NEW CHAPTER PUBLISHED

A Greek Tragedy: Understanding and Challenging 'the Known' From a Complexity Perspective

I am happy to announce that a paper I have written is due to appear in an edited collection, which will be published by Palgrave in November 2014.

The book

The volume, edited by Damian Rivers, is titled Resistance to the Known: Counter-Conduct in Foreign Language Education, and it sets out to critically challenge aspects of the established methodological 'orthodoxy' in Foreign Language Education ('the Known'). The collection is made up of nine contributions, as follows:

PART I: Countering micro-processes in local contexts
1. Language-Learner Tourists in Australia: Problematizing 'the Known' and its Impact on Interculturality (Phiona Stanley)
2. A Greek Tragedy: Understanding and Challenging 'the Known' From a Complexity Perspective (Achilleas Kostoulas)
3. Symbolic Violence and Pedagogical Abuse in the Language Classroom (Jacquie Widin)

PART II: Countering macro-processes in national contexts
5. On the Challenge of Teaching English in Latin America with Special Emphasis on Brazil (Kanavillil Rajagopalan)
6. Dialogizing 'the Known': Experience of English Teaching in Japan Through an Assay of Derivatives as a Dominant Motif (Glenn Toh)
7. The Impossibility of Defining and Measuring Intercultural Competencies (Karin Zotzmann)
8. Transcending Language Subject Boundaries Through Language Teacher Education (Suzanne Burley & Cathy Pumphrey)
9. English-as-Panacea: Untangling Ideology from Experience in Compulsory English Education in Japan (Julian Pigott)

My chapter

In my contribution, I synthesise empirical data and post-modern theorisations in order to develop a critical perspective of how English Language Teaching (ELT) is practiced in Greece, and to make suggestions for moving beyond it.

In the first part of the chapter, I discuss how language teaching can be conceptualised as a complex adaptive system. I briefly outline the background of Complex Systems Theory, and explain how it can serve as a useful lens for understanding phenomena in Foreign Language Education. To support this claim, I argue that Foreign Language Education
displays three properties of complex adaptive systems, namely open-ness, non-linearity and emergence.

The second section of the chapter draws on data from my doctoral research, a case study of a language school in Greece. I argue that language education is driven by the interplay of two intentionalities, credentialism and protectionism. Of these, credentialism is primarily associated with communicative language teaching, whereas protectionism valorises practices derived from local pedagogical traditions. The interplay of these intentionalities leads to the emergence of a distinctive transmissive mode of Foreign Language Education, which I exemplify with reference to grammar teaching.

Finally, in the third section, I problematise the linguistic, pedagogical and political implications of the Known. I argue that a complexity-informed perspective allows us to move past the Known in two ways: Firstly, it provides us with a conceptual toolkit for understanding the situated processes from which the Known comes into being. Building on this, I make the case for more complexity-informed action research into local settings. Secondly, it offers hints as to how change might be effected in the Known, and calls for moving beyond it in ways that focus on the particular, are praxis-oriented, and have an emancipatory outlook.

The Author

Achilleas Kostoulas is an early-career academic, currently working towards the completion of his PhD in The University of Manchester (UK). His thesis reports on a complexity-informed ethnographic cases study of English Language Teaching in Greece, which is seen against a backdrop of globalization. More information about his professional background and publications can be found in his website: www.achilleaskostoulas.com

Contact details and additional information

Author's email: achilleas@kostoulas.com


Amazon listing: http://www.amazon.com/Resistance-Known-Counter-Conduct-Language-Education/dp/1137345187/