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*Educating English Language Learners* appeared as a result of a US 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” (p. 1). Referring to what Donna Christian calls “educational facts” (p. 1) about the lower academic ability of students with limited English proficiency, and disappointingly 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 twenty years, how research findings have been applied in US schools, and possible future research directions.

The introductory chapter attempts to justify a synthetic research review and to describe the review methodology. Chapter 2 on Oral Language reviews the research literature on proficiency in oral English along the lines of four major topics: language development, school factors, non-school factors, and assessment. 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" (p. 14). Moreover, conclusions like "there is a positive relationship between English language use outside of school and English proficiency" (p. 41) do not seem to move beyond commonsensical perceptions of what language learning involves. The third chapter, heavily relying on correlational studies, discusses Crosslinguistic and Crossmodal Issues in literacy and calls for more research "to draw stable and definitive conclusions" (p. 84). Instructional Issues related to reading and writing by English language learners are dealt with in Chapter 4, in which Fred Genesee and Caroline Riches easygoingly define reading and writing as "the production or comprehension of written language and behaviors related to the production and comprehension of written language" (p. 109) (!). At one point this chapter highlights two major sources of infection in the ailing body of second language education research: 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" (p. 125). Another interesting issue in this chapter is that the authors seem to 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" (p. 138). Chapter 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.

Although the volume strives to shed light on English language education through exploring major relevant academic resources, it ironically appears to be exposing the issue of how research in this area has been hijacked by distractions. Concentrating on the taken for granted concepts of *academic achievement* and *communicative* language ability on one hand, and trusting mainstream research trends based on positivistic approaches and statistical procedures on the other, seem to have led second language education research almost to the middle of nowhere! Researchers on the education of English as a foreign language seem not to need to continue "sustained programmatic research" (p. 226) along the old paths but to revisit research traditions in search of more lifelike approaches. Moreover, they seem to need to shift their attention from promoting *academic achievement* to gaining profound understanding of learning *language* as a socially vital practice of *meaning creation.*