

Introduction

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This book is intended for teachers working with linguistic minority pupils. Its chapters provide accounts of learning and teaching practices in classroom contexts in Australia, England and the United States. Our intention has been to present the work of practitioners, teacher-educators and researchers engaging in the daily practices of working with individuals, groups and whole classes through different approaches that are aimed at supporting students in linguistically rich and diverse classrooms. Each chapter describes an approach that is responsive to and positive about linguistic diversity and sets out guiding principles, examples, questions and further reading. The book aims to present to teachers an easy-to-use and accessible set of readings that provide ideas for adaptation to local contexts and circumstances. Each chapter works within a specific social and institutional context and invites readers to consider their own classrooms in relations to the pedagogic issues and approaches outlined. This book is relevant to all teachers who would like to increase their knowledge and skills and expand and evolve their responsibilities in relation to English language learners (ELL). Teachers are responsible for both the subject and linguistic/communicative needs of their students. As Pica suggests, 'World wide, teachers are confronted with the responsibility to teach classes of students who must acquire knowledge and skills in science, technology, business, and telecommunication, and do so through a language of which they know very little, or nothing at all.' (2008: 76). This book provides a guided discussion for teachers working with linguistic minority pupils.

The book cuts across national boundaries and illustrates what teachers share in their different national settings in working with linguistic minority students. It is through a focus on local classrooms that the possibilities of different approaches and educational principles can be considered. We believe that keeping things local helps mediate against what Denos et al. (2009) have described as imposed 'slots and categories' which damage the 'vibrant and multifaceted' young people with whom teachers work (2009: 37). Similarly, a focus on situated classroom practice allows teachers to consider themselves as agentic in bringing about change. Another study that illustrates the difference individual teachers can make in their linguistically diverse classrooms comes from Skilton-Sylvester (2003). She shows how different pedagogic approaches respond to the needs of children and adults studying English in US classrooms creating different learning opportunities. She argues that despite a prevailing

language-as-a problem (Ruiz, 1984) orientation in US schools, teachers are able to create equitable educational practices for linguistically diverse students locally in their own classrooms. In the Skilton-Sylvester study teachers achieved this by adopting a positive and proactive stance towards the use of the Khmer language and culture in their classrooms. We hope the chapters in this book will also provide teachers with a sense of possibility and agency in creating learning opportunities for their students.

Another aspect shared across the chapters is an overarching competitive education system which underscores strong academic performance and emphasizes assessment in the subject matter, success in which allows students future educational opportunities (Stoller 2008). Language learning thus happens in an environment that is focused on subject curriculum. Stoller (2008: 65) argues that 'The integration of content and language-learning objectives presents challenges for policy makers, program planners, curriculum designers, teachers, materials writers, teacher educators, teacher supervisors, test writers, and learners.' These challenges run across all the national contexts described in this book. These include how best to align subject curriculum matter with language structures and functions and how best to sequence and select these language items from within a rich subject curriculum. The chapters share the common focus of education in compulsory school classrooms where young people have the dual aim of language learning and subject curriculum content.

As well as sharing understandings across national boundaries, there are also features that are unique to each. Terminology differs and chapter authors use various terms for describing learners, teachers and practices. These include English language learners (ELL), English as an additional language (EAL) pupil, bilingual students and English as a second language (ESL) learners, 'low literacy' learners, support teachers, EAL/ESL teachers, reading teachers. We have avoided trying to standardize these terms across the different chapters as we recognize that their development is context dependent, reflecting political debates about social practices in each national context. They reflect ideologies debated and contested in different national contexts. Moreover, different policy trajectories have created a whole range of policy acronyms particular to national contexts and we have made the decision to let these stand in each chapter with the author introducing and explaining specific terms where necessary.

The chapters presented in this book are about practice informed and guided by literature. They are accounts illustrating different pedagogic approaches grounded in specific classroom contexts. In each chapter local circumstances are described while simultaneously illustrating a particular orientation and approach to working with students learning English as an additional language (EAL) or second language (ESL) or bilingual students maintaining and enriching their community languages. These approaches include communicative approaches, bilingual approaches, content-based instructional approaches, sociocultural approaches and collaborative approaches. Each chapter provides a descriptive account of classroom life and invites the reader to extend this to their own classrooms in plausible and meaningful ways. We do not revisit earlier debates on 'approach', 'method' and 'technique'. Rather we orientate to

recent work by Kumaravadivelu (2003) and arguments for postmethod pedagogy (see below). We will see in the chapters that follow authors taking up positions around the boundaries of the approaches they outline, with some viewing this as useful while others seeing the dangers.

Situated approaches to pedagogy: the postmethod condition

Our understanding of 'approach' views teachers as critical and reflective practitioners who adopt situated responses to their classroom contexts rather than taking up 'method packages'. In fact, current thinking describes the 'futility of searching for a method' (Kumaravadivelu, 2003: 23). Kumaravadivelu describes the term 'method' as limiting because it sets up hierarchies through which 'experts' in the field tell 'practitioners' what they should be doing. Rather, he suggests we should be seeking local and agentive responses to our classroom contexts based on guiding principles that build on our local and global social knowledge. He points out, 'The term *methods*, as currently used in the literature on second and foreign language (L2) teaching, does not refer to what teachers actually do in the classroom; rather it refers to established methods, conceptualized and constructed by experts in the field' (2003: 24). He describes several limitations of the concept of 'method' itself (2003: summarized from 28–30):

Over-idealization of the concept and context: Because methods are based on idealized concepts and geared towards idealized contexts they can never capture or visualize all the teaching needs, wants, and situations in advance. This means that teachers will not find situation-specific solutions in any one method. In other words, teachers need to be eclectic and adaptive in responding to their own students and their classroom needs.

Overly crude categories and boundaries: Kumaravadivelu explains how methods get caught up in what he describes as a 'whirlwind of fashion' (2003: 28). When this happens practitioners can end up adopting entrenched positions around the different approaches which do not necessarily help them to respond to their own local teaching and learning needs. Loyalty to one particular method can result in inflexible approaches as teachers align themselves to one rather than another method.

Failure to recognize 'eclecticism' and pragmatism: This last limitation of 'method' presents the dangers of not thinking widely and broadly in terms of local needs. Because classroom teachers find it almost impossible to use any of the established methods as designed and delivered to them, they need to adapt. Kumaravadivelu argues they should adopt an eclectic approach that draws on whatever practical and intellectual resources teachers have available to them. However, Kumaravadivelu points out that the 'eclectic method' is rarely recognized or described in ELT Methods books.

This kind of argumentation leads Kumaravadivelu away from 'methods' towards what he calls the 'postmethod condition' (2003: 32–3). The postmethod condition signifies three interrelated attributes. First, it signifies a search for an alternative to method rather than an alternative method. While alternative methods are primarily products of top-down processes, alternatives to method are mainly products of bottom-up processes. According to Kumaravadivelu, the postmethod condition empowers practitioners to construct 'personal theories of practice' (2003: 33). Second, the postmethod condition signifies teacher autonomy which he describes as the ability of teachers to know how to develop a critical approach in order to self-observe, self-analyse, and self-evaluate their own teaching practice. The benefits of teacher autonomy are that teachers shape their own desired change and provide better opportunities for their students. The third attribute of the postmethod condition is principled pragmatism. Kumaravadivelu describes this as practice that sees the teacher responding to the immediacy of the local teaching context. We might think of this as teachers acknowledging their own values, beliefs and theories that come to shape their own pedagogical practices.

As described above, Kumaravadivelu describes the postmethod condition as a theory of practice in which macrostrategies should be used as principles to guide teachers working with students learning a second or additional language. These macrostrategies are 'derived from historical, theoretical, empirical and experiential insights related to L2 learning and teaching' (2003: 38). Kumaravadivelu describes these macrostrategies as providing a general plan or a broad set of guidelines for generating one's own situation-specific microstrategies or classroom techniques. Thus macrostrategies are always supplemented with microstrategies, which are responses to local circumstances. Kumaravadivelu lists ten macrostrategies. They are produced in full below (2003: 39–40). In the chapters that follow we see many of these macrostrategies illustrated in action as well as microstrategies particular to specific classrooms. In listing the macrostrategies below we also provide an example from one of the chapters in this book to illustrate the key point behind each macrostrategy. Each chapter contains a plethora of further examples.

Maximize learning opportunities: This macrostrategy envisages teaching as a process of creating and utilizing learning opportunities, a process in which teachers strike a balance between their role as managers of teaching acts and their role as mediators of learning acts. In Chapter 6 we see how two different teachers in two different classrooms use the pedagogical structure of 'Reciprocal Teaching' to mediate the joint learning aims of language and subject content. The teachers balance the curriculum so that both a language and content focus is possible while addressing the management of all the different needs of the students in their classes.

Minimize perceptual mismatches: This macrostrategy emphasizes the recognition of potential perceptual mismatches between intentions and interpretations of the learner; the teacher; and the teacher-educator. In Chapter 2 we learn how

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inclusive pedagogies, unless properly resourced with appropriate teacher expertise and knowledge may fail the very students they set out to support. Mismatches between the rhetoric of inclusion and the sometimes excluding practices of classroom life illustrate how linguistically diverse students learning English as an additional language might suffer.

Facilitate negotiated interaction: This macrostrategy refers to meaningful learner-learner, learner-teacher classroom interaction in which learners are entitled and encouraged to initiate topics and talk, not just react and respond; Chapters 2 and 5 describe how teachers in partnerships bring different interactional possibilities and opportunities for teaching and learning in the way they interact with students. Chapter 7 shows how teachers with different specialisms, for example EAL and subject teachers use language differently in working with linguistically diverse students and discusses the possibilities of different interactional styles.

Promote learner autonomy: This macrostrategy involves helping learners learn how to learn, equipping them with the means necessary to self-direct and self-monitor their own learning; Chapter 7 provides positive examples of how teachers can bring together learning from the home with learning at school so that young people come to view their own experiences as valuable in shaping their own development.

Foster language awareness: This macrostrategy refers to any attempt to draw learners' attention to the formal and functional properties of their L2 in order to increase the degree of explicitness required to promote L2 learning. Chapter 3 describes approaches that show one particular student becoming aware of the language and subject knowledge necessary in order to progress in her examinations. This chapter shows how a teacher can make explicit the language required for examination success.

Activate intuitive heuristics and contextualize linguistic input: These two macrostrategies are both concerned with the importance of providing rich textual data so that learners can infer and internalize underlying rules governing grammatical usage and communicative use. They highlight how language usage and use are shaped by linguistic, extralinguistic, situational and extrasituational contexts. These two macrostrategies are exemplified in Chapter 6 which shows how teachers make connections between language content and linguistic knowledge, illustrating along the way how teachers can use texts for meeting the dual learning aims of language usage and communicative use. A focus on language allows for a focus on both grammar and its role in meaning-making.

Integrate language skills: This microstrategy refers to the need to holistically integrate language skills traditionally separated and sequenced as listening, speaking, reading and writing. Chapter 5 shows the importance of holistic integration but also the dangers of subsuming the individual language skills within the subject curriculum paradigm which in many classrooms does not

allow an opportunity for a language focus. When this happens, the traditional skills are holistically integrated into the subject focus but are often lost entirely as the teacher engages in subject transmission.

Ensure social relevance: This macrostrategy refers to the need for teachers to be sensitive to the societal, political, economic and educational environment in which L2 learning and teaching take place. Chapter 7 illustrates how classroom practices must draw in the outside worlds of their students and bring these into the classroom to create more equal learning environments which validate and represent students' cultural and social experiences. Chapter 4 illustrates how the wider social and political context in Australia has created the need for a nuanced response to a particular group of students described as 'low literacy'. Chapter 4 shows how the educational response needs to take into account the experiences of these learners whose histories are those of disrupted education.

Raise cultural consciousness: This macrostrategy emphasizes the need to treat learners as cultural informants so that they are encouraged to engage in a process of classroom participation that puts a premium on their power/knowledge. Chapter 8 articulates the importance of affirming identities, promoting bilingualism and fostering integration as central to every level of decision-making in the classroom. The chapter emphasizes the importance of responding to the linguistic and cultural diversity of bilingual students in our classrooms as a positive resource.

Method dogma

Kumaravadivelu's framework of principles, macrostrategies and microstrategies are proposed to counter what some have called the dogma of methods (McKay, 2002). The application of methods 'carte blanche' leads to unthinking teachers (see Leung and Creese, Concluding Remarks). Shohamy (2006) has described how teachers can serve as soldiers of the system carrying out orders without questioning policy and the ideologies and agendas behind it. Van Deusen-Scholl (2008: xvii) suggests that teachers should view themselves as part of the bigger social and political picture and 'the multiple goals and purposes of language education within plurilingual/pluricultural environments'. McKay (2002) points to the importance of considering teacher beliefs and values and argues that this needs to be the starting point in considering what methods might work in any particular classroom. Quoting Prabhu (1990), McKay suggests that we start with what is *plausible* for the teacher. This is because teachers bring a subjective interpretation to their teaching context and make sense of the method through their own sense of plausibility. As McKay puts it (2002: 116):

This sense of plausibility is influenced by teachers' own experience in the past as learners, by their experience of teaching, and by their exposure to one or more teaching methods. A method then, for Prabhu is 'a highly

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developed and highly articulated sense of plausibility (1990: 175). Thus, 'the best method varies from one teacher to another, but only in the sense that it is best for each teacher to operate with his or her own sense of plausibility at any given time' (ibid: 175–6).

The literature we have reviewed here reinforces the importance of local interpretations of theory and research for producing responsive classrooms through informed practice. It places teachers at the centre of their classrooms in creating cultures of learning that are meaningful and plausible to them and therefore to their students. This view offers those of us working in linguistically diverse educational contexts proactive and local strategies for shaping our classrooms. It emphasizes the ability of practitioners to change and transform settings. It asks us to think local and consider how our own practices as teachers and researchers will figure in the lives of the students we work with. Kramsch and Sullivan describe this as 'global thinking, local teaching' (1996: 200).

All of the eight chapters that follow document a theory into practice approach and show it in action. Each chapter describes a different context but all share the aim of exemplification. They illustrate language educators drawing on applied linguistic research to illuminate and solve problems they encounter in their practice (Kramsch, 2008). They describe many of the challenges faced by teachers in educational contexts which typically view linguistically diverse classrooms as sites of social problems rather than sites of social resource (Ruiz, 1984). The chapters offer contextualized accounts of teachers' resistance to negative constructions of linguistic diversity and provide examples of response, personalization and differentiation. They show teachers addressing common and individual needs of their diverse students.

Chapter 1 comes from Constant Leung who outlines the principles and interpretations of communicative language teaching (CLT). He provides an overview of the theoretical influences on CLT and describes how this has been interpreted in practice particularly in English schools. In this chapter the functional perspective inherent in CLT, in which language is viewed as performing a set of different functions, is described. Leung considers CLT's relevance to subject content teaching and its conduciveness for EAL development. His chapter introduces four chapters that show learning and teaching contexts broadly influenced by the CLT paradigm. Although it has been seriously critiqued, CLT continues to have a tremendous influence on all language teaching fields of research, policy and practice (EAL, EFL, ESL, MFL¹ and community languages). Over 20 years ago, Swan expressed his concern about the communicative language teaching (CLT) canon.

Along with its many virtues, the Communicative Approach unfortunately has most of the typical vices of an intellectual revolution: it over-generalizes valid but limited insights until they become virtually meaningless; it makes exaggerated claims for the power and novelty of its doctrines; it misrepresents the currents of thought it has replaced; it is often characterized by serious intellectual confusions; it is choked with jargon. (Swan 1985: 2 cited in McKay, 2002: 111; also see Leung, 2005 for a further discussion.)

While CLT's limitations have become increasingly clear its relevance to those teaching languages is still hugely important. Van Deusen-Scholl describes new avenues in CLT approaches.

New approaches have attempted to address these concerns while maintaining a communicative focus, emphasizing a highly interactive learning environment, and increasingly providing a more authentic context for learning. Several authors point out the limitations of the ways communicative language teaching has been applied as too utilitarian and suggest new perspectives which take into consideration the social and cultural context. (Van Deusen-Scholl, 2008: xiv)

The chapters that follow show how CLT influences are moulded and shaped by both local and wider social contexts. Frank Monaghan considers the mainstream classroom as a site for language learning. He provides a historical, social and political account of current policy and outlines how teachers and teaching, and learners and learning are conceptualized in policy. The chapter considers what teacher professional knowledge and skills are involved in working with students learning English as an additional language (EAL) and makes important points about teacher collaboration, pedagogy and knowledge. Manny Vazquez uses an extended anecdote to consider the relevance of research evidence. He places himself and his student Mona at the heart of the chapter in a process of discovery and reflection. Using research evidence produced by Lynne Cameron (2002) he exemplifies how he adapts and responds to his student's vocabulary learning needs from within the national assessment system. Alan Williams describes what English as a second language (ESL) teachers need to know when responding to a particular group of students who face significant challenges in Australian schools. Williams shows how 'low literacy' ESL learners need particular responses beyond those typically labelled ESL. Using theory that views literacy as social practice, he shows how teachers can respond to both the autonomous and ideological dimensions of literacy. Angela Creese investigates how certain pedagogies come to have more power and authority than others. She does this by analysing the interactions of different teachers working with different students. Candace Harper, Kimberly Cook and Carol James describe the integration of content and language in American classrooms. Using an instruction technique called reciprocal teaching they illustrate how two different classrooms balance content and language learning aims. The chapter shows how the two teachers activate and develop students' background knowledge, increase participation and make connections in discussions of text. The chapter considers factors that affect teachers' ability to respond to the dual demands of language and content foci. Margaret Hawkins describes a sociocultural approach to language teaching and learning. She shows the importance of considering language use as situated in the community. Hawkins illustrates the importance of schools valuing and validating all the languages and cultures of its community and goes on to illustrate how teachers might achieve this. She demonstrates this through introducing the reader to two fictional

students who are being inducted into different school projects. Hawkins shows some of the challenges that might arise for these students and considers how teachers might respond. De Jong and Freeman Field describe bilingual approaches in education and show how educators can achieve quality schooling for bilingual learners through the use of three principles: affirming linguistic and cultural identities; promoting additive bilingualism; and fostering integration. Like the previous chapters, they illustrate these principles in practice through accounts of classroom life.

Note

- 1 English as an additional language, English as foreign language, English as a second language, modern foreign language.

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