

Book Review

Crozet, C. & Diaz, A. R. (2020). *Tertiary language teacher-researchers between ethics and politics: silent voices, unseized spaces*. New York: Routledge.

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by

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A timely contribution to the growing body of literature on teachers and practitioners in the language and culture teaching field, this book critically describes and then analyses the contemporary issues faced by those involved in this field and the paradox between the abstract direction of their intentions and the reality on the ground.

The book is very much aware of the situation of our times and how today's political landscape is influencing how decisions and strategies are formed at tertiary education level. That is to say that at tertiary level we are seeing a commodification of learning driven by student recruitment considerations when selecting what is offered to learners. In terms of language learning the authors rightly point out that this has led to a need to justify teaching languages, struggles to preserve the teaching of certain languages that are considered somehow less profitable or less attractive to mainstream target learners as well as competence-driven language teaching which undermines the more abstract, philosophical, creative and artistic nature of the study of languages and cultures. The book also argues that in light of these issues it is all the more necessary to reconsider the identity of language teachers and in particular university language-teacher researchers (ULTR), who are currently underrepresented in Language Teacher Identity (LTI) research, as they are the ones who are on the ground and who are the direct interface with the shift in attitudes towards language teaching and the ones who are able to alert and raise awareness about the consequences of this shift. The book therefore intends to start to fill this gap in research.

The relevant and appropriate methodology adopted in conducting the research is in line with the contemporary nature of the book. The researchers chose to give consideration to the co-creation of knowledge in the project allowing narrative knowledging (Barkhuizen, 2019) to emerge. The authors ascribe to Barkhuizen's (2011, p. 395) definition of narrative knowledging as 'the meaning making, learning, or knowledge construction that takes place during the narrative research activities of (co)constructing narratives, analysing narratives, reporting the findings, and reading/watching/listening to research reports' (p. 11). Both authors included themselves in the data pool of 15 participants based on their conviction of regarding the importance of engaging with the interview questions. They considered that this approach allowing would allow them to continuously question their own positioning as researchers and to explore their own situated identities. While this

Commented [Reviewer1]: This sentence is a bit packed.

is not a traditional research methodology, they make a clear argument for adopting it in the framework of this study.

This relatively short book is organised into four core chapters. The first core chapter after the Introduction focusses on 'setting the stage' for the research project by defining key terms and actors in the field of study and explaining why these terms were chosen. For example, language is conceived as 'the process of acquiring so-called *second, foreign or non-native* "target" languages and cultures (p. 23)'. The chapter also describes the context of the study: Australian higher education. One specific intention in describing the actors being researched in detail is due to the fact that there is a lack of distinction between those involved in teaching language and culture in the current literature, they tend to be grouped into one homogenous group, whereas the authors rightly deem it necessary to point out that within this group there are different actors according to profiles, roles, employment status, and the level of agency they hold which ~~creating~~ create power dynamics between them (p. 23). After describing the various actors the authors then home in on University university Language-language Teacher/teacher-Researchers-researchers (ULTRs) as they believe they ULTRs have are of a particularly significant role-particular significance in terms of understanding work place roles and power dynamics at tertiary level better.

Commented [Reviewer3]: seems there is a word missing here?

Commented [Reviewer4]: The capital letters and acronym causes confusion. It looks like an association of some sort, although I figure it refers to a group of people to whom the book authors assigned a special identity? If so, can you add some clarity about this term early on, when you first introduced this concept in the first page?

Commented [Reviewer6]: 'have a role in understanding something better' sounds a bit strange

The second core chapter describes the conceptual and theoretical framings of the study and the analytical lens through which the data is analysed. These are articulated around the relevant constructs of identity, agency and structure. Drawing on Barkhuizen, (2016, p. 4), they adopt a contemporary conceptualisation of identity as a fluid, dynamic and evolving rather than a fixed and given one. Developing it towards the entangled notion of agency and, importantly, framed within the context of the current institution landscape, which they posit has been somewhat overlooked in other research. This political approach to LTI is supported throughout the study. A broad range of appropriate, pluri-disciplinary literature is reviewed to support the arguments put forward.

The third core chapter outlines the pivot point between the more abstract discussions about ideology and ethico-political engagement in the Language and Culture Education (LCE) field and the reality on the ground in said field whereby the incongruence between these two factors is highlighted, which does not match up. The authors' valid concern for the rise in right-wing populist ideology underpins the points raised. Their interest lies in exploring 'how tertiary LCE can more consciously and critically respond to this threat' (p. 81), suggesting that ULTRs should see themselves as political advocates preventing fermenting fascist ideology given the superdiverse and non-neutral environment that engagement with students in the scope of university teaching and learning takes place in.

Commented [Reviewer8]: vague - do you mean 'university teaching and learning'?

Chapter Five, which is the fourth core chapter, reflects on how the research participants view the notion of culture and culture teaching given their diverse realities, revealing the dissatisfaction and illegitimacy they feel as regards culture and intercultural language teaching. Pertinent issues are raised such as the frustration of practitioners with the systemic shortcomings in terms of class time and size and the ideological stance of how intercultural language teaching is conceptualised and valued, or undervalued. The relevant need for rethinking teaching material and how this can be determined is also pointed out. In light of these limitations, the next point in this section on how to teach critical cultural content becomes all the more stark; there is a sensitive balance to be made between providing factual knowledge and warning about the risks of essentialism, which can be a

challenge for practitioners given their own vision of interculturality. This last point is connected to the final one in this chapter which mentions the practitioners' feeling of illegitimacy practitioners have in terms of culture teaching and cultural knowledge. -How they perceive themselves in relation to the language and culture they teach has a great impact on their classroom practice.

Commented [Reviewer9]: meaning unclear

The conclusion fulfils its purpose of summing up and suggesting reflection and action for next steps based on the findings of the book.

This sensitive account of the issues and experience of practitioners in the language and intercultural teaching field is significant in driving forward the conversation on how to develop a theory of practice which may help bridge between ideals and current, potential practices. The authors suggest that future action could be oriented towards challenging dominant ways of thinking as regards language education and the 'enduring legacy of colonialism' (p.78) in this field. The book contributes to the highly relevant and contemporary reflection on the place and function of language teaching in today's increasingly market-driven educational landscape.

Commented [Reviewer10]: The concluding paragraph is quite short. Can you expand on what the authors suggest for 'future action', or what 'theory of practice' you think that this book has delivered? Maybe re-cap some of the things you mentioned in the opening paragraphs of this review?