

The book attempts to cross disciplinary boundaries between applied linguistics and sociology. The demanding epistemological discussions presented here would require more in-depth and elaborate consideration than is possible in the limited space of this book. Many of the issues presented in this dense volume of theoretical argumentation are only touched rather than elaborated upon. The social realist view of applied linguistics depicted by the authors, therefore, seems to be far from adoptable by applied linguistics as a guiding disciplinary approach. A further concern about the book is that it almost completely ignores existing socially oriented approaches to language studies, including Critical Applied Linguistics and the relatively vast area known as Critical Discourse Analysis. Nonetheless, the very endeavor of a socially informed approach to applied linguistics is to be appreciated.

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FRED GENESEE, KATHERYN LINDHOLM-LEARY, WILLIAM M. SAUNDERS, AND DONNA CHRISTIAN (EDS.), *Educating English language learners: A synthesis of research evidence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Pp. x, 245. Pb \$24.99.

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Educating English language learners appeared as a result of a U.S. government-funded project in an attempt to synthesize “research on the relationship among oral language, literacy, and academic achievement for English language learners (ELLs) in the United States” (1). Referring to what Donna Christian calls “educational facts” (1) about the lower academic ability of students with limited English proficiency, and placing institutionalized academic achievement at the center of their discussions, the contributors review three databases and a number of journals of language and education. They explore research trends in the education of English as a second language in the past 20 years, how research findings have been applied in U.S. schools, and possible future research directions.

The introductory chapter attempts to justify a synthetic research review and to describe the review methodology. Chap. 2 reviews the research literature on proficiency in oral English. What “proficiency” means is not discussed beyond stating that it “involves acquiring vocabulary, gaining control over grammar, and developing an understanding of the subtle semantics of English” (14). Moreover, conclusions like “there is a positive relationship between English language use outside of school and English proficiency” (41) do not seem to move beyond commonsense perceptions of what language learning involves. The third chapter, heavily relying on correlational studies, discusses cross-linguistic and cross-modal issues in literacy and calls for more research “to draw stable and definitive conclusions” (84). Instructional issues related to reading and writing by English language learners are dealt with in chap. 4. The authors assert that what they call the “one off syndrome” “may reflect pressure on university-researchers to ‘publish or perish’ and/or the need to provide answers quickly” (125). Another interesting issue in this chapter is that the authors admit – at least as far as assessment is concerned – that it is difficult to provide recommendations based on a review of the research literature “because the research is so fragmented” (138). Chap. 5 deals with academic achievement and seems to have regrettably replaced real *learning*, as what research is meant to promote, with the standards set by academic institutions. Finally, the chapter on “Conclusions and future directions,” recapitulating common trends in English language education research, calls for more research aimed at theory development and for the application of varied and multiple research designs and also recommends more systematic reviews of the research findings.

With a view of the distracted research trend that the book uncovers, rather than merely continuing “sustained programmatic research” (226) along the traditional paths, researchers need to revisit their practices in search of more natural approaches and more profound understandings of language learning as a social practice of meaning construction.

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645