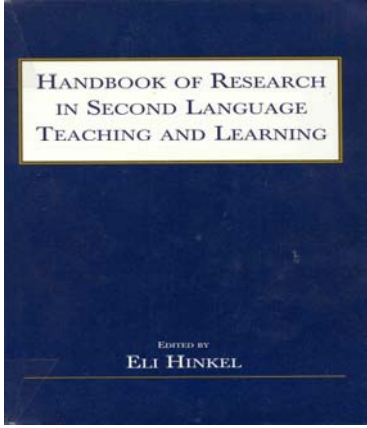*Handbook of Research in Second Language Teaching and Learning*
Eli Hinkel (Ed.). (2005)
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Language teaching and learning as an important field of academic as well as pedagogical inquiry has been developing at an enormously rapid rate in the last few decades. As Howartt (2004) writes, the beginning of English language teaching is only part of the language teaching enterprise in modern times. Methods for language teaching and many other aspects related to language teaching and research naturally have been imbued with this rapidity with which practitioners have engaged themselves in carrying out professional activities (Richards & Rodgers, 2004). These various activities reflect a wide range of professional interests spanning ESL, ESP, EAP, EFL, content-based language instruction and many other activities related to teaching languages other than English. *The Handbook of Research in Second Language Teaching and Learning* (Lawrence Erlbaum handbook series) is a timely publication that systematically presents those areas of professional interests in one volume.

Eli Hinkel should be hailed for her initiative and effort to have brought scholars together to have produced an impressive piece of work that will be frequently consulted. As can be seen, renowned scholars as well as new stars, both native English-speaker and non-native English-speaker writers in the field, have contributed to the book. This 1144-page volume consists of 57 chapters which are organised in 8 thematically sequenced parts. These parts stand out as unique but inter-related strands of language teaching. The 8 parts are (1) important social contexts in research on second language teaching and learning; (2) methods in second language research; (3) applied linguistics and second language research; (4) second language processes and development; (5) methods and curricula in second language teaching; (6) second language testing and assessment; (7) identity, culture, and critical pedagogy in second language teaching and learning; and (8) language planning and policy and language rights.

Part I addresses important social contexts in research into second language teaching and learning. It comprises 9 chapters (chapters 1-9), covering bilingual education, matters relating to ESL in elementary, secondary and adult education settings, ESP, EAP, EFL and issues related to teaching world Englishes.

Within 5 chapters (chapters 10-14), Part II examines methods in second language research, including ethnography, case study, classroom research, action research and various other qualitative research methods.

Part III (chapters 15-22) reviews and discusses more macro-level issues under the heading of "applied linguistics and second language acquisition" (SLA). Pica's chapter (chapter 15) begins this part with a review of SLA and applied linguistics, followed by McKay's chapter (chapter 16) on sociolinguistics and SLA. Pragmatics, sociocultural theory, conversation analysis, contrastive rhetoric and corpus linguistics are next presented in connection with second language teaching and learning.

Part IV is more inclined towards micro perspectives in terms of the approaches adopted by the writers of the 12 chapters (chapters 23-34). It is in this part that second language processes and development are presented carefully. Contending issues such as age, cognitive considerations, fossilization, output hypothesis, literacy and biliteracy are discussed, and the traditionally well-known skills (listening, speaking, reading, vocabulary, writing and grammar) are also thoroughly surveyed.

Part V looks at methods and curricula in second language teaching. One of the key areas, Communicative language teaching (CLT), which has been in practice in various social contexts for about thirty years, has been critically reviewed by Savignon in Chapter 35, where Savignon also highlights in particular people's general understandings about CLT – what is and what is not CLT. Since the time when Canale and Swain (1980) proposed a framework for CLT and testing, it has been a rather long period during which such an update is needed. So Savignon's chapter is a particularly timely addition (see also Howartt, 2004). Pursuant of this chapter are other 7 chapters dealing with topics ranging from teaching methods (e.g., traditional and grammar translation), form-focused instruction, instructed language learning and task-based teaching, discourse-based approaches to second language teaching. It is pointed out there that form-focused instruction, instructed language learning, task-based language teaching and learning and discourse-based approaches are variants of CLT in one way or another. CALL and learning strategies are also discussed.

Part VI focuses on language testing and assessment. McNamara's introduction jells naturally with other chapters in this part. The context, validity and the nature of language tests and what they measure, research methods in language testing, teacher assessment of second language development in the classroom, and testing languages for specific purposes are all discussed in this part.

Part VII, the smallest section of the whole book, goes beyond what used to be considered less important to SLA but has gained prominence these years: identity, culture and critical pedagogy in second language teaching and learning. Chapter 49 examines identity in language learning; chapter 50 reviews issues in teaching and researching intercultural competence; and chapter 51 raises issues with traditional pedagogy and alerts readers to the importance of critical pedagogy in second language teaching and learning.

Part VIII follows Part VII quite closely in a natural fashion because of its sociocultural lenses extended to examine language teaching and learning in connection with larger socio-political issues linked to language planning, language policy and language rights. Contributions come from different parts of the world, but socio-political issues that are surfaced share some degrees of similarity. For example, Baldauf, Jr. presents an introduction and another

individual chapter that serves as an overview of language planning and policy research (chapter 52); Theo van Els examines the European landscape of language status planning (chapter 53); Liddicoat reviews syllabus and materials development in relation to corpus planning (chapter 53); Baldauf, Jr. and Kaplan look at language-in-education policy and planning'; May asks challenging questions about language policy and minority language right (chapter 57). As Baldauf, Jr. says in his introduction, the section presents "a framework for and an overview of the important research issues for language policy and planning" and in its totality "examines some general key issues and provides a possible framework for the types of activities that define the field" (p. 953).

It is obvious that as a landmark volume *The Handbook of Research in Second Language Teaching and Learning* provides a broad, state-of-the-art overview of current knowledge and research into second language teaching and learning. It has completed a mission seemingly impossible. It covers various topics that regard second language learning and teaching from different perspectives that gain insight from social, political, cultural, psychological, cognitive, and interactional processes. As the editor states clearly in her introduction, it is really impossible to include all areas of relevance to language teaching and learning, but what has been achieved so far well represents the key areas of language teaching and research today. I regard the decision as a wise one, because doing so has made it possible for the *Handbook* to be uniquely but relevantly focusing on the most immediate knowledge to be presented in one tome that deserves the name.

More importantly, although the tome is really thick and heavy, spawning almost 1,150 pages, the chapters are so clearly organised that readers who are interested in reading relevant chapters will not feel lost. For example, the whole volume is preceded with an introduction by the editor who sets some kind of a preamble in which she explains the rationale for inclusion or exclusion of certain topics albeit their relevance, the historical background of language teaching and learning, the organisation of the book and the structure of the chapters. Equally important and useful as the rest of the chapters of the *Handbook*, what I see as something really relevant and uniquely new to the professional lives of teachers, teacher researchers, teacher-educators and all those involved in teaching, is the last part, "Part VIII: Identity, Culture, and Critical Pedagogy in Second Language Teaching and Learning". It is here that interesting questions are raised about identity, culture and critical pedagogy, which is a timely reminder to those practitioners who have not thought of challenging the authoritarian philosophy in language teaching, or who have seldom thought of such issues in their professional practice (see e.g., Canagarajah, 1999; Norton, 1995; Norton & Toohey, 2004; McKay & Wong, 1996; Pennycook, 2001).

Systematically organised, the *Handbook* is definitely a welcome addition to the already increasingly well-developed field of language teaching and learning. It might be one of the first comprehensive handbooks that reviews and discusses the field so thoroughly. I believe that it is not only researchers who are interested in reading it, practitioners, graduate students, and faculty members in teacher education and applied linguistics programs, curriculum and material developers, teachers-in-practice, student-teachers, and all other professionals in the field of second language teaching and learning, will equally find it a valuable collection of landmark developments of the field in which they have been working.

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