


Higher Education Internationalization and English Language Instruction. Xiangying Huo. Springer, 2020

Qinghua Chen 

Volume 33, 2023

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1108290ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31468/dwr.1033>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Canadian Association for the Study of Discourse and Writing

ISSN

2563-7320 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Chen, Q. (2023). Review of [Higher Education Internationalization and English Language Instruction. Xiangying Huo. Springer, 2020]. *Discourse and Writing/Rédactologie*, 33, 139–144. <https://doi.org/10.31468/dwr.1033>

Article abstract

The book "Higher Education Internationalization and English Language Instruction" is an autoethnographic work that examines the intersectionality of race and language in the Canadian higher education system. Through personal stories and narratives, the author explores themes such as native-speakerism, writing centre tutoring, multicultural education, and social justice. The book makes two significant contributions: first, it amplifies the voice of racialized individuals through the application of Critical Race Theory to personal experiences and diaries, serving as a springboard for thought and an invitation to dialogues on transformation. Second, it demonstrates the potential of personal narratives to reveal ideas that are often overlooked in positivist approaches, providing insight into methodological approaches that graduate students and young researchers can adopt. The book concludes with practical implications for addressing discriminatory systems and practises in universities to promote diversity and inclusiveness. The book follows a standard format for scholarly works and provides a useful background on the internationalisation of higher education and the significance of English as a medium for multiculturalism in Canada.

© Qinghua Chen, 2023



This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

érudit

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>

Book Review

Huo, X. (2020). *Higher Education Internationalization and English Language Instruction*. Springer.

Review by Qinghua Chen
Simon Fraser University

Preamble

After reading this book, I felt compelled to write a preamble to contextualise and situate myself and the review I've written within the larger context of reading, reviewing, and discussing critical scholarship, which incorporates both the scholarly and personal voice of the researched. As an autoethnography, the author has exposed her personal life, experience, and even her vulnerability to readers, reviewers, and editors in order to contribute to our understanding of such a crucial topic as the intersectionality of race and language. Before engaging in debate, all the diverse feelings, whether powerful or subtle, dismal or delicious, successful or frustrating, should be honoured with compassion. Otherwise, any attempts to explain or theorise about the author's bodily experiences, which are so authentic, become superfluous. As Kubota (2020) notes, it is crucial to avoid the mistake of reducing critical scholarship to precise theoretical analysis devoid of what matters to individuals who have exposed their inner life for the benefit of society. It is simple for post-structural researchers to argue and criticise that our emotions, identities, and subjectivities are socially produced and manufactured. Regardless matter how true this may be, it does not significantly alter how we perceive our emotions.

As an emerging scholar who has just begun a postdoctoral position and as a person who grew up and had his education in China, I share many of Dr. Huo's experiences and can thus relate to many of her sentiments (which is an important component of the book). Nonetheless, my positionality (i.e., being a male) will obviously hinder my capacity to comprehend Dr. Huo's experience. Consequently, my critique in this book review should also be read in light of this positionality.

Contributions of the Book

This book addresses a variety of interrelated topics, including native-speakerism, writing centre tutoring, students' perceptions of racialized instructors in higher education, multicultural education, and social justice, which intersect exquisitely in the autoethnographic writing of Dr. Huo's years of experience navigating the Canadian university context. The first contribution of the book is to highlight the voice of the racialized through the application of Critical Race Theory to the interpretation of personal experiences and the teaching of diaries. The reflection on the trajectory of becoming a legitimate writer with guidance from "a skilled substitute" revealed the narrative of how much work is required for a racially marginalised person to attain the position of legitimacy that her native-speaking peers are "born" with. These experiences and narratives are extremely significant and potentially transformative for readers with varying positionalities in the system, and they serve as a springboard for thought and an invitation to dialogues on transformation. These stories should also draw other racialized teachers and instructors in the Canadian higher education system, as many of us, including myself, may find effective counter-discourse to resist discriminatory behaviours and microaggressions in our own contexts. Reading, discussing, and commenting on these narratives can encourage the formation of important relationships between racialized teachers and instructors.

The second key contribution of the book is its methodological contribution, which demonstrates how a person's personal narrative can illuminate ideas that are typically overlooked or even disregarded in positivist approaches. For instance, the author's continued interactions and subsequent debriefing of previous interactions with the participant "Gang" have added significant richness and validity to the study, as the author's own voice legitimises the analysis of the participant's social and economic status and identity, demonstrating how colonial ideologies blended with other social and political factors to shape the participant's subjectivity. If simply interviews or surveys had been utilised, the analysis would not have been as in-depth. This study's methodological approach can inform many graduate students and young researchers, such as myself, and help us consider conducting our own research on comparable or related themes. The author has showed how seemingly disparate facts spanning a rather lengthy time period are woven together to represent the instructor's identity evolvment.

Chapter 8's instructive and applicable implication is another major contribution. The significance of universities in promoting diversity and inclusiveness cannot be overstated. However, discriminatory systems and practises continue to exist inside academic institutions, severely

influencing student experiences and limiting educational progress. Therefore, both teachers and students must be aware of cultural differences and address their own biases and preconceptions. In addition, rather than just catering to their desires, the curriculum must be created and altered to meet the needs and interests of diverse pupils. If these reforms are adopted, universities will be able to build a learning environment that emphasises fairness and respect for all individuals. These practical implications can draw university administrators, policymakers, the media, and advocates as well as members of the media and the advocacy community.

Orientations of the chapters

The book follows a standard format for scholarly works, making it easy to navigate. The introductory chapter examines the function of English in higher education in the context of globalisation and colonialism, highlighting the relevance of language and its power dynamics, particularly in the setting of colonialism. Next, the function of English as a power language and its commercialization in globalisation are examined. As a crucial backdrop for the study, the introduction delves further into the internationalisation of higher education, focusing on international students, internationalisation of the curriculum, and international instructors. This background knowledge is useful for examining the significance of English as a medium for multiculturalism in Canada.

Chapter 2 will be useful for readers who are interested in Bourdieu and his theory of cultural capital. The author provided an easy-to-understand commentary on Bourdieu's work and how it is applied in the current study. The discussion then moves on to Critical Race Theory, which is an established theory seeking to comprehend the role of race and racism in society, particularly through legal and institutional institutions. It contends that racism is a systemic issue that is firmly ingrained in society's laws, policies, and institutions.

Chapter 3 of the book is titled "The Spread of English as a "World" Language." Beginning with an introduction of global Englishes and reactions to English as a worldwide language, the chapter continues with a discussion of responses to English as a global language. The chapter then explores sociolinguistic disputes on native speakerism, including the concept of "native speaker," the distinction between native and non-native speakers, linguistic norms, and native status. This chapter examines native-speakerism as hegemony in further detail, including native speaker myths, linguistic imperialism, the native speaker fallacy, and standardisation as an ideology.

Chapter 4 of the book reviews studies on English as an international language instructor. The chapter covers the benefits and efficacy of non-native language instructors as well as students'

perspectives of non-native English-speaking teachers. In addition, it addresses the hurdles experienced by non-native English-speaking instructors, such as linguistic, social, and recruiting obstacles. The chapter finishes with a summary of the principal topics covered.

Chapter 5 of the book discusses the research methodology. This chapter addresses the research topics, the research site, and the participants, as well as their demographic backgrounds and the sampling strategy employed. The chapter describes the use of a qualitative research methodology and autoethnography for the study. The chapter presents an overview of autoethnography and the data collection techniques employed, such as reflective journal entries, autobiographical interviews, and field notes. In addition, the chapter explains the applied data analysis methodologies and the researcher's stance. The chapter finishes with a summary of the chapter's key ideas.

Chapter 6 of the book presents the findings of the study on students' perceptions of the role of English and the characteristics of English language instructors. The chapter begins with an overview of the students' socio-historical locations, including their family background, sociocultural locations, and sociopolitical identities and positions in Canadian society. The chapter then discusses the students' views on the role of English and their perceptions of native and non-native English-speaking instructors. The chapter highlights the students' evolving perceptions over time.

Chapter 7 presents the study findings of a non-native English language instructor's experiences at a higher education institution's writing center. The chapter is divided into three sites: the writing center, the new online booking system, and the drop-in service in the library. Each site highlights various challenges faced by the instructor, including linguistic issues, sociocultural issues, and racialized stereotypes. The chapter also includes the instructor's reflections on their evolving status as a writing instructor, from being on the periphery to becoming a legitimate English instructor at the center.

Chapter 8 and the last chapter of the book provide a summary of the study's findings, implications, limitations, and concluding remarks. The author provides a summary of the study's primary findings, which include students' perspectives of the function of English and English language teachers' qualities, as well as a non-native English language instructor's experiences at a college writing centre. The author also discusses the theoretical and practical implications of the study, as well as its limitations. The author finishes the book by highlighting the significance of acknowledging the experiences and viewpoints of non-native English language educators and the necessity for more study in this field.

A Critical Dialogue

As discussed in the preamble, the lived experiences and the author's courage in writing about such an important topic should be valued and acknowledged regardless of the theoretical lenses utilised and the findings they yield. Concerning the study is the relative paucity of material about the author's own journey of learning English writing, particularly her own knowledge base, upon which she draws while tutoring students that visit writing centres. The author may have made links between the research topic and her personal learning history. Despite her years of experience and ability in this field, the author mentions on numerous occasions that her professional identity as a competent writing tutor has been questioned. From a dialogic perspective, there is no definitive perfect method to write; yet, there are certain rules that students must follow in order to meet course, institutional, or professional criteria. So, I was wondering if the author might also take into account the variety of epistemologies included into the students' backgrounds, which may have influenced the students' conceptions of what constitutes effective writing. How can writing centre teachers like the author avoid coercing emerging writers into reproducing the existing quo while guiding students to satisfy their individual writing requirements? First and foremost, discriminating practises are the result of the supremacy of western epistemology. For instance, the author stated that she has been writing literature reviews for decades and is perfectly familiar with the meaning of a thesis statement. But are these so-called "true knowledge about writing" problematic and repressive to begin with? The decolonization process, according to Santos (2019), includes proliferating epistemologies and provincializing the western one within an ecology of epistemologies. Chen (2010) argues that decolonizing subjectivities can be achieved through referencing Asian cultures rather than Western ones. For instance, the author may have delved more into the writing traditions of the Iranian and Vietnamese participants and the ways in which these writing traditions could facilitate their writing endeavours.

References

Chen, K.-H. (2010). *Asia as method: Toward deimperialization*. Duke University Press.

<https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11smwwj>

Kubota, R. (2020). Confronting epistemological racism, decolonizing scholarly knowledge: Race and gender in applied linguistics. *Applied Linguistics*, 41(5), 712-732.

Santos, B. de S., & Meneses, M. P. (2019). Conclusion: Toward a post-abyssal world. In B. de S. Santos & M. P. Meneses (Eds.), *Knowledges Born in the Struggle: Constructing the Epistemologies of the Global South*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429344596>