Book Reviews

Power and Meaning Making in an EAP Classroom: Engaging with the Everyday
Christian W. Chun
Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters, 2015, 219 pages, ISBN 978-1-78309-293-2 (pbk)

The most recent entry in Multilingual Matters' *Critical Language and Literacy Studies* series (jointly edited by Alastair Pennycook, Brian Morgan, and Ryuko Kubota), *Power and Meaning Making in an EAP Classroom* is a book that no responsible EAP practitioner can afford to ignore. This is not to suggest that the book, despite its many virtues, is without its problems; rather, the point is that these problems point to issues that must be confronted in the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) classroom. Chun aims to bridge the distance between theory and practice by documenting the implementation of critical literacy pedagogy in a Canadian postsecondary EAP classroom. The author worked with an EAP instructor over the course of a year, chronicling the instructor's and the students' negotiations with critical literacy through such topics and issues as globalization, neoliberalism, and social/racial/cultural identity.

In the introductory chapter, Chun provides an overview of what is essentially his main thesis: that the corporatized North American postsecondary EAP program is a neoliberal site (p. 22) wherein English functions as a commodity. The EAP practitioner with whom the researcher collaborated—the pseudonymous "Emilia"—is also introduced, and readers see the extent to which the relationship between the academic researcher and the EAP practitioner mirrors the relationship of *praxis* between theory and practice. Chapter 2, "An EAP Classroom," examines how a space becomes a classroom via "discourse in place." Aspects of an EAP classroom, such as deciding on class rules, chronically late and disruptive students—numerous classroom realities and issues—are examined. In this chapter, classroom practices, curriculum, and materials are considered, and transcripts of actual teacher-student exchanges are used to gain a sense of the discourse and dynamic characteristic of the class.

The third chapter is titled "Exploring the Making of Meanings," and it includes a consideration of the importance of dealing with technology as an aspect of literacy and as an element of the EAP curriculum (class wikis, online videos, etc.). This chapter also explores the effectiveness of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) for "doing" critical literacy in an EAP class. Guided by the researcher/author, Emilia investigates how SFL could be used in the

JEFF BROWN

classroom to help students improve their academic writing in English. Learning to "read against the text" can help learners go beyond improving their skills in academic English; it can also assist them in understanding and dealing with "the powerful institutional discourses of their chosen schools, and of the new societies in which they now reside" (p. 67). A key point to note in this chapter is Chun's distinction between critical *thinking* and critical *literacy* and how an ongoing awareness of that distinction can constructively inform instruction in EAP.

In Chapters 4 and 5, Chun discusses the use of YouTube videos in the EAP classroom, how such videos might introduce discourses of globalization and neoliberalism into the classroom, and the disparate ways students react to, reinforce, or resist such discourses in classroom exchanges. The sixth chapter, "Who is 'Jennifer Wong'? Multiculturalism and the Model Minority Consumer," considers issues of consumerism and racialized immigrant identities vis-à-vis an examination of an EAP textbook's presentation of the "ideal" young, mobile Canadian citizen. Chapter 7, "Bringing the Political into an EAP Classroom?" examines the role of the EAP instructor in explicitly highlighting political issues in the classroom and asks readers to consider whether a "politically neutral" language classroom is possible. In the final chapter, "The Everyday Life of an EAP Classroom," Chun reflects upon the collaboration with Emilia and the extent to which everyday pedagogical practices can incorporate the concerns of critical literacy.

The thoroughness of Chun's study notwithstanding, readers (especially EAP practitioners) may still be left with some troubling questions. For example, does Chun at any point acknowledge a way in which he learned *from* Emilia? The learning process generally seems to be one-way. Indeed, there can be a tone of condescension in Chun's lamentation that "research has not yet fully influenced everyday classroom practices" (p. 65). The suggestion seems to be that practitioners need only fully embrace the findings of research for their classroom practices to be more effective. Another question pertains to whether there is adequate acknowledgement of the challenges and restrictions facing contract (nontenured) EAP faculty. Indeed, it is quite fortuitous that the teacher-collaborator in this case received tenure during the course of the book's study. Yet the fact remains that the majority of instructors in Canadian postsecondary EAP programs are nontenured, contract faculty. Bearing this in mind, readers might ask if the success Chun sees here in the collaboration with Emilia does not lead him to the facile, utopian conclusion that the way to bridge the theory-practice divide is to have "researchers and practitioners working closely together" (p. 56). Surely, one can't help but respond, there must be reasons why such an obvious solution has not already been implemented. As a result, one might wonder if Chun's evaluation of the transformative possibilities of critical literacy is excessively optimistic. In the author's defense, it should be pointed out that these questions and con-

cerns are, to a large extent, acknowledged and highlighted at various points throughout the book. Whether they are satisfactorily dealt with will most likely remain a point of contention.

Ultimately, such questions underscore (rather than detract from) the importance and relevance of *Power and Meaning Making in an EAP Classroom.* In addition to problematizing the implementation of critical literacy in this specific EAP classroom, Chun provides a rich overview of the literature underpinning a critical approach to English language teaching. Readers interested in delving deeper into this literature will find all the direction they need in the extensive references cited by Chun; those less inclined to delve into background literature will nonetheless find the wealth of practical classroom materials to be of value. This combination of a perspicacious theoretical overview and an insightful investigation of crucial context-specific pedagogical issues makes Chun's book essential reading for the EAP practitioner.

Jeff Brown

The Reviewer

Dr. Jeff Brown is a professor in the Centre for Preparatory and Liberal Studies at George Brown College in Toronto, Ontario. His research interests focus on critical pedagogy and the ethics of English language teaching. His work has appeared in a variety of journals, including *TESL Canada Journal, Dialogue, Language Problems and Language Planning,* and *Symposium.*

Computer Games and Language Learning
Mark Peterson
New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013, 167 pages, ISBN 978-1-137-00516-8

The power and potential of digital technologies are increasingly being harnessed and investigated for the purpose of supporting language learning. Mark Peterson's book, *Computer Games and Language Learning*, provides a concise, in-depth review of relevant literature and a case study for the purpose of answering two central questions: (a) Is the participation in computer gaming beneficial for language learners? and (b) Does computer gaming represent a paradigm shift in language education? To address each of the questions framing the book, Chapters 1 through 6 build a rationale for using computer games with language learners, leading to Chapter 7, wherein Peterson presents a case study of a massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG), and Chapter 8, in which he provides a conclusion and ideas for future directions.

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the history of digital technologies in language education, beginning with mainframe computers introduced in the 1950s through to the inauguration and evolution of the field of computer-assisted language learning (CALL). The reader is also introduced to the potential of modern technologies, such as mobile communication devices