

Book review

Raise Up. A diverse and inclusive view of English

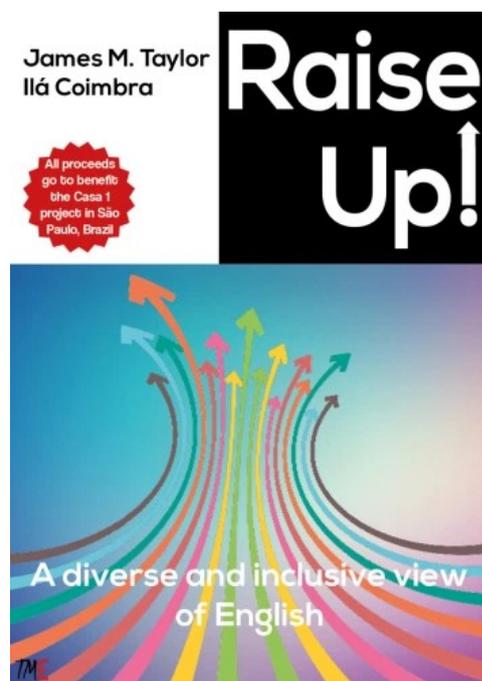
James A. Taylor and Ilá Coimbra, San Pablo
Taylor Made English, 2019
25 pp.

Raise Up. A diverse and inclusive view of English by James A. Taylor and Ilá Coimbra

The aim of *Raise Up* is that of showing how feasible and achievable it is to create a truly inclusive mainstream coursebook. Through a strong political positioning, rather scarce nowadays, James A. Taylor and Ilá Coimbra take active part in the ongoing visibilization processes of historically forsaken non-hegemonic groups. Not only do the authors teach by example showing English teachers ways to become critical and active social players but also they contribute to remove prejudicial labels surrounding ELT practice.

The book is concerned with the teaching of English through the use of socially relevant and appealing contextualized lessons. Within these lessons the authors visibilize historically forsaken groups such as women, BAME, indigenous peoples, LGBTQIA+, the working class, refugees and non-conventional body types, among others. Nonetheless, as claimed by Taylor and Coimbra (2019, p. 2) “the lessons are not about the people represented, but including them.” This means that non-hegemonic identities are not described in the lessons; instead, real life situations which they are part of are the context for the different lessons.

The book is divided into eight lessons, each of them directed to a language level and age group. It includes lessons for teenagers as well as lessons for adult learners. The lessons are directed for students with pre-intermediate, intermediate, upper-intermediate or advanced levels. All of the eight units are structured around one main encompassing subject which follows the inclusive criteria above mentioned. The eight lesson subjects are *Family Life*, *Leadership*, *Rules at Work*, *Rural Life*, *Influential Women*, *Talking About Where You Work*,



Refugees and Different types of homes. According to Taylor and Coimbra (2019, p.2) they are to be used as individual lessons chosen by the teacher for their class. To different extents, each of the units takes into account the four skills (reading, listening, writing and speaking) and differentially places emphasis on grammar or vocabulary. The exercises' conventional structures and tasks turn into completely original and appealing activities if the teacher is one to appreciate the relevance of the contextualizing topics.

Despite the fact that, as it was mentioned before, the outstanding feature of the book is the real and appealing contextualization of the lessons, it is not the only one. That is to say that educators who might choose lessons from this book do not necessarily need to feel completely identified with the authors' cause. The type of exercises chosen and the sequence they shape are effective on their own.

What is more, the book reminds ELT educators of the importance of the inclusion of authentic literature as part of the lessons' structure. An example of this is Lesson 2 (for advanced level), which in order to work on reading comprehension skills, includes a passage of "Damnificados" a novel authored by J.J. Amawaro Wilson. The selected novel, set in metropolitan Caracas, deals with social issues such as work, unemployment, beggary, corruption, among others.

The last section of the book includes an extended invitation to readers to contribute with lessons based on inclusive criteria. It is also worth mentioning that all proceeds are to be donated to Casa 1 Project in Sao Paulo, Brazil, which is a shelter for LGBTQIA+ community members who have been expelled from their homes.

What the authors do say as much as what the authors do not say is part of the message of the book. Not only do they converge into a democratizing view of language as a vehicle of opportunities, but they also highlight the ethical value of the project. When we refer to what this book does not mention, we mean all those fictitious, unlikely and decontextualized universes that are sometimes proposed or imposed in mainstream textbooks. Here lies the value and the originality of working with the kinds of contextualized settings which *Raise Up* offers.

The authors regard the learning subject in only one way: as an autonomous learning subject. Any other conception of them would be inconceivable. Students just as much as teachers are real life subjects and the situations presented in the book are indeed not directed to artificial, extemporaneous nor imaginary audiences.

To conclude, this interesting material raises a number of questions which, as English Language Teaching professionals, would be worth asking. Can the ELT community members bear in mind a bigger scale production of projects like *Raise Up*? Are public institutions prepared for the implementation of similar projects? Is the editorial market prepared and willing to carry on with projects of such nature? Is the proposal in this book methodologically, culturally, socially and economically feasible in all Latin American countries? Can an hegemonic language such as English be the vehicle for the establishment

of academic bonds of vicinity or autonomy in Latin America?

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