
Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

Language Learners as Ethnographers

*Celia Roberts, Michael Byram, Ana Barro, Shirley Jordan,
and Brian Street*

Volume 16 in the *Modern Languages in Practice Series* edited by Michael Grenfell

Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters, 2001, ISBN 1-85359-502-0

An Intercultural Approach to English Language Teaching

John Corbett

Volume 7 in the *Languages for Intercultural Communication and Education* series edited by Michael Byram and Alison Phipps

Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters, 2003, ISBN 1-85359-683-3

Critical Pedagogy: Political Approaches to Language and Intercultural Communication

Alison Phipps and Manuela Guilherme

Volume 8 in the *Languages for Intercultural Communication and Education* series edited by Michael Byram and Alison Phipps

Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters, 2004, ISBN 1-85359-753-8

These three texts offer significant insights into principles of intercultural language education, models of implementation, and implications for the increasingly complex and diverse linguistic, sociocultural, and political realms North Americans and Europeans occupy. Through my lens as a Canadian TESL educator who is currently designing a course on intercultural communication in language education and seeking out relevant sources, I analyze and compare some of the distinctive features of these texts. As my critique emerges, so does my agenda to promote language education practices that are inquiry-oriented yet do not lose sight of critical and ethical perspectives.

Language Learners as Ethnographers explores the roles of cultural studies and intercultural communication in language learning. The first part of the text addresses theory and practice related to language-learning and ethnography. The authors use the multidisciplinary nature of ethnography to advocate for ethnographic approaches to language learning informed by social and linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistics. In the second part of the book, the authors describe and analyze a case study entitled the Ealing Ethnography Project, which involved advanced-level language-learners en-

gaging in field work, data analysis, and a write-up of a local group encountered while completing a year of study abroad.

Instructors who are contemplating the design and implementation of an inquiry-driven approach such as that described in the Ealing Ethnography Project will find a plethora of information and ideas about the language classroom and how learners may be guided through the process of conducting their own mini-research initiatives. For example, Chapter 6 addresses issues of how the ethnographic projects may be used to generate teaching materials and also addresses concerns about evaluating and generalizing results. The authors rightly claim that their model can usefully be adapted to a variety of contexts; indeed, I became quite excited as I envisaged the possibilities for facilitating an ethnographic task in my own intercultural communication course.

However, a concern that arose as I progressed from the first part of the text to the second was how the authors addressed (or apparently diminished) some of the crucial ethical issues associated with ethnographic data collection and representation. At the outset of the book, the authors' potentially critical stance seemed promising with their recognition that "the idea of groups having fixed and essential characteristics are challenged as new solidarities within multilingual societies are formed" (p. 6). Roberts et al. go on to contest the idea of neutrality in language-learning, insist on the importance of fostering "critical cultural awareness" (Byram, 1997a) in learners, and encourage blurring the traditional dichotomous distinctions between *them* and *us*. It was quite disappointing to me as a reader, then, to discover that the authors gloss over ethical issues that arose during learners' ethnographies (such as the problematic notion of privileged outsiders—the learners—imposing themselves on marginalized groups, for example, single mothers, for the purposes of completing the assignment). Instead of addressing these issues with the thoughtful critical analysis evident at the outset, the authors vaguely suggest, "an explicit discussion of these issues has to be introduced into the programme" (p. 193), with no further indication of how this may be achieved.

An Intercultural Approach to English Language Teaching, like *Language Learners as Ethnographers*, also emphasizes the interdisciplinary nature of studying cultures and languages. However, intended audiences vary somewhat; whereas Roberts et al. target secondary and university-level instructors of languages other than English, Corbett seeks to provide English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) teachers with an overview of historical and theoretical perspectives of intercultural language teaching and examples of classroom tasks. Chapters address the following topics: 1. An Intercultural Approach to Second Language Education; 2. Implementing an Intercultural Approach; 3. Culture and Conversational English; 4. Culture and Written

Genres; 5. Ethnographic Approaches to Culture and Language; 6. Exploring Culture through Interviews; 7. Developing Visual Literacy; 8. Using Literacy, Media and Cultural Studies; 9. Assessing Intercultural Communication; and 10. Prospects for Teaching and Learning Language and Culture.

Obvious parallels are evident between the ethnographic focus of Roberts et al. and some of the chapter topics in Corbett (e.g., Chapters 5 and 6). If I were to identify particular contexts in which each of the two books might most usefully be explored, I would suggest that Corbett's work might be more appropriate for preservice EFL teacher education whereas Roberts et al. might usefully be used by experienced foreign-language educators or as part of an inservice teacher education program. I am inclined to categorize the two texts in this way because Corbett's work emphasizes an initial overview of intercultural language education with more general applications to teaching, whereas Roberts et al. delve into more depth with specific ethnographic techniques that although adaptable to varying contexts as stated earlier, would most probably be employed by language educators with considerable professional experience and confidence.

A particularly noteworthy portion of Corbett's book is Chapter 6, which is about interviewing as a tool for exploring concepts of culture; this chapter would be accessible and useful for novice teachers. However, like the above criticism of the Roberts et al. text, I would wish to ensure that this chapter be used as a starting point for discussion of interviewing and that appropriate stress be placed on the need to approach interactions with participants ethically. The issue of ethics seems noticeably absent in much of the discussion about data collection; interviews are seen as tools for "gather[ing] information about aspects of the target culture" (p. 137) and as such are implicitly (and falsely) regarded as neutral undertakings. For further discussion of how to maintain ethical relationships with participants, for example, the need to speak with rather than for participants, I would spend some time with my students on the work of Griffiths (1998) and Tuhiwai-Smith (1999) to ensure that potentially exploitative research practices be minimized and avoided altogether if possible.

One other concern with Corbett's text is that it completely ignores the Australian literature in this area. Although this criticism could be leveled at all three of the texts reviewed here, the omission seems particularly striking in Corbett's book because it deals specifically with intercultural language teaching, a focus shared by Lo Bianco, Liddicoat, and Crozet's (1999) seminal work on this subject. Readers, especially those who read the publisher's promotional material stating that "intercultural learning is also beginning to impact on English Language Teaching," might be led to believe that this book is one of the earliest texts in the field when it is not. For this reason I would hesitate to use this book as a core text in preservice EFL teacher

education without supplementing it with other international perspectives. It seems ironic that some of the work in intercultural language teaching, although emphasizing the need for border crossing and open-mindedness, simultaneously demonstrates considerable cultural bias and an inappropriately narrow focus in its own review of the literature and stances represented.

Critical Pedagogy: Political Approaches to Language and Intercultural Communication provides a refreshingly distinct approach from the other two texts in both format and content. This volume consists of four articles initially published in an issue of the journal *Language and Intercultural Communication*, with contributions from Giroux (Betraying the Intellectual Tradition: Public Intellectuals and the Crisis of Youth), Turner (Academic Literacy in Post-colonial Times: Hegemonic Norms and Transcultural Possibilities), Nainby, Warren, and Bollinger (Articulating Contact in the Classroom: Towards a Constitutive Focus in Critical Pedagogy), and Diaz-Greeberg and Nevin (Listen to the Voices of Foreign language Student teacher: Implications for Foreign Language Educators). Explicitly focusing on critical pedagogical issues of power and interculturalism in the current United States political climate offers welcome explicitness following the more implicitly "neutral" stances adopted in the two other texts reviewed here. Although the intended audience is academic, thereby limiting the applicability and appeal of some of the articles for practicing teachers, I can envisage including this collection as part of the reading requirements for a graduate-level course on critical pedagogy and/or intercultural communication.

I was impressed with the unique and varied contributions of all the authors. Turner, for example, argues for a critical-pragmatic approach to academic literacy as she explores the complexity of working with a Korean doctoral student who struggles with aspects of written communication in an English academic context. Her perspective raises an issue central to understanding my own role as a university educator working with students of diverse linguistic backgrounds: How can we help students succeed in the academy while fostering a critical perspective and recognizing the historical and political legacy of the academy as a vehicle for maintaining the status quo? Nainby, Warren, and Bollinger similarly call into question the role of the educator as an agent of transformation by critiquing Freire's work on critical pedagogy and urging teachers to consider classroom communication from the perspective of co-creating reality with their students. Diaz-Greeberg and Nevin's piece, sharing the voices of foreign-language student teachers, will be of particular interest to teacher educators who wish to integrate aspects of critical pedagogy into their courses in an attempt to prepare teachers adequately for the culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms in which they will work.

The highlight of the volume for me was Giroux's contribution, which explores how the current political climate in the US devalues young people and emphasizes the individual at the expense of the collective, which results in blaming individuals for societal problems such as disease and poverty. Critiquing the US role in Iraq, Giroux extends an inspiring challenge to academics to engage in "new modes of resistance and collective struggle buttressed by rigorous intellectual work, social responsibility, and political courage" (p. 19), linking knowledge with action and ideally rekindling people's sense of responsibility for one another. I would recommend this piece as a reading in any graduate-level course addressing issues of interculturalism and critical pedagogy.

In summary, foreign-language and EFL teachers, teacher educators, and academic stakeholders may glean a variety of useful theoretical and pedagogical insights from these three texts that address issues of interculturalism and critical perspectives in language education. Such work may offer teachers and researchers who face issues of diversity encouragement that interculturalism is gaining increasing recognition in scholarship and pave the way for additional efforts to integrate a variety of international and ethical viewpoints.

Clea Schmidt

The Reviewer

Clea Schmidt is an assistant professor of TESL at the University of Manitoba.

References

- Griffiths, M. (1998). *Educational research for social justice: Getting off the fence*. Milton Keynes, UK: Open University Press.
- Lo Bianco, J., Liddicoat, A.J., & Crozet, C. (Eds.). (1999). *Striving for third place: Intercultural competence in language education*. Melbourne: Language Australia.
- Tuhiwai Smith, L. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. London: Zed Books.

Test It Fix It: English Verbs and Tenses Pre-intermediate

Kenna Bourke

Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003, 88 pages

Test It Fix It: English Verbs and Tenses Intermediate

Kenna Bourke

Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003, 88 pages

Kenna Bourke is a recognized British author of grammar books. In 1999 she won the English Speaking Union's Duke of Edinburgh Book Competition for *The Grammar Lab*, a series for young learners. The *Test It Fix It* series, consist-

ing of two sets, one for verbs and tenses, one for grammar, is for older students. Each set has two books, pre-intermediate and intermediate.

The organization and design of the two *Test It Fix It: English Verbs and Tenses* books is the same. Twenty chapters in each book cover a verb tense or aspect of a verb tense, with four pages in each chapter. The organizational premise of *Test It Fix It* is for students to attempt two exercises; check the answers and read the explanatory notes to understand the correct answer; then do two more exercises. The fourth page of each chapter is called "Review," but in fact is a clear mini-grammar lesson.

The four exercises in each chapter follow varied styles. There are multiple-choice, write-the-sentence, fill-in-the-blank, true-or-false, find-and-correct-the-error, choose-a-word-from-a-list, matching, choose-the-best-option, choose-the-correct-sentence, and others. Bourke has even introduced variety within styles; for example, with "choose the best option," one form is "Jim's never seen/never saw this film. I'm sure he'll like it" (Intermediate p. 20), and another is multiple-choice with A or B choices. The variety is refreshing for both teacher and student and ensures the usefulness of the book. The variety is enhanced by the attractive layout and presentation of the exercises and explanations.

The exercises are well composed and just the right length. The first test in a chapter takes between five and 10 minutes, depending on the knowledge and real language level of the student. The second test takes approximately the same time. The Review explanation at the end of each chapter is an excellent encapsulation of the grammar point, serving as either a starting point or a summary. For new teachers the exercises and review explanation are a clear introduction to the most commonly taught verb tenses.

The pre-intermediate text covers present simple and present continuous, past simple, past continuous, present perfect (3 chapters), past perfect, review of all tenses, future (3 chapters), first conditional, future review, time expressions, obligation and necessity, ability, -ing or infinitive, do/make/have/have got, reported speech, and word order. Two charts complete the book, one with verb forms (including contractions and question forms), one with common irregular verbs.

The intermediate text deals with present simple and continuous, used to/would/be used to, present perfect review, present perfect continuous, since/for/ago, past tenses review, future review, second and third conditionals, reported speech (2 chapters), passive (2 chapters), have/get something done, relative clauses, modals, modals in the past, verb patterns (-ing or infinitive), state verbs, confusing verbs (such as say/tell), and phrasal verbs. Concluding the book are three charts with state verbs, verb forms, and irregular verbs, which are the same as in the pre-intermediate book.

The exercises are challenging for novice pre-intermediate or intermediate students. Their strength is for review after grammar taught from a course book or to supplement skills books. The pre-intermediate exercises would be a good grammar introduction for intermediate classes, and the intermediate exercises good for high intermediate. The books cover many of the verb tenses that students are expected to understand well, and therefore function well as testing materials at the beginning of a level. Both books would be useful in any ESL/EFL teaching situation where grammar is a focus.

Ellen Pilon

The Reviewer

Ellen Pilon is an ESL teacher in the International Language Institute in Halifax, Nova Scotia and an IELTS examiner. She is now working on her third master's degree, this one an MEd in curriculum studies TESL at Mount Saint Vincent University.

**Silence in Second Language Learning:
A Psychoanalytic Reading**

Colette A. Granger

Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters, ISBN: 1-85359-697-3,
142 pages (paperback)

You may well be wondering why anybody would wish to write a book about nothing. Surely silence is merely the absence of speech, an empty space in the more significant flow of spoken discourse. Granger's book sets out to dispel this myth by providing an insightful examination of silence in second-language learning as a phenomenon rich in meaning not only linguistically and socially, but also psychically. The author's contention that a learner's silence may partly be the manifestation of psychical elements and that psychoanalytic theory can provide a useful framework for exploring such episodes makes this an original and perceptive study. There is a definite need for such a work as the dearth of published material relating to silence in language-learning attests. Indeed, Granger herself points out that research into second language acquisition seems "oddly silent on the subject of silence" (p. 9).

If like me your knowledge of psychoanalysis is virtually nonexistent, do not despair. Granger's lucid style and timely quotations make her arguments on this potentially complicated subject easy to grasp. She draws on ideas from the likes of Sigmund Freud and Donald Winnicott to establish how the four main concepts of psychoanalytic theory—*anxiety, ambivalence, conflict, and loss*—relate to a language learner's changing self-concept in the SLA process and how silence plays an integral role in such a process. Of particular interest is Granger's belief that the silent period in some second-language learners may be sort of "psychical paralysis, a temporary freezing, a complex combination of an inability to articulate and a lowered self-regard" (p. 62),

which can result in the learner being suspended between two selves, living unsteadily in a changed identity between two languages.

Silence in Second Language Learning really starts to come alive when the author gives a voice to a diverse range of language learners who have experienced this unstable existence. By using psychoanalytic thought in the interpretation of several autobiographical memoirs and language learners' diaries, Granger manages to tease out instances where the paths of silence, identity construction, and second-language acquisition meet. Due to the reticent nature of silence in written discourse, this is a far from straightforward and highly interpretive task. The author often has to work with what is obliquely hinted at rather than what is directly stated by the writers. Even so, her intellectual vigor and sound reasoning mean she manages to succeed in this undertaking with aplomb.

This book is likely to appeal not only to SLA researchers interested in an original analysis of the relationship between language and identity. It should also be of interest to language educators at the "chalkface." This is especially true of its final section, which explores issues in pedagogical practice. *Silence in Second Language Learning* could be useful to those teachers—and I believe there to be many—who have been mystified, frustrated, or even just made curious by the silent episodes of their learners. Granger has produced a work that may well go some way to helping such teachers better understand both their learners as individuals and their own role in the often disconcerting process that is learning a second language.

J.E King

The Reviewer

J.E King has taught English in a range of countries around the world including Poland, Italy, the United Kingdom, Hungary, and Japan. He is particularly interested in cultural influences on learners of English in an Asian context.