

Book Reviews

Jayendran, N., Ramanathan, A. & Nagpal, S. (Eds.), *Language Education: Teaching English in India*. Routledge, 2021, ISBN: 978-0-367-48593-1 (hbk), ISBN: 978-1-003-05436-8 (ebk)

Reviewed by Hamda Hanan

William F. Pinar (2005) postulates that the academic field of curriculum studies is embedded in the national culture. In that case, it follows that curriculum studies and pedagogical innovations need to take into account the specificities of India. *Language Education: Teaching English in India* edited by Nishevita Jayendran, Anusha Ramanathan, and Surbhi Nagpal, published by Routledge specifically embarks on such a project. The book situates the teaching and learning of English within the sociocultural context of the nation. The volume discusses the cultural, discursive, and sociopolitical functions of language education and the teaching of English in the Indian classrooms. As part of Principles-Based Adaptive Teaching Series, it identifies the changes affecting teaching-learning practices in schools and addresses the range of knowledge development required of educators to adopt innovative pedagogies in the 21st Century classroom.

The book does not regard language as a tool for communication alone but rather considers it a socio-cultural artefact as well. The book acknowledges the ability of language to aid cognition and demarcate identities. And thus, the book addresses language learning and teaching, taking into cognition its historical legacy, the colonial and postcolonial context, and its contemporary relevance.

The book is divided into eight chapters: While the first half aims to understand language and language learning, the second half deals with the pedagogical aspects of English Studies in the Indian classroom. The first chapter presents an overview of the different approaches to language through the perspectives of linguistics, philosophy, and ethnography. It connects language to thought and also explicates ways in which language, culture, and identity relate to each other. The second chapter in addition

to providing a historical overview of English Studies in India also dwells on the policies and practices of institutions which regulate English Studies in India. Further, the chapter brings in comparable debates from across the world and reflects on how language learning is crucial to critical literacy. The third chapter distinguishes between language acquisition (a subconscious process with inputs) and language learning (a conscious process based on reflections), and further links the idea to the socio-politico-economic-multilingual context of India. The chapter also explores approaches to create an inclusive English Classroom in India. The fourth chapter focuses on the idea of literacy in general, and critical literacy in particular, to discuss ways in which English language teaching for critical literacy must factor multimodality and an integrated approach to language learning. The chapter also presents reading as a constructivist act of interpretation.

The second half of the book begins with two chapters on teaching English, while the first chapter deals with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), the second chapter deals with teaching language through literature. It focuses on the Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing skills (LSRW) and explains the various Teaching Learning Resources (TLR) available. These two chapters being reflective in nature present an array of lesson plans and case studies. The following chapter is exclusively devoted to the teaching of fiction, poetry, and drama. The chapter encourages the teaching of literature along two trajectories, that of critical appreciation and critical thinking. The book concludes with a chapter on the evaluation and assessment strategies for teaching and learning English in the Indian classrooms. The postscript suggests the ways ahead in developing a learner-centric strategy that informs the syllabus, pedagogy, and evaluation.

The book stands apart from other books of the kind which usually jump on the bandwagon of discussing the syllabus or evaluation. The book begins by providing the reader an overview of language, through the domains of linguistics, philosophy, culture, and aesthetics. The book also deserves credit for its structure which is reflective in nature rather than the cliched prescriptive approach. The book presents a list of what can be done rather than a restrictive list of what should be done in English language classrooms. Almost all the chapters begin with an activity, further the chapters are followed by a list of clearly stated objectives and conclude with a list of takeaways. Through the activities, reading

comprehension and exercises, the book encourages interaction and the reference section usefully suggests further research areas.

References

Pinar, W.F. (2005). Curriculum studies and the politics of educational reform. In J. Satterthwaite & E. Atkinson (Eds.), *Discourses of education in the age of new imperialism* (25–45). Trentham Books.

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Ansari, A.K. & Nagpal, R. (Eds.) (2021), *Premchand on Literature and Life: Selections* (Translated from the Hindi) Aakar Books, 2021, ISBN: 9789350027394; Routledge, 2023, ISBN: 9781032524573.

Reviewed by T.C. Ghai

Premchand on Literature and Life (2021) includes selections from Premchand's letters, articles, and editorials in different magazines like *Hans* and *Jagran* that he edited or was associated with. It is the third book that I have come across recently on Premchand's non-fictional works, the other two being *Premchand on Culture and Education* (2020) and *Premchand on National Language* (2019). Together, these three books give us a fairly comprehensive view of Premchand's understanding of literature, life, and the burning issues of his world, including literary, social, cultural, economic, and political concerns.

The fifty excerpts included in the book are selections from four magazines—*Bharat*, *Kalayan*, *Jagran*, and *Hans*, and cover the period between 1922 and 1936. Most of the articles from *Hans* are editorial pieces that Premchand wrote, expressing his views on a wide range of issues related to life and literature, this was a period in which he arguably produced some of his best work in both short and long fiction. The length of the pieces varies from half a page to ten pages, depending on the issue he is reflecting upon. Occasionally, for instance, in the Editorial titled "Proposal for an