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## **Book reviews**

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### **ADVOCACY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING**

*Heather A. Linville & James Whiting (Eds.)*

New York, NY: Routledge, 2019

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Advocacy comes from the Latin *advocatus*, meaning “one called to aid”, in other words, speaking or acting on behalf of another. Staehr Fenner (2014), an author quoted and referenced throughout Linville and Whiting’s book, *Advocacy in English language teaching and learning*, defines advocacy as taking appropriate actions on English learners’ (EL) behalf, providing them and their families with a voice, and using and having a deep understanding about the EL’s background in order to know which action to take.

The volume published in 2019 is edited by Dr. Linville, Associate Professor and Director of TESOL at the University of Wisconsin, La Crosse and James Whiting, Professor of Applied Linguistics and Coordinator of the graduate TESOL program at Plymouth State. The book also includes contributions of other lecturers, teachers, MA and PhD students with broad experience in leadership, teacher education, and social justice showing good diversity among the authors. The 15 articles discuss advocacy in TESOL in the USA, and often mention P-12 education (primary to senior high school) and local US legislation. Yet, this does not present a problem, as many of the issues are universal for the field of TESOL and easy to relate to depending on one’s teaching context.

The book is divided into four parts. Part one is an overview of advocacy, followed by Part two concentrating on preparing teacher advocates. Next is Part three covering advocacy in action, and finally, the focus of Part four is advocating within a specific EL population. What is surprising and refreshing about this book is the reflection questions at the end of every chapter. They invite the reader to dig deeper into their own praxis to understand and, hopefully, become an advocate.

After the excellent foreword by Ester de Jong, TESOL past president, the book starts with an overview of advocacy in section one. This is the shortest section of the book with only two chapters. However, what it lacks in the number of chapters, it certainly does not lack in content or depth. Heather A. Linville, one of the editors of the book, presents a study in which she looks at the skills in-service ESOL teachers use to advocate and in what ways those skills were developed. The second and last chapter of the section is written by Harrison and Prado who investigate the role of advocacy in ESOL. The authors outline teachers' actions and perceptions of advocacy and also problematize two types of activism. The end of the chapter proposes a new term: transitive advocacy which refers to "the transference of advocacy actions from person to person, offering a richer framework for understanding the nature of ESOL teachers' advocacy."

Part two has four chapters and explores teacher education programs at graduate level explicitly showing that there is space in the curriculum for advocacy. In fact, in Chapter 3, Whiting provides a series of examples from the graduate TESOL course he teaches in which advocacy plays a central role. The advocacy-focused activities include role-playing, preparing and presenting a workshop, creating an advocacy plan, developing a community asset map, and completing an assignment on landmark legal cases related to the field of TESOL. Whiting's aim is certainly achieved as other TESOL professionals can easily replicate the suggestions in addition to adapting and creating new ones.

Part three with six chapters is the longest one of the book showing successful stories/reports of how advocacy can be integrated in real life situations in different contexts. Including families, adult and afterschool education.

The last part of the book comes with three chapters and discusses advocacy for specific populations including long-term English learners, African and indigenous Hispanic.

The book clearly presents three recurrent themes: the fight to extinguish the deficit model perspective, the understanding of ELs as emergent bilinguals, and the prevention of the marginalization of ELs and their families. Perhaps that is the reason why the very thought-provoking work of Freire (1970, 2001) can be found throughout the chapters which undoubtedly show the authors and editors' commitment to social justice and their political tone. The book is an important and much needed effort. It is also highly

recommended to every person working in the ELT sector as there is something meaningful for all professionals acting in the most diverse scenarios. In addition to that, the language is very accessible without being shallow in content. Finally, the stories told are usually uplifting and after reading each chapter, the reader might feel the delightful winds of change and the reassuring feeling of not being advocating alone.

As important as advocacy for ELs is, there was very little about teachers and administrators advocating on behalf of teachers. In fact, it was only in Chapter 10 that Rob Sheppard explicitly addressed the reasons why teachers should advocate. Apart from others, he mentions that teachers should advocate for their own self-interest as a way of securing their own jobs. Even though Sheppard describes a US context, in Australia many EAL professionals have been suffering with the lack of job security and poor working conditions, particularly with the rise of casualization in recent years. To the reader, if you find advocating for ELs isn't very appealing, perhaps consider doing it for your own wellbeing. It can be difficult for teachers to advocate when they themselves are in need of advocacy.

In a time when walls are being built, refugees are being kept in islands, extremism and intolerance are on the rise and everything seems to be upside down or going backwards, advocacy might be the way out to make sure that social justice is at place, and language learners are treated the way they deserve to be. As the authors of each of the chapters in this book suggest, language learners need to be given a voice if we are to change the predominant ideologies of educational deficit about multilingualism in society. Their voices need to be heard, understood and valued. As teachers, we need to be adequately prepared to help them, and also fulfil our social role. As Martin Luther King beautifully puts it, "it always seems impossible until it's done." So shall we do it?

## References

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