

Book Review

The Pedagogy of English as an International Language: Perspectives from Scholars, Teachers, and Students

Roby Marlina and Ram Ashish Giri (Eds.). Springer, 2014. 265 pp. ISBN: 978-3-319-06127-6 (eBook)

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Marlina and Giri approach teaching English as an international language (EIL) by presenting prevailing examples of changes in pedagogy. These changes result from a paradigm shift from teaching Standard English to recognising its international functions. *'The Pedagogy of English as an International Language: Perspectives from scholars, teachers, and students'* includes the voices of important stakeholders who provide a comprehensive overview of the state of the art of EIL pedagogy. This volume consists of 17 chapters organised in three parts: from the background of the paradigm shift in teaching English; through vivid descriptions of on-going changes; to fruitful reflection upon the experience of change. Readers interested in English pedagogy in Asian contexts will find this volume especially germane because many cases are drawn from the region. Four chapters most relevant to EIL teaching in Asia are reviewed in more detail here.

The chapter entitled *Teaching and Learning of EIL in Korean Culture and Context* by Park and Kim, presents EIL teaching in Korea where the national curriculum now aims at developing students as intercultural speakers of English. The described gap between the curriculum rhetoric and the reality is perhaps not surprising, but disappointing. Although a case study of Korea, this chapter has relevance for other Asian contexts. For example, native English teachers (NETs) in Hong Kong and the scheme to recruit them face very similar problems to those described in this chapter. This similarity shows that the failing of policies in their initial aims is not uncommon. Particularly, the defining of native speakers by citizenship, which happens in both Korea and Hong Kong, cannot guarantee the modelling that the government had desired. This study of Korea shows that changes are gathering pace, but there are still problems to be addressed.

The views of local Malaysian teachers reported by Ali in the chapter *Implementing EIL paradigm in ELT classrooms: Voices of experienced and pre-service English educators in Malaysia* are valuable. The reported positive and enthusiastic attitude toward the EIL paradigm of most participants in the study (80%) is a pre-requisite for a paradigm shift. Yet, perhaps more important are the worries of the remaining 20%.

They express concerns about a lack of awareness at almost all levels of the system and indifference towards a Malaysian variety of English, which remind readers that changes take place in a piecemeal fashion. This chapter would be even more captivating if it offered more insights into how the teachers thought they could put EIL pedagogy into practice.

Xu, in the Chapter *Teaching and assessing EIL vocabulary in Hong Kong*, reports the experience of student-teachers of English in sampling and analysing local use of words in a vocabulary studies course. Although the course described is intended specifically for trainee teachers rather than more common EIL learners, it engenders a useful and relevant practice. A small limitation is the insufficient elaboration on the feedback given to students. In particular, while many of the word samples demonstrate a local twist, it is not clear whether these items are accessible to both native and non-native English users and thus whether these word samples should be considered as English words. It would be really interesting to read how such issues would be addressed with the student-teachers.

In the chapter *On teaching EIL in a Japanese context: The power within and power without*, Giri and Foo present a narrative of an Australian NET teaching in Japan. The key point made in this chapter is highly valid: it is not only the non-native speakers who are tied by the Standard English ideology; native speakers, such as this NET and his British colleague, also suffer. Both have been challenged by students on their English because the standard in Japan is American English. Readers familiar with Asian contexts will also be interested to read the commendable description of the examination-oriented culture in Japan where, given the huge emphasis on examination, correctness, and hence standards, are often prioritised. Indeed, this washback effect on pedagogy is conspicuous in many parts of Asia. This chapter reveals that attitudinal shift is certainly not easy and is happening 'at a miniscule pace' (p. 245).

Overall, this volume deserves a strong recommendation to readers interested in EIL pedagogy in Asian contexts even though only some of its chapters focus on the region. Given the book's purpose to trigger debates about teaching English as a pluricentric language, the editors succeed rather well in profiling current EIL pedagogy and demonstrating challenges to set off such debates. The editors have also organised the chapters in a logical manner which is accessible and easy to follow.

About the reviewer

Bronson Hui is currently an EFL teacher-researcher at a secondary school in Hong Kong. He received his MSc in Applied Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition from the University of Oxford, and his BA and BEd from the University of Hong Kong. His research interests include EFL pedagogy, vocabulary acquisition, and bilingual processing.