

Book Review

Current Issues in ELT, by Ruchi Kaushik and A. L. Khanna.
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Critical Issues in ELT is a collection of twenty-four well-researched papers written by various linguists, language teachers, and ELT professionals from both India and abroad. The book is divided into seven thematically organised sections: 1) Multilingualism, 2) Critical Pedagogy, 3) Continuing Professional Development, 4) Materials development, 5) Assessment and Evaluation, 6) Technology-aided teaching and Learning, and 7) Inclusive Education.

These themes present sets of empirical data, classroom-based action research projects and personal narratives exploring theories, frameworks and issues in English Language Teaching (ELT). It addresses contemporary debates on critical issues (e.g., the elite status English holds, teachers' professional development, etc.) of ELT in India and provides thorough and important information on current issues in ELT through an extensive study. The book is of great relevance for English language teachers, students, researchers and all ELT practitioners in India. It aims to broaden their perspectives and raise awareness about the critical needs that must be recognized in the current landscape of English education in the country.

The first section, 'Multilingualism' starts with a research paper on translanguaging Hindi-English by Bhatia where his main argument is "bilingual language mixing - code-mixing (CM) and code-switching (CS) and/or translanguaging in a classroom setting is one of the inevitable consequences of sustainable bilingualism..." (p. 35). The chapter highlighted the need to enrich the linguistically and culturally diverse Indian classroom by freeing Hinglish with its wide-ranging linguistic innovation from the clutches of the linguistic deficiency hypothesis (Ponte & Higgins, 2015; Pontier, 2022). The second paper in this section by Deepa and Durairajan challenges the four-tiered myth about the superiority of the English language, arguing that English is not superior to Indian languages. They believed that multilingual theories of ELT can contribute to dethroning English from its godly status to an ordinary language. The third paper by Schwab presents the Passepartout Methodology concept based on the multilingual approach to models and theories of Third Language Acquisition (TLA) adopted in Switzerland. This concept proposes the development of new teaching methods through Third Language

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Acquisition theories and research promoting multilingual approach in English language teaching.

The second section of the book ‘Critical Pedagogy’ begins with a research paper on Critical Pedagogy and English Language Teaching in India by Mishra where she advocates Critical pedagogy (CP) for developing critical literacy by mediating English language learning through the mother tongue (MT) and providing learning materials accessible to learners in terms of concepts, ideas and experiences. Similarly, in the next paper, Narayanan proposes a Discourse Oriented Pedagogy (DOP) as a critical literacy tool that “problematizes all skills-based methods of language teaching and works out a process that targets the human mind itself and not the product of the mind” (p. 91). Furthermore, a paper by Karla claims that critical literacy goes beyond individual cognitive skills, examining literacy as a social practice. Lastly, in the concluding paper, Vishwanathan asserts that classrooms can be made more interesting by using a syllabus that promotes CP using texts that emphasise local themes and experiences familiar to the learners and promoting a multilingual approach to second language learning.

The first paper in the third section, ‘Continuing Professional Development’, by Bolitho introduces the concept of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) as a multidimensional ‘process’ where development happens, leading to changes that affect the professional life of teachers in different ways. The second paper by Shankar presents the findings from her 60-hour master’s programme course, which suggest that learner feedback provides useful insights into the learners’ thoughts, providing better teaching and assessment measures for teachers. The third article by Palani provides a data-driven reflection for self-directed CPD, another Integral CPD tool, which she demonstrated was useful through her findings on self-reflection of her own classroom teachings via self-video recording. The fourth article by Pande discusses the impact of peer mentoring enabling CPD, claiming that peer “mentoring maximises peer support” (p.183) and that “CPD is most effective when initiated by a teacher as motivation plays an important and seminal role” (p. 184).

The fourth section of the book ‘Materials development’ starts with a paper by Bolitho, who highlights the importance of locally authored textbooks, stating that an author’s familiarity with the context of the textbook, the local culture addressed and the L1 interference can be covered through locally authored textbooks. Srinivas also advocates this in the following paper where she argues that creating customised English for Specific Purposes materials, though time-consuming, can be rewarding for teachers and practitioners as they have a sense of ownership of materials and greater motivation to implement them in their courses. Similarly, in the closing paper for this section, Gayathri and Vijaya present their study on the use of authentic materials and translanguaging with ten EFL learners and conclude that the use of authentic material and translanguaging “can promote language learning in a manner that is engaging and relevant to the real-time needs of the learners” (p. 220) and advocated drawing links

between language and identity, experiences and learnings from outside world and the experiences within (Creese & Blackledge, 2010).

The fifth section of the book ‘Assessment and Evaluation’ opens with Tharu’s paper on Formative Assessment (FA), which stresses the need for a holistic understanding of FA, ongoing professional development and training programs for teachers to tackle the challenges to practically implement it. In the second paper, Parthasarathi presents the findings from a study on the effectiveness of peer feedback in L2 writing, reporting an improvement in different aspects of the student’s writing as they receive written and oral feedback in different writing tasks. In the third paper, Mukhopadhyay asserts that writing is a cognitive-linguistic process where teacher feedback can enhance the student’s writing. It highlights what to give feedback on and how to plan with an adapted feedback framework for others to self-regulate through process-oriented feedback and trace student growth systematically. The last paper by Chakrakodi, examines how monitoring teachers’ writing growth through portfolio assessment can significantly support their development. The study found that teachers were able to enhance their writing skills and track their progress by utilizing their individual portfolios.

The sixth section of the book is ‘Technology-Aided Teaching and Learning.’ The first paper in this section, written by Eldo and Kumar, provides a comprehensive analysis of the role of ICTs in reforming English language classrooms that emphasise using technology as a means to language development and not as an end in itself. The second paper, written by Jose, draws our focus on enhancing language learning tasks using Web 2.0 tools with sample tasks that enable collaboration and personalization in ESL classrooms. In the third paper, Thomas and Jayendran discuss how Design-Based Research (DBR) can enhance technology-enabled language learning. They argue that DBR helps marginalized individuals gain a better understanding of their learning context, fostering collaborative learning. Additionally, they emphasize the importance of using information and communication technology (ICT) and multimedia as tools to support education, rather than viewing them as an end in themselves. The last paper is an exploratory study by Philipose and Rajagopal that reports the resourceful use of Google Classroom as a tool for preparing and sharing learning materials, additional resources for learning English, classroom management and storing a digital record of class work.

The last section of the book is ‘Inclusive Education’. The first paper in this section by Kpur addresses inclusive education as a philosophy based on social justice and equitable learning for all. The last paper of the book is a narrative account of the author Vaidya’s experiences as a mother of an Autistic child. Vaidya speaks out about the need for a truly ‘inclusive’ classroom with teaching-learning activities that will benefit not just the disabled but all the children. The need for proper teacher training and sensitization programmes is also clearly entailed in this narrative.

The issues presented in this book, along with the research findings and practical suggestions, are all interconnected. Among the different issues discussed, we can see that the issue of language and power in Indian classrooms and the language learning environment is addressed in many of the thematic sections of the book. A key element emphasized throughout all the chapters of this book is the importance of a well-structured teacher training program. Such a program should be tailored to meet the specific needs of teachers, enabling them to effectively implement various language teaching practices that address challenges in English Language Teaching (ELT). Ultimately, this will lead to more capable, efficient, and knowledgeable educators in language classrooms. However, the different issues of ELT addressed in this book are mostly based on the Indian context. This may limit the applicability of the approaches and practices suggested in the book to a limited population. Also, as a collection of different research papers by different authors, the book weaves together a variety of styles in writing and presentation with differences in density and tone which may alter the engagement and reading experience of some readers. In conclusion, this well-ordered, insightful anthology of critical issues in ELT is a valuable resource for students, teachers, researchers of India and all people in the vast field of English Language Teaching.

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Nathan C. Lalremruatpuia is a fifth-year Ph.D. student of English Language Education department at the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad. His research focuses on the reading comprehension development of young Indian ESL learners and explores the influence of intervention through peer interaction in the development of their reading comprehension. His area of research interests includes second language reading pedagogy and assessment, affective variables and task variables that impact second language reading.

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