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## LINGUIST List 21.3579

Thu Sep 09 2010

### Review: Applied Linguistics: Spolsky and Hult (2010)

Editor for this issue: Anja Wanner <[anja@linguistlist.org](mailto:anja@linguistlist.org)>

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1. Alicia Pousada, The Handbook of Educational Linguistics

#### Message 1: The Handbook of Educational Linguistics

**Date:** 09-Sep-2010

**From:** Alicia Pousada <[pousada.a@gmail.com](mailto:pousada.a@gmail.com)>

**Subject:** The Handbook of Educational Linguistics



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EDITORS: Spolsky, Bernard & Hult, Francis M.

TITLE: The Handbook of Educational Linguistics

SERIES TITLE: Blackwell Handbooks in Linguistics

PUBLISHER: Wiley-Blackwell

YEAR: 2010

Alicia Pousada, English Department, University of Puerto Rico at Río Piedras

#### SUMMARY

This book is the 2010 paperback edition of 'The Handbook of Educational Linguistics' originally published in hardcover format in 2008 (not reviewed on LINGUIST at the time). It is an affordable, one-volume compendium that sums up

the increasingly complex and multidisciplinary field of educational linguistics via focused yet processable articles written by an international group of experts. It addresses the broad spectrum of theoretical perspectives, essential themes, principal conclusions, and real world applications of educational linguistic research. It should be extremely helpful in the clarification and resolution of language education dilemmas world-wide that have resulted from the dialectical processes of globalization and linguistic diversification. It is directed at a well-educated, though diverse, audience, including school policymakers and curriculum developers, linguistic researchers, language teachers, and graduate students working in literacy campaigns, bilingual or bidialectal education programs, programs for the deaf, and language resuscitation efforts.

The editors of the handbook certainly have the credentials to carry out their job. Bernard Spolsky, retired professor formerly of McGill University, Indiana University, University of New Mexico, and Bar-Ilan University, is well-known to anyone who has worked in any of the areas circumscribed within educational linguistics. He posited the term "educational linguistics" back in 1974 and wrote the first textbook dedicated to the topic in 1978. He has published numerous books and articles on educational and applied linguistics and is also the editor of the 1999 Concise Encyclopedia of Educational Linguistics (Spolsky 1974, 1978, 1999). Francis Hult is an Assistant Professor of Applied Linguistics at the University of Texas at San Antonio and has taught at the University of Pennsylvania and at Lund University in Sweden. He has written numerous articles on language policy and planning and manages the Educational Linguistics List.

The first two of the 44 chapters paint with broad brushstrokes the outlines of the field of educational linguistics. The next seven chapters discuss the interdisciplinary links between educational linguistics and other language-related fields, including neurobiology, psychology, anthropology, sociology, political science, education, and theoretical linguistics. The 27 articles composing the core of the book address the themes of linguistically and culturally responsive education, language education policy and management, literacy development, language acquisition, and language assessment. The final eight chapters of the handbook consider the recent contributions of research to the practices of language/literacy instruction and assessment, in particular with regard to indigenous, minority, and migrant communities. They additionally pinpoint areas for future research involving the utilization of technology in dealing with language problems and in rescuing endangered languages.

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#### EVALUATION

While all of the articles are useful in different ways, they are far too numerous and their scope far too ample to permit individual evaluation in this review. However, a few points bear highlighting for anyone seeking to utilize the handbook in educating or informing others.

First of all, this is not a textbook and is best utilized as a reference book or supplementary reader. A number of the articles naturally review overlapping literature and can become repetitious if read one after the other. Second, given the small space allocated for each article (approximately 10 pages), there is a tendency to rush through the explanations of complex theories and procedures. Graduate students (and other potential users like program planners or grant writers) should be encouraged to read the articles that are most useful to them in order to get a general idea of the major points of contention and then explore the specifics further in the list of sources given. Lastly, there is considerable coverage of classic references which may initially appear to the modern reader to be less than relevant in the 21st century. It is vital that

these vintage sources be given due recognition for their groundbreaking status, and it is crucial that the process of creating research of all kinds be seen as the dynamic and historically contextualized unfolding of understandings that it is.

Overall, Spolsky & Hult offer a varied and valuable treatment of key language questions faced by educators and government planners today. They allow a newcomer to get a sense of the breadth and depth of the field of educational linguistics, while providing veterans with useful summaries and analyses of past and current investigations. Graduate students and researchers will especially appreciate the extensive bibliographic sources listed at the end of each chapter, including Internet references, and the creative and potent suggestions for future research that is geared toward improving the linguistic experiences of speakers around the world.

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## ABOUT THE REVIEWER

Alicia Pousada received her Ph. D. in Educational Linguistics from the University of Pennsylvania, one of the first graduates of the program initiated by the late Dell Hymes. Since 1987, she has taught linguistics in the English Department of the College of Humanities at the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras. She directs the Lewis C. Richardson Seminar Room, a graduate research center dedicated to language and literature of the English-speaking world with particular emphasis on the Caribbean. Her publications and presentations focus on language policy and planning, multilingualism, and teaching of English as an Auxiliary Language world-wide.

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