
Book Reviews

Language and Learning in Multilingual Classrooms: A Practical Approach

Elizabeth Coelho

Toronto: Multilingual Matters, 2012, 357 pages

The main purpose of Coelho's latest text is to provide teachers and administrators with practical advice for creating effective school programs that meet the diverse needs of newcomer students from multilingual and multicultural backgrounds. The book comprises an introduction, 10 chapters, and an index. The chapters are divided into three sections from *Getting Started*, through *Planning: A Whole-School Approach*, to techniques and instructional strategies that can be used to support second-language learners (L2Ls) *In the Classroom*. Although Coelho provides many examples from Canadian English-as-a-second-language (ESL) teaching contexts, to appeal to a wider audience, she uses the acronym L2Ls throughout rather than English-language learners (ELLs), English as an additional language (EAL) learners, or ESL learners.

In section 1 (chapters 1 and 2), Coelho presents information on the Canadian immigration process and the immigrant experience together with tips for orienting students and their parents to their new culture. After describing several guiding principles for creating welcoming school communities and fostering successful integration, she provides several excellent suggestions for designing an effective initial assessment protocol. Potential sources of cross-cultural communication problems are identified, and advice to promote an understanding of and how to alleviate miscommunication is included. Coelho then draws attention to the important role of the first language in second-language acquisition and outlines activities to assist students in maintaining and continuing to develop their first language while learning English through the use of multilingual resources and dual-language book projects.

In the second section (chapters 3 to 5), key issues that affect second-language acquisition and the development of academic language proficiency are emphasized. Then follow implications for language instruction and a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of several programming models (dual language, intensive, part-time, content-based). Teachers and administrators are called on to recognize and build on the cultural and social capital that L2Ls bring to the classroom. Coelho offers readers a repertoire of step-by-step approaches for adapting instruction and assessment to accommodate

varying levels of L2Ls' language proficiency appropriately. She concludes this section with a discussion of a 10-point action plan designed to assist L2Ls in achieving academic standards.

In the final, most practical section (chapters 6 to 10), Coelho describes numerous instructional strategies, teaching techniques, and activities for increasing L2Ls' academic success. She offers tips for creating inclusive classroom environments where L2Ls' cultures are valued and respected and highlights activities for fostering multilingual school environments. She also delineates guidelines for creating safe classroom environments where L2Ls feel comfortable interacting with native speakers. Coelho ends with three excellent chapters that include techniques for improving L2Ls' comprehension, production, interaction, and literacy skills. Through the use of real classroom examples and activities, she illustrates scaffolding supports for developing oral language and reading and writing across grades, subject areas, and language proficiency groups.

Readers will find two features of this text particularly helpful. First, Coelho clearly describes in detail how she and other experienced teachers have effectively used many practical strategies for the effective programming, assessment, and instruction of culturally and linguistically diverse students; these could easily be adapted for a variety of teaching contexts. Second, explanation boxes are embedded throughout the text to guide the reader to useful Web sites and materials. Information in these boxes also serves to connect previously explicated second-language acquisition theories and concepts to newly introduced ideas, techniques, and activities for teaching L2Ls. Although some of the information presented in this text overlaps with the material in Coelho's (2004) text entitled *Adding English*, readers will find references to many new resources and materials in this 2012 text that were not available in 2004.

From a Canadian perspective, this text has two minor weaknesses. Although it is important to ensure that teachers are aware of standards-based instruction, because the author references the Common European Framework of Reference for languages, much of the information in chapter 4 is not directly relevant for teachers who work in schools that use other provincial ESL benchmarks. Another issue is that Coelho rarely uses parenthetical documentation to cite her sources. Statements such as "research studies ... have shown" (p. 66) are included, but she neglects to identify to which studies she is referring. This lack of attention to referencing makes it difficult to follow up on some of the research findings described and at times leads to unsubstantiated generalizations. For example, Coelho states that in Canada, "there are no bilingual schools" (p. 68) when this is not the case. Lists of sources and resources are provided at the end of each chapter; however, more explicit citations that link material in the text to specific researchers' theories and results would assist practitioners in making overt connections between research and practice.

Overall, because the many excellent ideas, instructional strategies, and activities outlined in this book would prove useful for both elementary and secondary schoolteachers who have English-language learners integrated into their content-area classes, this text could be used in Canadian teacher education programs as a reference or even as a possible course text in an introductory TESL course. Inservice teachers with limited training in TESL may find the last section of the text particularly relevant; these chapters would be excellent material to be studied and discussed in professional reading groups.

Marilyn L. Abbott

The Reviewer

Marilyn Abbott is an associate professor in the TESL program at the University of Alberta.

Reference

Coelho, E. (2004). *Adding English: A guide to teaching in multilingual classrooms*. Toronto, ON: Pippin.