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Xuesong Gao
Editor

Second Handbook of English Language Teaching

With 51 Figures and 37 Tables

 Springer

Editor

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Preface

The *Second Handbook of English Language Teaching* provides authoritative, current perspectives on controversial and critical issues from many of the field's leading researchers, theorists, and policy makers around the world. Like the first edition of the handbook, 58 chapters respond to a wide range of questions about policy, practice, research, and theory related to English language teaching (ELT) in international contexts. Most of the chapters have been completely revised and newly commissioned for this second edition. As a result of this, the chapters in the new edition of the handbook synthesize the most up-to-date interdisciplinary knowledge base for effective decision making and highlight directions for implementing appropriate language policies at both instructional and societal levels.

The editors and contributors in the first edition of the handbook recognized the problematic nature of various labels such as English as a second language (ESL) and English language learners (ELL) to describe the key players related to the learning and teaching of the English language. These labels may be replaced with terms that appear to be more positive (e.g., bilingual), but they do not necessarily redress the dominance of deficit framing of bilingual students in terms of their overall bilingual/multilingual repertoire. Far more importantly, these labels tend to “create a single category” to represent diverse groups of individuals who are involved in the learning and teaching of the English language (Cummins and Davison 2007, p. xxii). With this critical awareness in mind, the editorial team for the current edition continue to call the field “English language teaching” and use it in the title of the handbook.

As was the situation when the first edition was published, English continues to replace other languages as the second or additional language taught most frequently and intensively in schools in many parts of the world. The perceived social and economic rewards associated with speaking English continue to motivate parents to demand earlier and more intensive teaching of English. The demand for English has also escalated among adult learners, including immigrants to English-speaking countries, business people involved in the global economy, students seeking English-medium education, and those who just want to travel as tourists. In many countries, large-scale ELT programs for adult learners continue to grow in communities and workplaces as a result of the globalization of workforces, the perceived need to increase economic competitiveness, and a move toward life long learning.

While these issues were critically addressed in the first edition, contributors in this edition continue to explore various aspects of the field and the varying concerns of different stakeholders. Like their counterparts in the first edition, many of the chapters in this edition focus on the ideological dimensions of English language teaching and discuss their implications for language education policies and pedagogical practice. In the meantime, the field has also witnessed the emergence of new constructs with significant implications for English language teaching. For instance, the rising interaction between speakers whose first languages are other than English has motivated efforts to explore, understand, and document particular varieties of English or semiotic processes emerging from such interaction, which have been captured by the term “English as lingua franca” (ELF) (e.g., Gu Patkin and Kirkpatrick 2014; Jenkins 2014). Questioning whether languages should be regarded as bounded units, researchers have increasingly argued that languages should be considered as semiotic resources that language learners use to fulfill cognitive operations, which facilitate their language use and task completion. For this reason, translanguaging or translingual approaches have been promoted to help language learners utilize multiple languages, in particular their first languages, as resources to support their learning of English (e.g., García and Li 2014; Li 2018). By considering these emerging constructs, like its predecessor, this edition of the handbook provides “a unique, updated 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” (Cummins and Davison 2007, p. xxii).

The current edition follows the structural organization of the first edition and has two volumes and six parts with 9 to 11 chapters in each part. Volume 1 concerns the macro issues of English language teaching such as shifting language policies, curriculum and program development, as well as assessment and evaluation. Volume 2 focuses on key constructs in language teaching and key stakeholders including language learners and teachers.

Contributors in the first part (nine chapters) on the “Global Scope and Politics of English Language Teaching” present updated accounts of language education policies and curricula in countries such as Japan, Korea, and China. Efforts have been made to include diverse contexts when discussing the politics of English language teaching in North American schools and the development of teaching English as a third language in European contexts. New contributors have been asked to provide overviews of English language education policies and programs in contexts including Brazil, the Middle East, and Russia, which have been featured in this handbook for the first time. The escalating promotion of English as medium of instruction in many contexts has encouraged us to include a chapter that problematizes English medium instruction in higher education in light of recent advances in research on English as lingua franca.

Contributors in the second part (nine chapters) on “The Goals and Focus of English Language Teaching Programs” explain why and how English language teachers include intercultural competence and critical literacy as goals of English

language teaching. The linguistic goal of English language teaching has also been problematized in light of the multilingual turn in language education, which sees language learning as a process for learners to enrich their linguistic repertoire. This is in alignment with the development of translanguaging pedagogy to facilitate language learners' use of multiple languages as resources and promote linguistic equity in the process. Contributors note that a range of curricular and pedagogic responses has been developed to meet a variety of language learners in different educational sectors including secondary schools and tertiary institutions. In this edition, a new chapter on developing curricula for young language learners has also been commissioned to meet the need for supporting increasingly younger language learners worldwide. This part also includes one brand new chapter on the development of English language pedagogy to support language users with particular vocational and professional needs, while the chapter on workplace English has been updated to address the need to teach adult language learners.

The third part (nine chapters) on "Assessment and Evaluation in English Language Teaching" addresses the development of assessment tools and practice in a variety of contexts. Contributors explore pre-entry and post-entry language proficiency tests for universities, two important concerns for language educators and policy makers in many universities that use English as medium of instruction to attract international students. This edition also includes a major assessment development initiative in one of the most populous countries, China, which is likely to influence the largest number of English language learners in a profound way. Given the significant role of assessment in language education, contributors have also presented how feedback and different approaches to assessment, including dynamic assessment, can be used to promote language learners' learning and help them to construct the future to motivate their language learning efforts. In light of the rising number of young language learners, this part has a chapter devoted to the assessment of this group. To enable language teachers give effective feedback and undertake assessment for learning while teaching, it is also necessary to promote their assessment literacy so that they have the know-how to maximize the positive effect of feedback and assessment on language learners. Finally, it is also important for language educators to become critically aware of the issues of fairness and social justice in assessing language learners.

The second volume starts with Part 4 (10 chapters) on "The Learner and the Learning Environment." Contributions to this part highlight the variety of English language learners and their characteristics, as well as efforts to create conducive environments that enhance their learning. Like chapters in the previous parts, young language learners deserve special attention as the age of learning English has been lowered internationally, creating a necessity for language teachers to understand how young language learners learn and how they should be taught. However, adolescent language learners continue to be one of the most significant groups of language learners, whose identity development is highly likely to be mediated in the process of learning English. Some language learners' identity work may be found in their resistance to particular language norms, including pragmatic ones imposed upon them by language teachers. Language learners' resistance in certain areas also draws

attention to how language learners engage with the learning process and how they use strategies to achieve better control of language learning toward autonomy. Language learners' strategic and autonomous learning efforts have been understood with reference to their identity aspiration and pursuit, as mediated by the social, cultural, multilingual, and political contexts where they find themselves. As language learning is seen as a social process, it is important for language teachers to ensure that language learners are motivated to learn in classrooms. To create a motivating classroom, language teachers may use various feedback strategies to encourage language learners to reflect on their learning process and self-identify areas for further improvement. With the development of educational technology, it has become necessary for language teachers to create a technology-rich learning environment so that language learners can use online resources and technological devices to support their language learning efforts.

Part 5 on "The Constructs of Language" includes 10 chapters that address traditional topics of interest and issues of emerging significance for language teachers. In light of the rise of English as lingua franca, it has now been necessary to reconsider the learning and teaching of pronunciation, as language learners are no longer expected to achieve native-like pronunciation in learning English. Approaches to the teaching and learning of vocabulary have not changed much over the years, while vocabulary continues to be valued by language teachers and learners as key to understanding and comprehension. In contrast, it is increasingly necessary for language teachers to adopt a contextualized approach to grammar teaching that is meaning-oriented (rather than just teaching forms). This contextualized approach to grammar teaching reflects an awareness that language use is a context-dependent sociocultural practice. Language teachers are encouraged to promote language learners' understanding of speech genres and their academic writing for different disciplines in universities. To support language learners' learning efforts, they need to be enabled to self-regulate and metacognitively control their learning process. Contributors in this part also focus on teaching language learners about the use of technology in teaching digital literacy and helping language learners with disabilities to develop their English language skills. Finally, new pedagogical approaches, such as usage-based approaches to language teaching and integrating language into content teaching, have been promoted by the contributors in this part.

The final part on "Research and Teacher Education in English Language Teaching" contains 11 chapters. A variety of research approaches are discussed in this part in relation to English language teachers' professional learning, including action research, heuristic research, qualitative research, conversation analytic approaches, auto-ethnography, and ethnography, as well as critical research. Research on crucial topics with significant educational implications is also covered by the chapters in this part. For instance, issues such as teachers' emotional labor and the relevance of SLA to classroom pedagogy are discussed. Different perspectives are presented on language teacher cognition acknowledging teacher learning now takes place in a technology-enhanced environment and teachers' collective efficacy should be promoted in well-coordinated teacher education programs.

Despite all the efforts to achieve a comprehensive coverage of issues of great significance for English language educators, this handbook has some gaps due to the challenges in producing a handbook on English language teaching, which addresses various stakeholders' needs and explores significant professional issues in diverse contexts. Nevertheless, this handbook does provide an opportunity to synergize our efforts to further improve the effectiveness of English language teaching internationally and help to build a more equitable, multilingual world.

September 2019

Xuesong Gao

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Acknowledgments

Technological advances have made academic publishing less tedious and time-consuming, but this new edition of the handbook still relied on a large number of colleagues and took about 3 years to complete. Like my predecessors, I would like to express my gratitude to the contributors from different parts of the world who authored the chapters for this handbook. Most of the contributors who had chapters in the first edition accepted the invitation to update their chapters for the new edition, but they often ended up writing brand new chapters for this handbook in light of the rapid growth and dramatic changes in the field of English language teaching. Perhaps, driven by a desire to ensure their intellectual contributions to the first edition continue to be relevant to the community of English language educators, they have patiently responded to many requests from the reviewers and editorial and technical staff throughout the process. Many new contributors have also provided the handbook with fresh perspectives and insights. Their commitment to academic excellence, as reflected in their responses to all the requests and suggestions, has made it possible for us to produce the second edition of this handbook together.

Apart from the contributors, the process of editing this handbook has received valuable support from a long list of key individuals. First of all, Chris Davison and Constant Leung need to be acknowledged for role of consulting editors. Having co-edited the first edition of the handbook, Chris shared important tips and guided me throughout the entire process from proposal to completion. Constant identified topics and potential contributors for inclusion in the new edition. Second, I must also thank the anonymous reviewers who evaluated chapters and provided valuable input for the contributors to further improve their writing. As a journal editor, I always find it difficult to find reviewers, even when publishers usually provide some sort of rewards such as 30-day access to a particular database. The reviewers who reviewed chapters for this handbook received absolutely nothing. To retain their anonymity, they do not even receive public acknowledgment here, but we are forever in their debt. Third, at the early stage of this editing project, Sara Mashayekh helped with preliminary preparations for the handbook, including contacting potential contributors and identifying potential reviewers. Her editorial support was generously supported by the School of Education, the University of New South Wales.

I would also like to thank colleagues at Springer, who played critical roles in shaping this project toward completion. I would like to thank Jolanda Voogd, who encouraged us to do a second edition of the handbook. I am also very grateful to

Audrey Wong-Hillmann and Sindhu Ramachandran, who watched over the entire editing process and dealt with numerous queries from the contributors and me. They also provided many insightful suggestions to further improve the presentation of the handbook. Santhiya Gangatharan played a critical role in the production process and supported me and the contributors in overcoming various production-related issues. In contrast to Chris' experience of editing the first edition, I was able to access the Meteor manuscript management system, which significantly reduced my time commitment in the entire process and made editing a much more manageable task.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my family, in particular my wife, for their support. This is one of the longest book editing projects I have ever undertaken. It lasted almost three years and caused many anxious nights as I realized that I really needed to speed up the process and maintain the momentum so that the handbook could be completed in time. The editing also took place during my transition to the University of New South Wales from the University of Hong Kong. It was no easy task to edit such a large handbook while also moving home between two continents. Without my wife's full support and understanding, the task would have simply been a mission impossible!

I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to interact with so many leading scholars and produce this comprehensive examination of important professional issues in the field of English language education. The project has been an eye-opening process for me as I engaged with the issues often critically presented by the contributors. I was almost overwhelmed with the complexity of our professional practice in an increasingly divided world. I am truly grateful for the new understandings of English language education that I have gained from the entire process of editing this handbook. Like my predecessors, I hope that the handbook provides a catalyst for further reflection and continuous dialogue, which will not only help to improve the educational quality of English language teaching but also build more equitable multilingual societies through English language education.

September 2019

Xuesong Gao

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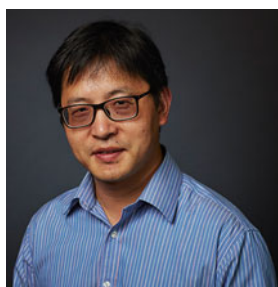
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Chris has researched and published extensively on the interface between English as a mother tongue and ESL development, integrating language and content curriculum, and English language assessment, in leading international journals including *TESOL Quarterly*, *Applied Linguistics*, *Language Assessment Quarterly*, *Language Testing*, and *Linguistics and Education*. She is founding coeditor (with Andy Gao) of the Springer book series on English Language Education.

Chris has been actively involved in an extensive range professional associations and community organizations throughout her career, including undertaking stints as President of the Australian Council of TESOL Association, Chair of the Australian Literacy Federation, Chair of the TESOL International Research Committee, and, most recently, Chair of the NSW Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards Initial Teacher Education Committee, and President of the

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Part I

**Global Scope and Politics of ELT: Critiquing
Current Policies and Programs**



The Global Scope and Politics of English Language Teaching: Section Introduction

1

Xuesong Gao

Abstract

In this section, contributors outline policy and pedagogical development for English language education in major educational contexts such as Brazil, China, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, North America, and Russia. Relevant chapters problematize the teaching and learning of English on a variety of issues, including social equity (South Korea or English-medium universities), policy implementation (Japan), and the uniqueness of English as a third language (the Basque country and Tyrol). While some chapters in the section document efforts to promote the learning and teaching of English in major contexts including Brazil and China, others challenge the dominance of English monolingualism and contend that policy makers should make the linguistic resources that English language learners bring with them more relevant to their educational experiences.

Keywords

Language policy · Medium of instruction · Social equity · Diversity

The chapters in the first edition of this handbook made it clear that “language teaching cannot be reduced to a one-dimensional set of prescriptions” because our language use is mediated by various contextual factors and processes including particular physical space, communication purposes, linguistic resources, and human relationships (Cummins and Davison 2007, p. 3). The chapters in the current edition confirm that English language teaching is

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always subject to contextual mediation. While the English language often carries historical baggage in different colonial and postcolonial contexts, it has also acquired nuanced ideological meanings in these contexts, sustaining its wide appeal as the most important language in addition to official languages. For instance, access to quality English language education remains a strategically decisive factor in enabling individuals to realize upward social mobility in many of the contexts covered by the chapters in this section. While such access can be jealously guarded by key stakeholders, we have also seen different governments investing efforts and resources in promoting English competence in their societies. Even though English and its associated cultural imports are still likely to be questioned in some contexts (e.g., China, the Gulf countries), the language has assumed a much more consolidated position as the most popular “foreign” or even second language to be learned.

Most of the chapters in this section do not necessarily question why English should be promoted in particular contexts; such critiques can easily be found in the chapters of the first edition of this handbook. Instead, they either question the ways that English has been promoted in a given context or try to work out ways in which the promotion of English can be sustained to benefit the public (e.g., Oda’s chapter on Japan and Jessner and Cenoz’s chapter on English as a third language). Despite such acceptance, some contributors raise critical questions with regard to the learning and teaching of English as English language education contributes to the widening gaps between those who have and those who have not (e.g., Shin’s chapter on the “English divide” in South Korea). The promotion of English language education is also problematized for its role in supporting the dominance of monolingualism in increasingly linguistic diverse university campuses in English-speaking countries (e.g., Jenkins’ chapter on English as lingua franca).

The first chapter by Cummins, López-Gopar, and Sughrua reminds readers of the legacy of migrating settlers and their need for English language education in North America. The chapter focuses on education policies and English language teaching in schools in Mexico, the United States, and Canada. It describes the nature, trajectories, and outcomes of English language teaching in these contexts before presenting a variety of approaches to promoting English language learners’ language and literacy skills, including content-based approaches, English language teaching within bilingual education programs, and more recently, multilingual and translingual approaches. The chapter stresses the importance of transformative pedagogy in promoting positive identities and enhancing literacy skills to support English language learners in their pursuit of academic and life goals. These considerations are particularly important in facilitating these learners to achieve success, as migrating English language learners often have to cope with increasingly unfavorable sociopolitical conditions.

The sociopolitical context for English language education in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries as presented by El-Kheir and McLeod in the second chapter echoes many of the chapters in the first edition of this handbook. Though English has become the regional lingua franca, there are clear concerns about identity, local language, and cultural tradition due to the fact that English is de facto a dominant language in education (e.g., Karmani 2005). Because English

language education has been given such importance in school and university education, society in general, including key stakeholders in education, are struggling to keep the balance between Arabic, the national language, and English, the global lingua franca, which will be critical in shaping the future of individuals and countries in the region.

In comparison with El-Kheir and McLeod's concerns for policy implications, Oda problematizes Japan's revision of English language policies as policy makers revise relevant policies without considering how language learning takes place in schools. Oda strengthens his critique of the failure of Japanese policy makers to appreciate school realities by outlining the implementation processes of relevant policies, highlighting the policy makers' lack of preparation when making major policy decisions. For this reason, he questions whether such policy decisions can lead to positive outcomes as envisaged by the policy makers in the first place.

Policy makers' neglect of school realities certainly contributes to implementation failures in many contexts, which in turn may sustain educational inequity. Shin focuses on the role of English in social reproduction which has led to the so-called English divide in South Korea, whereby English competence determines individuals' upward social mobility. She draws attention to the operation of neoliberalism, which transforms communicative English as symbolic capital for individuals and language learning into a strategic move to strengthen their competitiveness in the job market. Since language learners from rich families have more access to opportunities to practice and develop communicative English, the enshrinement of communicative English as the pedagogical goal in English language curricula further puts those with limited resources at a disadvantage and contributes to the widening gap between the achievements of these two groups of learners. Therefore, Shin reminds readers of the need to become critically aware of any English language policy and to promote practices to address equity issues in English language education.

In a similar vein, Jenkins raises critical questions with regard to the issue of justice as the kind of English promoted in classrooms is no longer compatible with the kind of English many language learners (users) need for interaction with other learners. She highlights this issue of injustice in the context of higher education, where many international students with diverse linguistic backgrounds are required to attend courses on campuses where only particular varieties of English (i.e., those of native speakers) are recognized as the legitimate language. She argues that language policy makers in these so-called "English-medium" universities need to make language policies more relevant to international students and the linguistic resources they bring with them.

Shifts from favoring particular varieties of English to enabling language users with appropriate linguistic resources can be also detected in changing English language policies in China, one of the most populous contexts for English language education. Wang and Luo's chapter documents changes in the national English curriculum since the 2000s in the Chinese context. The chapter provides details of different versions of English language curricula being implemented across the country and explains how and why different versions of the curriculum have different foci. For instance, the 2003 version emphasizes the development of

language learners' language skills, knowledge, affect and attitude, learning strategies, and cultural awareness. However, the most recent version focuses on key competences that students need to develop for the twenty-first century, including language competence, cultural awareness, thinking capacity, and learning ability. The chapter further elaborates how curriculum goals, course structure, content selection, teaching approaches, and assessment methods are updated to help teachers deliver the changing curriculum goals. Though these changes are certainly impressive, it remains to be seen how the new curriculum will impact the ways that English is learned and taught in China.

In this edition we also have a chapter on Russia, since the development of English language teaching in that country is relatively underreported outside the country. Davydova discusses language ideologies and language policies in relation to attitudes toward English in Russia. The chapter recounts how languages have been managed historically as the nation has struggled to promote the Russian language while maintaining multilingualism. Recent events such as the annexation of the Crimean Peninsula have made Russia increasingly isolated from the West. As with China, there have always been questions about the English language and its associated cultural imports in Russia, but it seems that English has become one of the most important foreign languages, if not the second language in the country.

The chapter by Jessner and Cenoz further confirms the status of English as an important third language, critical for wider communication in many contexts. Drawing on recent studies on third language acquisition, they note the differences and similarities between learning L3 and L2. In particular, language learners learn their third language at different times from their learning of L2, and they may achieve different proficiency levels in the end. This means that relevant English language policies and curricula need to be developed to reflect these differences. They reported studies on the learning and teaching of English as a third language in the Basque country and South Tyrol. Though the findings suggest that English as L3 learners may have some cognitive advantages, more research is needed to understand and appreciate how these learners use various linguistic resources in the learning process.

The last chapter by Menezes and Braga documents the efforts made by the Brazilian government and colleagues to integrate educational technology in language education, as a strategy to cope with a large number of language learners in a geographically dispersed and diverse context. The use of technology in language education was first associated with language learners in Brazilian universities when they needed to develop good reading skills in English. With the employment of digital tools, games, and mobile devices, language educators have been trying to enhance language learners' oral skills in both universities and secondary settings. As in many other contexts, the integration of educational technology in language education is undermined by a variety of challenges such as teachers' resistance to taking on new practice, poor infrastructure (i.e., unreliable Internet connectivity), and insufficient support for language teachers. These challenges require policy makers to invest more resources in initiatives to promote the use of technology to enhance language learning and make it more sustainable in Brazil. This is a lesson that educators and policy makers need to attend to in most contexts.

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English Language Teaching in North American Schools

2

Jim Cummins, Mario E. López-Gopar, and William M. Sughrua

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Abstract

The chapter focuses on the intersection of research and (K-12) educational policies in English language teaching (ELT) in Mexico, the United States, and Canada. Initially, current provision for ELT in public schools in these three contexts is summarized. Then six thematic lenses are identified through which current ELT provision and experience in these three contexts can be viewed. These thematic lenses are (1) nature, trajectories, and outcomes of ELT; (2) the emergence of

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content-based approaches to ELT; (3) ELT within bilingual programs; (4) multi-lingual and translanguaging approaches to ELT; (5) decolonization and identity negotiation in ELT; and (6) literacy engagement as fuel for English academic language development. The final section integrates these themes and the research evidence underlying them with broader policy directions for evidence-based ELT in North American schools.

Keywords

Bilingual instructional approaches · Content-based language teaching · Cross-lingual interdependence · Decolonization · Literacy engagement · Socioeconomic status (SES) · Transfer across languages · Translanguaging

Introduction

A common characteristic of all three North American countries is that their populations consist of *settlers*, the descendants of Europeans who settled in North America more than four centuries ago, and *Indigenous communities*, who lost most of their ancestral lands in the settlement/invasion by Europeans. The physical eradication of many Indigenous communities during the initial conquest and later territorial expansion by European settlers was compounded by what the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015) called “cultural genocide,” which Indigenous children experienced in residential schools that operated in Canada and the United States for more than 150 years. These schools were explicitly designed to eradicate Indigenous languages and destroy children’s Indigenous identities. In Canada, children were shamed and physically beaten for speaking their languages, and many experienced sexual abuse and torture at the hands of the religious orders which operated the schools (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada 2015).

The legacy of residential schools and the racism that gave rise to them is large-scale underachievement among Indigenous students in Canada and the United States. Although most Indigenous students speak English (or a dialectal variety of English) as their home language (L1), many do not acquire sufficiently strong levels of English academic skills to pursue college and university qualification. Although sustained education decolonization projects have been undertaken in some North American Indigenous contexts (see, e.g., López-Gopar [2016] for Mexico, McCarty [2008] for the United States, and Walton and O’Leary [2015] for Nunavut in Canada), structural challenges such as the shortage of formally qualified Indigenous teachers have constrained the impact and scalability of these projects.

In Canada and the United States, most school-age learners of English are from immigrant backgrounds. From the beginnings of European settlement, both countries have sought and attracted large numbers of immigrants seeking new opportunities and a better life. For example, the province of Quebec in Canada was predominantly settled by French speakers, and French is the only official language in Quebec, although English is one of the two official languages at the federal level across Canada. Thus, English is taught as a second language (L2) to French-speaking

students in Quebec. There are also pockets of minority francophone communities across other Canadian provinces, and these students have the right to attend French-medium schools, where English is also taught as a second language. Within Quebec, with some very limited exceptions, immigrant students are required to attend the French school system, and thus there is minimal teaching of English as a second language in Quebec English-medium schools.

Over the past 20 years, annual immigration to Canada has been around 250,000, with an increase to more than 300,000 since 2015. This has resulted in large numbers of students who come to school from homes where languages other than English or French are spoken. In Ontario, about 20% of the school population has grown up speaking a language other than English or French, and in large cities such as Toronto and Vancouver (in British Columbia), more than 50% of the school population comes from multilingual homes.

In the United States, almost 5 million students, representing about 10% of the school population, are identified as “English language learners” (ELLs), and this number is considerably larger in major urban centers across the country (National Center for Educational Statistics 2018). The largest group (3.8 million) is comprised of Spanish speakers, but many other languages are also represented (e.g., Chinese varieties, Arabic, Vietnamese). According to Sanchez (2017), California has 29% of all ELLs nationwide followed by Texas (18%), Florida (5%), and New York (4%). A large majority of ELLs (also termed “emergent bilinguals” in this paper) are born in the United States and are US citizens (85% pre-K through grade 5; 62% grade 6 through 12).

English language teaching (ELT) in Mexico differs from ELT in Canada and the United States insofar as Spanish is the language of instruction in almost all schools, except for some English-Spanish bilingual programs mostly in private schools and some bilingual programs involving Indigenous languages. Thus, English is taught as an additional language to students whose L1 is predominantly Spanish or, in some cases, an Indigenous language.

Nature, Trajectories, and Outcomes of ELT

Nature of ELT

In order to understand students’ English language learning trajectories and outcomes, it is necessary to distinguish between social and academic language or what Cummins (1981a) has labelled conversational fluency and academic language proficiency. Conversational fluency reflects our ability to carry on a conversation in familiar face-to-face situations where meaning is supported by facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, intonation, and the immediate environment. This dimension of language proficiency is developed by the vast majority of native speakers of any language by the time they enter school at age 5 or 6. Phonology and fluency, in particular, reach a plateau with minimal further development after age 5 or 6.

Conversational language use involves high-frequency words and expressions as well as relatively common grammatical constructions.

Academic language proficiency, by contrast, represents an individual's access to and command of the specialized vocabulary and functions of language that characterize formal schooling. It reflects the extent to which a student can comprehend and use the oral and written language that appears in the subject matter of academic disciplines and in discussions about these disciplines. It involves knowledge of less frequent vocabulary and more complex grammatical constructions, which are seldom used in face-to-face conversation. For example, the passive voice is a common feature of academic language, as is nominalization, where an abstract noun is created from a verb or adjective (e.g., acceleration). Unlike conversational fluency, students' proficiency in academic language continues to develop through the school years and beyond both among native speakers and learners of English.

Learning Trajectories

Newcomer immigrant students who arrive in the early years of schooling typically pick up L2 conversational fluency quite rapidly when there is exposure to the language in school and in the wider environment (e.g., on television). One to 2 years of exposure to and learning the school language are usually sufficient for young learners to acquire a comfortable degree of fluency in that language. Students who arrive at older ages (e.g., in their teenage years) may take longer to acquire L2 fluency and may retain traces of their L1 accent in the new language. By contrast, newcomer students typically require at least 5 years, on average, to catch up academically (Collier 1987; Cummins 1981b); this is because of the complexity of academic language (e.g., many more low-frequency words) and the fact that students are catching up to a moving target – native-speaking students who continue to make gains in vocabulary, reading, and writing skills every year.

Outcomes of ELT

United States. Sanchez (2017) summarizes the academic outcomes for ELLs in the United States as follows:

Many ELLs remain stuck in academically segregated programs where they fall behind in basic subjects. Only 63 percent of ELLs graduate from high school, compared with the overall national rate of 82 percent. In New York State, for example, the overall high school graduation rate is about 78 percent. But for ELLs, it's 37 percent, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. Of those who do graduate, only 1.4 percent take college entrance exams. (p. 8)

Collier and Thomas (2007) similarly note that students taught English-as-a-second-language (ESL) as a subject at the secondary level or placed in ESL pullout programs

at the elementary level frequently fail to catch up academically: “Our research findings across numerous school districts in the USA indicate that the average achievement levels of high school graduates who were initially placed in ESL pullout programs is the 11th percentile” (p. 344).

The challenges facing immigrant-background students in US schools are also reflected in the findings of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development’s (OECD) Programme for International Student Achievement (PISA). PISA data regarding the academic performance of 15-year-old students from about 70 countries around the world have been reported since the year 2000, and supplementary analyses in some years have identified the performance of first- and second-generation immigrant-background students (e.g., Christensen and Segeritz 2008; Stanat and Christensen 2006). In the 2003 assessment of reading skills, first-generation immigrant-background students (born outside the United States) performed 50 points below the mean, while second-generation students (born in the United States) performed 22 points below the mean. The PISA mean for all countries is 500 points with a standard deviation of 100 points.

The PISA findings also highlight the role of socioeconomic status (SES) in determining educational outcomes in the United States. The United States is similar to many European countries insofar as the educational levels of immigrants and asylum seekers are significantly less, on average, compared to those of the “mainstream” population. Furthermore, the impact of socioeconomic variables on academic achievement is considerably greater than is the case for countries such as Canada where immigrant-background students perform relatively well in comparison to the non-immigrant background student population. Despite spending more per pupil, on average, than most other OECD countries, there are significant disparities among states in funding allocations to school districts serving students of different SES backgrounds due to the fact that funding predominantly relies on local taxes rather than on centralized federal allocations (e.g., Boykin and Noguera 2011). Consequently, many immigrant-background students who come from socially disadvantaged backgrounds attend schools that are under-resourced in comparison to schools attended by more affluent non-immigrant background students. The under-resourced nature of these schools includes not only per-pupil funding but also the experience and qualifications of teachers and school leaders.

In short, the OECD (e.g., OECD 2010a) has consistently emphasized that equity is a strong predictor of excellence. Indeed, countries that demonstrate greater equity across social groups also tend to perform more strongly on the PISA tests than those characterized by socioeconomic disparities (see also Darling-Hammond 2010). Thus, the underachievement of immigrant-background students in the United States can be attributed at least in part to the socioeconomic disparities that characterize its schools and society. Furthermore, the fact that immigration remains a volatile and divisive political issue in the United States reflects a social and educational climate that is less conducive to promoting both integration and equity in education.

Research focused specifically on the impact of ELT programs in the United States presents a complex picture. Callahan et al. (2010) analyzed nationally representative

data to assess the effects of student placement in English as a second language (ESL) programs at the high school level on academic achievement and placement in college preparatory courses. They reported a strong negative relationship between ESL placement and both academic achievement and placement in college preparation courses, even when controlling for prior achievement and multiple background variables. Callahan et al. (2010) suggest that “disparities in language minority student achievement may be due in part to schools’ placement of students into ESL and policies regarding ESL students’ access to academic content” (p. 24). They specifically point out that “students placed in ESL coursework exit high school with significantly less academic content, even when accounting for English proficiency, prior achievement, generational status, ethnicity, parental education, years in U.S. schools, and school level factors” (2010, p. 26).

Callahan et al. (2010) note that this seemingly counterintuitive finding is consistent with the descriptions of some high school ESL programs that have emerged from ethnographic research, which refer to the “ESL ghetto”; specifically, students identified as “ESL” often experience reduced access to grade-level academic content because their level of English is not deemed sufficient to master this content. The authors note that their findings do not address pedagogical approaches within ESL classes. The negative effect of ESL placement is largely due to the fact that language-focused ESL coursework takes up space in the student’s schedule that might preclude students’ access to more academically rigorous and engaging coursework. They argue for the need to expand academically challenging content-based language support services at the high school level.

The findings of Callahan and colleagues (2010) may not be generalizable to the classification of immigrant-background students as ELL in the early grades. Shin (2017) investigated the issue of whether an initial designation of students as ELL influences their later academic achievement. She reported that among students near the cutoff for designation as ELL or non-ELL, the classification had significant positive effects on ELLs’ academic achievement in the elementary grades and, to a lesser extent, in the later grades.

Canada. A synthesis of research findings from Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver demonstrated that, in general, immigrant-background students tend to perform relatively well in Canadian schools (McAndrew et al. 2009). This study reported that the academic performance of students whose home language differed from that of the school exceeded what would be predicted based on various risk factors such as low SES:

In some sites, the results of the target group are even slightly higher than that of the comparison group [native-speakers of the school language] with regard to graduation rates, performance in various subjects, and most of all, participation in selective or university-bound courses. (2009, p. 16)

This general pattern is also apparent in the OECD’s PISA findings. The OECD (2010a) summarizes the performance of Canadian immigrant-background students in reading abilities as follows:

PISA results suggest that within three years of arrival in Canada, immigrants score an average of 500 on the PISA exam, which is remarkably strong by international standards. For comparison's sake, in the 2006 PISA assessment of reading, Canadian first-generation immigrants scored an average of 520 points, as opposed to less than 490 in the United States and less than 430 in France. Canada is also one of very few countries where there is no gap between its immigrant and native students on the PISA. (By contrast in the United States the gap in reading is 22 points, and in France and Germany it is around 60 points). Second generation Canadians perform significantly better than first generation Canadians, suggesting that the pattern is of progress by all students over time. Finally, Canada is one of the few countries where there is no difference in performance between students who do not speak the language of instruction at home and those who do. (pp. 70–71)

The OECD (2010a) attributes the relative success of immigrant students as a group to the fact that their average socioeconomic status is equivalent to that of native-born students and they attend schools that are of equal quality to those attended by other Canadian students. The report also points to the fact that immigrants are welcomed as part of Canada's commitment to multiculturalism which "provides a distinct philosophy that seeks to both respect the importance of native cultures while also incorporating immigrants into a distinctively Canadian identity" (p. 71).

However, this apparent success masks considerable variation in students' academic outcomes. Studies in Alberta (Derwing et al. 1999; Watt and Roessingh 1994, 2001) revealed that large proportions of ELL students failed to graduate with a high school diploma (60% in the Derwing et al. (1999) study and 74% in the Watt and Roessingh (1994) study). More recent studies from British Columbia also show a high "disappearance" or non-completion rate among ELL high school students (Gunderson et al. 2012; Toohey and Derwing 2008). Immigrant students from higher socioeconomic backgrounds tended to perform considerably better than those from refugee and/or low socioeconomic backgrounds. In some contexts, the extremely strong performance of some groups of socially advantaged students masks the relatively weaker performance of students from less advantaged groups.

Some of the largely positive results for Australia and Canada can be attributed to selective immigration that favors immigrants with strong educational qualifications. In both countries, the educational attainments of adult immigrants are as high, on average, as those of the general population. In Canada, about 60% of immigrants fall into the "economic" category, selected for their potential to contribute to the Canadian economy, with the remainder distributed between refugee and family reunification categories. In addition, both Canada and Australia have encouraged immigration during the past 40 years and have a coherent infrastructure designed to integrate immigrants into the society (e.g., free adult language classes, language support services for students in schools, rapid qualification for full citizenship, etc.). Both countries have explicitly endorsed multicultural philosophies and policies at the national level aimed at promoting respect across communities and expediting the integration of newcomers into the broader society.

The impact of SES on school achievement differs significantly between Canada and the United States. Although there are significant SES disparities among the