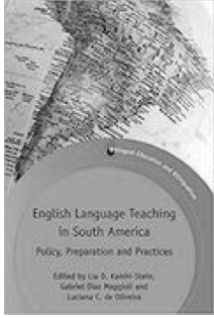


English Language Teaching in South America: Policy, Preparation and Practices		
Author:	Lia D. Kamhi-Stein, Gabriel Diaz Maggioli and Luciana C. de Oliveira (2017)	
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Readers of *English Language Teaching in South America: Policy, Preparation and Practices* will learn a great deal about the historical development of policies, teacher preparation, and cultural nuances of English teaching in South America. In addition, readers’ worldviews on language teaching will be challenged by the South American teachers and scholars featured in the book, especially those who advocate for policy that prioritizes the needs of their communities before the expectations of inner-circle English speaking countries.

The insights in this book include the exploration of the development of English language education throughout seven newly democratic societies in South America as they shift away from oligarchic neoliberal institutions and set out to redirect their resources for the public good. This book’s central goal is to evaluate the cases of Argentina, Ecuador, Uruguay, Chile, Colombia, Venezuela, and Brazil and measure their progress in reducing the educational inequality created by the exclusion of the working class and historically subjugated populations from English instruction (Myers-Scotton, 1993). The authors chose not to rely on scholars from *inner-circle* countries-- nations where English is used as the primary language, such as the UK, the USA, Canada, and Australia (Kachru, 1986). By highlighting the voices of eighteen South American teachers and editors, the book provides a valuable insider’s perspective on the region’s issues, policies, and programs.

The book is divided into three parts: *English Language Policy*, *English Language Teacher Preparation and Professional Development*, and *School-Based Research and Innovative Practices*. Each part is then divided into chapters that focus on a policy or program within a particular South American country for a total of twelve chapters. The book concludes with a

brief epilogue. It is critical to first read, *English Language Policy*, before reviewing the other two parts. Part One details necessary information on the geopolitical history and policy constraints of each region, providing readers important context for the latter two parts.

There are two ways a reader could digest the remainder of the book. The first involves selectively reviewing chapters based on a particular country or program of interest (e.g., textbook programs, video-based classes). The second way involves reviewing the whole book for a comparative sense of each country's efforts in policy and programming. In one example, the analysis of how Chile came to adopt its standards for English language education versus Uruguay and Ecuador is discussed. The insight gained from this book is immensely enlightening, as the contrast of countries highlights the contexts and ways in which scholars have adapted solutions for similar types of problems.

Part One, entitled *English Language Policy*, surveys the diverse historical contexts culminating in the standards and policies presently institutionalized in seven countries, as well as the unique characteristics of each country's English language educational development. One example is Uruguay's long history of foreign language teaching but critical shortage of English teachers. This issue has led to the expansion of remote video-conferencing as a central component of Uruguay's language education program. Another case is Brazil's uniquely high investment in its national school textbook program which provides textbooks to every student in the country and gives teachers ample control of textbook selection. A central theme across all countries is the mission to expand English to populations that previously lacked opportunities to learn the language. The authors also reflect on some challenges with educational reform, such as the tendency for top-level policymakers to implement decisions without the consultation of local teachers. Instead, policymakers rely on consultants from inner-circle countries to validate the integrity of their programs. The book criticizes these decisions, noting that programs adopted from the British Council or the U.S. Embassy do not distinguish between the countries that they are employed in and are often adopted without public debate. Part One suggests that, as these countries transition to progressive societies committed to the public good, English language teaching policies should prioritize local needs and contexts before the adherence to the standards of foreign parties.

Parts Two and Three describe ways in which different regions have accommodated their unique contexts to produce individualized initiatives in teacher preparation and content delivery. These parts contain chapters that describe research-supported initiatives and provide evaluations of their strengths and weaknesses. These initiatives include a partnership between the U.S. Embassy and Ecuador's Education Ministry to develop a teacher curriculum, as well as Argentina's *Connecting Equality* initiative to close the digital literacy gap in some of Buenos Aires' historically underserved neighborhoods. These chapters showcase the variety of paths taken to confront localized constraints and improve the service of English language teaching. The chapters also provide thoughtful reflections on each region's achievements and implications for future improvements.

In the epilogue, the book states its two-fold intention: To expose readers to emerging English instruction initiatives that are occurring in South America and to describe the challenges that scholars face in adapting inner-circle pedagogies to meet the realities of students and teachers

in South America. For these two purposes, this book offers utility for English teachers preparing to teach in the region. Prospective teachers can use this book to understand the aspirations and needs of the students they will serve and teachers with whom they will collaborate. Also, this book can inform teachers and policymakers about ongoing work in the area and how to best support its progress. Finally, for teachers from abroad, the historical context provided by this book can help to avoid arbitrarily imposing inner-circle expectations and perpetuating a cycle of neo-colonialism. Rather, the insight from this book can make foreign teachers better allies to help South American teachers achieve outcomes for their students on their own terms.

The strengths of this book include the indispensable insider's perspective that it provides on educational issues in South America, as explained by scholars who have a true passion for the success of English language education for all South American students. It provides a comprehensive and comparative history of education, and it connects this history to current programs.

One weakness of the book is that its scope does not include a focus on day-to-day educational issues. While there is information on innovative programs being used in the region, it would be beneficial to devote more space to describing traditional methods upon which these innovative programs are meant to improve. The *avant-garde* programs discussed in the book will likely play a large role in the future of teacher education in the region; however, showcasing those programs comes at the expense of providing more typical teacher preparation and content delivery.

English Language Teaching in South America: Policy, Preparation, and Practices offers valuable perspectives on the sociocultural state of teacher education in the region. The well-regarded local scholars who contributed to this book have identified and described initiatives that will likely set the regional standard for English language education in the near future. Thus, I recommend this book to any English language teacher with an interest in South American education.

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