

Book Review

A Review of Pedagogy & Practice for Online English Language Teacher Education

Reviewed by Tim Krause, Portland Community College

Pawan, F., Wiechart, K. A., Warren, A. N., & Park, J. (2016). *Pedagogy & practice for online English language teacher education*. Alexandria, VA: TESOL Press.

Online education is a rapidly growing field for not only students of English, but their teachers in training as well. In 2012, for example, more than 40 online MA TESOL programs were offered by universities globally and more than 400 online TESOL certificates were available from private sources. While highlighting various practical benefits of online coursework, the collaborators of *Pedagogy & Practice for Online English Language Teacher Education* argue that “pedagogy, rather than technology, should drive online instruction.” They seek to connect foundational theories of teaching with their own online practices in order to demonstrate how “online teaching is enhanced by technology but not subsumed by it.” Each chapter, therefore, presents a review of research complemented by real-world case studies.

In its initial chapters, the book explores two common concerns of instructors moving from face-to-face classrooms to online instruction: teacher presence and reflective teaching. Here, Faridah Pawan describes presence theory

in terms of connection to self, students, subject matter, and pedagogical knowledge, elaborating on the notion that “teacher presence” exceeds direct instruction to include design, administration, and facilitation. Online, this includes modeling and timing of participation to promote engagement and motivation; providing metacognitive strategies that promote learner autonomy; and making the process of learning visible across the virtual classroom. Consciously incorporating these strategies is itself a form of reflective teaching, which Pawan suggests aligns well with online teaching given the way its asynchronous nature affords time for thoughtful consideration. Pawan describes how the practical inquiry model can provide a framework for reflective online instruction, leading students to be co-constructors of knowledge.

In Chapter Three, Pawan examines Universal Design, a practice originally devised to promote accessibility for all learners. As one of the more practical chapters, it explains how instructors can leverage technology in learning

management systems to incorporate multiple means of representation, action, expression, and engagement. Through examples, readers are shown how these multi-faceted modes of instruction not only increase accessibility, but also create richer learning environments.

Next, contributors Crystal Howell and Ai-Chu Ding steer readers to the value of lifelong learning networks for both instructors and pre-service teachers. “No longer can learners master a particular body of knowledge and expect their mastery to last a lifetime,” they explain before invoking connectivism, or lifelong learning particularly through professional development networks. This, they argue, is the best strategy for dealing with ever-shifting 21st-century epistemology. Following this lead, Pawan returns readers to practicalities in the next chapter by concentrating on active learning through just-in-time teaching, flipped classrooms, and hybrid courses -- technology-enhanced formats that increase the quality of education so that learners’ knowledge is in sync with the world around them.

Still, inexperienced online teachers may believe courses will be less engaging due to lack of spontaneity customarily observed in face-to-face courses. Chapter 6 looks at achieving dialectical learning through synchronous meetings that expand engagement and learning. Amber N. Warren presents a case study for real-time discussion via a web-conferencing platform that enables dynamic interactions. In contrast, in Chapter 7 Pawan and Jaehan Park pivot to how educators can use online

instruction’s unique qualities -- even its asynchronous nature -- to students’ advantage.

At the conclusion of Chapter 7, the book offers a nod to culture and communicative competence, a topic that continues all too briefly in Chapter 8 where Park, Warren, Pawan, and Kelly A. Wiechart describe their experiences using an online platform as a “third space” to explore culture. Given no boundaries of geography or time, as well as the potential anonymity of identity, online classrooms are natural spaces where cultures interact. This intersection deserves further examination.

The final chapter brings readers full circle. Pawan and Howell introduce the concept of the “trans-classroom teacher,” educators who alternate between bricks-and-mortar and bits-and-bytes classrooms. The authors ponder the influence that one has on the other, and what happens in the liminal space between the two. The implication is that an expansion of identity requires an expansion of pedagogy, one that has yet to be fully articulated.

The authors are generally successful in demonstrating how online instruction can be – and should be – rooted in accepted pedagogical theories, extending each chapter with useful questions for discussion. Though the text is focused on teacher training, its principles transfer easily to language teaching. However, online education is still in its infancy. Given the rapid evolution of technology, the lifespan of this book may be short even though its core tenet -- pedagogy before technology -- is timeless.

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