

Book Reviews

Beyond Methodology: English Language Learners K–12

Johanne Myles

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As classrooms witness increasing diversity, it has become critical to respond to the needs of all students, especially English Language Learners (ELLs). While teacher education programs equip teachers with instructional strategies, other concerns also confront teachers today, including appropriate placement of ELLs, learning disabilities, and communication with their families. In *Beyond Methodology: English Language Learners K–12*, Johanne Myles delves deeper into these challenges and hopes to generate questions that will move teaching from a place of expertise to one of exploration. The book is organized into five clearly written chapters that discuss topics ranging from welcoming newcomers to creating inclusive classrooms. Each chapter includes relevant case studies and ends with an extensive list of suggestions for further reading. Instead of presenting solutions to any challenges, the author presents her readers with opportunities to examine any assumptions they may have about the ELLs they teach.

In Chapter 1, Myles provides an overview of classroom diversity, welcoming newcomers, and models of language support. She begins by discussing how addressing the needs of ELLs is a major challenge facing schools today. Myles does a good job of going beyond a simplistic characterization of ELLs and informs her readers about their circumstances external to language proficiency level. In terms of ELLs' language development, she describes the role of classroom teachers and ESL specialists in helping them acquire both BICS (basic interpersonal communication skills) and CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency). She then discusses the process of welcoming ELLs and their families to the school and details the issues surrounding the proper placement of ELLs in appropriate classrooms. She also lets her readers test their abilities in proper ELL placement based on brief student profiles that she provides. Myles concludes the chapter with a discussion of several models of ESL instruction delivered in many urban classroom contexts.

While the first chapter outlines the difficulties that educators face, in Chapter 2 Myles helps the readers understand how complicated the process of adjustment can be for ELLs. She outlines four stages in the acculturation process: *initial enthusiasm* or *euphoria*, during which ELLs may experience excitement about their new surroundings; *culture shock*, in which they may experience confusion and stress; *recovery*, during which they find gradual

stability; and *integration*, in which they regain their self-confidence. ELLs may have varied experiences, and Myles rightfully urges teachers to be mindful of any evidence of stress that they may show. In concluding this chapter, Myles reminds her readers that, despite the challenges that ELLs face, they bring with themselves a vast array of resources and it is crucial that school staff work together to recognize their wealth of knowledge.

Chapter 3 focuses on the difficulties teachers face when making accommodations and modifications for ELLs while simultaneously having to fulfil curriculum expectations. This is often complicated for teachers. On the one hand, they strive to provide an inclusive classroom in which ELLs can participate fully while, on the other hand, they must recognize the limitations of the ELLs so that they can receive proper support. Myles also discusses various groups of ELLs who have special needs due to gaps in their education and learning disabilities and what teachers can do to help them. She concludes the chapter with a discussion of ELLs in gifted programs. The tendency of schools to focus on ELLs' limitations rather than their strengths is a reason why ELLs are an underrepresented group in gifted programs today. She recommends that ELLs should be provided with proper opportunities through which they can demonstrate their skills and abilities in meaningful ways.

At the heart of Chapter 4 is the impact that social and emotional complications have on ELLs' academic performance. Myles begins by describing how socialization practices within families can influence ELLs' language learning. An ELL who speaks an L1 other than English at home may find socialization challenging due to a linguistic mismatch between the communication patterns at home and in school. Myles further examines the important role motivation plays in SLA and what teachers can do to ensure that ELLs are personally invested in their learning. Expanding on the conversation about ELLs' home lives, she discusses how schools can communicate with and engage the parents of ELLs despite possible hurdles including a language barrier.

The author goes beyond issues related to the curriculum and language proficiency and discusses topics such as bullying and advocacy for ELLs in Chapter 5. She brings to attention how ELLs may be viewed as different and thus can become easy targets of bullying. It is vital that schools adhere to a zero-tolerance policy for bullying and help prepare their students to live in a multicultural environment. From dealing with issues of proper ELL placement to requesting more ESL-specific resources, teachers often end up advocating for ELLs, which can cause personal and professional burnout and frustration. Myles guides teachers toward helping ELLs self-advocate by finding their own voice. She concludes the chapter with a discussion on creating an inclusive classroom and reminds us that an inclusive school environment requires effort from the school staff as well as the students' families.

Myles states in the introduction that one way in which this book differs from others on the subject is that, unlike most standard teacher education

texts, this one does not focus mainly on instructional methods. She further argues that she does not provide any strategies on how to deal with challenges because even mere suggestions could be misconstrued as tried and tested methods. However, at the end of the book, she includes a series of appendices that she calls “teaching suggestions” on every topic ranging from strategies for oral communication to dealing with bullying. Regardless of this minor critique, this resource is a valuable contribution to the field, considering the increasing number of ELLs across classrooms today. The author discusses issues surrounding ELLs with great sensitivity and care. This book is a worthy guide for those teachers who, as the title suggests, wish to go beyond methodology and integrate ELLs in ways that will prime all students for success.

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Dr. Mithila Vidwans recently completed her Ph.D. in Education at the University of Western Ontario. Her research interests are in the area of teacher education and culturally responsive pedagogy.

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Farrell, T. S. C., & Baecher, L. (2017). *Reflecting on critical incidents in language education: 40 dilemmas for novice TESOL professionals*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic.