

Fashioning an intercultural voice

Ben Goldstein, IATEFL 2009.

A Desire for English

“English is ‘flexible, elastic, resilient, capable of talking on whatever tones, rhythms and colours I choose”

Anita Desai (cf. Kirkpatrick, p. 179)

“Surrounded by the multiple discourses of English as a desirable and powerful language, people’s craving for English may be linked to a yearning for particular lifestyles, bodies, images, discourses and identities”.

Alastair Pennycook (p. 86)

“(Memoirs and language autobiographies) ...make clear, for instance, that the acquisition of a new language raises questions of subjectivity and desire: the problems confronted by the learner are not just technical or mechanical but involve complex issues of identity: who am when I speak this language? Or alternatively “can I be me when I speak it?”

Deborah Cameron (cf. Nunan & Benson, p.13)

The teacher’s role

“Teachers should... be able to evaluate ELT materials critically to ensure that these do not, either explicitly or implicitly, promote a particular variety of English or culture at the expense of others”.

Andy Kirkpatrick (p.195)

“It is only by understanding the histories and lived experiences of language learners that the language teacher can create conditions that will facilitate social interaction both in the classroom and in the wider community, and help learners claim the right to speak.”

Bonny Norton (p. 142)

Different voices, different stories

“Every learner has a distinct story to tell, and teaching culture is about constructing and hearing these stories”.

Patrick Moran (p.3)

“Learners seek out a personal space where two worlds exist simultaneously, ... (here) they will make their own meanings and relevances, often challenging the established educational canons of both native and target cultures”.

Claire Kramersch, p.238

“It’s not that we all want to speak the King’s English, but whether we speak Appalachian or Harlem English, or Cockney, or Jamaican Creole, we want to be at home in our tongue. We want to be able to give voice accurately and fully to ourselves and our sense of the world”.

Eva Hoffman (p.124)

“Why have I confined myself to teach in this second language, this language which will never be as easy as the first one? Why have I chosen to live in not-quite-my-own-language, in exile from myself, for so many years?... Then something will happen, in the classroom, and I’ll see this French language as essential in its *imperfection*: the fact that we don’t have as many words is forcing us to say more. The simplicity of our communication moves us, we’re outside of cliché, free of easy eloquence, some deeper ideas and feelings make it through the mistakes and shine all the more through them.”

Alice Kaplan (p.210)

“If the world is imposing English on our students, we can enable them, through English, to impose their voices on the world”.

M. Warschauer (p.511)

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