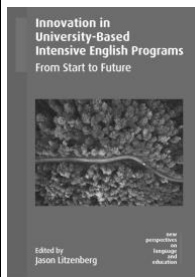


Innovation in University-Based Intensive English Programs: From Start to Future

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| Innovation in University-Based Intensive English Programs: From Start to Future | | |
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An Intensive English Program (IEP) usually refers to any type of program that provides international students with an immersion-style environment for learning academic English, prior to matriculating into a full-time college or university degree program. The field of applied linguistics has always maintained a symbiotic relationship with IEPs, with programs serving as sites for teacher training, curriculum development, and research implementation (Orlando, 2016). Despite this, IEPs frequently struggle for recognition with many in the field viewing them as “not worthy of notice, time and effort” (p.2). Indeed, most publications involving IEPs tend to be limited in scope, focusing more upon the administrative aspects of program operations, with little consideration of mechanisms for sustainability. Jason Litzenberg addresses this gap in his recent edited volume *Innovation in University-Based Intensive English Programs: From Start to Future*. By considering the past, present and future directions of innovation in US-based IEPs, the present volume assumes a broader stance towards innovation. More specifically, while the contributors of this book consider IEPs and IEP practices, they also attempt to expand outward and assess the impact of IEP innovations beyond the traditional boundaries of the programs themselves.

Following an overview by the editor, the book consists of 13 loosely connected chapters all relating to IEPs. The first three chapters focus on the historical aspects of IEPs, beginning with the establishment of University of Michigan’s English Language Institute (ELI) in 1941, which was widely regarded as the first IEP (Chapter 1). Applied linguistics research and IEPs share a more than 50-year history of mutually benefiting one another (Fang, 2020), but the pinnacle of IEP-supported applied linguistics publications shows a majority of them appearing across the leading journals (e.g., *Language Learning*) between 1976-1987 (Chapter 2). Around this time,

many former directors of IEP programs got their start in the field, coming of age in a ‘Wild West’ of IEP development, research and implementation (Chapter 3). After reviewing how IEPs came to be, the volume turns to current operations and practices, with an eye towards the future. Subsequent chapters cover empirical studies and systematic reviews of varying issues such as employment trends of IEPs (Chapter 4), IEP services (Chapter 5), IEP impact on campus culture (Chapter 6), and IEP teacher education (Chapter 10). These studies provide realistic and concrete profiles of diverse IEPs, laying the foundation to expand our perspectives and create alternatives.

The volume also discusses calls for possible radical reforms. These innovations include a myriad of topics, such as IEP Practitioner-Administrator-Scholar (PAS) identity (Chapter 7), native-speakerism scholarship (Chapter 8), and IEP partnership (Chapter 9). In these cases, innovation means acknowledging hard and honest truths in order to engage in the critical reflection needed for actual meaningful reform (Christison & Stoller, 2023). The book also addresses the important role of technology, with the authors urging the incorporation of communities of practice into the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework, exploring the ways technology may continue to influence English language classrooms and offering warnings as well as suggestions for moving forward that help practitioners “not to lose sight of our bigger goals in education and our humanity” (p. 205) (Chapter 12). The book closes with a forward-thinking approach that poses critical questions for future directions of IEPs and discusses opportunities for further research, such as reimagined partnerships and applied technology skills (Chapter 13).

A major strength of this volume is that the chapters discuss IEPs on a range of different levels, representing one of the few attempts to go beyond describing administrative aspects of IEPs. What sets this book apart from other texts, however, is that the contributions each address the idea that “IEPs are intrinsically bound with innovation” (p. 5). While the authors do not adhere to a single conceptualization of innovation, the contributions demonstrate various interpretations of it and how they engaged with the concept. In some ways, these contributions are qualitative expressions of how practitioners interpret innovation. To illustrate, Chapter 9 argues that equitable and bilateral communication among stakeholders is essential for long-term and sustainable IEP projects. Such recognition is fundamental for educators who wish to align their practices with the changing needs of society (Christison & Stoller, 2023). What’s more, the book is distinctive in challenging the “peripheral positioning of IEPs” (p. 116). For instance, Chapter 7 argues that IEP educators could adopt “the multiple roles of Blended EAP Professionals” (p.119), developing professional and scholarly identities which help bring attention to a field that deserves more attention than it has received in past decades. Another strength of the book is that the authors attempt to close the gap between researchers and practitioners. For instance, by exploring the practical experiences of two co-authored participants in a Brazilian English teachers’ program, Chapter 10 argues for applying theory to practice, emphasizing that the internationalization of English teachers’ continuing education should be reevaluated and conceived from a “bottom-up perspective that considers local issues and centers teacher voices” (p. 161). In short, the volume successfully accomplishes its purpose.

Nevertheless, some shortcomings should be noted. For one, while the chapters advocate that IEPs should embrace “multiculturalism” in curriculum experimentation (e.g., Chapter 7), the book does not offer any practical suggestions on how IEPs can resist and combat the current trends of isolationism, nationalism, and anti-intellectualism, which remains an important area of inquiry for IEPs (Christison & Stoller, 2023). Alternatively, while IEPs have provided research sites for applied linguists and language teacher preparation, topics such as how pre-service and in-service IEP educators can get the appropriate training in order to remain

competitive and relevant are still untouched. Finally, despite arguments against native-speakerism, the book would have benefitted from offering some critical and reflective examples of IEP educators challenging racism in their practices, providing ESL teachers the flexibility to follow in their own teaching contexts.

Despite these critiques, the volume provides a well-written and thorough exploration of what IEP innovation means at US universities. Although the IEPs discussed here are US-centered, this volume could be relevant for many language programs, program administrators, researchers, and applied linguists around the world. This book will be of great interest to IEP educators who are looking to innovate in their programs, but also to applied linguists and ESL/EFL teachers who are interested in reflecting on their own working environments because the issues covered can address particular needs and challenges that may arise in varied contexts.

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