and Practice

By Ramanathan, Vaidehi (2005) Clevedon, U.K: Multilingual Matters. Pp. v-xii & 143 \$29.95 ISBN 1-85359-769



The hybridization of the English language is a natural outcome of the ongoing process of colonization affecting postcolonial studies of language and practices across the world. Vaidehi Ramanathan's book *The English-Vernacular Divide* addresses the impact of this hybrid language on the mindset of the people of the Indian subcontinent, with a focus on the state of Gujarat. One of her concerns is how language policies at the level of nation, state, and institution, impact educational endeavors on "such hybrid continuous grounds" (viii). In other words, she focuses on the ways in which students, teachers and institutions "interpret and engage with particular language policies to build bridges across perceived chasms, while respecting tensions in contact zones" (viii). She mainly addresses the tensions that rise in the conflict between the educational systems encouraging the English medium of instruction and the resistant factors which encourage the vernacular form. The author has herself been schooled and has received higher education in the same system.

Now an Associate Professor at the University of California, Davis, Ramanathan conducted this study of "critical ethnography" (7-8) over the span of seven years of site visits in Gujarat, primarily during the summer months. Addressing some current language-related issues, the book is specifically emphatic on the dynamics between English and the vernaculars and traces these dynamics to their roots in the macro-structures in India. She has attempted to document where and how college-going students get situated in the English-vernacular canvas, the ways in which tertiary-level English "disadvantages students educated in the vernacular" (3) and how teachers and institutions are trying to eliminate this divide and helping in the integration of English and the vernaculars.

The author has based her research on a study of three institutions of higher education in Gujarat:

one is a vernacular medium (VM) college for women. The second is a private business college in the English medium (EM). The third is a co-educational Jesuit institution (one in which Ramanathan herself studied) which is an EM college. The study is exhaustive based on 80 interviews with VM and EM students, 21 interviews with members of the faculty at the three institutions, and 100 hours of observation in classes and activities at these colleges. Another source of data was educational documents obtained from these institutions, as well as textbooks used at the K – 12 levels, to college circulars, newsletters and internal documents.

Ramanathan outlines the language-related social practices, the historical developments, and some of the enforced pedagogical and curricular practices that result in the values and inclinations of the English-speaking Indian middle class. She explores the politics of divergent pedagogic tools and practices, affecting the English literacy of the VM and the EM variety from the K-12 levels. An examination of textbooks reveals the dichotomy in the way in which English is taught in the VM and the EM institutions. The EM texts encourage a kind of individual thinking and understanding of civic issues through metadiscourse, self-discovery, comprehension and westernized readings; whereas the VM texts are more focused on survival English and grammar lacking in space for self-discovery and essay writing.

She analyzes the type and role of English instruction located in the two divergent institutions: the VM women's college and the EM private business college in order to study the methods and manner in which the teachers and the taught, at both institutions, reduce the English vernacular divide. She supplies a lot of data and descriptions of the two different institutions: the different practices, procedural display and social conventions. She outlines those classroom issues that widen the English- vernacular gulf in the

VM college which is less visible in the Business College. In the latter, the cultural models are more oriented to western pedagogic practices, while English is taught in context, using business themes affiliated to the other courses. She further deals with the divisive politics of tracking which, in the Indian socio-educational context, enhances the English-vernacular chasm. She delves into the nature and general justification for tracking and its consequences for different groups of students. She then briefly discusses “at the risk of hugely simplifying them” (94), hegemony, caste, discrimination and social justice. She refers to the University-wide mandates of tracking VM

students entering EM colleges which give rise to further cultural dissonance. Ramanathan’s attempt to highlight and analyze the linguistic imperialism, existing in our country is praiseworthy. The delineation of the socio-educational factors and latent ideologies that inform and oppose the pedagogic practices which paradoxically bridge as well as widen the English-vernacular gulf is exhaustive and insightful. For those who have schooled in exclusively EM institutions and who have had their tertiary education at a college with a mixture of EM and VM students, it can be very intriguing to trace the familiar and identifiable data and processes described in the book.