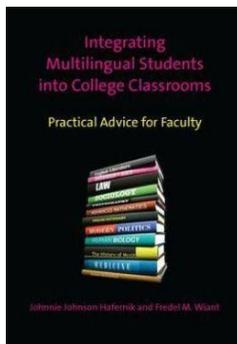


Professional Book Review

Hafernik, J. J., & Wiant, F. M. (2012). *Integrating Multilingual Students into College Classrooms: Practical Advice for Faculty*. Tonawanda, NY: Multilingual Matters. 184 pp., ISBN-13: 978-1847698193, \$ 26.96.

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As a faculty member in English for Academic Purposes at an institution with a very diverse student population, I have frequently fielded questions from cross-disciplinary colleagues about how to best understand, communicate with, and most importantly, teach the multilingual students in their classes. Johnnie Johnson Hafernik and Fredel M. Wiant's recently published volume *Integrating Multilingual Students into College Classrooms: Practical Advice for Faculty* addresses precisely these questions. The book fills a much needed gap in the literature on academic language development for college-level nonnative speakers of English, which the authors view not as the sole responsibility of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) or English as Second Language (ESL) departments, but of faculty throughout the academy.

Integrating Multilingual Students is logically organized into two parts, comprising a total of eight chapters. "Part 1: The Context" delivers an overview of our increasingly multilingual college classrooms, in which the myth of the monolingual student norm (Canagarajah, 2006) is rapidly being debunked. In Chapter 1, the authors illuminate the diverse backgrounds of students who are frequently grouped together under the label "multilingual," but who may actually be international students (those who have come to study directly from their home countries), "parachute kids," (those who have attended boarding schools in the U.S. prior to enrolling in universities), or "Generation 1.5" students (immigrant students whose schooling was completed partially in a country of origin and partly in the U.S). In drawing these distinctions, the authors are careful not to essentialize or stereotype students, noting that there is wide variation within any of these groups of students. Nevertheless, faculty with limited information about the varied backgrounds of the multilingual students in their classes will find some generalizations helpful, such as the fact that international students may be culturally unfamiliar with typical American educational practices like group assignments or peer review or that Generation 1.5 students often resist the ESL label since they often consider themselves fully bilingual or even English-dominant.

The book's second chapter outlines the fundamentals of second language acquisition, particularly as related to academic language, and offers advice for cultivating learning environments that foster student success. While some of the

theories presented here may seem outdated to specialists in the field—e.g., Cummins' (1979) distinction between Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)—they are potentially very useful in helping non-ESL-trained faculty understand the complexity of academic language and literacy development and appreciate why, even after years of study, students rarely “perfect” their English or resemble native speakers. Aptly, the authors question this construct in its entirety and claim that native-like proficiency is a largely unachievable and unnecessary goal. Instead, Hafernik and Wiant advise faculty to cultivate within themselves “an orientation to look at students’ potential and their abilities, not only at their differences and challenges” (p. 31) and to adopt strategies that help multilingual students find their places as members of the academy and insiders in their disciplines.

“Part 2: Understanding and Addressing Language Skills” lays out concrete and practical strategies for helping multilingual students become academically successful in the four language domains of speaking (Chapter 3), listening (Chapter 4), reading (Chapter 5), and writing (Chapter 6). In each chapter, the authors provide useful tables listing common academic task types and the requisite language skills involved. While there may be some who argue with these exact divisions of task types (e.g., why self-sponsored tasks such as personal diaries and entries on social media sites are included as academic writing tasks), the authors succeed, on the whole, in outlining the wide diversity and complexity of tasks multilingual students must navigate in college. The authors also include many useful strategies for faculty members to incorporate into their pedagogical practices to build academic literacy. Importantly, Hafernik and Wiant never neglect students’ need for pragmatic background learning along with increased linguistic knowledge.

Because of their importance in both US society and in the academy, and because of the challenge they present for multilingual learners, the book’s final chapters are devoted to working in groups (Chapter 7) and assessment (Chapter 8). In Chapter 7, the authors give useful suggestions regarding the challenges of group formation; the importance of approving of topics early on, including multiple steps and checkpoints; and providing clear rubrics with grading guidelines. The final chapter on assessment is one that will likely be of greatest interest to faculty. A “baker’s dozen” list of frequently asked questions on pages 109-132 offers guidance on some truly pressing issues, such as how much outside assistance (e.g., from friends, tutors, or the writing center) is appropriate for multilingual students, whether they should be granted extra time or dictionary use on exams, whether they should be allowed to rewrite papers for better grades, how much weight should be given to linguistic accuracy in assignments and exams or to accent and pronunciation in oral presentations, and how to respond to perceived weaknesses in these areas. Finally, the authors address the all-important question of how to “promote intellectual honesty and decrease acts of cheating and plagiarism in students’ written and oral work” (p. 125). The

advice in this chapter is nicely supported with an appendix of “Sample Rubrics and Other Evaluation Tools” (pp. 152-167).

Despite the numerous strengths of *Integrating Multilingual Students*, a potential critique of the book is that some faculty may find that the authors, in their efforts to cheerlead for the full inclusion of multilingual students into the college classroom, gloss too quickly over some complex issues. For example, included on their list of “myths” about multilingual students in the classroom on pages 20-22 are the following topics: “multilingual students’ work requires too much time to read and grade,” “multilingual students don’t know about the US and the topics covered in class,” and “multilingual students slow the class down.” These issues may create very real challenges for faculty. Nevertheless, Hafernik and Wiant do provide some useful suggestions for easing faculty and student concerns in these and other areas.

In their introduction, the authors claim that they have “sought to make their book reader-friendly and enjoyable” (p. 5), and that it can be read equally well in its entirety or as stand-alone chapters or sections within chapters. In my view, Hafernik and Wiant have succeeded in their task of producing a highly beneficial reference book for college faculty across the disciplines whose classes comprise both US and international-born students. The authors take seriously the claim that multilingual students in the college classroom are assets with the potential to enrich the lives of all of us. Indeed, the greatest strength of this book is that the vast majority of strategies offered as effective teaching practices for multilingual students will likely raise student achievement universally, making the suggestions here a true win-win for all concerned.

References

- Canagarajah, A. S. (2006). Understanding critical writing. In P.K. Matsuda, M. Cox, J. Jordan, & C. Ortmeier-Hooper (Eds.) *Second-language writing in the composition classroom: A critical sourcebook* (pp. 210-224). Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s.
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