

Book reviews

EARLY LANGUAGE LEARNING AND TEACHER EDUCATION. INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH AND PRACTICE.

Zein, S. and Garton, S.

Bristol and Blue Ridge Summit, Multilingual Matters, 2019

Jonnell Uptin

*The University of Sydney, Faculty of Arts and Social Science,
School of Education*

The major theme explored within this book is research into primary language teaching. The book presents individual research papers on the subject giving a rich and broad perspective across diverse geographical contexts. Using multiple methodological approaches, the teaching and learning of an additional language is explored to enhance a deeper understanding that will equip teachers and teacher education in the future as well as inform the implementation of teacher education policies. Previous research is scarce and this book is a very welcome contribution to the field.

Published in 2019 the editors are Doctor Subhan Zein of the University of Queensland in Australia and Professor Sue Garton of Aston University in the UK. The book is divided into four sections; Part 1 The Complexity of Teacher Learning; Part two, Innovations in Mentoring and Supervision; Part Three, Strategies in Program Development and Part Four; Perceptions, Knowledge and Assessment. The contributors include highly reputable academics in the field of language teaching and teacher education as well as studies conducted for honours and PhD thesis giving a diversity of experience. There is a rich global aspect to this book as studies from around the world, both from the Global North and South, investigate language teaching. Another welcoming element is that various aspects of teacher education in different languages are explored, moving away from an English centric focus.

This book ushers in a new era of research examining the importance of language teacher education for young learners (whatever that language may be). Crucially, it interrogates what is

already known in general language teaching and then brings in the specific complexities that exist in teaching primary aged students. This is the stand out point of this book because in many other fields of learning there is an acknowledgement that young children learn differently, however, as second language acquisition has largely concentrated on adult learners the need to prioritise teaching and teaching preparation for young learners is essential. The book begins by addressing this need acknowledging the rapid global changes in the uptake of additional languages. Governments around the world recognise the cultural and financial capital to be gained in having multilingual citizens. The introduction of early language learning in schools is now a world-wide phenomenon. However, the shortage and the limitations of adequately trained teachers has become problematic in many countries. The research within these pages aim to bring professional enhancement to the field.

Each of the research papers examine the impacts of various theories upon the practice of teacher education and teaching young learners and there is an emphasis on the implications for practitioners. The cumulative effect of the book means that there is strong evidence for these theoretical approaches to be taught in teacher education in the future. Thus, the gap between theory and practice is being addressed here. One such example can be seen in the studies that saw that there is a strong connection between bilingualism and foreign language learning. The implications here is that pre service teachers can be encouraged to make decisions and plan classroom practices that move away from deficit notions toward strengthening and supporting the bilingual learner in their language learning.

In capturing the issues surrounding early language learning the book highlights one universal problem, that is individual countries around the world have implemented policies for the implementation of learning an additional language in primary schools. While this is a welcome addition to curriculums it has been a top-down approach without fully understanding the demands that education systems face in implementing such policies and without equipping them with resources such as training specialist language teachers. The research here offers constructive and thoughtful initiatives on the many complexities surrounding this issue including implementing effective practices in teacher training. There are significant issues raised by each researcher and these vary from teacher efficacy, the loneliness of

being the only language teacher in a school, training teachers to effectively implement communicative language teaching and learning how to collaborate. This means that the reader can use this as an effective resource to assist at certain times in their professional life.

This book gives a new optimism for the field as the research gathered presents relevant insights and fresh perspectives into language teaching methodologies. There is a strong and much needed theoretical contribution that is evident in each of the studies. It advocates for better resourced and professionally equipped teacher education programs that put the learning of languages for young people as a priority.