

AFTERWORD

Reflections on Global English Instruction: New Roles and Approaches

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In this afterword, we will be looking at the role of English in East Asia generally and how that affects the linguistic ecology of the region. We will situate the chapters of this book within that context and also within contemporary views on second language development, including the growing importance of intercultural communication competence. Those developments will be discussed in connection with the evolving roles of teachers of English. Finally, we will look at the growth in options for personalized instruction, which offers new approaches to English language instruction, as illustrated by the chapters of this book.

“English fever” and its consequences

English today holds a unique position among world languages, a position that some have described as unprecedented in human history:

English is like no other language in its current role internationally, indeed like no other at any moment in history. Although there are, and have previously been, other international languages, the case of English is different in fundamental ways: for the extent of its diffusion geographically; for the enormous cultural diversity of the speakers who use it; and for the infinitely varied domains in which it is found and purposes it serves (Dewey, 2007, p. 333).

The extent of the spread of English as a lingua franca across the globe and its central role in diverse domains of human endeavor – education, entertainment, commerce, media, international organizations – bestow on English “a unique cultural pluralism, and a linguistic heterogeneity and diversity which are unrecorded to this extent in human history” (Kachru, 1985, p. 14). The number of people with “reasonable competence” in English was estimated at the beginning of the 21st-century to be somewhere around 1.5 billion (Crystal, 2003); that number is likely to be significantly higher now, with no indication that growth is slowing.

The ubiquity of English and its instrumental role in both institutions and private lives makes English language learning an intensely desired commodity worldwide: “People are ready to go to great lengths to achieve the goal of becoming proficient in English by investing a great deal of time, effort, and financial resources in language learning: English is viewed as a stepping stone to success in a globalized world” (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016, p. 26). As discussed in the introduction to this book, English language learning has deep roots in Taiwan, with the country's unique economic and political position resulting in an ever-growing need for English proficiency. The situation in Taiwan reflects global trends, as well as the state of English education in other Asian countries, where there are as well intense government and private efforts to enhance English language learning. The importance of learning English in Korea, for example, has been described as a “veritable English language mania” (Park & Abelman, 2004, p. 46), with government efforts supplemented by phenomena such as the creation of “English-only” villages or the practice of Korean mothers going abroad with their children to learn English (Butler, 2014b).

Similarly, in China there is “English fever” (Park, 2009); Zou & Zhang (2011) write that for many parents in China, “English is more than just a school subject; it permeates into many aspects of social life” (p. 191). Butler's research (2014a) in Changzhou, China indicated that parents' zeal for English

education was so intense that in her parental survey, 73% of parents responded positively to the statement, “I have no problem if my child will be able to speak English better than our home language(s)” (p. 109). The fervor for English language leads many parents to seek out additional opportunities for instruction through enrolling their children in so-called “cram schools”, private institutions which provide English lessons after regular school hours or on weekends. This is a phenomenon occurring across East Asia, including in Taiwan (see Lin, 2008; Lin & Byram, 2016). The use of cram schools is a reflection of the importance of English language proficiency in advancing educationally, including for high school and university admission. The sometimes problematic level of the English language proficiency of English teachers in public schools is one of the factors behind the widespread use of cram schools for English (see Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016).

The existence of such schools also highlights the fact that in many Asian countries (and elsewhere as well) there is “a problematic connection between policy and practice” (Liddicoat, 2014, p. 223) when it comes to English language instruction. While officially, national curricula may call for the use of a communicative language learning approach, emphasizing task-based instruction and the active use and development of speaking skills, classroom instruction may look quite different. In Japan, for example, the official curriculum reflects modern language pedagogy, but in reality a grammar-translation method is commonly used in teaching English, with a “great deal of focus in the English language classroom put on test-taking skills” (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016, p. 62). This gulf is evident elsewhere as well; in Malaysia, strong governmental emphasis on English language development has not led to the expected results in terms of English language capabilities (Don, 2014).

A concern Butler (2014a) raises about the English mania in China is the possible negative affect on the use and promotion of minority languages. Liddicoat (2014) points out

that in East Asia, language education policies emphasize bilingualism, usually in the form of a national language plus English. This is in contrast to other regions, such as the European Union, in which bilingualism has yielded to an emphasis on plurilingualism, including being proficient in two or more languages. The official disinterest for the development of multilingualism has unfortunate byproducts:

That has consequences for the linguistic ecology, especially in minority language contexts, where such thinking does not make space for the inclusion of learners' home languages within a bilingual framing of education or an openness to plurilingualism that could include home languages in addition to other forms of language learning. The policy focus on bilingualism at most creates a significant tension in a region where plurilingualism outside the educational system is widespread but largely ignored (Liddicoat, 2014, p. 225).

Bilingualism has consequences that go beyond language learning. The lack of support for minority languages is often accompanied by a concomitant social devaluation of minority groups. This relates as well to the different degrees of access families have to English learning resources (books, tutors, after-school classes) depending on socio-economic status and domicile: “To pay attention only to what is going on in formal English-language classrooms may result in a distorted and incomplete picture of English-language acquisition. That is because wealthier parents and their children typically have greater access to various forms of English education outside of the classroom” (Butler, 2014a, p. 96). These concerns, as well as an urban-rural divide, are evident in Taiwan as well (see Lin & Ivinson, 2012).

Trends in English language instruction

Given global movements towards greater use of English in a large variety of areas, English language instruction is booming, with integration into the school curricula at an early age in many countries (see Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016). Additionally, there are an increasing number of possibilities for learning English outside of formal educational settings. Those opportunities have expanded exponentially, with options available through online resources, extracurricular activities, work-related training, travel/study abroad, entertainment, and private schools. This book explores those expanded English learning opportunities in terms of younger learners (chapters 1 and 6), Internet tools and services (chapters 1 and 7), non-formal language learning (chapter 4), stays abroad (chapter 5), professional training (chapters 2, 3, and 6), and the use of media/entertainment (chapters 4 and 8). The variety of environments studied provides ample illustration of the penetration of English into all aspects of students' existence, from leisure-time activities to professional contexts.

In addition to this book illustrating different ways in which English language learning is occurring today in student lives (both in Taiwan and worldwide), there are several other important themes related to English language instruction which emerge as explicit subjects or subtexts:

- 1) a recognition of the importance of students developing competences in dealing with different varieties of English and with individuals from different cultures;
- 2) changes in the role of the English teacher today, as learning opportunities have expanded beyond the classroom;
- 3) the increasing personalization of English instruction to the needs/interests of individual learners.

Global English and Intercultural Competence

Dewey (2007) coined the term “Global English” to describe the sense that English as a global lingua franca is not “owned” by native speakers. Indeed, “in today’s global world, English is the language of international communication and the majority of interactions conducted in English are between non-native speakers” (Murray & Scarino, 2014, p. 9). Kachru (1992) uses the term “World Englishes” to describe the fact that there are a variety of “legitimate” versions of the language beyond the UK and USA. English is in that respect different from other world languages, where one variety of the language may be considered the accepted standard worldwide. For French, for example, the Académie Française is the official institutional custodian of the language.

Varieties of English take on linguistic and cultural characteristics from local and regional uses, giving them a unique combination of features. There are as well “emerging varieties” of English from its wide use in online tools and services (Liddicoat, 2014). Consequently, L2 users of English are likely to encounter many variations of English both in face-to-face and online encounters. To deal with that situation, English L2 users will need more than knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary; they need pragmatic and strategic competences. They will also need flexibility and a willingness to accept language forms and uses different from their classroom experiences, i.e., the “ability to negotiate meaning through the medium of English with potential interlocutors from multifarious language and cultural backgrounds and who may speak a different variety of English” (Murray & Scarino, 2014, p. 10). That entails becoming comfortable with the increasing mix of languages and cultures evident in our globalized world. This calls for a level of intercultural competence that matches the increasingly multicultural world in which we live. That brings with it a need for the wider inclusion of culture in second language instruction: “We are on the cusp of a major change in how we think about not only languages, languages education and the teaching and learning

of languages, but also about the role of language and culture in learning more generally” (Murray & Scarino, 2014, p. 4).

The contributors to this book reflect this view of Global English as situated in a multilingual and multicultural world in which English learners need to be able “to adapt on the fly to any given interaction both linguistically and culturally” (Murray & Scarino, 2014, p. 10). Chapters 1 and 7 explore the use of information technology to broaden language exposure and expand standard methodologies of the classroom. Lin, Shie, and Holmes (chapter 1) introduce blogs as a means as well to develop greater linguistic and cultural awareness; the Taiwanese students encountered new uses and variations of English, as well as new perspectives on topics such as education, through blogging with UK counterparts. Students in Chiu's study (chapter 2) express their enjoyment in discovering cultural differences and in recognizing the fallacy of accepting broad national stereotypes (“not every German is hard-working and punctual”). The need for intercultural competence in the hotel industry is demonstrated in Weng (chapter 3), with results that could be useful in designing intercultural training programs. White (chapter 8) explores how the use of novels in English language instruction can enable “students to understand and appreciate cultures and ideologies different from their own in time and space”, as fiction enables exploration of “vicarious new worlds”.

The activities in Yakoveleva's English club (chapter 4) venture beyond the binarity of English-Taiwanese language/culture to incorporate multiple national cultures, providing a wider, intercultural understanding. Yakoveleva invited students to reflect on the topics discussed in connection with their own personal backgrounds and experiences, thereby contributing “to their awareness of the role of the Taiwanese culture”. This reflects current SLA (second language acquisition) theory that second language learning should “build upon the learner's existing linguistic and cultural lifeworld” (Murray & Scarino, 2014, p. 6). The importance of reflexivity on cultural experiences is stressed in Yeh (chapter

5), who points out that “not all intercultural encounters lead to developing students’ multicultural competence”. Yeh shows how students engaged in international internships were able to take on the important role of “intercultural mediators of languages and cultures” (Murray & Scarino, 2014, p. 5).

Huang’s essay (chapter 6) explores how international students working on translation projects learn to accommodate to different styles of communication, an experience duplicated by the investigator herself. During the semester, students were asked “to reflect on their learning and challenges”. The importance of offering students opportunities for critical reflection on what they have learned and experienced is vital in deepening learning and avoiding facile explanations of observed behaviors/utterances. That can be accomplished through learning journals, blogs, or, as was the case here, through periodic student-researcher interviews. Recently, a new approach has been suggested, the joint instructor-student practice of critical conversation analysis of sample dialogs (McConachy, 2018).

The “intercultural perspective on language use” advocated by McConachy (2018),

foregrounds the importance of the learner’s ability to direct close attention to how language is used in context, to reflect on what one has observed and experienced within interactions, to compare what has been observed with what one already knows, and to develop the capacities for viewing the exchange of meanings from multiple perspectives (p. 7).

Such an approach directs attention away from broad national characterizations and towards cultural values embedded in language. This aligns well with the concept of “small cultures” (Holliday, 1999), which focuses on the formation of affinity, job, or task related groups which develop dynamically their own behaviors and practices through emergent communicative

activities. Learning the rules and roles of small cultures is important in many environments, including in participation in online communities, where learning the cultures of use of different tools or services is a prerequisite for “legitimate peripheral participation” (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Thorne, 2003). That holds true for blogging practices (chapter 1), as it does for particular areas within English for special purposes, such as journalism (chapter 2) or workplaces (chapters 3, 5, and 6).

New roles and expectations for English teachers

The studies together provide practical examples of the need for English teachers today to adapt learning and teaching approaches to the changing landscape of English language development. The ubiquity of English in all spheres of life has changed the dynamics of classroom English instruction: “Not so very long ago, the teacher was *the* main source of English for students, but times have changed” (Sundqvist & Sylvén, 2016, p. 5). Sundqvist & Sylvén’s *Extramural English* (2016) chronicles how that change is manifested in the availability of rich online media and resources. Sockett’s study of *Online Informal Learning of English* (2014) provides further examples. The availability and popularity of English language media (TV programs, movies, popular songs), especially among younger learners, means that many students in English language classrooms are also learning outside of class through what Chik and Ho (2017) label “recreational language learning”. Additionally, students may be learning English through travel, work-study programs, private schools, or participation in extracurricular language-related activities, schools, or organizations.

Sundqvist & Sylvén (2016) describe the changing face of classroom instruction in English:

With the emergence of Global English and the digital era, L2 English classrooms began to change. From anecdotal evidence we know that teachers

realized, slowly but surely, that their job ‘suddenly’ was a new job—and that job was challenging, to say the least. Previously, classrooms were more or less homogeneous in the sense that most learners had similar access to English input and also similar opportunities for English interaction and output. Further, the teacher could control learners’ amount of exposure to English and, in most cases, the teacher was also the main (and often the only available) English role model for the learners (p. 31).

Differences among learners are no longer just in the areas of cognitive ability and aptitude for learning languages but can vary with the degree of outside-class English exposure. These changes lead to the ongoing need for professional development for English teachers. English teachers need to learn about new online affordances for language learning, as well as to explore experiential opportunities that connect language development with students' leisure, study, work, and travel activities (Godwin-Jones, 2015). At the same time, the dynamic shifts in English L2 development today bring with them the need for teachers to practice action research, which engages teachers as researchers. Using findings from research and from experiences of their own local situations, action researchers try to find improved methods of teaching English that take into account the multiple learning options available today. This is, in fact, the genesis of most of the content of this book.

The teacher-authors in this collection report on a variety of new approaches to both enhance learning and further motivate students. One of those areas is to introduce active use of technology tools and services, including blogging (chapter 1), translation software (chapter 6), and student response systems (chapter 4). In the latter study, the introduction of the Kahoot student response software, also called clicker or polling apps, involves student use of mobile devices in a

BYOD mode (bring your own device). This usage echoes the call for greater integration of mobile devices in language learning (Godwin-Jones, 2017), as well as the targeted use of mobile devices in the classroom (Godwin-Jones, 2018). It is interesting to note that recent studies have highlighted innovative uses of mobile technology for learners by Taiwanese teachers and researchers, with more studies from Taiwan than from any other area of the world (Crompton, Burke & Gregory, 2017). Given their universal popularity, mobile devices offer one of the most important means available today to connect language learning to students' real lives.

Part of the appeal of Kahoot (and of similar online tools), as Lin (chapter 7) discusses, is its game-based features. When students enjoy an activity – whether it be gaming or watching videos – that is likely to be a strong motivating factor, as well as providing the opportunity for more time on task in terms of language exposure (Sykes, 2018). Yakoveleva (chapter 4) makes use of videos and gaming to add variety to content presentations, as well as to send a message to young learners that “English could be fun”. She also used popular English songs, scaffolding their use through preparation with vocabulary, listening to the songs while reading the English subtitles, and finally doing an activity with the lyrics, before having the students themselves sing the song. Sockett (2014) has shown how having students combine listening to music while working with song lyrics can enhance learning. English language media, along with other physical materials (food, board games, cards, souvenirs), can as Lin, Shie, and Holmes (chapter 1) state function as “cultural artifacts”, serving as “mediational tools to facilitate cultural reflections and interactions”. They also foster enjoyment in language learning. White (chapter 8) shows how much that can be the case as well for the reading of novels.

Learners as people

Language learning can be enjoyable and personally fulfilling, but it can also be nerve-racking and anxiety-promoting. In fact, the discussion of learners' emotional states runs like a leitmotif through much of this book. Recognizing and engaging students' emotional states has become recognized in SLA theory as central to effective learning (Busch, 2015; Murray, & Lamb, 2018). Bloggers in chapter 1 express nervousness over their command of English, as well as surprise at some of the information they receive from their British partners. Likewise, in chapter 2, students expressed hesitation in engaging with foreigners in English, and Yeh (chapter 5) points to how “emotionally difficult” it is to be in a professional setting in which one is expected to communicate competently with culturally and linguistically different others. Finally, Huang (chapter 6) discusses the stress felt by students in a university-industry collaboration project. Huang states that this experience “helps participants learn to cope with stress and to develop higher stress resistance”.

The practice of paying attention to stress-inducing, language-related situations aligns with recent studies that have highlighted the usefulness of critical incidents, both in terms of language learning and the development of intercultural communication competence (Reinders & Benson, 2017; McConachy, 2018). Those experiences can be disconcerting, but also present learning opportunities:

Without experiencing some discomfort in language learning, we cannot learn another language, and without some discomfort with some topics we cannot develop skills of criticality and intercultural citizenship. It is exactly when we need to negotiate meaning in learning a language and when we need to make sense of certain ambiguities in intercultural citizenship that we are required to learn new knowledge and skills as well as sometimes change

*our attitude (Byram, Golubeva, Hui & Wagner, 2017,
p. 258).*

This personal transformation comes as students “participate in learning and communicating in the target language, over time that process of adjustment or adaptation will fundamentally alter their sense of who they are” (Murray & Scarino, 2014, p. 9). This view echoes the calls in recent studies that advocate a “relational perspective on language education” (Murray & Scarino, 2014) and a “dialogic approach to intercultural acquisition” (Garrett-Rucks, 2016). The ultimate goal is to guide students through L2 interactions and the development of critical skills via self-reflection towards an end goal of transformative intercultural citizenship (Byram, Golubeva, Hui & Wagner, 2018).

Intercultural experiences engage students as whole persons, not just as learners. It involves not just knowledge and skills, but attitudes as well. Recent voices in SLA have pleaded for a more “person-centered” approach to language instruction (Benson, 2017; Larsen-Freeman, 2018). This engages students “emotional selves” in their learning (Kennedy, Diaz & Dasli, 2017, p. 168). Identity theory in SLA (Norton, 2001) has demonstrated the importance for student motivation and longer-term uptake of their investment in becoming members of “imagined communities”. Helping students construct an “English self” can increase students self-confidence, as shown in a recent large-scale study in China (You, Dörnyei & Csizér, 2016). Several studies in this book point to the need among Taiwanese students as well to boost their level of self-assurance, both in the use of English and in personal encounters with foreigners. The development of self-images of themselves as competent and confident English speakers may be of particular importance for students from migrant, minority, or disadvantaged communities, who may not “recognize themselves in the pedagogical practices of their English teachers” (Lin & Ivinson, 2012, p. 82). The shift towards a multicultural and multilingual view of language

learning entails focusing on the learner as a unique individual who brings into the L2 classroom a variety of values, beliefs and behaviors from cultural experiences and languages. Teachers need not only to be aware of those backgrounds, but to draw on them as well, leveraging out-of-school experiences (including online activities) to anchor L2 learning within students' own life experiences. This kind of “cultural bridging” (Lin & Iverson, 2012, p. 83) or “bridging activities” (Thorne, 2003) makes it more likely that learning is meaningful and memorable, because it has been personalized.

This focus on the individual learner in SLA has naturally led to a rise in recent years of qualitative and mixed method studies, with a growing emphasis on the diversity of individual development paths (Dörnyei, 2009). The use of group averages, as is the general practice in quantitative studies, identifies general tendencies observed in a group which may not yield useful information in terms of individual outcomes. That interest in the variety of learner experiences is reflected in this collection. Chapter authors use a variety of methods to gather data on individual student experiences, including individual and group interviews, focus groups, learning journals, questionnaires, assessment instruments, and researcher observations. The case studies that were developed from analyzing these data provide a rich mosaic of student English learning in a variety of contexts.

Conclusion: Towards Global Citizenship

Taken together, the studies in this collection demonstrate the utility (and need) of going beyond the textbook—and the classroom—to engage students in language-related activities. That process broadens cultural horizons while supplying greater interest/incentive to use English in different situations and with a variety of interlocutors. In the process, students gain confidence and competence, both in negotiating meaning and in building relationships through English.

The studies show that this goal can be accomplished in a variety of ways. The use of online interactions creates a “critical space for enhancing students' language and intercultural competences” (Lin, Shie, & Holmes, chapter 1). Given the growth of activity in this area, it is critical for teachers to take advantage of the benefits of technology-enhanced language learning in their own classrooms, as well as to acknowledge, encourage, and build on students' self-initiated online activities using English. At the same time, it is important as well to engage other aspects of their situated lives, whether that be travel or leisure time pursuits. That may involve participation in organized extracurricular activities or professionally oriented endeavors such as internships, work abroad, or service learning.

National curricula for English often highlight findings from research, such as the importance of broadening focus beyond the language typically encountered in the classroom and taking into consideration the complex, multicultural nature of language use today. Official curricula and pedagogical reforms are often slow in implementation in the classroom (for multiple examples for English, see Sundqvist, & Sylvén, 2016). This collection demonstrates, at least, that in English language instruction at Wenzao Ursuline University of Languages, teachers are actively seeking ways to expand student exposure to and learning of English in ways that connect with students' activities, interests, and needs.

The chapters of this book demonstrate the validity of new approaches for engaging and integrating a variety of learning options into English language instruction. While benefiting significantly English learners, these kinds of instructional innovation make the task of English teachers ever more complex, demanding both more knowledge and more flexibility:

Language teachers are working in a world which has changed in the past decades in fundamentally disruptive ways, through profound changes in the

role that networked computers play in everyday life and through the social and demographic shifts brought on by an increasingly globalized society...Second language teachers need to be able to work effectively in this evolving environment, preparing students for work and life in a world likely to be quite different from that in which they grew up, and which is likely to continue to change in significant ways (Godwin-Jones, 2015, p. 10).

Teachers need not only to be proficient in the target language and have sufficient training in being effective classroom teachers, but they also will need to be able to cope with increased use of technology, and the need for all educated citizens to be global citizens (Kumaravadivelu, 2013; Byram, Golubeva, Hui & Wagner, 2018). That makes the job of teaching English both challenging and exciting, and as this book shows, offers to teachers a variety of ways to make English language instruction both meaningful and effective. The key to effectiveness is not just finding the right resources and approaches but adapting them to the local educational context. That combination of global and local is demonstrated in this collection of essays.

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