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## Book Reviews

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### **Word Knowledge: A Vocabulary Teacher's Handbook**

*Cheryl Boyd Zimmerman*

Oxford University Press, 2009, 150 pages

Cheryl Boyd Zimmerman's *Word Knowledge: A Vocabulary Teacher's Handbook* investigates the complex nature of teaching and learning words and functions as both a resource and as a reference guide for novice and experienced ESL teachers. Her overall aim is to "help tease apart the complex process of vocabulary learning and teaching and to provide ideas for addressing learners' needs" (p. v). She accomplishes this goal by providing a thorough and comprehensive overview of what it means to truly learn a word.

Zimmerman's handbook is organized into seven chapters and begins with an introduction to the central notions of her book: "word consciousness" (p. 3) and "word layers" (p. 5). She draws on the work of other researchers in the field who have introduced this concept, and she states,

Word consciousness is a critical skill to develop, first for vocabulary teachers, and then for their students. It will enable learners to improve their use of words by making insightful observations about words in authentic use. A key aspect of word consciousness is acknowledging the extensiveness of what it means to know a word. That is, word consciousness includes a growing understanding of the many layers of word knowledge. (p. 5)

The layers referred to by Zimmerman represent other kinds of knowledge such as a word's grammatical functions or its possible affixes. It is this other knowledge beyond the singular definition of a word that a learner gradually acquires in order to achieve a deeper knowledge and a broader understanding of the uses of a single word.

In the introductory chapter, Zimmerman lists five general principles that all teachers can use for teaching vocabulary. These are centered on selectivity, practice, and observation. Teachers need to select words carefully, paying particular attention to the explanations and avoiding lengthy descriptions and examples. Students will need frequent opportunities to encounter these new words and meaningful activities in which to use them. Teachers will, of course, wish to observe students closely in the process to monitor their learning. These guidelines will be of interest to all instructors who wish to ensure that students are acquiring the new vocabulary presented in their lessons.

The subsequent chapters examine particular features of word knowledge: Working with Meaning; Working with Collocation; Working with Grammatical Features; Working with Word Parts; and Working with Register and Other Language Variations. Each chapter provides further elaboration on the key feature in four sections: Background, A Closer Look, Key Considerations, and Activities. The final chapter suggests how to cultivate awareness and understanding of word learning so that learners can use strategies and techniques to facilitate their own independent acquisition of new vocabulary.

Teachers who are interested in techniques for teaching vocabulary will find the activities listed at the end of each chapter an additional asset of Zimmerman's handbook. Each activity is distinctly labeled with a clear objective and procedure. Some of the activities include charts where students list various word parts, and others require them to analyze new vocabulary used in video or audio excerpts. Students are also asked to incorporate new words into sentences or in mini-compositions. The range of activities is varied and provides meaningful opportunities for valuable vocabulary practice.

In brief, *Word Knowledge: A Vocabulary Teacher's Handbook* has much to offer ESL instructors. For experienced teachers, the handbook provides new insights into the complex nature of vocabulary acquisition and offers guidelines and strategies for teaching new words. For novice instructors, this handbook is the consummate how-to manual for approaching the task of vocabulary instruction. Zimmerman's book is a valuable resource for all instructors who are interested in enhancing their current practice and knowledge of second-language vocabulary instruction.

*Jacqueline Foster*

### *The Reviewer*

Jacqueline Foster is currently Chair of the School of International Education in Vancouver Island University. Her research interests are contrastive rhetoric and teacher feedback in second-language writing.

## The Reflexive Teacher Educator in TESOL: Roots and Wings

Julian Edge

Routledge, 2010, 196 pages

At the end of the first chapter of *The Reflexive Teacher Educator in TESOL: Roots and Wings*, Julian Edge describes himself as a stranger who is “looking for reflexivity” and claims, “it is worth the search” (p. 13). Through his distinctive writing style, his inclusion of autobiographical data, and his use of metaphor, Edge has written an iconic book that addresses “any fellow TESOL professional with an interest in his or her own continuing development, as well as administrators, researchers and policy-makers who see the professional development of teachers as a focus of their interest or responsibility” (p. 3).

Edge asserts that teacher learners need authentic examples of teacher educators who explore and theorize past experiences and who incorporate this new knowledge into their current style of teaching. This distinctive approach involves five ways of behaving: copying, applying, theorizing, reflecting, and acting, through which teacher educators continue to become methodological, technical, theoretical, intellectual, and pragmatic. Edge refers to this framework by the acronym CATRA.

Although the narrative is organized into 10 distinct chapters, the message of the book is best understood through a simple framework of beginning, middle, and end. The first three chapters set the context for the book. In chapter 1, Edge introduces the components of the CATRA framework. In chapter 2, he distinguishes between the terms *reflective* and *reflexive*; he then proceeds in Chapter 3 to provide examples of reflexivity in linguistics, psychology, philosophy, and ecology, as well as its role in qualitative research.

Beginning in chapter 4 and running through chapter 8, Edge devotes a chapter to each of the five elements in his CATRA framework: “Copying and Becoming Methodological” (chapter 4), “Applying Theory and Becoming Technical” (chapter 5), “Theorizing Practice and Becoming Theoretical” (chapter 6), “Reflecting and Becoming Intellectual” (chapter 7), and “Acting and Becoming Pragmatic” (chapter 8). In introducing each chapter, Edge reviews the points made in the previous chapter and posits his intentions for the current chapter. In his introduction to the book as a whole, he speaks of the need for teacher educators to work with their teacher learners to help them establish their roots and grow their wings. In chapters 4 through 8, Edge includes a section entitled “Roots” and one entitled “Wings.” In these sections, Edge identifies phases of his life in which he established roots in the educational values that he found most important and how he subsequently developed wings that allowed him to explore his environment and to continue to explore new possibilities to enrich his praxis. He concludes each chapter with a section entitled “Reflexivity,” thoughtfully applying what is discussed in the chapter to his definition of reflexivity.

In the final two chapters, Edge touches on the unexpected consequences of his search for reflexivity and “pulls together the hanging threads of the book” (p. 163). In chapter 9, he explores the relationship between his work in the field and his work in the literature and identifies moments when things went wrong. He shares with the reader two such instances in his professional life. He then relates specific situations in the literature in which he found himself reconstructed in ways that he claims were unsatisfactory. He concludes with the chapter entitled, “So What?” Here Edge provides a summary of what he has come to understand “in the terms he has developed to understand it with” (p. 169).

This book, rich in detail, will appeal to educators who draw meaning from narrative truth. Edge expertly includes sections that he calls “Reflective Memos” throughout as examples of “reflection-in-action” (p. 34). He begins and ends the book with an innovative parallel text set in the context of an old Western movie. The reader gains meaningful insight into the concept of reflexivity through his clever use of the metaphors of Narcissus and Icarus.

The *Reflexive Teacher Educator in TESOL: Roots and Wings* is a valuable book for teacher educators. Although Edge shares his experiences as an educator in TESOL, teacher educators from all disciplines can reflect on and learn from the lessons he learned. Readers looking for a book that outlines general principles, rules, and instructions may find this autobiographical narrative distracting. However, Edge has expertly structured the book so that readers create meaning as they read. In addition to the rich description of his experience, he includes theoretical insight from such noted scholars as John Dewey and Robert Kegan.

As a teacher in transition to the role of teacher-educator, I found the book revelatory. Edge has provided a framework for my consideration. Drawing from his own criteria for evaluating this book (p. 172), I am motivated to review my autobiography reflexively, and Edge’s five dimensions of becoming have inspired useful ideas for my teacher education praxis.

*Nicola Friedrich*

### *The Reviewer*

Nicola Friedrich is a doctoral student in the Department of Language and Literacy Education at the University of British Columbia. Her research focuses on the literacy experiences of young children from refugee families. A former classroom teacher, Nicola has worked extensively with children who struggle with literacy.

## Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Classrooms: New Dilemmas for Teachers

Jennifer Miller, Alex Kostogriz, and Margaret Gearon (Eds.)

Multilingual Matters, 2009, 290 pages

As the world's population becomes increasingly mobile, there is more diversity in classrooms than ever before. With this in mind, *Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Classrooms* examines the consequences of this trend, which has often resulted in multilingual learners who do not share the dominant first language of their communities becoming marginalized and subsequently not achieving their educational goals. This volume addresses these issues by investigating the pedagogic provisions that are currently in place in countries such as Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom. Moreover, the authors argue for teaching practices to become more responsive to culturally and linguistically diverse learners.

One goal of the editors is to explore how language educators can effect change and be responsive to the needs of increasingly diverse and marginalized populations of learners. They focus strongly on research related to learning and teaching in multilingual/multicultural societies. The book also looks at several issues concerning diversity in schools, including the greater length of time required to learn academic language compared with social language; and social integration, which is often linked to academic success. The authors also offer views that encourage reconsideration of how teacher education currently prepares instructors for working with ethnically diverse learners.

This volume of 15 articles is divided into three sections. The first (chapters 1-6) presents an overview of instructional practices in multilingual classrooms. In chapter 2, Lasagabaster investigates how immigrant students in the Basque region in northern Spain adapt to and integrate into local society. He examines teachers' perceptions of immigrants' native tongues *compared with other European languages* and proposes suggestions for immigrant learners such as the introduction of a personal *adoptive* language to foster positive attitudes toward their home languages. In response to limited research on teachers from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, chapter 3 is a study of preservice teachers completing a postgraduate diploma of education in Australia. The author explores these teachers' constructions of their identities and the challenges that they face, not only in the university lecture hall, but also in their own classrooms, as well as the biases and stereotypes that exist. Chapter 4 discusses the findings of a study of ESL secondary students in Australia who were exposed to intellectually challenging content-based instruction. The findings suggest that ESL programs that offer students high-level cognitive challenges can be beneficial even when learners lack a high level of English proficiency.

The second section (chapters 7-11) is more theoretical, discussing notions of how minority learners' identities are formed by traditional educational policies.

In chapter 8, for example, Kostogriz offers an interesting perspective on how professional educators are shaped by their views of minority learners. The author questions the Australian government's neo-conservative educational policy and argues that a curriculum based on the dominant culture is problematic because strangers will never accept such a curriculum. The challenge for English teachers in Australia is to deliver effective instruction to multicultural classrooms while adhering to a national policy that values some languages and cultures over others. Consequently, Kostogriz proposes *transculturation*, which allows for effective instruction by acknowledging and embracing all identities and cultures. It remains unclear, however, how transculturation is to be applied in the classroom. In chapter 9, Costley and Leung examine minority ethnic students in state-funded education in the UK. Chapter 11 is an expansion of the discussion of professional ethics. Based on research from a larger study that reviewed language-teacher education courses in all Australian universities, the author believes that the programs fail to address the diverse classrooms that new instructors will invariably encounter on entering the workforce. For example, she suggests that the pedagogical materials in use actually promote the traditional view that a standard form of English exists.

The final four chapters focus mainly on the conduct and direction of research in diverse contexts. Chapter 12, for example, examines how relationships form between researcher-practitioners in ethnographic studies. The author describes how ethnographic researchers working in a multilingual team position themselves in the framework of the research and the team based on their own backgrounds and inherent beliefs and biases. In chapter 15, Smythe and Toohy report on a photo project in which grades 6 and 7 students were given a camera to take pictures at home. The study revealed that out-of-school discourse practices should be integrated into the classroom, as students bring with them unique knowledge that should not be discounted.

Overall, *Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Classrooms* is an extremely useful guide for scholars and educators. Not only is the discussion of theory and practice balanced, but each article in the volume addresses and challenges traditional hegemonic structures concerning underrepresented students in education prevalent in the Western world today. Most important, however, this book emphasizes the idea that all learners regardless of their ethnicity, background, or native tongue must be at the forefront of any debate about changes in policy and instruction. These ideas will without doubt continue to be relevant for years to come.

*Fabrizio Stendardo*

### *The Reviewer*

Fabrizio Stendardo has worked around the globe in the field of language education for the past 10 years as an instructor, curriculum developer, and teacher trainer. Currently he is completing his master of TESL in the Department of Language and Literacy Education at the University of British Columbia.