

**'Teacher Collaboration and Talk in Multilingual Classrooms' by Angela Creese**

Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2005, ISBN 1-85359-821-6 (pbk)

This is an excellent book – scholarly, timely, grounded in real classroom experience and a pleasure to read, although not always a comfortable read.

The book explores issues arising from the collaboration of EAL and mainstream teachers in three multilingual London secondary schools. It begins with the following exchange between a geography teacher and two 15 year old students who want to know why she is being recorded:

*T: Because she [referring to Creese] wants to record what I am saying and what Miss Smith (EAL teacher) is saying and then she can play it back and she can see if there is a difference between the two of us.*

*S1: There is.*

*S2: Yeah, I think there should be a difference.*

*T: Why?*

*S1: Miss, you're the better teacher aren't you?*

*S2: Like if I don't understand and Miss Smith explains to me and I still don't understand and I call you over and you tell me a different thing.*

*T: So we see it from two different ways you mean?*

*S1: But you're the proper teacher aren't you?*

*T: Well no. We are both proper teachers.*

*S1: She's like a help.*

*T: No, that's not true.*

This is the starting point for an examination of issues such as:

- How are 'real' teachers constructed
- What makes a teacher a 'help'
- How and why are the teachers' expertises positioned differently
- What are the implications of this positioning on the way that language diversity issues are viewed within the mainstream subject-focussed classroom?

The book is divided into 11 chapters. Chapter 1 covers the theoretical and methodological framework for the research and in doing so provides a very helpful introduction to an ethnographic approach to studying language/discourse in its social context, quoting Hornberger and Skilton-Sylvester, who wrote:

*In looking at the ways in which power is constructed through language and in interaction, actors can begin to see themselves as agents who have the power to transform practices and not merely as recipients of already decided upon norms.*

Chapter 2 explores ideological basis for policies and practices we generally describe as 'partnership teaching' and 'mainstreaming'. There is a poignant reminder of Josie Levine's vision/challenge for the mainstreaming endeavour from 1990:

*[it requires] a move away from bilingual pupils being seen chiefly as the responsibility for specialist language teachers, to the view of all teachers having responsibility for them ... Further, from the point of view of bilingual learners 'taking their rightful places in "normal" classes', mainstreaming fits the principles of an entitlement curriculum, along with mixed ability grouping and interactive teaching practices.*

Hmm. As Creese points out:

*... mainstream curriculum and educational practices are selectively inclusive and ambiguously exclusive at the same time. They are inclusive in the sense that all students are welcome in the classroom. However, they are exclusive in the sense that government fails to support [sic] EAL as a legitimate crosscurriculum discipline (see also NALDIC 1999) or to endorse the use of community languages for extended curriculum learning.*

Chapter 3 examines the contradictions faced by teachers who are trying to implement inclusion in a competitive educational climate driven by standards and measurable outcomes and how hierarchies establish themselves around EAL and subject teaching.

Chapters 4 and 5 provide fascinating insights into the ways that EAL and subject teachers use different kinds of classroom discourse, associated on the one hand with different pedagogic styles (facilitation and transmission respectively) and on the other with wider discourses on education and diversity.

Chapters 6 and 7 look at the different models of collaboration between EAL and subject teachers (withdrawal, support, partnership) and how these impact on both teachers' and students' views of diversity in the school. Creese supports partnership teaching, arguing that it: *allows EAL teachers to become more fully engaged with the curriculum agenda while honing their skills as scaffolders of learning.*

Chapter 8 considers the potential mainstream classrooms provide for focussing on language, form and meaning and how EAL and subject teachers deploy their varied resources to develop both language and cognitive attainment.

Chapters 9 and 10 provide a much needed discussion of the use and usefulness of community languages by bilingual teachers. Chapter 10 describes a very challenging event in one of the schools when a group of Turkish-speaking Kurdish background students accused the school of racism. The head teacher made strategic use of different languages to refute the accusations and this is explored as is the role of Turkish-speaking bilingual EAL teachers who mediated the school's message. As Creese points out: *A minority language usually restricted to certain domains and uses, Turkish expanded its scope considerably during the two-day event.*

Chapter 11 not only provides a summary of the previous ten but also teases out the implications, arguing the need for:

- Initial teacher training on the role language plays in teaching and learning processes
- Education policy to endorse the work done by EAL teachers and recognise it as a specialized discipline within the teaching profession
- To debate the underuse of bilingual teachers and community languages for curriculum teaching/learning in secondary schools
- A clear indication of what a language focus might mean in the subject-based classroom and a rationale for explaining how students' English language will be developed there
- To introduce and develop specific bilingual pedagogies to address the common and individual needs of bilingual students.

As will be clear from the chapter summaries, the book is both wide-ranging in its scholarship and tightly focussed on the real experiences of teachers and students working in multilingual settings. It deserves to be read by everyone with a direct stake or interest in the topic.

**Frank Monaghan**