Book Review

THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING EDITED BY GRAHAM HALL LONDON: ROUTLEDGE 2016 PP VII-XVIII-591

This volume is the latest in the Routledge series of Handbooks commissioned and written by leading scholars in the field. The areas reviewed have been divided into six sections but quite naturally there is considerable interdependency given the context of 'English Language Teaching'.

In the introduction to this volume Hill points out that simply saying that ELT is 'what teacher do' obscures the complexity of what is involved in ELT as it involves teaching and learning English as second, additional or foreign language or as an international lingua franca. In addition, one has to consider ELT for specific purposes or more general purposes in different countries, contexts and levels. ELT has emerged as a distinctive entity, a profession, in its own right prompted by increase migration, the internationalizing of education, globalization, the internet and the growth of multinational capitalism turning ELT into a commodity. Of central concern is the relationship between research/theory on one hand and 'practice' on the other. In a world of multiple perspectives the competing demands offer possibilities for practice rather than, 'one-size-fits-all' to the challenges of English language teaching today. There is a clear challenge today for the literature on ELT to be *informative* but not *directive*, and to be *authoritative* while providing opportunities for those engaged in the ELT profession to *reflect and react* to the research/theories proposed and applied given the context of culture and situation in which ELT is practiced.

The chapters in the handbook focus on a specific issue within ELT. There is an introduction to the area, a critical review of current issues, discussion of key areas of debate and an outline of possible future

developments: followed by discussion questions, related topics, further readings and references. The thirty-nine chapters are grouped into six main sections progressing from 'broader' contextual issues to a narrower focus on the language classroom.

Part I

The opening chapter, *World Englishes and English as a Lingua Franca: a changing context for ELT* traces the way in which English today has an unprecedented global spread marked by diversity and variety. Seargeant looks at Kachru's Three Circles of English, Schneider's dynamic model, and English as a Lingua Franca in terms of 'What model of English should be taught?', 'Who should teach English?' and 'How should English be tested?'

The two subsequent chapters have a more overtly critical position as regards ELT in a globalized context. Pennycook makes the link between *Politics, power relationships and ELT*. He suggests that English Language educators should question the wider implications of classroom language policies, textbook choices, and language norms. Kramsch and Zhu Hua look at the changes in *Language and culture in ELT* questioning whether ELT has become a 'culture-free skill'. They note that English language teaching requires knowledge of history, awareness of discourse processes and what this might mean in both global and local cultures. Llurda's chapter focuses on the traditional view of *'Native speakers', English 'and ELT* and the changing perspectives of the 'traditional' distinction and the values that were once attached to each type of speaker. The author points out that these two apparently mutually exclusive groups make no sense in a 'real world' situation and considers and the implications for teachers and teaching.

Finally in this section Crookes discusses *Educational perspectives on ELT*. This article draws on concepts from the philosophy of education to explore the values teachers have and the ways in which teacher are consistent (or not) with language teaching and educational traditions within which teachers might be working.

Part II

Opening this section, Graves outlines key issues in *Language curriculum design* by describing three historical waves of curriculum content:

the linguistic, communicative and a third wave consisting of genre and text-based learning, content–based learning, project based learning and the use of technology---each with different understandings of both language and how and why people learn a language. Grey's chapter on *ELT materials: claims, controversies and critiques* highlights the ways in which published materials represent both language for pedagogical purposes and the world it inhabits with all the simplifications and distortions this can entail. Assessment is also a central consideration and Fulcher and Owen in *Dealing with the demands of language testing and assessment* outline ways in which teachers might understand and engage with standardized language testing and assessment in the classroom. Karen E Johnson in *Language teacher education* discusses the ways in which the development of knowledge of language teaching might take place through 'located teacher education' which links disciplinary knowledge (language awareness) to experiential knowledge (the experienced classroom teacher).

Several chapters in the Handbook identify new technologies as influencing current developments in ELT as in the chapter on *New technologies, blended learning and the 'flipped classroom in ELT'*. Examining these two approaches the chapter discusses how new technologies might encourage curriculum innovation but may also disrupt established teacher and student routines.

Subsequent chapters outline key issues across ELT, *English for specific purposes* (ESP) with the development of this area of ELT over the past decades and tracking students' needs and the development of genre-based instruction. *English for academic purposes (EAP)*, discusses the extent to which EAP students should balance the pragmatic accommodation of academic norms with the possibility of critically challenging them. *English for speakers of other languages (ESOL)* focuses on language education and migration while *Bilingual education in a multilingual world* focuses on language contexts where English is one of the bilingual target languages and the different forms bilingual education can take and the current tensions in the field.

Part III

Part III deals with methods and methodology and how the current profusion of methods in contemporary ELT makes it impossible to deal with every approach. In the opening chapter of this section, Hall provides an

overview of the historical trends and current debates surrounding *Method, methods and methodology*. He outlines a range of perspectives on the development of methods in ELT which at times diverge and offer conflicting accounts of the past and present Following this Thornbury examines *Communicative language teaching in theory and in practice* exploring the links between the original conceptions of communicative language teaching (CLT) and learning and current practices. Van den Branden review *Task-based language teaching* which has gained momentum in ELT but which can be challenging to implement. Morton gives an overview of *Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)* and sees it as an umbrella term identifying a range of approaches to integrate content and language. Holliday closes this section by focusing on *Appropriate methodology* and how teaching methods need to be made meaningful to the cultural and linguistic experience of the language learners and their teachers.

Part IV

The first two chapters of this section draw on contrasting accounts of how languages are learned. One focuses on *Cognitive perspectives on classroom language learning* and looks at a range of complex mental processes that learners engage in to develop language knowledge. The other gives reviews of *Sociocultural theory and the language classroom* from an ELT perspective inspired by Vygotsky's research and the relationship between thinking and speaking. From this perspective social context and cultural tools (such as language) mediate thinking and learning, and it is misleading to separate 'the cognitive' from 'the social'.

Subsequent chapters in this section review a range of learner characteristics and their implication for language learning and teaching. There is an overview of *Individual differences* (IDs), involving factors such as anxiety, aptitude, language learning styles and willingness to communicate. *Motivation* is discussed in a separate chapter reflecting its central role in language learning and the range of different approaches that theorists have taken to describe and research this phenomenon.

The final three chapters, although maintaining a focus on learning and learners take a more contextually and institutionally oriented approach to the issues they discuss. Firstly, Benson's concern is with *Learner autonomy* in the changing context of the global spread of ELT. While Envers traces the development of *Primary ELT*. Highlighting the socio-political nature of

decisions for and reviewing responses to, an early start to teaching and learning English. Finally Pinter's *Secondary ELT* reviews core characteristics of teenage learners and the challenges of working with secondary level learners.

Part V

The section of the Handbook looks at *what* is taught in the classroom; the language itself, and considers how the teaching of language knowledge and skills might be realized in practice. The first chapter provides an overview of the possibilities offered by *Corpora in ELT*, discussing how corpus analysis has provided new insights in language and language use. The following chapter discusses *Language Awareness* (LA) which incorporates knowledge *about* language, and the rationale behind the Association for Language Awareness (ALA), a movement taking up an ideological stance towards language-related issues and an approach to teaching and learning languages.

The next two chapters look at teaching language as a 'system' and then teaching of 'language skills'. *Teaching language as a system* draws on 'systemic functional linguistics' and 'cognitive linguistics' to present a comprehensive system which might help teachers better understand language and language teaching. The chapter on *Teaching language skills* provides an overview of the critical issues surrounding the teaching of the four skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening and the need to integrate such skills in the classroom teaching.

The final two chapters in this section explore aspects of English language teaching that are often overlooked in the mainstream literature of ELT. Paran and Wallace's chapter on *Teaching literacy* clarifies the distinction between 'literacy' and 'reading and writing' with particular reference to learning literacy in a second language. In *Using Literature in ELT*, Hall reviews useful ways of expanding learner's vocabulary, awareness of register, genre and general linguistic knowledge. A stronger claim is also made that literary texts are central to the needs of students in a wide range of situations in everyday life.

Part VI

The final section of the *Handbook* looks at a number of key issues and questions that English language teachers and learners try to work their way through in the classroom. An article discussing *Complexity and language teaching* opens this section. Mercer outlines how complexity theories and seeing the classroom as a complex dynamic system can help to understand ELT learning and teaching contexts and processes. This chapter also suggests that complexity theories can offer teachers and researchers a framework for reflexive practices. The following chapter by Walsh and Li looks at the relationship between *Classroom talk, interaction and collaboration*. The authors not only outline how learners access and acquire new knowledge and skills through the talk, interaction and collaboration which take place but also suggest that teachers need to develop an understanding of these processes in order to maximize opportunities for language learning in the classroom.

The chapter on *Error, corrective feedback and repair* offers an overview and discusses the issues surrounding corrective feedback, informed by empirical findings from SLA research and tackles questions about whether, when, how and by whom corrective feedback might or should be provided. Kerr's chapter *Questioning 'English-only' classrooms* examines own-language use (use of the 'mother-tongue' or 'first language') in the ELT classroom and argues for the principled use of the learner's own-language.

The final three chapters examine contexts for interaction and language learning. *Teaching large classes in difficult circumstances* suggests the need for teachers to move away from a 'problem-solution' approach to pedagogy and more towards developing context-appropriate methodologies for large-class teaching. The chapter on the relationship between *Computer-mediated communication and language learning* focuses on feedback of learner's writing and speaking and telecollaboration in language and intercultural learning while addressing the question of the 'effectiveness' of computer-related communication. The final chapter explores *Values in the ELT classroom*, showing how the teaching of English always involves values realized in both the decisions teachers make and how classes are organized, and in the values students and teachers express during lessons. This chapter also reflects at the level of the classroom, issues of power, culture and educational philosophy first outlined in the opening section of the *Handbook*.

In a volume of this size surveying a field of such diversity the discussion and interpretation may not always find agreement with what individual readers might think. However, the main aim of this *Handbook of English Language Teaching* was to indicate the diverse nature of ELT as a profession constituted by a range of communities of practice and professional interests but also as focus of study and professional reflection. It is not expected for readers to work through the book chapter by chapter but rather, at least initially look at the areas that pertain to their immediate interests. However, it will also no doubt, stimulate professional and academic reflection on the key issues facing ELT. I for one will be certainly using this Handbook with my post-graduate students although even undergraduates in the field of language would benefit considerably if their interest is to be a language teacher or even in the broader field of applied linguistics.

J.A. Foley

Graduate School of English,

Assumption University