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Introduction

Chris Hastings and Laura Jacob

Some projects are born out of ideas; this one was born out of a community, the Social Responsibility Interest Section (SRIS) of TESOL International Association. SRIS is made up of English language teachers who are committed to the ideal that language, culture, and context are inseparable; consequently, we share the belief that language teaching should not be separated from its context, that issues of human rights, peace, global citizenship, and the environment deserve a significant place in the classroom. It is with this understanding that SRIS “aims to promote social responsibility within the TESOL profession and to advance social equity, respect for differences, and multicultural understanding through education.” The people of SRIS brought a wealth of experiences, expertise, and resources to this work.

This project came about organically. No formal call for proposals was sent out; instead it was a project that was born of the relationships between TESOL educators. It arose out of conversations and emails that Laura originally sent around the group’s listserv, expressing a desire to share the work that SRIS members are doing to promote justice in their communities of practice around the world. As teachers expressed an interest in contributing, Laura and Chris volunteered to organize and edit the chapters. This compilation represents the power of ELT to work for peace and social change, and it is intended to be a small sample of work currently being done in the field.

The contributing authors considered this to be a valuable contribution to the field because there are only a limited number of books that address the importance of social justice in the profession. TESOL is a field frequently affected by the world’s sociopolitical climate. English language learners are often pushed to the periphery of society and are subject to inequitable power structures. Those actively engaged in the profession work with students marginalized by global and local trends, helping them to realize their full potential and contribute to their communities.

One limitation of compiling such a collection is that important areas of the field will inevitably be missed. We acknowledge that several areas of social justice in ELT are lacking in this volume, as it was a product of the authors who volunteered to contribute. It is intended to be, not a complete survey or introduction to the field, but rather a sampling.

This book addresses social justice concerns across the globe as they relate to the TESOL profession. Linguistic and nonlinguistic issues are considered, such as gender, race, and socioeconomic status within the context of English language teaching, while
addressing the critically important themes of social justice and equity. This anthology of articles gives current teachers and teachers-in-training as well as undergraduate and graduate students in TESOL an idea of the needs for advocacy in the TESOL profession, provides a vision for addressing global injustices in the classroom, and offers concrete classroom activities through personal and professional examples.

It is intended to be used by teacher educators, university-level ESL instructors, graduate students interested in social justice issues, and undergraduate level students enrolled in TESOL teacher preparation programs. It provides a taste of different aspects of the literature while painting a holistic picture and simultaneously giving it a personal voice to the work of social justice in ELT.

SRIS represents the beauty and potential of an Interest Section in TESOL. It is represented throughout the year as a supportive listserv and gathers during TESOL’s annual convention for fruitful discussion, inspiration, and collaboration. The members that make up SRIS are passionate, devoted individuals (as you will see as you read their chapters in the following pages!) who reach out to each other throughout the year to support one another in their fields of work and to encourage one another to promote true social change in each of their contexts.

This diverse collection of voices from the field in ESL and EFL contexts both personalizes the issues TESOL educators face and serves as a resource for those wanting to address social injustices in their individual TESOL contexts.

Generally speaking, each chapter in this compilation represents one of two realities: that English language learners are often on the margins of society and that those of us who teach them must work to advocate for their needs. We hope that the chapters will help educators identify the needs of other students or the areas of privilege represented in the ELT world, where more advocacy work is needed.

The first section, Social Justice and ELT: Setting the Stage, introduces the topic and the need for a volume that focuses on social justice in the English Language Teaching profession. In the first chapter, “A Short Introduction to Social Justice and ELT,” Charles Hall provides some perspective on the history of social justice in language teaching, discussing how justice is determined by its context and encouraging readers to consider social injustices they have encountered. In the second chapter, “The First Step Toward Social Justice: Teacher Reflection,” Lavette Coney invites teachers to reflect on their own background, to peer at the state of the profession and be honest about the prevalent racism within. In chapter 3, “Critical Pedagogy’s Power in English Language Teaching,” Mayra Daniel argues for the importance of having a critical pedagogical lens in the ELT field.

The second section, Peacebuilding and English Language Teaching, focuses our attention on the role English can play in working for peace across hostile borders. In “Bringing Peacebuilding into the English Language Classroom,” Valerie Jakar and Alison Milofsky discuss the connection between peacebuilding and English language teaching by sharing their personal paths to peacebuilding and providing guidelines for bringing peacebuilding into the classroom. In chapter 5, “Tension and Harmony:
Language Teaching as a Peacebuilding Endeavor,” Michael Medley discusses the integration of peace and language education by reflecting on his own identity as a peaceable language teacher. In “Healing Colonial Pain: English as a Bridge Between Japan and Korea,” Kip Cates explores the part that ELT can play in promoting better relations and mutual understanding between Koreans and Japanese students, and the responsibility that educators have to teach English for peace and facilitate opportunities for international exchange.

In the third section, Positioning for Advocacy, special attention is given to the power dynamics behind the English language. Ali Fuad Selvi, Nathanael Rudolph, and Baburhan Uzum argue for “the adoption of a glocal perspective that maintains, creates, and promotes spaces, discourses, and practices for innovation, incorporation, collaboration, and inclusivity for all” in chapter 7, “Equity and Professionalism in English Language Teaching: A Glocal Perspective.” In “Ideological English: A Theme for College Composition,” Jennifer Mott-Smith discusses the social inequity and discrimination present as different social groups’ language forms are judged, and how educators might address that by encouraging students’ ownership of English. In chapter 9, “Provincializing English: Race, Empire, and Social Justice,” Suhanthie Motha argues for provincializing English, “or seeking to support in learners and teachers a critical analysis of the ways in which the language is racialized and colonized, of how learning English changes us, and of how participating in the teaching of English changes the world” (S. Motha [2014], Race, Empire, and English Language Teaching: Creating Responsible and Ethical Anti-racist Practice; quoted in chapter 9 herein).

The fourth section, Language Rights, Privilege, and Race, asks us to look at the injustice, privilege, and systemic racism prevalent in society that also play into the ELT profession. In his chapter, “Language Rights and Indigenous Education in Australia,” Adriano Truscott informs us about Indigenous education in Australia, the context of language policy and rights, the role of TESOL in the protection of such rights, and classroom practices that enhance self-esteem, develop biculturalism, and encourage the Indigenous cultures of the classroom to thrive. In chapter 11, “Student Voices Inform Practice: Perceptions of Linguistic and Cultural Discrimination,” Elisabeth L. Chan shares how she became involved in social justice issues within TESOL and discusses how her own perceptions of race, language, and culture were formed. She also discusses her research on international students’ perceptions of race, language, and culture, gives the implications of her findings, and closes by sharing social justice activities for the language classroom. In “Understanding Privilege: Considerations for Teaching and Teacher Training Toward Social Justice,” Heidi Faust examines the role that privilege plays in creating opportunities and barriers in different contexts through personal reflections and invites readers to reflect on their own experiences through a series of activities modeled for personal awareness, teacher training, and for use with students in the classroom. In “Racializing Justice in TESOL: Embracing the Burden of Double Consciousness,” Shelley Wong and Rachel Grant share tools for countering racism in places where it is entwined with culture.

In section five, Gender and Sexual Orientation Justice, we turn our focus to gender discrimination and identity development for the LGBT community. In chapter 14,
“Gender Sensitization as a Learning Outcome,” Kirti Kapur helps teachers empower their students by examining the origins of gender relations in their everyday lives. She discusses how gender sensitization can be both a direct and an indirect result of language instruction and critical pedagogy. In “Exploring Perceptions of Gender Roles in English Language Teaching,” Mayra Daniel and Melanie Koss consider the impact of “cultural norms in ELT and of the links between gender, social identity, and English language acquisition.” In “Walking in the Words of ‘the Other’ Through Ethnodramatic Readers Theatre,” Carter Winkle shares an enthodrama that can be used to help teachers engage their students around issues of gender and sexual identity in ELT. The drama seeks, not to provide answers for students and teachers, but to provoke much needed dialogue.

Section six, Working Across Borders/Advocating for Students, peers deeply into the lives of English language learners in the state of Texas and provides vision for justice for those students who are undocumented immigrants in the United States. In their chapter, “When Nobody Seems to Care: Preparing Preservice Teachers for English Language Learners in Texas Classrooms,” Baburham Uzum and Mary Petron discuss the issues facing ELL students in Texas and encourage the use of service learning projects as an opportunity to empower teachers and students to address these issues. Christine Poteau, in “Pedagogies, Experiences, Access, Collaboration, and Equality (PEACE): Reforming Language Pedagogies to Promote Social Justice for Undocumented Immigrants,” discusses the challenges that both documented and undocumented immigrants face when going to a new country, shares research on the role that intercultural competence skill development can play in social justice education, and highlights challenges and benefits of different pedagogies. In chapter 19, “Teaching Undocumented Immigrants in the United States: A Seditious Secret and a Call to Action,” Michael Conners discusses his background as a veteran who has become engaged in social justice issues in the TESOL community, examines the complexities of working with undocumented students, and shares the results of an action research project to empower students to be agents of change.

The final section, Classroom Practices, provides relevant program objectives, activities, and classroom lesson plans that provide pathways to promote justice in relevant ways. In “Using Drama to Combat Prejudice,” Alexis Finger shows how drama can be used by teachers and students to fight prejudice. In chapter 21, “We Are All Environmental Educators (Whether We Know It or Not),” David Royal discusses the many roles that English language teachers play as cultural ambassadors, advisers, entertainers, and even environmental educators. In the final chapter, “A Community Adult English Literacy Program for Migrant Workers in Qatar: Context-Specific Critical Pedagogy and Communicative Language Teaching at Work,” Silvia Pessoa, Nada Soudy, Natalia Gatti, and M. Bernardine Dias report on the motivations, challenges, and curriculum design of a community English literacy program for migrant workers in Qatar. The authors describe the program and its curriculum and argue for the effectiveness of adult literacy programs that use a context-specific critical pedagogy and communicative language teaching approach to ensure the literacy and communicative competence development of the adult learners for empowerment and personal advancement.