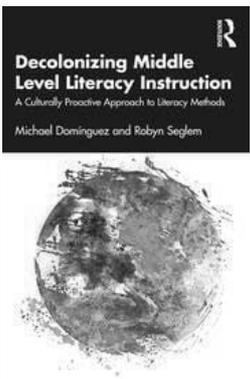


## Decolonizing Middle Level Literacy Instruction: A Culturally Proactive Approach to Literacy Methods

February 2024 – Volume 27, Number 4

<https://doi.org/10.55593/ej.27108r1>

Decolonizing Middle Level Literacy Instruction: A Culturally Proactive Approach to Literacy Methods		
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<b>Publisher:</b>	Routledge	
<b>Pages</b>	<b>ISBN-13</b>	<b>Price</b>
Pp. 198	978-1-03-225188-2 (paper)	\$42.36



English teachers and educators may find it challenging to identify inclusive instructional approaches and materials that address the needs of their diverse student populations (Wright, 2019). Furthermore, teaching ideas, resources, and pedagogical approaches that value English as a Second Language (ESL) learners' diverse linguistic and cultural assets requires classroom-level planning that might be unfamiliar to some ESL teachers. *Decolonizing Middle Level Literacy Instruction: A Culturally Proactive Approach to Literacy Methods*, by Michael Domínguez and Robyn Seglem, will prove useful as it provides writing and reading instruction strategies for preservice and in-service English Language Arts teachers. These strategies can help ESL teachers adapt curricular and instructional materials to the sociocultural contexts of their students, thus providing helpful information for equity and diversity in language education.

This book is strategically organized into three parts and twelve chapters. Part 1 focuses on the conceptual clarification of language coloniality, which the authors define as the promotion of dominant cultures, thoughts, and visions of the world through school languages. This draws the reader's attention to dominant language literacy practices that might not match practices in some communities, such as the predominance of writing over oral literacy practices. This part is important for a better understanding of the book's rationale. Part 2 proposes alternative

decolonial pedagogical approaches, teaching activities, and inclusive school-level assessment practices that could support students' meaningful learning. Part 3 provides advice and recommendations on the support systems teachers can implement for innovative instruction practices. Though all these three parts are important for different purposes, Part 2 is the most relevant for ESL teachers. It provides reading and writing instruction ideas that teachers can implement to value all learners' funds of knowledge (Wright, 2019).

Part 2 of the book comprises seven chapters, each focusing on a specific decolonial pedagogy that ESL teachers can adapt. Chapter 3, the first of these chapters, recommends instructional practices that value the learners' community histories. It advocates for ethnographic research approaches as instruction and learning strategies that could help learners document, share, and discuss their communities' perspectives on topics found in curricular materials. Chapter 4 focuses on shared humanity and calls teachers to select texts and activities that engage learners in reflecting on the perspectives of underrepresented authors and how the ideas of those authors connect to their realities. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 are similar in content as they call for pedagogical practices that value all voices and democratize powers in English classrooms. Chapter 6, for instance, recommends that teachers go beyond acknowledging and welcoming bi/multilingual students in their classrooms to create meaningful learning experiences for all students through the selection of texts and books that value lived experiences and challenging questions that connect them to their communities or an audience of their choice. Chapters 7, 8, and 9 focus on learners' linguistic and cultural assets and how they can be engaged in the classroom to disrupt language hegemony. Chapter 8 calls for a learning environment that allows students to use any language in their repertoire to explore topics and share their views in English, while Chapter 9 provides strategies to challenge students' perspectives and positions on different instruction topics through reflective exploration of different authors' views. This part is the most important section of the book for ESL teachers because the seven pedagogical approaches provided can help address challenges related to inadequate curricular resources or lack of those resources in some ESL contexts.

In this book, Domínguez and Seglem have gathered theoretical and practical content on critical approaches to literacy instruction that can benefit ESL teachers in multilingual and multicultural contexts. The recommended human-connected pedagogical approaches and other student-centered practices can help teachers explore students' local communities. The recommendations can also help teachers and students use ethnographic approaches to investigate issues in the local community using English as a tool. Such practices could help address the issues of students' lack of interest or commitment during English classes, as their context-based knowledge is valued during English classes. The second strength of this book is the authors' transparency about decolonial pedagogy. They acknowledge in Part 1 that the different activities and practical ideas presented are suggestions that every teacher can use as a starting point for designing contextualized plans that can work in their context. This transparency is mentioned at the end of each chapter of Part 2 through lesson planning questions that should help teachers adapt the ideas.

This book's main weakness is the challenges of implementation at the curricular and standardized assessment levels. The authors acknowledge the challenges teachers could face in school if they use decolonial pedagogies and open up to discussing all lived situations in the students' communities. They then give recommendations in Part 3 on building a support network that could help when criticisms against their practices arise. However, information is

lacking about expectations for standardized assessment when using the recommended contextual pedagogies. Another challenge ESL teachers with large classes might face in using the recommendations is the ability to value the voices of all their students and meet curricular expectations in terms of units and lessons to cover. The recommended planning ideas are specific to the USA context, where linguistic and cultural diversity means different things compared to some ESL contexts. Class sizes are small in the USA, English is accessible outside school, and students' home languages sometimes have written resources that can be used in the classroom. In some ESL contexts, students cannot read or write in their home languages. In future editions, the authors could consider the book's potential outside the USA and formulate recommendations for a broader audience.

Although this book is aimed at English Language Arts teachers in the USA, the strategies, teaching ideas, and discussed power dynamics in the classroom are relevant for most ESL contexts. However, using those strategies would require contextualization, as highlighted by the authors at the beginning. The socio-cultural and language policy contexts might differ, but the recommendations remain valid from a language coloniality perspective. Given that English is a second, third, or foreign language to most students in ESL classrooms, it is nearly impossible for textbooks to be culturally and linguistically sensitive to all geographical needs. The strategies recommended in this book, such as classroom-level planning of teaching and learning and reference to the community for teaching ideas, can help ESL teachers step away from prescribed content and methods and create meaningful ESL learning opportunities for all students.

### **To Cite this Review**

Somé, K. J. (2024). [Review of the book. (2023), *Decolonizing Middle Level Literacy Instruction: A Culturally Proactive Approach to Literacy Methods*, by M. Domínguez & R. Seglem]. *Teaching English as a Second Language Electronic Journal (TESL-EJ)*, 27 (4). <https://doi.org/10.55593/ej.27108r1>

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