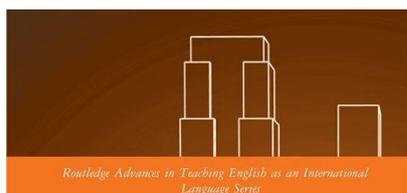




Book Review



THE PLACE OF ENGLISH AS AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

TEACHERS' REFLECTIONS

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The Place of English as an International Language in English Language Teaching, Teachers' Reflections, by Phan Ngan Le Hai, Abingdon and New York, Routledge, 2020, 184pp., £96 (Hardback), ISBN 9781138625129

The paradigm of English as an international language (EIL) has emerged in the field of English language teaching (ELT) (Marlina, 2018; Matsuda & Matsuda, 2018; McKay, 2003). While teaching EIL is considered a crucial component of English educational practices, little is known about English language teachers' reflections on teaching EIL, particularly in the Asian context. Hence, any relevant book examining EIL related pedagogical implications in Asia is highly welcome. The book *The place of English as an International Language in English Language Teaching, Teachers' reflections* edited by Phan Ngan Le Hai presents a thorough examination of EIL disciplines by exploring how English teachers perceive the teaching of EIL with a focus on Vietnam. It provides an insightful and updated overview of the emerging English teaching paradigm based on front-line English language teachers' reflections.

The book is organised into six parts. In Part I (Chapters 1-2), the author presents an overview of English history and establishes its relevancy to the current status of English. Chapter 1 brings to the fore the need for a discussion of significant changes in English. Chapter 2 provides a discussion of English globally through multi-facet changes ranging from demographic, geographic to structural changes of English. The author reviews previous studies on teachers' and students' perceptions of English worldwide. Deriving from those findings, it is evident that English language teachers and learners need to raise their awareness of English varieties and recognise all varieties of English as equal. It is worthwhile for readers to understand how previous studies develop the various strands of scholarship on EIL concerning teachers' and students' perceptions of English.

Part II (Chapters 3-4) adopts Sharifian's (2009) definition of EIL that does not refer to a single variety of English but emphasises that "English, with its many varieties, is a language of international, and therefore, intercultural communication" (p. 2) as the framework, and critically points out issues relating to teaching EIL, such as teaching models, the teaching of culture(s) and teaching materials. In Chapter 3, as a Vietnamese scholar, the author reconstructs EIL pedagogical approaches in the context of what Kachru (1985) terms as "Expanding Circle countries" and proposes that teaching EIL should make learners communicate with people from diverse lingual-cultural backgrounds, other than with English native speakers. Therefore, language teachers should be responsible for introducing varieties of English to learners. Chapter 4 presents the historical, cultural and sociolinguistic context of Vietnam, along with English development and current challenges ELT in Vietnam faces. It discusses how to address



Vietnamese students' incompetence in intercultural communication. These challenges need to be addressed and therefore motivate the author to carry out the present research.

Part III (Chapter 5) starts the empirical stage of the present research. It offers readers a detailed description of the research process. Hence, readers can identify the research approach, research questions, research instruments, data collection and data analysis. Through individual interviews and focus groups, the author managed to collect data from 52 Vietnamese in-service ELT teachers at lower and upper secondary schools, tertiary institutions as well as English language centres and focused on their attitudes toward EIL and related teaching practice.

Part IV (Chapters 6-9) reports the empirical study results and systematically presents four major themes generated from data: reflections on the current status of English, the implications for teaching models, the implications for the teaching of culture(s) and the implications for teaching materials. These results displayed participating teachers' conflicting attitudes and various degrees of awareness of the recent changes in English. Although teachers realised the global status of English, they still mainly taught American and British English models and associated cultures since their teaching largely depended on textbooks that were mostly imported from the UK and the USA. In these chapters, the author identifies a series of constraints and challenges in relation to teaching EIL. One specific example discussed in Chapter 9 is the lack of teaching materials representing the recent changes in English. Accordingly, teachers suggest integrating additional teaching materials to reflect the diversity of English.

To echo Part IV, Part V (Chapter 10) details the findings of previous chapters and addresses the teachers' constraints when implementing EIL in the classroom. Based on the participants' reports, the research reveals that teaching EIL requires joint efforts of local government, educational institutions, textbook designers, educational stakeholders, and an openness to the voices of English teachers.

Part VI (Chapter 11) concludes the volume and provides pedagogical implications for teaching EIL. Directions for future research are also indicated. In response to the global status of English today, teachers are advised to increase their understanding of the sociolinguistic complexities of English by increasing EIL exposure and inspiring a change in their mindsets and attitudes.

This book offers an accessible description of English language teachers' awareness of EIL and challenges they encounter during their implementation of EIL. It provides a useful reference to educational stakeholders for fine-tuning ELT curriculum and teaching materials in the area of intercultural communication as it showcases a variety of authentic EIL teaching challenges from language teachers. Moreover, this book contributes to a nuanced understanding of the complexity of teaching EIL in similar Expanding Circle teaching contexts. It is informative and truly comprehensive. Therefore, I recommend this book to in-service English language teachers because it offers much food for teachers' reflection and could serve as a valuable guide for them in approaching EIL. Likewise, pre-service English language teachers can also gain benefit from this book because they can be exposed to the complexities of teaching EIL at an early stage of their career.

Although this book provides insights into English language teachers' reflections on teaching EIL, it would have been more meaningful if both quantitative and qualitative approaches could be adopted for data collection. The author adopted the qualitative approach, for which more types of data could be collected, such as teachers' lesson plans and class observation.

In sum, this book is well-structured with a specific focus for each chapter. English language teachers and researchers who are interested in teaching EIL and intercultural communication should enjoy reading the book and get inspirations about EIL from it.

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