

Book review

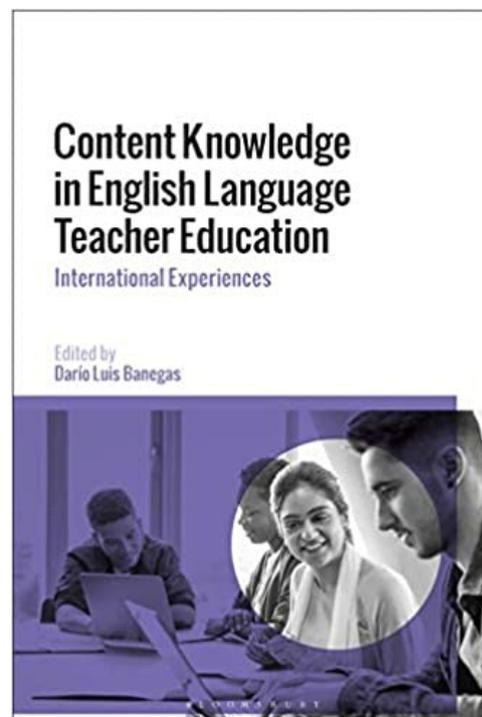
Content Knowledge in English Language Teacher Education

Banegas, Darío Luis (ed.)
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Content Knowledge in English Language Teacher Education, edited by Darío Luis Banegas and addressed to teacher educators, assumes that, depending on their circumstances, lecturers and tutors promote the construction of knowledge of and about the English language in ways which vary according to what they think relevant regarding what future teachers should know. Out of the three types of knowledge explored by teacher educators, namely content knowledge, pedagogical content knowledge and general pedagogical knowledge, this publication focuses on the former, and interrogates the way it is approached in English Language Teaching Education.

The authors brought together in this publication agree on defining content knowledge broadly, as possessing two dimensions engaged in a constant dialogue: the knowledge of English as a system and the ability to use English proficiently. Although most contributors approach the matter from the perspective of linguistics, all of them address this dialogue, therefore engaging in the exploration of English as a semiotic system and reflecting on how to improve English language proficiency among student-teachers. The theoretical backbone articulating all the contributions is clearly explained by Banegas in the Introduction to the book, a text which summarizes complex issues without ever simplifying them.

Readers will find fourteen chapters which reflect, describe or report on experiences which range from the teaching of History of the English Language to develop knowledge and proficiency (Ikeda, Chapter 1) to the incorporation of other languages in the classroom based on a module taught at an English Language Teacher Education programme (Schmitt,



Chapter 5), through considerations regarding the constraints and affordances of the curriculum (Güngör, Chapter 13).

Some chapters center on ways to improve proficiency, for example through an integrated scheme incorporating contents and skills learnt and developed by student-teachers in prior courses in order to foster linguistic, intercultural, academic and professional skills (Banfi, Chapter 10); by implementing a thematic module that allows students to explore current controversial issues to develop their competencies (Barahona and Benítez, Chapter 12); by incorporating cultural elements to a reading and writing workshop to raise cultural awareness and promote language learning (Soto and Ramírez, Chapter 14); by promoting the creation of writing portfolios to help student-teachers improve their writing and reflective skills (Saavedra Jeldres and Campos Espinoza, Chapter 11).

Some authors address prevalent approaches to the teaching of grammar and reflect on the implications of teaching formal or systemic-functional models (Anglada, Chapter 3) and on the importance of using corpora to show students authentic language use (Hardacre and Snow, Chapter 4). Others report on their experiences in teaching a number of units of study. Readers will learn about a graduate course introducing a functional model of language which is based on a systemic-functional language model, on pedagogy and on genre theory (Chappell, Chapter 2), about a module on world Englishes raising students' awareness of the number of varieties around the globe (Zhang and Wei, Chapter 6), about the teaching of pragmatics through different means, among them film (Heras, Chapter 7), about how teacher education programmes have approached the teaching of discourse analysis (Salas Serrano and Téllez Méndez, Chapter 8), and of phonetics and phonology (Blázquez, Espinosa and Labastía, Chapter 9).

We think this is a highly valuable book for teacher educators and curriculum designers. One of the assets of this publication is that it reports on experiences set in extremely diverse geographical settings, many of which are not generally addressed by international literature: Argentina, Australia, Chile, China, Ecuador, Japan, Mexico, Turkey, the United States. Not only does the book make an overt effort at representing different contexts and voices, but also invites teacher educators to continue reflecting on the issues it approaches by ending each chapter with a section titled "Questions for change", which aims at fostering interdisciplinary dialogues and collaboration with teacher educators in other parts of the world.

As Banegas states in the introduction, "content knowledge in ELTE poses challenges, debates and questions around the knowledge of and about the English language that EFL/ESL teachers need in order to carry out successful teaching practices." The fourteen accounts of institutional experiences regarding teacher education in different contexts offer brilliant insights into how teachers may make it possible for their students to acquire proficiency in language use and build knowledge about the language and its pedagogy as part of the same educational programme. No doubt this book makes a significant

contribution to discussions which, though dating way back, still spark heated arguments among educators.

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