



BOOK REVIEW

Reynolds, K. M., Mendoza Chirinos, G. M., Suarez, D., Effiong, O., & Kormpas, G. (Eds.). (2024). *Decentering advocacy in English language teaching: Global perspectives and local practices*. University of Michigan Press.

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In recent decades, along with the emerging inquiry into the social and political dimensions of language education (e.g., Crookes, 2022), advocacy in English language teaching (ELT) – efforts on behalf of English language learners to promote social justice language education (Linville & Whiting, 2019) – has received growing attention. While there is growing global interest in ELT advocacy, the majority of published studies are situated within the Global North (e.g., United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia); advocacy research in postcolonial and/or underrepresented regions remains limited (Guerrero Nieto, 2020). *Decentering advocacy in English language teaching: Global perspectives and local practices* contributes to this body of work through the narratives of advocacy efforts within 11 diverse geopolitical and educational contexts in Africa (Nigeria, Cameroon), Central America (Belize, El Salvador), Asia (Vietnam, Laos), Middle East (Türkiye, Israeli and Palestinian Territories), and South America (Paraguay, Uruguay), each documented and reflected upon by the advocates themselves. It serves as a valuable resource for educational professionals working within the space of ELT advocacy, or students and researchers learning about current ELT advocacy efforts in the global context.

The book begins with an introduction that outlines its purpose and previews each chapter. The core content comprises 11 chapters showcasing individual advocacy projects within a unique context. The concluding chapter synthesizes key patterns of advocacy emerging across the volume. Rather than summarising each chapter individually, this review discusses the chapters thematically across three broad areas: student-focused (Chapters 1, 3, 4, 5, and 7), educator-

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focused (Chapters 2, 6, 8, 10, and 11), and social issues-focused (Chapter 9). This structure reflects the varied loci of advocacy addressed in the volume and allows for a more meaningful synthesis of the book's contributions.

Advocacy efforts centred on students in this volume align with what has been described in the literature as learner- or learning-oriented advocacy (e.g., Dubetz & de Jong, 2011) and materials-oriented advocacy (e.g., Harrison & McIlwain, 2020), wherein educators advocate learners' rights to equitable and contextually relevant language instruction and tangible learning resources. Chapter 1 details efforts to integrate computer-assisted language learning in a rural Nigerian school with limited infrastructure to improve students' listening comprehension, while Chapter 4 describes an online high school initiative for incarcerated youth in Belize. Notably, many ELT advocacy efforts, such as those in Chapters 3, 5, and 7, organically expanded from the delivery of English language instruction to include life skills, computer literacy, and entrepreneurial and leadership training, positioning English not only as a communicative tool but as a gateway to socio-economic mobility. The value of these chapters lies in their practical examples of how ELT can be adapted to meet broader needs within the community. In doing so, they exemplify how advocacy can be decentred – grounded not in Western models but in locally responsive initiatives which challenge inequities within specific socioeconomical contexts.

Chapters 2, 6, 8, 10, and 11 focus on advocating for the professional development, agency, and empowerment of English language teachers. A range of cultural, societal, and political challenges are addressed, including gender challenges faced by female teachers in Cameroon (Chapter 2), systemic and cultural barriers preventing English language teachers from advocating for their students in Vietnam (Chapter 6), a lack of interactive, communicative language teaching for young learners along with a lack of authentic practicum environment for student teachers in Türkiye (Chapter 8), challenges to fostering an environment for teachers' professional development amid the COVID-19 pandemic in Paraguay (Chapter 10), and raising educators' awareness of issues of inequality within a newly mandated curriculum in Uruguay (Chapter 11). Although the narratives within the aforementioned chapters focus primarily on supporting English language teachers in the professional contexts, it is evident that many of these efforts also positively impacted on students' learning. These chapters offer important insights for ELT researchers and practitioners, highlighting how ELT advocacy is decentred through challenging Western-centric, top-down models of reform with teacher-led, grounded, and locally driven strategies.

Finally, Chapter 9 documents engagement with the sociopolitical dimensions of ELT. This chapter explores EFL classrooms as spaces influenced by history and sociopolitical realities within the broader context of the "intractable conflict" in the Israeli and Palestinian Territories. The chapter puts forward three guidelines for ELT practices (Reynolds et al., 2024, p. 14): (1) emphasizing appropriateness alongside correctness; (2) deconstructing binary thinking; and (3) acknowledging societal inequities while maintaining high academic standards and promoting the use of learners' multilingual repertoires. This chapter exemplifies decentring by

decolonising ELT through negotiating and respecting the multiple social and linguistic identities of the learners and their communities.

Throughout the volume, the educator-advocates' narratives reveal a deep sense of selflessness, commitment, courage, and a high degree of reflexivity. Most of these projects were self-initiated, self-funded, and facilitated with the support from volunteers within local communities. For instance, in Chapter 4, the educator-advocate, with an accountant and a lawyer from her professional networks, covered the initial costs of establishing an online educational program and volunteered their expertise in registering a company. Despite being explicitly told that no government funding would be available, the team remained undiscouraged and continued to move ahead with their plans. Beyond constraints in finance and resources, which were a common thread across many chapters, the educators also faced cultural and institutional barriers. Within specific cultural contexts in which social hierarchy is highly valued, advocating for their own students through challenging higher authorities might lead to educators being professionally marginalised (e.g., Chapter 6). Yet, these educators not only persisted but demonstrated critical self-awareness in reflecting on the unintended consequences of their advocacy. For example, in Chapter 3, the author acknowledged how well-intentioned decisions, such as establishing a dress code to teaching students to dress and groom properly, and creating an online mobile messaging group, inadvertently alienated some students despite her strong awareness of their socioeconomic conditions. These reflections highlight the complexity of grassroots ELT advocacy and the continuous negotiation between intention, impact, and equity.

In my view, in addition to the advocacy efforts documented in this volume, a few areas are worth exploring to further advance the field and support ELT practitioners. One possible extension of this volume would be empirical studies documenting and measuring the impact of advocacy initiatives. Studies demonstrating the impact of existing advocacy efforts could serve to strengthen applications for much-needed funding and resources to sustain and further develop grassroots projects. A second area for future exploration may be context-sensitive revisions to the definitions or frameworks of advocacy. Such theoretical developments could further contribute to decentring dominant paradigms surrounding ELT advocacy practices. Finally, as several chapters imply, engagement with policymakers is essential to initiating or sustaining advocacy work. Given that navigating policy discourse is not typically part of educators' or researchers' training or professional experience, it would be of great practical value for future work to systematically document the strategies, obstacles, and successful approaches to policy engagement.

To conclude, this volume represents a valuable step toward shifting the focus of ELT advocacy literature beyond predominantly Western perspectives and showcasing educator-advocates' voices in underrepresented contexts. It portrays advocacy as a situated, everyday practice shaped by educators' resilience, ingenuity, and critical reflection within their specific contexts. It also presents debates about several challenges and implications across different social and geographical settings and invites future research on the (re)conceptualisation and impact of ELT advocacy practices. This volume will be of particular interest to English language

education professionals who are interested in, or committed to, the intersection of ELT and advocacy. Teacher educators and program designers may also find the chapters valuable as reflective tools or case studies that illustrate how advocacy can be integrated into pre-service and in-service teacher education and training. Furthermore, the volume will appeal to applied linguists, education researchers, and policymakers interested in critical and contextually embedded approaches to English language education.

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