

## Book review

### **Planning As Narrative: A Cubist View on Planning Units of Work for English Language Teachers**

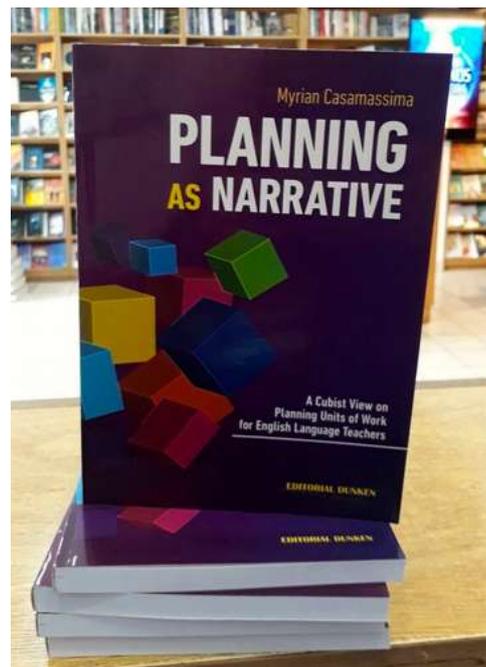
M. Casamassima, Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires:  
Dunken, 2017, Pp. 208, ISBN 978-987-02-9826-7

It is often the case with most creations that we forget what life was like before the idea existed. Such is the case with *Planning as Narrative, A Cubist View on Planning Units of Work for English Language Teachers*: an invitation to view planning as a story to assist deeper and broader thinking. Inspired by Cubism, a movement pioneered by Pablo Picasso and Georges Braque that set out to explore things not from a single, static angle but from multiple perspectives, the author has revolutionised English Language planning by presenting a clear, situated and all-encompassing model.

As Mercedes Foligna states in the forward to the book, *Planning As Narrative* comes to fill a void in the bibliography about planning for the English language class. Its publication is all the more timely as it vividly portrays some of the contexts in which the teaching of English as an additional language takes place and it accounts for much of the local, research-based knowledge. Thus, it contributes to an understanding of the thinking which underlies planning and a conceptualisation of its process.

Right from the cover with pictures of colourful cubes in motion, we are ushered into a realm of possibility: Planning as narrative, as a social event, memorable and vibrant, a text co-created by means of dialogue. We are shown the elements present in story, based on Kenneth Burke's theory (1945) and how these elements can interact to create further ideas. Indeed, Myrian Casamassima offers a systematic and creative tool to arrange, analyse, evaluate and challenge our ideas while planning.

*Planning as Narrative* is a story itself. It starts with the first part of a poem entitled It was time to plan, which depicts frowns of the teacher, centre-staged, having to choose from meaningless grammar and lexis. The book draws to a close with the second part of the poem



which mentions what if's, genuine questions, stories unfolded and matters of consequence like cultures and selves. A change which readers will go through themselves as the book progresses.

Chapter 1 tells how the idea of *Planning as Narrative* came about and builds the theoretical foundation of planning as a social event and as narrative thought (Bruner, 2004; Burke, 1945). The ideas presented are grounded in Constructivism, with thinkers such as Lev Vygotsky (1986), Jerome Bruner (2004), James Wertsch (1998) and Rod Ellis (2000). Chapter 2 sees the elements of narrative presented in Chapter 1 in the field of Teaching and Learning: Instruments, Actors, Actions, Scene, Goals and Trouble. The author summarises the chapter main ideas by drawing an analogy to Pablo Picasso's painting *Girl before a Mirror*, showing readers a deepened perspective. Chapter 3 describes the actual building of a plan-as-narrative from a narrative, cubist view. Plenty of examples support the discussion and add realism to an already vivid picture. The chapter also deals with evaluation, inspired by Rob Pope's *Textual Intervention* (2003). It challenges teachers to change the plan-as-text in order to evaluate present and possible ideas. Chapter 4 is devoted to planned narratives in action. Cases become so alive that readers can grasp the power that narrated thought has and the possibility it can generate. Finally, an epilogue clinches the salient points encouraging the reader to adapt them to suit their own contexts.

Overall, *Planning as Narrative* offers teachers informed ideas to reconsider their practice and to find inspiration in a solid, profound yet playful model of planning. It helps to see at a glance a much broader and intricate picture of teaching. It redefines achievement and describes the various paths towards it. After reading the book, the reader will have designed their own planning cube and will be flipping it to become the best they can be.

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