VALENTIN WERNER & FRIEDERIKE TEGGE (ED.) (2021). POP CULTURE IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION: THEORY, RESEARCH, PRACTICE. Routledge.

Review by **Grace Yue Qi**
Massey University

Pop culture in language education provides rich insights into the nexus between language and culture, acknowledging the diverse range of linguistic and cultural artifacts in pop culture that can be used in language education. This edited volume reflects on pop culture in language education through four inter-related parts: 1) the language of pop culture and language skills areas; 2) pop culture and classroom practice; 3) beyond the classroom; and 4) sociocultural and culture-critical considerations.

Werner and Tegge (Chapter One) suggest that researchers need to be open-minded in the way they approach research in this area, and that pop-culture needs to be broadly conceptualised. Each section of the chapter is introduced with authentic language from pop culture artifacts (movies, fictions, games etc.). The authors engage readers with a range of perspectives of pop culture in transdisciplinary research and outline and critically discuss the chapters that follow.

Drawing upon corpora and data of spontaneous speech in natural conversation and media dialogue, Bruti (Chapter Two) investigates words frequently used by teens, such as *gonna* and *wanna*, *fuck, shit, dude*, and *totally*. This study highlights the importance of using authentic materials in language classrooms as they reflect real-world usage, and the language students use in their own lives. The study revealed the effectiveness of the materials for motivating learners of English as a foreign language and for further developing their critical thinking skills, as well as their communicative competence and multiliteracies.

Bednarek, in Chapter Three, based on her examination of the common use of swear/taboo words by English native speakers in American TV series and media dialogues, warns us to be mindful of their appropriateness in other contexts such as educational settings, personal lives and around young learners. In Chapter Four, from an analysis of 160 North American rap songs, Tegge and Coxhead discuss the suitability of rap music for language learners because of the lexical demands and varieties of language used (e.g., dialects, local languages and language variations). Chapters Three and Four provide insights into language use in youth culture and how it functions to support learners in developing a critical awareness of their own language and cultural identities.

Werner, in Chapter Five, advocates for the teaching of grammar through pop culture texts, despite the frequent occurrence of informal/non-standard forms. The study reminds us of Larsen-Freeman's (2011) idea of a 'grammar of choice' to accept the grammatical variation driven and guided pragmatically by contextualised language in use.

Part Two offers practical guidance for teachers in using pop culture in the classroom. Rucynski (Chapter Six) illustrates the connections between theory and practice in his discussion of a course design informed by CLIL principles and studies of humour. The course encourages students in a Japanese university to explore the intersection of humour and social issues embedded in *The Simpsons.* Drawing upon a student-centred approach, Rucynski articulates his processes of course design, implementation and evaluation, along with his reflections. Chapter Seven by Issa discusses a practical approach for integrating comics and political cartoons in an Arabic language classroom, an approach he argues is well-received by students who find it stimulating and motivational. Issa also provides comics and cartoons with English translations and websites as a resource for teachers to draw on.

The concept of 'eco-songs' is examined in Chapter Eight where Summer outlines how songs in different genres can be used to raise awareness of environmental sustainability. The inquiry-based approach encourages meaningful sociolinguistic analysis, as well as discussions and 'fun' language practice through activities such as singing and producing songs. Peirson-Smith and Miller, in Chapter Nine, report on a course design which provides students with scaffolded support to analyse and recognise how pop culture encompasses aspects of everyday life. Through a detailed analysis of student comments on Facebook, they conclude that student interaction is natural, and that Facebook enables students to engage with one another on a range of different topics. This chapter also illustrates the crucial role that learner agency plays in empowering learners to take ownership of their learning through self-exploration and critical discussion.

Trotta (Chapter Ten) considers the pros and cons of researching language embedded in pop culture and highlights the paucity of research in this area which he argues is in part due to a lack of support for novice researchers. Trotta contends that the inevitable complexity in research design and data collected from pop culture should not prevent researchers from contributing new knowledge to this emerging field.

In Part Three, Pai and Duff (Chapter 11) conduct a critical review of the literature and empirical studies on the innovative use of pop culture in teaching both in and outside the classroom. Examples are provided which demonstrate how culture

can be incorporated in materials in Cantonese and Mandarin at a Canadian university. Chapters 12 (Bollansée, Puimège and Peters) and 13 (Rodgers and Heidt) demonstrate positive outcomes in terms of vocabulary development through incorporating pop culture in teaching. For example, Bollansée et al. suggest that young learners aged 11-12 can effectively acquire extramural English vocabulary through watching non-subtitled TV shows and gaming, whereas Rodgers and Heidt illustrate the effectiveness of gaming for language learning, while also noting that this is dependent on the coverage and level of words used in the game.

An intervention study by Sauro and Thorne in Chapter 14 explores fandom-based curricula design for L2 learning in a teacher education course. Fandom is an increasingly common subculture, whereby an aspect of pop culture attracts a group of enthusiastic fans. The authors reflect on the process of engaging pre-service teachers in the (re)design and (re)implementation of fanfiction for creative writing. It is argued that the process is helpful for pre-service teachers in experiencing and developing an awareness of the potential for integrating pop culture in their future classrooms.

Part Four synthesises critical discussion on key theoretical concepts underpinning sociolinguistics. The notion of authenticity discussed by Moody in Chapter 15 draws on Kachru's (1985) model of world Englishes where 'acts of authenticity' are advocated. The actors of pop culture can only *project* a feature of language based on their interpretation, imagination and creation. However, their act may not be accepted by the other users of the language. The goal of 'acts of authenticity' as stated by Moody is to respond to "language in pop culture as acts of authenticity for audiences to authenticate (or reject) as appropriate or inappropriate within the constraints of media in respective pop culture markets" (p. 253). Concerning the concept of 'investment' (Norton, 2013), Ibrahim in Chapter 16 promotes a major theoretical shift from "learning" into "investment" and from "language" and "grammar" into "discourse" and "media" (p. 257). Ibrahim suggests that teaching and learning should become a type of critical discourse analysis to help people make sense of their lives, words and being human. The final chapter analyses Korean popular culture (K-pop) through critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970) and proposes a three-step discussion model designed to support development of academic and critical literacy competence. Teachers use artifacts of pop culture to support students in critical discussions of vocabulary, and in being able to negotiate meaning with other students. This study values pop culture in motivating students to critically reflect on their lived experience, knowledge and social realities.

In summary, *Pop culture in language education* makes a strong case for adopting a sociolinguistic theoretical lens, and for facilitating critical discussion of theory

and practice on integrating pop culture in language classrooms and beyond. Through unpacking and exploiting an array of pop artifacts and by employing different methodological approaches, each chapter in the volume encourages researchers and practitioners to value and explore the potential of pop culture to benefit language learners in a variety of enticing and ground-breaking ways.

References

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