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Book Review

Race, Empire, and English Language Teaching: Creating Responsible and Ethical Anti-racist Practices, by Suhanthie Motha, New York: Teachers' College Press, 2014, 208 pp., \$80.00 (Hardcover), ISBN 978-0807755129

What does it mean to become an English teacher in a global community, in which the English language carries tremendous capital? How can English teachers assist their learners to access privileged forms of English while making them critically aware of its history of colonization and discrimination? How do the changing trends in the teaching profession globally shape the practices of one teacher in one class? How can teachers negotiate the hegemonic status of the English language in their lesson planning and delivery? How do teachers' own identities become salient in their day-to-day practices? These are some of the questions Suhanthie Motha raises in her insightful, accessible and well-articulated book *Race, Empire, and English Language Teaching: Creating Responsible and Ethical Anti-racist Practices* (2014). As she states upfront, she does not attempt to provide concrete answers to these questions. Instead, she directs the readers in ways that they can think about these issues critically in tandem with their own teaching contexts, practices and beliefs. Grounded in her own professional practices and those of her graduate students, the issues that Motha raises in her book are those English teachers around the world face inside and outside of their teaching contexts.

In Chapter 1, Motha presents a well-articulated argument about the dangers of the rapid spread of the English language and the illusions and the inequalities that are inherent to that. While many embrace the traditional narratives of the promises the English language holds with no second thoughts, Motha points out the dangers of the global dominance of English. Contrary to the liberating effects of the English language, the spread of English has a stratifying effect and thereby perpetuates existing or new social divisions. It produces an unequal social life, social order and a hierarchy. Very often these inequalities and differences are invisible and extremely subtle.

Chapter 2 maps out the complex and inter-related theoretical constructs that inform Motha's argument in three themes, which are 1) the reproduction of historical connections between English language spread on the one hand and colonization, imperialism and the empire on the other, 2) the repeated underscoring of English language teaching's embeddedness within a context of inequitable racial relocations, and 3) the role played by language ideologies in perpetuating racism and linguistic discrimination. While each of these concepts are examined separately, she argues how they are tightly interrelated in a manner that they cannot be disentangled.

In Chapter 3, Motha critically engages the readers in a discussion about how the ESL class is a part of and contributes to the maintenance of colonialism. Contrary to the common practice that positions teachers at the bottom of the educational hierarchy, where information is funneled down to them, Motha identifies teachers as transformative agents, and regards teaching as intellectual practices. She points out that it is through teachers' intellectual engagement and collaboration that changes in education can take place. Therefore, teachers need to come to full terms with their agency and power to make changes. They need to be reflective practitioners who have the knowledge and the ability to connect the events within their classrooms to the larger socio-historical contexts.

Continuing to focus on teachers and the role of teachers, Chapter 4 discusses the racialized discourses and their effects in ESL. Motha uses the term racialized discourses to refer to how racism is reproduced through the mere act of teaching the English language. By this she does not mean English should not be taught, but it should neither be taught nor learned without a consciousness of the racialized effects of its acquisition. Motha argues that teachers need to teach their students English while fostering a critical understanding of the ways that acquiring English, language hierarchies and accentedness would position them within their school communities as well as other settings in the larger society.

Chapter 5 focuses on the importance of place and the ways in which languages and language varieties are territorialized. Place, as Motha argues, is not a static location, but is also located in the ways in which language varieties, accents, and nativeness are positioned and conceived in English language teaching contexts. She argues for the need for all of us to reevaluate notions about varieties of English and its implications. By bringing to the forefront the racialization of language use and language teaching, she discusses the challenges teachers face in valuing language varieties.

Throughout the book, Motha gets the readers to question their own practices, beliefs and biases about teaching and learning English. By doing this, she helps the reader to make connections between what is presented in the book and the readers' own lives. Though Motha states that the book is intended for novice teachers, this is a good read for anybody who is curious about the business of teaching and learning English.

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