

# Book Review

## Critical Issues in ELT

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**Critical Issues in ELT Authors: (edited by) Kaushik and Khanna, Publisher: Aakar Publications, Pages: 359, ISBN: 9789350027721, Price: 1095.**

Critical Issues in ELT, is a compilation of essays discussing seminal issues pertaining to English language teaching and learning. The volume brings forth noteworthy debates on issues and lacunae related to ELT that need the focussed attention of policy makers, teachers, teacher educators and researchers. Leaving behind traditional concepts and boundaries, the volume highlights new perspectives and insights emerging with a more holistic understanding of ELT.

Conventionally, ELT has focussed on discovering the best strategies for developing learners proficiency in the English language, preparing modalities and structures for its classroom transaction. Today, the focus has shifted from classroom teaching to diverse contemporary debates that argue in favour of a more holistic perspective. The English language is perceived as a language of emancipation and empowerment for marginalised communities in India because of its social and economic advantages (Iliaih, 2013). At the same time, the growing role of English as a lingua franca and the adverse impact of linguistic imperialism is a cause for concern because many students are negotiating school subjects in a language in which they lack proficiency pushing them out of the school system. A change is needed. In the words of Kaushik and Khanna(2022) the field of ELT is witnessing rapid changes and steps are being taken to review the practices of teaching English, promoting a multilingual approach to language learning, simultaneously, searching for an

alternative that would foster English language learning without adversely impacting regional languages. The present volume explores these changing facets of ELT and the editors have divided the articles into seven theme based sections which mirror these facets. They are:

- ✍ Multilingualism
- ✍ Critical pedagogy
- ✍ Continuing Professional Development
- ✍ Materials Development
- ✍ Assessment and Evaluation
- ✍ Technology based teaching and learning
- ✍ Inclusive Education

The articles in the first section explore the teaching and learning of English in the quintessentially multilingual cultural ethos of India. Each article explores the theme as an important social construct while highlighting the premise that the language of the people should be used as a classroom resource rather than as an anathema to effective language learning. Bhatia, in the first essay, makes the case for second language acquisition grounded in the concept of additive multilingualism. The author simultaneously brings forth the challenges that are inextricably intertwined with the transaction of this concept. Deepa and

Durairajan attempt to bust the myths surrounding

English language and its teaching. The foremost myth is the perception of English as superior to Indian languages. On the contrary, the author stresses that we should perceive English as a 'Window on India' and appreciate multilingualism as the way forward. Schwab, explores how to adopt the multilingual perspective in material development while describing it as enriching for the teachers.

The purpose of critical pedagogy (CP) has been to construct schools into questioning environments where teachers and students can question the relationship between theory and practice, critical analysis and common sense, learning and social change. In the section on critical pedagogy, the four articles explore this theme from varied viewpoints. At the onset, Mishra studies how CP has been adopted in Indian educational policies, curriculum and syllabus. The rationale is to oversee how it has been translated and implemented in this context. Anandan explores how the growing popularity of English has propagated linguistic imperialism. In place of conventional ELT practices, he advocates Discourse Oriented Pedagogy as a critical literacy tool. This tool, Anandan advocates, will help foster second language acquisition. Kalra highlights her efforts to introduce CP in primary classroom through the art of storytelling. This engages them in meaning making which in turn challenges power narratives and societal inequities. Viswanathan, in his article, studies critical pedagogy from the perspective of the classroom experiences of first generation undergraduate learners. Their initial discomfiture with a new language faded as local culture and real life issues were amalgamated in the teaching learning process.

Continuing professional development is an essential component in furthering the growth of

professionals and requires attention from the perspective of teacher educators and practitioners. Bolitho's article focusses on the fact that despite the need of CPD, in the context of Education, there is no understanding of the term among its stakeholders. Shankar shares the findings from her research to illustrate the role of learner feedback as a tool for teacher learning which in turn fosters a teachers professional development. Palani explores the area of reflective practice as an integral component of CPD. On the other hand, Pande's article highlights how teachers' engage with action research within their own educational context provides them a platform for professional development.

Tomlinson (1998, cited in Tomlinson, 2016) had stated that very few books had been published on materials development reflecting the general feeling that it wasn't a sufficiently academic area of interest and materials were usually introduced as examples of method in action rather than as a means to explore the principles and procedures of their development. Today materials development is given considerable space in ELT as a means of helping teachers to understand and apply theories of language learning and fostering teachers' professional development foregrounded in the cultural context of the country. The section on materials development is rooted in this belief beginning with Bolitho's article that studies the importance of textbooks that are grounded in the local culture, school realities and mother tongue. Bolitho's article explores the processes involved in training teachers to become material writers while highlighting the need for developing locally produced material. Srinivas's article examines the area of learners with specialised professional or academic needs and the urgency for developing material, sourced from authentic sources, that is

tailored to meet their learning objectives and needs. Raman and Vijaya examine the use of authentic material in the context of a task based language framework. They are able to demonstrate efficacy of employing the multilingual practice of trans-language in developing a deep sense of self and identity in the learners.

Section 5 examines Assessment and Evaluation through a critical lens. Joseph Tharu contends that continuous and cumulative assessment has been instrumental in integrating formative assessment in Indian classroom practice. Parthasarathy presents a review of peer feedback research in the context of L2 writing. Mukhopadhyay's article's strength lies in its deep understanding of the need to move from product to a process approach to writing and how closely its efficacy rests on the use of teacher feedback. Chakrakodi shares benefits of his study on portfolio assessment from the perspective of a teacher education program.

Technology -aided teaching and learning is a key focus area in the contemporary ELT context. If used effectively it can create a powerful learning environment for the learners. The articles in section 6 focus on the extent of the transformative power of technology and its efficacy in the ELT classroom. Eldho and Kumar's study examines role of ICT in redefining the ELT classroom. Thomas and Jayendran draw the readers' attention to the plethora of ICT based language materials, their efficacy and limitations that need to be examined circumspectly. The final article by Phillipose and Rajgopal studies the comparative merits of

diverse digital platforms and their classroom use.

In keeping with the contemporary concerns the concluding section is devoted to Inclusive education and its role in establishing an equitable educational ethos. Kirti Kapur stress is upon adopting inclusivity as a philosophy and not as a program. Vaidya, on the other hand, presents an insiders narrative as she recounts and analyses her experiences of bringing up an autistic child. Teacher sensitization, training and acceptance is extremely important in this context. Vaidya builds a powerful argument for it as a pre- requisite for creating an equitable learning environment for students.

Critical Issues in ELT (edited, Kaushik and Khanna) bears testimony to the changing face of ELT. The book explores varied facets of English language teaching. It is a recommended reading for English language practitioners and researchers alike for its well- researched writing and the exhaustive reading list at the culmination of each chapter.

#### References :

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