

Portland State University

PDXScholar

World Languages and Literatures Faculty
Publications and Presentations

World Languages and Literatures

2007

Review of Adrian Holliday's "The Struggle to Teach English as an International Language."

Eva Núñez-Méndez

Portland State University, enunez@pdx.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/wll_fac



Part of the [Applied Linguistics Commons](#), and the [First and Second Language Acquisition Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Citation Details

Núñez-Méndez, Eva.(2007) Review of Adrian Holliday's "The Struggle to Teach English as an International Language." *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* 29 (3): 495-497. Cambridge University Press. DOI: 10+10170S0272263107070350

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access. It has been accepted for inclusion in World Languages and Literatures Faculty Publications and Presentations by an authorized administrator of PDXScholar. Please contact us if we can make this document more accessible: pdxscholar@pdx.edu.

in the number of available movement positions between the two languages (specifier, complementizer phrase in English; and specifier, focus phrase vs. specifier, complementizer phrase in Hungarian) leads learners to misanalyze locality requirements.

The volume consists of six chapters organized according to the study of RRCs. Chapter 1 introduces the theoretical questions that guide the study and examines the assumptions that underlie the study of SLA by reviewing the positions considered in the literature on the availability of UG in the learner's grammar. Following the principles and parameters approach to the theoretical framework of UG, chapter 2 presents the syntactic properties of Hungarian clause structures in general as well as the properties of Hungarian and English restrictive relative clauses. The chapter ends with a comparison of the landing sites for *wh*-phrases in English and Hungarian. Chapter 3 presents the research background on the acquisition of RRCs. The chapter reviews studies that consider the noun phrase accessibility hierarchy and its relation to L1 transfer, studies that involve processing approaches in the acquisition of relative clauses, and UG-based studies. In chapter 4, the experimental design and methods of data analysis are presented. Chapter 5 presents the results of the data obtained in the experiment, and chapter 6 discusses the results in terms of their relevance to the research questions proposed and the general objectives of the study.

This book is well written and gives a clear analysis of the syntactic structure of Hungarian clauses; in particular, the author provides a thorough description of movement constraints of Hungarian *wh*-phrases and relative clauses. The author follows up with a comparison of movement restrictions in both languages, Hungarian and English, and gives predictions for how the parametric differences might affect the interlanguage grammar of Hungarian learners of English. Because this study investigates principles of UG that are instantiated in the L2 but not in the L1, it provides new evidence for the partial access to UG view, which should be of interest to researchers who claim that parameters cannot be reset once the L2 learner has reached a certain age. However, this claim could have been made stronger if a study on L1 English learners of L2 Hungarian could show a similar developmental pattern in their interlanguage grammar (locality requirements are more restricted in English than in Hungarian).

Overall, the volume brings new insights to the degrees of availability of UG to L2 learners, and it should be of interest to researchers as well as to advanced students of SLA. The research presented in this volume, by exploring languages that are parametrically very different, contributes to the advancement of knowledge on the acquisition of movement and empty categories as it relates to RRCs.

(Received 31 May 2006)

Miren Hodgson

University of Massachusetts, Amherst

DOI: 10.1017/S0272263107070350

THE STRUGGLE TO TEACH ENGLISH AS AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE.
Adrian Holliday. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005. Pp. ix + 193. \$25.95 paper.

Curriculum settings, the relationship among language, culture, and discourse, and the change in the ownership of English are the main topics addressed in this volume.

Holliday discusses social and political issues in English language education in diverse international locations. He focuses on the injustices created by the desire to change the cultures of nonnative-speaker students and teachers and proposes suggestions on how to overcome this situation. Working with English as an international language brings up some conflicts among TESOL educators and researchers, who face cultural and political interfaces created by the native-speakerist attitude. The balance of power in the classroom is central to Holliday's proposal of cultural continuity and enriching encounters.

With eight chapters, this volume goes from the politics of educators of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), culturalist perceptions of *us* versus *them*, the residues of audiolingualism, the bureaucratization of professionalism, social authenticity, and linguistic imperialism versus cultural resilience, to a wide range of propositions for development and reassessing language teaching principles. From his own multicultural international experience, Holliday expands qualitative research on cultural prejudices that emerge from a dominant ideology of English-speaking Western TESOL. Thanks to the comments of his informants from outside the English-speaking West, the author examines himself, his own practices, and the professionalism of a dominant culture of practice that has become normalized. Based on examples of academic life from classrooms, conferences, and documents, Holliday directs his research—sociologically speaking—toward the struggle in international English education as a residue of a colonial past. In the complex, divided, and diverse community of ESOL educators, the author analyzes the distance that emerges from a dominant particular ideology that has its origins within the culture but does not govern the thinking of all its members.

In my opinion, one of the most valuable sections is chapter 6, entitled “Stakeholder-centeredness,” which deals with the idea that the so-called communicative classroom serves to prescribe and control cultural behavior. Within the imperialism thesis, culturalist native-speakerism has tried to incorporate people into existing systems and, therefore, has relied on stereotypical notions based on cultural prejudices of the day. However, there are cases in which either individuals or groups have used their own resources to resist the confining influence of these forces. Individual richness and social autonomy shape this cultural resilience to imperialism. As an example of this conflict, the author quotes comments from colleagues in English departments in Chinese universities who consider the *us* versus *them* problem. Because most ESOL educators fail to see the diversity, and thus miss out on the richness and the dynamism of what really goes on in English departments, he describes the complexity of local discourses in this way:

These discourses are usually constructed and operated based on a dichotomized conception of East and West. . . cultural traits are frequently and conveniently made use of to explain and justify what is happening and should happen in Chinese ELT. They fail to see that the struggle over pedagogic changes in Chinese ELT is not all about the modern against the traditional, China against the West. (p. 136)

Based on comments and accounts from 36 ESOL educators from 14 countries, including 20 professionals from outside the English-speaking West, Holliday's research provides evidence of cultural discrimination when it comes to teaching English as a second language outside the Western world. This volume clearly presents the damage that can be done by cultural prejudice and pushes forward the boundaries of knowledge of TESOL as cultural and political practice.

The author succeeds in showing the reader his ideology of native-speakerism, through which the nonnative-speaker other is seen as culturally deficient. Within a multicultural TESOL world, Holliday illustrates an intelligent research framework designed to achieve cultural continuity. Clearly organized and well written, this volume provides a resourceful pool of opinions in TESOL education. It opens up a dialogue—left open-ended on purpose—for the reader to think about cultural identities and speaking English as a second language.

(Received 31 May 2006)

Eva Nunez Mendez
Portland State University

DOI: 10.1017/S0272263107070362

TEACHING ENGLISH TO THE WORLD: HISTORY, CURRICULUM AND PRACTICE. *George Braine (Ed.)*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2005. Pp. xx + 169. \$22.50 paper.

This volume, edited by Braine, has some links to a volume he edited 6 years earlier (Braine, 1999). The major purpose of the earlier work was to provide personal narratives of a number of nonnative English language teachers from various world settings. This volume relies on nonnative teachers to present information on the history of English language teaching and the most prominent curricula for this teaching in their respective countries, followed by their autobiographies. The issue of nonnative teachers of English has gained increasing prominence in recent years, as witnessed by the growing number of conference colloquia, formation of new interest sections within professional associations, and publications devoted to this topic. This volume contributes to that topic and movement but goes even further by adding information on what English language teaching has meant in key countries around the world.

The volume is addressed mostly to a Western audience, with specific reference made in the introduction to the large number of nonnative speakers of English enrolled in North American TESOL programs as well as native speakers there who aim to teach in foreign countries. The editor also expresses his hope that this volume might partially correct the extreme imbalance in the literature on English language teaching so heavily dominated by native-speaker authors. A problem in any such book is the issue of representation among the samples chosen. Here the editor has collected chapters from 15 countries grouped into four major categories. One group, representing former British colonies, includes chapters devoted to India, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Sri Lanka. From Europe, there are three countries: Germany, Hungary, and Poland. A third group includes countries that are former colonies of countries other than Britain—Brazil, Indonesia, and Lebanon. The fourth group includes countries with no colonial past: The People's Republic of China, Israel, Japan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey. The editor expresses regret that only one country is included from South America and describes his unsuccessful attempts to locate authors from even one country in Africa.

There are four sections in each chapter. Each begins with a brief summary to provide background information on the country in question. This is the weakest part of the book, however, because many of these descriptions are far too brief to do justice to the topic—some are as short as two paragraphs. The historical sections are well done,