



Book review

International Perspectives on English Language Teacher Education. Innovations from the Field, T.S.C. Farrell (Ed.). Palgrave Macmillan, New York (2015). v + 202pp.

Although a number of publications have focused on language teacher preparation, what a beginning language teacher needs to know is still far from consensus. In his edited volume from the Palgrave Macmillan's series on International Perspectives, Thomas Farrell, an SLA authority on first year language teaching (i.e. 2006a; 2006b; 2008; 2012), makes an urgent call for a more successful reconciliation between teacher theoretical preparation and practical demands of the school job. Presenting a collection of ten case studies from ten countries in twelve chapters, followed by questions ("engagement priorities") posed at the end of each chapter, the volume describes some examples of good practice with their context-specific manifestations, successes and tensions to be used by those engaged in language teacher preparation so as to better address the needs of novice teachers.

Chapter 1 sets the theoretical grounding for the volume, as Farrell introduces the aims of his book, explains the intricacies of "teaching in the first years" (p.7) and elucidates his understanding of novice-service teacher education that already begins in language teacher preparation programmes and continues into the first years of teaching in real classrooms. His model explicitly suggests that addressing the needs of novice teachers should be started at pre-service education and, as his term of novice teacher (pre-service plus first-year teacher) implies, the cooperation between college and school preparation should be closer.

Chapter 2 engages with Simon Phipps's example from Turkey in which the principles of the Delta course are successfully integrated with the MA programme to better make a link between theory and practice through including critical reflection in traditionally discursive MA assignments. Although I wholly believe in the positive reception of this MA programme, the question to be asked is its "novelty". As qualitative research approaches are increasingly popular, the reflective part, constituting the "Findings" section in most MA theses, is usually their distinguishing feature. A practical problem with the programme might concern making teachers put effort into writing reflective assignments as some of them may treat it as time-wasting. More limitations of the suggested MA programme could have provided readers with a fuller picture of the challenges related to its implementation.

Working in the Canadian context, Thomas Farrell, in Chapter 3, encourages teacher educators to assign reflective papers in teacher candidate graduate courses to make them step back and reflect on how a given course can impact on their future as language teachers. Getting pre-service teachers to articulate their beliefs and knowledge seems a very apt suggestion. Students may often not see the link between a course and its predicted impact, and therefore the value of a course, if personally described and acknowledged by them, may result in their better remembering its content. I am confident that we should go in the direction proposed by Farrell and have more reflection in various teacher graduate courses.

In Chapter 4, Margo DelliCarpini and Orlando B. Alonso from the United States lead us into a critical examination of Content Based Instruction (also known as CLIL in Europe), when they ask a critical question about teacher preparation: Are content teachers ready to teach English language learners and are English as second/foreign language teachers ready to teach the content? Their innovation is a pilot course structured in such a way that skills in collaborative practices are developed. Apart from describing this successful mainstream and ESL teachers' cooperation-based project, the chapter offers a lot of other thought-provoking issues about teachers' collaborative practice.

Chapter 5 by John Macalister and Jill Musgrave from New Zealand makes use of Nation's (2007) *Four Strands* framework, according to which any language course should consist of four equal strands: meaning-focused input, language-focused learning, meaning-focused output and fluency development. Creating the dissonances between student teachers' personal experiences and the course principles, the authors implement the framework, and then ask their former students to share their problems in the form of "graduate scenarios" that prevented them from using the course principles in practice. I find this chapter one of the best in the volume, as reality-based scenarios from graduates may prove genuinely effective in preparing pre-service teachers for the unpredictable situations in future classrooms.

Chapter 6 picks up the thread of designing materials in language teacher education in the context of South East Asian Countries. Drawing on his materials development workshops, Jack C. Richards shows that innovation can also stand for "small

things" like the ability to adapt materials to teachers' local contexts. Involving teachers in consciousness raising, modeling, guided and then individual creation, can develop teachers' creativity in materials design. I am glad that the issue of teacher creativity has been raised, as the abundance of books for teachers with ready-made solutions tend to deprive teachers of many instruction skills, such as the ability to adapt the activities in the course materials so that they can address the local contexts.

Chapter 7 by Leketi Makalatela from South Africa discusses translanguaging principles in L2 reading instruction, as covered in an ESL pre-service teacher programme. Although applicable to only some contexts around the world, the advocacy of linguistic interdependence between heritage languages and English, based on a purposeful alternation of the languages of input and output and resulting in the simultaneous development of literacy skills in the two languages seems very convincing. A good selection of questions at the end of the chapter merits attention, as well.

In Chapter 8, Lubna Alsagoff describes a language enhancement course in Singapore that aimed to increase student teachers' awareness of the "Singlish" problem. Applicable as it is to restricted contexts only, the Singaporean case study can still successfully encourage other teacher educators to attend courses that would develop English teachers' awareness of their own linguistic profiles and reflect on their language variety choices including the consequences of these choices, especially if they are not valued by the policies of their home countries.

Helen Donaghue's Chapter 9 is an excellent account of the impact of technology on teaching and language teacher education in the United Arab Emirates. Her discussion explicitly presents what the imposed implementation of iPads means to many experienced language teachers. The discussion is replete with pertinent remarks offering many opportunities for reflection, such as a growing gap between teachers who are using new technologies and supervisors who lack this ability but have to evaluate the teachers.

Chapter 10 by Steve Mann provides a discussion of his successful employment of audio-feedback computer software in a UK teacher education context. This contribution is very well-balanced as the author shares his positive experience with *Jing* but at the same time acknowledges the criticisms offered by his students. Mann's chapter is worth reading before deciding on investing in this feedback software.

The last case study is presented in Chapter 11 by a Chinese teacher educator, Hao Xu. Focusing on developing novice EFL teachers' pedagogical knowledge, Hao Xu uses three-phases in the lesson study activities (global understanding of the structure of a lesson, awareness of concrete objectives, achieving teaching objectives from a holistic point of view). The practicalities of this programme can be challenging (i.e., making all the teachers in one group meet to observe each lesson) but the very idea of practice-oriented development is useful.

Thomas Farrell's Chapter 12 wraps up this review of innovations, as it seems to invite readers to ponder on two thoughts. First, he provides a conclusion that all the international contributors to the volume are gearing towards the concept of reflective practice. Second, Farrell presents his own framework for promoting reflection which can be implemented in three different ways: theory-into-(beyond) practice, (beyond) practice-into-theory or a single stage application (p. 199).

Who is this book for? Without any doubt, it can be recommended to teacher educators who usually read teacher development books as soon as they are released. It would also appeal to many teachers, curriculum developers and all those who like to keep up to date with what is happening in applied linguistics worldwide.

Although some of the innovations are context-specific, or what is considered innovative in one context may already be standard practice in another, most innovations presented here may have global resonances. Clearly, Farrell has made an important contribution in preparing this volume, as readers will benefit from the ideas described here and I wish the book were just the first in a series publishing educators' innovative attempts at bridging the gap between theory and practice on a regular basis.

References

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