



The Goals and Focus of the English Language Teaching Program: Section Introduction

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Abstract

Contributors in this section discuss what English language curricula need to encompass in response to increasingly complex and challenging teaching contexts. Language curricula need to build on emerging theorizations of English language, which are influenced by a multilingual, translanguaging turn, to appreciate the significance of making use of multiple linguistic resources in the language learning process. On this view, tailor-made curricula need to be prepared and developed for teaching young language learners. Language curricula should recognize language learners' multilingual resources and encourage the use of translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy. Language curricula should also promote intercultural competence and critical literacy, while they are expected to provide pedagogical framing and content orientation for English as an additional language/dialect students with the linguistic resources for academic studies in secondary schools and tertiary settings. In addition, language curricula need to be developed to foster workplace-related language skills and competence.

Keywords

Translanguaging · World Englishes · Intercultural competence · Critical literacy · ESP

Chapters in the first edition of this handbook questioned the assumption that many people have about the goal of English language teaching programs. They drew attention to the role of context in mediating English language development and

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causing English language educators to shift their pedagogical foci. Some of the chapters highlighted the significance of interaction as a means for language learners to develop their language, while others drew on theorizations of identity and agency to construct the kind of language pedagogy needed to empower language learners. These chapters presented increasingly sophisticated understandings of what language learners would like to pursue in learning English, and how language pedagogy can help these learners achieve these. They confirm that the goals of English language teaching are often shifting and dynamic in response to emerging contextual needs.

The chapters in this section side-step any simplistic assumptions about what needs to be achieved in English language teaching. Like those in the first edition, these chapters look into what English language curricula need to encompass in response to increasingly complex situations for communication. As language use is closely tied to particular social functions, language teachers need to prepare English language learners and equip them with the linguistic resources and skills for competent performance in specific communicative events. Further to what was covered in the first edition of this handbook, language teachers are also urged to consider other important pedagogical goals, as proposed by the contributors in this section.

In the first chapter, Zheng and Gao contend the need to recontextualize models of intercultural competence for promotion in English language teaching in a Chinese context. Considering the fact that intercultural competence is a complex, fluid, and elusive construct, researchers and teachers have yet to agree about how intercultural competence should be promoted in English language teaching. It has been widely acknowledged that it is problematic to assume “native speakers” as the model intercultural communicators for English language learners to imitate. Zheng and Gao advocate a model of intercultural competence built on the notion of “productive bilingualism,” in which English language learners strengthen their own cultural identities and develop additional cultural identities through learning English (e.g., Gao 2014). The pedagogical efforts as described in the chapter may be of interest to those who have concerns similar to those of Zheng and Gao, but who nevertheless wish to promote intercultural competence in English language teaching.

As with Zheng and Gao, the chapter by Saraceni is a critique of the idea that learning English means imitating “native speakers” and learning to use English like them. He elaborates his critique in three historical waves, including the World Englishes paradigm, the advancement of English as a lingua franca, and a multilingual turn. The first two paradigms question the dominance of “native speaker” varieties in English language teaching. To contest this dominance, the World Englishes paradigm celebrates the emergence of regional or local varieties of English as possible alternatives to the “native speaker” varieties, while English as lingua franca scholars would like to see English language learners prepared for interaction with other non-native speakers and native speakers (e.g., Kirkpatrick 2007). The recent “multilingual turn” in language learning research highlights the full range of linguistic resources that language learners have in their multilingual repertoire. It questions the boundaries that are often assumed to differentiate languages and draws attention to the possibility of facilitating language learners to utilize these linguistic

resources in pursuing effective communication. All these paradigm shifts call for language teachers to reconceptualize what is to be taught in classrooms. In the light of the multilingual turn in language, Saraceni forcefully argues the need to reconsider the boundaries of languages and affirm the significance of the linguistic resources that language learners bring with them in learning English.

The chapter by Hardigree and Ronan presents an approach that views multilingual language learners not as individuals with multiple, bounded linguistic skills, but as individuals with an expanding repertoire of linguistic resources and skills. Drawing on a “translanguaging” approach (Li 2018), they contend that traditional language pedagogy should be questioned for failing to use all of the language learners’ linguistic resources and suggest that pedagogical shifts need to take place to give language learners opportunities to use their linguistic resources in achieving their goals. In the chapter they document such a pedagogical attempt to illustrate how translanguaging pedagogies can be effectively implemented and how they can promote linguistic equity in different contexts.

Aside from the kind of language that should be taught in English language teaching, Abedina and Crookes promote the integration of critical literacy in language teaching. They present a historical narrative of critical literacy, including its penetration into the field of applied linguistics and its emergence as a major pedagogical goal. They also review relevant practices of critical literacy in different contexts and document how they implement the promotion of critical literacy. The chapter outlines a set of clear pedagogical procedures and steps that individual teachers can take, but it also critically reflects on the challenges that teachers may encounter when implementing critical literacy in teaching. Fully aware of challenges English language teachers may face, Abedina and Crookes encourage all teachers to make an effort because teachers have to use their initiatives to try different versions of critical literacy in places where language teachers are highly controlled by schools and government institutions.

In response to the rising need to teach English to young language learners (Butler et al. 2018), Rixon suggests how curricula for teaching English to young language learners can be developed and how different curricula can be devised to cater for young language learners’ needs in specific settings. Teaching young language learners requires different curricula from that for adult learners as the curricula for young language learners need to be “child-friendly,” but they should be also easier for teachers to communicate with parents and other stakeholders in a given community. In addition, learning activities as promoted by these curricula need to have sufficient cognitive, educational, and cultural value, so that young language learners can learn and develop. Rixon emphasizes that the success of these curricula partly depends on how English language teachers, parents, and other stakeholders in education interact with each other effectively to build up an effective education system. Successful implementation also relies on continuous teacher education and resource allocation in the education system.

The chapters by Leung and Arkoudis and Harris address the critical issue of integrating learners of English as an additional language (EAL) or dialect (EAD) into the mainstream secondary and tertiary curriculum in English-speaking contexts such

as California, England, and Australia. Leung highlights the multidimensionality of the EAL label in EAL curricula and practice, as it evokes linguistic, educational, social, and even political connotations. Drawing on recent studies in California and England, Leung argues that EAL learners are yet to be properly understood because of the complexity of their experiences. It is necessary to further develop relevant EAL curricula and pedagogies in response to the multidimensionality of EAL learners in mainstream schooling.

Likewise, Arkoudis and Harris address the concerns of English as an additional language or dialect (EALD) learners in Australia's English-medium universities. Despite the variety of program support that these learners receive in universities, it is uncertain whether they graduate from Australian universities with sufficient English language skills and competence for employment. For this reason, there is a need for universities to identify, monitor, and evaluate best practices for such language support programs. The chapter provides a framework that helps universities adopt and strengthen evidence for best practice, so that EAL/D graduates can achieve satisfactory English language standards and put themselves in a more favorable position in the increasingly competitive market.

To help English language learners develop the required linguistic skills for academic studies and employment, English for specific purposes (ESP) has emerged as a specialist domain of enquiry. The chapter by Hyland elucidates the ideas and research inputs foundational to the development of ESP as a specialism. It recounts major practices that are highly influential in ESP development, including needs analysis, intercultural rhetoric, and discourse analysis. The chapter notes that language teachers working in ESP are encouraged to pay more attention to discourse than to language, to become much more informed about relevant research in teaching, and to adopt collaborative pedagogies (with teachers in other disciplines). Language teachers are also made much more aware of variations in discourses and the implications of their teaching. Hyland contends convincingly that ESP teaching promotes a situated view of literacy practice that language learners need to develop for professional and academic purposes. This situated view of literacy practice can be illustrated by Lockwood's chapter on language use in workplaces in Hong Kong and the Philippines. The chapter remains largely unchanged from the previous edition, highlighting how research on workplace language use can contribute significantly to the planning and development of ESP programs that prepare language learners for the increasingly globalized business operations.

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