Title	Book review [Review of the book *Directions and prospects for educational linguistics*, by F. M. Hult (Ed.)]
Author(s)	Selim Ben Said
Source	*Journal of the NUS Teaching Academy, 1*(1), 55-58.
Published by	NUS Teaching Academy

BOOK REVIEW

Selim BEN SAID[1]

[1] English Language and Literature Academic Group
     National Institute of Education, Singapore

Address for Correspondence: Dr Selim Ben Said, English Language and Literature Academic Group,
National Institute of Education, 1 Nanyang Walk, Singapore 637616. email: slim.bensaid@nie.edu.sg

Book Review

Hult, F. M. (Ed.). (2010). *Directions and prospects for educational linguistics*. Dordrecht, Springer, v + 154 pp., € 99.95 (hardback), ISBN 978-90-481-9135-2

As Nancy Hornberger points out in the foreword of this edited volume, educational linguistics (EL) as a field has the capacity to encompass different disciplines and theoretical paradigms but ultimately should attain a socially-sensitive goal in order to empower communities and reverse language inequalities. In this regard, while the 9 contributions of this book stretch across diverse research orientations, they all aim towards elaborating a socially-situated roadmap for the field of EL.

The papers in this book are organised into three discrete themes, (1) theoretical and methodological considerations (chapters 1-3), (2) innovative problem-oriented research (chapters 4-6), (3) emerging areas of inquiry (chapters 7-8), in addition to a concluding epilogue (chapter 9). Offering to transcend disciplines and layout research that is more theme-oriented and problem-based, chapters 1-3 promote the argument that EL should not drown in the meanders of discipline-specificity but rather engage dispassionately with "language issues in and around educational settings" (xvii).

In the first chapter of the book, Constant Leung makes abstraction of the quarrels in the epistemic delimitations of language (in) education and presents a case for a focus on a more problem-oriented perspective on the field. Thus, rather than being isolated in the confines of disciplinary blinders, he envisions EL as a discipline which would "involve the exercise of value judgments and ideological preferences over competing and often conflicting views" (p. 3). As an illustration of these premises, Leung examines the operation of structure and agency in the field of English as an Additional Language (EAL), whereby these two critical dimensions offer an interpretive paradigm/framework to understand both the role of language (in) education but also researchers' disciplinary commitments and ideological values.

The second chapter by the volume editor Francis Hult, starts by clarifying the dimensions whereby Applied Linguistics (AL) and EL differ, with the latter being narrower than AL yet having the edge of overriding disciplinary boundaries. Expanding on Halliday's concept of transdisciplinarity (2001, 2007) and in a similar vein to Leung, Hult thus explores the possibilities and "intellectual benefits" for EL research to "cross-pollinate" across disciplines. This conceptualisation alleviates EL research from discipline-fixity to a thematically-driven approach which is "grounded in educational practice". While the risks of such an approach

may liken EL to a loose field of inquiry which opportunistically borrows from disciplines without being itself one; Hult, however, rightly argues that a discipline-bound reflection on EL is problematic because it does not provide a bottom-up or grounded reflection where problems are prioritised independently from the dogmas of disciplinary foundations. In this respect, the book succeeds in providing an eclectic and transdisciplinary overview on the field of EL which is abounding with promising research trajectories and orientations.

Offering a practical implementation of how language (in) education research can benefit from a more transdisciplinary orientation, Creese (chapter 3) first mentions how current trends in EL research are moving towards interdisciplinarity. A case in point taken up by the author is the internal dynamics of research teams involving participants from different backgrounds, expertise, and research horizons. In this respect Creese draws two examples of team collaboration around projects in language (in) education. These two teams which are described as typically involving an eclectic mix of participants with different personal/professional identities, voices, social positions, and competencies, yield a "pluralisation of authority" (Rampton, 1997, p. 23) and contribute to a more dynamic, hybrid, and contextual understanding of educational practices.

Illustrations of real-life cases and applications of research in educational linguistics are presented in chapters 4-6. In chapter 4, the crucial imperative of using a problem-based approach to EL research is manifested in the desire to bolster language (in) education research to "educate ordinary members of communities (…) on what it means to be a citizen of a world characterised by multilingualism, globalisation and transnationalism" (p. 49). To this effect, Boxer offers to question, and deconstruct outdated scholarly premises (i.e. the native speaker as a model and norm-provider, the concept of interlanguage, etc.). If not challenged in light of current research development, these notions will inevitably create cross-cultural problems and mishaps in communication. Boxer cites the real-life situation of a court case where a young boy died as a result of communication gaps during a screening interview with an infected blood donor. Despite being a seemingly isolated incident, Boxer shows that this event is symptomatic of the broader needs to implement research projects where people are educated about the linguistic and cultural pluralism which is symptomatic of our current globalised world.

Using ethnopoetics (Hymes, 1996) as the central tenet of her analysis, Warriner (chapter 5) examines the aesthetic choices in the narrative of Ayak, a young Sudanese immigrant woman to the US recounting daily struggles in an effort to integrate to her new environment. Through the analysis of discursive features such as poetic form, rhythmic repetition, and parallelism, Warriner explains that Ayak's narrative indicates a sophisticated communicative competence which consists not only of early indicators of her aptitude to use English but also of her creative

use of the language and ability "to communicate a number of very compelling facts while also performing a set of competent identities" (p. 70). The implications of these observations are enlightening in terms of pedagogy as they provide a contextualised picture of competence not only in terms of direct "achievables" but also with respect to more sophisticated abilities not traditionally assessed.

The last chapter in this thematic grouping which also emphasises the resolutely transdisciplinary inclination of this volume describes the use and function of eye-tracking technology in second language acquisition research on recasts. Adopting an eclectic and integrated approach which takes into account different trends in Computer-mediated communication (CMC) research, Smith presents the innovative use of eye-tracking technology as a way to access learners' interactional data. Although the chapter constitutes cutting-edge research in CMC and eye-tracking technology, the focus on the interdisciplinarity of EL might have been accentuated excessively here. In this respect, the framing of the paper within the general theme of the book is more implicit than apparent. In fact, the connection with EL is formulated more in Hult's introductory note (p. xix) than in the paper itself making the chapter more stand-alone than thematically-framed.

Chapters 7 and 8 are two examples of the emerging trends and promising research directions in educational linguistics. Together with chapters 4 and 5, chapter 7 embodies more than any other contribution in this book Hornberger's stated aspiration (pp. vi-vii) to empower language learners and redress language inequalities in education around the world. As explained by Carlson et al. although it is unquestionable that bilingual deaf education represents strong developmental possibilities for deaf learners, in reality, most school-aged children integrate the system with serious shortcomings. These limitations are explained due to the lack of preparation of these learners to integrate a system where knowledge of both a signed language and the written form of a spoken language are expected. Some of the research areas identified by the authors that could help in addressing these issues consist in having a better understanding of the nexus between words and signs or lexical and signed representations but also to explore possibilities where deaf learners could optimise intersubjective skills during the pre-school stage. Finally, the development of the metaphor of "alignment" between deaf learners' written and signed languages is a crucial skill where research on bilingual deaf education is much needed.

Chapter 8 explores the possibilities afforded by digital gaming environments and their potential for creating a virtual space to optimise language learning. As argued by the authors, in a world which is growingly dominated by digital literacies and were visual/digital interfaces are ubiquitous, the socio-cultural fabric of gaming networks as a non-traditional language learning environment, creates unique possibilities for learners to interact virtually and constitutes a new semiotic and cultural space where mediated second language learning is facilitated.

The epilogue (chapter 9) keeps in line with the overall thematic orientation of the book. Bernard Spolsky, an authoritative figure in research on educational policy, thus reiterates the need to adopt a transdisciplinary approach when conducting research in EL. As Hult states in the beginning of this volume, EL needs to remain "open to a broad range of 'relevant disciplines' that might provide tools for solving language (in) education problems" (p. xix). The emphasis on the transdisciplinarity of EL research, which is an ongoing leitmotiv since early seminal scholarly works (Spolsky, 1974, 1980) is a fundamental premise which traces a promising future for the field of EL.

REFERENCES

Halliday, M. A. K. (2001). New ways of meaning: The challenges to applied linguistics. In A. Fill & P. Mühlhäusler (Eds.), *The ecolinguistics reader: Language, ecology and environment* (pp. 175-202). New York: Continuum. [First published in (1990). *Journal of Applied Linguistics 6*, 7-36].

Halliday, M. A. K. (2007). On the concept of "educational linguistics." In J. J. Webster, (Ed.), *The collected works of M.A.K. Halliday, volume 9: Language and education* (pp. 354-367). London: Continuum. [Originally published in Giblett R., & O'Caroll J. (Eds). (1990). *Discipline, dialogue, difference: Proceedings of the language in education conference Murdoch University, December 1989* (pp. 23-42). Murdoch, WA: Duration].

Hymes, D. (1996). *Ethnography, linguistics, and narrative inequality: Toward an understanding of voice*. Bristol, PA: Taylor & Francis.

Rampton, B. (1997). Retuning in applied linguistics. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics 7*, 3-25.

Spolsky, B. (1974). The Navajo Reading Study: An illustration of the scope and nature of educational linguistics. In J. Qvistgaard, H. Schwartz & H. Spong-Hanssen (Eds.), *Applied linguistics: Problems and solutions* (pp. 553-565). Heidelberg, Germany: Julius Groog Verlag.

Spolsky, B. (1980). The scope of educational linguistics. In R. B. Kaplan (Ed.), *On the scope of applied linguistics* (pp. 67-73). Rowley, MA Newbury House.

The interface of education and linguistics can be seen as a complex cross-over field of (multi)discipline-based knowledge, ideologically driven policy positions and professional choices. This chapter will explore the question, 'How do we account for the work that we do in educational linguistics?' I will invoke the concepts of structure and agency in the discussion. In addition, reflections are offered about future directions and prospects for the field of educational linguistics. It is suggested that effective language educational management must go beyond facts and data in order to communicate effectively to policymakers and the general public the importance of multilingual education. You can write a book review and share your experiences. Other readers will always be interested in your opinion of the books you've read. Whether you've loved the book or not, if you give your honest and detailed thoughts then people will find new books that are right for them. 1. Storytelling Portrait Photography: How to Document the Lives of Children and Families. You can write a book review and share your experiences. Other readers will always be interested in your opinion of the books you've read. Whether you've loved the book or not, if you give your honest and detailed thoughts then people will find new books that are right for them. 1. Francis M. Hult Editor. Directions and Prospects for Educational Linguistics. Editor Francis M. Hult Department of Bicultural-Bilingual Studies University of Texas at San Antonio San Antonio, TX USA francis.hult@utsa.edu. Books related to Directions and Prospects for Educational Linguistics. Skip this list. More by Francis M. Hult. Skip this list. Research Methods in Language Policy and Planning. Francis M. Hult. Complete your review. Tell readers what you thought by rating and reviewing this book. Rate it *. You Rated it *.