

## Educational Language Teaching: A New Movement beyond Reflective/Critical Teaching

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**Abstract:** This paper aims to extend our understanding of what it means to be a language teacher of sufficient caliber by elucidating ways in which professionals in teacher education can help teachers proactively construct and promote their *Educational Identity*. Our descriptions of the historical outlooks to language teachers constitute the starting point for a wider discussion on the expansion of the language teacher's identity in being and becoming an *Educational Teacher*. Having made reference to a variety of ground-breaking approaches in English language teaching and learning, encapsulated in the notion of *Applied ELT*, this article highlights some of the future challenges that should be involved in language teacher training courses. However, the purpose of this paper is by no means to promise more than it can deliver; rather, the introduction of *Educational Language Teacher* should rest on the guarantee that what is being offered to teachers can and will support how well they deal with life issues in the classroom. Issues raised here should be able to (a) contribute to a better understanding of the future directions in language teacher education, (b) present a series of recommendations on actions that need to be taken and, consequently, (c) lead to improvements in the planning of teacher training programs.

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### 1. Introduction

The English language, during the colonial era, was considered to be an instrument in the hands of colonizers for bringing to the fore their own culture and curbing other countries' cultural expressions through cultural invasion (Freire, 1985), exploitation (Said, 1993), and marginalization (Ha, 2004). Most simply put, a great part of linguistic imperialism comprised the deculturation of the speakers of other languages (Phillipson, 1992) whose unfortunate consequence, i.e. ESL/EFL learners' loss of identity (Norton, 1997; Ricento, 2005), could then be observed in most of the theories and practices in the field of ELT.

However, with the advent of Postmodernism, the validity of the mainstream Western scientific practices, along with their teaching methods which were prescribed by native theoreticians for a variety of *unknown* contexts, were put into serious question (Kuhn, 1962; Kumaravadivelu, 1994; Pennycook, 1989; Prabhu, 1990). Likewise, the native speakers were stripped of their sheer ownership of the English language and there was no longer any distinction between native and non-native speakers of English (Swales, 1993; Walker, 2001; Widdowson, 2003). Rather, due to the emergence of World Englishes (Kachru, 1982) with

its notions of *inclusivity* and *pluricentricity*, the possession of the English language became denationalized and indigenized by other varieties of English around the world (Higgins, 2003; Smith, 1976; Widdowson, 1994).

Similarly, during the postmodern era of ELT, many scholars denounced the idolatry of the *native* language teacher (e.g., Rampton, 1990; Phillipson, 1992; Kramsch, 1997) and the idea of teachers' being classroom *consumers* (Kincheloe, 1993; Prabhu, 1990; Richards, 1990; Stern, 1991) but, instead, gave a high prominence to classroom *action research* (Altrichter, Posch, & Chamot, 1995; Curry, 1996; Schmuck, 2006; Wallace, 1998) and looked upon language teachers as *reflective* (Cutforth, 1999; Kumaravadivelu, 1999; Mena Marcos, Sanchez, & Tillema, 2011), *critical* (Giroux, 1988), *participatory* (Freire, 1972), *exploratory* (Allwright, 2003), and *transformative* (Kumaravadivelu, 2003) teachers.

Nonetheless, in this paper we argue that in an age of globalization and neo-colonization we must extend the language teachers' role beyond that of a reflective practitioner and transformative intellectual and give them a new identity. This study, therefore, mainly centers on introducing *Educational Language Teacher* as a new concept in language teacher

education. It examines the basic issues of where and under what conditions language teacher education works best, including not only qualifying language teachers to realize and promote their professional identity (Bauer & McAdams, 2004; Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004; Varghese et al., 2005) and abandon their undue reliance of native identities (Abell, 2000), as well as to be reflective practitioners and transformative intellectuals in their teaching, but also developing teacher training courses in which teachers are empowered to become *educational teachers* in the sense that, henceforth, they should go beyond teaching language per se towards extending their knowledge of other disciplines so that they can help learners develop as 'whole-person' individuals.

## 2. Timeline: Roles of Language Teachers

Language teaching has undergone three stages, namely Pre-modern era, Modern era and Postmodern era (Pishghadam & Mirzaee, 2008). In each stage, language teachers have been assigned different roles regarding the dominant stream of thought.

### 2.1. The pre-modern era of ELT

During the Pre-modern era of ELT, the Classical Method, later known as the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), whose aim was the learning of classical languages like Latin and Greek through translation of literary texts and focus on rote learning of vocabulary and grammar rules, became the dominant method of teaching the language. The GTM focused on grammar, vocabulary memorization, reading and writing, with little or no attention given to listening and speaking skills. During the heyday of GTM in the late 1800s and early 1900s, language teachers were considered the sole authority in the classroom and used their own *intuition* to teach the language.

### 2.2. The modern era of ELT

During the Modern era of ELT, the professionals of the field were mostly preoccupied with the quest for the deceptive 'best' method of teaching language (McArthur, 1983) in terms of the theories, methods, and techniques which were stipulated in advance (Stevens, 1977) and generalized across various audiences from unknown locations. The prescription of the theories of English language teaching by professionals in Core countries such as the UK, USA, and Canada (Phillipson, 1986) for a variety of contexts around the world signaled the entrance of colonialism into the field of ELT.

#### 2.2.1. The Native-like teacher

The Audiolingual Method, for example, was based on the basic premises of behavioristic psychology such as stimulus-response, habit

formation, and reinforcement. During Audio-lingual Method (ALM), the English teachers were supposed to be as native-like as possible, the native English-speaking teacher was deemed as the best teacher, and the monolingual teaching of English as the perfect form of instruction.

#### 2.2.2. The Consumer teacher

In the 1970s, an era referred to as the "spirited seventies" (Brown, 2002), the ALM waned in popularity and gave way to some new methods such as, to name just a few, the Silent Way, Suggestopedia, and Total Physical Response. Having made universal claims, these "changing winds and shifting sands" or 'designer methods' (Marckwardt, 1972), sought to discover the best method for teaching the English language (Brown, 2000) which could be prescribed for and generalized across a wide range of audiences and contexts.

In this view, teachers were considered to play the role of a technician and a classroom consumer in the sense that they should adhere to, and transmit, the professional knowledge to learners without having the right to change the content of information (Kincheloe, 1993). Put another way, the language teacher was primarily concerned with the passive transmission of the information which has already been agreed upon by experts in the field to language learners. That is to say, the situated, novel and context-specific experiences of language teachers were ignored to the extent that teachers were supposed to continually refer to the theoreticians' general prescriptions of what the best way for language teaching was. This strand of thought was deemed too inefficient to cater to the specific localities of language classrooms around the globe and, consequently, gave way to a reflective view of teaching in the postmodern era.

### 2.3. The post-modern era of ELT

Finally, during the postmodern era of ELT, the emergence of notions such as subjectivism, constructivism, relativism, and localism made the ELT professionals cast doubt on the validity of the mainstream Western scientific practice (Kuhn, 1962). Accordingly, during this period second language learning and teaching were considered complex, non-linear, dynamic, emergent, and unpredictable processes (Larsen-Freeman, 1997). Similarly, the modernist idea of looking for the 'best' method was severely criticized (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, Long, 1989; Pennycook, 1989; Prabhu, 1990; Richards, 1990, 2003; Stern, 1991) granted that the relationship between theory and practice could only be visualized by virtue of the immediate act of teaching (Widdowson, 1990).

Likewise, the native-like pronunciation was no longer the sole criterion for language proficiency (Kachru, 1990; Swales, 1993; Walker, 2001) and as a result, the ownership of the English language became de-nationalized and indigenized by the speakers of other English varieties (Kachru, 1992; Smith, 1976; Widdowson, 1994). When it comes to language teaching, likewise, the idea of the idealized native speaker as the best teacher has been deconstructed by many scholars such as Kramsch (1997), Paikeday (1985), Rampton (1990), and Phillipson (1992). These scholars argued that non-native teachers should abandon their undue pursuance of native identities and, instead they ought to focus upon accepting their own unique identities as non-native speakers so that they can put into practice their own language learning experiences to contribute to the promotion of language proficiency among learners of multiple linguistic, sociocultural, historical, national and religious identities.

Through introducing the notion of 'postmethod', Kumaravadivelu (1994, 2003) invited the ELT community to look for a meaningful and organized *alternative to method*, and not an *alternative method*, in order to decolonize the colonized ELT. In a similar vein of argument, Prabhu (1990), through what he called teachers' *sense of plausibility*, gave a high prominence to language teachers' subjective understanding of their own teaching as well as their local needs. In other words, English teachers were encouraged to become reflective practitioners (Kumaravadivelu, 1999).

### 2.3.1. The Reflective language teacher

In the reflective outlook to teachers, language teachers are no longer looked at as passive executors appointed by the professionals of the field to carry out their prescriptive rules of language teaching, but are empowered to reflect on, and be sensitive to, their own context-specific teaching practice. In fact, the idea that teachers need to become reflective practitioners was proposed to give priority to the fact that teachers need to be continually concerned with enhancing their research-based instruction, revising their lessons, and adapting their teaching practices to the specific contexts of language teaching and learning based on the feedback they receive from learners. Accordingly, several scholars such as, to name just a few, Cutforth (1999), Kincheloe (1991), Kumaravadivelu (1999), and Mena Marcos, Sanchez and Tillema (2011) widely accepted, and still use the notion of teacher reflection.

Such research-based reflection on the teaching practice has two interconnected manifestations: *reflection-on-action* in which

teachers devise a lesson plan and, subsequently, pass judgment on the effectiveness of their teaching practices, and *reflection-in-action* in which teachers monitor their ongoing performance on the spot and make attempts to immediately accommodate and redress their teaching practice (Schon, 1983). Accordingly, teachers' engagement in action research has gained considerable momentum in the area of education (e.g., Argyris & Schon, 1974; Schon, 1983; Noffke, 1997; Zeichner & Liston, 1996; Hui & Grossman, 2008; Gordon & Schwinge, 2009). This research has been a venue for teachers to enhance the teaching process, modify their instruction, create collaborative environments, and simply put, to reflect on their own teaching and become reflective practitioners.

Likewise, in the realm of language teaching, action research has received more and more attention in recent years (e.g., Altrichter, Posch, & Chamot, 1995; Curry, 1996; Schmuck, 2006; Wallace, 1993). It was thus recommended that action research be incorporated into the language teacher education programs (Richards & Lockhart, 1994) so that teachers could enhance and enrich their teaching practices in response to the situated conditions and their continuously changing experiences (Curry, 1996).

### 2.3.2. The Participatory/Critical language teacher

Later in the era of postmodernism, some scholars of the field of language teaching such as Auerbach (1995), Kumaravadivelu (1999) and Pennycook (1999) who were largely inspired by Freire (1972), espoused the idea that any kind of pedagogy should challenge the ideological, sociopolitical, and historical forces with the aim of empowering learners to acquire the required knowledge and social skills to be able to function as critical agents in a society (Giroux, 1988).

In fact, under the rubric 'Critical Pedagogy', these scholars made attempts to give language teachers a critical and participatory role to become *transformative intellectuals*, whose primary obligation was to empower language learners and emancipating them from the hegemony of dominant ideologies. Such pedagogy is concerned with "connecting the word with the world," "recognizing language as ideology, not just as system," "extending the educational space to the social, cultural, and political dynamics of language use," and "creating the cultural forms and interested knowledge that give meaning to the lived experiences of teachers and learners" (Kumaravadivelu, 2006, p. 70).

In this view, language teachers, as agents of change and seekers of democracy in education, should therefore raise their sociopolitical awareness

via problem-posing activities in terms of a holistic approach to both educational advancement and personal transformation (Kumaravadivelu, 2003) in such a way that teachers and learners acquire a sense of ownership of their own teaching and learning rather than unduly relying on professional experts (Kincheloe, 1993).

### 3. Introducing Educational Language Teacher

Now, inspired by Pishghadam (2011) who states that ELT has already acquired a scientific and independent status among many other disciplines making it ready to be applied to and improve other domains of knowledge, we argue that it is time for a new role for language teachers to adopt. In fact, during this era of neo-colonization and globalization, in which the knowledge of the colonized countries is constantly being used to serve the colonizer's interests while the cultural identity of the colonized people are lamentably being compromised (Phillipson, 1988), and that the need for localization of knowledge and expertise is being felt more than any other time (Kumaravadivelu, 2006), language teachers are expected to become *Educational Language Teachers* who are not only experts in teaching language but also educational experts in the specific context they work. In other words, although reflective language teaching largely pervades the current practices in teacher education (Gimenez, 1999) and is considered by many scholars (e.g., Gordon, 2011; Johnson & Johnson, 1999; Mena Marcos, 2007; Richards, 2000; Tabachnick & Zeichner, 2002; Vieira & Marques, 2002) to be part and parcel of teacher development, we suggest that language teachers should not be limited to but should be empowered to move *beyond*, reflective language teaching towards gaining the relevant and sufficient caliber required for extending their professional identities by taking into account and trying to improve other domains of knowledge which, directly or indirectly affect learners' idiosyncratic lives.

Most recently, a new paradigm in second/foreign language studies, i.e. Applied ELT, which simply refers to the applications and contributions of ELT to other domains of knowledge, has been pioneered by Pishghadam (2011), and furthered by Pishghadam and Zabihi (2012) in order to breathe new life into the field of English language teaching and learning by giving it a more contributory and life-changing status, and inviting the professionals of the field to take a fresh look at its principles.

A key tenet of Applied ELT is that ELT, as a full-fledged and interdisciplinary field, is ready to be applied to and improve other domains of

knowledge (Pishghadam, 2011). As such, the inclusion of learners' other characteristics such as motivation, emotional abilities, thinking styles, and values in language teaching programs is not considered an obstacle for language teaching and learning, but as a real strength. A number of research studies have been carried out in this regard coming up with the idea that, through the proper manipulation of the procedures in ELT classes, language teachers can contribute to other disciplines of knowledge. As a case in point, the field of psychology has received some useful implications from ELT in order for some psychological traits such as emotional intelligence (Hosseini, Pishghadam, & Navari, 2010), critical abilities (Pishghadam, 2008), and their national and cultural identities (Pishghadam & Saboori, 2011) to be improved.

Added impetus was given to the theory of applied ELT when Pishghadam and Zabihi (2012) brought forth the essential concept of *Life Syllabus*, suggesting that for a language course to be as efficient as possible it should incorporate the issues of concern in learners' life into the ELT curriculum, highlighting these aspects as well as the enhancement of learners' language proficiency. In a later extension of the theory of Applied ELT, Pishghadam and Zabihi (in press) have introduced *English for Life Purposes (ELP)* as a new concept in English language teaching. ELP offers a variety of topics for discussion which can enable the learners to compare their home culture with other cultures and project their unique identities. It not only mitigates the learners' anxiety, depression or other negative aspects of life but it would also enable the teachers to enhance the learners' emotional, intellectual, and motivational abilities while teaching them a second/foreign language.

Of course, the Applied ELT paradigm from which flow these essential changes in language planning and policy, language teaching and learning, syllabus design, materials development, and finally language teacher education informs these changes in myriad ways. For example, in the case of language teacher education, as is the primary concern of this paper, an emphasis on the *educational identity* of language teachers rather than their language-related native or professional identities demands a greater part on the side of the teachers that they should be trained to understand the psychological, emotional, social, economic, and even religious and moral needs of learners and design the syllabus according to those needs.

Fascinatingly, in accordance with the principles of Applied ELT discussed above, we further argue that language teachers should be

enabled to cross the boundaries of language teaching by virtue of extending their knowledge of other disciplines. The overall conclusion which our discussion here leads us to is that language teacher education has to prepare teachers for a dual role both as professionals in language-related as well as interdisciplinary issues. In fact, henceforth English language teachers ought to be regarded as *educational teachers* – teachers who have gained a sense of agency and have become empowered to construct positive professional identities in different disciplines of knowledge other than language teaching. Our purpose here is thus to reallocate the role of the teacher from language facilitator and instructor to an *educational language teacher*, a role which may not be possible for every teacher to take on at the outset, hence the need for devising appropriate language teacher training courses.

#### 4. Reorienting Teacher Training Courses in ELT

It has been and still is the common belief among ELT professionals that linguistic knowledge should form the central part of language teachers' knowledge base for teaching language (e.g., Baur, 2003; Yates & Muchisky, 2003; Zimmermann, 2003) to the extent that any language teacher education program was expected to train teaching trainees to become linguists (Leow, 1995). Later on, with the advent of Applied Linguistics, it was felt that other academic fields such as Sociology, Psychology, and Anthropology could provide useful implications for teachers and teacher educators towards the betterment of L2 teaching (e.g., Lafayette, 1993; Stern, 1983).

However, the theory of *Applied ELT* (Pishghadam, 2011) emerged with the aim of reversing the direction, ascribing a more contributory role to ELT. Put another way, so far, it has been the acceptable trend to employ the findings of other disciplines such as linguistics, sociology, psychology, neurology, etc. to enhance our understanding of teaching English. Now it is time for language teachers to play the role of a producer. In this view, language teachers play a vital role in building learners' social, cultural, and national identities. It is believed that every action on the part of ELT teachers would necessarily leave perennial steel prints on the slate of the mind of the learners and might play an important role in molding their life patterns as an individual, as a social member and as a citizen.

Be that as it may, if teacher education programs wish to prepare language teachers who are capable of becoming *educational teachers* in their classrooms and if learners ought to be exposed to language teachers of sufficient caliber, then these

programs will have to include activities aimed at promoting this end. Thus it is recommended that a teacher training course should *not only* comprise a series of facts about phonetics, morphology, syntax, semantics, discourse analysis, etc., but should instead add knowledge of other academic fields to the knowledge base that language teachers are typically presumed to need in order to teach language so that language teachers, as educational experts, become empowered to exert their newly achieved educational identities to contribute to the disciplines they wish to enrich.

To give but one example of such training courses, if teacher educators want to add the knowledge of the field of psychology to *educational language teachers'* repertoire of disciplinary knowledge, they have to (a) be sensitive to a wide range of issues such as self-confidence, emotional intelligence, creativity, etc. within the field of psychology, (b) keep abreast of the effective strategies and activities developed elsewhere for the enrichment of these issues, and (c) share their own ideas and practices with other educators worldwide. This is undoubtedly a huge task for language teacher educators, considering the fact that the psychological demands of individuals are so wide in range, and as a result, they inevitably have to strive hard to handle all these issues. It thus behooves the professionals in language teacher education to prepare language teachers to get on with such a colossal task.

To summarize thus far, it is recommended that the professionals in language teacher education develop training programs in which teachers of English are empowered to gain expertise not only in language teaching but also in different other disciplines and in so doing, become more of an *educational teacher*, a critical and proactive educator rather than merely a language instructor.

#### 5. Final Commentaries

In this paper, we were mainly concerned with introducing a new concept in language teacher education, drawing upon the previous roles ascribed to language teachers as well as our conceptions of the emergent need for language teachers to adopt a new role. Firstly, we referred to some stages in the development of ELT and the respective roles assigned to language teachers at each stage, and then argued that in an age of globalization and neo-colonization, language teachers by virtue of promoting their educational identity should be regarded as *educational language teachers*, i.e. critical, forethoughtful, and interdisciplinary educators who in addition to having a thorough command of language have a fair knowledge of other

disciplines rather than merely being reflective and critical language instructors.

It is important to note that the main rationale and source of inspiration for us to propose such a new identity for language teachers to take on has been the theory of Applied ELT brought forth by Pishghadam (2011). Therefore, obviously we are not generating new theories to the detriment or total negation of other theories but instead, we hinge upon, not annihilate, other theories and practices without which, we firmly believe, we could not have developed ours.

As such, the paper concludes with recommendations proposing ways in which language teacher education programs can be enriched by centering their attention on the promotion of teachers' professional identities while teachers, once their roles as *educational language teachers* have been established, i.e. when they have acquired a fair degree of mastery over those disciplines which ELT can enrich, decide how to focus more and more on the enhancement of learners' quality of life.

Therefore, we have made attempts to revitalize and reorient language teacher education by suggesting that the construction and development of language teachers' professional identity should empower them to become educational teachers. That is to say, we should encourage ESL/EFL teachers to develop an understanding of their own assets, values, and beliefs, enabling them to become, as was shown above, not only self-reflective practitioners and transformative intellectuals but also educational experts who very well know themselves and their own area of expertise as well as different disciplines of knowledge to which the field of ELT is able to contribute.

After the pioneering work of Pishghadam in 2011, inevitably years have to elapse for further research to emerge on the Applied ELT paradigm. His innovative stance appears to have encouraged a number of researchers and scholars to put the theory into practice, with all topics centering on the promotion of language learners' life qualities such as emotional abilities, ways of thinking, interpersonal competencies, self-confidence, motivation, creativity, etc. in a variety of domains ranging from language policy and planning, to materials development, syllabus design, and teacher education. In the area of language teacher education, these alterations epitomize an essential shift of focus from a *language-only* perspective to an *'education + language'* orientation with which teachers can enlarge their roles to be experts in teaching the language and at the same time in different other disciplines of knowledge.

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