

BOOK REVIEW

Rethinking Teaching and Learning Practices in a Visual and Bilingual Setting

Mulrooney, K. J. (Eds.). (2014). *Teaching and Learning in Bilingual Classrooms*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press. 134 pages. Hardcover. ISBN 1563686309. \$80.00.

Mulrooney edited a collection of research by five professors at Gallaudet University who used an initiative called Scholarship of Teaching and Learning to methodically examine and assess classroom interaction within their bilingual classrooms. Their approach and results relate to university professors, both nationally and internationally, who strive to embed effective strategies within culturally and linguistically diverse university classrooms. As a university professor in Brazil, where many Deaf students study alongside hearing students in our Brazilian Sign Language Program, I have noticed similar challenges as we facilitate cultural and language differences among students. We need to create a learning place where students feel they belong, to take advantage of the education system in which they are involved. Mulrooney and colleagues provide tools and strategies to apply within this rich learning environment. In this book, professors from Gallaudet University describe a bilingual context that creates a complex cultural tapestry, as the students bring different sign languages, different written languages, and rich cultural experiences, leading to a teaching and learning environment that requires expansion of professors' pedagogical practices. The authors document effective strategies for creating a safe and trusting learning community that connects the students, where they feel they belong, and that takes into account these differences, including use of visual orientation, sign languages, spoken language interpretation, and student identity. Students engage in and commit to the learning process by talking about their own experiences and the goals of the class in a way that becomes an extension of their lives as learners. The authors see their classes as a journey across a threshold, in which previous barriers to teaching and learning, specifically related to language, are removed. Instead, teaching and learning is seen as a reciprocal process with specialized skills that establish coherence among professors and students, such as application of discourse strategies in sign language when learning about a specific text genre. This complex context includes meaning at the propositional, interpersonal, and meta-linguistic levels. The authors realized how the analytical process in teaching and learning involves much more than simply renewing their classes every semester, improving the readings, or reviewing

specific approaches. Instead, they delve into the questions of what currently occurs, what works, and what can potentially occur, to understand how they conduct their classes. For example, professors can change the focus of writing a text in English to producing a text in ASL, observing the textual structure needed to have a quality text. This analysis is an important step to cross the status quo threshold, or overcome barriers, to achieve effective instruction within a diverse bilingual environment. From this process, professors establish a safe learning environment that ensures a critical way of thinking and removes educational barriers rather than only focusing on specific skills. This process results in a change from unconscious incompetence, or unawareness of the ineffectiveness of one's instruction, to unconscious competence, or intuitive instructional effectiveness so that knowledge becomes part of one's being. An important piece of this process is feedback from professors that promotes students' critical learning engagement. Through this process and experience, we see that Deaf Education is not so different from the teaching and learning processes utilized in general education. The authors use the common lens from education science to look at the specific bilingual context with Deaf students and focus on aspects of teaching learning that are most closely connected to sign language. Apart from the use of filming in class, the visual specificity of Deaf Education is not focused upon; perhaps, this extension should be considered within diverse bilingual educational settings, such as the use of videos produced in sign language combined with visual tools, such as the use of images and icons taking advantages of the semiotic studies for a more visual approach. The authors present a clear pedagogic goal to share their teaching and learning experiences at Gallaudet University, as a place focused on Deaf Education with visually oriented students in a bilingual class setting. This is a valuable approach for other professors and teachers working in similar contexts to use. Certainly, this is what I gain from this book as a professor.

Ronice Quadros

Federal University of Santa Catarina