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Julia Hammer. *Die Auswirkungen der Globalisierung auf den modernen Fremdsprachenunterricht. Globale Herausforderungen als Lernziele und Inhalte des fortgeschrittenen Englischunterrichts. Are We Facing the Future?* Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2012. Hb. 370pp. €45.00. ISBN 978-3-8253-6101-3.

One should not judge a book by its title. The title's somehow baroque opulence, including an English addendum, may suggest a long-winded study covering vast, proliferating areas of 'global issues' as they are called in the parlance of today's *didactics*. However, quite the contrary is the case. By singling out and defining a number of key global issues, the author quite successfully engages in a focused and cogent evaluation and assessment of a select number of contemporary textbooks by major publishers. As the catchphrase "Are We Facing the Future?" implies, this is first and foremost a study based on the widespread assumption – reflected in all curricula in the German *Länder* – that English language teaching at school can and should no longer focus only on the 'core countries,' those of the "inner circle" (Kachru) which were once privileged as the almost exclusively taught 'target cultures.'

Within the last decade the content (*Inhalte*) of EFL in Germany has been thoroughly revised, now including what used to be dubbed 'the New English Cultures' (in Germany there would be a preference for Australia, New Zealand, Canada, India, South Africa, and occasionally the Caribbean). Analyzing the latest curricula (as Hammer does), one can clearly see the shift towards transcultural issues and content matter, with English serving as a lingua franca in the 'global village.' This shift, of course, has enormous repercussions with regard to pertinent question of what literature(s), what culture(s), and what topics are taught in EFL. It has brought with it, as Habermas would call it, *eine neue Unübersichtlichkeit*, confusion and uncertainties, especially considering the question of what exactly should be taught. Anything is deemed teachable, it seems, as long as it is written in English (no matter by whom) and deals with some kind of 'global issue,' furthering 'global education' and 'transcultural competence' – which are all, to my mind and in the final analysis, extremely vague expressions, similar to co-terminus buzz words such as 'soft skills' and 'procedural knowledge' (knowledge which can be applied in the real world).

Any doctoral dissertation or, for that matter, any book on the issues referred to above and in the title of Hammer's book are, in accordance with academic

traditions, obliged to outline and discuss the various underlying discourse fields and concepts. Having to discuss issues such as global education, intercultural and transcultural learning can be a tedious labor of love, making sure one includes all the relevant aspects and all the major contributors to the various discussions. Yet, the theoretical framework for the main part of Hammer's study provides, in spite of its relative length of about one third of the study, for interesting reading and can be recommended for all those who want to be informed both about the latest ramifications of inter- and transcultural learning debates as well as about how 'global education' in all its manifold terminological variations is featured in curricula.

The heart of this study consists of five chapters (Chapters 4 to 8) which all present evaluations and assessments (*Lehrwerkanalyse*) of current textbook material (that is, coursebooks, *Schülerbücher*) according to a set of finely elaborated criteria. Textbooks are scrutinized as to their topic-relatedness, their content, and the teaching-learning methods and techniques suggested in them – all with regard to five topic fields of globalization or global learning. These were, of course, defined in the theoretical part with reference to those topic areas suggested in curricula and discussed in publications by German EFL scholars as well as by international experts on 'global education.' In each of the five chapters, Hammer first elaborates on the complexities of the aspect of global learning under discussion: migration, multiculturalism, economic and ecological interrelatedness, English as lingua franca, intercultural communication, and cultural identity. She then takes a thorough look at textbooks discussing just how textbooks deal with the issue under discussion. To use one example: The issue of multiculturalism or multicultural societies is first discussed with regard to seminal questions of strategies and practices of segregation, assimilation and integration, racism, terror, war, but also forms of living together peacefully. This is completed by quantitative and qualitative analyses. Graphs visually reveal to what degree or percentage a certain topic – here multiculturalism – is featured in the 27 textbooks analyzed (covering the three-tier German school system). While these graphs may look fancy, the qualitative analysis appears much more thorough, with a good eye for details, and gleaning interesting findings.

While for many years, textbook analyses, especially as projects in the form of doctoral dissertations, revealed severe shortcomings and deficiencies in the areas of national, ethnic, racial, and gender stereotypes (textbooks often projected sanitized images of middle-class life in the target cultures, with, as the joke goes in EFL circles, the token Indian corner shop or the odd divorced couple 'thrown in'), Julia Hammer confirms what has so far been only surmised – that there is, indeed, a positive trend and that instances of stereotyping or lopsided and slanted presentations are very rare in contemporary textbooks. All in all,

her bottom line is that textbook editors and publishers should be given a good report card, maybe not with ‘straight As,’ but with a ‘much improvement has been made’ remark. Taking up her initial question “Are We Facing the Future,” the last line of her book ends with laudatory remarks: “The English textbooks are preparing for a future in a global world” (315).

Julia Hammer has demonstrated how textbooks reflect the recent shift away from concepts of target cultures and *Landeskunde* knowledge to ‘exemplary learning’ of key issues of global significance (a concept, by the way, which was suggested by Klafki a generation ago, as Hammer rightly observes). For better or for worse, this opening up of what was once a clearly demarcated zone of learning – Culture with a capital C in native-speaker core countries – offers new opportunities of tackling in class locally and globally highly relevant challenges. Textbooks do provide material for this task. However, as the author might have stressed more poignantly, textbooks with their tendency to present texts, authentic ones or not, in artificial contexts, should never be the only source of teaching/learning. Hammer, after all, may have inadvertently revealed a new dilemma: if textbooks have improved so much, the tendency to rely on them to a great degree or even exclusively may even increase.