

## Book Review

**Daborn, E., Zacharias, S., Crichton, H. (2020) *Subject Literacy in Culturally Diverse Secondary Schools*. London: Bloomsbury Academic. ISBN:978-1-3500-7362-3 (PB)**

This book deals with two very important topics that all secondary school teachers need to be knowledgeable about, but that I had never before seen treated so well together. The main thread throughout the book is the focus on learners in secondary school classrooms that are nowadays culturally-diverse. The other focus is subject-related language, with an emphasis on how to present it to learners whose first language/s is/are different from those of the school. This book provides teachers with much assistance in understanding the needs of culturally diverse learners, and it abounds with information on how best to adjust subject pedagogy accordingly. English language structures used in different subject areas are highlighted, and teachers are provided with practical and detailed advice based on the extensive teaching experience of the three authors.

Daborn, Zacharias and Crichton undoubtedly have had plenty of contact with culturally diverse learners and have refined their methods in supporting learners in subject literacy in English, as can be seen from the many concrete examples they use to support their claims and recommendations. In this book I particularly appreciate the sociocultural framework that serves as an eye-opener to subject teachers who might not have had the opportunity to study sociolinguistic and cultural issues in their teacher education courses. Indeed, the first thirty pages of the book provide a substantial background to language issues in subject teaching, and lay the foundation to the understanding of how language is a medium for the construction of knowledge and meaning. Chapter 2 focuses on the learners and their strengths in a context where they do not yet master the language of

instruction. The authors offer plenty of practical suggestions about, for example, how to welcome a bilingual/multilingual learner to the classroom, how to organise group work using the first language/s of the learners and how to keep learners engaged despite a potential language barrier. For instance, teachers' attention is drawn to the fact that examples provided in textbooks might be totally unrelated to the learners' life experience, as in the case of having to talk about cause and effect in science using the example of a heavy snow fall, which some students would never have experienced. The authors rightly suggest how the teacher can introduce the topic of cause and effect by presenting pictures of situations from the learners' life experience, such as, what happens when they forget money and get on the bus, or the air pollution that results from cars belching smoke from exhaust.

The remaining five chapters deal with subject-related language and knowledge, challenging texts, pedagogical tasks and feedback to support learners and how to monitor emerging literacy and plan for their progression. In Chapter 5, when presenting group tasks in the English lesson, the authors provide a five-step approach to the task, starting with helping learners predict content from the title, to establishing the setting and the role of the main character, to preparing for reading, and finally preparing the group activity. No stone is left unturned when it comes to dealing with subject-related language. For example, one of the many teaching resources presented in this book is the 'language aware feedback portfolio'. Help for constructing such a portfolio is provided using cross-references to the relevant information throughout the book. Given that verb tenses in English are frequently difficult for learners of English, a helpful chart is provided on p.199.

Each chapter starts with an outline introducing the content of the chapter. All the chapters include teaching resources, links to relevant documents, suggestions for further reading, questions for reflection, and examples of language features to help the reader identify the patterns to focus on. Throughout the book, key ideas are highlighted with a symbol in the margin. Several diagrams, text boxes and continua illustrate important elements. Such features are not only visually helpful but also serve as a tool for appreciating how the English language is applied in different subjects. For example, Table 3.3 provides examples from six subject areas (English, Geography, Chemistry, Biology, History and PE) about the different language features of procedures used in each of these subjects. Often, examples of texts from different subject

areas are presented wherein language elements are highlighted, such as, noun phrases and adverb phrases (p.73), and markers of opinion (p.129).

This book is written by expert and experienced teachers for teachers who wish to embark on their professional development. I recommend this book not only to teachers of multilingual and multicultural classrooms, but especially to plurilingual teachers who teach subjects through a language, often English, which is not their first language. This book is ideal for adoption in initial teacher education and professional development courses, as it provides plenty and varied material that would give good guided structure to a course, and it can, in fact, be used as a coursebook.

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