

Preface

This two-volume handbook provides a comprehensive examination of policy, practice, research, and theory related to English language teaching (ELT) in international contexts. Nearly 70 chapters highlight the research foundation for the best practices, frameworks for policy decisions, and areas of consensus and controversy in the teaching and development of English as a second and/or additional language for kindergarten through to adult speakers of languages other than English. In doing so it problematizes traditional dichotomies and challenges the very terms that provide the traditional foundations of the field.

A wide range of terms has been used to refer to the key players involved in the teaching and learning of the English language and to the enterprise of English language teaching as a whole. At various times and in different contexts, the following labels have been used in countries where English is the dominant language to describe programs, learners, or teachers of English: *English as a second language* (ESL), *English as an additional language* (EAL), *limited English proficient* (LEP), and *English language learners* (ELL). In contexts where English is not the dominant language, the following terms have been used: *English as a foreign language* (EFL), *English as an international language* (EIL), and *English as a lingua franca* (ELF). The international professional organization that supports and advocates for English language teaching calls itself *Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages* (TESOL) and the term *English to speakers of other languages* (ESOL) is also used in some contexts around the world to refer to programs, students, and teachers.

None of these labels is sociopolitically neutral; they each highlight certain features of the phenomenon of English language teaching and those who engage in it, and de-emphasize other features. For example, all of the labels listed above foreground *English* as the focus of attention, thereby obscuring the fact that the learners are bilingual or multilingual with fully functioning abilities in their home languages. This risks contributing to a deficit view of the learner, particularly in English-speaking contexts involving immigrant and refugee students. The term *limited English proficient* used by the US federal government is particularly problematic in this regard. Other terms are problematic for different reasons; for

example, *ESL* makes the assumption, rooted in a monolingual perspective, that English is the second language of the student whereas in reality it may be the third, fourth, or fifth language that an individual has learned. *ELL* is currently the favored term among many professional organizations and educational agencies in North America but it obscures some key differences between programs for English mother tongue learners and those who are learning English as an additional language.

Attempts to use ‘positive’ terminology to refer to students and programs can also be problematic. For example, in the United Kingdom students have frequently been referred to as *bilingual* learners but this label obscures the fact that many of these students are still in great need of English language development (and were usually afforded few opportunities and little encouragement for mother tongue maintenance). In the United States, advocates for bilingual programs and some educational agencies have frequently referred to students as *bilingual* or *bilingual/bicultural*; however, it is arguable that this labeling may have contributed to the widespread assumption among the media and some policy-makers and educators that bilingualism represents a linguistic deficit and that the bilingual student is ‘limited English proficient.’ In contexts where English is not the dominant language, the label *EFL* has traditionally been used but *EIL* and *ELF* have been promoted as alternatives. The latter is seen as a much more accurate sociolinguistic descriptor to describe many learning and teaching situations outside predominantly English-speaking countries. The problem with adopting all such labels, however, is that by definition they create a single category in which people from many different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, language levels, socio-economic positions, aspirations, and perceived identities are treated as a collectivity.

In this handbook we have not attempted to reconcile this multiplicity of identities and ideologies; rather, we have generally remained faithful to whatever term has been provided by the author of each chapter, assuming that it is an accurate reflection of their context and history, with the exception of the term *LEP* which we have generally changed to *ESL* or *ELL*. The field as a whole, in all its richness and diversity, we have called *English language teaching* (ELT), despite the limitations of the term, hence the title of this handbook. As this discussion of labels illustrates, language intersects with societal power relations in multiple and complex ways and this reality is reflected in the entire field of English language teaching. Thus, it is not surprising that many of the chapters in this handbook explore the ideological dimensions of ELT and their implications for language policies and classroom practice.

The handbook is intended to provide a unique resource for policy makers, educational administrators, teacher educators and researchers concerned with meeting the increasing demand for effective English language teaching while, at the same time, supporting institutions and communities concerned with the survival and development of languages other than English. Its publication is timely in view of the continuing spread of English as a global language and the associated expansion of ELT in countries around the world. Policy decisions regarding ELT that will be made during the next five years will influence the lives of individuals and the development of societies for the next 25 years or more. Policies and practices relating to ELT are, unfortunately, just as likely to be motivated by political pressure backed up by plausible but flawed assumptions as they are by research and careful evaluation of alternative options. For example, many parents and policy makers just assume that earlier and more intensive instruction will result in higher levels of

English proficiency. As the research reviewed in this handbook demonstrates, this assumption is not necessarily valid—the issues are considerably more complex than the rush to English would suggest.

Even a cursory examination of the spread of English demonstrates the ecological nature of the phenomenon. The introduction or expansion of English language teaching in any particular environment exerts multidimensional influences on the status and even prospects for survival of other languages in that environment. Social and linguistic groups within these environments are similarly affected—either advantaged or disadvantaged—by the policies adopted in relation to English.

To illustrate, it is clear that in countries around the world, English is replacing other languages as the second language taught most frequently and intensively in school. The perceived social and economic rewards associated with English have propelled parents to demand earlier and more intensive teaching of English. For example, in Japan, pilot projects have been instituted to start teaching English in the primary grades. In Hong Kong there is spirited public debate about the value of English-medium education and the most appropriate age to start learning English. English-medium universities are expanding rapidly in traditionally non-English speaking contexts, not just through the establishment of off-shore campuses, but through local universities shifting to English as the main language of instruction. For example, universities in mainland China have been required to teach 10% of their curriculum in English since 2004; in Japan entire degree programs are being offered in English in an attempt to maintain student numbers as the university-age population rapidly dwindles. In Norway and Sweden English is rapidly displacing the national languages as the medium of teaching and learning in science and engineering faculties. Finland has the largest proportion of higher education courses taught in English outside English-speaking countries. In the European community in general, there are concerns that the drive to teach English is turning it into the *de facto* official language of the new Europe. Similar developments and debates about the accelerating spread of English are underway in countries around the world. Expansion and intensification of ELT by means of an earlier start, increased time allotment, and experimentation with immersion and bilingual or trilingual programs are evident both in private sector and public sector schools in many countries.

Demand for English has also escalated among adult learners including immigrants to English-speaking countries, business people involved in the global economy, and those who just want to travel as tourists. In many countries, large-scale ELT programs for adult learners have been established in the community and workplace as a result of the globalization of the workforce, the perceived need to increase economic competitiveness, and a move towards life-long learning.

In some contexts, English has displaced not only competing second languages but also first languages. In many former British colonies and other recently independent countries in Africa and Asia, for example, English is used almost exclusively as the medium of instruction in schools, thereby constricting the institutional space available for indigenous languages and creating immense challenges for students to learn academic content through a language they do not understand. Is this the best policy option? What are the alternatives? Who benefits from these policies and who is disadvantaged? Clearly, policies and practices associated with English language teaching must be considered not only in relation to effectiveness and efficiency but also with respect to the moral dimensions of decisions and initiatives. Who benefits from particular expenditures of resources and

what are the hidden costs with respect to what these resources might have been spent on? Is external aid for language teaching programs promoting the development of home-grown expertise or inducing long-term dependency on external support? In short, power and status relationships between social groups both within and across societies are intertwined in obvious ways with language teaching policies and practices.

Increased focus on English language teaching has also occurred in countries where English is the dominant language. Many English-speaking countries have experienced dramatic increases in immigration during the past 30 years (e.g. the United States, Australia, and Canada). For example, about 40% of students in California have learned English as a second language and 25% of these are classified as *limited English proficient* by government agencies. In Canada, about 50% of students in the Toronto and Vancouver urban areas have learned English as an additional language. In Australia, more than 25% of the population use a language other than English as the main language of communication in the home. The rapid spread of the new knowledge economies and the decline in demand for traditional manual labor are creating even greater pressure for newcomer populations to be highly proficient in English. There is also much more transmigration with people moving to English-speaking countries for temporary periods seeking further education and/or work, a trend accelerated by developments such as the expansion of the European Union. The number of foreign university students in the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada has increased steadily during the past 20 years.

Increasing cultural and linguistic diversity in English-dominant countries has given rise to concerns among some groups that English might be under threat from competing languages. These concerns have given rise to fierce debates, often with racist overtones, about how English should be taught to immigrant and second generation children as well as adults. In several US states, for example, referenda have mandated that only English be used in schools for instructional purposes. The goal has been to restrict or eliminate bilingual programs that are seen as conferring status on other languages. Clearly, debates on language policy issues in many countries have been characterized by the confounding of ideological and research-based perspectives. There is considerable research that can inform policy in these areas but it is frequently ignored and/or distorted as a result of entrenched ideological positions.

The *International Handbook of English Language Teaching* provides authoritative perspectives on these issues from many of the leading researchers, theorists, and policy-makers around the world. The handbook synthesizes the interdisciplinary knowledge base for effective decision making and highlights directions for implementing appropriate language policies at both instructional and societal levels. Each volume is divided into three main sections and chapters are clustered to address common topics and themes. The focus of Volume I is on *Policies and Programs in ELT: Changing Demands and Directions* while Volume II addresses *Language, Learning and Identity in ELT: Reconceptualizing the Field*.

Volume I includes a critical examination of current policies and programs in a variety of contexts around the world (Section 1). The chapters in this section identify empirical, theoretical, and ideological foundations of ELT policies and their effects on learners and organizational structures. Section 2 of this Volume focuses specifically on the development of curriculum content for ELT programs and the

pedagogical approaches that have been implemented to teach this content, while Section 3 examines policies and practices in assessment and evaluation. All of these dimensions of ELT—curriculum content, pedagogy, assessment, and evaluation—involve complex sets of decisions made by multiple actors (e.g. policy makers, curriculum developers, publishers, teachers, parents, researchers) who interact with each other in dynamic and often unpredictable ways. Increasingly, these actors span the international stage. Initiatives adopted in one or more contexts (e.g. standards-based curriculum development and high-stakes testing) influence decisions taken elsewhere, often through the mediation of international experts who consult with publishers and government agencies to identify ‘best practices.’ The chapters in all three sections of Volume I highlight the complex interplay between global and local perspectives and the need for policy decisions that take account of local linguistic contexts rather than just importing formulaic “off-the-shelf” solutions that may be highly inappropriate for a particular context.

In Volume II, the focus shifts to the changing conceptions of the learner, the teacher, the learning environment, and the English language itself that are implied by particular approaches to program development, curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment. *Identity* has emerged as a key construct in recent research and theory within ELT, reflecting the fact that learners and teachers are engaged in multiple social relationships both with each other and with peers and colleagues. Learning is conceived as a social endeavor rather than simply an individualistic cognitive and linguistic process. Identities are being constantly negotiated as learners learn language and this process of identity negotiation is strongly influenced by patterns of power relationships in the broader society. Language itself is being reconceptualized as a result of this process, with an increasing concern with shifting and emerging genres and multimodal texts. The final chapters focus on the development of the ELT profession in a broad sense, both in terms of cutting edge research and in terms of teacher growth and change in an increasingly complex and demanding global environment.

The spread of English is often presented as an inexorable and natural expansion, outside the control of government and non-government agencies, similar to the ideology of ‘manifest destiny’ that rationalized US imperialist expansion in the 19th and 20th centuries. At the same time its teaching is often assumed to be an inherent good, or at the other extreme, vilified as a threat to fragile and precarious linguistic ecologies. Our hope is that this handbook will, in some way, contribute to building the knowledge base and capability of various agencies and individuals to direct and control this expansion and shape its impact on complex and multiple linguistic and pedagogic communities, both local and global. Effectiveness and efficiency of ELT, and provision of equitable opportunities to all learners to acquire English (and other languages), are clearly important goals embedded throughout the handbook. However, informed and careful planning in ELT needs to focus not only on maximizing such elements in an increasingly complex, shifting and changing environment, but on ensuring balance and harmony among multiple elements. This is also a central goal of this handbook.

International Handbook of English Language Teaching

Cummins, J.; Davison, C. (Eds.)

2007, LVI, 1201 p. In 2 volumes, not available

separately., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-0-387-46300-1