

Book Review

First and Second Language use in Asian EFL

Ross Forman. *Multilingual Matters*, 2016. 212 pp. ISBN-13:978-1-78309-558-2 (hbk)

Reviewed by:

Karen Ngeow

Centre for Applied English Studies, The University of Hong Kong

The discussions raised by Ross Forman in this book will interest native and non-native English teachers working in ESL/EFL contexts. Teachers who constantly reflect on what could be done more to facilitate their students' attempts to make sense of L2 learning within the context of L1 language knowledge would certainly be able to relate to the various issues in the classroom scenarios described by Forman.

In this book, the Asian EFL teacher's experience is presented via three perspectives: Pedagogy, the Personal and the Professional. In the section focused on Pedagogy, the author reviews bilingual EFL practices and invites teachers to think through intercultural dimensions of language learning. In the Personal section, the reader is engaged in deliberations on building an understanding of identity and beliefs when teachers and learners 'perform' in L2. Finally, the Professional discussions focus on global EFL concerns with respect to methodology, curriculum and materials development.

Forman's book is essentially a response to calls by ESL/EFL professionals who seek exploration and expansion of L1 pedagogy in L2 teaching. The outcome is a form of blended, bilingual pedagogy that embraces "identity and alterity" (pp 103-104) from the perspectives of both teachers and learners. The author's use of the term alterity, which he says goes beyond consideration of cultural otherness, is of significance here as it underpins Forman's belief that teachers should be encouraged to look "within the self to see how alterity may be evoked by the experience of moving into a new language" (p 104). By walking with ESL/EFL educators, as depicted in the emic accounts presented throughout the book, the reader is inherently able to identify with teachers who have to, or choose to, balance the use of two languages in their classrooms. A case in point is when the author discusses interview data of L1 teachers who had to perform or take on roles as English speakers with their students. In Thailand, for instance, L1 teachers said they felt they could be more open when using English while others pointed out they felt an "unrealness" of roles when they used English in the classroom. Teachers who used students' native language in English classrooms found that this very often led to overall ease of communication and better rapport. When most of us would see this as a debate for comparing the consequences of L1 and L2 use in classrooms, Forman takes us to a stimulating level of teacher cognition deliberations by asking us to consider the interpersonal roles, performance and affective influence played by L1 teachers. In this regard, he advocates that L1 teachers should present themselves not only as excellent models for students but also as repositories of knowledge about their own experiences,

feelings and thoughts connected to the process of becoming an L2 user. He feels L1 teachers should comprehend their identity as L2 users and also role adjustments in achieving linguistic self-confidence. Only then will they be better able to guide their students through similar language acculturation processes and ensuing decisions about language choice and use (e.g., in code switching contexts) by sharing their own affective experience as L2 learners.

In his final chapter, Forman provides a reminder of the book's rationale and focus: enhancing the ESL/EFL teacher's bilingual pedagogy by connecting inwards (i.e., teacher's personal roles) as well as outwards (i.e., professional contexts).

I consider this an insightful book for both novice and experienced ESL/EFL teachers. It has many merits, and one that I feel many teachers and researchers will appreciate is the emphasis on the L1 teacher growth via reflection, where L1 teachers are constantly encouraged to question teaching practices, evaluate pedagogical choices and consider perspectives in the varied contextualised classroom interactions presented throughout the book. In addition, Forman helps to dispel several long-held notions related to the disadvantageous use of making references to L1 within the context and curriculum of L2 teacher education. Even more significantly, this book succeeds in instigating practicing teachers to constantly reassess the role of L1 and the L1 teacher's contributions in the second or foreign language classroom.

About the reviewer

Karen Ngeow is a Senior Lecturer at the Centre for Applied English Studies at The University of Hong Kong. Her main areas of interests are writing pedagogy, learner cognition, teacher reflection and pragmatics in language education.