

the lived experiences of the transnational teaching professionals. It also furthers the scope of research in transnationalism by bringing up several points for future research. The reflexivity seen in the volume, from the editors as well as the contributing authors, is worth mentioning in both research and teaching domains.

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Reviewed by Minakshi Lahkar

“An [educational] aim ... must suggest the kind of environment needed to liberate and to organise their capacities.” (Dewey, 2012, p. 150)

Critical Issues in Teaching English and Language Education edited by Troudi (2020) makes a powerful plea for listening to the hitherto marginalized voices of students and teachers in the domain of English language teaching and learning in less-developed countries. Appropriately-titled, this collection of rigorously researched papers has a strong philosophical grounding in the emancipatory pedagogy advocated by thinkers like Freire, Giroux, Pennycook, Kumaravadivelu, and Benesch. The writers present perspectives informed by criticality as they seek to raise awareness and problematize the neoliberal agenda underlying top-down language policy and planning which ignores ground realities.

Since the 1950s, most of the Gulf countries have adopted a Western model of education using English as a medium of instruction (EMI) in Higher Education. Unfortunately even after seven decades, there is no clearly-thought-out language policy and the consequences are presented in the first section, “Issues of Language in Education Policies.” After

schooling with Arabic as the medium of instruction, there is a sudden switch to EMI in tertiary education with ineffective bridge courses in English. Al Bakri and Troudi's study of an Omani institute notes how poor English writing skills hamper real learning and promote a culture of copy-pasting. In Kuwait, entry into Higher Education is determined by English proficiency. Ironically, most graduates are employed in the public sector where only Arabic is required. This emphasis on L2 as the language of globalization, modernity and science leads to an uncritical devaluation of L1.

The second section, "Issues in Critical Language Pedagogy," begins with a study (Chapter 5) in which classroom discussions and paper writing on the topic of English Imperialism provokes reflection on the use of English and an appreciation for Arabic. Chapter 6 details how the use of appropriate materials and teaching strategies can build awareness of multiple perspectives and enable students to bring in their own funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992). Chapter 7, a study of a Sino-British transnational university, discusses how students' participation in classroom transactions can be enabled in ways that are culturally familiar to them. Critical Discourse Analysis is used in Chapter 8, to show how EAP (English for Academic Purposes) textbooks, meant for a Saudi classroom, promote neoliberal discourse.

In the third section, "Issues in Critical Language Teacher Education", Slimani-Rolls (Chapter 9) advocates Exploratory Practice for teachers to integrate normal classroom activities into research, taking students as collaborators. This would be more impactful than training programmes designed by specialists who have little clue about the lived realities of teachers. This is further underscored in Chapter 10 which discusses how the centrally-administered, decontextualized teachers' training courses in Chile breed frustration and disengagement. Chapter 11 shows the mixed perspective of Omani teachers towards the use of Critical Pedagogy. Hence, Al Riyami and Troudi, conclude that all stakeholders, including policy makers, must be brought on board to use critical pedagogy in the classroom. There is also an interesting discussion on Communicative English, which became central to Oman's 1998 educational reform.

Section four, "Issues of Voice and Voicelessness with English," begins with Chapter 12 which details how after an initial top-down design of the New English Curriculum, Dominican Republic policy-planners

made a course-correction and gave teachers a greater role in the process. The remaining chapters however sound a sombre note. Chapter 13 discusses how technological surveillance enforces performativity and creates an anxiety-laden atmosphere. This is exacerbated by poorly constructed systems set up for Student Evaluation of Teachers which administrations use to determine tenure (Chapter 15). Chapter 14 brings in the discriminatory recruitment practices privileging native speakers over non-native ones. This would be especially relevant for Indian ELT professionals seeking employment in the Gulf.

Despite the range of studies undertaken, a few gaps remain. The tantalizing reference to Syria and Iraq, where AMI is still used in Higher Education for science and medicine, points to a counter-hegemonic model which is however not elucidated. Another unexplained point is the comment on the “fluctuating role of English learning” in Chile (p. 240). Footnotes are also missing for a few abbreviations like SLA, in the chapter dealing with native versus non-native speakers, and SEN, in the chapter on ELT in Chile.

Nevertheless, the book is worth reading. It builds an awareness of how neoliberal discourses impact our own teaching-learning practices and provides suggestions for practising critical pedagogy in our classrooms. Its whole-hearted advocacy of a bottom-up approach to language policy and planning is a plea for realizing the transformative potential of Higher Education.

References

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