

Ideology for Second Language Teachers

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Abstract

This paper criticizes the lack of clarity in second language teacher education, and in the literature on second language teaching more generally, about the relationship between language and ideology. The paper proposes that there should be a reference point for second language teacher-learners which would allow them to position themselves and others. Thompson (1990) provides such a reference point in the form of a framework that can be used to analyse the extent to which the language in texts supports the power of social elites. The paper draws on some examples of orientalist discourse in order to discuss how second language teacher-learners can come to understand the process of the production and reproduction of ideas. The advantage of Thompson's framework is its clear presentation of five ways in which ideology operates and the fact that if second language teacher-learners decide to disagree with him, their own use of the term ideology will be based on principled argument. Such an outcome will be preferable to the current situation in which this valuable concept is rarely dealt with explicitly, and across the literature appears in contradictory ways, leaving second language teacher-learners struggling to identify some coherence around the term.

Keywords: culture, ideology, orientalism, second language teacher education