

Book Review

Matsuda, Aya (ed.). *Preparing teachers to teach English as an international language*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters, 2017. ISBN: 9781783097029, xxi + 254 pp.

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The volume is a recent one in a series of compilations concerned with the pedagogical application of research into the international use of English (e.g. Bayyurt and Akcan 2015; Matsuda 2012; Sharifian 2009). However, this publication is more specific in its scope in that the target audience is the teacher educator aiming to prepare teachers to teach English as an international language.

The book consists of 15 chapters. It is clearly structured and arranged in six parts which present a move from theory to practice, from larger units in teacher education to smaller ones. Part 1 comprises two theoretical frameworks, while Part 2 contains two papers with examples of complete education programmes. Parts 3 and 4 outline four teacher education courses in various parts of the world. Part 5 presents units within courses, whereas the final section of the volume is a collection of sample lessons which have been developed by teacher educators from diverse backgrounds.

The two papers in Part 1 intend to propose frameworks for the development of EIL-aware teacher education programmes. In fact, neither of them is entirely new in that the ideas that have been put forward in these articles have already been published before. For example, the first paper by Bayyurt and Sifakis contains an amended and toned-down version of the transformative framework which originally aimed at the reorientation and transformation of teachers' deeply held beliefs about language use and teaching. In this paper, however, the authors emphasise that the teacher education programme they put forward should not force teachers to “radically change the way they think” (p. 13) but, rather, enable teachers to critically appraise the literature and their own teaching experiences. This article presents a framework, albeit not a theoretical one, comprising the three phases of a teacher education programme (exposure, critical awareness and action plan) designed by Bayyurt and Sifakis, and then administered in Turkey.

What may count as theory in the paper seems to be an attempt to define some of the key notions, for example, World Englishes, English as an international language (EIL) and English as a lingua franca (ELF). However, neither this

nor other papers in the compilation manage to arrive at a consensus regarding the interpretation of the key concepts. In Chapter 1, initially EIL is seen as an umbrella term incorporating both WE and ELF (p. 6). Then there is the mention of EIL and ELF and EIL/ELF constructs, which implies a less hierarchical kind of relationship between the two notions. Thus, the answers to the questions of what distinguishes EIL from ELF (if there is such a distinction) and how an EIL-aware teacher education (p. 12) is different from an ELF-aware one (p. 13) remain unclear. Elsewhere, there is the implication that EIL might be a variety (see “How realistic it is to teach EIL” on p. 100), whereas Matsuda views EIL as a “function that English performs in international, multilingual contexts” (p. xii). In other papers EIL, ELF and WE are subsumed under the category of global Englishes (pp. 69, 172). Even though the terminological variety and inconsistency may reflect the order of the day, it would have been helpful if the teacher educator readers had been given a clearer view of what it is that they should include in their preparation of teachers.

In the Bayyurt and Sifakis chapter as well as in other chapters of the volume, there is reference to “EIL-aware lessons” (p. 11), “EIL classrooms” (p. 57) or a “mini EIL lesson” (p. 106). Participants attending some of the programmes and courses have the task to plan and deliver such lessons, either to their school classes, to other university students or to their peers. However, there are a couple of issues that arise here. A practical one is that in primary and secondary education a lesson cannot be treated as a discrete unit as it forms part of a teaching/learning process where a lesson is just one link in the long chain of many lessons that constitute the teaching of school subjects. Secondly, in the absence of a theoretical framework for an EIL-oriented language pedagogy which is based on a pragmatic theory or theories of EIL language use, what at present can be proposed as EIL pedagogy cannot be considered an approach the way Communicative Language Teaching has been. Therefore, the context of teaching learners of English and that of training teachers should be distinguished. In the light of this, what the present volume offers is not preparing teachers as the title suggests, but the preparation of teacher educators as indicated in the blurb.

The second paper in Part 1 is a revised version of a model of EIL teacher education which has been published in a similar compilation (Matsuda 2012). As opposed to the first one, this chapter does present a theoretical framework for EIL-informed teacher education in the form of a model consisting of four components (place, proficiency, understandings and praxis) which interact with each other and have praxis in the centre. The details about the four components not only provide helpful suggestions for class discussions but also identify those articles in the volume which pertain to the particular topics and issues raised here.

Parts 2, 3, 4 and 5 outline programmes, courses and units within courses that have been developed and implemented in countries representing all three of Kachru's circles. As for the Inner Circle, four countries have been included. One of them is the United States (Chapter 4), where the paradox of delivering an EIL programme in an Inner Circle country becomes particularly apparent. In the programme, there are activities such as "Lost-in-New York," where both the culture to be explored and the authenticity of the materials to be collected are necessarily bound up with native speakers and their norms. Despite this potential contradiction, EIL and other programmes and courses in Inner Circle countries attract and aim to attract students from the Outer and Expanding Circles, so perhaps this is why the paper on a course taught at the University of Edinburgh (Chapter 5) contains a list of EIL-oriented courses in the United Kingdom (p. 72).

The papers in Parts 2, 3, 4 and 5 are structured in a similar way. They begin with an introduction which is sometimes the repetition of the same ideas, such as the mention of fundamental changes in the use of English and the implications it has for the teaching of the language. All papers contain a brief description of a particular programme, course or unit. All of them, even the chapters on teacher education programmes in Part 2, which necessarily have a wider scope, give an overview and provide a considerable amount of detail which can prove to be particularly beneficial for a teacher educator reader. Papers with lots of useful information, including selected texts, websites, tasks, and topics and questions for discussion not only give tips and ideas for classroom use, but also stimulate thought and challenge the reader at the same time.

The most valuable part, it seems to me, is the section in each chapter which describes the challenges the authors faced when designing and delivering EIL courses or course units. These are honest and open accounts of the difficulties the teacher educators experienced and of the lessons they have learnt from these experiences. The difficulties included context-specific ones such as the elective status of a course, the composition of a particular student population or a course deemed too theoretical by the participants. Authors also mention time and curricular constraints, students' lack of proficiency and the frustration students feel when leaving the idealistic and safe environment of the course and encountering the reality of teaching. In addition, students were often overwhelmed by the amount of reading they had to do. Some of the authors also had to deal with the doubts and reluctance of the students who resist change. What is really interesting in these accounts is the authors' realisation of the flaws of their work, the subsequent amendments they made to the courses and the benefits of reflection and retrospection which accompanied the task of writing up their papers.

The final part of the book consists of one chapter containing lessons, activities and tasks providing teacher educators with further tips and ideas. In the introduction the sample lessons are described “as flexible enough to be adapted to a variety of context and audience” (p. 211). I, for one, have also found inspiration and ideas among them for the development of a new course I have been assigned to teach at my institution. No doubt, what the authors of Chapter 13 hoped for, that is, that they may have contributed “to the practice of English teacher educators” (p. 192), has indeed been fulfilled.

References

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