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## Book Review: Language and Learning in Multilingual Classrooms: A Practical Approach

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Ina Choi

Second Language Studies, Michigan State University  
choiina1@msu.edu

**Elizabeth Coelho (2012), *Language and Learning in Multilingual Classrooms: A Practical Approach*. Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters. 376pp. US\$39.95 (paperback) ISBN: 9781847697196.**

Global migration has emerged over the last decade such that countries that have seen relatively few immigration issues have started struggling (as France, the United States, Great Britain, and Australia have) with various and diverse concerns related to immigration. For language teachers, the new reality of global migration is a challenge, especially if the language teachers have not experienced or prepared for classes with culturally and linguistically diverse students and the acculturation issues their families face.

In *Language and Learning in Multilingual Classrooms: A Practical Approach*, Elizabeth Coelho addresses the needs of educators in schools where programs are developing plans for newcomers. She provides plenty of suggestions and advice with this book, which should be required for all school administrators, educational planners, and teachers of multicultural education.

The book is organized in three sections: (1) Getting Started, (2) Planning: A Whole-School Approach, and (3) In the Classroom. Each section consists of two, three, and five chapters, respectively. The first section answers a large question through two chapters: Why do teachers and administrators need to care about multilingual and multicultural teaching and learning? In Chapter 1, Coelho provides background information of linguistically and culturally diverse learners. She reports who they are, why and how they came to Europe or North America, and what they experienced in a new education system. Acknowledging that more than 20 percent of America's children are from immigrant families, Coelho asserts it is time for educators to adjust to realities and try to integrate culturally and linguistically diverse children into classrooms with native speakers instead of separating them into language-learning courses. In Chapter 2, she prepares teachers to engage immigrant students with ready-to-use ideas and activities. The author also presents specific and detailed suggestions for initial diagnostic assessment, useful for novice teachers who are not familiar with culturally diverse student populations as well as those more experienced but perhaps desiring fresh ideas. Highlighting the importance of parents' involvement in the latter part of the chapter, Coelho offers ample suggestions and exercises for parents so they can contribute to their children's schooling based on each child's situations and needs.

The second section addresses several critical areas in the realm of education planning. Chapter 3 starts out by revealing some challenges that face immigrant children at school. This section is followed by models of successful language programs in Canada, Europe, and Spain. This chapter is helpful for teachers to understand what makes learning difficult from children's perspectives. This chapter is also beneficial for school administrators. It may provide insight as

to what kind of program they should offer. Chapter 4 contains an assessment framework for language learners at different learning stages. The author includes a summary chart of key recommendations for instruction and assessment at the end of the chapter, which is a concise overview of its content. In Chapter 5, Coelho targets educational administrators and policymakers by proposing 10 actions plans for school districts in multilingual and multicultural communities. It also contains specific outcomes from large-scale studies (e.g. nationwide research) and what the author viewed as more “small scale” studies (e.g. citywide research) on the performance of immigrant children.

The last section is a collection of practical advice and activities. They range from how to create learning environments to how to teach vocabulary in classes while considering the diverse learning needs of non-native students. That is, Chapter 6 and 7 focus on classroom environments, whereas the rest of the chapters within the section pay close attention to linguistic skill areas, such as speaking, reading, writing, and listening. In Chapter 6, as the title (6. An Inclusive Learning Environment) states, Coelho encourages readers to think not only about inclusive practices, strategies, and solutions for teaching, but also about the physical arrangement and design of an inclusive class. In Chapter 7, the author notes that it is important to view students’ linguistic diversity as an asset and to see bilingualism as a benefit for both teaching and learning. A variety of exercises and projects are described so teachers can use them in curricula. By doing so, Coelho believes teachers can take advantage of students’ differing languages and reinforce learning. In Chapter 8, Coelho talks about how to scaffold oral language communication to support immigrant students in class, putting emphasis on authentic, purposeful, and comprehensible interaction. In Chapter 9, the author continues with a focus on reading and writing instruction with an overview of different approaches. There are some examples of students’ work, so teachers can get a clear sense of what they might teach and how they could guide students. The last chapter deals with vocabulary acquisition, which is one of the most challenging aspects of language development for second language learners. By explaining why non-native students have such a hard time with vocabulary development, Coelho aspires to enhance teachers’ understanding of the issues at hand with research findings and classroom observations. She ends with what teachers need to include when assessing vocabulary knowledge.

With regard to whether the book provides a practical approach to language and learning in multilingual classrooms (as the title of the book states), the answer is ‘yes’ from my viewpoint. Every chapter includes varied effective and efficient guidance to help instructors and practitioners. Resources are listed at the end of each chapter with websites for those who are interested in the specific issues addressed and for those who want to read more. Thus, the book is a great collection of a wide range of detailed ideas and activities for teaching multilingual and multicultural classrooms. The book has other strengths as well. First of all, each chapter contains many visuals which include photos, charts and graphs to help readers understand context. The illustrations are of two types: either for teachers to use in class activities or pictures and/or maps that help explain how the teacher can implement these classroom tasks. Second, Coelho successfully maintains a balance between theory and teaching practice and successfully underscores her beliefs that it is the educators’ responsibility to support culturally diverse students and their families. Lastly, instead of a mere list of activities and exercises that might be useful for immigrant children, the author helps readers understand *why* the activities are helpful, *why* newcomers have difficulties, and *why* linguistic diversity is beneficial in teaching and learning. In all, given the contributions and advantages, I strongly recommend this book for

mainstream classroom teachers, specialist language teachers, school administrators, and educational policymakers.