

RESENHAS

RICHARDS, J. C. *Beyond training: perspectives on language teacher education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

As the title suggests, *Beyond Training* is a book that aims at offering a new perspective on Teacher Education. The core of Second Language Teacher Education is examined here, but also some models are criticized while different solutions and practices are presented, making this book a real guide for Education professionals. The book has an opening chapter which consists of a summary about the next sections. Part I, *Theories of second language teaching* contains chapters 2 and 3; part II, *Perspectives on teacher thinking* is composed of chapters 4 to 6; part III, *Examining teacher education practices* includes chapters 7, 8 and 9 and part IV, *Entering the field of language teaching* contains chapter 10, the last one of the book.

In chapter 1 *The scope of second language teacher education*, the author discusses the six domains of second language teacher education (SLTE). These dimensions of teaching are: theories of teaching, teaching and communication skills, subject matter knowledge, pedagogical reasoning, decision making and contextual knowledge. This chapter is also a summary of the whole book, It contains the main aspects of teaching that the author sees as the core of SLTE.

In chapter 2, *Theories of teaching in language teacher education*, the main theories of teaching are analyzed, some of them are: science-research conceptions, theory-philosophy conceptions and art-craft models of teaching. According to the author, these theories are important in SLTE if they can be used as tools that might lead to reflection, helping the future teachers to identify the theories that best fit their own teaching and that are implicit in their beliefs and practices.

Chapter 3, *Teachers' maxims*, emphasizes the importance of listening to what teachers have to say about their classroom practices. Teaching maxims influence not only the way teachers perceive their activity but also the way they behave and make decisions during their classes. Through these implicit theories of teaching, teachers understand and interpret their work and, through their "maxims", this process can be better understood.

In chapter 4, *Teacher beliefs and decision making*, Richards points out to the importance of the conceptualizations that teachers have about what is good and bad teaching. These beliefs are acquired through practice and underlie each one's theories of teaching, influencing the kinds of thinking and decision making inside and outside the classroom. Here the author describes the nature of belief systems and of interactive decision making. It is also discussed and presented in this chapter how these cognitive aspects of teaching are relevant for SLTE, using as examples some teacher case studies

Chapter 5, *Exploring pedagogical reasoning skills*, was written not only by Richards but also by Li and Tang. The core of this chapter lies on the question of how much the pedagogical subjects influence the practice of the future teachers and if these subjects contribute or not to their achieving teaching expertise. One example of how experienced and inexperienced teachers planned a reading lesson and another of how literature teachers of different levels and experience used literature texts while teaching English are given in this chapter. The results show that experienced teachers accomplished the use of the materials as a whole, while the less experienced teachers had problems on doing that.

Chapter 6, *What's the use of lesson plans?*, discusses topics like the nature of lesson plans and their use. An example of how novice and experienced teachers developed and used a lesson plan is given and the discovery here is that improvisation and decision making play an important role in teaching activities. Therefore, planning a lesson has to be seen as a process, not only as a product.

In chapter 7, *Textbooks: help or hindrance in teaching?*, Richards discusses how the use of textbooks can become an useful tool for teachers or, on the other hand, can block creativity and improvisation in the classroom. The extent of textbook use in language teaching, the negative or positive influence of textbooks, the interests that are involved in the development of textbooks are some of the topics discussed by the author in this chapter.

In chapter 8, *Through other eyes: revisiting classroom observation*, the author proposes a new way of classroom observation. In other words, observation can become a tool that will provide critical reflection for the teachers about their own teaching. Behaviorism is criticized here and some clues about observing a class are given. Also, different kinds of observation are presented and analyzed. The emphasis

here lies on the assumption that what is important to observe in a teacher is hidden under the observable acts of teaching, that is why the use of critical reflection should be encouraged while we observe someone's classes.

Chapter 9, *Reflective thinking through journal writing*, written by Richards and Ho, reports on how the use of journal writing can help teachers to become more aware of their acts while teaching and of their activity as a whole. According to the authors, journal writing facilitates the process of thinking and using reflection as a means to improve teaching. A study done in Hong Kong with English teachers is exemplified, so as to show how they coded and analyzed the level of reflectivity found among many journal entries. Many positive aspects were achieved during the experience, including the broadening of the relationship between the teacher, the instructor, the content and the institution where the study took place.

Chapter 10, *The first year of teaching*, is the last one of the book and the only one of part IV. Through the experiences of five novice teachers the author discusses such aspects as initial experiences of teaching, expectations, how much these teachers employed the practices that they had learnt during their studies and the problems and difficulties they had in the first year as teachers. It was found that culture and background played a significant role for these five teachers, and also that the pressure was related to concerns about having a good relationship with the students and covering the content. These two main concerns prevented the 5 participants from using much of what they had learnt in their course.

As seen here, *Beyond Training* comes as a relevant book for those who are in some way involved in SLTE, but it is also a useful tool for anyone who might be interested in the development of pedagogy and education practices.

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