

International Perspectives on Diversity in ELT

Banegas, Darío Luis, Beacon Griselda, Pérez Berbain, Mercedes, editors.

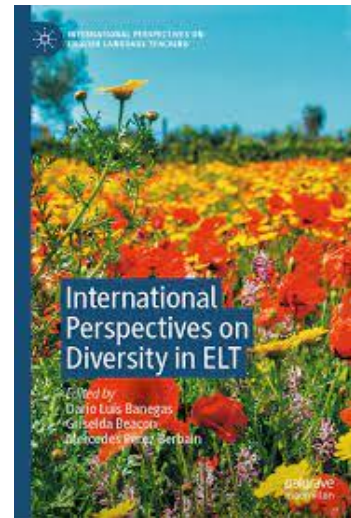
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International Perspectives on Diversity in ELT, edited by Darío Luis Banegas, Griselda Beacon and Mercedes Perez Berbain is a book that offers a *diverse* reading material. In fact, it has gathered several authors from different geographies, with manifold professional training and careers, and a varied set of angles from which to handle the main issue of the volume: *diversity in ELT*.

In the Introduction, the editors explain what motivated them to work on a volume that would summon different voices from different contexts and different perspectives to share “diverse lived experiences in ELT” (p. 1). Following Liu & Nelson (2017), the point of departure is the idea that “diversity is an inherent property of the ESL classroom” (p. 1). The editors acknowledge that the issue is highly complex and that only some themes could be included in the book. Nonetheless, the volume successfully explores three thematic areas inherent to diversity: 1) interculturality, 2) gender and 3) special educational needs. The editors offer a brief discussion on the three issues and explain how the book is structured so that readers can anticipate the scope of the topics developed.

The book includes a list of the contributors with brief biographical references, so readers can also anticipate the variety of perspectives, contexts and interests they will come across when reading the articles.

Firstly, the question of *interculturality* is developed with highly interesting discussions, theoretical references and examples of experiences in different classroom settings. For instance, a primary and secondary school experience in Argentina (Melina Porto and Javier Arguiano, Argentina, chapter 1¹) or an English-medium module called *Language, Culture and Identity* that is part of a Bachelor of Arts (BA) programme in Bilingualism in Colombia (Carlo Granados-Beltrán, Colombia, chapter 2). Outstanding as a textbook-assessment case is the analysis of a Cambodian Grade 7 coursebook (Roby Marlina, Singapore, chapter 4) that may result in a good example for teaching professionals, whether they deliver lessons or are in charge of developing contents in order to assess the degree of *interculturality* in current ELT materials. Furthermore, this first part of the volume includes some theoretical issues that, in my view, ELT professionals should be acquainted with in order to become transformative intellectuals (Giroux, 1988): the decolonial turn, coloniality, pluriversality (chapter 2), and social construction of knowledge and context-dependent curricula (Darren K. LaScotte and Bethany D. Peters, USA, chapter 3), among others. These articles inevitably bring to mind the enriching pedagogical and epistemological contributions made by Lev Vygotsky, Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux, Boaventura de Souza Santos, Alastair Pennycook and B. Kumaravadivelu, most of whom are quoted along this

¹ The editors and the contributors use the word ‘chapter’ without numbering them. For the sake of language economy, here I will number them following the order in which the articles appear in the volume.

part of the volume. The first section ends with an article that seems to operate as a link to part 2: the (in)visibility of LGBTIQ*² issues in ELT (Thorsten Merse, Germany, chapter 5). The author states that one of the aims of the chapter is “to (re)negotiate the engagement with cultural diversity in English language teaching (ELT) from a queer-informed vista” (p. 91). The article offers sound theoretical foundations and examples of tasks that could be included in EFL classrooms with the necessary adaptations to fit different contexts.

As previously mentioned, part two focuses on *gender*. Highly interesting experiences, studies and research work offer readers the opportunity not only to get acquainted with or broaden their knowledge of gender-related underpinnings, queer and feminist theories, discrimination issues and social reproduction theory, but also to get insights into teaching and learning experiences that may result in good guidelines for pre-service and in-service ELT educators. For instance, a narrative of an empirical study carried out in Cyprus (Dimitris Evripidou, Cyprus, chapter 6) sheds light on the challenges faced by teachers when dealing with sexual identities in their classrooms on the underlying assumption that “sexual identities are integral components of social identities” (p. 115). The outcomes of this study show that disassembling teachers’ insecurities in *deheteronormalising* their lessons is no easy task and underscore the need for the inclusion of sexual identities and diversity issues in teacher training programmes, in-service teachers’ courses and in postgraduate programmes.

Much in the same way, a research study (Rafaella R. Potestades, Philippines, chapter 7) focuses on sexual identities construction in ELT classrooms. Readers can appraise the educational context of Philippines, a country that has developed some legislation that favours gender equality but still faces many challenges in the educational field, in particular in ELT, to achieve gender equity and diversity. Furthermore, a case study that is part of an ongoing project in Japan (Tanja McCandie, Japan, chapter 8) focuses on the discrimination of women who teach English at Japanese universities. The article includes several quotes from ELT teachers interviewed for the study. After reading this work, we cannot but strengthen our view that there is still a long way to go to dismantle the patriarchal society we live in.

The section also includes a narrative of a workshop carried out in Argentina in 2019 as part of a regional conference for teachers and student-teachers of English. At the very beginning the authors (Paola Cossu, Gabriela Brun, Argentina, and Darío Luis Banegas, UK, chapter 9) state that the chapter “sits at the intersection of teacher professional development (CPD) comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), and content and language integrated learning (CLIL)” (p. 173). As everybody knows, albeit many institutions and educators seem to ignore it, in Argentina the CSE Law (2006) establishes the right of all students from state and private institutions to receive sexuality education taking into account the multidimensional nature of sexuality construction. The workshop highlighted the importance of reflection and discussion of these issues within a critical pedagogy perspective.

The last article (Carolyn Blume, Germany, chapter 10) focuses on a teaching experience: a blended-learning unit on gender-related topics within a module that focuses on ELT inclusion in a German EFL teacher preparation programme. It also offers useful hints to help educators reflect on the “centrality of language in shaping identity, and its role in constructing and propagating ‘social ideologies’ (Sauntson, 2017)” (p. 193).

The last section centres on *special educational needs* (SEN). Readers can appraise interesting teaching and learning experiences that explore not only educators’ cognitions of SEN but also some experiences of how to manage different types of impairment in ELT contexts. For instance, the section includes a description of the 5-Dimension Model developed in Finland as an approach to differentiation, which is defined as the maximization

² The author employs an asterisk to represent further self-definitions.

of each student's potential (Anssi Roiha and Jerker Polso, Finland, chapter 11). In addition, a case study analyses five EFL teachers working at a private Japanese university that offers an English programme including SEN students in the mainstream class (Robert J. Lowe, Matthew Y. Schaefer, and Matthew W. Turner, Japan, chapter 12). The study highlights the need for ELT professional training courses to incorporate inclusive pedagogies.

There is another interesting case study of a joint venture university experience in mainland China (British and Chinese universities) that focuses on the inclusion of dyslexic students in ESAP courses (Stuart Perrin, China, chapter 13). The study sheds light on the similarities between some second language classroom practices and dyslexic students' teaching strategies. In another chapter, the authors (Ewa Domagała-Zyśk and Anna Podlewska, Poland, chapter 14) narrate their experience teaching EFL to deaf and hard of hearing students (DHH) at John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin. Though great efforts to teach EFL to DHH students and a deep commitment to focusing on inclusive education are manifest, due to my own experience with members of the Argentine Deaf Community, I am doubtful about the validity of some of the principles, strategies and communication techniques proposed, since they resemble some of the tenets and practices advocated by oralists. Finally, teachers' beliefs and assumptions about teaching students with ADHD in ELT are explored in a small-scale study at two universities in Turkey (Neşe Cabaroğlu and Merve Tohma, Turkey, chapter 15). The outcomes of the analysis once again emphasize the need for teacher education programmes to include "the inherent diversity of learners and their right to inclusive education" (p. 295).

The fifteen chapters that make up the three parts include suggested books for further reading along with detailed and up-dated references. In addition, they offer a section entitled 'Engagement priorities' with some questions aimed at fostering further reflection. The volume ends with a chapter by the editors organized under five questions. Like an epilogue, it stands as a good summary of the content of the volume in which, as the editors rightfully state, "there is a common thread running through all the chapters which brings this diverse tapestry together" (p. 307). In short, the book is highly recommendable to pre-service and in-service ELT educators and it would be advisable to include it as reading material in teacher education programmes in our country.

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