

Book Review

A Review of *Social Justice in English Language Teaching*

Reviewed by Pamela Pearson, Linfield College

Hastings, C. & Jacob, L. (Eds.) (2016). *Social justice in English language teaching*. Alexandria, VA: TESOL Press. ISBN: 9781942799429

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There may never have been a more timely book on social justice in TESOL. Just as we had begun seeing more inclusive policies take shape for immigrant families and English language learners (ELLs) in the U.S. educational system under the Obama administration (e.g., the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (2012); Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015), we have witnessed a dramatic shift in both attitude and actions on the part of the Trump administration (e.g., the Executive Order on Immigration issued in January 2017). Many who work with populations that have been impacted or stand to be impacted by the rapidly changing structure wonder how we can advocate for ELLs and promote and restore equity at a time of great instability.

A useful starting point, I believe, is Chris Hastings' and Laura Jacob's edited volume, *Social justice in English language teaching* (hereon, *Social Justice in ELT*). Published in 2016, *Social Justice in ELT* is a collection of chapters exploring social justice issues

not only in P-12 educational settings in the U.S., but on wide a range of issues (e.g., peacebuilding; language rights; gender and sexual orientation) across several international contexts (e.g., Japan, Korea, Australia, Qatar). The book consists of seven parts:

- 1) “Setting the Stage,” an introduction to social justice and ELT
- 2) Peacebuilding and ELT
- 3) Positioning For Advocacy
- 4) Language Rights, Privilege, and Race
- 5) Gender and Sexual Orientation Justice
- 6) Working Across Borders/Advocating for Students
- 7) a concluding section on “Classroom Practices.”
- 8) There really is something for most any TESOL practitioner.

For those of us in Oregon and the Pacific Northwest – and anyone in the political climate of populism more generally – perhaps the most relevant chapters are Chapter 2, “The First Step Toward Social Justice: Teacher Reflection,” and Chapter 12, “Understanding Privilege: Considerations for Teaching and Teacher Training Toward Social

Justice.” In Chapter 2, Lavette Coney challenges individuals, programs, and the entire field to engage in critical reflection on diversity, racism, and white privilege as they pertain to ELT. She begins by pointing out that although TESOL is guided by an inclusive mission statement and a nondiscrimination policy, the organization could do more to specify what those values would look like in practice. Coney suggests that “antiracist work” in preservice programs is necessary for individuals to reveal hidden biases/internalized racism of teacher candidates – but that the work is never over. It must be a lifelong pursuit if one is to develop the “knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and pedagogical skills” required to promote language acquisition through culturally responsive pedagogy over time. A nice complement to Coney’s theoretical chapter is Chapter 12, in which Heidi Faust not only makes the case for self-reflexivity, but also provides descriptions of practical strategies that can be used to promote awareness of one’s own identity and biases in order to engage with others to confront oppression and marginalization. The activities she describes in detail are

- a) Insider/Outsider (identity circle);
- b) Awareness:
Recognizing/Naming/Resolving
(overcoming barriers chart);
- c) Courageous Conversations
(sentence starters for safe
spaces);
- d) The Bathtub: Stocks & Flows
(exploring ‘belonging’); and

- e) “Where I’m From” Poems (to increase funds of knowledge).

For those interested in exploring social justice in ELT more generally, I would recommend Chapter 3, Mayra Daniel’s “Critical Pedagogy’s Power in English Language Teaching,” and Chapter 11, Elisabeth Chan’s “Student Voices Inform Practice: Perceptions of Linguistic and Cultural Discrimination.” In Chapter 3, Daniel demonstrates the need for developing critical, or “transformative,” literacy practices for students to learn to analyze cultural messages and “compare and contrast their worlds” (p. 25). In Chapter 11, Chan argues for the need to incorporate students’ previous experiences with discrimination for in order to harness the power of personal narrative in exploring perceptions of race, language, and culture.

As mentioned above, this collection covers a broad range of topics from a diverse group of scholars, making it a really flexible edition for TESOL professionals. It is general enough that it is useful for pre-service teacher education and/or ESOL endorsement programs; it is academically challenging enough that it would be appropriate for graduate-level work; and it is recent enough that in-service practitioners and seasoned TESOLers would encounter new information. In all, I think Hastings and Jacob have succeeded in compiling a comprehensive treatment on the topic of *Social Justice in ELT*.

Pamela Pearson holds a PhD in Applied Linguistics from Georgia State University. She has taught EFL in Djibouti, Japan, Mexico, and Turkey, and ESL in Georgia and Iowa. Pam currently teaches and supervises pre-service teachers in the ESOL Endorsement Program in the Education Department at Linfield College.