Review

Making a difference: Challenges for applied linguistics. Honglin Chen and Ken Cruickshank (Eds.). Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009. pp.367.

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Chen and Cruickshank's *Making a difference: Challenges for Applied Linguistics* highlights the pivotal role played by diverse conceptual, methodological, and practical orientations to language-related issues in the field of applied linguistics. The approaches and applications represented in the twenty three articles brought together in this edited volume are demonstrative of this diversity, and more specifically, are an invitation to consider its centrality to and relevance for the development of the field and the ways in which "applied linguists can play a key role in making a difference in people's lives" (p. 13). Though no specific mention of an intended audience is provided in the book itself, a quick perusal of the publisher's website suggests the book is primarily targeting students, researchers, and language or teacher educators in tertiary institutions, but could also be of potential interest to a more general audience with an interest in language-related issues.

Considering the very helpful chapter sketches already provided by the editors (pp. 13-16) and made available online by the publisher (http://www.c-s-p.org/flyers/978-1-4438-0034-1-sample.pdf), this review will not offer a systematic summary of each article in the volume. Instead, it presents a review of Chen and Cruickshank's important framing chapter (not included among the aforementioned sketches), and briefly refers to selected articles in relation to themes identified by the editors.

Chen and Cruickshank's introductory chapter is as important a conceptual contribution to thinking about the development of the field of applied linguistics as it is a clever framing device and rationale for combining 22 such different studies in one volume. The conceptual contribution is the largely the result of an accessible introduction to and compelling application of the work of Basil Bernstein, whose concepts are drawn upon to:(1) characterize how the disciplinary positioning of early work in the field, as a practice-oriented mediator of 'theoretical' knowledge about language produced in the field of "traditional linguistics", inhibited its ability to develop itself as an autonomous and legitimate producer of knowledge; (2) describe three "recontextualising principles" central to the field's move to legitimize itself as a "specialised field" with strong links to both theoretical and practical knowledge production; and (3) discuss the advancement of the field in terms of important internal (how the field itself coheres), external (how it relates to/with other disciplines), and "real-world" (p. 8) challenges (how work in applied linguistics can address the concerns of language users in different contexts). Where the framing function of the chapter is concerned, Bernstein's notion of 'horizontal knowledge structures', which allow for the "constru[al] [of] applied linguistics as a serial organisation of knowledge with progress coming from the addition of fresh perspectives, new connections, new speakers, and new ways of speaking" (p. 11), plays a vital role in arguing for how the range of articles in the volume cohere.

Unlike many other edited volumes, the editors have elected not to categorize the chapters into sections according to conventional domain names (i.e., discourse analysis; language teaching; language policy and planning; etc.). Indeed, apart from the chapter titles the Table of Contents offers readers little in the way of explicit organizational frames to help orient them to links between the chapters. But this is by

design; near the end of their introductory chapter, Chen and Cruickshank note that this "conscious" decision does not interrupt the overall cohesion of the collection, and make a case for what they understand to be "recognisable sections" (i.e., Ch. 2-6, 7-11, 12-18, and 19-23) and "interweaving themes throughout the book" (pp. 9-10). The themes mentioned are to do with issues of 'context' on the one hand and 'methodological approaches' on the other, and offer a useful heuristic with which to briefly consider the range of contributions represented by the articles.

As the first of these interweaving themes, the editors argue that context figures prominently in a majority of the articles as a result of authors' "attention to real world issues and a focus on the specific phenomena" (p. 10). Indeed, the role of context is clearly implicated in discussions of: the discursive constructions of 'at-risk' youth in relation to 'normalising' educational and institutional discourses (Ellwood & Laws); the way gender is negotiated both in and out of the classroom in by female English teachers working in international development contexts (Appleby); how Japanese students' interview accounts of silence compare with their in-class speaking practices (Nakane& Ellwood); how students' Willingness to Communicate is as much a situational variable as it is a trait variable, and as such ought to be investigated within an ecological framework (Cao); whether and to what extent listener attitude is implicated in comprehensibility or intelligibility of accented speech (Fraser); the unique phonological features of Hong Kong Mandarin as it compares with Beijing Mandarin, and the potential influence of Cantonese on those features (Cheng); some of the recent changes to and implications of language policy as it regards Australian Aboriginal languages in relation to English (McKay); how a range of variables mediate migrant families' choices about which language to use (i.e., L1, L2 English, or Australian sign language) with their deaf children (Willoughby); the relationship between, and implications of, aging populations of immigrant linguistic minorities and health services in Australia (Bradshaw); the practical realities of policy statements about language services for multilingual East and West African immigrants, and the role of information collection and sharing in the provision of those services (Borland & Mphande).

What is less clear is how, or with what degree of delicacy, the attention to context present "in many chapters in the book" might be demonstrative of Chen and Cruickshank's assertion that "context cannot simply be defined as a set of variables such as language, place, culture, or surrounding, but is much more dynamic and interactive drawing from philosophy and the cognitive and social sciences (Duranti & Goodwin, 1992)" (p. 10). Especially with the field as a horizontal knowledge structure in mind, readers may wonder about whether or how such assertions might be reconciled with work in applied linguistics where context is not similarly dynamic and interactive (see, e.g., Collins' [Ch. 17] take on the representation of English Grammar in language textbooks in China).

Where the second interweaving theme of methodological approaches is concerned, Chen and Cruickshank make explicit mention of the "mixed-methods" contributions to the volume (Cao; Fraser) and those which "move between micro- and macro-level research tools" (Borland & Mphande; Bradshaw; Lambert; McKay; Willoughby). Cao's chapter, for example, mixes 'quantitative' analyses of classroom observational data(i.e., frequency counts) and survey-like "participant journals" (p. 203; i.e., percentages) and 'qualitative' (i.e., content) analyses of audio-recorded classroom interaction, stimulated recall interviews, and participant journals. Fraser's relies on three kinds of participant data collected through a website: responses to two Likert-style surveys, and their transcriptions of audio-recorded accented speech were analysed quantitatively; recordings of participants' oral impressions about the speakers were analysed qualitatively. In their respective chapters, Borland and Mphande move between analyses of data from face to face interviews (micro-) and government databases

(macro-level) in a way similar to Bradshaw's, whose analyses move between focus groups (micro-) and census data (macro-level).

Though not mentioned specifically by the editors, the use of participant talk as the basis for empirical analyses could also be interpreted as a 'methodological' thread linking a majority of the chapters in the volume. A total of 14 of the chapters present arguments based on data derived from participants' oral interactions with one or more interlocutors: in research interviews (Appleby; Azuma; Borland & Mphande; Cao; Crichton & Scarino; Ellwood & Laws; Lambert; Nakane & Ellwood; Stracke; Willoughby), focus groups (Bradshaw), classroom interaction (Cao; Ko), student-supervisor conferences (Yamada), and "Cooperative Development" (Edge).

Fittingly, however, the variety of purposes for which mixed methods, micro- and macro-level research tools, and participants' oral data were chosen, the different epistemological statuses attributed to the methods of generation or ontological statuses attributed to the data themselves, and the multiple approaches to analysing these data represented across the chapters – are indeed an evocative example of how "the [horizontal] knowledge structure of applied linguistics is mediated by a weaker classification principle with less clearly defined objects of and open procedures for study (Bernstein 2000)" (Chen & Cruickshank, p. 8). This horizontality is exemplified at the level of research representation as well, in the sense that contributors' explicit commentary on methodological choices, status(es) afforded methods or data, and analytic approaches vary widely across the chapters.

For readers whose purpose is not to understand the volume (as a whole) in the context of its framing chapter, the ingenuity of Chen and Cruickshank's marshalling of Bernsteinian theory might not be appreciated to its fullest extent. Still, theirs ranks as one of many compelling chapters that contribute to the appeal of the volume even if it were to be approached as a series of unrelated papers. I found myself re-reading Poynton and Lee's (Ch.2) critical discussion of the use of system networks and terminology in Appraisal Theory, both for the staging of the critique itself and as a compelling reminder of the ways in which epistemological issues are thoroughly implicated in methodological choices; trying more than once to decipher how Price's (Ch. 4) use of "composite constructions" (p. 52) of an ESL-speaking female international student and one of her lecturers could, in the absence of any explicit analytic approach, so successfully illuminate the dialogic, situated, and negotiated nature of evaluative criteria associated with a writing assignment; considering the role of multiparty classroom talk-in-interaction as a critical locus for larger (language/learner/classroom/school) socialization processes, and how student and teacher agency are exercised in and through these interactions and processes (Ko, Ch. 8); and intently searching for further research on parents' roles as language planners in work on bilingualism and language development among bilingual children (Lambert, Ch. 20).

Both as an edited collection of papers delivered at the 2007 Applied Linguistics Association of Australia conference and a microcosmic example of a field "that has been struggling to define its identity" (Chen & Cruickshank, p. 1), *Making a difference: Challenges for applied linguistics* embodies the pluricentric complexity of theory, method(ology), and praxis which constitute applied linguistics. And yet, although this diversity "risks fragmentation, it also provides a context for productive tensions, robust discussions and fresh insights as the various subfields rub up against one another" (Derewianka, 'Preface', p. xi). It is in and through these tensions, discussions, and insights that, whether as a whole or in separate parts, the field of applied linguistics will undoubtedly continue to evolve.