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BOOK REVIEW



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Language-Sensitive Teaching and Learning: A Resource Book for Teachers and Teacher Educators, edited by Richard Rossner and Rod Bolitho. Palgrave Macmillan Cham, 2022. XXII, 192 pp. ISBN N 978-3-031-11338-3, £44.99 (sbk)

Adib Alfalah ^{a,*}, Sri Dewi Priwanti Siregar ^a

^a Universitas Pendidikan, Indonesia

Language-Sensitive Teaching and Learning: A Resource Book for Teachers and Teacher Educators, edited by Richard Rossner and Rod Bolitho, provides an in-depth understanding of language use in both classroom settings and online teaching and learning. The book also offers a range of practical ideas and activities, which are designed to be applied to teacher education courses and professional development programs for teachers in practice. Furthermore, the book includes a dedicated chapter (chapter 5) that focuses on those working in teacher education, encompassing curriculum development and in-service training. The concept of language-sensitive teaching helps teachers become more aware of the importance of language and communication in facilitating students' academic success.


The book is organized into five chapters, each with sections containing multiple tasks that emphasize different aspects of language usage in education. After each task, there is a commentary providing potential answers and addressing relevant issues. Each section concludes with a summary and a few reflective questions to prompt further consideration. Students are expected to reflect on the newly acquired knowledge following interpretation (Brau & Vygotsky, 2020).

The opening unit (chapter 1) delves into the various dimensions of language in communication, which apply to individuals across various contexts of communication, including those utilized in personal and professional interactions. This discussion aims to provide a broader context for examining educational issues that are addressed in subsequent chapters. The chapter consists of four sections, each discussing a different aspect of language use. The first section delves into the idea of language users as 'social agents' through tasks 1-8. The second section explores diversity in language utilization, covering tasks 9-13. The third section focuses on the reflection of identity and culture in language use through Tasks 14-19. Lastly, the fourth section examines how language is used to exert influence and control in various ways with tasks 20-24.

* Corresponding author: Universitas Pendidikan, Indonesia

Email address: adib_alfalah@upi.edu

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Chapter 2 marks the beginning part of a three-part section that centres on language within educational contexts. It examines fundamental language concepts, techniques used by teachers, and resources for educational purposes. The chapter also explores factors that guide language use and how it impacts cognitive growth and classroom management. The chapter's tasks provide examples of diverse language used by teachers and students in various teaching and learning situations. This chapter is divided into four sections. Section 1 provides a comprehensive overview of the role of language in education and its impact on cognitive development, as well as the various factors that influence language use in the classroom (tasks 1-4). Section 2 offers a comprehensive exploration of the context and communication in education, shedding light on the various factors that influence language use in educational settings and providing practical examples to illustrate these concepts (task 5-10). Section 3 offers valuable insights into the role of language in education, highlighting how teachers and students use language to support learning and cognitive development, while also exploring the impact of language choices on classroom dynamics and student outcomes (task 11-14). Finally, section 4 offers valuable insights into the dynamics of learning talk and context in educational settings, providing practical examples and encouraging reflection on the role of talk in supporting students' learning experiences (task 15-18).

Chapter 3 is divided into four sections. First, section 1 offers valuable insights into the role of language in education and provides a foundation for understanding the impact of language on learning and teaching practices. It sets the stage for further exploration of language and communication in educational settings, making it an essential component of the chapter (task 1-9). Furthermore, section 2 offers valuable insights into the relationship between language and subjects in education, highlighting the need to consider linguistic diversity and subject-specific language use in teaching practices (task 10-13). Next, section 3 offers valuable guidance on the use of language and questions in teaching, highlighting their impact on student learning and the importance of providing support to facilitate comprehension and critical thinking (task 14-20). Lastly, section 4 provides essential guidance on effective teaching practices and the role of scaffolding in facilitating student comprehension and learning (task 20-25).

Chapter 4 expands on the concept of a language repertoire, discussing strategies for expanding and improving it, as well as the role of literacy and oracy in developing language repertoire. In addition, a teacher may need to help students master the domain-specific language that is important for the task that they face (van Dijk et al., 2022). Through exploring practical examples from the classroom and theoretical issues, the chapter highlights the intricate connection between learners and teachers' language repertoires and the fundamental concepts of literacy and oracy. In addition, this chapter is divided into four distinct sections. Section 1 (covering task 1-6) emphasizes the impact of schooling on the growth of a student's language repertoire. Section 2 (including tasks 7-15) delves deeper into the importance of literacy and oracy and their relevance to language repertoire development. Section 3 (containing tasks 16-17) explores various genres that children encounter in different subjects and need to master during their schooling. Finally, Section 4 (covering tasks 18-19) focuses on the role of a teacher's language repertoire in the development of learners' literacy and oracy.

Chapter 5 focuses on the integration of language studies in teacher education and training programs, with a specific emphasis on addressing the issues discussed in chapter 1 to 4. The chapter highlights the need for a language component in initial teacher education curricula or in-service programs for teachers of all subjects. By focusing on language studies, the book aims to contribute to the improvement of teacher education and training programs, with the hope of benefiting both practicing and aspiring teachers. The chapter covers 4 sections. Section 1, through tasks 1-11, provides a brief overview of the current state of teacher education and training, with a particular emphasis on the inadequate focus on language and literacy matters. It also proposes a core syllabus that can be used in designing language modules for pre-service or in-service programs. Section 2 discusses task types that can be used in language-sensitive teaching, covering tasks 12-18. Section

3 provides examples of best practices in language-sensitive teaching from three European countries through tasks 19-27. Lastly, section 4 explores strategies for systematically integrating language-sensitive teaching and learning into all teacher education programs, encompassing tasks 28-33.

The book deserves commendation for its practical and comprehensive approach to teaching and learning with language sensitivity, making it a valuable resource for educators. The writing style is clear and accessible, facilitating easy comprehension. Furthermore, the book incorporates numerous examples and case studies from various educational contexts, bolstering its relevance to diverse teaching environments. However, it would be beneficial to specify and briefly explain which case studies are referenced in one or two sentences at most. Moreover, the inclusion of links to YouTube videos in several sections serves as valuable aids for completing tasks. The integration of technology not only enhances the learning experience but also empowers students to take charge of their education, fostering a sense of responsibility and autonomy (Hossain, 2024).

On the other hand, the book has some potential weaknesses. These include a heavy focus on theoretical aspects without offering concrete guidance on how to implement the ideas in the classroom. The book also predominantly focuses on educational practices in Europe, which may limit its relevance to readers in other countries. To address these limitations, readers outside of the European context may need to adapt the concepts presented in the book to suit their specific contexts, which may require additional research and effort to implement language-sensitive teaching in diverse settings.

Overall, this book is not only a valuable resource for (student) teachers who work with students of all ages and across different subjects, but it also has a wide appeal. Language teachers, including those who teach English, Arabic, and other foreign languages, as well as lecturers and trainers interested in improving language and literacy instruction, can benefit from the book's practical approach. Furthermore, researchers interested in language and literacy issues in education can also benefit from its insights. This book is considered valuable because it serves not only as a crucial resource for (student) teachers working with students of various ages and subjects, but it also holds broad appeal for language educators (English, Arabic, and other foreign languages), lecturers, trainers, curriculum designers, policymakers, and researchers.

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