Reviews
Compte rendus

Multicultural Education and Policy: ESL in the 1990s. A Tribute to Mary Ashworth.

John H. Esling (ed.)
Toronto: The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education Press, 1989.

Mary Ashworth, who retired from the University of British Columbia in 1988, has become over the last thirty years the symbol of an indefatigable crusader for the empowerment of students and for the rights of minority-language groups. In *Multicultural Education and Policy,* John Esling has collected eleven studies which both represent and pay hommage to various key aspects of Ashworth's thinking on the ways in which to improve the quality of education for students who live in multilingual communities.

The studies follow a dedication by Patricia Wakefield (pp. vii-ix), a students' tribute by Maggie Warbey (pp. xi-xii), and a preface by Esling (pp. xiii-xx). The book concludes with an epilogue by Ashworth herself ("A Good Genius for Teaching," pp. 193-197), in which she makes the point that good teachers are invariably those who have a genuine concern for their students, a list of her published works (pp. 198-199), and biographical notes on the contributors to the volume (pp. 200-203). The thematic thread that ties the eleven studies together is the idea that ESL policy, research directions, and instructional practices should take advantage of, not counteract, the linguistic and cultural diversity of learners. And, in fact, the three parts that make up this anthology address the political, research, and instructional possibilities for ESL for the future.

In the first part ("Issues in Policy Development," pp. 1-70), there are four studies which deal with the development of appropriate policies for multicultural contact situations. These first review the evidence that favours the incorporation and utilization of linguistic and cultural diversity in school curricula. Then they put forward concrete proposals for formulating and implementing educationally-feasible multicultural policies. Jim Cummins ("Heritage Language Teaching and the ESL Student: Fact and Friction," pp. 3-17) reviews the main research findings on heritage language development in the home and in the school, finding that the resulting form of "additive" bilingualism leads the minority-language child, with

few exceptions, to an enhanced intellectual, linguistic, and academic development. The overwhelmingly positive research cadre should, Cummins hopes, allay the fears of those teachers who continue to oppose heritage language education for minority children. Jean Handscombe ("Mainstreaming: Who Needs It?" pp. 18-35) assesses the role of ESL within a multicultural school setting (North York in Ontario), offering a series of specific recommendations for "mainstreaming" minority-language children into the curriculum. Marilyn Martin-Jones ("Language Education in the Context of Linguistic Diversity: Differing Orientations in Educational Policy Making in Britain," pp. 36-58) puts the analytical microscope on Britain's multicultural education policies and finds patterns that are similar to those highlighted by Handscombe. Marianne Celce-Murcia ("A Language Policy for ESL Students at the University of California," pp. 59-70) argues in favour of extending multicultural models of education to the university level. On the basis of her experiences at the University of California she hopes that all universities will consider developing policies to address issues ranging all the way from admissions standards to the actual content of courses, so as to be better able to meet the needs of non-native English speaking students.

The three studies in the second part ("Directions in Research and Teacher Effectiveness," pp. 71-122) describe pedagogical and research aspects of ESL within multilingual settings. Peter Strevens ("The Achievement of Excellence in Language Teaching," pp. 73-87) introduces the concept of "informed teaching" which, he maintains, underlies excellence in language teaching. The features of this teaching style include a knowledge of a vast array of pedagogical techniques, an ability to motivate students continually, and an in-depth familiarity with the professional aspects of teaching. In essence, Strevens makes the crucial point that optimal learning conditions are dependent, in large part, upon the teacher's approach to the classroom. Merrill Swain and Alister Cumming ("Beyond Methodology: Behind Research," pp. 88-106) paint a delightful, but thought-provoking, exposé of research in the second language learning domain. They look at experimental design, test procedures, and researcher interpretations through the lens of a series of incidents collected from a variety of researchers. These often humorous cases-in-point take us behind the scenes to get a closer look at the fallibility and/or gullibility of researchers. This is an extremely instructive excursion that should remind all those who do research to keep their eyes continually open for "the human factor" in their experimental scenarios. Margaret Early, Bernard A. Mohan, and Hugh R. Hooper ("The Vancouver School Board Language and Content Project," pp. 107-122) describe a Vancouver School Board research project that aimed to integrate language and content in a multilingual way. Perhaps the main finding of the project is that subject area

achievement constitutes an important medium for students to develop and utilize expository language.

The third part ("Instructional Implementation," pp. 123-192) contains four studies which examine various options for implementing instructional and curricular practices that are sensitive to the needs of linguistically-diverse students. Lily Wong Fillmore ("Teaching English through Content: Instructional Reform in Programs for Language Minority Students," pp. 125-143) discusses features of content instruction that research in Canada and the United States suggest are critical to language learning. Teaching a language through content is successful only if teachers recognize how important their role is in providing access to the new language. Emily Jane Faries ("Language Education for Native Children in Northern Ontario," pp. 144-153) surveys the educational situation for Native children in Ontario and concludes that the system must utilize the child's existing linguistic skills and background cultural knowledge. Only in this way will the learning of English become a meaningful, and psychologically effective, process. Jill Bourne ("Funding Bilingual Education: Special Provision and the 'Reform' of British Education," pp. 154-172) looks at the relationship between enlightened multilingual education models in Britain and the contradictory funding practices of the government. She hopes that this anomaly can be rectified through the help of ESL teachers "becoming language support teachers," and thus becoming leaders by example. Finally, D. Scott Enright ("Toward a New Compact between Multicultural Schools and Their Families and Communities," pp. 173-192) proposes a reorganization of school curricula which integrates subject area study with "culturally inclusive activities."

To conclude this collection of studies not only pays substantive tribute to the leadership and influence of Mary Ashworth, but also charts the main paths for multicultural education practices to pursue in the future. In the final analysis, such practices constitute pragmatic and commonsensical solutions to the education of minority-language children. The alternative, as experience has constantly shown, only courts disaster.

Marcel Danesi

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Success With Foreign Languages: Seven Who Achieved It And What Worked For Them.

This book is a remarkable piece of work! It is quite novel in its approach and format, thereby making it difficult to categorize in the literature. It contains a wealth of ideas and suggestions related to second and foreign language teaching and learning, wonderfully woven together thanks to the breadth and depth of Earl Stevick's experience and knowledge of this field.

The book documents, analyzes and discusses the cases (plus additional subsidiary cases) of seven extremely successful foreign language learners, the discussion being based on a series of in-depth interviews that were recorded and transcribed by Stevick.

In the Preface, Stevick describes his original goal in carrying out this study as follows:

> When I began the interviews, I was hoping to find out what the successful learners did alike. If we could teach their secrets to our students, I thought, then everyone else could become as successful as the people I had talked with. It soon became apparent, however, that learners are even more different from one another than I had expected (p.xi).

From this quote, it would seem that this book is part of the growing body of professional literature on "The Good Language Learner", much of which is aimed at precisely what Stevick describes: teasing-out what the good language learner does, and then finding ways to get all other language learners to do the same. But, as is already evident from the final sentence of this quote, Stevick did not find the commonality and consequent generalizations that he had hoped for. And while for many of us this would have constituted no less than the pot-of-gold at the end of the rainbow, Stevick's research has yielded a different, but equally valuable pot-of-gold. We are introduced to this just a few lines further on in the Preface:

> But as I listened to those good learners, I also found something very positive: many of the things they were describing fitted well with one or another abstract, theoretical concept in the field. Yet they do not

provide unambiguous vindication for any one model of second language acquisition. Each model will find in these interviews some confirmation, but also some challenge.

The Contents of Each Chapter

What Stevick does is very intriguing: in each chapter, he describes one of the seven learners, and what they told him about their own experiences. These descriptions are intersperced with "boxes" (rather like one finds in magazines and in the newspaper), in which key theoretical concepts or models that the description relates to, are mentioned. For example, when describing Derek, "An Imaginative Learner" in Chapter Four, on page 59 there appears a box containing the following:

- Active search for abstractions.
- Apparent contribution of 'learning' to 'acquisition'.
- Feeling of things 'slipping into place'.
- DONNA: Benefit from organizing and memorizing.

The descriptions are broken up by sections entitled "Comments", in which Stevick steps out of the constraints of reporting on the interview, and attempts to interpret what the learner is saying, and to relate it to different theoretical and methodological questions. For example, in Chapter Six, "A deliberate Learner: Frieda", Stevick says on page 108:

> Both Frieda and Ed tell us that they do a lot of reading aloud to themselves. Frieda, however, seems to do a great deal more conscious mental work as she reads than Ed does. She apparently has an unusual degree of ability to switch her attention rapidly among the sounds and the meanings and the grammatical features of the text. . . .She is what the originators of the Natural Approach would call a Super-Monitor User.

Another section that appears regularly throughout every chapter is "Working With Ideas". In these sections, which follow some discussion, a "Box" of concepts and interpretive comments, Stevick poses a series of questions for the reader, based on what is being discussed. For example, one set of questions he asks about Gwen, "a self-aware learner", in Chapter Seven is:

1. How do you understand Gwen's distinction between 'separate selves', and separate 'facets' of her single self?
2. How would you describe her motivation with regard to pronunciation? Is this a motivation that you could easily share?
3. In what respects was Gwen building her 'interactive competence' and not just her 'linguistic competence' (see 3.1.2)?
4. What questions would you still like to ask Gwen?

There are two additional sections that appear in almost every chapter. One is called "A Technique", and this is followed by the name of some language learning technique that Stevick describes that relates directly to the preceding discussion. For example, in Chapter One, "An Intuitive Learner: Ann", section 1.2.3 is "A Technique: Examining a whole newspaper". Finally, although the seven chapters are titled and focus on a particular learner's case, Stevick bolsters what he is analyzing, and extends the applicability of the ideas, by describing one or two additional learners and what they did. For example, Chapter Two focuses on Bert—a formal learner, but there is also a section on Bob, and what Bob told Stevick about memorization.

Who the Book is Useful for, and How it Can be Used

If I were forced to categorize this book, I would say it is a resource book for teachers, but would add the comment that to be able to derive maximum value from it requires a certain amount of familiarity with the theoretical literature on second language acquisition.

It provides some fascinating insights into second language learning, and how the different methodologies that have been popular over the past few decades have plugged into different aspects of the process, none of them being totally "correct", but none of them being totally "incorrect", either. This, in turn, reinforces the very healthy notion that there is no one correct approach, and that teachers should be picking out the best bits from the different methods, making maximum use of those bits that are most successful, given the particular classroom circumstances.

The book can also be very useful in teacher-training courses. All too often, when teacher-training programmes *do* offer theoretical courses in second language acquisition, the students have difficulty in finding the link back to the classroom. This book bridges that gap exceptionally well, and has the professional integrity not to claim to have all the answers, but rather poses a large number of the right *questions* (in the "Working with ideas" sections in particular) for student-teachers to ponder. The questions posed cause trainee-teachers to analyze and consider numerous issues which otherwise might have remained "theoretical issues important only for the theory class".

The Content of the Eight Chapters

Space does not allow me to describe in any detail what is contained in each of the seven chapters plus the Summary chapter at the end, so I will mention only a few points from each, in the hope that this whets the readers' appetites.

Chapter One. An Intuitive Learner: Ann Learning Norwegian.

Of particular interest in this Chapter, is the importance of Listening Comprehension in Ann's language learning. Ann "takes language in through the ear", and this in turn leads to a discussion of the importance of nonverbal as well as verbal data. The discussion with Ann raises the issue of listening and *meaning*—Ann at one point talks of "taking in sounds", and Stevick says, "At the same time, you're taking in what's going on *with* the sounds—the meanings." To this Ann replies: "Yes. Part of it is that I intensely desire to communicate with fellow human beings" (p.10).

Ann describes herself as a "participator"—she makes free use of intuition—both are very important ingredients for the successful listener in a foreign language.

This Chapter also provides some very useful ideas on the acquisition of vocabulary—a topic that recurs in numerous chapters throughout the book.

Chapter Two. A Formal Learner: Bert Learning Chinese.

Bert, a formal learner, spends a lot of his language learning time "stockpiling grammatical reflexes." Bert is a learner who uses typically audio-lingual, mechanical drilling methods, as he puts it, "burning patterns into the brain". As Stevick points out, this kind of pattern practice is tedious and exhausting, but in answer to the question, "Is it worth it?", he gives the following answer: "For some learners the balance will go in one direction, while for others it will go in the other." (p.27).

The chapter ends (p.38) with a very interesting comment of Stevick's about the success for some people and the failure for others of mechanical audio-lingual drilling. He talks about the need, even from fixed dialogues or other texts, to "generate vivid meanings. All they require is more or less effort of the imagination". One way of doing this that Stevick suggests is to read the texts aloud "while picturing a person to whom one is trying to get the meaning across". His closing comment in the chapter is highly thought-provoking, and offers a very interesting comment on the Audio-Lingual approach: "This ability may have been one requirement for success with the Audio-Lingual approach".

Chapter Three. An Informal Learner: Carla Learning Portuguese and German.

Carla, the focus of this chapter, is an extremely interesting learner. She was *exceptionally* successful in picking up ('acquisition') German and Portuguese while in Germany and Brazil, but is very unhappy in the

formal German course that she is attending in the U.S. ('learning') at the time of being interviewed. In fact, she believes that she is doing very poorly in the course, but her teachers, responding to her interactive ability, argue to the contrary. She possesses 'interactive competence', but lacks 'formal competence' (Stevick's terms). Carla is open, willing to take risks, and happy with informal learning, but not at all happy with formal class-room learning.

The chapter is full of interesting comments and insights about the issue of formal learning vs. informal acquisition, and, given that she is taking the German lessons after her informal experience of learning German in Germany, the question has to be asked whether the German lessons are, perhaps, doing her more harm than good.

Carla's case is also interesting in terms of the affective domain: she confesses to feeling extremely uncomfortable in her German class—"Part of it is all those people in there with their high aptitude scores [an additional avenue to pursue is the meaning and importance of such scores]" (p.52). This opens up the question of what might have been done differently in her class so that she did not feel uncomfortable.

Chapter Four. An Imaginative Learner: Derek Learning German, Russian and Finnish.

Derek tells how he designs his own tables of noun declensions, etc. when learning Finnish. He engages in an active search for abstractions—he is "stockpiling grammatical forms" (p.58-59).

This learning of the formal rules is what Krashen calls "learning", and Stevick observes from his interview with Derek, that this is a case of "learning" contributing to "acquisition"—someting that Krashen claimed was not possible.

Another interesting issue in this chapter is the fact that Derek feels he derives much more benefit from constructing his own grammatical tables than had he been presented them in a grammar book. This, he says, would have been uninteresting. And, what is more, he explains that the grammar book would have given him too much detail and thrown him into "information overload", whereas by constructing the tables himself, he can control the amount of detail.

Later in the chapter, we learn of some fascinating techniques that Derek uses to attach meanings to form. He is truly imaginative. He explains how he made the most of the language practice sessions, particularly when he did not really have anything to say on the topic:

> I created a fictitious brother, and made his character rather colorful
> and flamboyant. He would get into difficulties, and say crazy things,

which relieved me of the onus of responsibility for anything I said or
thought. . . It let me find ways to use words better. . . I could use
whatever words or phrases had been taught to me. (p.71).

This technique that Derek uses is in keeping with what he advocates as
a way of making maximum use of the material in the textbook: "I will
even go so far as to say, "If you cannot learn what you want to say, then
learn to want to say what you can say.' "

Chapter Five. An Active Learner: Ed Learning Korean, Rumanian and Swahili.

I personally found Ed to be perhaps *the* most fascinating of all the
learners interviewed. But, consequently, I also found his case to be the
most difficult to summarize and to generalize. This is probably due to the
fact that he is such an exceptional learner, with such remarkable insights
into what he wants to achieve, and how he goes about achieving it.
    This chapter in many ways contains "a bit of everything": a discussion
on the value of reading aloud, very important sections on Ed's acquisition
of pronunciation and grammar, comments on vocabulary, the value of
drilling (and attempts to make it more meaningful) in foreign language
acquisition, and some discussion of "monitoring".
    Four very important points about Ed do have immediate generalizability:

  i. Ed sees of paramount importance that he be actively involved in
     meaningful language situations.
  ii. Ed's successful language learning is a fascinating combination of
     "acquiring" and "learning", perhaps suggesting that the optimum
     is neither "acquiring" alone, nor "learning" alone, but a combina-
     tion of the two which is comfortable for the particular individual.
  iii. Concentration is clearly an extremely important ingredient for the
     successful language learner, and this is very evident in what Ed
     says.
  iv. Ed "builds his learning style around his strengths, and does not
     worry about his weaknesses" (p.88).

Chapter Six. A Deliberate Learner: Frieda Learning Arabic and Hebrew.

Frieda was highly successful in learning Arabic in the past, and is
disappointed with the Hebrew course that she is taking at the time of the
interview. Most of the discussion relates to her successful learning of
Arabic, but a couple of points about the Hebrew course are very noticeable:
the approach being used in the Hebrew course is forcing Frieda to use
techniques and features of language learning that she is weak in—precisely

in contradiction to what Ed says about building one's learning style around one's strengths. Another factor that clearly is a significant variable is that she does not like the Hebrew teacher!

When discussing her learning of Arabic, we see that Frieda really is a "deliberate learner"—she is a super-monitor user, and the techniques that she uses are far more conscious and deliberate than Ed's in Chapter Five— she internalizes all the teacher's "do's" and "don'ts" (p.119).

A feature of Frieda's technique that would seem vital to most successful language learning is that she deliberately works out ways of practicing the language outside of the classroom. She speaks of three main ways of doing this: she seeks out native-speakers so that she can practice with them; she creates her own drills; and, when all else fails, she practices the language by talking to herself.

This chapter again discusses the learning of vocabulary, and some very good suggestions are put forward.

Finally, a surprising aspect of successful language learning that we see in Frieda is what might be "an extreme example of producing language on the basis of rules" (p.117). She seems to have a knowledge of articulatory phonetics, and to work out how to pronounce different sounds based on phonetic descriptions of the way they are articulated. However, Stevick goes on to point out that it is possible that despite what Frieda says, "The printed materials actually contributed little or nothing to Frieda's control of Arabic pronunciation. Their main value was that having them relieved her anxiety, and so allowed her mind to accept and work with the incoming sounds more readily". He leaves this question unanswered, and builds it into the subsequent "Working With Ideas" section.

Chapter Seven. A Self-aware Learner: Gwen Learning Japanese.

Gwen is a particularly interesting case, because she is a professional linguist and supervisor of language instruction. She makes extremely good use of her intellectual understanding of how things work. She explains that her linguistic training also makes her aware of what is happening when she listens to the language she is learning. This clearly is what Krashen would call "learning". However, in addition to this "learning", there is clearly also "acquiring". She reports that, "I do a lot of my learning by a kind of osmosis" (p.133). Stevick goes on to interpret her comment as meaning "Just soaking it up without direct effort", which Gwen confirms is what she meant, and she goes on to explain: "Even if you don't understand it all. But pretty soon things will begin to sink in. . ."

Stevick observes that Gwen, like Derek, Ed and Frieda, but unlike Carla, "seems able to focus simultaneously on *what* she is saying and *how* she is saying it" (p.130).

It is also interesting to note that despite her linguistic sophistication, and despite the premium put on pronunciation by some of the others interviewed, Gwen does not see pronunciation as very important.

Finally, when describing how she meets every weekend to talk Japanese with a Japanese couple, she tells how "sometimes of course I fall on my face—linguistically, that is. I don't mind that because I'm secure with them socially. . . . Falling on my face linguistically doesn't mean falling on my face socially. That's the point" (p.128). This comment points up the importance of feeling comfortable as a learner, and consequently being willing to take linguistic risks.

Chapter Eight. Summary.

In many respects, this chapter is the most ambitious of all. In it, Stevick, after conceding that there are great differences between his informants' language learning, states: "Nevertheless, I think I see emerging out of all these contrasts and contradictions an overall pattern" (p.138). He then proceeds to explain the pattern in general and then to expand in some detail on certain of the elements in the pattern.

The following section, 8.3., which is called "What I myself would do with a new language" is a very clear and succinct summary of the 11 generalizations that Stevick teases out of these multi-faceted interviews.

Finally, Stevick discusses the implications of these generalizations for the teacher.

Concluding Comments

This review has been one of the most challenging that I have ever written because I have attempted to give the "flavour" of what is contained in each of the chapters, without summarizing every one of the multitudinous points. Those points that I have chosen to mention might not be those that Stevick would have had me highlight, but this has been an honest attempt to report on what I have found to be one of the most thought-provoking and intriguing books in the field of second language teaching and learning that I have ever read!

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