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Rubio, F., ed. 2007. *Self Esteem and Foreign Language Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing. ISBN: 9781847182159. 220 páginas.

In only 205 pages, *Self-Esteem and Foreign Language Learning* offers an in-depth account of the topic of self-esteem in the second language classroom. This book is about “‘healthy’ self-esteem”, as Arnold (2007: 14) notes, “where students have both a positive, accurate belief about themselves and their abilities and also the commitment and responsibility that comes when they see themselves as able to complete worthwhile goals”.

The volume is edited by Fernando Rubio, Associate Professor in the English Language Department at the University of Huelva in Spain. Targeted mainly to Applied Linguistics researchers and second language teachers, it brings together theoretical reflections, empirical work, and practical information on a topic scarcely covered elsewhere in the specialized literature.

Dedicated to Jane Arnold, Professor of English Language Teaching Methodology at the University of Seville, and author of numerous publications on the affective dimension in language learning, the volume contains eleven chapters neatly organized into three main parts: Part I, entitled “An Overview”, is made up of two chapters that introduce the topic; Part II, “Theory and Research”, comprises five chapters that ground the topic theoretically and brilliantly account for research studies on self-esteem’s related issues; finally, under the title “Implementation and Classroom Applications”, the four chapters in Part III propose a wealth of interesting and useful practical applications for encouraging positive self-esteem in the second language classroom. These contents are preceded by a preface written by Dr. Elaine Horwitz, from the University of Texas at Austin and author of important publications on foreign language anxiety, learners’ beliefs about language learning, and language learning strategies.

Part I opens with the editor’s contribution, “Self-Esteem and Foreign Language Learning: An Introduction”. In this first chapter, Rubio introduces the topic and claims for a lack of publications on it. The author provides a brief but relevant review of the literature on self-esteem in the field of educational psychology that proves a wide

disparity of conclusions. These findings range from those that consider self-esteem an influential factor in achievement to those that consider it an outcome of achievement. After exploring the conceptual entity of self-esteem, and providing his own definition of self-esteem, the author goes on to discuss the frequent misconceptions about the issue of self-esteem provoked by a serious lack of knowledge that, in many cases, associates high-self esteem with narcissism or aggression. Before the end of the chapter, the author refers to the school setting as one of the main factors affecting self-esteem. This idea leads him to address the issue of the actual effects of affective factors in language learning. Most probably, this particular relation between the affective dimension and language learning has to do with the vulnerability of the self “because it is deprived of its normal, familiar vehicle of expression”, as Jane Arnold (2007: 17) points out a few pages later. The chapter closes with an overview of the next chapters of the volume.

In chapter two, “Self-Concept and the Affective Domain in Language Learning”, Jane Arnold stresses the importance of incorporating the learner’s internal characteristics in the language learning process. After offering the second language teacher some useful guidelines for dealing with affective variables in the second language classroom, the author explicitly recommends language teachers to develop the five components of Reasoner’s (1982) model of self-esteem, namely, learners’ security, identity, belonging, purpose, and competence. Arnold finishes her contribution by encouraging teachers to be particularly involved in enhancing their own and their learners’ self-concept, and to consider it part of their daily work.

Part II begins with chapter three, “Self-Esteem and Language Learning: Breaking the Ice”, by Verónica de Andrés, teacher and researcher at the University of Salvador in Buenos Aires, and one of the first researchers in the field. Opened with the engaging story of a low self-esteem learner, the chapter evolves towards a combination of scholarly and practical sections on the main issue of this volume. In the first half of her chapter, de Andrés grounds the concept of self-esteem historically by providing an appropriate selection of its antecedents, and proceeds with a revision of the research literature on self-esteem and related fields. The second half of the chapter is devoted to the description of an action-research project that provides evidence on the positive results of the implementation of a self-esteem programme with children. Finally, we should note that in the “Appendix” section, apart from the data collection tools used in her study, the author offers a description of activities for promoting learners’ self-esteem, which any second language teacher will most likely find useful and inspiring.

In chapter four, Javier Ávila, teacher at the University of Córdoba and at a secondary school, revisits the theoretical background of the concept of self-esteem from a diachronic perspective. Based on Evans’s (2001) idea that “every decision starts with an emotion”, Ávila (2007: 73) gives the affective component of learning an essential colour in the learning palette, thus, entitling his chapter “Self-Esteem and Second Language Learning: The Essential Colour in the Palette”. The author explores the different “shades” of the concept of self-esteem as related to some affective and cognitive variables of second language learning, such as anxiety, motivation, students’

autonomy, and information processing. The chapter ends with a brief discussion on self-esteem as a salient characteristic of good language learners.

In chapter five, “The Social Dimension of Identity and Self-Esteem in the Foreign Language Classroom”, Sonia Casal, teacher at the University Pablo de Olavide (Seville), goes beyond an individual conception of self-esteem and places the emphasis on the social nature of identity and self-esteem. From the start, she refers to the importance of groups both in an individual’s life and in language learning. The author introduces Tajfel and Turner’s Social Identity Theory, which studies the types of relationship between members of different social categories or groups, and basically concludes that “stereotypes and prejudices tend to arise among groups” (Casal 2007: 96). Aware of these results, Casal recommends minimizing the negative effects shown by this theory by establishing heterogeneous groups that promote learners’ positive interdependence, among others.

Ana M. Ortega, teacher at the University of Jaén, contributes chapter six, “Anxiety and Self-Esteem”, which covers the interrelation between the factor of language anxiety and self-esteem. The chapter opens with a revision of some of the second language acquisition models which include the affective dimension, namely, Krashen’s Monitor Model, Giles and Byrne’s Intergroup Model, Clement’s Social Context Model, or Schumann’s Acculturation Model. The author moves on to explicitly consider self-esteem and anxiety in the second language context by focussing on the relationship of self-esteem with classroom competitiveness and risk-taking. Ortega concludes her valuable contribution by proposing a quite comprehensive set of anxiety-reducing measures, and recommending the use of a socio-constructivist framework in order to deal with language anxiety and low self-esteem.

In chapter seven, entitled “Fostering Teenagers’ Willingness to Learn a Foreign Language”, Carmen Fonseca, Professor at the University of Huelva, and Carmen Toscano, teacher of Spanish language and literature at Harvard University, approach the issue of self-esteem in teenagers. The authors introduce this topic by referring to the most frequent difficulties found in teaching adolescents. Fonseca and Toscano delve further into some affective factors of special relevance in adolescent second language learning, such as motivation, language aptitude, and self-confidence. Particular attention is given to understanding and enhancing the role of the teacher as a facilitator, i.e. the teacher as someone who includes affective factors or learners’ inner processes into the instruction. The last part of this ever-timely issue includes the authors’ proposal of six activities based on each of the six elements of Alistair Smith’s (1999) BASICS model: Belonging, Aspirations, Safety, Identity, Challenge, and Success.

Chapter eight, “Stories and Who we Think we Are”, is the first of the three practical chapters of Part III. In this chapter, Andrew Wright, author, illustrator, storyteller, storymaker, and teacher trainer in over 30 countries, moves into the domain of stories and their role in favouring identity and self-esteem. In this thought-provoking chapter, the author provides a valuable set of guidelines to enhance healthy self-esteem by taking full advantage of stories in the second language classroom. Among these guidelines, Wright includes some recommendations on choosing and adapting stories, he

also provides some interesting ideas for helping children to respond to stories, techniques for promoting learners' story making based on their experience as well as on fiction and fantasy, and finally, he adds a last section on how learners should edit, publish and perform their own stories.

Marina Arcos, ESP teacher at the Polytechnic University of Madrid and researcher on materials development, contributes chapter nine, entitled "Tasks and Activities to Promote Self-Esteem in the Primary English Classroom". Based on a definition of self-esteem as comprising learners' self-value and self-efficacy, the author presents her proposal to deal with self-esteem in the primary English classroom. Arcos strongly suggests an effective management of the classroom by, for example, creating cosy spaces for learners or giving them the opportunity to express their feelings and ideas. The core of the chapter is the proposal of twelve self-esteem-promoting activities and tasks for primary school learners. Arcos arranges them into three main groups, namely, tasks and activities which encourage students to focus on their feelings, values, and attainments; tasks and activities which encourage students to appreciate other people's feelings, values and attainments; and finally, activities which incorporate reading books. Needless to say, in the same way as other chapters in this volume, this one will be of considerable value to those primary second language teachers willing to bring the ideas found in this book to the language classroom.

Chapter ten, "Practical Activities to Promote Teenagers' Self-Esteem in the Foreign Language Classroom", is co-written by Concha Julián, teacher in secondary education and advisor in a teaching training centre, and Eva Díaz, researcher at the University of Huelva and teacher in secondary education. In this chapter, the authors address the issue of self-esteem in secondary education. Based on the above-mentioned Reasoner's (1982) model, the authors propose a set of ten activities to foster self-esteem in the adolescent second language classroom. In each of these activities, the complex nature of adolescent learners is taken into account by putting the emphasis on their competence, belonging, identity, purpose, and security.

As advanced in other parts of the volume (see Arnold 2007: 24), apart from considering learners' self-esteem, teachers should also take care of their own affective dimension. Inmaculada León, a secondary teacher in Badajoz and researcher on teacher confirmation in the English classroom, closes the volume by addressing this issue in chapter eleven, "Teacher's Self-Esteem: The Role of Confirmation". This chapter analyses the issue of teachers' self-esteem from the perspective of teacher confirmation. Confirmation is defined here as "the process by means of which we make others feel valued, recognized, and acknowledged" (León 2007: 192). This is a reciprocal process, i.e. teachers should be confirmed by others in their schools, and learners should be confirmed by teachers themselves. The situation of a teacher affects the situation of his/her learners. After considering the opinions of four secondary school language teachers on these aspects, León includes some recommendations to enhance teachers' self-esteem. Finally, the author provides a scale that contains teachers' behaviour perceived by learners as confirming or disconfirming.

RESEÑAS

All in all, the volume constitutes a must-read in any graduate course in Applied Linguistics and foreign language education programme. The references at the end of each chapter attest to the extensive scholarship on display in the book. Superbly documented, neatly organized, and clearly written, *Self-Esteem and Foreign Language Learning* comes out as an excellent and stimulating contribution to the forgotten study of the influence of affective variables on language learning.

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