Resistance to the Known
Also by Damian J. Rivers

SOCIAL IDENTITIES AND MULTIPLE SELVES IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION (co-editor)

NATIVE-SPEAKERISM IN JAPAN
Intergroup Dynamics in Foreign Language Education (co-editor)
Resistance to the Known
Counter-Conduct in Language Education

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In the beginning was the scream. When we talk or write, it is all too easy to forget that the beginning was not the word, but the scream. Faced with the destruction of human lives by capitalism, a scream of sadness, a scream of horror, above all a scream of anger, of refusal: NO. The starting point of theoretical reflection is opposition, negativity, struggle. The role of theory is to elaborate that scream, to express its strength and to contribute to its power, to show how the scream resonates through society and to contribute to that resonance.

(Holloway, 2002: 15)
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In a 1988 lecture entitled ‘Necessary illusions: thought control in democratic societies’, speaker Noam Chomsky declared how ‘most schooling is just training for stupidity and conformity’. Despite this assertion, Chomsky also added how ‘there are teachers who do stimulate thought and sometimes they get away with it’. Throughout my experiences as an educator I have found such a perspective to hold alarmingly true. These views reflect the daily struggle facing educators who are required to reconcile various forms of systematic oppression and restriction with a professional optimism that individual students can become the authors of their own unknown world. During various periods of turbulence, it has been a test of professional courage to remain unrepentant when pressurized, excluded and ridiculed by authorities (institutions, individuals and ideas) and their attempted impositions of supposed best practice. In consideration of this intellectually rewarding yet emotional laborious journey, sincere appreciation is extended to the small but significant group of principled educators who have provided support at those times when I have been able to ‘get away with it’, and especially at those times when I have not been so fortunate. In addition, humble gratitude is extended to all of the staff at Palgrave Macmillan for their first-class professionalism, to the anonymous reviewers for their constructive criticism, and to the team of contributing authors for their unwavering commitment to resisting the powerful burden of ‘the known’ and its apathy-inducing influence. Finally, whenever one encounters difficulties and disturbances in one’s professional life, it is often those who are closest in one’s personal life who must contend with the consequences. Therefore, a final heartfelt acknowledgement is reserved for the continued vitality, inspiration and moral courage provided by my four sons.

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Introduction: Conceptualizing ‘the Known’ and the Relational Dynamics of Power and Resistance

Damian J. Rivers

Preamble

This volume stands as an intended expression of responsible pedagogy; however, as no such recognized category exists – on the odd assumption that all of our pedagogies are responsible – it will most likely be banished to the distant domain of critical pedagogy, host to the voices of ‘them’ and ‘their’ views as opposed to ‘us’ and ‘our’ views. With this unwanted categorization in mind, a few words on the nature of the critique seem like as good a place as any from which to begin. Foucault (1981/1988: 154) contends that the critique is not just a ‘matter of saying that things are not right as they are. It is a matter of pointing out on what kinds of assumptions, what kinds of familiar, unchallenged, unconsidered modes of thought the practices that we accept rest.’ While this appears to be a fundamental requirement of any prospective responsible pedagogy, like so many facets within the relational dynamic of resistance–power/power–resistance, the nature of the critique offers numerous pitfalls and paradoxes. Indeed, Foucault (1978/1997: 42) earlier warns that the critique ‘only exists in relation to something other than itself: it is an instrument, a means for a future or a truth that it will not know nor happen to be’. In terms of this volume, such a perspective on the nature of the critique complements the Krishnamurtian approach to ‘the unknown’ in that it can never be more than a mere gesture toward an unreachable final destination or point of resolution.

Sketching ‘the known’

The conceptualization of ‘the known’ behind this volume derives from Indian esoteric philosopher Jiddu Krishnamurti (1895–1986) and his
numerous reflections on the struggle facing individuals within organized structures and systems of thought, belief and action. In the most simplistic terms, ‘the known’ can be defined as the tyranny of the expected or the ‘dogma in which we are conditioned’ (Krishnamurti, 1954/1975: 58), with such cognitive entrapments adequately pointing toward our individual susceptibility to ‘the conditions of institutions and the effects of institutions’ (Spivak, 1990: 785). Despite superficial proclamations advocating emancipation, ‘the known’ networks of day-to-day existence in which we participate often depend, for their very survival, upon multifarious forms of psychological oppression and enslavement. Aldous Huxley (1954/1975: 12–13) once observed how all ‘organized beliefs are based on separation, though they may preach brotherhood’ and the domain of language education is certainly not immune from the cunning calculations of authoritarian dictate. Throughout this volume the domain of language education is shown as a most accommodating host to various forms of sectarian authority, and numerous examples are provided illustrating these dynamics in localized contexts.

One of the most appealing features of Krishnamurti’s conceptualization of ‘the known’ is the emphasis placed upon time in relation to the invasive influence past thoughts, beliefs and actions are able to exert upon individuals living in a supposed – but ultimately non-existent – present reality (i.e. the here and now). That which individuals might ordinarily perceive as the here and now should, in Krishnamurtian philosophy, be recognized as a non-progressive cognitive snapshot, not of the way things are (i.e. the present) but of the way things were (i.e. the past). This conceptualization reveals how our thoughts, beliefs and actions – which masquerade as reflections of the present or as hopes for the future – should be understood as footprints on a road already walked. Therefore, all ‘knowns’ demand constant revision and/or resistance.

... the mind is conditioned by the past ... and that conditioned mind projects itself into the future; therefore it is never capable of looking directly and impartially at any fact. It either condemns and rejects the fact or accepts and identifies itself with the fact. Such a mind is obviously not capable of seeing any fact as a fact. That is our state of consciousness which is conditioned by the past and our thought is the conditioned response to the challenge of a fact; the more you respond according to the conditioning of belief, of the past, the more there is the strengthening of the past. That strengthening of
the past is obviously the continuity of itself, which it calls the future. (Krishnamurti, 1954/1975: 223)

Alongside Krishnamurti’s guiding conceptualization of ‘the known’, contributing authors to this volume were invited, but not in any way required, to consider the observations offered by Allan Bloom (1987: 249) who describes how the ‘most successful tyranny is not the one that uses force to assure uniformity but the one that removes the awareness of other possibilities, that makes it seem inconceivable that other ways are viable’. Informed by personal experience, in all of its subjective splendour, one can argue that the anxieties, insecurities and fears (i.e. discomforts) awaiting those who dare to strive toward ‘unknown’ thoughts, beliefs and actions are powerful enough to compel us not to inquire to the best of scholastic abilities, not to satisfy the demands of our curiosity, but instead to be mundanely content within an imposed reality that convinces us to deny the presence of conditioning where it undeniably exists. However, our discomforts (i.e. anxieties, insecurities and fears) should be cast not as products of ‘the unknown’ but rather as direct products of ‘the known’ and its stubborn ideological reluctance to release individuals from a subjugating repetition of thoughts, beliefs and actions.

We would rather cling to the known than face the unknown – the known being our house, our furniture, our family, our character, our work, our knowledge, our fame, our loneliness, our gods – that little thing that moves around incessantly within itself with its own limited pattern of embittered existence. (Krishnamurti, 1969: 76)

Indeed, ‘when we accept such a way of life we accept the structure of society as it is and live within the pattern of respectability’ (Krishnamurti, 1969: 59). For many, education within established patterns of respectability is sufficient to attain a state of satisfaction and contentment (e.g. for the teacher, a perception that the demands of the profession are being met and for the student, a perception that what is being taught is valid, worthwhile and sufficient for human intellectual growth). However, for many others such patterns of respectability only exacerbate persistent feelings of discontent and frustration.

Educators and students who are able to relate to the latter of these two conditions may find temporal reprieve through entering into what Boler (1999: 177) declares as a ‘pedagogy of discomfort’. This process ‘begins by inviting educators and students to engage in critical inquiry
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regarding values and cherished beliefs, and to examine constructed self-images in relation to how one has learned to perceive others’. Comparable undertakings include Giroux’s (1991: 52) notion of ‘border pedagogy’ cast as a means of providing ‘an understanding of how the relationship between power and knowledge works as both the practice of representation and the representation of practice to secure particular forms of authority’ within education.

Engaging in such responsible practice is, however, not without danger as Cochran-Smith’s (1991: 284; see also Simon, 1992) discussion of the moral practice of ‘teaching against the grain’ demonstrates. For teachers and students such initiatives can be ‘protracted, difficult, uncomfortable, painful, and risky’ on account of the fact that they involve ‘struggles with our colleagues, our students, as well as struggles within ourselves against our internalized beliefs and normalized behaviors’ (Ng, 2003: 217). Personal experience has revealed how assuming the responsibilities of an educator seeking some kind of truth and reason behind the conditions under which we are expected to labour brings us into frequent conflict with colleagues who would rather not draw back the dust-ridden curtain of ‘the known’.

Once the spell of my own conditioned utopia had been shattered, I represented a more significant problem for EC management to the extent that one member of the managerial team began ignoring my very existence. This act demonstrates how invisibility can be used as an attempted form of governance once the incitement of fear, as a first and predictable option, is no longer deemed effective. (Rivers, 2013: 88)

Like the critique, the theme of knowledge presents some quite paradoxical challenges within this volume, especially when accepting that to experience freedom from ‘the known’ what is seen as contemporary knowledge (i.e. that from the past) cannot be relied upon to create that which is currently ‘the unknown’. It would, nonetheless, be practically impossible to produce a publishable volume without making extensive use of pre-established discourse, terminology and forms of argumentation. Based upon this premise, the collection of chapters within this volume inadvertently contribute to the maintenance of that which they are attempting to resist (e.g. pre-established channels of knowledge representation).

Knowledge is a flash of light between two darknesses; but knowledge cannot go above and beyond that darkness, Knowledge is essential
to technique, as coal to the engine; but it cannot reach out into the unknown. The unknown is not to be caught in the net of the known. Knowledge must be set aside for the unknown to be; but how difficult that is! (Krishnamurti, 1956/1967: 20)

Paradoxes of this nature are far-reaching and contribute further to a persistent burden of conscience. This burden reflects the fact that no matter how hard one strives toward its realization, reality is not ‘knowable by the mind, because the mind is the result of the known, of the past ... the mind must understand itself and its functioning, its truth, and only then is it possible for the unknown to be’ (Krishnamurti, 1954/1975: 98). Therefore, and as testament to our cognitive entrapment within the pre-established parameters of ‘the known’, any potential flashes of light emanating from within this volume are unavoidably tinged by the lingering shadows of a quite enduring darkness.

We have our being in the past, our thought is founded upon the past. The past is the known, and the response of the past is ever overshadowing the present, the unknown. The unknown is not the future, but the present. The future is but the past pushing its way through the uncertain present. This gap, this interval, is filled with the intermittent light of knowledge, covering the emptiness of the present; but this emptiness holds the miracle of life. (Krishnamurti, 1956/1967: 21)

Retaining the Krishnamurtian emphasis upon time variables, one might suggest that in previous decades (i.e. less digitally interconnected times) ‘the known’ has required a sustained period to gradually entrench itself within the conscience of the individual. In more recent times, however, this process of cognitive entrenchment has become a more expedited occurrence due to the speed at which information can be disseminated via an almost endless compendium of multimedia channels. These processes are even more pronounced when dealing with concepts, notions and ideas that appeal to individuals on account of their in-vogue status and/or the magnitude of their for profit potential. Both such factors tend to facilitate the smooth imposition of authority regardless of questions concerning the legitimacy and integrity of their contribution and value to pedagogy. Concepts, notions and ideas of this nature are further marked by their ability to satisfy the impatience of our self-interested desires in addition to their ability to appeal to a significant number of people, albeit an appeal cultivated by various agendas and motives.
Irrespective of how and why certain concepts, notions and ideas are thrust upon us, one can suggest that the longer a particular concept, notion and/or idea is able to evade challenge, deconstruction or transparent ridicule, the more legitimate its proponents are seen to be and the more resources they are able to muster toward its continuation. Such processes might be described as a kind of run-and-hide survival rather than survival through standing and being counted. These slippery processes intentionally make it difficult for individuals to recognize and then resist the original principles upon which certain concepts, notions and/or ideas were proposed. Those most rewarded by the continuation of certain ‘knowns’ can often be observed using techniques such as ‘self-policing … to ensure that all members of the ruling class [are] on the same page’ (e.g. members-only meetings and events, separatist interest groups). Glorification rituals (e.g. narrowly themed seminars, workshops, presentations, publications) also work to ‘create the impression that the ruling order’s rule [is] legitimate’ (Ostrowski, 2002: 539).

While the principles behind this volume are drawn from Krishnamurti’s discourse, the concept of ‘the known’ shares many similarities with the more contemporary notion of ‘regimes of truth’ (later changed to jeux de vérité or ‘games of truth’). Originally defined as ‘the ensemble of rules according to which the true and the false are separated and the specific effects of power attached to the true’ (Foucault, 1980: 132), Foucault’s ‘regimes of truth’ links to Nietzsche’s conception of human agency and its contingency upon established social, cultural and historical practices in order to explain:

... how larger structures or discourses regulate an individual’s thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors. Foucault contends that particular images are socially inscribed and reinscribed upon individual consciousness until they are thought of as ‘normal’ or simply uncontested ‘truths’. Such images, beliefs, and practices, being unquestioned and normalized, exert a tremendous force upon consciousness, encouraging compliance and making resistance difficult. In order for an assumption to become a regime of truth, it must be accepted as fact by the community in which it exists. It then becomes unquestioned and unquestionable, and its arbitrariness becomes invisible. (Carroll et al., 2008: 167)

Bourdieu and Passeron’s (1990) discussion of symbolic violence, whereby inegalitarian structures and systems impose themselves as a ‘legitimate vision of the social world’ on account of their ‘worldmaking
power’ (Bourdieu, 1987: 13) represents another useful avenue for exploration into the extent of our conditioning. One might also find it revealing to explore John Dewey’s (1916/2004: 47) ‘habits of mind’ in considering the formation and consequences of ‘the known’: ‘habits reduce themselves to routine ways of acting, or degenerate into ways of action to which we are enslaved just in the degree in which intelligence is disconnected from them’. Recognizing the ‘habits of mind’ as a form of social, cultural and historical conditioning means that the infinite complexity, potential and opportunity surrounding our every waking moment is drastically reduced as the limits of our human agency are constrained by our conformity and deviation from that which is represented, even within ourselves, as normative and acceptable. Likewise, Ira Shor’s (1992: 129) four qualities for ‘desocialized thinking called critical consciousness’ (i.e. power awareness, critical literacy, permanent desocialization and self-education/organization) provide a practical framework for exploring ‘the known’ by making clear ‘the way we see ourselves in relation to knowledge and power in society … the way we use and study language … and … the way we act in school and daily life to reproduce or transform our conditions’.

Looking for an exit: the power of resistance

The chapters within this volume demonstrate how the act of resistance is a form of countering through strategic planning rather than impulsive reaction. After dismissing a number of related terms as being too precise or too strong (e.g. disobedience, insubordination, dissidence), Foucault (1978/2007: 268) eventually arrives at the term ‘counter-conduct’ (contre-conduite) to describe ‘the sense of struggle against the processes implemented for conducting others’. Paramount to the principles behind this volume and the potential formation of future relationships is Foucault’s (1978/1997: 75) observation that to engage in counter-conduct is not to advocate ‘fundamental anarchism’ but rather an expression of ‘the will not to be governed thusly, like that, by these people, at this price’ (Foucault, 1978/1997: 75).

First of all, can you reject all authority? If you can it means that you are no longer afraid. Then what happens? When you reject something false which you have been carrying about with you for generations, when you throw off a burden of any kind, what takes place? You have more energy, haven’t you? You have more capacity, more drive, greater intensity and vitality. If you do not feel this, then you
Schutz (2004: 15) highlights how during the course of ‘the past two decades or so, the emergence of postmodern ideas in educational circles has complicated our understandings of oppression and resistance’. As one of the most significant contributors, Foucault (1990: 95) declares that resistance ‘is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power’. Indeed, the ‘us–them’ or ‘you-and-I’ relational requirements within power to resistance and resistance to power were also exposed by Hannah Arendt (1970: 36) who cites Voltaire’s definition of power as an imposition that ‘consists in making others act as I choose’.

Consequently, it seems important to acknowledge how ‘resistance and the subject who resists are fundamentally implicated within the relations of power they oppose’ (Mills, 2000: 265 discussing Foucault). To offer resistance is therefore an act of power. This observation presents two potential problems. First, the act of resistance serves to legitimize even the most futile impositions of authority. Second, the act of resistance as a form of power holds the potential to become as oppressive an imposition as the original authority being resisted. Moss and Osborn (2010: 2) offer an analogy of such interactions through their description of ‘the staircase of resistance which leads back on itself’. These observations serve to alert us to potential dangers concerning an interest in working toward, even in unity with difference, an end state or solution. Would those who resist the impositions of authority, eventually come to see their freedom to resist as an authority of its own? Berkowitz (2007: 25) touches upon this question in a description of the liberal spirit in America and its paradoxes:

At every turn, the spread of freedom emboldens the liberal spirit’s inclination to expose and overthrow claims of arbitrary authority. However, as the claims of freedom themselves acquire authority in a free society, the liberal spirit has difficulty limiting its campaign against authority to that which is arbitrary. With each new success, the liberal spirit comes closer to viewing all authority as arbitrary. Eventually, the liberal spirit turns upon the authority of freedom itself, attacking the very source of its moral standing.

In order to plot an escape from ‘the known’ structures of oppressive cultism dominating the domain of language education (e.g. special interest groups, publications and conferences promoting separatist
interests, the idolization of so-called experts in whose footsteps many self-defeated ‘lesser thinkers’ take pride in following, pedagogies which tender to trend and fashion), potential resisters must become familiar with an existence outside of the ‘culture of niceness’ (Matt and Shahinpoor, 2011: 160) that accommodates ‘the known’ and its advocates, a culture that attempts to coercively recruit all individuals into a staged master narrative of ‘being in it together’ through embracing ‘our’ shared collective condition.

Choosing to become an illegitimate member of the family unit – one which ‘engenders alienation and dehumanization because it relies on layers of dishonesty and inauthenticity’ (Matt and Shahinpoor, 2011: 160) – and discarding its protections and privileges is a difficult decision to act upon. This is particularly true within institutional contexts such as schools where the lure of domesticated family life and warmth of collegial relations is seductive. It may therefore offer some awkward comfort to know that for many individuals the choice of whether to look beyond ‘the known’ is made for us once the boundaries of in-group nicety and normative in-house relations have been violated. When such ruptures occur they may find themselves flung from the inner warmth of the family unit as if, in the words of the late Christopher Hitchens, ‘shot from a cannon towards a barn door studded with old nail files and rusty hooks’.1 Traumatic as it so often is, this experience compels individuals to make a conscious decision: accept and return to the authority and impositions of ‘the known’ or make moves toward ‘the unknown’ of intellectual empowerment.

While teachers are not always located within institutional structures and the extensive power of ‘the known’ impacts beyond the physical boundaries of the classroom and/or the institution, the school as institution (and thus workplace) is a context where ‘the known’ is often able to flourish. In a discussion concerning the ‘faces of resistance at work’, Fleming and Spicer (2007) highlight four distinct types of workplace resistance which are outlined below in relation to some common example scenarios from the domain of language education and how teachers might counter the impositions of authority.

Resistance as refusal: A contracted language teacher is called to a one-to-one meeting with the president of a private university to explain why their student grades include some C and F grades. It is explained to the teacher that this reflects badly on the university’s efforts to attract new students. The president asks the teacher to grade their students again in a more ‘appropriate’ manner. Despite this application of considerable pressure from the president the teacher refuses
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to change the grades and reaffirms their professional opinion that the original grades are an accurate reflection of student ability and effort made throughout the course.

Fleming and Spicer (2007: 32) assert that resistance as refusal ‘represents the classic image of resistance: the aim is to block the effects of power by undermining the flow of domination rather than change it. By its very nature, therefore, refusal is generally a visible strategy of resistance.’ Those individuals refusing the imposition of authority, especially when the refusal is given in a public rather than private setting, must often contend with punitive sanctions from authorities. A refusal to do as one is told immediately ‘activates the eyes of authority’ who have been challenged. The teacher in the example scenario shown could expect not to have their contract renewed by the president or to be excluded from grading duties in the future.

Resistance as voice: A group of language teachers who are responsible for the majority of language lessons conducted within a state-funded university are excluded from all departmental efforts focused on curriculum development and materials design on account of their employment status as ‘native-speaker’ language teachers. In response, the teachers organize their own unofficial curriculum planning committee and publicize their activities within common spaces around the university campus. Authorities within the university are therefore compelled to engage in dialogue with them concerning their activities, thus creating a platform for exchange.

Individuals who are excluded from the primary channels of decision-making and authority might choose to enter and/or create alternative decision-making structures. Resistance as voice reflects efforts of the subjugated to ‘gain access to the flows of domination in order to participate in the decisions that affect them’ (Fleming and Spicer, 2007: 35). Common means of achieving this include the creation of independent discussion groups, committees or other social movements that serve to draw attention to a particular point of contention. Likewise, active participation in a worker’s union of some sort permits a subjugated individual to voice their resistance through a legitimate counter-channel, thus prompting institutional authorities to take notice and engage.

Resistance as escape: A language teacher working with a private conversation school is required to follow questionable pedagogies that
are not supported by the research literature or professional training. The teacher is required to dress in formal business attire even when teaching children, is paid close to minimum wage and is treated with contempt by superiors. The teacher, while following the rules of the employer and performing their duties efficiently, constantly complains about the school to other colleagues but tells him/herself that it is not worth getting into trouble by complaining directly to the school authorities as the job is just temporary.

Subjugated individuals may choose to employ strategies which allow them ‘to disengage mentally from the world of work ... commentators have pointed to cynicism, scepticism and dis-identification as common avenues of escape’ (Fleming and Spicer, 2007: 38–9). While cynicism has been shown to act as a common means of escape, authorities in many cases permit individuals to ‘let off steam in a manner that does not necessarily harm the existing regimes of power’ (Fleming and Spicer, 2007: 39). In making reference to an ‘ideology of cynicism’, Žižek (1989: 32 emphasis original) details how ‘cynical distance is just one way to bind ourselves to the structuring power of ideological fantasy: even if we do not take things seriously, even if we keep an ironical distance, we are still doing them’. Such resistance may be successful for the individual worker in terms of coping with the immediate impositions of authority, but it is only successful for as long as the individual worker is willing to ‘turn a blind eye to the material nature of power’ (Fleming and Spicer, 2007: 41).

Resistance as creation: A language teacher working within a public school setting is reprimanded by the school authorities for exposing students to ideas and concepts that are not in the official school textbook. In response, the teacher who previously encouraged students to freely share their opinions on the language learning process now chooses not to engage with students in any conversations other than those that directly relate to the contents of the official school textbook. All student efforts to talk freely with the teacher about any topic extending beyond the textbook are greeted with an unemotional: ‘I am not allowed to talk about that, please ask the school board for more details’ response.

A subjugated individual may become ‘attached to an identity that is the very product of relations of domination’ (Fleming and Spicer, 2007: 41). The forms of resistance which such a dominated identity may take include ‘rescript[ing] the official culture [of an institution] in order to
render it absurd or hypocritical’. For example, the discourse of authority may be turned back against the institution through over-identification (i.e. the individual workers follows the dictate of management too seriously) as a form of criticism. Individuals may then use such discourse to hold institutions and their agents of authority to account according to the very principles imposed upon workers. Furthermore, individual workers may use their insider knowledge to create counter-scripts or alternative narratives of the workplace ‘within the context of broader flows of domination’ (Fleming and Spicer, 2007: 43).

The above typology of workplace resistance is extremely useful in strategically planning for action and as a means of understanding how certain acts of resistance are likely to be received by authority. However, as any teacher within a school environment will know, one is unlikely to hear these terms used by the authorities against which one is resisting (e.g. the manager of a language school would be unlikely to say ‘please stop resisting by voice’ or ‘please stop resisting by creation’). Taking advantage of the family unit structure and its ability to promote feelings of guilt, shame and betrayal, it is more common for the teacher engaged in counter-conduct to be accused of being too individualistic, too negative, too critical, too uncooperative, too cynical and too disobedient. In new management speech these terms might be packaged together under the banner of ‘not being a team player’. The original point of contention around which the act of resistance was initiated remains untouched while the teacher is denounced (often in public) through what can only be described as a character assassination.

The following of authority is the denial of intelligence. To accept authority is to submit to domination, to subjugate oneself to an individual, to a group, or an ideology ... and this subjugation of oneself to authority is the denial, not only of intelligence, but also of individual freedom. Compliance with a creed or a system of ideas is a self-protective reaction. The acceptance of authority may help us temporarily to cover up our difficulties and problems; but to avoid a problem is only to intensify it, and in the process, self-knowledge and freedom are abandoned. (Krishnamurti, 1953/1981: 58–9)

Giroux (2001: 109) points out ‘resistance must have a revealing function, one that contains a critique of domination and provides theoretical opportunities for self-reflection and for struggle in the interest of self-emancipation and social emancipation’. As mentioned, offering resistance to ‘the known’ and the authorities who depend upon its
maintenance represents a pathway that, despite being laden with emotional disturbance, hardship and difficulty, is a project of hope. The revealing function of the resistance offered within this volume is hope that there exists a more dignified way of managing human interactions in a manner which does not facilitate the imposition of authority upon those who do not want it. Holloway (2002a: 2) describes what the parameters of this 'unknown' world could look like while also making a number of valuable points concerning the modest nature of resistance:

We may have a vague idea: it would be world of justice, a world in which people could relate to each other as people and not as things, a world in which people would shape their own lives. But we do not need to have a picture of what a true world would be like in order to feel that there is something radically wrong with the world that exists. Feeling that the world is wrong does not necessarily mean that we have a picture of a utopia to put in its place. Nor does it necessarily mean a romantic, some-day-my-prince-will-come idea that, although things are wrong now, one day we shall come to a true world, a promised land, a happy ending. We need no promise of a happy ending to justify our rejection of a world we feel to be wrong.

The motivation to creatively articulate our freedom through ‘a scream of sadness, a scream of horror … a scream of anger, of refusal’ (Holloway, 2002b: 15) is powerful and seeks to hold those who exert authority over others to moral accountability. Dale and Hyslop-Margison (2012: 61) describe how to ‘live in an immoral context and accept that context without resistance is an act of immorality’. The expectations of moral accountability do not therefore primarily reside with those who, in seeking to stave off the impositions of authority and control, take up a position of resistance.

From the outset of this project it was especially important from an ethical perspective that the acts of resistance to ‘the known’ offered within this volume did not attempt to assume the authoritative voice of ‘the one who knows’ (Lather, 1998: 488). While many of the chapters included within this volume do make suggestions concerning how certain ‘knowns’ can be overcome, none of the chapters impose best practice solutions. The dangers of replacing one ‘known’ for another were understood by Krishnamurti:

Truth is a pathless land, and you cannot approach it by any path whatsoever, by any religion, by any sect. That is my point of view,
and I adhere to that absolutely and unconditionally. Truth, being limitless, unconditioned, unapproachable by any path whatsoever, cannot be organized; nor should any organization be formed to lead or to coerce people along any particular path. If you first understand that, then you will see how impossible it is to organize a belief. A belief is purely an individual matter, and you cannot and must not organize it. If you do, it becomes dead, crystallized; it becomes a creed, a sect, a religion, to be imposed on others. This is what everyone throughout the world is attempting to do. Truth is narrowed down and made a plaything for those who are weak, for those who are only momentarily discontented. Truth cannot be brought down, rather the individual must make the effort to ascend to it. (Krishnamurti, 1929 cited in Lutyens, 1997: 272)

Therefore, any supposedly legitimate claim to truth or to the identification of ‘the unknown’ can never be permitted to become ‘the known’ as this process would facilitate the imposition of its own, now illegitimate, authority.

**Overview of the volume**

Drawing evidence from across multiple sociocultural contexts, the following nine chapters are a collective demonstration of resistance to ‘the known’ through counter-conduct. The professional experiences and observations of the authors within this volume reveal how complex connections between the pedagogies, practices and policies of the institution and the broader sociocultural context, are often overshadowed by the more imperative task of providing a brand of language education uninterested in discussing the ideological and political foundations of its own imposition. Indeed, the domain of language education is one in which the relationship between rigorous scholarship (theory creating) and daily practice (theory enacting) is often stretched to breaking. Many chapters reveal the consequences of restricting language education to a vacuum of neutrality disconnected from open discussions of ideology, politics, inequality or any other such muddled facet of social life. These chapters also contribute to better understanding of the ways in which the interests of dominant groups and self-interested ‘academicsects’ (Lake, 2011: 465) have been shielded from accountability.

The contemporary era constantly proclaims itself as post-ideological, but this denial of ideology only provides the ultimate proof that we
are more than ever embedded in ideology. Ideology is always a field of struggle – among other things, the struggle for appropriating past traditions. (Žižek, 1989: 37)

With gestures made toward countering the dangers of a postmodernist ‘pedagogy of nothing’, McLaren (1994: 206–7) emphasizes that ‘while educators must center their pedagogies on the affirmation of “local” knowledges of students within particular sociopolitical and ethnic locations, the concept of totality must not be abandoned altogether’. In accordance with this, the chapters within this volume are varied in their point of entry into the act of resisting ‘the known’. Part I features those chapters which fundamentally concern the resistance of micro-processes within localized contexts (Chapters 1–4), while those chapters featured in Part II offer resistance to macro-processes espoused on a more national level (Chapters 5–9). This relatively unbound approach to the presentation of diverse and stimulating intellectual material aims to facilitate the identification of ‘unknown’ connections between the chapters on an individual reader basis. Indeed, the reader will find numerous intersections between the chapters. The reluctance to explicitly pre-identify connections between the acts of resistance offered reflects a desire not to limit, restrict and/or impose specific modes of thinking and parameters of interpretation. The pleasure of discovery, innovation, creation and understanding is seen as being the responsibility of the reader. Despite this, each chapter concludes with five points to ponder to facilitate further discussion where appropriate.

Stanley (Chapter 1) maps the consequences for the development of interculturality when language education initiatives intersect with powerful tourist imagery in Australia. The author contends that images drawn from stereotypical tourist associations such as ‘blond surfers on sun-drenched beaches, indigenous faces patterned with paint, Sydney opera house, cricket and rugby, dangerous wildlife and outback terrain, and curious marsupials’, function as tyrannical ‘knowns’ which impact the imagined experiences and expectations of students. Highlighted are several ways in which these dynamics place language education providers under significant pressure to provide students with an ‘authentic’ Australian experience. The author challenges ‘the known’ idea that intercultural contact alone is often sufficient for the development of interculturality by contending that although students might go to Australia in order to internationalize themselves, ‘when they get there they may find that pre-existing stereotypes are reified rather than challenged’.
Kostoulas (Chapter 2) draws upon principles from complexity theory in order to bring challenge to ‘the known’ pedagogical practices operating within a private English language school in Greece. Data collected through interviews, classroom observations, and questionnaires over a nine-month period allowed the author to reconstruct a prototypical lesson for analysis. From this the author identifies ‘the known’ as being an ‘idiosyncratic form of pedagogy’ which prioritizes ‘grammatical form as a learning objective, and the use of transmissive, teacher-fronted methods of instruction, with a view to developing the learners’ ability to succeed in certification examinations’. Conclusions are made which point toward the potential value of complexity theory as a means of creating a more nuanced understanding of language pedagogy as ‘an emergent product of influences operating locally and globally’.

Widin (Chapter 3) challenges ‘the known’ idealized images of the ‘hallowed space’ that is the English language classroom in order to reveal ‘the violent, abusive and brutal practices, albeit symbolic, that accompany pedagogical work’. Drawing upon observational and interview data collected in Laos, Spain and Japan, she examines the ‘tensions between the espoused (“the known”) and enacted values of the teaching institutions (in the broadest sense)’ in order to highlight ‘the struggles of students and staff to accumulate the linguistic and cultural capital necessary to secure a legitimate place within each context’. The author concludes by asserting that the examples provided ‘demonstrate how certain knowledge, capital and dispositions are afforded dominant or subordinate positions’.

Rivers (Chapter 4) explores – as a struggle for individual teacher-researcher autonomy – a multifaceted ‘known’ found within various higher education institutions across the globe: the promotion of language-learner autonomy (i.e. the promotion of individual freedom of choice, self-determination and democracy in education) under the non-negotiable authority of an English-only language policy (i.e. the prohibition of individual freedom of choice, self-determination and democracy in education). In addition to reflecting upon the boundaries of the academic critique, this chapter calls for the authorities of autonomy in language education ‘to take a long, hard look in the mirror and to ask themselves in whose interests, and for what values, do they do their work’ (McChesney, 1999: 14).

Rajagopalan (Chapter 5) examines the difficulties surrounding the teaching of English in Latin America, with special focus on Brazil. The author argues that in addition to a plethora of ‘known’ folk beliefs concerning the role of English and how it should be taught, these
difficulties are underpinned by significant geopolitical issues circulating throughout the region including lingering suspicions over US foreign policy. Despite numerous hurdles persisting in moving beyond ‘the known’, the author contends that the situation is not ‘as bleak as might appear at first glimpse. People are slowly beginning to separate the wheat from the chaff and learn to be more pragmatic than dogmatic in matters related to language politics (which is how it should be)’.

Toh (Chapter 6) uses the metaphor of financial derivatives to showcase a number of ideological inconsistencies and contradictions found within English language teaching practices in a Japanese higher education setting. The author identifies a number of parallels between personal teaching experiences and ‘the workings of the financial derivative’ which are cast as ‘an enactment of inauthenticity, artificiality and contrivedness’. In detailing two existential conditions of educational practice, pedagogy and policy – the ‘reflexive condition’ and the ‘derivative condition’ – the author illustrates how English is framed as a challenge to ‘the ascendancy of the Japanese language in the fields of education, business, the law, policy making, governance and other social and political spaces’. The outcome is therefore a maintained state of embracing, rather than resisting, ‘the known’, thus facilitating ‘well-recognized well-honed practices in TESOL that permit safe, harmless but narrow and neutered forms of English teaching to proceed at a pace and fashion that society in general is able to countenance and tolerate’.

Zotzmann (Chapter 7) asks whether it can be considered fruitful to use the term ‘competence’ in order to describe the potential and desirable outcomes of intercultural learning, on the basis that the term seems to suggest predefined and potentially testable behaviours and dispositions. The author explores the intercultural learning process as one which occurs ‘at the boundaries between the taken for granted “known” and “the unknown”: the experiences not yet lived, the perspectives not yet understood as well as the discourses and other semiotic resources not yet encountered or appropriated’. It is suggested that intercultural education initiatives might be better served if they avoided a reductive focus on ‘generating educational “output” or performance-based competencies’ and instead strove toward developing ‘individuals as socially responsible and open-minded people, to enable democratic debate and reflexivity and to nurture and strengthen our moral imagination’.

Burley and Pomphrey (Chapter 8) critique modern language education within the context of compulsory schooling in England via an exploration of the subject boundaries between modern languages and English. The authors discuss language teacher education programmes
that ‘attempt to create a dialogue between the two subjects in order to resist the traditional subject boundaries which exist in language education’, adding how such initiatives ‘reveal both the possibility of challenging “the known” in relation to these subject boundaries within a teacher education context, but also the difficulties of maintaining such resistance within the school environment post training’. While praising certain efforts, the authors warn about ‘known institutionalized practices which still insist on separating the study of language into discrete subject areas’ and therefore the need for resistance remains.

Pigott (Chapter 9) frames ‘the known’ as denoting ‘orthodox thinking on English education in Japan, in particular its manifestation in the discourse of English-as-panacea’ and brings attention to some of the ways in which those involved in compulsory English education in Japan are harnessed into a certain type of ideological machinery which impacts upon their debates and notions of objectivity. The author contends that through a plethora of heterogeneous ‘knowns’, it becomes normative to view compulsory English education in Japan ‘as dysfunctional given its apparent ineffectiveness ... However, such an understanding fails to take into account the political, historical, and cultural forces which lie beneath the surface of institutionalized language learning.’ The author concludes that it behoves those concerned with the integrity of language education to challenge rather than serve ‘the known’.

Note

1. This extract is taken from comments made by Christopher Hitchens (1949–2011) during an interview/conversation on a Washington, DC sidewalk in reference to Hitchens’ own impending death at the hands of oesophageal cancer. The recording now features as a part of many different YouTube video clips related to Hitchens (e.g. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mQorzOS-F6w between 9:40-10:06).

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Part I
Countering Micro-Processes in Local Contexts
1
Language-Learner Tourists in Australia: Problematizing ‘the Known’ and its Impact on Interculturality

Phiona Stanley

Introduction

Think of ‘typical’ Australian scenes, and what springs to mind? Likely images include blond surfers on sun-drenched beaches, Indigenous faces patterned with paint, Sydney Opera House, cricket and rugby, dangerous wildlife and outback terrain, and curious marsupials. All of this is ‘true’ in that it does exist, and all of it is ‘authentic’ in that such images do lie (pun intended) in Australian history, popular culture, fauna and geography. But such images are also manufactured by the tourism industry and by social imaginaries, both inside and outside Australia. And when language education intersects strongly with tourism, as it does in the contexts discussed in this chapter, such images operate as a tyrannical ‘known’ that shapes the experiences that students imagine, and so expect, from their Australian sojourn. Language education providers are then under pressure to provide, indeed to manufacture, Australian ‘authenticity’ as this is imagined by cultural out-groups: the students and their friends and families back home, to whom the experience is displayed on social media. This chapter considers the impact of this on English language education in contexts particularly affected by this (imagined) ‘known’: language schools in Australian cities that are very much on tourism’s beaten path.

The study was inspired by my reflections on and conversations with other trainers about the training of teachers on Cambridge Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA) courses in Sydney. I noticed that the teachers we thought most capable and that we graded highly against CELTA pass criteria were not necessarily those who found and kept jobs in the local language school sector, and that, conversely,
plenty of those who struggled with teaching and analysing language turned out to be the most employable. The reasons for this fell into place somewhat when I started thinking about the complexity of the teaching role in local language school contexts: part teacher, part cultural insider, part friend, perhaps. I remember doing a one-to-one tutorial with a weak CELTA candidate at risk of failing the course who told me, in dismay, ‘but the students like me’. And they did: he was bubbly and personable and he cared about them, although he struggled to address their language questions and his classroom management was chaotic. He eventually passed CELTA, and found work, and his students still liked him very much. But although he was a good teacher (in the context), he was not a particularly good teacher (in the sense I understand it). The problem is one of naming: he is good at doing the job expected by Australian language schools and their students, although he is not particularly technically skilled, as measured by CELTA-type criteria. In fact, a de facto teacher role seems to be operating in the context and this stems, in part, from the tyranny of ‘the known’ about what Australia, and Australians, are like.

So I designed a study to understand what students want when they come to Australian language schools to study English, particularly at the ‘language travel’ end of the market. This was a qualitative, interview-based study and my research questions were as follows: what do students expect/want from their Australian language school experience and what are the effects of these demands on the teachers and on teaching? From this, how might a de facto teacher role be described? From this work, I theorize that the students’ demands and expectations coalesce to form ‘the known’ of out-group imagined ‘authenticities’, and that these, in turn, form part of the de facto teacher role. This ‘known’ is constructed mainly by students themselves but perpetuated and in part created by marketing departments and, ultimately, teachers themselves. The notion that ‘authentic’ Australians are blond, bubbly, fun surfer types goes unchallenged in many classrooms, particularly for short-stay language tourists. But there is also resistance, and in some contexts students were exposed to the realities of a complex, multicultural, socially stratified Australia with its convict history and plenty of Indigenous blood on its hands.

Situating this study in the literature

In theoretical and empirical terms, this is a complex study to situate in the literature: there is no single ‘field’ into which it conveniently fits. It is therefore necessary to cast rather a wider net, and this section draws upon
literature from tourism studies and gender studies as well as language education and intercultural studies. It discusses out-group social imaginaries and their role in framing expectations and evaluations of cultural others. From there, the discussion turns to discourses of cultural purity and ‘authenticity’, and describes the staged authenticity in which tourism providers engage in order to meet tourists’ demands for essentialist cultural fixities; I contend that something similar is happening in Australian language schools, where there is a circle of marketing-led, tourism-like imagery that is performed back to students and seldom disrupted, with deleterious effects on students’ development of interculturality.

‘The known’ in this context is an out-group constructed social imaginary about what Australia, and Australians themselves, are like. By ‘social imaginary’, I mean:

That set of symbols and conceptual frameworks particular to a social collectivity or network, which have been built up, modified, mediated and transformed over time, and which are drawn on in the sense-making process ... The imaginary refers to the ways in which a nation or other grouping sees both itself, and others, that is, those considered not part of itself ... The media here is understood as a mediator and shaper of that set of projected and shared envisionings. (Lewis, 2009: 227)

This is not to say that a single, homogeneous social imaginary exists among potential English language students outside of Australia, and it is important to note that out-group constructions may differ. For example, students interviewed for this study construct Australia and their Australian study sojourn variously as follows:

[Before I arrived] I think teachers here, they are all very motivated ... And they are funny. I think it’s very important, because you are not in the real school ... This is like, it’s school, okay, but it’s like holidays, it’s mixed ... It doesn’t have to be like high school. We want to take it easy. (Sylvia, Italian student, chain language centre, Regional City, 2012)

First of all I thought, I just wish[ed] that all the teachers have special way to teach English correctly. So once I had a question to my teacher but she can’t answer to me. So I’m really disappointed because I didn’t expect that situation. So, yes, that was a bit different ... In Korea, it’s a little bit passive way but they’re strict so they always made us to study. But here I think it’s cultural things, it’s a little bit different ... I don’t
think it’s strict enough... For example they don’t check my homework. Yes, it’s my responsibility but if they check my homework every day I would do that. (Hye Jun, Korean student, chain language centre, Regional City, 2012)

When you are in Colombia and somebody speaks with you about Australia, you’re only thinking kangaroos, koalas. [They think] there is koalas in Sydney ... Before I arrived here I thought that this country was like United States, like a big city, busy city. All the people maybe stressful, maybe angry. But when I arrived here I saw that all the people was very organised, all the things was just very organised ... Here people may be thinking of you if you have a problem, [people ask] ‘are you okay?’ Friendly. (Andrés, Colombian student, independent language centre, State Capital, 2012)

These excerpts evidence the variety of social imaginaries of Australia that exist among incoming students. Whereas Sylvia constructs her Australian experience as part holiday and hopes that her teachers will be fun, funny, relaxed and energetic/passionate (‘motivated’), Hye Jun constructed strict, expert teachers who would ensure quick progress; these images are at odds. Andrés had a different construction altogether, and one that differs from the majority construction: the blond, relaxed surfer stereotype. Perhaps Tourism Australia is less active in Latin America than, for instance, in Europe or East Asia, and the blond surfer stereotype has not informed social imaginaries there to the same extent. Indeed, social imaginaries of Anglophone ‘gringos’ in Latin America may be dominated by love–hate notions about the USA (Pratt, 2004; see Rajagopalan, this volume), which Andrés acknowledges as the source of his pre-arrival constructions. It is important to say, therefore, when discussing social imaginaries that those at work in this study are out-group constructions, plural. So although a dominant social imaginary of Australia does seem to exist among the students, there are also outliers such as those cited above. Importantly, these remind us that social imaginaries are heterogeneous.

It is hard to overstate the importance of social imaginaries in framing lived experiences. This was exemplified in my previous research among university students in Shanghai (Stanley, 2013), for whom ‘Western’ teachers of English are evaluated according to how well, or otherwise, they correspond to Chinese social imaginaries of what ‘authentic’ Westerners are like. These out-group constructed stereotypes form powerful criteria against which Westerners are evaluated, with the result
that the teachers are pressured into performing back to the students a caricature of the fun, outgoing, loud, confident, non-serious, non-expert Westerners that the Chinese social imaginary had constructed.

This can be theorized with reference to the work, on gender roles, of Judith Butler (1990). Performance expectations borne of out-group constructed social imaginaries operate like roles to provide frameworks within which individuals or experiences may or may not ‘fit’. So an individual’s appearance or behaviour may be critically evaluated as ‘typical’ or ‘atypical’, or as (insufficiently) ‘authentic’, according to out-group constructions about the cultural identification ascribed to the individual. So if students imagine Australians to be blond, blue-eyed surfers, they may subsequently evaluate dark-haired, non-surfer Australians as deficient rather than problematizing the stereotypes. Additionally, students may evaluate Australia itself as disappointing if preconceived expectations are not met. In both cases, expectations frame how lived experiences are experienced and evaluated.

Tourism studies have explored this area, considering tourists’ search for what they perceive as ‘authentic’. MacCannell (2008: 334) sets out two distinct discourses that may variously frame tourists’ expectations of foreign cultural ‘authenticities’:

The first would be an essentialist, realist ethnographic perspective that believes in authentic primitives and natives frozen in their traditions. And the second is a post-modern, post-structural, non-essentializing, hip version of culture as emergent, as constantly responding to challenge, changing and adapting.

Where tourists imagine, for example, ‘authentic primitives and natives frozen in their traditions’, we can expect them to be disappointed if, for example, they visit the Amazon and, in place of ‘authentic’ natives, they find people wearing jeans, using iPads and drinking lattes. Instead of problematizing their own ‘authenticity’ constructions it may be easier to critique the natives as lacking. So tourists’ experiences may be marred by seemingly inauthentic performances of local people that are evaluated against tourists’ own constructions of local cultures (Atlejevic and Doorne, 2005; Badone and Roseman, 2004; Kontogeorgopoulos, 2003; Little, 2004; Oakes, 2006; Robinson and Phipps, 2005; Rojek and Urry, 1997; White, 2007).

But cultural authenticity is a chimera. No culture is untouched; no culture exists in a vacuum of fixed authenticity – and if it did, it would anyway likely differ from out-group constructions of what that
authenticity was actually like. However, MacCannell’s (2008) existentialist first discourse of culture still frames many tourists’ expectations, and as a result tourism providers may ‘stage authenticity’. For instance, Bruner (2005) describes Masai dance performances for tourists in Kenya. Crang (1997: 148) describes such work, of playing expected roles, as ‘the deep acting of emotional labour’. He analyses different types of tourism performances, including ever-smiling airline staff and compulsorily bubbly, chatty and flirty bar staff in Mediterranean resorts, and concludes that ‘these employees’ selves become part of the product … their personhood is commodified’ (Crang, 1997: 153). However, it is more than just employees’ performances that are commodified by these jobs. Their ascribed characteristics – ethnicity, gender, age, and looks, for example – are ‘part of what is required from an employee’ (Crang, 1997: 152). So in the same way as ‘Western’ teachers in China experience pressure to perform back to students the students’ own imagined constructions of ‘authentic’ Western behaviours and characteristics, Australian teachers and home-stay families may be under pressure to live up to incoming language school students’ expectations, and some providers may choose to ‘stage’ this ‘authenticity’ back to students by employing teachers or home-stay families that do not disrupt students’ out-group social imaginaries of ‘authentic’ Australianness.

What is the effect of this, though, on students’ interculturality? This is defined as:

> The capacity to experience cultural otherness and to use this experience to reflect on matters which are normally taken for granted within one’s own culture and environment ... in addition, interculturality involves using this heightened awareness of otherness to evaluate one’s own everyday patterns of perception, thought, feeling and behaviour in order to develop greater self-knowledge and self-understanding. (Barrett, 2008: 1–2)

While most students in this study stated their primary purpose in Australia as learning or improving their English, most also contextualized this against extrinsic motivations rooted in imagined globalized professional futures and the fostering of transnational identities: in learning English, students hoped to become more employable and more ‘global’. And, indeed, the aim of teaching ‘culture’ along with language is not new. Plenty of scholars have noted the importance of developing learners’ interculturality as a goal of language education. But where out-group cultural constructions are not problematized, and indeed, may be
reified, by border-crossing experiences, students’ interculturality may not develop as anticipated. Young et al. (2009: 149) critique the superficial use of culture as context rather than content in language education, concluding that ‘culture is not approached in the classroom in a principled, active and engaged manner and ... this lack of engagement may have a detrimental effect on learning’. This is a ‘food and festivals’ view of culture, common in language textbooks, which Holliday (2009: 146) critiques as: ‘traditional attempts at multiculturalism which have ritualised the sharing of superficial national and ethnic cultural exotica’. It appears, then, that we are not teaching culture well, and that much classroom teaching of culture is superficial.

This seems incredibly wasteful of the opportunities presented by transnational educational contexts, like the language schools discussed in this chapter, in which students travel half way around the world to immerse themselves in another culture. In particular, while many students’ express purposes include ‘the internationalization of themselves’ (Lisa, Director of Studies, university language centre, Regional City, 2012), language schools could do a much better job of mediating students’ interculturality development. It is therefore suggested in this chapter that one immediate solution, already underway in some contexts, is to scaffold students’ intercultural learning by engaging critically, in class and elsewhere, with implicit discourses of cultural ‘authenticity’ which operate in this context as problematic but largely unproblematised ‘knowns’. This is the resistance needed to disrupt what is, currently, an ‘intercultural’ situation that tends to reify rather than challenge pre-existing socially imagined ‘authenticities’ of essentialist cultures.

Methodology

This is a qualitative study based on semi-structured interviews with students, teachers, directors of studies, CELTA trainers and marketing staff at 11 language schools in 3 Australian cities. The language schools varied in type and included four independent language schools, four language schools belonging to international chains, and three language centres attached to universities. Each of the three ‘types’ of schools was studied in each of three cities which, for the sake of anonymity, are described here rather than named. The first city is a small regional city, with a population under 200,000. It is firmly on the backpacker tourist trail and its attractions are primarily nature-related. The second city is a state capital with galleries, sporting events, and a buzzing CBD: it feels like a ‘proper’ city without being too overwhelming, there are
fewer language schools and fewer international students than in the bigger cities, and its population is over a million. The third site is one of Australia’s ‘world cities’: hugely multicultural and with a population over 4 million, it has sprawling suburbs, a complex public transit system, and many thousands of international students.

I gathered a lot of data for this project, and the transcribed interview texts, combined, run to around 200,000 words. I interviewed 70 people, including 37 students, 11 teachers, 13 directors of studies and 7 CELTA trainers. To protect anonymity I have used pseudonyms and blurred identifying details throughout. The students were in their early twenties, and their nationalities included the following: Colombian, Mexican, Belgian, Swiss, German, Korean, Japanese, Italian, Thai, French and Slovak. Most of the teachers were Australian, whether by birth or naturalization, and while most were native English speakers there were also teachers for whom English was an additional language. The interviews were audio-recorded with participants’ consent and all audio recordings were transcribed and analysed inductively, by hand, using Grounded Theory (Charmaz, 2006).

Most of the students were interviewed in small groups, in English or their first language (in the case of low-English-proficiency, all-Spanish-speaking groups in two locations; my Spanish is CEFR C2 level), and most interviews lasted about an hour. A few students and most of the teachers and other language school staff were interviewed individually. The choice of group or individual interview was expedient as much as anything, as this research had to fit around the available time of the participants. However, in a number of the group interviews there were interesting examples of participants’ teasing out issues among themselves, such that I do not feel integrity suffered as a result of being interviewed among peers. Indeed, among the students in particular, group interviews were likely less intimidating than a one-to-one interview with a researcher who, to them, may have seemed like a teacher.

The interview schedules were slightly different for each type of participant and in all the central purpose was to answer the central research questions: what do students expect and want from their Australian language school experience and what are the effects of these demands on the teachers and on teaching? The interview questions evolved as the study progressed, as I brought up recurring, particularly unexpected, themes in search of different perspectives and deeper insights. The data is therefore iterative. What emerged most strongly, as this chapter will show, is the sheer complexity of the teachers’ de facto roles and the gulf of difference between it and the CELTA pass criteria (Cambridge ESOL, 2003). This
certainly explains the poor correlation, noted in the introduction, between those who excel on CELTA and those who succeed in the industry.

**Imagining Australian authenticities**

The remainder of this chapter deviates slightly from the time-honoured research-paper genre structure of ‘findings’ followed by ‘results’. Instead, I present and discuss the data according to themes emerging from the data itself. Themes emerging from the data, and highly relevant to understanding both the ‘known’ in this context and resistance to it, include: students’ imagined Australian ‘authenticities’, the pressure that schools and teachers perceive to perform such imagined authenticities back to students, and instances of resistance, where teachers and others attempt to problematize, pluralize and resist imagined ‘authenticities’ with a view to recognizing and representing Australian diversity and enhancing students’ intercultural competence. This first section begins with students’ constructions of Australia.

The following extract from a student focus group exposes some common stereotypes held about Australia by these (respectively) Belgian, Swiss and German students:

*Phiona:* Before you came here, what was your picture of Australia?
*MATHILDE:* Sun.
*EMILIE:* Sea.
*SABINE:* Good-looking surfer boys running around.
*EMILIE:* Nice people, they’re all friendly.
*SABINE:* Like everybody’s really relaxed all the time.
*MATHILDE:* Yes … People are really relaxed I think.
*SABINE:* Compared to cities in Europe …
*EMILIE:* Yes.
*SABINE:* Everything’s really relaxed here. In Europe everybody’s stressed all the time.

(Student, ‘focus group’, chain language centre, Regional City, 2012)

These views were typical of the students’ pre-arrival constructions, a view that one director of studies attributes to Australian tourism destination marketing:

The [Tourism Australia] advertising campaign, which is the selling of Australia overseas, is full of the blonde, blue eyed, bronzed people
who are on surf boards with big smiles. (Julia, Director of Studies, university language centre, State Capital, 2012)

Beyond images from tourism, some students, particularly East Asians but also South Americans and Europeans, constructed Australia as irrevocably different from their home countries. This included notions of universally friendly, ‘relaxed’ people, and extended to ostensibly more ‘dynamic’, ‘informal’ and ‘relaxed’ classroom environments (various student focus groups, 2012).

This construction is grounded in notions of essential differences between students’ home and host cultures, and the following extract from a director of studies interview relates this construction back to the selling of Australia in tourism:

*Patty:* They view anything [in class] that is quiet as boring, quite often.

*Phiona:* Although in their own countries, learning is often quite quiet.

*Patty:* Yes, yes but they don’t expect that.

*Phiona:* So it’s a different expectation here?

*Patty:* I think so.

*Phiona:* Why’s that, do you think?

*Patty:* I think they come with the idea ‘I’m not at home anymore, therefore I’m out here and everything is brighter and greener on the other side’ … They see Australians as what gets sold through the tourism board.

*Phiona:* Which is what?

*Patty:* To them, outgoing, bright, bubbly. And that’s what they expect.

(Patty, Director of Studies, independent language centre, Regional City, 2012)

The above excerpts suggest that, for students arriving in Australia, there is an expectation of finding the following: ‘good-looking surfer boys’, ‘blonde, blue eyed, bronzed people’ who are ‘really relaxed’, ‘friendly’ and ‘outgoing, bright, [and] bubbly’. Students may have an expectation that they will be ‘friends with [their] teacher’, that they will have ‘teachers who empathise’, and that everything will be ‘different’ and ‘brighter’ than at home. These are keywords from the above extracts, and are ideas that came up repeatedly in the data.

However, students’ notions of key differences between Australia and their home countries go beyond tourism-type images of friendly, bubbly
In my country it’s almost impossible to be a friend with a teacher and student because of my culture. But unlike my culture, it’s different here. I think it’s better because they empathise us. I can easily [talk] about my problem. (Hyori, Korean student, chain language centre, Regional City, 2012)

Hyori describes the empathy she perceives between teachers and students in Australian language schools, comparing it to the more formal relationship she perceives between teachers and students in Korea. This theme recurred in many student interviews, with some students describing a mutually respectful teacher–student relationship that they perceive and appreciate in Australia. For instance, comparing her language school experience to her mature-age university student experiences at home, Anja explains:

[The teacher] must be friendly and with open mind. It's for me really important. In my home country, I make my education on the second way ... I go back to school and make my returns for going to university [as a mature-age student]. I was 25 when I begin the [university]. And I notice there, what’s fantastic is the teacher was young, they’re [only?] a bit older [than the students], like here. And the connection or the teaching there was like here. You speak with the teacher and he makes fun with you but you know, okay, now we study. It's like here ... it's equal. When the teacher, when he is friendly and when he has open mind and he – it's okay when he have his own opinion, that is good. But it must be possible saying your own opinion as a student. (Anja, German student, chain language centre, State Capital, 2012)

Anja’s interview excerpt is more nuanced than Hyori’s, perhaps as Anja has experienced adult education in her home country. As a result, instead of comparing school education at home with adult language education in Australia and attributing perceived differences solely to culture, as Hyori appears to do, Anja is better able to delineate the difference between schooling (in Germany) and adult education (in either Germany or Australia), saying she prefers the ostensible equality between teachers and students in both contexts. Of course, Hyori may be correct: perhaps relationships between teachers and students in adult education in Korea
are more formal than in Australia. But in both cases above, the students note that they appreciate the apparent informality, approachability, fun, open-mindedness and friendliness of Australian teachers in class.

So what happens when students arrive in Australia only to find that these constructions are stereotypes, and that Australia is rather different – more multicultural and less bronzed and blond, perhaps – than they had imagined? What if their teacher is more serious, or less ‘fun’ than they might have imagined? These excerpts tease out the interplay of students’ expectations with their lived experiences, beginning with impressions of Australia generally and then considering students’ imagined teachers:

**Marie:** I know Australia is really multicultural and stuff, I know, but on the other hand my [host] family’s from Fiji. It’s like: I’m not in Fiji; I want to have the real Australian thing.

**Phiona:** What’s the real Australian thing?

**Marie:** I think that’s the hard thing about Australia. You don’t really have your own culture. Your culture is too multicultural.

(Marie, Belgian student, chain language centre, Major City, 2012)

We often have issues with students who say, ‘I’m staying with a Sri Lankan family’, [or], ‘they’re Indian’ ... ‘Indians aren’t English speakers’. You know we’re in Australia, which is supposedly a multicultural country, and these are people who speak excellent English ... but they’re not white. The students are stressed by the fact that they’re not with a white [family]. You know, their ideal of what it is to be in an Anglo culture. (Julia, Director of Studies, university language centre, State Capital, 2012)

**Phiona:** You mentioned the idea of good-looking surfer boys. Is this the picture that people have of Australia?

**Sabine:** Yes. I think so. Yes.

**Phiona:** Is it true?

**Sabine:** No. Because when I arrived my [host family] dad, his son is skinny, white, black hair and I’m sorry but he’s ugly. Then my host dad arrived, black hair, and even the neighbours are not [blond]. I didn’t see in my suburb. There’s no good looking [people]. So the stereotype, I didn’t see.

**Mathilde:** Yes. We have like the stereotype of really big blond guys and when I’m on the bus on my way home they’re only Chinese guys.
Emilie: Yes. That's right.
Sabine: Yes so different. Yes.
Mathilde: When I'm on the bus I don't think I'm in Australia, it’s like I'm in China.
Emilie: Yes.
Mathilde: Yes but I think, I knew that there were a lot of Asian people [here], but I thought it was more mixed. Because you have like the Chinese suburb, the Japanese suburb and I thought it was mixed. ... You really see, like, there are so many Asian people.

(Students, ‘focus group’, chain language centre, Regional City, 2012)

These excerpts describe students’ negotiations between an imagined ‘Australia’, as constructed by out-group stereotypes and arguably perpetuated by tourism advertising, and their lived experiences of staying with host families and in suburbs that breach these stereotypes as people there may be Fijian, Sri Lankan, ‘Chinese’, or simply dark haired and ‘ugly’! These quotes also point to an important reality, that students’ experiences of language travel extend well beyond the classroom, comprising home-stay experiences and getting-around experiences, as well as encounters in everyday life, part-time jobs (for many longer-stay students), and engagement with their peers from myriad countries. For some students, this will be a first experience of living away from the parental home, and for most it represents a first time sojourning abroad.

One expectation that emerges, therefore, is that their teacher will act as a conduit into the local culture: an explainer, an ‘insider’, a guide. So while students may project imagined Australian ‘authenticities’ onto their teachers, resulting in stereotypical expectations about teachers’ personality and appearance, students may also hope that their teacher will help them understand Australian ‘realities’ from the teachers’ experience. However, there is a necessary conflict here: how are teachers to walk the line between performing students’ imagined ‘authenticities’ back to them while also sharing, exposing and exploring Australian ‘insider’ realities? It appears that students want a cultural entry point and insider information, but they do not necessarily want their own stereotypes to be disrupted too much. These excerpts speak to this complex demand:

My favourite teacher is my morning class teacher ... He try to make conversation with many classmates and he talk about his private
story, it makes me closer. (Emiko, Japanese student, independent language centre, Regional City, 2012)

They loved [one of the teachers] ... I said, ‘what was so good about [him]?’ They said, ‘he gave personally. We would often be talking about something and he would personalise it and say, ‘when I worked here’ or ‘when I did this’, or ‘in my life’, for example, ‘this happened’. Everything he did felt real, and that's what I liked about it. It wasn’t just the textbook.’ (Amy, Director of Studies, chain language centre, State Capital, 2012)

[In class, some of the most successful teachers] just talk about say why Australians like meat pies so much. Or what their dad used to do when he was living around here ... I think most of [the students] actually do go for it, if they’ve got the personality to carry it. That’s the thing, is that if you’re that kind of charismatic person and you can make a story a yarn, spin a yarn and make it entertaining. I think the students ... feel like they’re learning some aspect of Australian culture. (Mark, Director of Studies, chain language centre, Regional City, 2012)

I think one of the things that the students here enjoy is the fact that we joke with them a lot. Even though we’re their teachers, they’re all adults so we, kind of, treat them like equals and we joke with them in the same way that we would joke with our friends ... I think that’s one of the important things in the teacher/student relationship, here at least. (Amelia, teacher, chain language centre, Major City, 2012)

Ulrike: Yes. They do like change our lessons because of us. Last week it was about crime law and [our teacher] told us the whole story about [Lindy] Chamberlain with the dingo. Yes it's like the dingo story is really famous in Australia but we didn’t know about it.

Marta: Yes.

Ulrike: So it’s good that we do now. ... I really want to learn about the culture because in my family I don’t learn it. ... [Our teacher], she’s like our guide here.

Marta: Yes, I mean for example, when we went to [an art gallery] and I really liked it and it was something new ... And next time or today she brings typical Australian food so it’s something – yes. I like it because in Europe you don’t, you have nothing from Australia.
Ulrike: No. We don't know anything about the culture.

Marta: You just know yes Australia, the capital city is Canberra and...

Ulrike: You know like the normal things you learn in school but not like the inside info.

(German and Slovak students, chain language centre, Major City, 2012)

These quotes exemplify what students seem to want and expect from their teachers: empathy and easy communication, teachers who ‘give personally’ and who let students into the ‘insider info’ and their ‘real’ lives, and teachers who joke and can ‘spin a yarn’. This may explain the disjuncture that I had noticed between those who excel on CELTA, for which language analysis and teaching skills are required (but for which there is no need to give personally or be able to spin a yarn), and those teachers who seem to be most successful in language school classrooms. This suggests that teachers are, to some extent, responding to what students want.

Performing Australian ‘authenticities’

This is no surprise to directors of studies, and the following excerpts show various takes on the situation:

I was really amazed because when I first became a [director of studies]. I was expecting – I had some jagged personalities in my staffroom, people who were really quite difficult to be with in the staff room. I did – the first six months – I did a whole round of observations, and they were all absolutely delightful in the classroom. [In the staffroom] they might have been, like, gnarly and yeah, jagged is the best word. Kind of sharp edges. But in the classroom they, kind of, turned on the nice personality. (Julia, Director of Studies, university language centre, State Capital, 2012)

I think that [as a teacher] you can be very technically skilled, but if you’re a grumpy bastard you probably won’t get great feedback. You can probably get great feedback without being that technically skilled with some classes. So I think that those sort of human attributes, the affective factors, are probably out there [important] for a lot of students. They’re here for a short time and they want to feel that somebody is caring and somebody is interested in them. (Jason, Director of Studies, university language centre, State Capital, 2012)
We started instituting these leaving surveys [and we improved our student satisfaction rate] ... So I’m really happy about that, but in a way, part of me died in the process. Because the way that you really keep students happy has not been to institute a rigorous academic curriculum with clear academic objectives ... It’s really to think much more carefully about what customers want and their expectations. Trying to hire teachers who really have that personality. That personality for teaching, their personality carries the class and keeps the people on board. (Mark, Director of Studies, chain language centre, Regional City, 2012)

These participants frame a similar phenomenon differently: while Julia says she was ‘amazed’ at the difference between the ‘gnarly’ teachers in the staffroom and their in-class ‘delightfulness’, Jason appears to accept that part of the teachers’ job is the affective factors that make the students feel cared for. Mark’s view is the most nuanced and idealistic: saying that ‘part of me died in the process’ he acknowledges the trade-off he has had to make between the quality language education (‘a rigorous academic curriculum with clear academic objectives’) that he would prefer to institute and the need to keep students happy by hiring only teachers with the right kind of ‘personality for teaching’ that keeps the students ‘on board’. This comment speaks of seemingly mutually exclusive teacher traits: technical skills and a non-gnarly personality, or at least the ability and willingness to perform as needed. As Crang (1997: 148–53) describes, though, this is ‘the deep acting of emotional labour’ through which the teachers’ ‘personhood is commodified’.

This goes beyond personality, though, with some directors of studies consciously hiring teachers who also look the part of imagined, ‘authentic’ Australians:

[One of our teachers] Marco’s got that coolness. He’s a soccer player ... He's hunky looking. The girls love him. He's married so it's all safe ... But that just makes all the girls go goo-goo over him. The boys hang out the front [of the school] and he plays basketball with them ... So he's for me a dream type of teacher, where the students love him ... [The students say] ‘Marco is the most wonderful teacher ever’. When it comes to photos, when they’re leaving, it’s, ‘Marco, Marco’, every student that’s had him...If Marco was small and nerdy and wore glasses, would [the students’] reaction be the same? I don’t know. I think probably not. (Amy, Director of Studies, chain language centre, State Capital, 2012)
Phiona Stanley

The majority of [teachers] are big booming personalities with smiles. The joker – jocular, ‘hey, look at me’ kind of person ... big, bubbly – people who could host children’s television ... There are lots of them. There are lots of them. I think of the more successful teachers where I am and they’re all dimply-faced people. Almost like a baby face. You know, the non-threatening face that you see on a baby, with big dimples and kind of maybe lower eyes and big smiles. Almost like a child’s face actually. (Julia, Director of Studies, university language center, State Capital, 2012)

Beyond the issues discussed in the previous section, of students’ disappointment and surprise with Fijian or Sri Lankan host families, or negative evaluations of multicultural Australian ethnoscapes that differ from the Anglo-Aussie stereotypes implicitly promised through marketing materials and imagined as out-group social imaginaries, these quotes speaks of a conscious effort on the part of language teaching operations, and directors of studies in particular, to perform back to students, through teacher hiring decisions, both the personality and the appearance that students seem to expect.

This is not to say that directors of studies are to blame; those I interviewed stressed the pressure they were under to meet student satisfaction targets. This is, then, a complex pressure coming from students themselves, perpetuated by marketing departments, and all too often insufficiently disrupted by directors of studies or teachers themselves, whose jobs are predicated on keeping students happy. It is a circle of certainty in which truth is imprisoned.

Resistance to ‘the known’

How on earth might this situation be resisted, and even resolved? The good news is that there is some resistance to cultural stereotyping and the performance and perpetuation of imagined authenticities. This section describes some ways in which the circle of certainty, described above, might be ruptured. The process starts among those who question students’ purpose in coming to Australia at all:

One of the reasons why they’re coming here is globalization. You know, meeting people, networking from different counties ... [In] this global world, you’re going to need international experience. When I go to ... the farewell ceremonies, where our director will come and speak, one thing [he says] is, ‘you’ll be able to put this on
your CV as you've had an international experience and that may make the difference when you are applying for a job back in Japan or back somewhere else.’ (Anna, teacher, university language centre, Major City, 2012)

If you're going to study with a class full of your own nationality, then why come here? Why not just do it in your own country? So you come here for more than what you can get back home. A part of that is a mixture of nationalities, where the common language is English … [The students want] the internationalization of themselves. (Lisa, Director of Studies, university language centre, Regional City, 2012).

These quotes speak of teachers who understand that students are, in part, seeking to acquire or hone interculturality with a view to acquiring the cultural, social, symbolic and economic capital that this may confer in their home countries (Bourdieu, 1986). In order to do this, there is a need to problematize imagined ‘authenticities’ and help students move towards MacCannell’s (2008: 334) ‘post-modern, post-structural, non-essentializing, hip version of culture as emergent, as constantly responding to challenge, changing and adapting’.

Some of the participants describe this kind of resistance:

[One of our teachers,] Su Ming, gosh I don’t know where she's from but she's grown up in Australia. So if they're not aware about [how multicultural Australia is], they learn pretty quickly. I'm German, so I’m not Australian in pure terms … All our marketing material and all our brochures and all our orientations, all point to the fact that they’re in Australia, which is multicultural. It’s definitely not what they expect, but it's to be expected. [Describes an example, a student’s complaint about a Japanese-heritage homestay family.] In this case it was a high school kid, the student. The high school teachers accompanying the student had to be re-educated a little bit as well and we said, ‘well this is Australia’. (Martin, Director of Studies, independent language centre, Regional City, 2012)

We’ve got European students who will say to me, ‘oh there’s quite a lot of [Asian people in Australia]’ and they’ll do the slitty-eyed gesture. I’ll say, ‘yeah, that's interesting, my wife's Japanese’. They'll go, ‘oh right, yeah, sorry’. (Mark, Director of Studies, chain language centre, Regional City, 2012)
Europeans [students] ... some of them we’ve had, refused to go into their class because there were too many Asian [students]. So what they’re expecting is, they’re expecting a European international language school. I’ve had students who have refused to go to a class because they don’t like it. They’ll make a slant-y eye gesture. They’ll actually do that. I’ve had quite long and quite difficult discussions about needing to be culturally accepting ... Teaching [them] that they are going to have to get to know people with an Asian background ... But to what extent is that the fault of the marketing? If you look at our brochure there is not a percentage of Asian faces in any of the pictures. The faces are predominantly European and nice looking South Americans, all young people. So that expectation, I think, is partly the company’s fault. If everything that you’re shown shows 95 per cent of white faces and young people having a good time in Australia, then you get here and your class ... 10 out of 15 people [are] Asian. They’re Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian, Thai. But they [European students?] can’t even distinguish between that. They just look ‘Chinese’ [to them]. (Amy, Director of Studies, chain language centre, State Capital, 2012)

These quotes evidence directors of studies’ problematizing ideas about ‘Australian’ society, normalizing and pluralizing Asian-ness, and challenging some students’ racism. Amy and Martin also highlight the role of marketing in shaping and managing students’ expectations: whereas Amy’s chain of language schools is a multinational (with glossy marketing materials and a global network of educational agents and marketing offices), Martin’s centre is independent and he is a co-owner and, as such, he has much more control over how the centre is marketed. As a result, he consciously showcases a ‘multicultural’ Australia to potential students. This difference illustrates an important point: although Amy’s organization markets ‘predominantly European ... white faces’, and this may sell language courses in a stereotypically imagined Australia, this also seems to set up and perpetuate stereotypical expectations that may subsequently cause problems. These problems are operational, in that part of the director of studies role may need to include ad hoc intercultural sensitivity training for students, as Mark and Amy describe. But the problems run much deeper: whereas students may hope to ‘internationalize themselves’ through language study abroad, their experiences may, in fact, reify and reinforce pre-existing notions about putative ‘Asian’ difference and an interculturality and Australian ‘authenticity’ that is strictly white (and photogenic).
To some extent, directors of studies may resist, as Amy explains, by hiring teachers who are rather more diverse than the marketing materials may suggest, including non-native-speaker teachers:

In my staff at the moment I’ve got 14 teachers. Only four of them are from [this city]. I’ve got two Brazilians, one Scottish, one English, one Irish, a South African and two from New Zealand. I also had a Canadian ... Finnish ... Norwegian ... [and] Dutch teacher[s]. But I haven’t had a Japanese-born or an Asian-born teacher. I have had Europeans and South Americans; and they’ve been part of the lovely cultural mix there hasn’t been an issue.... Would it work the same if I had an Asian teacher who is Japanese and [a lot of] Japanese students? I don’t think it would. I think [Japanese students] they’re a bit harder to sell to in their expectations. I think they’ve come all this way and their expectation is to have someone who looks completely different [from them]. Yeah, if you looked at Marco [one of the Brazilian teachers], I mean he could be Brazilian, Italian, he could be Norwegian ... He’s European looking. I don’t think it would work if I had a Korean looking or Japanese looking. [The students are buying] an image. Just a western image. (Amy, Director of Studies, chain language centre, State Capital, 2012)

I have written elsewhere about dichotomous discourses of difference that may frame East Asian students’ expectations of ‘Western’ authenticity (Stanley, 2013: 46–51), and this is well documented in the literature on English language teaching in Japan (e.g. Rivers and Ross, 2013). So although Amy’s efforts to replicate Australian multiculturalism within the staffroom are laudable, some students’ apparent conflation of ‘Australianness’ (and even in-class multiculturalism) with ‘whiteness’ remains unchallenged. This is less obvious, and arguably less offensive, than the ‘slitty eyed’ gestures made by the European students cited above, but racism it is nonetheless as it constructs ‘authentic’ Westernness as irreducibly white.

**Conclusion: resisting ‘the known’**

Where, then, might we intervene in this problematic circle of certainty, to unravel a damning Mobius strip that constantly reinforces itself even as it twists the truth? My suggestion is that it is among the students themselves that change may best be initiated. At the moment, the teaching of ‘culture’ and ‘interculturality’, as discussed above, can be
rather two-dimensional (see Zotzmann, this volume). The focus tends towards the superficial: ‘food and festivals’ and culture as context; this, paradoxically, actually reinforces discourses of essentialism, determinism and difference, that are also reinforced, problematically, in language school marketing. But students themselves, perhaps in an effort to ‘internationalize themselves’, are in fact grappling with these kinds of ‘big’ cultural issues, and it is my suggestion that classroom teaching of ‘culture’ might consider text analyses of this kind of conversation:

**Sabine:** [Asian students] are just so different from us. I mean, it begins in the food how they, and their cloth[e]s.

**Mathilde:** It’s, like, little things. Like I said to Emilie last week, I was really annoyed with my roommate. She’s from Japan. She has a cold but she doesn’t blow [her] nose. She’s like just sniffing and I’m, it’s really irritating and Emilie said ... that it’s a habit because in Japan it’s rude to blow your nose. [So] for her, it’s normal.

**Sabine:** Yes. For example when they eat they’re always [chewing sound] and they make noises. So Sherry, she’s my flatmate, yes. ... When I see what she eats she also always say, ‘come and try’, and I try because yes I want to taste, but I said, ‘no, I can’t eat it’. She eats eel, mix it all with her chopsticks. ... I think like sometimes they’re like, not adult behaviour. Like childish, I think.

**Emilie:** So even how they walk because they don’t move their feet they’re choo-choo-choo [gestures shuffling feet].... And they’re not very sporty.

**Sabine:** They wear winter cloth[e]s, they don’t wear shorts.

**Mathilde:** They don’t want to get skin tanned. ...  

**Sabine:** I think they have a lot of things about us to say as well. Because my roommate ... I think she is probably sometimes also annoyed by me and thinks maybe that I’m dirty or irritating and I have the same.

**Emilie:** Yes and one of the Asian boys, he’s from Taiwan. He said to me and my friend he said, ‘you European girls you are so nice, you look so good, you don’t have to put on [so] much makeup’. I was like, ‘okay, thank you, but I have wear my makeup’. He’s like, ‘no don’t wear makeup, you’re so beautiful without it’.

(Students, ‘focus group’, chain language centre, Regional City, 2012)
Between them, the students negotiate a series of surface-level indicators of (cultural) difference: food, clothing, make-up, manners, hobbies, ways of walking, and notions of cleanliness. Intriguingly, as well as being able to delineate the ‘ways’ of the ‘other’ (problematically homogenized as ‘Asian’), these European students also identify some of their own ‘cultural’ behaviours that the ‘Asian’ students may find troubling: to others, Europeans may be dirty, irritating, or overly made up. In a mixed nationality class, as is the norm in all the participant language centres, this kind of discussion could be the very focus of teaching of interculturality, with the intention of problematizing the surface-level indicators of difference and exposing unexpected similarities, commonalities and shared humanity. One teacher comments:

[The students] are becoming more international, but I don’t think there are many who actually trying to do that. I think that’s just a by-product of what we do ... They’re looking for English, and hold a koala, and all that stuff ... And they just haven’t considered [anything else]. The Saudi with a Japanese friend. It just has not clicked ever in their existence. [in my class I look at culture.] ... Next thing you know, ‘I think I’m going to move to Japan and study’ ... [There are] quite a few multicultural romances here, and [when they go home] I find that they’re dating someone from a different culture in their home country. Whereas before they wouldn’t have considered it. It’s that exposure. [They become] broad-minded, yeah, and probably better people. (James, teacher, chain language school, Major City, 2012)

I would suggest, also, that as part of such a curriculum of interculturality development, the marketing materials used by language schools (and, indeed, Australian universities and other international education providers) might be studied and problematized for what they say, or do not say, about studying in Australia: students are uniquely placed to comment on their own lived experiences and the extent to which this is produced (or reproduced?) in and by such materials. A comparison might be made, for example, between the consciously ‘multicultural’ Australia portrayed in Martin’s marketing materials and the airbrushed, European-looking ‘Australia’ produced by both Tourism Australia and the marketing divisions of language school chains like Amy’s.

Students go to Australia, in part, to ‘internationalize themselves’, but when they get there they may find that pre-existing stereotypes are reified rather than challenged. This discredits the notion, all too often accepted in international education literature, that intercultural contact
is sufficient for interculturality to develop. It is not. Instead, it appears to be necessary to intervene and to mediate students’ intercultural experiences, both of the host country and its realities (as compared to constructed ‘authenticities’) and also the intercultural experiences that they have with each other. This suggests a new way forward for the teaching of ‘culture’ in language education: teaching the interrogation of ‘authenticity’. By addressing these complex, problematic issues in class, teachers can problematize the essentialist, realist views of culture that so often appear in English language textbooks. This would equip students with a vocabulary (and a taste) for ‘resistance to the known’.

**Points to ponder**

1. How do you react to Sabine, Mathilde and Emilie’s quotes? If you were teaching them, how might you engage them in developing their interculturality? Is this a valid goal of language learning in this context, do you think? Why/not?

2. Consider the various directors of studies’ responses to the issue of teaching ‘culture’, whether through performing students’ constructions of Australian authenticity back to them, managing students’ expectations through marketing materials, or intervening and resisting by hiring multicultural teachers and providing ad hoc intercultural training. What would you do in this situation, and why?

3. This study was sparked by the comment ‘but my students like me!’
   To what extent is teacher popularity an indicator of teacher quality? How might this differ by context?

4. Emiko and Amy describe teachers that ‘talk about his private story, it makes me closer’ and that ‘gave personally’. To what extent can (and should) teachers be their students’ friends? Why is this important? What might be some tensions and issues?

5. Does learning about cultural others mean characterizing cultures for the purposes of teaching? If so, do we run the risk of essentializing and stereotyping cultural others? Against this background, how might we ‘teach culture’ as part of language education?

**References**


A Greek Tragedy: Understanding and Challenging ‘the Known’ from a Complexity Perspective

Achilleas Kostoulas

Introduction

This chapter takes up the topic of ‘resisting the known’, and sets out to challenge current conceptualizations of foreign language education (FLE) in two ways. Looking into FLE in Greece, the chapter aims to bring under scrutiny pedagogical practices that are taken for granted among local educators and learners. Alongside this substantive aim, I draw on complexity theory with a view to offering an alternative way of thinking about FLE and moving beyond it towards more critical forms of pedagogy. By using the case of a language school in Greece as an illustrative example, I argue that complexity theory provides us with analytically useful ways of understanding the processes that shape pedagogy, and hints at how educational practices may evolve towards forms that are more reflective and critical.

This chapter begins with a brief overview of complexity, where the theory is outlined and an argument is made for its relevance to FLE. The second section of the chapter uses empirical data to instantiate established pedagogical practices (‘the known’) from within a language school in Greece. The considerations that seem to give ‘the known’ its distinctive form are analysed, and then a reconstructed ‘prototypical’ lesson is described. It is argued that ‘the known’ is a product of local pedagogical traditions and global influences interacting in complex, synergistic ways to produce a highly transmissive form of pedagogy. Finally, in the third section, a suggestion is put forward for ‘resisting the known’ by reconceptualizing FLE and by reorienting pedagogical practice in ways informed by complexity theory.
**Complexity theory and its relevance to FLE**

Complexity theory concerns itself with the study of systems that are made up of heterogeneous components (e.g. people, institutions, processes or even smaller systems), of which the non-linear behaviour cannot be explained as the aggregate of their components’ activity. Through the study of such systems, complexity theory aims to provide ‘a unified description of the particular, and yet quite large class of phenomena whereby simple deterministic systems give rise to complex behaviours’ (Nicolis, 1995: xiii). In the literature, terms such as complex systems, complex dynamical systems, complex adaptive systems, dissipative systems and others are often used to emphasize different aspects of such entities. Such distinctions are often valuable, but for the purposes of this chapter, they can all be subsumed under the term ‘complex adaptive systems’. Similarly, the designation ‘complexity theory’, or ‘complexity’, will be used as roughly synonymous to ‘dynamical systems theory’, ‘non-linear science’, ‘chaos theory’ and other related terms.

The origins of complexity theory can be traced to empirical work carried out in the 1960s in order to account for phenomena that seemed to defy linear causality, such as weather patterns (Lorenz, 1972). Since then, complexity (as well as its antecedent theoretical formulations) has fruitfully informed diverse disciplines, such as chemistry (Prigogine and Stengers, 1984), biology (Kauffman, 1993; Lynch and Conery, 2003) and meteorology (Rind, 1999). In the social sciences, complexity theory has been brought to bear on the study of collective entities such as business organizations (Battram, 1998), and on disciplines such as ecological psychology (Juarrero, 1999; Thelen and Smith, 1994). More relevant to this discussion is the fact that in recent years interest has grown in the application of complexity to education (Davis and Sumara, 2006; Mason, 2008) and applied linguistics (Davies, 2008; Larsen-Freeman and Cameron, 2008; Meara, 2004, 2006).

The principal appeal of complexity in the study of FLE lies in its potential to provide a coherent account that transcends levels of analysis (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron, 2008). Analytical models informed by complexity are scale-free, i.e. they can be equally applicable to the interaction of students and teachers in a single lesson and to the interplay of power relations that develop among linguistic communities on a global scale. In other words, complexity theory does not distinguish between micro- and macro-levels of analysis. Rather, it posits that higher-order systems come into being through the interaction of lower-order systems, and that the processes that are manifest in the former can also be
traced in the latter (Davis and Sumara, 2006). In doing so, complexity theory can help to produce an account of FLE which acknowledges individual agency, the constraints of social structure and the reciprocity of their interaction (Byrne, 1998).

In addition to being hermeneutically useful, complexity theory is intuitively appealing to FLE, on account of the fact that language classrooms present many of the defining features of complex adaptive systems. A full listing of such features lies outside the scope of this chapter, but interested readers are referred to Mercer (2013) for a comprehensive review and discussion. For our purposes, discussion will be confined to three distinctive properties, namely the way complex adaptive systems interact with their environment, the ways in which they evolve, and the emergent phenomena they produce.

Although it is epistemologically necessary to define the boundaries of a system in order to facilitate the study of its components, complex adaptive systems can best be described as being ‘open’ (Larsen-Freeman and Cameron, 2008: 32) or ‘ambiguously bounded’ (Davis and Sumara, 2006: 5). This means that the constituent components of a system do not just interact amongst themselves: rather, they constantly exchange energy and information with their environment. To illustrate with reference to FLE, activity in a classroom can be studied with reference to the multiple cultures that the teacher and students embody: their ‘supposed’ national culture(s), the culture(s) of the school, the local and global professional communities to which the teachers belong and so on (Holliday, 1994). In complexity terms, each of these cultures is viewed as a complex adaptive system; similarly, the class in its entirety can be described as a lower-order system that is embedded within these cultures (higher-order systems). One should note that the designations ‘lower-’ and ‘higher-order’ are used here to describe the relations between the systems, rather than in an absolute sense. The interaction between the lower- and higher-order systems is dialectic, i.e. the activity in the classroom is influenced and constrained by that of higher-order systems, and conversely the properties of the higher-order systems emerge from the activity of their constituent systems (Gilbert, 1996).

A second important property of complex adaptive systems is that they tend to react to changes in their environment in non-linear ways. Complex adaptive systems are often capable of absorbing minor perturbations in their surroundings by flexibly reconfiguring their structure, but they are most likely to return to their ‘preferred’ state or ‘attractor’, as soon as circumstances allow for it. For example, body temperature will revert to a normal 36.6° C after illness (Larsen-Freeman and
Cameron, 2008). In FLE, the survival of local pedagogical models in the face of sustained globalizing pressures (e.g. Canagarajah, 1999) provides an example of how attractors function. However, if a perturbation manages to dislodge a system from its attractor, change is likely to be rapid, spectacular and non-reversible (Byrne, 1998). This kind of change is called a ‘phase shift’, and it can be produced by either a strong outside perturbation or by the cumulative pressure of many minor changes. The sudden demise of behaviourist approaches to teaching and the ‘communicative revolution’ in the late 1970s and early 1980s nicely illustrates such a shift.

The last defining feature of complex adaptive systems that will be discussed in this section involves their ‘emergent’ properties. Emergence is defined as a process whereby higher-order phenomena are brought into existence through the collective behaviour of the parts that make up a complex adaptive system (Mayr, 1982). For instance, in biology, movement can be thought of as an emergent property arising out of the co-activity of muscle, nerve and blood cells. Crucially, emergent patterns of behaviour are not subject to formal decomposition, i.e. they are more than just the sum of the parts out of which they emerged (Anderson, 1972). Self-awareness, for instance, seems rather challenging to explain in terms of the activity of individual neurons; the properties of water are different from those of hydrogen and oxygen; and ‘social facts’ (Durkheim, 1895/1994) such as institutions, power, religion or the markets seem to transcend the sum of the activity of individuals. In FLE, emergence provides us with an analytically useful construct for comprehending how phenomena such as ‘linguistic imperialism’ can arise out of the activities of individual actors and organizations, most of whom do not appear to have overtly exploitative agendas (Phillipson, 1992).

Having outlined the epistemological utility of complexity and identified properties of complex adaptive systems that resonate with FLE, I will now use complexity theory to investigate how a ‘known’ form of pedagogy emerged in a specific setting in Greece, as an emergent outcome of the interaction between local and global influences.

Understanding ‘the known’

The Greek education system places a high priority on FLE: at the time of writing, English was already taught in all schools starting from the third year of primary education, and plans were being piloted for introducing English courses at the start of formal education. In addition, as many as 90 per cent of parents prefer to intensify the tuition their children
receive by enrolling them in supplementary evening courses, which are offered by privately run language schools (Alexiou and Mattheoudakis, 2013). According to one estimate, in 2008 families spent on average 15 per cent of their annual household income on supplementary FLE (University of Athens Research Center for English Language, n.d.).

In this section I wish to describe, by means of illustrative examples, some salient features of FLE which may be observed in some learning contexts in Greece. This description will draw on data from a case study that was conducted in a private language school that provided English language courses (the ‘host institute’). The data were collected using a variety of methods (interviews, classroom observation, questionnaire surveys and content analysis of documentary evidence) between September 2010 and May 2011, and were used to reconstruct a series of ‘prototypical lessons’, which seemed to function as notional templates for teachers and students within the host institute.

The scope of this chapter only allows for a selective presentation of the findings generated by the study, and the limitations of case study research preclude their uncritical projection onto other contexts. However, my intention in this section is not to provide readers with a comprehensive description of FLE as practised in Greece, or even a full account of the pedagogy practised in the host institute. Rather, I wish to showcase the processes through which ‘the known’ was given shape, i.e. the synergistic ways in which local pedagogical tradition and global influences come together to produce a form of pedagogy that is rarely problematized.

The discussion that follows focuses on the way grammar was taught at the host institute: this focus reflects the high importance that seems to be attached, among Greek learners and teachers alike, to mastering the grammatical system (Alexandropoulou, 2002; Kotsiou, 2003; Prodromou and Mishen, 2008). It is also consistent with the fact that the explicit teaching of grammatical rules and subsequent practice constituted the most common form of instruction observed at the host institute (accounting for more than a third of the activities in the syllabus).

Why was grammar taught so extensively?

The high emphasis placed on teaching grammar at the host institute appeared to the shaped by two dynamics, namely an overt concern regarding certification, and a hidden protectionist agenda. These will be discussed in the following sections, paving the way for an example of the pedagogy that emerged through the interaction of these dynamics.
Aiming for certification
What I describe as the ‘credentialist dynamic’ was a composite construct made up of a multitude of beliefs and practices, some of which were clearly manifest at the host institute, and some of which appeared to permeate it from its environment. Some of these were the high premium placed on developing accuracy, the prevalence of examinations and the importance attached to them, and the commercial interests of the host institute. Others included the credentialist ethos that permeates Greek society (i.e. the local context of the institute), and the native-speaker bias that is associated with English Language Teaching (ELT) as a global profession (i.e. the global context of the host institute).

One of the most salient features of pedagogical practice at the language school was what can be termed an ‘accuracy ethos’ that pervaded the beliefs of teachers and learners alike. This view was succinctly expressed by one of the teachers, who claimed that ‘anyone can pick up some English’ by exposure to the media, but that the reason students came to the host institute was in order to learn how to speak ‘proper English’. The ability to use the language accurately seemed to be associated with grammatical awareness, as shown in the following responses students provided to the questionnaire survey. (N.B. Some data have been translated from their original form in Modern Greek. Also data have been lightly edited to enhance clarity or remove some language infelicities, at the request of the host institute.)

In an English class we should to learn grammar, reading and listening, because with them we can speak right English.

[We should have] Grammar lessons because this will help us speak and write without mistakes. I believe that we should also know the grammar and speak well without many mistakes.

The link between the ability to use the language accurately and metalinguistic awareness was also invoked by teachers, as seen in the following interview extract:

_Interviewer:_ Could they learn [how to speak accurately] if you didn’t explicitly teach them the grammar?

_Teacher:_ [4 sec] Erm, not really.

_Interviewer:_ Not really. What makes you believe this?

_Teacher:_ Because they don’t, not – they learn this experientially but they don’t understand why they must do this [i.e. use a particular structure].
Achilleas Kostoulas

Data such as these appear to suggest that metalinguistic awareness and accuracy were viewed as a singular construct, or at very least, as inextricably intertwined.

A second aspect of school life at the host institute, which seemed to be related to the accuracy ethos, was pervasive testing, which served to monitor student progress, encourage learning and – to some extent – influence teaching through washback (Bachman and Palmer, 1996). As can be seen in Table 2.1, three main types of test were in use at the host institute: ‘Dictations’ were short daily quizzes designed by the teachers. ‘Revisions’ took place at the end of a set number of lessons, and were based on activities in the textbooks. ‘Tests’ were formal examinations designed by the host institute, and were normally held at the end of every two-month term. The frequency of testing, along with the importance attached to it by students and teachers alike, constituted what might be termed an ‘examination culture’ within the host institute.

A third salient aspect of pedagogy at the host institute was the tendency to channel learners towards language certification examinations, which were regarded as the end-point of language instruction (see Pigott, this volume). This tendency was often justified as a response to societal expectations (see below), but benefits to the host institute were also acknowledged: in addition to what were described as ‘obvious advantages for the learners’, the argument was put forward that channelling students to examinations run by independent accreditation boards was beneficial to the school as a whole. I was told that the students’ success rates, which were consistently above average, compared very favourably against commercial competitors, and served to enhance the reputation of the host institute. It was also suggested by some teachers that, absent the societal pressure for certification, student attrition levels would be high:

Teacher: [...] I have students who don’t want to come to the classes, who cry, who say they ‘I don’t like English but I have to do it in order to find a job and in order to satisfy my parents.’ And I think that they don’t learn

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Test type</th>
<th>Number/year</th>
<th>Typical duration</th>
<th>Designed by</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dictation</td>
<td>Approx. 90</td>
<td>5–15 minutes</td>
<td>Class teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revision</td>
<td>4–6</td>
<td>1 class session</td>
<td>Coursebook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>One or two 60–90 minute sessions (outside normal tuition time)</td>
<td>Host institute</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Resistance to the Known

English just for [its] own sake. They learn it in order to take a degree, to gain a degree. To hold a degree.

Interviewer: How many students do you think that is? I mean do you think that is a small percentage of students, many students?

Teacher: From my personal experience, I would say a large amount of students. Yeah, they are, and I don’t think it’s because of the school where I work – I if I go back to my school years, I think that a lot of, students didn’t want to learn [English

Interviewer: [didn’t really want to learn English=

Teacher: =they were forced to.

The data above need not be interpreted as indicative of commercial cynicism, but they do seem to suggest an overlap between the learners’ perceived needs and the commercial interest of the host institute.

The beliefs and practices within the host institute could be related to societal influences. There are frequent references in the literature to the credentialist ethos that permeates FLE in Greece (e.g. Karavas-Doukas, 1995; Mattheoudakis, 2007; Sifakis, 2009). Angouri et al. (2010) claim that Greeks ‘strongly believe’ in the necessity of mastering foreign languages, but they tend to be motivated primarily by the desire to demonstrate language knowledge by means of a certificate. The value of such certification appears to be related to the belief that it facilitates access to the job market, including coveted posts in the civil service and prestigious teaching posts in language education (Papaefthymiou-Lytra, 2012).

These societal expectations appeared to be fully internalized by the learners: the importance attached to certification was clearly illustrated by the following student responses to a hypothetical scenario, in which they had to advise a friend who was thinking of quitting class (Figure 2.1). The view was unanimously expressed that the imaginary student should not interrupt her studies before obtaining some kind of certification. Some typical responses included the following:

In my view, you should at least take the first certificate as it is necessary for the job.

I would recommend that you take at least the ECCE certificate (for job reasons) and then if you would like to stop, stop.

I don’t disagree with the choice of starting a new language, but in my opinion it is better to continue learning English at least up to Lower [i.e. B2] level [...]
She could continue for a couple of years her lessons, in order to take [illegible] her certificate. Then her English will be recognized [...] The students’ attitudes towards certification appeared to be related to the belief that accreditation would help them to enhance their professional and academic prospects later in life: many students explicitly stated that ‘you need these papers [certificates] to find a good job’, because a certificate ‘improves [: proves?] that you are good in English’. They also felt that possession of a language certificate would help them to ‘find easier job and you can also study in England in very good universities’. Even students that seemed keen on studying the language for non-instrumental reasons commented that ‘without a diploma it’s like you don’t know anything’. On the whole, it seems safe to claim that the students had largely internalized the societal expectations regarding certification.

The examinations which conferred certification tended to valorize ‘inner circle’ or ‘norm-providing’ varieties of English, i.e. the varieties supposedly used by native speakers (Kachru, 1985). For example, the examinations provided by the two most prominent and prestigious boards were found to almost exclusively use British and American English in their listening materials (Kanellou, 2011). In addition, one of these boards hinted that a consistent use of ‘American or British’ spelling was desirable (University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, 2007: 4), and the examinations provided by the other one were self-described as ‘examinations of Standard American English’ (Irvine-Nikiaris, 2009: 4). Intriguingly, a third examination board described their examinations as having a ‘pluricentric’ outlook, but this was somewhat peculiarly defined:

As far as the KPG exams in English are concerned, it should be noted that English is viewed as a pluricentric language and the KPG exams
deal with World Englishes. As a result, oral and written texts are not exclusively in British or American English but may be, for example, in Australian or Canadian English. (University of Athens Research Centre for English Language, 2012: 3)

In other words, even when an explicit attempt was made to design tests sensitive to the nature of English as a language for international communication, as suggested by Jenkins (2006) and others, it proved hard to escape a native-speaker bias.

Interpreting these data from a complexity perspective, a multitude of factors were observed operating in synergy. Pedagogy at the host institute was impacted by what I defined as accuracy ethos, an examination culture and the commercial interests of the school, all of which were in interplay. Frequent examinations were seen as requisite both on account of the accuracy ethos and as preparation for certification. Similarly, the imperative to achieve high success rates at the examinations served to legitimize both the accuracy ethos and frequent testing. These considerations were constrained by the credentialist expectations of Greek society, to which the host institute conformed. Conversely, the pedagogy that the host institute provided resulted in the reproduction of credentialism. Lastly, the value attached to certification amplified the impact the examinations and the ‘native-speakerist’ (Holliday, 2005; Houghton and Rivers, 2013) ideology that seemed to underpin them. The complex interplay of beliefs and practices can be helpfully condensed into what I have termed the credentialist dynamic (Figure 2.2).

![Figure 2.2 A credentialist dynamic](image-url)
Preserving the state of the system

The second dynamic that impacted pedagogical practice at the host institute was a protectionist agenda that seemed to underpin many beliefs and practices. Crucially, this agenda was never explicitly acknowledged as such: rather, it formed part of what Holliday (1994) described as the ‘deep action’ of the system. The term ‘protectionism’ is being used here to refer to an ideological position that emphasized the idiosyncratic features of FLE in Greece, the perception that the needs and abilities of Greek students differed from those of students in other contexts, and the consequent belief that mainstream FLE methodology was inappropriate for the setting. Like credentialism, the protectionist agenda was a collective construct, made up of several beliefs and practices, which are outlined below.

For example, it was suggested by some teachers that learners in Greece have the benefit of a ‘solid’ background in grammar, which was extensively and explicitly taught in the state education system. The claim was made that, since many grammatical categories (‘basic grammar phenomena’) were universal across languages, learners in Greece could capitalize on this knowledge and engage with grammar ‘in sufficient depth’. It was also argued that the students’ familiarity with grammatical metalanguage facilitated learning through explicit presentation. For the teachers who held such beliefs, teaching communicative skills without recourse to the underlying linguistic theory seemed to be an ‘unnecessary’ oversimplification of the subject matter that learners ‘need[ed] to know’.

Moreover, the claim was put forward that learners in Greece were often unable to engage with cognitively complex learning tasks, such as the inductive inference of language structures and authentic interaction in pairs and groups. In the words of one teacher: ‘Whenever I tried to use these methods [i.e. group work] it was always a failure’. Among the reasons the teacher cited for this outcome were the learners' unfamiliarity with this mode of work, and their tendency to engage with off-task behaviour when not directly supervised, both of which she attributed to their young age. Similarly, other teachers felt that the learners with whom they worked lacked the cognitive maturity to deploy the skills requisite to the inductive teaching of grammar. For these reasons, it was almost unanimously claimed that, despite recommendations in the literature, the most appropriate form of instruction for these students involved teacher-directed, deductive teaching.

Another idiosyncratic feature of the Greek context, which some teachers felt was important, concerned the extensive pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1986) of local teachers. In their discourse, teachers often made passing reference to their academic training, which allowed
them to engage in scientific descriptions of the target language (e.g. ‘four years at university, with literature, linguistics and [TESOL] methods [...] should not be compared with those who become teachers overnight’). The following interview extract is quite typical of this attitude:

If I am-, I struggle to describe the differences between Present Perfect and Past Simple, or between Past Present Perfect Simple and Continuous, how can an Englishman or an American do this? Let’s get serious. [...] In England grammar hasn’t been taught in the last 20–30 years. In the postgraduate course [which I attended in the UK], only I and another girl, she was also Greek, knew any proper grammar to explain what was happening. The others kept saying things that were not logical, whatever. [...] If you [ask native speakers] what this is, a Past Perfect for example, they will look at you like fools. They don’t even know the names [of the tenses]. [...] [Locally trained teachers] know how to write properly, accurately and to explain. And they also know, because they have done this as students, how [local] students think, and they can help them.

Among teachers with similar beliefs, pedagogical paradigms that devalORIZED their extensive knowledge were perceived as paving the way for inadequately trained teachers to enter the profession, without regard to what they believed to be the students’ best interests.

Traces of this particularistic mentality were also visible in the courseware used at the host institute: most of the coursebooks used at the host institute had been produced by local publishers or the local branches of international publishing houses. Statements such as the following, taken from the blurb of one coursebook, were quite common:

This two-level course for A and B junior classes, written especially for Greece, with lots of exciting resources for students and teachers ...

Another coursebook was described as having been written by an author who had extensive experience ‘working in the field in Greece’, and it was pointed out as a marketing point that special emphasis was placed on ‘the common grammatical and lexical mistakes that Greek students often make’. Yet another series was self-described as ‘a three-level course for Greek students’ which ‘addresses the needs of Greek students and teachers’. It should be noted that all these references to the Greek reality did not seem to be reflected in the content of reading passages, the names of characters, or the cultural imagery of the books. Rather, what seemed to set this courseware apart from similar learning materials
used in mainstream ELT was a rigid structural syllabus, extensive use of metalanguage, and a relatively high distribution of activities aiming at the presentation or practice of grammar (Table 2.2) (see Prodromou and Mishen, 2008). In fact, according to a key publisher, quoted by Kostoulas (2007), coursebooks produced for the Greek FLE market might just as well be described as ‘glorified grammar books’.

In summary, it was felt that learners in Greece were capable of understanding metalinguistic concepts and applying them in their communication. However, their relatively young age precluded them from engaging in cognitively complex tasks, or tasks that could not be effectively supervised by their teachers. Coupled with the above, the pedagogical content knowledge of locally trained teachers, of which a thorough grounding in grammar was an integral part, was highly appreciated. The perceived need for learning materials that acknowledged the particularity of the local context and the development of such materials by the local ELT industry seemed to be in a dialectic relation. These beliefs and practices effectively insulated the host institute from mainstream FLE theory, which has challenged the pedagogical effectiveness of transmissive instruction in favour of constructivist approaches to learning, such as communicative language teaching (CLT) or task-based learning (TBL). All of the above resulted in the development of a ‘protectionist’ dynamic, which is depicted in Figure 2.3.

### A prototypical grammar lesson

What seemed to emerge from the interplay of the ‘credentialist’ and ‘protectionist’ dynamics was a distinctive, highly transmissive, form of pedagogy (‘the known’). In this section, I will exemplify ‘the known’, by describing a prototypical sequence of activities, which illustrate the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Series</th>
<th>Grammar activities (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Series 1 (Beginners)</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Series 2a (Intermediate)*</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Series 2b (Intermediate)*</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Series 3 (Upper Intermediate)</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*At the time of the study Series 2a was being introduced to replace 2b which was being phased out.
way grammar structures were taught at the host institute. This prototypical lesson was reconstructed from multiple classroom observations, interviews and lesson plans, and serves to show how ‘the known’ synthesized local and global influences into a form of pedagogical practice which superficially resembled some aspects of mainstream ELT theory, but preserved features of local pedagogical tradition.

‘Grammar lessons’ were fairly common in all the courses offered at the host institute, and prototypically consisted of three phases: a prompt, ‘explanation’ and controlled practice activities, which were sometimes supplemented with feedback/free production (‘application’). This macro-structure resembled the presentation–practice–production (PPP) model, on which much of the courseware was based, but it was adapted in practice to conform to local pedagogical tradition, for example the ‘direct teaching’ sequence described by Matsangouras (1995), which calls for a progression from prompting and presentation, to individual supervised practice and eventually free practice and evaluation.

Prompting
Grammar lessons typically began with some kind of prompt that illustrated the target structure. This prompt was sometimes provided by the textbook, through realia, or by means of seemingly impromptu observations (‘is it going to rain?’). Alternatively, specially designed tasks might be used, such as the one below:

**Lesson 1**
The class is divided into two groups (boys vs girls), and each group is given several strips of paper. These contain fragments of a story
which has been divided in strategic spots so as to draw attention to the past perfect forms.

Prompts were generally brief, and – to use a phrase frequently stated by the teachers and often encountered in lesson plans – they served ‘to connect the new language to what already had been taught’.

**Explanation**

The second phase of a prototypical grammar lesson was a lecture on the formal features and uses of the language structure in focus. These lectures were often quite sophisticated and lengthy, occasionally taking up 10–15 minutes of a 50-minute lesson. The following classroom observation notes show some examples:

**Lesson 2**

The teacher announces that they are going to talk about the future tenses. She uses the interactive whiteboard (IWB) to project a slide with two columns, one for predictions and another one for plans. In each column she has made a list of words such as *arrangement*, *plan*, etc., which are arranged in order of certainty. After explaining the model, she provides examples for each category and directs the learners’ attention to the tense of the verb, checking comprehension.

**Lesson 3**

The teacher then uses different colour pens to underline various words in the sentence, and provides the grammar rule in the abstract

*TOO + adjective + TO + infinitive*

She explains that this shows that the action described in the infinitive is impossible because of what is described in the adjective, writes this on the board and repeats it in Greek. Adding numbers to the board, she then asks the learners to copy this information in their notebooks (first the rule, then the examples).

During these lectures, students were sometimes referred to grammar reference sections in their coursebooks. A variety of presentation formats were used in these sections, including grammar rules in full sentence form followed by examples, grammar structures in note form or in elaborate substitution tables. These presentations were often read in class, and key terms were normally glossed over in either Modern Greek or English.

A number of teachers reported that they were not always comfortable using the grammar reference sections in the coursebooks, as these
were not sufficiently detailed or explicit. In order to work around this perceived deficiency, many teachers required their students to use dedicated grammar notebooks in which the content of the ‘explanations’ was recorded. As an alternative, some teachers provided their classes with supplementary handouts containing the main points of the ‘explanation’.

**Practice**

The third phase common to grammar lessons involved controlled practice of the recently taught language forms. Although this phase was structurally similar to the practice section of a typical PPP instructional sequence, and the activities were often based on exercises designed for such a sequence, there were notable differences beneath the surface: while PPP is derived from audio-lingual learning (Richards and Rodgers, 2001) and aims at developing language competence through habit formation, at the host institute the ‘practice’ phase seemed to function – in some cases at least – as a trigger for low-level cognitive processes. In addition, the emphasis placed on writing partially differentiated the ‘practice’ stage from audio-lingual theory.

During ‘practice’, learners typically engaged with activities that required the controlled production of language forms. These activities were conducted individually, in writing, under the supervision of a teacher, and some examples included gap-and-cue, multiple-choice or transformation exercises, as shown below:

**Lesson 4**

Additional practice is provided in the form of a gap-and-cue exercise from the workbook, where the learners are asked to produce the Past Perfect Continuous [form of the verb provided]. After completing the exercise, the learners are instructed to exchange workbooks and correct the answers, using the key that is provided in an OHT.

**Lesson 5**

Following that, she presents each learner with a handout where there are several examples of sentences in future tenses. She asks the learners to identify and justify the use of each tense. This is followed by a multiple-choice exercise where the learners are asked to select between different verb forms.

Many of the activities with which the students engaged were included in the courseware, but these tended to be heavily supplemented by additional practice handouts.
Theoretical legitimization of these activities was provided by one of the teachers, who pointed out that in her, considerable, experience the grammar sections in the textbooks tended to be ignored by the learners, and the grammar notes provided a minimum of exposure, but it was the practice activities where ‘true learning takes place’. During ‘practice’, she argued, learners ‘understand what they do not know’ so that they can eventually ‘internalize’ the language. More insights into the kind of mental processes that were associated with grammar practice were provided by learners, who described the exercises as a way to ‘learn when we must use this form and when the other’, and suggested that they were ‘helpful because we can see and correct our mistakes in order not to do them and improve our English’. The implication seemed to be that for some learners at least, grammar practice activities provided an opportunity to test provisional hypotheses and possibly restructure their internal grammar systems.

Application
Practice phases were sometimes followed by a free production phase, during which the students were expected to use the previously taught language more freely in either oral or written discourse. In the lesson plans and the teachers’ discourse, these phases were referred to as ‘production’ or ‘application’. ‘Application’ phases were generally regarded as less important than the preceding ‘explanation’ and ‘practice’. Teachers tended to view these activities as either an optional extra which could usefully fill instruction time if the ‘practice’ phase finished early, or could serve to provide the teachers with feedback regarding the effectiveness of instruction. Consequently, the time allocated to such activities tended to be brief, and there seemed to be a tacit understanding that they were included in the lesson plans in the interest of comprehensiveness, but that they would be most likely be shortened or omitted in response to time pressure.

The activities used in the application phases normally drew on the courseware, and were related to its grammatical content. For example, after being taught ‘present simple’ forms and adverbs of frequency, learners might be asked to orally describe how they usually celebrate their birthday. Various prompts such as ‘invite friends’ or ‘make a cake’ might be provided as scaffolding. Although the rubrics in the courseware and the instructions in the teacher’s books suggested that these activities could be done by the students working in pairs or groups, in reality the activities tended to be implemented under very tight teacher control: the teacher would nominate students to produce pieces of
discourse with minimal guidance, and would then provide feedback regarding the accuracy of the student’s output. Writing activities would generally be assigned as homework.

In summary, grammar lessons at the host institute seemed to follow a linear path that resembled the transmissive patterns sometimes encountered in Greek pedagogical literature. Although the instructional sequences encountered in the learning materials tended to be structured along the lines of PPP, teachers at the host institute appeared to adopt them to suit their own purposes, by making the following modifications:

- A relatively brief ‘prompt’ phase was generated through improvisation or design of new materials;
- During the ‘explanation’ additional emphasis was placed on meta-linguistic awareness;
- The ‘practice’ phase, though formally similar to what is encountered in a PPP sequence, seemed to supplement the explanation in that it aimed to foster language awareness;
- The activities aimed at prompting the free production phase were reconceptualized as a means to test learning.

Taken together, these adaptations seem to be cast doubt on the validity of conceptualizations that regard teaching practice as an uncritical application of the coursebook content (Papageorgiou, 2002; Veioglou, 2002).

**Moving beyond ‘the known’**

It is the view taken in this chapter that ‘the known’ was not a static entity, but rather a state in which a complex system found itself, and thus a state open to challenge and amenable to evolution. This section explores how complexity can inform both processes, by reconceptualizing FLE and by critically reorienting pedagogy.

**Rethinking ‘the known’**

Drawing on the defining features of complex adaptive systems, which were outlined at the start of the chapter, in this section I propose a different way of conceptualizing FLE, which views ‘the known’ not as orthodoxy, but rather as the contingent outcome of beliefs and practices that stand to be problematized; and one that treats the relation between an educational setting and its context(s) as reciprocal interaction rather than passive determinism.
In describing FLE at the host institute, it proved difficult to isolate the host institute from the contexts in which it was embedded. In the interest of analytical convenience, the beliefs and practices that gave shape to pedagogical practice have been grouped into three categories, representing different levels of analysis: the host institute, its local context (roughly construed as Greek society) and its global context (subsuming ELT as a global enterprise).

Consistent with complexity thinking, practices and beliefs in the higher-order systems tended to influence those in the lower-order systems, but – crucially – did not determine them. For example, the priority attached to native-speaker norms in a global level was manifested as a preoccupation with developing accurate expression in the host institute. Similarly, a mutually reinforcing dialectic relationship seemed to operate between the value that local teachers assigned to developing grammatical competence, and the development of grammar-intensive courseware that catered to the needs of the Greek ELT market.

The combined effect of all these influences was that FLE at the host institute seemed to settle in what can be described as a deep ‘attractor’. In complexity thinking, attractors are frequently visualized as valleys or whirlpools from which objects cannot easily escape. The metaphor seems applicable in this case, too: almost all the beliefs and practices that were described in the preceding paragraphs seemed to force FLE towards ‘the known’. This does not mean that all the influences were operating in unison: for instance, mainstream professional thought in the field seems sceptical about such practices, and therefore seemed discordant to ‘the known’. Interestingly, in these cases the system seemed to reconfigure itself by developing a protectionist ideology that served to discredit any influences that might move the system away from its attractor state.

The end result was the emergence of an idiosyncratic form of pedagogy, which in this chapter has been termed ‘the known’. The main features of this pedagogical form included prioritizing grammatical form as a learning objective, and the use of transmissive, teacher-fronted methods of instruction, with a view to developing the learners’ ability to succeed in certification examinations. Although it might be tempting to view this pedagogy as the product of purposeful design determined by learner preference, teachers’ competence (or lack thereof), textbook choice or the prescriptive application of theory, such interpretations would be reductive, and do not seem to stand their ground under analytical scrutiny. Rather, it makes more sense to view ‘the known’ as an emergent product brought into existence through collective activity.
In evaluating ‘the known’, two properties seem to be of particular interest. First, the power structures in the host institute were inequitable: teachers were responsible for deciding about the content, the methods and the pace of instruction, whereas learners appeared to be relegated to a largely passive role. Such an arrangement seemed to facilitate the efficient delivery of content, thus catering to the students’ immediate needs (e.g. certification), but did so at the expense of more distal needs such as empowerment. Secondly, the dynamics that gave rise to this pedagogy appeared to be self-reinforcing. Most beliefs and practices in the host institute and its contexts were compatible with transmissive models of pedagogy, and were therefore implicitly and unquestioningly accepted. In addition, developments in pedagogical theory were effectively isolated by protectionist ideology and had little observable impact. The implication seems to be that attempts to prescriptively restructure the system in a top-down fashion would be unlikely to succeed.

What I hope the previous paragraphs have demonstrated is that complexity provides us with an attractively simple, but analytically powerful theoretical framework, which researching practitioners can usefully apply to their own educational contexts. The value of this model lies not only in its hermeneutical power, but also in that it provides insights as to how ‘the known’ might evolve towards more agentive behaviours, an example of which is presented in the following paragraphs.

**Challenging ‘the known’**

In addition to rethinking the ways in which it is perceived, the evolution of ‘the known’ involves actively challenging it through pedagogical practice that is critical in its foundational assumptions and emancipatory in its outlook. As noted above, the complex nature of educational settings seems to imply that the prescriptive imposition of new practices is unlikely to succeed. Rather, what seems to be needed is the organic development of a pedagogical paradigm (a new known) which is compatible with the complex nature of the educational setting.

Although it would be injudicious to predict the precise form of such an emergent paradigm, I would venture that, in order to succeed, it should centre on the parameters of ‘practicality’, ‘particularity’ and ‘possibility’ (Kumaravadivelu, 2001, 2003, 2006). ‘Practicality’, in this sense, refers to valuing pedagogical practice which is derived from the teachers’ reflection and action, as opposed to the prescriptive application of theory. In other words, it involves being sensitive to the emergent nature of pedagogy, and it presupposes understanding the processes through
which pedagogy is shaped. In the example of host institute, practicality involves valorizing classroom-based research and observation, which is likely to increase the teachers’ ownership of change.

Particularity denotes an outlook that emphasizes the idiosyncratic features of each educational setting, and calls for pedagogy which is responsive to the distinct needs of teachers and learners in the setting. It involves understanding the complex influences which impact the educational setting, and which create affordances and constraints for the emergence of pedagogical norms. Returning to the example of the host institute, this outlook acknowledges concerns about the ways in which Greek learners differ from others. However, emphasis is placed on understanding the reciprocal influences between the idiosyncratic system and its environment, which creates scope for a more nuanced understanding than the uncritical rejection of outside influence.

Finally, possibility involves empowering learners, by raising their awareness of their subject-position and the power relations through which their subject-position is constructed. Requisite to such pedagogy is an epistemological position that concerns itself with social macro-structures and the ways that they relate to the individual, but eschews determinism. In the case of the host institute, this would involve practice that is committed to a reflexive problematization of ‘the known(s)’: questions such as ‘what impact does “the known” have upon us?’ and ‘how can we impact “the known”?’ (see Edge, 2011) would be at the core of such pedagogy.

Complexity theory also enables us to predict that pedagogy informed by the principles of ‘practicality’, ‘particularity’ and ‘possibility’ might not have immediate observable impact, as the system would restructure to accommodate changes. However, the appeal of such an approach lies in the fact that minor bottom-up evolutionary changes, which are compatible with the current state of the system, are likely to be implemented with little resistance, and their cumulative effect can lead to a major phase shift.

Concluding remarks

This chapter instantiated complexity theory with reference to a specific pedagogical example, and put forward the argument that complexity forms an appropriate informing model for critical pedagogy. By drawing on empirical data from a case study in Greece, I demonstrated how complexity can help generate nuanced understandings of pedagogy, which is viewed as an emergent product of influences operating locally and globally. In addition to helping us rethink what ‘the known’ is,
Resistance to the Known

complexity involves a shift in the way we think about ‘the known’, and therein lies its appeal to praxis.

Points to ponder

1. In the chapter, the case was made that the pedagogical practice that emerged at the host institute was not solely in the interests of the learners. Could this practice be described as exploitative?
2. In your teaching context, is it easier to find traces of local pedagogical practices or global influences? What do you think that shows?
3. Thinking of your own teaching context, list some of the most salient influences that impact teaching, at the school level, its immediate context (the local society) and the global level. How do these seem to operate in relation to each other?
4. At the end of the chapter, a case was made for a more empowering pedagogy. How might this impact the learners, teachers and stakeholders in the host institute?
5. To what extent do you think that an outlook informed by complexity offers advantages in thinking about FLT?

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Symbolic Violence and Pedagogical Abuse in the Language Classroom

Jacqueline Widin

Introduction

The English language (EL) classroom is often depicted as a benign, neutral space separate from external tensions and struggles (Crystal, 1997, 2012), and although language education researchers such as Pennycook (1994), Phillipson (1992), Rapatahana and Bunce (2012) and Rivers (2013) draw attention to contestations in this space, an idealization of EL pedagogic relations still exists. The enduring image of EL classrooms as beneficial, harmonious, problem-free and negotiable spaces is a key component of the many branches of the ELT (English language teaching) industry; major corporate and aid organizations rely on ‘the known’ propagation of the benefits of ELT in idealized classrooms where the desire to teach and learn is high. However, the EL classroom is not a disinterested space, its walls are permeable to the outside world and it reflects the inequalities prevailing in contemporary society.

The current chapter draws upon three case studies located in three different contexts (Laos, Japan and Spain), and provides an account of current struggles in ELT classrooms and institutions. The first two cases are from a larger study which investigated the perceived benefits of international EL education in Australian university ELT projects and specifically focused on the question: Who benefits from the spread of English language education? The study examined interview data from the 25 participants, journal entries and participant observation (Widin, 2010). The third, a more recent study, is an exploration of EL teaching in a Spanish University Language Centre (SULC). In Spain, the data was collected from observations and interviews with six teachers of SULC and observations of an intermediate Spanish language class. The observations and interviews were collected over a two-month period. The teachers’ and
students’ voices appear in this chapter with consideration for the research participants’ anonymity, and pseudonyms are used for participants and the institutions. While the three case studies yielded rich data about the dynamics and power relations in their respective contexts, I limit myself here to examining the tensions between the espoused (‘the known’) and enacted values of the teaching institutions (in the broadest sense), illuminating the struggles of students and staff to accumulate the linguistic and cultural capital necessary to secure a legitimate place within each context.

The hallowed space of the foreign language education (FLE) classroom where English is taught as an additional language, has been viewed through a critical lens by a substantial number of language education researchers (e.g. Houghton and Rivers, 2013; Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 1992, 2009; Rapatahana and Bunce, 2012; Sung and Pederson, 2012) and has been described as a site of unequal distribution of power and resources. However, despite the well-researched critiques, many ‘knowns’ or ‘universal truths’ endure in the face of these analyses, for example: firstly, the neutrality of English, secondly, that there are many benefits of learning English as an international language, and thirdly, the space in which the pedagogical work is undertaken is a space of respect where the needs and languages of the learners are taken into account. This latter ‘known’ is best demonstrated by the rhetoric of international EL projects where the providers, in the ELT project cases here, Australian universities, claim to take into account the context and needs of the learners (teachers of English). I use Bourdieu’s analytical concepts of field, capital, habitus and symbolic violence to show how the imposition of supposed truths or rational procedures are imposed and accepted and in some instances, resisted, by both teachers and learners.

Symbolic violence is inherent in any teaching and learning process. The language-learning context (or in Bourdieu’s terms, field) is a complex interaction of power relations: economic and linguistic capital interplays with the (linguistic) dispositions of the learners and teachers within the particular linguistic market to carry out the teaching and learning of languages. The focus here is not to examine the particularities of methodology or strategy that teachers and learners engage in, rather, to focus on the violent, abusive and brutal practices, albeit symbolic, that accompany pedagogical work. In the case of the language classroom this is evidenced by the way linguistic practices are determined legitimate or not, linguistic habituses are valued or not and the way overarching processes of domination and subordination work to create inequality.

The previously stated well-accepted truths or ‘knowns’ about ELT are explored through two key struggles: the first focuses on the notion
of expertise or in Bourdieuan terms, legitimacy, with respect to both
expert-language teacher and expert-language speaker. The analysis
shows how the common-sense understanding of language teacher and
speaker expertise dominates and is challenged within the field. The sec-
ond centres on a little examined context of ‘Which language? When?’,
the social space around and within the classroom and investigates the
struggles between the use of the target language and the first language of
the learners and gives accounts of students’ ability (or not) to withstand
the damaging effect of dominant English (as a first language) language
speakers. To help understand the relationships of language, power and
legitimation I have integrated Bourdieu’s analytical framework with the
heuristic concepts of glorification, stigmatization and rationalization
(Skutnabb-Kangas, 1998). The latter three elements work together to
privilege particular languages and practices and subordinate others so
that unequal access to power and resources is rationalized as ‘natural’.

Resistance is an integral element of the field, for example, resistance to
the use of a coursebook; the ways students resist: the teacher, other students
or the artefacts of teaching and of course the way teachers resist student
desires. This is not necessarily a story of successful resistance but one that is
necessary to tell, for although symbolic violence does not ‘resort to physi-
cal coercion’ (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990: 36), it is a powerful delineating
force and wreaks havoc in its path through the foreign language education
classroom, its often invisible presence strengthening its power.

In the following sections I firstly describe the language teaching
contexts under examination. The next section outlines the theoreti-
cal concepts which underpin the analysis and discussion of the peda-
gogical work in the cases. English is a major player in delineating these
particular FLE sites and its position as a ‘known’ and benign benefit is
challenged; the following section discusses the role of English in the
cases and presents a range of views about how English is not a neutral
actor. The next two sections continue with the theme of legitimacy in
relation to teachers in the first instance and then linguistic practices in
the second. The concluding section summarizes the impact of symboli-
cally violent and abusive practices in these fields of FLE and poses some
questions for reflection and further discussion.

**Context**

The contexts of the three cases referenced are geographically, socially,
culturally and linguistically different – South East Asian, East Asian
and European – yet the linguistic landscapes are thematized by similar
patterns of subordination and domination. In all three countries English is a compulsory school subject and in the context of Spain and Laos EL skills are often positioned as a way to better one’s chances in a difficult economic situation. The projects in both Laos, aid funded, and Japan, fee based, provided EL teacher training for EL teachers in schools and universities. The project goals were to train EL teachers to offer a range of EL courses, for example English for academic and teaching purposes and English for specific purposes, and to produce a set of secondary school EL textbooks. In Laos and Japan Australian universities were the key drivers in providing and delivering EL education. Language was a pivotal factor and a constant point of reference in both of the projects as their very existence was predicated on promoting and supporting the teaching of English.

The SULC is a highly regarded fee-based language teaching centre in a large Spanish university. It attracts both a large number of international Spanish language students, predominantly from the USA, and local EL learners. The EL teaching programme and teaching staff were the primary focuses of the research study; an important feature of SULC was the predominance of non-Spanish teachers of English.

Theoretical framework

I owe much to Pierre Bourdieu in unravelling the dynamics of the international language education field. Bourdieu’s conceptual framework allows for a multilayered investigation into both the field of FLE, university language centres and the broader social context, the field of power. Briefly, the concept of field refers to the arenas of life or social spaces within which particular practices occur. Fields are characterized by regularities and behaviours, hierarchies of power and advantage, the struggle for scarce resources, and constantly shifting and contested boundaries. Capital represents the stakes or resources (e.g. linguistic capital) holding symbolic value within a field which are the subject of competition and define individual positions or status within that field. Habitus refers to each individual’s established dispositions and ways of being in and perceiving the world. Bourdieu (1989) has written extensively in the area of language, power and pedagogical work. Bourdieu’s notion of the legitimate speaker is helpful in analysing the way English dominates in international arenas. In regard to the research in EL teaching projects, this notion allows me to ask questions such as: Who is a legitimate speaker within the field of EL teaching projects? How is one recognized? The EL projects’ goals were to improve EL teaching and
learning skills but did a commensurate improvement in these skills make for a legitimate speaker or teacher?

All three cases are set within the context of the internationalization of education and significantly involve the flow of differences and delineations (Marginson, 2008); these include differences in languages, pedagogies, work practices, inclusion and exclusion. Bourdieu provides the tools to investigate the unequal distribution of resources and power. The field of power in this instance is represented by the powerful institutions at national and international levels: institutions such as Australian aid agencies, Australian foreign relations organizations, international aid and finance organizations, and universities within and outside of Australia.

Symbolic violence

Symbolic violence is used to describe the way power relations are established in FLE; by this Bourdieu means a non-physical sort of violence which is exercised upon a participant in the field with his or her complicity (or to use Kumaravidelu’s 2003, 2008, 2012 term, self-marginalization). For example, in the EL education projects the Australian project teams carry out symbolic violence (marginalization) by imposing meanings as ‘legitimate by concealing the power relations which are the basis of its force’ and at the same time communicating a logic or rhetoric of disinterest (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990: 4). Therefore, when the English language and/or English language teacher education is taught, it is fundamentally trying to impose ‘culturally arbitrary’ conditions by an arbitrary power (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990: 18) under the guise of legitimate order. Violent and brutal practices similarly exist in EL classrooms in countries such as Spain, where the notion of a supposedly unattainable ‘native speaker’ status strongly governs the construction of a Spanish speaker of English identity. As shown later in this chapter, the arbitrary judgement by arbitrary powers (the so-called native English speaker teacher) coerces learners to privilege the status of the non-Spanish teachers and delegitimize themselves as speakers of English.

Bourdieu’s notion of pedagogical work is helpful to look at how certain practices become legitimate, or keeping with the theme of this volume, ‘known’. As Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) define it, pedagogic work has three main features: first, it takes place over considerable time, it is not made up of ‘discontinuous and extraordinary actions’ (p. 47) but a sequence of pedagogic actions, whether the actions were deliberate or not. Secondly, pedagogic work produces a long-lasting and
resilient outcome. It is embodied by those who receive an education and who are then able to reproduce the practices long after the pedagogic work has stopped. Thirdly and most importantly for the purposes here, pedagogic work requires pedagogic authority, which *legitimates* the pedagogic agent and the product of the work. Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) go on to describe how the sanctions of the pedagogic action are more likely to be accepted if they are in accordance with the market, in this case the market for EL.

We also need to take into account the idea of ‘stakeholder interest’; if we think about FLE as a field, the field ‘happens’ because the stakeholders/participants believe in the value of the capital in the field. The participants in this study reveal that the value of capital (either linguistic, cultural, social or economic) is differently determined and acted upon by different stakeholders. While some seek to change the practice, and others to maintain the orthodoxy of the field, one thing that underlies the practice of the individuals who participate in the struggles of the field is that they believe in the game and the value of the stakes. Participation in the field buys into its legitimacy to some degree.

Kumaravadivelu (2003, 2008, 2012) offers another complementary way to think about this dynamic of the field with his use of the terms ‘the process of marginalization’ and the ‘practice of self-marginalization’ (2012: 22). These are used by Kumaravadivelu (2003) to identify and understand how the colonial concept of method continues to hold hegemonic control over ELT pedagogic practices even after the ‘end’ of colonialism. The cooperation of host country participants in the game of the ELT project, their practice of self-marginalization, is a strategy which legitimates the field. Through self-marginalization the host country teachers take on the language and teaching practices of the donor/project implementers at the expense of their own expertise. The notion of resistance becomes complex, if one has an ‘interest’ in the field; for example, as a teacher or learner of English the challenges or resistance that is offered may still work to keep the dominant practices in place.

**About English: who benefits from ELT?**

The character of English as a foreign (the preferred term is ‘additional’) language class varies with respect to the particular context. In Laos and Japan it is multilayered: the primary sites of examination are EL teacher education, and ESP (English for specific purposes) classes along with consideration of the EL students in secondary schools and
universities/colleges; in Spain while the focus is on the English classroom it was of interest to this chapter to take into account the teaching of Spanish as a foreign language, as in both of these sites there is an overt struggle between English and Spanish. In all cases we can see the operation of a unified linguistic market where English has imposed itself as the only legitimate practice, and other linguistic practices are measured against it (Bourdieu, 1989).

The international power of English is a recurrent theme in EL teaching literature and is of central concern in the analysis of EL teacher education and classroom teaching (Ha, 2008; Holliday, 2005; Medgyes, 1994, 1996; Oda, 1999, 2008; Phillipson, 1992, 2009; Rivers, 2013). Commentators on the ‘global’ spread of English put forward different values and beliefs about its impact yet the dominant voice is most often Western and triumphant (Phillipson, 2012), and critical voices are far fewer and focus on issues of inequality, domination and subordination. Their concerns are antithetical to David Crystal’s (1997, 2012) picture of a blissful, trouble-free expansion of English and continued supremacy. Crystal takes as given the world language status of English. In his historical trajectory of its ascension he claims that the success of English is through ‘being in the right place at the right time’ (Crystal, 1997: 110). Critical perspectives range across views such as: the notion of linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992, 2009) and language rights and linguistic diversity (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1999, 2000); the post-structuralist view that locates English and English teaching in discourses of colonialism in the past and their continuity into the present (Canagarajah, 1999, 2005; Kubota, 1998; Pennycook, 1998; Ramanathan, 2005); and the sociocultural views of Coleman (2011) and Holliday (2005) which reflect a critical view of the language marketplace. A main theme to draw from this diversity of construct is that EL teaching practices are never neutral or apolitical (Kubota, 1998; Pederson, 2012).

EL education has to do the pedagogic work described earlier to bestow its legitimacy, and this pedagogic work inevitably involves forms of abuse or brutality, albeit symbolic. Symbolic violence was well illustrated during the assessment of Spanish students’ English proficiency that I observed in SULC. The candidates sat a rather traditional grammar-based test with a short speaking and listening component. The coordinator marked the written assessments in front of the students on a one-to-one basis. The coordinator later explained that he liked to mark the students’ work in front of them to show them their mistakes and ‘to bring them down a peg or two’. The coordinator felt that the
candidates often had an inflated view of their ability in English and needed to be made aware of their poor performance. A consistent theme of my interviews with the teachers of English was that the Spanish learners had ‘hopeless’ levels of English, they were poor learners and really had poor prospects of achieving a reasonable proficiency. The teachers’ views eerily concur with a recent British Council publication (Powell-Davis and Otero, 2011) which, while dealing broadly with Spanish-speaking countries of the world, also identifies Spanish learners from Spain as having a very low proficiency in English, the reasons being the learners’ negative attitude to English, poor policy guidance for EL provision and inadequate teaching methods.

It is axiomatic to say that the role of English in the FLE field is a contested one. In Laos and Japan the goals of both projects were primarily about improving teachers’ proficiency in the teaching and use of English. The goals also implied that the types of professional development offered by the project were not available in the host countries. In Japan, the ELT marketplace was highly competitive. Underlying the goals of both projects was the glorification of the projects’ English teaching programmes and the stigmatization of the host countries programmes. In Spain, the SULC offered courses that were considered prestigious as the vast majority of the teaching staff were identifiably native English speakers from supposed inner-circle countries (Kachru, 1986) (this designation is problematic and is addressed later). Pederson (2012) similarly describes the teaching staff at a Korean university and the powerful impact this has on the positioning of teachers and learners in the FLE field. Phillipson’s (2009) critique of ‘neo-linguistic empire’ is alive and well in all three sites as the ‘individuals opt for the linguistic capital’ that will supposedly provide the spin-off benefits in increased economic and social capital.

While English was and still is a compulsory subject in the secondary schools in all three cases, this ‘known’ did not sit easily with all of the Japanese, Lao and Spanish teachers interviewed in the two studies. This ambivalence was well expressed by Lan, an EL teacher in Japan; she thought that many of the students in Japan do not see a reason for studying English and for this reason some teachers think it should not be compulsory:

... a lot of English teachers say that English should be an elective. Not all students ... have to learn English so that the students who are really interested in or motivated in learning English should take English classes.
Sal, also from Japan, agreed with the sentiments of the above quote. He saw English as an important subject of study but felt that students would take more responsibility for their learning if they elected to do it:

I think an elective subject always requires students to have a kind of sense of responsibility … actually English is important, it is the major language all over the world in the modern age … but still I think to give them a choice is important.

Another teacher, Ken, referred to the ambivalence about the study of English: ‘teachers and students in this country do not actually feel the necessity of actually using English here’.

In spite of these views all of the Lao and Japanese interviewees agreed that EL education is high in the national priorities for their countries. There were many reasons given as to why English is important, and interestingly almost all of the interviewees expressed the importance in terms of the ‘national interest’ of the particular country. Weng, from Laos, talked about how English would improve her country’s status within the region and identified the (hoped for) linguistic capital that English brings:

… like the other countries nowadays English is very important especially in south east Asia. Our government has opened up the country and we know that English is a key.

Son, in discussing her country's ‘national interest’, joins other Lao participants in supporting the need for English since Laos separated from the former Soviet Union and adopted a more market-oriented economy. English was seen as a necessary skill in order to have a more active involvement in international affairs. Son identified how EL is the dominant language of the communication activities within the government arena:

… since the opening of our country to the outside world … English is very important for every ministry. All the documents we receive right now are mostly in English … also in the government, also any position with companies or organizations they need people who can speak English.

It is intriguing that the interviewee constructed an equivalence between the experience of the individual and that of the nation state. Most of the population of Laos are amongst the poorest people in the world and the government’s gross domestic product was largely funded
(70 per cent) by aid monies. The hope that the development of EL skills would lead to accumulation of wealth (economic capital) clearly demonstrated how the discourses of EL study as ‘empowerment’ and ‘capacity building’ are internalized in the hearts and minds of the individuals and institutions as represented by the host-country interviewees above. Son continued to talk about the dominance of English and how her university department (English) had double the number of students of any other department in the university. She saw this as indicative of the importance of English in her country. She also mentioned that each ministry office had a special English course. She postulated the view of English as an escape route out of an ‘economically desperate’ situation, and while she differentiated between the different motivations and desires between the ‘ordinary person’ and that of the ‘national interest’ it was still with the sense that the country would be able to ‘better itself’. She saw English as the natural, neutral choice for Lao people, ‘English does not belong to one group of people’, and because Laos is a small country with no political or economic power then English is the right choice. Interestingly enough, the research participants in Spain perceived that increased proficiency in English would improve their students’ life chances, since in the current economic situation many people are unemployed, especially young adults. Both teachers and students saw EL skills as providing increased opportunities.

Whether English does bring this desired status or not is a future chapter in this story. The glorification of English, and the stigmatization of Lao, Japanese and Spanish, result in the rationalization of first, the project model, and secondly, the proliferation of EL education, and support the delineations within the EL education field. The participants seem to have internalized the discourses about the power of English and the linguistic capital EL holds is unquestioned.

The role of English as a ‘bridging’ language was glorified in all cases; as Sen, from Japan, explained, it would not be possible to choose one of the languages of the surrounding countries as this would place that particular country in a dominant position. Mak, also from Japan, raised the role of English as a ‘lingua franca’:

... it’s hard for us people here to learn other Asian languages ... when we want to communicate English is already the international language or tool to communicate.

The overall goal as expressed in the aid-based Lao proposal is an excellent example of how successfully the notion of English was glorified; it
was a key to economic success and has embedded itself in the minds of those concerned with winning bids for aid projects. The project proposal confidently outlines how the programmes it proposes to implement will benefit the country by building a ‘critical mass of EL capabilities’, and linking this so-called development to much enhanced economic opportunities and supposed social improvement. One wonders how in a very poor country where access to basic L1 education is severely limited, a project constrained by its own internal mechanisms will impact on the economic and social development of the country.

In Spain, Laos and Japan English was portrayed as the means by which the professional sector of the country could participate in international affairs; for example, a teacher (Lan) from Japan: ‘... for businessmen [sic], for engineers and for researchers to give lectures at conventions. They have to write in English for publication in major journals. So especially in business and science they need English ...’.

Vong, from Laos, concurred with this view. He talked about this particular aspect of English as an international tool in the light of the national government’s change in economic policy, and he emphasized how a good knowledge of English would allow Lao specialists to participate in international conferences and negotiate economic deals with foreign investors. He was also concerned that Lao people would not ‘catch up with new technological developments’ if EL skills were not developed.

In Japan it was also seen as the tool for communication in a ‘worldly’ sense: ‘... and these days in Japan the board of education says that students must communicate with others internationally in English ...’ (Lin). The view of English as a benign lingua franca is also reflected in other interviews with Spanish, Lao and Japanese participants. In these interviews English was also seen as providing access to areas of work that were previously barred.

A conundrum for the ELT industry is the perception, and at times matching reality, of the entrenchment of English as the dominant language in the science, technology and general academic fields (Phillipson, 2009, 2012). This domination is often represented as a largely natural phenomenon (Crystal, 2012), or as Graddol (2006, 2010) depicts, an opportunity for the proliferation of varieties of English. However, as critics such as Phillipson (2009) and Lin (2005) point out, this spread of English further deepens global inequalities as it dominates and offers more opportunities to the English-speaking elite, decreases opportunities for L1 uses and sanitizes education. Phillipson (2009) does, though, offer hope that this blanket domination is really is only a perception and that many languages are used in business and education.
Who is the legitimate teacher?

Symbolic violence runs through this whole discussion of the FLE field. The foundation of both ELT projects delegitimizes (or invalidates) the teaching practices in Laos and Japan. It is here that one is able to see clearly the relations in the field as they pertain to ELT, in particular how one of the main goals of the projects, to replace existing behaviour in the field, is realized. The so-called native English speaker teachers and teacher educators are shown to be superior mainly through their proficiency and familiarity with the approaches to teaching of English.

A highly contested area of the ELT project field is where project participants are engaged in struggle over the scarce intellectual resources in the field, that is, legitimacy in terms of voice and participation, intellectual and academic credibility, economic stakes and educational resources. A key issue is that of the ways in which intellectual or knowledge capital (or in Bourdieu’s 1992 terms, symbolic capital) is accumulated. Bourdieu argued that because legitimate knowledge in the different fields is determined in relation to the dominant conception or ruling ideas/theories at any moment in a field (which is dominated by symbolic capital) on average it is unlikely that host country (localized) knowledge or practices can change the structure of those dominant practices and legitimate knowledge (Bourdieu and Eagleton, 1992: 119). If we think about the nature of the symbolic capital in the fields, is it possible for a range of ‘knowledges’ to equally accumulate the relevant capital needed to create change or give recognition to indigenous practices? Relating this dilemma to English language teachers, the question is then how can ‘so-called’ non-native-speaking English teachers (NNETs) claim their legitimacy? Pederson’s (2012) study of ELT in a Korean university reports that many ‘so-called’ NNETs find their so-called native English speaker colleagues underqualified, and he draws attention to the many contradictory definitions of a native English speaker and yet this fluid discursive construction wields both symbolic power and violence. The resultant native English speaker–non-native English speaker dichotomy is further contested in Houghton and Rivers’s (2013) collection which explores the power dynamics in the ELT industry, where ‘native-speakerism’ (Holliday, 2006) determines status and legitimacy but also brings with it blurred boundaries around complex sociocultural/linguistic relations. Given this complexity and possible resistances, the so-called native English speakers’ accumulated symbolic capital still comprises what is deemed legitimated knowledge.

Australian universities’ quest for economic capital coupled with the increasing demand for EL on an international scale provided fertile
conditions for the conception of both ELT projects. The project implementers embody the dominant ideas and theories of the time, these theories most often conserving, not challenging, the current practices in the field. In both projects the design of teacher education programmes and courses emanated from the types of courses that were delivered by the Australian university. The projects were won because of the university’s reputation in the field of TESOL and Australia’s perceived national successful experience of teaching in linguistically and culturally diverse settings. This brings us to look at a time-honoured ‘known’: the native English speaker is the best teacher of English (Phillipson, 1992).

Bilingual (or multilingual) language teachers are the norm in most countries in the world (Forman, 2012). What comes to mind when, in the ELT industry, we hear the term bilingual teacher or speaker? The most common reaction is that there is usually one legitimated type of bilingualism ‘English and the speaker/teacher’s L1’ (de Mejia, 2012: 248), for example, in Laos many of the EL teachers were fluent in a number of languages: Lao languages such as Hmong or European languages such as Russian or Czech, however this linguistic capital was not legitimated in the ELT field. The rights of bilingual teachers are invalidated by the ELT projects even though the right to a bilingual education is enshrined in the Hague Convention (1996) and strongly advocated by FLE researchers such as Skutnabb-Kangas (2008); she has committed decades of work to demonstrating how bilingual education improves broader educational outcomes for linguistic minority communities (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2008). English can be taught additively, to supplement the learner’s mother tongue, and in this respect the outcome is successful. Skutnabb-Kangas (2000, 2008) cites successful bilingual education in countries such the Netherlands, Norway and Denmark as examples of how the mother tongue is validated during the process of bilingually learning English.

The bilingual teacher brings more skills and knowledge to the project and the classroom than the monolingual English teacher (Forman, 2012). It is goes without saying that a monolingual teacher is a bad role model for bilingual-to-be learners, it is also the case that a monolingual teacher educator is a bad role model for bilingual EL teachers. Students must have a language right to bilingual teaching, teacher training and material writers who know the target languages and the students’ mother tongue. In many people’s views (e.g. Skutnabb-Kangas, 2008), you cannot write effective EFL materials for a specific group unless you know their mother tongue.

However, even though work in the ELT projects was described as being based in the current body of (Australian) language education theory and
Resistance to the Known

practice where literature (e.g. Forman, 2007, 2012; Kumaravadivelu, 2008; Pennycook, 1999, 2000; Phillipson 2009) espouses the critical questions of the relationship of identity and language and is mindful of ways in which the home or mother tongue must be given its rightful place, additive foreign language teaching practices were ignored. Here, the first language of the host country is rarely mentioned, project proposal documents carefully step around the issue and certainly in the language teaching approaches most common in EL projects, the first language is viewed (for example by the majority of Australian project staff and officials) as a barrier to EL development. Carla, an expatriate teacher in Laos, recounts how the team leader did not want to allow any of the Lao English teachers to use their first language in the courses run by the project. She recalled him as saying: ‘... they (the students) will not learn anything if the teachers use their own language. They must only use English.’

In the Spanish English classes the ‘English only’ approach was reinforced through the use of the textbook. The UK-based book, the medium through which the particular type of pedagogical work was carried out, also carried economic capital in that the language centre had a relationship with the publishers, as often happens in this field, and enforced use of this particular book. In carrying out the pedagogical work the medium also became the means through which to exert symbolic violence. This manifestation of the textbook was best illustrated by teachers’ comments about how they did not need to prepare for the classes, they had taught the same units a number of times in a sense, they knew it off by heart. The coordinator, Kevin, explained to me how the textbook was their syllabus, the teachers were not able to deviate from the book and they had to cover all the units. The teachers were captive to the book but at the same time comforted by its role as the mediator of the content and process of their teaching. Its role was contested by a minority; teachers like Janette found the book constraining and echoed critiques (Forman, 2014; Ha, 2008; Holliday, 2005; Kubota, 1998; Phillipson and Karmani, 2005) of published ELT textbooks and resources for their strong British or American flavour. In the materials English is not presented as an international language but rather glorified as belonging to so-called English-speaking countries. But Janette felt she could not spend much time on material outside the textbook as she would be held accountable for not completing the units. This approach precludes taking into account the students’ particular needs, for example social, cultural or linguistic, or the capacity of the teacher to theorize or make sense of the teaching and learning context. Both the learner and
teacher are marginalized through this approach (Kumaravadivelu, 2003) and as Bourdieu would say, suffer the imposition of ‘culturally arbitrary’ conditions (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990: 18).

In the SULC Pablo experienced a subordinate position amongst the English language teachers. He was the only mother-tongue speaker of Spanish on the staff, he described himself as proficiently bilingual, he was well qualified and experienced, yet he felt that his linguistic capital was constantly brought into question by both the expatriate English teachers and the students. He was given only lower-level classes of English and he was aware that the students felt somewhat cheated by not having a ‘native speaker’. He believed that he needed to ‘constantly perform English ability’ to the students to demonstrate his English expertise. He felt that he needed to do a lot of speaking to win them over. In a class that I observed, a speaking lesson, the topic was an aspect of English culture – eating out – and in a later discussion, he talked about how, as well as demonstrating his proficiency, he needed to show his familiarity with British culture. Although he felt constantly under trial about his English he described what he saw as the skills that he brings to the class: knowledge about the students’ social and educational background; how they like to learn and what the learning and language challenges the students face at this and other levels. He also talked about how he would use Spanish in class but only after the students had become comfortable with him.

The ‘English only’ approach was challenged by a number of the research participants in Laos and Japan: Song (a Lao lecturer) expressed the thoughts of many bi- or multilingual English language teachers, that although they should use as much L2 (English) as possible there is an important role for Lao in explanation. He also thinks that the Australian teachers should learn the Lao language and something of Lao culture:

... if Australian teachers can speak our language, understand our language I think this would be easier to present lessons. More or less this can save the time and is also fun when foreigners speak Lao – they understand now.

An Australian government official in Japan, Murray, raised the issue of bilingual skills. He believed that it was highly desirable that Australian ELT project team members were bilingual; along with all of the Lao and Japanese participants, he expressed the view that bilingual skills were integral to the ‘success’ or not of the project. The Japanese interviewees gave examples of a number of successful foreign university programmes
delivering courses to Japanese teachers and thought that foreign educators’ skill in Japanese and knowledge of the context contributed greatly to the number of project participants they attracted. On the other hand, when this issue was raised with the Australian stakeholders, most expressed the view that generic experience of work in offshore projects (and perhaps another language skill) was adequate.

In Bourdieu’s terms the dominant players’ lack of skill in, and acknowledgement of, the role of the host country language is a way of conserving the dominant position in the ELT projects. This same dynamic occurs in the Spanish EL classroom where Spanish was viewed as an impediment to effective learning of English. This lack of recognition is characteristic of the teaching and academic world; it is a way of stigmatizing, of placing particular players in a subordinate position. Another characteristic of the field is that the boundaries are constantly shifting and the dominant players are challenged by potential successors who may possess more valuable forms of capital. The players engage in struggles around the legitimation of ideas and academic credibility. However, the successful contender will most likely conserve the values and behaviour of the previous dominant player. In the ELT fields the so-called native speaker of English teacher maintains their ascendancy at a great cost. Pederson (2012) calls this process of domination a ‘regime of truth’; in his analysis based on ELT work in Korea – the dominant presence of the native English speaker is becoming more entrenched, he describes it as a discursive construction – it is a powerful one, stigmatizing and brutalizing those teachers and speakers designated as non-native English speakers. A practical application of the glorification of the native English speaker teacher is where many advertisements for English language teachers require an applicant to be a (so-called) native English speaker.

Which language? When?

One of the critical themes of work in ELT projects is the respective roles of English and the host country national language(s). In 1992 Robert Phillipson set out five tenets that influenced postcolonial education, one of which is highly relevant to this chapter: that English is best taught monolingually and as an extension, in the case of ELT projects that English be used as the dominant language of project work (in all international contexts). This was the case in Laos and Japan; all project documentation was in English and English was the language of meetings, appraisal work and teacher training. While some project team members saw the dominance of English as its natural position, ‘the
known’ of ELT project work, others contested this continuing dominance. The language(s) of the host countries was not mentioned in the documentation except as an aid in teaching low-level English language learners. To give further detail on this, in the Lao project documents, the host country national language(s) was only mentioned once: a bililingual in-service. This is in a country where English was a recently introduced foreign language and where the Lao project stakeholders worked overtime to become adequately proficient in English so as to be able to participate in the project processes.

The issue of which language was used in project work was a particular point of tension, a struggle for a number of the expatriate staff in Laos. Lee, an Australian project adviser, suggested to the Australian team that every second project committee meeting be run in Lao. As English was a relatively new foreign language in this particular context, Lee recognized difficulties in carrying out any truly collaborative work when English was used as the sole language of communication and negotiation in project management. However, other members of the Australian team thought that this was an absurd idea and Lee described how the Australian project director laughed out loud when this was raised at a project coordinating committee meeting. Lee described how members of the host country’s team were obviously struggling with English and how their roles as project coordinating committee members and project collaborators were constrained by having to communicate in a new language. The reaction to a possible rearranging of the subordinate and dominant positions by simply allocating space for the meetings to be run in Lao explicated the power relations in the field. The expatriate advisers would be in the position of having to have the meetings interpreted and would lose the ability to control the process as well as the content. In naming EL a ‘bully’ Barker (2012) calls up similar dynamics in the language field in Nauru, a western Pacific Ocean nation. Through positioning English as the language of administration of its aid programme, the Australian government undermines the status of Nauran and promotes a language policy built on a subtractive form of bilingualism.

Con, an Australian official who worked with the Australian aid office in Laos, endorsed the view that English is the ‘natural’ project language. He dismissed the need for expatriate staff to develop local language skills. He extended the role of English; he believed that it was not ‘functional’ to learn Lao, it did not help the intended practices of the project because ‘We’re headed for English’. He stigmatized Lao and relegated it to a subordinate position in the field and advised expatriate staff to get
assistance from one of the host country staff if they needed to use the ‘local language’. He had a particularly interesting attitude to the affective factors embedded in the language learning: ‘Some of the Australian teachers have learnt a bit of the local language. I’ve heard a few words dropped around the place and that keeps everybody happy …’.

Con expressed perhaps, from one point of view, what was realistic in terms of language learning. However, the point about ‘which language?’ in an international ELT project is not a neutral question. A number of issues emerge about the respective roles of the host country language and English in a project. Lee, in this extract below, encapsulated what I believe is a central dynamic of the field of aid projects:

I mean, when people from a rich country like the one we live in are working with people from a very poor country, and we’re communicating almost only in the language of the rich country, never in the language of the poor country, we have so much power. There’s a power imbalance that’s so enormous there, we can hardly conceive of it, and that power gives us certain strengths and also certain limitations.

Con might be seen as representing the practicalities of the situation but in doing so he ignored the particular dynamics and relations in the field as identified by Lee. The initial project proposals were responsible for the way the Lao language was positioned but Con was one of the aid agency project implementers and hence connected with the ongoing development of the project, as was Lee. My analysis of these different views of the power of ‘which language?’ is not simply a matter of practicalities. Certainly the Japanese teachers and similarly the Lao participants and other host country participants in both projects think that Australian project team members should develop at least an elementary proficiency in the local language.

While Con’s belief that there was little need for learning the national language of the country where one works is prevalent within the expatriate communities, the host country teachers, teacher trainers and ministry officials did not concur with the ‘English only’ view. In terms of the process of ‘internationalization’ as represented by the learning of English, the above examples, firstly of the role of English in the Lao ELT project committee meetings and secondly the view of the Australian aid official, explicitly support what has been argued critically elsewhere, that this process is one-way. The host country ministry officials, teachers, teacher trainers and students are engaged in the process of learning
English, and working in English, but there was very little engagement in the learning or use of the host country national language(s). The majority of project participants were native speakers of the host country languages. The positions of the local languages and native speakers of these languages were revealing and a telling feature of the project field. Masaki Oda (1999: 106–7) in his article about how the use of English can disenfranchise some parties in EFL organizations identifies a number of ways that native speakers of English marginalize the bilingual host country teachers. He draws on his and other bilingual teachers’ experience in JALT, an organization for language teachers in Japan (see Pigott, this volume). This organization was originally formed by EL teachers but is now no longer exclusively for ELT. Oda points out that although there may be teachers of French, Thai and so on,

[but] non-native speakers of English members, most of who are native speakers of Japanese, have had to be competent in English to fully participate in the organization’s activities.

He also describes the power plays of English native-speaking officers as against non-native speaking ones:

English native speaking teachers, including those who are monolinguals, appear to be given a privileged status in the profession. Many TESOL affiliates are controlled by English native speaking professionals who are not necessarily more qualified as language teaching professionals than their non-native speaking counterparts. (Oda, 1999: 119)

The above brief descriptions of the relations in the field of an EFL organization explicate the ways that (I contend) the general field of EL education plays itself out. The linguistic relations of power as previously stated by Lee dominated in both the Lao and Japanese ELT projects, while in a completely different context, the host country languages are relegated to the margins. The matter of learning the host country language(s) was not to necessarily expect that the expatriate staff will become proficient enough to engage in high-level discussions, though this was expected of the host country staff. The learning of the host country language(s) would simply place that language in a different position from that where it currently was, invisible. There are many examples of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who give priority to the learning of host country languages, for example volunteer community workers,
educators and other smaller project-type ventures. These organizations arrange for staff to undertake language study as part of their induction to work in the new context and clearly see the learning of the host country language as a significant attribute of project work.

Conclusion

In the exploration of the three quite distinct English language teaching sites it is evident that particular ‘knowns’, such as the benefit of English, its neutrality, and the problem-free teaching and learning settings belie the way English shapes and is shaped in the FLE field. The critical element of this exploration is to identify how ‘the knowns’ are realized and sustained as ‘regimes of truth’ in the field. The snapshots of how pedagogical work is carried out and the accompanying acts of symbolic violence demonstrate how certain knowledge, capital and dispositions are afforded dominant or subordinate positions.

Enacting pedagogical authority by marking assessments in front of students to diminish their performance, being the only Spanish native speaker on the staff in a Spanish ELT centre and insisting on ‘English only’ workplaces in aid-funded international language education projects are prime examples of the symbolic violence evidenced in the FLE field. Another glaring disparity is the delegitimation of teachers who have English as an additional language. The force of these brutal acts is glorified and rationalized by the ELT industry as it struggles to maintain its base in the ‘so-called’ EL speaking countries. Resistance to symbolic violence happens, teachers challenge ‘English only’ rules in both classes and project work but it is risky, as Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990) reminds us: the ELT field happens because we all have an interest in the field.

Points to ponder

1. The chapter begins by identifying ‘knowns’ in the ELT field, for example the ELT classroom is a problem-free space where the walls are impermeable to the outside world. Do you agree with this and the other ‘knowns’ in the introduction of this chapter? Why or why not? What other ‘knowns’ would you include?
2. The author states that symbolic violence is inherent in any teaching situation. What do you understand by the term ‘symbolic violence’ and do you agree?
3. What do you see as the benefits of learning English as an additional language?
4. What is the impact of English as a dominant language in the fields of science, technology and business (and any other)?
5. Define the categories: native speaker of English and non-native speaker of English? Who is a legitimate teacher of English?

References


4
The Authorities of Autonomy and English Only: Serving Whose Interests?

Damian J. Rivers

Introduction

One could make the argument that many modern-day democracies, despite appearing to promote the expansion of individual freedoms and liberties, demonstrate a more substantive interest in maintaining a status quo in which authorities are able to reduce individual freedoms and liberties unopposed under the rhetorical guise of the powerful acting in the best interests of the powerless. While this claim may seem quite fanciful to some readers, the observation that the dynamics of many modern-day democracies reflect a push-and-pull relationship between facets of democracy and facets of dictatorship (see McLaren, 2008; McCormick, 2011; Sharp, 2002) cannot be so easily contested. Indeed, the term ‘democracy’, as one associated with struggle and hope, is ‘the word that resonates in people’s minds and springs from their lips as they struggle for freedom and a better way of life’ (Schmitter and Karl, 1991: 114).

This position serves as point of departure for a discussion which focuses on a multifaceted ‘known’ found within various higher education institutions across the globe: the promotion of language-learner autonomy (i.e. the promotion of individual freedom of choice, self-determination and democracy in education) under the non-negotiable authority of an English-only language policy (i.e. the prohibition of individual freedom of choice, self-determination and democracy in education). The ideological foundations of the concept of learner autonomy create various interwoven relationships between sociopolitical conceptualizations of governance, freedom, democracy, dictatorship, context and the individual. For instance, one of the most well-known advocates of autonomy in language education suggests that the ‘pursuit of learner
autonomy and the pursuit of democracy in education are one and the same’ (Little, 2004: 124). However, this claim only attains significance when one defines the parameters that ‘the pursuit of democracy in education’ should assume. If one accepts the definition of democracy in education proposed by Shor (1992: 133) who asserts that ‘democracy should offer teachers and students freedom to question their socialization, to rethink the status quo, and to act effectively on their critical knowledge’, then this chapter draws attention to the manner in which certain language-learner autonomy initiatives can be characterized by their anti-democratic forms of power and impositions which prohibit students from questioning their socialization.

As an open call for professional reflection, the resistance to the supposed ideological innocence of ‘the known’ exercised within this chapter – as a demonstration of individual teacher-researcher autonomy – encourages ‘all intellectuals, or at least those who express a commitment to democracy, to take a long, hard look in the mirror and to ask themselves in whose interests, and for what values, do they do their work’ (McChesney, 1999: 14).

The boundaries of the academic critique

Before entering into the more substantive elements of this chapter, it seems important for the readership to be given some background information concerning the path which this work has taken as it directly relates to autonomy, freedom, democracy and dictatorship. The original version of this chapter, as the product of 18 months’ investment, deconstructed the aforementioned ‘known’ as operationalized within the discursive practices of a single institutional context in Japan. This detailed case-study approach was conceptually and theoretically underpinned by the following positions:

- Foucault (cited in Rabinow, 1984: 6) asserts how a primary task within modern-day society ‘is to criticize the working of institutions which appear to be both neutral and independent’. The original version of this chapter therefore sought to reflect professional responsibility as a teacher-researcher in challenging institutional dictate that, in many instances, was contrary to the research literature and/or professional beliefs and training.
- It has been documented that inside institutional cultures that are ‘opposed to the practice of conscience (to introspection and self-examination)’ individuals are often pressured into a process of faking
whereby ‘members are rewarded for going along with the organizational culture and punished for being dissenters’ (Shahinpoor and Matt, 2006: 43). The original version of this chapter therefore sought to ascertain to what extent language-learner autonomy advocates employed within the institution were participating in the process of faking as a means of obtaining professional reward and elevated institutional status.

- In examining the pedagogies and practices of a single institutional context, Ball’s (2003: 224–6) notion of fabrication was seen as an appropriate conceptual framework for understanding the intricacies of discourse performance and discourse representation in documentation published by institutional stakeholders:

  Fabrications are versions of an organization (or person) which does not exist – they are not ‘outside the truth’ but neither do they render simply true or direct accounts – they are produced purposefully in order ‘to be accountable’ [...] acts of fabrication and the fabrications themselves become embedded in and are reproduced by systems of recording and reporting on practice. They also work to exclude other things which do not ‘fit’ into what is intended to be represented or conveyed [...] while fabrications are at their most obvious in the form of major events, glossy publications and formal plans, they are also part of day-to-day social relations and practices and the routine selection and manipulation of data.

The original version of this chapter therefore sought to utilize three specific channels of discourse performance and discourse representation. These channels were inclusive of institutional discourse intended primarily for consumption by the general public (e.g. information presented on institutional websites, information within promotional brochures and other such store-front materials), and discourse intended to be consumed by the academic community beyond the institution (e.g. information presented within academic publications authored by employees of the institution that addressed language-learner autonomy and/or language policy issues). It was believed that complex channels of discourse such as these would provide a multi-dimensional perspective on language-learner autonomy and language policy constructions within the specific context of the institution. This approach was also an intentional effort to bring greater recognition to a professional belief ‘that a plurality of voices in a text
can bring us closer to some sort of truth regarding lived experience’ (Foster, 2007: 366).

- Manipulating the common demand to ‘associate professionalism with setting aside personal values in order to be objective and to meet shared standards of the profession’ (Martin, 2002: 548), the original version of this chapter sought to engage in the ‘parrhesiastic game’ (Foucault, 1983/1999: 3):

Parrhesia is a kind of verbal activity where the speaker has a specific relation to truth through frankness, a certain relationship to his own life through danger, a certain relation to himself or other people through criticism (self-criticism or criticism of other people), and a specific relation to moral law through freedom and duty. More precisely, parrhesia is a verbal activity in which a speaker expresses his personal relationship to truth, and risks his life because he recognizes truth-telling as a duty to improve or help other people (as well as himself). In parrhesia, the speaker uses his freedom and chooses frankness instead of persuasion, truth instead of falsehood or silence, the risk of death instead of life and security, criticism instead of flattery, and moral duty instead of self-interest and moral apathy. (Foucault, 1983/1999: 5)

Testament to the ‘struggle to become the author of one’s own world, to be able to create one’s own meaning, to pursue cultural alternatives amid the cultural politics of everyday life’ (Pennycook, 1997: 39), the authorities of contemporary academic publishing dictated that such a micro-contextual approach, which drew upon a substantial volume of discursive evidence, could not be published for legal reasons. This decision was made despite the recently updated UK Defamation Act 2013 (enacted on 1 January 2014), aimed at reversing ‘the chilling effect on freedom of expression current libel law has allowed’ (Ministry of Justice, 2013: 1).

As the actual identity of the institution was never directly revealed within the original version of this chapter, one must wonder why it is only acceptable for those who seek personal and professional gain from the academic promotion of a particular institution and its official version of best practice (i.e. ‘the-great-things-that-we-have-done-here’) to reveal the actual identity of an institution within the contents of an academic publication or presentation. Does this situation not point toward the aforementioned process of faking
or at the very least a pandering more toward neo-liberal principles (see Martinez and Garcia, 2000) of democratic consumer capitalism (see Novak, 1982) than to unconstrained academic exploration as a teacher-researcher?

Critical analyses of discourses in education are fundamentally affected by the fact that much of education, whether as an academic field or enterprise, is borne of ideologies that result in inequitable practices, power differentials among people of different race, culture, gender, class, and socioeconomic differentiation. The need for discourse and discursive practices to be critically analysed in education settings stems, moreover, from the understanding that education can never be free of values and ideology ... that mask social injustice while manufacturing compliance. (Toh, 2012: 1)

Perhaps of greater concern is the fact that the current version of this chapter is also unable, under advice from the publisher, to cite the numerous academic publications (channels of discourse performance and representation) authored by current or former employees of the institution in question, thus starving the chapter of the majority of sources cited as evidence for the position of resistance assumed. This chapter is therefore constrained by the direct actions of others who, in direct service of their paymaster, have made the professional decision to directly reveal the actual identity of an institution within their work beyond the affiliation tag line.

... we can never prove that our ideas and solutions are right or correct; we can only discover what is wrong with them through criticism. It is through criticism that we can revise or replace our ideas so as to improve them ... there must be an acceptance of the criticism of what exists, a recognition of some error or inadequacy. (Chitpin, 2013: 834 discussing Karl Popper)

The most worrying result of this stifling of criticism is that the professional opinions and published efforts of these individuals – so utterly compliant with institutional dictate – are now exempt from being critically held to account in print. As a demonstration of resistance-in-action, all instances in which the original source evidence has been removed are now marked with the ‘source withheld’ notation.
Individualistic (to reward the self) or individualized (to reward others)

Despite lingering ‘terminological and conceptual confusion within the field itself’ (Benson, 2011: 1), many first-wave definitions of autonomy in language learning spawned from a humanistic trend positioning individuals as having ‘the ability to take charge’ (Holec, 1981: 3) of their own educational experience. Many language-learner autonomy initiatives have since tended to evaluate achievement outcomes, rationalize investment–reward dynamics and attach quality-of-life value on a distinctly individual level (source withheld). While these principles are conducive to societies that value individualism and the attainment of individual capital, they are less conducive to societies where community cohesion and collective responsibility are more highly valued. Rather than channelling the principles of autonomy to equip language learners to better negotiate real-world social problems and global inequalities, individual learners are often taught to assess educational value on the basis of how much their personal needs are being talked up (source withheld). Consequently, students are guided toward viewing classmates not as equal-status peers, but rather as competitors within an organized scramble for the attainment of resources. Within many contexts one can easily observe how schools, teachers and students have been subverted into accepting the ‘prevalence of economic and utilitarian agendas (competitiveness and capacity building), over democratic (widening participation), in education policy and practice’ (Doyle, 2007: 194).

So prominent is the promotional material disseminated by language-learner autonomy advocates within contexts such as Japan, that a general search online is able to reveal various academic publications, presentations and sources of institutional literature that make reference to the promotion of language-learner autonomy under the non-negotiable authority of an English-only language policy (source withheld). Closer inspection of much of this discourse suggests that proclamations claiming to value ‘individual student choice’ and the provision of initiatives ‘tailored to individual learner needs’, reflect the aggressive commoditization of self-knowledge propelling many language-learner autonomy movements (source withheld). The general mechanics of such processes can usually be traced back to the ‘fallacy of personal validation’ where supposed personalized guidance and evaluation are ‘couch’d in such general terms that ... [it is] ... meaningless in terms of denotability in behaviour’ (Forer, 1949: 118) (see also Dickson and Kelly, 1985; Levy,
Resistance to the Known

1996). One example of this can often be seen in relation to the use of preferred learning styles where learners are told, on the basis of some kind of non-scientific quiz, that they are either kinaesthetic, visual or auditory learners (source withheld). In many cases, this information is then used as a foundation for instruction concerning how to become ‘a better language learner’ (source withheld). Generic simplification of this nature reduces, rather than expands, individual learning possibilities and awareness yet is often well concealed within pre-packaged products that are sold by the value-giving institution for consumption by the value-gaining student consumer (source withheld).

... illusions of autonomy are particularly widespread. Not only do learners have to accept a broad range of ‘imposed’ presuppositions, regardless of whether or not there is a teacher or an institution involved in their learning; they are also dependent on both the mediated materials they select in self-access centres as well as on the media themselves ... in most cases heteronomy rather than autonomy characterises such learning situations. (Schmenk, 2006: 82)

Gold and Feldman (2007: 68) demonstrate how commodities of this nature are engineered for maximum financial gain ‘for markets instead of need’ and thus ‘compel consumers to buy what they do not necessarily need or want, or cannot in reality afford’. These dynamics, however, point toward a common weakness (or strength) of democratic consumer capitalism, ‘the concentration of producer interests and the dispersion of consumer ones’ (Brittan, 2005: 23). Indeed, the self-interested capitalist searches ‘for all possible ways of stimulating [consumption], by making his commodities more attractive, by filling [consumer] ears with babble about new needs (neue Bedürfnisse ihnen anzuschwatzen)’ (Karl Marx cited in Nicolaus, 1968: 56). The rhetoric of the producer exploits persuasive ‘discourse types associated with commodity production’ (Fairclough, 1992: 207) and fails to display moral conscience in attempts to generate greater consumption. Questions should more frequently be raised concerning the capacity of certain stakeholder groups with the educational domain to assume the role of potential liberators from, rather than collaborators with, rampant capitalist dictate.

... Corporate values emphasise mass conformity, subordination to authority, obedience and loyalty. Ironically, these values, which undermine individuality and freedom of expression, have been encouraged in the name of individuality and freedom. The market values of competition,
salesmanship and deception have replaced the democratic ideals of truth and justice. (Beder, 2006: 229)

Dale and Hyslop-Margison (2012: 86) have drawn detailed attention to the nefarious ways in which teachers within higher education are often ‘dehumanized by dictates from the managerial and bureaucratic classes that control the university agenda to protect neoliberal interests’. Relevant to the educational practices espoused within various language-learner autonomy promoting environments (source withheld), the authors proceed to caution how ‘even at this level where some measure of critical leadership might be expected, self-preservation leads many teacher educators to oppress their students’. Such violence, as part of daily educational practice, soon hold among students who also ‘act as oppressors as well by treating teachers as retailers selling a product and seeing themselves as consumers, eventually judging their instructors on course evaluations by how well they respect this model’. The resultant situation is one in which ‘all potentially subversive groups to neoliberal authority monitor and report on each other in the interest of protecting hegemonic interests’ (Dale and Hyslop-Margison, 2012: 86).

**Manipulating demand and participation**

Where language-learner autonomy is concerned, one of the most common sales pitches made toward students, across various environments, comes in the form of pre-packaged educational products designed with ambiguous aims such as ‘making you a better learner’, ‘learning to learn’ or ‘becoming autonomous’ (source withheld). Often, and in stark contrast to the rhetoric accompanying such educational products, the individual language learner has very little, if any, input into the content of these products (i.e. the students are dependent on someone else deciding what they need and what is in their best interests) (source withheld). Not only does this undermine possible claims that individual learners are provided with opportunities to decide how and what to study, but freedom of choice is also impinged upon when noting that in many cases these educational products are delivered through, and demand participation in accordance with, the same non-negotiable English-only language policy as enforced within the regular classroom environment (source withheld). Is the maintenance of a consistent non-negotiable language policy, as opposed to addressing the complex needs and differences of individual students, consistent
with the individualization rhetoric of many language-learner autonomy advocates? How can reliance upon blanket language-use policies and pre-packaged educational products designed by course administrators be reported as autonomy promoting rather than autonomy prohibiting?

Reaffirming Brittan’s (2005) aforementioned description of democratic consumer capitalism and Karl Marx’s ‘babble about new needs’ is the fact that student demand for certain educational products connected to language-learner autonomy development cannot be sustained through their intrinsic appeal (i.e. many of these products can be described as unsuccessful). While one might expect that in response to this lack of consumer demand a more attractive product, designed to stimulate market interest and thus increase participation, would be created, this is often not the case. Instead, it is more commonplace to see increased demand and participation manipulated through the promise of extrinsic reward, usually in the form of credit to cash in on compulsory English-language courses (source withheld). As one example among many others within the Japanese context, Taylor et al. (2012) describe how due to low student participation in completing an optional self-study card as part of a language-learner autonomy initiative, the decision was made by the administrating teachers (i.e. the stakeholders with a vested professional interest in the success of the product) to make completion of the optional self-study card mandatory (i.e. the students were coerced into visiting certain areas and undertaking certain activities deemed appropriate by external authorities). This self-study card was then used as part of the final grade given within the students’ regular language classroom.

While the original inability of the educational product to stimulate consumer interest remains, the engineered solution or carrot-on-a-stick incentive is not problematized as it ‘satisfies the cognitive miser’s need for parsimony’ where ‘a particular truth [is given preference] over other, more accurate truths because, for example, it does not cause cognitive dissonance and inconsistency’ (Vertzberger, 1990: 113). The lack of interest in product accountability may also concern the fact that the engineered solutions reward the interests of all stakeholder groups, thus exerting a domesticating influence.

- **Student interests are satisfied** as they receive credit to cash in on their compulsory English-language courses often for doing significantly less than they would otherwise be required to in the regular language classroom.
Teacher interests are satisfied as student participation is significantly higher with the promise of credit to cash in on their compulsory English-language courses than it would otherwise be. This increased participation in the pre-packaged initiative can then be reported (within internal and external publications, etc.) as a demonstration of the appeal, and thus success, of the product being offered.

Institutional interests are satisfied through an observable return on its investment (the recruitment of certain teachers to promote certain initiatives). The increased student participation can be used to rationalize the continuation of certain activities as well as for the recruitment of other students.

Retreating for a moment to consider the question of professional integrity, one has to wonder how certain advocates of language-learner autonomy can be content with the inherent contradictions so obvious within the above situation. One can quite easily make a case that certain actions are undertaken to satisfy three fundamental needs: self-validation (as making a legitimate professional contribution to the institution), self-promotion (within the academic community) and self-protection (from negative institutional inspections, audits and appraisals). Various published materials available within the public domain demonstrate a quite distasteful interest in excessive self-validation, self-promotion and self-protection (source withheld). Certain self-published online books relating to language-learner autonomy and other lower-tier publications clearly show misleading proclamations in which no indication is given of: the normative practice of coerced participation used against the students, the extent to which the original educational product failed to stimulate market demand without offer of an extrinsic reward or the extent to which the original educational product could meet the individualized needs of the students (source withheld). In many instances of academic reporting, the success of an educational product is reduced exclusively to the act of consumption.

Another feature of the online academic material worthy of mention is the claim that coerced participation in the form of offering extrinsic rewards to students who demonstrate their autonomy through consumption serves only to reward motivated students, and does not disadvantage those students who choose not to participate in the act of consumption (source withheld). However, the non-consuming students are essentially denied the opportunity to receive credit – as the only available form of reward – to cash in on their compulsory
English-language courses. All students, regardless of their initial desire to consume or not, are therefore lured into participating in a manipulated two-tier grading system, a situation that might be more readily broken down as follows:

- Submit to and show motivation toward the authoritarian desires of the educational provider (which is deemed to be a sign of a good language learner) and participate in the initiatives that the educational provider advises are in your best interests and in exchange you will be rewarded with the opportunity to receive extra credit. This submission and participation will be described as a demonstration of your own autonomous action.
- Exercise your own individual autonomy (which is not considered to be motivated behaviour) and choose not to participate in the initiatives that the educational provider advises are in your best interests and you will have no such opportunity to receive extra credit. This non-submission and non-participation will not be described as a demonstration of your own autonomous action.

Those students who exercise their freedom of choice and opt not to participate would only be spared the two-tier grading system if made available to them were some other way of earning the same extra credit. However, as narrow assessments of best practice and good student behaviour are often based upon ‘producer interests and the dispersion of consumer ones’ (Brittan, 2005: 23), the autonomy-or-nothing proposition rather ironically comes to define a successful language learner as one who submits to the demands of authority for the purpose of extrinsic reward. Learning environments operating upon such principles therefore function by pressuring the student collective into functioning as ‘a single cog in an ever-moving mechanism which prescribes ... an essentially fixed route of march’ (Weber, cited in Gerth and Mills, 1946: 228).

As the title of this chapter posits, one is compelled to ask whose interests are best served by recycled promotions and impositions of this kind? As Foucault (1984/1997: 31) contends, the ‘risk of dominating others and exercising a tyrannical power over them arises precisely only when one has not taken care of the self and has become the slave of one’s desires’. The promotion of certain pre-packaged educational products (e.g. language-learner autonomy modules) (source withheld) aligns with Ball’s (2003: 224–5) notion of fabrication in that ‘truthfulness is not the point – the point is their effectiveness, both in the market or
for inspection or appraisal, and in the “work” they do “on” and “in” the organization’. Could one not also make the case that such promotional efforts reflect the professional insecurities of the proclaimants? As moral and social philosopher Eric Hoffer (1955: 61) notes, ‘our impulse to persuade others is strongest when we have to persuade ourselves. The never wholly successful task of persuading ourselves of our worth manifests itself in a ceaseless effort to persuade others of it.’ These are issues that should demand more open discussion.

**Manufactured deficiency as imperative for autonomy**

Negative political campaigning describes a situation whereby candidates in competition with each other encourage voters to support them not primarily on the basis of what they can actually offer as an improvement to the status quo, but instead on the basis of the unscrupulous activities and ways of living attributed to their opponents. Lau et al. (2007: 1776) note that ‘conventional wisdom about negative political campaigning holds that it works’. Likewise, the activities of classroom teachers, or more accurately non-Anglophone teachers in non-Anglophone contexts and their supposed traditional teaching methods, are often ridiculed as having an oppressive influence upon the ability of their students to become more autonomous as language learners (and human beings in general). In contexts such as Japan, language-learner autonomy advocates, through their academic output and daily pedagogical practice, demonstrate this reductive interest in mapping the desired normative features of what they believe to be a ‘good language learner’ (source withheld). This process often concerns ‘... the desired sense of identity, values, and sensibility – that students must “develop” to solve the school achievement problem’. The dynamics of this process also isolate ‘those who fail to exhibit or “develop” such capacities’, with such students being ‘seen as deficient, lacking in appropriate character, simply of lesser worth’ (Simon, 1987: 373).

While the establishment of distinctions between ‘us and them’, ‘the progressive and the traditional’, ‘the autonomous and the dependent’, ‘the communicative and the non-communicative’, often serve the immediate interests of those with the power to disseminate such claims, one wonders how the authority and control exercised by language-learner autonomy advocates can be distinguished from the authority and control exercised by other teachers? Should more attention not be given to the semantic gamesmanship (i.e. *we advise you* to speak...
this language only in order to conform and participate, *you might want to* do this work by this date in order to achieve this reward, *you could choose to* see this person in order to know more about yourself) which language-learner autonomy advocates often utilize to mask the sectarian nature of their authority? (source withheld) (see Pigott, this volume, concerning the unfashionable nature of authoritarianism which must ‘be dressed in liberal attire’).

In framing non-Anglophone teachers in non-Anglophone contexts as enforcers of a traditional classroom environment, one which limits the scope of autonomous development, those who assume more inventive role titles such as ‘language-learner autonomy specialist’ or ‘learning adviser’ are afforded opportunity through suspect ‘deployments of reasoning’ (Popkewitz, 1998: 24) to diagnose supposed teacher/student/context deficiencies and dictate their cure-all autonomy interventions (source withheld). Manufactured deficiency of this nature can be discussed within the parameters of a more general trend within the language-learner autonomy literature where deficiency is highlighted and measured through the degree to which local non-Anglophone populations (teacher–teaching methods/students–study methods) are seen to diverge from the best practice norms espoused by a Eurocentric elite (source withheld).

The authoritarians’ stance ... is the only truth, and it must be imposed on others. It is in their truth that others’ salvation resides. Their knowledge ‘illuminates’ the obscurity of the ignorance of others, who then must be subjected to the knowledge and arrogance of the authoritarian. (Freire, 2005: 73)

Casting ‘the Other’ as deficient clears the way for modern-day crusaders, armed with their autonomy-promoting agenda, to impose solutions and sanctions upon local non-Anglophone students as a means of eradicating an entirely manufactured problem: a problem with foundations in the negative emotional reactions and situational misunderstandings of the language-learner autonomy advocate (source withheld). Should it be considered odd to perpetually cast local non-Anglophone students in their home environment as being in need of corrective intervention? Do such assessments of deficiency not demonstrate a lack of sensitivity toward the quite obvious fact that it is the language-learner autonomy advocate who is often the non-conformist outsider? The incongruence between the ‘letter-home-from-the-orient’ discourse from many language-learner autonomy advocates (source withheld), and the violence (see Widin, this
volume) directed toward the local non-Anglophone population should not pass unnoticed no matter how respectable it first appears to be.

... learner autonomy can become an important notion in many cultural contexts only if its cultural backdrop in Western traditions is not neglected but given more serious consideration. At the same time, accepting the cultural embeddedness of autonomy may facilitate negotiating its potential meanings and importance with respect to diverse local environments, instead of simply promoting it in non-Western contexts. (Schmenk, 2005: 107–8)

Concerning questions of individualization and context-specific needs, online materials also reveal how some of the most respected academics in the field of language-learner autonomy depend upon the replication of template techniques transferred across sociocultural and national boundaries (source withheld). Hoffmann (1997: 5) warns that educators ‘should not jump to conclusions about innate characteristics of learners but rather examine the educational environment’, yet extracts can be found that perpetuate collective-level stereotypes concerning the classroom behaviour and the capabilities that the native population are believed to possess (source withheld). When stereotypical assumptions (e.g. ‘Japanese students do not contribute very much to communication activities’) intersect with blatant situational falsehoods (e.g. ‘Japanese students silently accept their grade and never question or refer to it’) the powerful discourse produced persuades many that such a reality, not too far removed from the realm of utter fantasy, actually exists (source withheld).

... our dissatisfaction at having actions imposed upon us by others is so great that it ... outweigh[s] any pleasure we might take even in the satisfaction of our own inclinations if that satisfaction is forced upon us by others. To avoid the frustration of being dominated by others and to experience, instead, the pleasure of making their own choices, human beings who live in circumstances in which they cannot avoid contact with others, or in which they even depend upon interaction with others ... must figure out how to act in accordance with a principle of cooperation but nondomination, which is at least part of a principle of autonomy. (Guyer, 2003: 82)

Failure to realize that the introduction of autonomous-learning behaviours in localized non-Anglophone contexts such as Japan does not require, and is not dependent upon, the importation of outsiders and
their fixed-template solutions stands as a failure to ‘undermine the stereotypical image of Japanese education that includes only mechanical learning and lack of individualism, creativity, and problem-solving skills’ (McKay, 2003: 106). Taking the Japanese educational context as an example, if it is acknowledged as promoting ‘creativity, original thinking and self-expression’ (Kubota, 1999: 23) combined with a dominant ‘philosophy of child development that stresses minimal use of direct control and strict discipline … [whereby teachers] … do not presume that children will understand but rather seek to create such understanding’ (Kelly, 2000: 198), then many language-learner autonomy advocates would be required to more thoroughly demonstrate the intrinsic value and need for their product. As this would require a significant commitment to the local environment and its people, rather than a temporal teaching experience, many language-learner autonomy advocates have no option but to reduce the scope of language-learner autonomy to the template promotion of learning styles, time management and strategy use (i.e. those corporate world aspects that can be pre-packaged and efficiently sold to the masses in all contexts) (source withheld).

The currency of individual value: just tell them to speak English!

What an extraordinary fact: In a multilinguocultural world we live but, sad to see and say: How much relevance to that do educational systems give?
As language educators, we say we should help students nurture their language-learning autonomy but, if we look at their Right to choose the language(s) used, what is its physiognomy?
We may say that globally there is a multilingual–multicultural reality but, do we treat each language and varieties thereof with dignity?
Why is the key concept of Language-Learner Autonomy often narrowly conceived?
Because Learners’ Right to choose the language(s) used is not being seriously perceived.

(Francisco Gomes de Matos, 2014)

McMillan (2013: 58) draws attention to the fact that “English only” policies, which have a long history in EFL programs around the world, have been thoroughly debunked by an extensive body of research
published within the past 20 years’. There exists a plethora of research literature describing how the imposition of ‘monolingual orthodoxy, with or without concessions, is untenable in every respect’ (Butzkamm and Caldwell, 2009: 25). Indeed, unlike the universally positive outcomes assumed to be on offer to students who consume the language-learner autonomy product, the imposition of an English-only language policy – ’a form of disciplinary power’ (Tollefson, 1991: 207) – does not facilitate the same kind of euphoric discourse of all-inclusive participation. It is therefore no surprise to note that those language-learner autonomy advocates who impose target-language only policies are often unwilling to enter into public discussion concerning the rationalization for the use of such policies (source withheld). The imposition of a blanket language policy, no matter how creative one is in attempts to deny the fact, is inconsistent with claims of a personalized approach to language-learning pedagogy, especially one that claims to provide language learners with opportunities to choose what to study and how to study within a programme tailored to individual needs (source withheld).

In allowing fundamental decisions concerning language-learning pedagogy to come under the dictate of the producer (i.e. the institution), student ability to participate and exercise freedom of choice becomes conditional upon whether they possess the particular currency-for-participation set by the producer (i.e. English-language proficiency) (see Widin, this volume). If one accepts that the ‘scope of our autonomy always depends on what we can already do’ (Little, 2004: 106), then those students not in possession of the currency-for-participation – who are those most in need of flexible support and assistance – are denied the opportunity to exercise their autonomous participation. The establishment of inequalities within language-learning pedagogy between an elite and a proletariat, and the implications created for accessing freedom and participation, have been documented by Cohen (2011: 167, original emphasis) who describes it thus: ‘there are lots of things that, because they are poor, poor people are not free to do, things that nonpoor people are, by contrast, indeed free to do’. While such divisions of class often have a divisive influence upon communities, one cannot overlook the fact that such divisions also work to bind different classes together through a rather grotesque mutual dependency. In other words, and to paraphrase Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762), the greatest enemies of freedom can be considered as the extremely rich (who are able to package and sell freedom) and the extremely poor (who are eager to buy freedom no matter at what cost).
Regulated by the conditional authority of the English-only language policy, all students are ultimately held to account according to circumstances occurring prior to entry into the institutional environment. For example, and with reference to Figure 4.1, those students shown as [s1] (higher English proficiency) might have been more fortunate in terms of resources available such as parental support and educational opportunity than those students shown as [s7] (lower English proficiency). Nonetheless, fundamental inequalities are not deconstructed and dismantled in the classroom but instead upheld and maintained as students are filtered into their respective social position. Promoting language-learning autonomy under such conditions means that some students – on the basis of their English language proficiency – are more readily permitted to explore their capacity for autonomy than others.

Figure 4.1 The inequalities sustained through implementation of an English-only language policy where proficiency level is used as the default value criterion and prerequisite for participation in language-learner autonomy initiatives. The visual indicates how those students with the desired currency are rewarded and empowered, viewed as desirable and made to feel included, while those without the desired currency are positioned as unrewarded and disempowered, viewed as undesirable and made to feel excluded.
who do not possess – perhaps through no fault of their own – the currency-for-participation. The educational environment is therefore entangled within ‘webs of hierarchies, prohibitions, and denials that serve to reward some students while denying others access to what can be taught, learned, and spoken’ (Giroux, 1991: 57). Situations fitting this description (source withheld) where those students who demonstrate the greatest need are given the least assistance reflect ‘an upside-down formula appropriate only in a system based in inequality’ (Shor, 1992: 141).

Consequentially, all students are educated into associating monolingual language use as positive (reward bringing) and multilingual language use as negative (reward denying). Cemented in the minds of all students is the absolute value criterion of the institution which disregards individual desire, inclination, identity, need, ability and/or belief. The student collective must therefore ignore their individual differences and instead submit to the English-only language policy and its powerful domesticating influence (source withheld). The subversive power attached to such policies further works to obscure the best interests of the oppressed students even from themselves in a manner worthy of the Marxist notion of false consciousness.

So seductive is the approval of authority that many students experience a ‘fear of freedom’ (Freire, 2009: 46) manifested through their voluntary servitude and submission to the strict demands of the language policy (source withheld). Krishnamurti (1969: 11) notes, ‘it is a most extraordinary thing that although most of us are opposed to political tyranny and dictatorship, we inwardly accept the authority, the tyranny, of another to twist our minds and our way of life’. If students do not succumb to the demands of the English-only language policy they are often guided toward a dark emotional pathway of shame (in not being good enough to participate), guilt (in breaking the contract of obligation to their classmates, the teacher and the institution) and ultimately fear (of the impending consequences and exclusion). Various mechanisms that stigmatize the L1 work to promote such negative emotional associations. For example, descriptions of policy rationale found within course materials and other information given to students tend to focus, not on the actual benefits of using English only, but on the negative aspects of using the L1. It is not uncommon for students to face various punishments in class for using the L1 (e.g. being asked to pay a fine, being given a yellow or red card, being asked to leave the classroom, being shamed in front of classmates, being threatened with a reduced grade), all of which demonstrate the ways in which ‘pedagogy can be used to silence and humiliate students’ (Giroux, 2001: 89) (source withheld).
Resistance to the Known

Benson (2011: 1) discusses how ‘the idea of autonomy often provokes strong reactions’, asserting how to ‘its critics, autonomy is an idealistic goal and its promotion a distraction from the real business of teaching and learning languages’. Rather than dismissing the idea of autonomy in language education as idealistic, this chapter stands as a proactive demonstration of teacher-researcher autonomy, and thus an affirmation of support for the concept. The ‘strong reactions’ expressed concern the manner in which the concept is widely commoditized by various stakeholders to further vested individual interests at the direct expense of students under their charge.

Furthermore, one can suggest that it is not the practice of individual autonomous action that language-learner autonomy advocates primarily appraise and value, but rather, the implications of individual autonomous action for the self-validation, self-promotion and self-protection of those making the appraisal. So while the ‘strong reactions’ within this chapter are a proactive demonstration of individual teacher-researcher autonomy, immediate reactions from many language-learner autonomy advocates will undoubtedly be shaped by the content deriving from the autonomous action as opposed to from the autonomous action itself.

Beneath the surface, the actual popularity of learner autonomy thus poses some real dangers to those language educators who conceive of language learning and an education for autonomy as culturally, socially, institutionally, and politically situated processes meant to help students broaden their horizon in the most comprehensive sense. Many teachers and researchers who grapple with the concept of autonomy (as opposed to those who, for instance, gladly welcome autonomy as a means to modernize their language programs through reduction of their teaching staff) may feel that the global promotion of autonomy makes it increasingly difficult to maintain that learner autonomy involves more than just promoting independence or strategy use. (Schmenk, 2005: 114)

Engineering an environment that best services the democratic capitalist interests of their paymasters appears to be the ultimate goal for many language-learner autonomy advocates as evidenced in the rather excessive promotional component of their work. This promotional component, in this instance, has afforded certain individuals the luxury of
anonymity as their public declarations of loyalty to a single institution have been dressed as academic work. As an impediment to responsible professional action, these figures have become so embroiled in a reciprocating cycle of in-group validation whereby one self-ascribed specialist promotes the opinions of another only for the favour to be returned, often through forums that provide a secure platform for the dissemination of a remarkably similar world view (i.e. special interest groups, in-house journals). The more individuals who choose to participate in this ‘bogus empowerment’ or ‘therapeutic fiction’ (Ciulla, 1998: 67–8), the more such individuals and the groups to which they claim membership become desensitized to the inequalities sustained by their actions and the more intolerant they become of outside interference or critical dissent. As Isaiah Berlin (1958/1969: 119) famously warns, ‘when ideas are neglected by those who ought to attend to them – that is to say, those who have been trained to think critically about ideas – they sometimes acquire an unchecked momentum and an irresistible power’.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has drawn attention to the argument that the professional discourse widely disseminated by many language-learner autonomy advocates often conceals the anti-democratic forms of power and control that their pedagogies maintain. Reversing this concealment is of paramount importance as the perceived ‘credibility of a discourse is what first makes believers act in accord with it. It produces practitioners. To make people believe is to make them act’ (de Certeau, 1984: 148). Often, principles and practices surrounding language-learner autonomy that should be assigned to the rule of democracy (in a pure or direct form) are too often assigned to the rule of dictatorship and the authority of its salaried priests. So apparent are these processes that to miss them takes admirable discipline.

Beholden to corporate interests, career building and the insular discourses that accompany specialised scholarship, too many academics have become overly comfortable with the corporatisation of the university and the new regimes of neoliberal governance ... many academics have disappeared into a disciplinary apparatus that views the university not as a place to think but as a place to prepare students to be competitive in the global marketplace. (Giroux, 2011: 152)

Until the considerable elements of self-validation, self-promotion and self-protection are erased from language-learner autonomy initiatives,
many individual educators will fall short in honouring their role ‘as professionals with the duty to set an example for their students and their students’ families in rejecting, with dignity and energy, the arrogance and absolute will of some so-called modern administrators’ (Freire, 2005: 11). Setting aside the limitations and constraints of this chapter, readers should ultimately question whether there is enough evidence circulating within contemporary academic literature to indicate that student interests are the ones being best served by all-or-nothing language-learner autonomy initiatives which: make misleading proclamations of individualization, manipulate participation through the lure of extra course credit, have content decided exclusively by administrators, and which demand conformity to a non-negotiable English-only language policy. The burden of proof, as well as the continued shame of authority, resides firmly with those who are able to deceive themselves into believing that there is.

Points to ponder

1. What are your thoughts on the concept of academic freedom and current issues concerning defamation in the publication of academic material? Does this reality promote the self-censorship of academics and hinder the advancement of innovative educational practice on an individual teacher-researcher level?

2. Kincheloe (1993: 187) asserts, ‘... no thoughts, theories, or pedagogies are completely autonomous. Ideas, perspectives, research orientations and the actions that come out of them are always connected to power and value interests.’ Exploring your own institutional context, where can evidence be found of ‘power and value interests’ that do not primarily advance the best interests of the students?

3. What are some of the ways in which your own teaching environment manufactures deficiency among students and the educational/language/nationality backgrounds from which they originate? What practices and/or policies are such manufactured deficiencies used to support?

4. Can the default imposition and acceptance of a non-negotiable English-only language policy upon students with mixed levels of proficiency be considered an example of responsible practice and/or effective pedagogy? What research evidence could be cited in support of such actions?
5. How can language-learner autonomy advocates rationalize their support for the top-down imposition of unrealistic expectations upon all students regardless of their individual proficiency, needs and/or desires?

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Part II
Countering Macro-Processes in National Contexts
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5
On the Challenge of Teaching English in Latin America with Special Emphasis on Brazil

Kanavillil Rajagopalan

Setting the scene

A late English friend of mine once told me a harrowing tale of which he himself had been the protagonist. An amateur botanist of sorts and an enthusiastic globetrotter, he was on one of his habitual exploratory ‘expeditions’, this time to Nicaragua. It was some time in the mid-1980s. His flight had been delayed due to bad weather and the plane finally managed to land in Managua some time after midnight, by which time the airport at the destination was practically desolate. The city was pitch dark and dead silent. My friend was lucky (so he thought) to be able to hail one of the few taxis whizzing past the airport and was on his way to his hotel downtown. As the taxi made its way through the meandering, poorly lit alleys of the old town, his driver suddenly pulled over and turned to him menacingly, muttering: ‘Gringo desgraciado, te voy a matar’ (You wretched Yankee, I am going to kill you). Terrified, my friend pleaded with him, saying he was not what his interlocutor thought he was and whipped out his passport to prove his point. But in response he got the following churlish and dismissive remark: ‘¿Mas tu hablas ingles, no?’ (But you speak English all the same, don’t you?) I will spare the reader the details of the rest of the episode, except that my friend – as goes without saying – was lucky to come out of the experience unscathed and tell the story years later.

The reason why I recount the story here is that it captures a number of beliefs ordinary people in Latin America entertain about the English language. English is associated in Latin America with Uncle Sam’s muscle power and his bullying behaviour. And the track record of the world’s only remaining superpower when it comes to relations with its neighbours to the south does help explain why many people in the
street in Latin America entertain negative feelings. Things have changed considerably in recent years but some of the old wounds have not yet had time to fully heal. It comes as no surprise that many in South America still view the pretensions of the Big Brother with distrust and, by extension, eye the English language with some unease and suspicion. The recent scandal about cyber spying by the US National Security Agency, as revealed by top-secret files leaked by former agency contractor Edward Snowden, has done little to mitigate the long-standing distrust.

In the episode just referred to, the specific historical moment when it happened as well as the place where it did matter a lot. For those of my readers who were too young at the time when the incident took place, let me briefly note that Nicaragua was right in the middle of a social convulsion, with a declaredly anti-US government in power and rumours swirling of active US involvement in the form of secret military aid to what were famously known as the Contras.

The taxi driver in the episode, one could say, was evidently under the influence of the massive and systematic anti-US propaganda carried out by the Sandinistas (as the Nicaraguan revolutionary socialists, the ones the US-backed Contras were aiming to topple, were called). One may even try to explain his violent attitude to an innocent tourist by dismissing it as a ‘one-off’ tempestuous gesture by someone who had limited schooling and little discerning power of his own to see through the vicious propaganda at the hands of scheming politicians.

But the distrust of the US and, by extension, the Anglophone world in general, that, as already alluded to, all too frequently materializes itself in the form of a summary rejection of the English language is not confined to any social class or region, but can be come across among people from different walks of life and different social classes in many parts of Latin America. Here is another anecdote that proves the point. An Argentinean lady once told the present writer during a casual conversation that she had quit her job overnight as an English language teacher in sheer frustration and disgust after the 1982 war with the UK over the disputed islands of the Falklands/Malvinas, tossing away years of hard work dedicated to learning the English language and preparing to be a teacher. As a matter of fact, she went on to confess that she was intrigued by what she sensed as the total absence on my part of any animosity towards the language in spite of the fact that my own origins, as she rightly guessed, happen to be from a country once under British colonial rule.

The two anecdotes narrated in the foregoing paragraphs point to the fact that negative reactions to the growing presence of English in
their midst are not isolated exceptions, but stem from sentiments more deeply entrenched in the psyche of the different nations on the continent. Of course, there are differences from one country to another but they have mostly to do with the intensity of the distrust and discomfort, which in turn has to do with the specificities of their respective histories. And people are not entirely to blame for being wary of any overtures from the English-speaking world, particularly the US. The US does have a long history of brazen interference in the affairs of the continent, treating it as their ‘backyard’ – a posture legitimized under the ‘Monroe doctrine’ and more specifically under the so-called ‘Roosevelt corollary to the Monroe doctrine’, which claimed in no uncertain terms that ‘this region was uniquely part of the U.S. sphere of influence’ (Horowitz, 1985: 54; see also Rajagopalan, 2006).

**ELT in Brazil: navigating ideologically muddied waters**

The two episodes discussed in the foregoing section should help one get an idea of the enormous obstacles one needs to overcome while embarking on a programme of English language teaching (ELT) in Latin America. As has become amply clear, in Brazil and in many other countries of Latin America the English language is bound up with a host of ideologically and geopolitically sensitive issues and one realizes sooner or later that one had better navigate one’s way through extremely troubled waters, steering clear of treacherous reefs lurking all around.

To complicate matters even further, there are many folk beliefs about the English language and how it should be taught that all too often stymie or overwhelm expert opinion and state-of-the-art approaches to language teaching. Together, these beliefs and long-nurtured convictions may be characterized as constituting the ‘default’ or ‘the known’ position regarding language teaching, which functions as a bulwark against any attempt at innovation and novel approaches to traditional concerns.

**ELT in South America and its default ideological position**

In Latin America, that default position centres around the idea of who owns the English language. The language is typically viewed as the property of the Anglo-Saxon people and by extension, of the Anglophone world, loosely defined as composed of nations that use the language for their day-to-day transactions. These nations are believed
Resistance to the Known

to be its sole proprietors and ultimate custodians, invested with the exclusive privilege of leasing it out to all others who wish to learn and use it in whatever capacity.

In the specific case of ELT, deeply entrenched beliefs about the best way to teach, what variety of the language to teach, and who is best authorized to teach, etc. are very much in place and have proved themselves to be extremely difficult to dislodge. This is because many of these beliefs have over the years become part and parcel of the default position and are understood as simply as what common sense dictates on the issues involved. In what follows, we shall go over some these beliefs.

First and foremost, this idea of the ‘ownership of English’ (Widdowson, 1994) is taken for granted, with the only divergences among people having to do with whether it is the US or Great Britain that should be considered the true stakeholders or guardians (the other Anglophone nations hardly ever come up for discussion). For reasons already alluded to, it is not uncommon in Latin America to find people favouring the British variety to its North American rival, often citing as their justification the history of the language and so forth, but seldom venting publicly their deep-rooted prejudices against their immediate neighbour to the north.

This in turn gives rise to what I have elsewhere referred to as the ‘apotheosis of the native speaker’ (Rajagopalan, 1997: 229). As a result, the figure of the native speaker (which, in effect, is transformed into an essentially radicalized totem – an object of adulation bordering on veneration) is elevated to the status of the centrepiece around which language teaching programmes are conceived and executed. In other words, this idea of the ownership of the language is also strongly underwritten by and inextricably tied to the notion of the native speaker of the language, despite the extremely slippery and elusive nature of the concept (Paikeday, 2003). The concept has been shown time and again to be infused with an essentialist (Rajagopalan, 1999), often racist agenda, but has nevertheless enjoyed great appeal among aspirant learners of the language, a fact that is exploited to its utmost marketing potential by language schools seeking to attract their clientele.

Language schools in the country cash in on the glib inference, hastily and erroneously made, to the effect that, to the extent the native speakers are held to be the true owners of the language and the only reliable source of authentic usage of the language, it should only stand to reason that they should also be deemed the ideal teachers of the language (Rajagopalan, 2005a). The figure of the ‘native speaker’ thus
becomes the poster child of expensive advertising campaigns run by these language schools.

It is also interesting to note that these clever marketing gurus were quick to pounce upon the burgeoning trends in the academic climate prevailing at given moments and make the best use of them for their own commercial purposes. Thus when there was a lot of hype about ‘communicative language teaching’ and the corridors of academic power were abuzz with slogans like ‘communication through interaction’, ‘notional–functional syllabus’, and so forth, they lost no time perceiving the alleged significance of the cultural component in language teaching and proclaiming loud and clear in their advertisements that the language schools had ‘authentic’ native speakers on their teaching staff, thanks to whom learners would be rewarded with complete immersion in the target culture. A famous language school in Brazil once adopted as their campaign slogan the following: ‘It is not just the English language we teach; it is the English culture as well.’

**History of nation-building in Latin America**

A brief detour into the 500 years or so of recorded history of the countries on the continent would help us put in perspective the current attitudes to foreign languages in general and to English in particular. The 12 nations that make up the continent of South America were all colonies of European powers, mainly Spain and Portugal. Brazil was Portugal’s only colony, but occupies nearly half the continent’s geographical spread and just under half its population. There were occasional scuffles between the two colonial powers resulting in the periodic redrawing of boundary lines, but the Treaty of Tordesillas, signed on 7 June 1494 between Spain and Portugal, has since then by and large guaranteed the integrity of their respective territorial ‘possessions’ over the centuries, having been invoked in the twentieth century by Chile to defend the principle of an Antarctic sector extending along a meridian to the South Pole and by Argentina to buttress its claims to the Falklands/Malvinas islands.

Colonization in South America was initially at least of a purely exploitative intent. This is evident in the very names given to some of the countries on the continent. Brazil takes its name from bразил, a tree that is native to the Atlantic coast and once grew in abundance on the land and was all but annihilated by ravenous logging under colonial rule. In its turn, the name of Argentina has at its root *argentum* which in Latin means silver and which once filled the coffers of Spanish monarchs.
But over time, partly in response to difficult financial situations in the metropolis, there were massive tides of immigration into the conquered territories that transformed themselves as a result into settler colonies. It was from that moment on that the idea of nation-building became a top priority. Territorial delineation and demarcation were secured and legitimized by the imposition of the language of the metropolis. In this endeavour, the countries on the continent were only following what had become accepted practice in mainland Europe (Wright, 2004). In Brazil’s case, Portugal lost no time intervening in the colony’s affairs every time they perceived a looming threat to its firm grip on it. In the words of Trouche (2001: 97):

Portugal’s attitude with respect to the language issue in colonial Brazil is marked by a preoccupation with the indissoluble relation between language and imperial domination, between language and the role of Portugal understood as something which was worth defending against all corrupting influences from without.

In the process of doggedly ensuring territorial integrity through implacable imposition of a common language, minority languages were put down with all the force the state could muster. To have an idea of the extent of the brutality practised – a veritable ‘linguicide’ – consider that, of the 1500 or so different indigenous languages believed to be spoken in what is today Brazil at the time of the continent’s ‘discovery’, only around 180 survive today and that too in a very precarious state, on the verge of extinction (Rajagopalan, 2012).

In Brazil, the history of foreign language teaching has a rather bizarre and tortuous history. To begin with, the very idea of a foreign language was nothing like the contemporary understanding of the term. According to Leffa (1999), the only ‘foreign’ languages that were taught in schools during the colonial period were the classical ones Greek and Latin. Citing Franca (1952) to support his claim, he notes that subjects like history and geography (and, believe it or not, even Portuguese, the vernacular language) were taught through these dead languages, which oddly enough made them the very media of instruction – reminiscent of practices adopted in the education of the nobility in medieval Europe. In other words, education itself was the privilege of a handful of people and there was no foreign language teaching worth the name. It was only by 1808, when the Portuguese royal family moved to Brazil, to escape the advancing armies of Napoleon Bonaparte, that two foreign languages, namely French and English, started being taught in schools.
But, for years to come, it was French that the Brazilian bourgeoisie was eager to learn. After all, French was considered a mark of cultural finesse and sophistication in matters of taste. English was there in the school curricula only because of the growing British presence in Brazil’s day-to-day affairs. This was because, in return for guaranteeing safe passage to the royal barge by escorting them all the way across the Atlantic Ocean, thus warding off any possible threat from the French navy, Britain had extracted from the Portuguese crown special trading privileges and preferential treatment.

**Post-Second World War realignment of geopolitical equations**

Things changed dramatically by the end of the Second World War. In the years preparatory to the war, Getulio Vargas, the then President of Brazil, who had dilly-dallied before making up his mind and even toyed with the idea of openly aligning with the Axis powers, suddenly switched sides at the behest of President Roosevelt and, as historians have suggested, under the influence of a veiled threat in the form of direct military intervention in the event of a refusal to comply. This sealed the subservient presence of Brazil in the pecking order of the US, a role it is desperately seeking to overturn but has not been able to do yet. The country’s current status as one of the world’s ‘emerging economies’ has brought about some changes, but Brazil is very much in the US sphere of influence even today.

Brazil is thus very much a part of South America where the US casts its long shadow left and right, despite occasional chest-pounding bravado from firebrands of the likes of the late Hugo Chaves of Venezuela and Evo Morales of Bolivia. In all fairness, however, it must be noted that things have changed over the years. Washington seems to have undertaken some intense soul-searching and after a series of debacles or embarrassing setbacks elsewhere in the world, the US has scaled down its long policy of interfering in the internal affairs of the countries where, until recently, they thought it perfectly within their rights to exercise ‘big stick diplomacy’. Julia Sweig (2013: A12), the Nelson and David Rockefeller Senior Fellow for Latin America Studies and Director for Latin America Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, wrote a piece in her weekly column in the Brazilian national newspaper *Folha de São Paulo* which throws a flood of light on this about-turn.

In the current crisis in Venezuela [in the wake of the tense situation created by Hugh Chaves's fighting for his life after undergoing a fourth
successive surgical operation for removing a pelvic cancer and the uncertainty over who takes over the reins of power in that country], it appears Washington preferred to relegate the matter to the back burner in stark contrast with Havana, Brasília, and Buenos Aires.

Adding a little later:

It is my hunch that those in the upper echelons of decision making power in Bogota and Brasília are keeping Washington up to speed with the developments up to a certain point at least.

Sweig wraps up her article by suggesting that the US would do much better by refocusing its attention on such domestic issues as arms control and reform of existing immigration laws, both of which speak directly to Latin American concerns, and ‘a dash of good sense in respect of Cuba’.

The ambivalent attitude towards the English language in Brazil that I have discussed at length elsewhere (see Rajagopalan, 2003) can easily be attested to in many other countries on the continent, as the episodes related at the beginning of this chapter confirm. Garcez and Zilles (2001: 22) hit the nail on the head when they wrote:

English is clearly a foreign language [in Brazil]. Equally foreign is what makes it the case that, if English is the lingua franca of international contact, that has to do with the success of British and [North-]American imperial enterprise, in relation to which Brazil invariably acted as a servile client. Thus, the distrust of foreignisms is the distrust of Anglophone presence in the day-to-day life in Brazil, especially that of the symbolic omnipresence of North-American corporate interests.

Other scholars have been even more vociferous and vented similar sentiments, not bothering to mince matters. The deep distrust and rising discontent over the way English has made significant forays into the daily life of the country were captured in a dramatic manner right at the outset of a PhD dissertation submitted to the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, in December 1991:

Right from the moment when members of Brazil’s bourgeoisie awaken to the music of FM/AM Electronic Digital Clock Radio, pressing down the snooze button so as to gain an extra few minutes of sleep,
while those on the seamy side of the social divide spring out of their beds, rudely awakened from their slumber by the deafening sound of a Westclox [alarm clock], Made in Brasil (sic), till the moment the television set – Sharp, Philco, or Panasonic – is switched off and the General Electric bedside lamp is also turned off, Brazil’s population is, every single minute, literally bombarded with words from the English language. (Oliveira e Paiva, 1991: 1)

The above quote is all the more significant because its author has made a name for herself as one of Brazil’s foremost applied linguists. But opposition to the use of ‘estrangeirismos’ (foreignisms), as they are called in Brazil, is not confined to academics or the intellectual classes. The idea of the defilement of the national language at the hands of a foreign language intruding into its day-to-day affairs is an emotionally charged issue and its political implications were not lost on the country’s politicians, who, eager to fish in troubled waters, quickly seized and exploited them to their fullest potential.

The simmering discontent over the growing presence of English in their midst boiled over in 1999, resulting in a legislative bid by Congressman Aldo Rebelo to place a ban on the indiscriminate use of English in Brazil (see Rajagopalan, 2002, 2005b, c). Here is a sample of his rabble-rousing rhetoric:

In point of fact, what we are witnessing is a veritable deformation of the Portuguese language; such is the indiscriminate and unnecessary invasion of foreignisms – such as ‘holding’, ‘recall’, ‘franchise’, ‘coffee-break’, ‘self-service’ and such portuguesisations of dubious taste, in general without justification, such as ‘startar’, ‘printar’, ‘bidar’, ‘atacar’ and ‘database’. And this is happening with such breathtaking speed and voracity that it is no exaggeration to suppose that we are about to jeopardize oral and written communication with the ordinary person in the street who is unaccustomed to the words and phrases imported, generally from North-American English that rule our daily lives, above all the production, consumption and marketing of goods, products and services, not to mention those foreign words and phrases that come to us through information technology and through the media of mass communication and popular trends and fashions. (Rebelo, 2000: 13)

All the same, these outbursts of pent-up frustration and bad blood turn out to be mostly isolated cries in the wilderness, enough to cause some
ripples but all too quickly deafened by enthusiastic accolades from hordes of young people across the continent who are won over by the glitz and glamour they associate, rightly or wrongly, with the English language. The proposed bill itself did cause quite a stir, but all its sound and fury ultimately fizzled out and in practice things went back to business as usual.

Politics of language

The question of language has been, since time immemorial, intertwined with that of politics, as Joseph (2006) has convincingly argued. But, up until fairly recently, the full implications of the close connection between the two were woefully lost on generations of linguists and others interested in language. ‘Language’, Joseph says, ‘is political from top to bottom’ and is, furthermore, ‘a political–linguistic–rhetorical construct’ (Joseph, 2006: 20). As I made a point of emphasizing elsewhere,

Joseph is not saying that language has, in addition to everything else it is believed to have, a political dimension. Rather, he is saying, language is constitutively and hence indissociably political. (Rajagopalan, 2007: 330)

As only to be expected, the topic of language politics has gained unprecedented attention from scholars, as more and more of them recognize the inalienably political nature of language, often resulting in radically new proposals for conceptualizing the very notion of language. Thus Pennycook (1994: 29) makes a compelling case for shifting the focus of scholarly attention from language as structure to ‘language use as a social, cultural, and political act’. ‘The politics of language’, writes Davies (2001: 580), ‘concerns policies and decisions about official and standard languages, language planning, language academics, and educational policies.’

Politics is, thus, of the very essence insofar as language is concerned. Indeed, language policy makers and language planners in different parts of the world have long known this for a fact or at least suspected it to be the case, but have not always admitted it openly or fully recognized the consequences of taking it into account when elaborating their plans. What has decidedly not been appreciated in the literature (except for some casual mentions here and there) and therefore needs to be highlighted right at the outset is that language teaching, insofar as it is an offshoot of the overall language policy put in place in a given country, is also shot through with political connotations of all sorts. This is
especially the case when it comes to the teaching of foreign languages. As a consequence, those foreign language teaching programmes that have paid no attention whatsoever to the political dimensions of the language in question as well as the geopolitical intricacies of the region where it is being taught have met with early setbacks and often been forced to wind down prematurely.

Needless to point out, of all languages currently taught across the world as a foreign language, English is at the centre of keen scholarly interest because of the extreme reactions to its gigantic spread in different parts of the globe. The reactions to the spread of English come in all hues and shades, ranging from exuberantly jubilatory to downright deprecatory. The language has been saddled with such a disparate and confusing set of colourful descriptions as ‘decorative language’ (Dougill, 1987), ‘the most chameleon of languages’ (Maley, 1985), ‘the gateway to dreams and faraway places’ (Dougill, 2008), a ‘semi-sacred language’ (Asker, 2006), a ‘glottophagic language’ (Calvet, 1974; Mesthrie, 2008), a ‘cannibalistic language’ (Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas, 1995), ‘Trojan horse’ (Qiang and Wolff, 2007), a ‘lingua frankensteinia’ (Phillipson, 2008) and a ‘killer language’ (Price, 1984; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000).

Simply put, ELT is responsive to and reflects the fast-changing geopolitical landscape all over the world.

**ELT in South America: on the danger of losing oneself in a maze**

Holborough (1996: 172) famously observed: ‘Teaching English can no longer be taken as simply teaching language.’ The accuracy and relevance of that crisp observation become nowhere more striking than in what one is able to verify in Latin America. For reasons already looked into, English is a language, nay a *commodity*, at once loved and loathed, in the same breath, by many. On the one hand, it affords people a secure passport to the world at large. On the other, it also serves as a constant and nagging reminder of years of what people see as stepmotherly treatment historically meted out to them by their Big Brother to their north.

As may be readily inferred from the fundamentally contradictory state of affairs sketched in the foregoing paragraph, teaching the English language in countries in South America is no easy task. One is sooner or later forced to recognize the truth of what was highlighted right at the outset of this chapter: that any effort to devise a language teaching programme from a standpoint that does not take into account the political dimensions of the language in question is doomed to founder.
Given that the English language is politically a ‘hot potato’ not only in Brazil, but in the whole of Latin America, it is absolutely crucial that we approach the business of teaching it with caution and sensitivity as well as respect for some of the deeply entrenched beliefs and opinions held by people at large. In the past, most of the time, language-teaching programmes were undertaken with no clear endgame in sight, nor goals defined. The net result was that language teaching in Latin America simply copied trends in vogue in Europe and North America. Methods and techniques developed in these countries were haphazardly copied and hastily implemented. In a paper published in 2005, Leffa wrote:

The model of [language] teaching with an emphasis on methodology has come to a stage of theoretical exhaustion. After some centuries of the use and testing of a variety of methods, with an emphasis on speech at one time and on writing at other times, often centred around the linguistic form and at times communication, we have finally reached the conclusion that there simply is no guarantee whatsoever that a given method will work and, worse still, many have concluded just about any method can be made to work. (Leffa, 2005: 206)

Leffa had in mind the long succession of methodologies (whose corpses still lie rotting in the battlefield of language pedagogy), ranging from grammar-translation through direct method, audiolingual method, and so on, and finally to communicative language teaching that took the ELT world by storm at one time or another, ultimately leading to complete disenchantment with the very notion of method, synthetically captured in Kumaravadivelu’s (2001, 2003) call for a new post-method mindset – which, in turn, only left many a language teacher all over the world rudderless and unattended (Bell, 2007; Rajagopalan, 2007).

**Defining objectives and setting up priorities**

Historically, the principal problem with ELT in Brazil (and indeed in many of the other countries in Latin America) was that it was very much geared towards the interests of the elite. Families from the upper middle class who were wealthy enough to afford frequent overseas visits to Europe and North America would send their children to private language schools, inaccessible to the vast majority, to acquire some working oral skills in the language – just enough for them to be able to flaunt their English and do shopping at Harrods or Stephanie’s. The vast
majority of those who went to these language schools were only interested in learning a smattering of English that they know would serve as a feather in their caps and guarantee them a certain ‘one-upmanship’ when applying for an executive post in some multinational firm. In an article published in the 1980s, Shepherd and Shepherd (1986) pointed out that ELT curricula in use in Brazil were exaggeratedly skewed in favour of the oral skill, to the detriment of others.

With the passage of time, the situation changed as it became clear to the masses at large that lack of sufficient command of English was a major stumbling block in Brazil’s attempts to reach out to the world at large, to export goods and services to far-off lands and compete with the rest of the world to attract much-needed foreign investment to jump-start ailing domestic industries. Along with this, the realization dawned on many people that what they really needed was a knowledge of English which would serve them in a number of other vital areas, ranging from making sense of an instruction manual accompanying the latest imported electronic gadget to reading a specialized textbook in medicine or engineering and, who knows, some day applying for a place in a graduate course at MIT, Cambridge or Harvard. This rapidly changing reality on the ground has made it necessary to ask fresh questions about a number of aspects of ELT, including course design and objectives of specific teaching programmes (Duboc, 2011).

One thing that has become clear to many course designers is that excessive emphasis on spoken language and improving oral communicative skills was simply misguided and a waste of time and energy simply because many of the English language learners were hardly likely to find themselves in live situations where their skills would be put to the test (see Pigott, this volume). Rather, many of them urgently needed passive skills such as listening and reading material available only in English and important in their jobs as doctors, engineers, foremen, mechanics and so forth.

Another major change in ELT that came about as a result of the changing direction of the wind was that it was no longer seen as revolving around the figure of the ‘native speaker’. Moita Lopes (2008: 333) synthesized the reigning spirit when he wrote:

In the ideology that I propose, English will cease to be viewed as just an international language, involved in linguistic imperialism and homogenization across the world, and will also start being seen also as a frontier language that people appropriate in order to live out their social lives (to live, love, learn, work, resist and, in the end, be
human), making this language function in the context of local histories, not by way of mimicking global designs, but in performing their very identities, that did not exist previously.

There can be no mistaking what is on the agenda. Moita Lopes and others would have the language reconceptualized and its role in Latin America seen not as simply bowing to universal trends sweeping across countries in the periphery such as those in Latin America, but carve out a new place for it in the business of national self-affirmation, by appropriating it and making it serve local medium and long-range agendas.

These new goals were announced in the Brazilian National Curricular Parameters, in whose elaboration Moita Lopes played a major role. In the words of Almeida (2012: 332):

The movement towards a more meaningful approach to the teaching of English as a foreign language in Brazilian regular schools reached its climax in the 20th century with the publication of the Brazilian National Curricular Parameters (PCN) for the teaching of foreign languages at basic education level. [...] At the center of this controversy was the importance given by the official policies to the teaching of reading, as opposed to an approach, borrowed from private language institutes, which historically favored a focus on the oral skills.

But differences of opinion on specific aspects of the Parameters aside, there can be no doubt that there is an emerging consensus summarized by Leffa (2012: 399) in the following words:

Language teaching ought not to take place in an abstract world, purely theoretical and fabricated by the authorities, be it in an authoritarian sense on the basis of power, or in the sense of practiced by someone authorized to do so on the basis of putative expertise; rather it should be situated in a given context, on the basis of actual reality, that guarantees the teacher the option to act within what is plausible under his/her set of circumstances.

Lately, there have also been calls for critical literacy programmes in place of traditional conservative approaches (Jordao and Fogaca, 2012). Interest in shifting the focus of attention on different and innovative approaches to ELT has also been growing, albeit sporadically (Lima, 2011).

That the world of ELT in Brazil and elsewhere on the continent of South America has been going through intense questioning and
problematizing is evidenced by the growing number of scholars wondering whether there is a conceptual slippage in the use of technical terms such as, say, ‘instrumental’ versus ‘communicative’ approaches to ELT (Borges, 2011), and whether recent interest in the cultural dimension of ELT has promoted essentialized views of culture (Salomao, 2011) and whether or not computers can be of help in overcoming the problem (Damiao, 2011). Some have pleaded for an openly transgressive approach to education as a whole, getting rid of all the shackles inherited from the past that only curbed free thinking (Urzeda-Freitas, 2012).

Burgeoning disquiet along similar lines can also be observed in other countries in Latin America, like Argentina and Chile. In the first of these countries, one notices an incipient interest in trying to verify the actual reading practices of university students at the graduate level in order to ascertain their language needs and tailor language courses for them (see Parodi, 2012). In general, one is, it seems, justified in concluding that the time is ripe for significant changes in the way foreign languages are viewed and taught across Latin America.

**Reconceptualizing the very idea of what constitutes a language**

There can be no doubt either that changes in the attitude to ELT in Latin America (as indeed elsewhere in the world) move in tandem with an increasingly felt need to reconceptualize the very idea of language to better reflect contemporary reality. It has been fairly well established that most of our thinking about what language is and how it works bespeak an essentially nineteenth-century mindset. Hutton (1999: 287) convincingly argues that:

> Notions such as ‘mother-tongue’ and ‘native speaker’ are fundamental in contemporary formal as well as sociological linguistics, yet their status within organicist ideology and radical-nationalist identity politics is forgotten or ignored. At the very least it should be recognized that the rise of mother-tongues reflects a particular set of historical circumstances, not a transhistorical law of human identity formation.

It has also been fairly well established that colonialism (which reached its pinnacle precisely in the nineteenth century) played a significant role in shaping much of the linguistic thought of the succeeding century and still persists in many quarters (Errington, 2008; Pennycook, 1994, 1998).
But with winds of change gathering pace, there have been clear signs of sustained efforts being undertaken to rethink the very notion of what constitutes a language. Talbot Taylor (1997) sounded a timely alarm bell by denouncing what he saw, in Schalkwyk’s (2005: 98) words, ‘as the malaise of modern linguistics: its refusal, in the name of its scientific credentials, to acknowledge the normative character of language’. Notice, incidentally, that it is this ‘normative character’ that gives language its inalienably political dimension. According to Schalkwyk, one clear symptom of this ‘malaise’ is the ‘discrepancy between linguistic expert and lay speaker’.

This discrepancy or disconnect, as I would prefer to call it, between what the person in the street thinks and what the so-called expert on the subject pontificates in relation to the same has been a major stumbling block in the way of professional linguists being able to bring the weight of their expertise on issues of political relevance. Other scholars have expressed similar concerns. Fishman’s (2006) book *DO NOT Leave Your Language Alone* is a case in point. The importance of this book and its title becomes fully clear only when considered against the title of another book published half a century earlier by Hall (1950) with the title that says exactly the opposite of what Fishman exhorts the readers to do: *Leave Your Language Alone!* In that book, Hall was voicing what was then the battle-cry of modern linguistics and what it claimed to be its distinctive feature that made it a truly scientific enterprise: its value-neutrality, assumed by its early committal to remain purely descriptive, overcoming all temptation to be prescriptive. Fishman (2006: ix) did not mince matters when he claimed in the preface to his book:

> In earlier and more innocent times, it was widely believed that language, just as any other gift from God, could neither be ‘planned’ nor ‘improved’. As those times were coming to an end, an attempt was made by Professor Robert A. Hall (1950) to foster the complete disappearance of language planning by harsh criticism, discouraging scholarly activity in the language-planning direction. His book *Leave Your Language Alone!* now stands as a monument to a bygone age.

As he categorically went on to affirm, ‘language planning is ultimately judged not by its small coteries of specialized language planners but, most crucially, by its intended consumers’ (Fishman, 2006: x).

The animated controversy in Brazil a decade ago over the excessive use of English words in the vernacular (of which mention was made earlier) brought to light the enormous gulf between the linguist and
the public at large. As it transpired, it did not take very long for some politicians to decide to wholeheartedly join the fray, as they were quick to smell blood. Aiming to fish in troubled waters, a Congressman even tabled a bill that, once it passed muster in the parliament and was sanctioned by the President, would put a total ban on the use of English words in public, in places ranging from neon signs to shop windows to all newspaper and textbook publishing. Luckily, the whole project fizzled out in the end, but not before a lengthy battle of wits, full of sound and fury, but surprisingly signifying quite a lot. For, what the whole episode did underscore was the complete irrelevance of the stance assumed by the country’s linguists to matters involving the conduct of language politics.

The road ahead

In other words, not everything is as bleak as might appear at first glimpse. People are slowly beginning to separate the wheat from the chaff and learn to be more pragmatic than dogmatic in matters related to language politics (which is how it should be). As already noted, the countries in South America have clearly woken up to the fact that English is a valued asset for anyone keen on not missing out on the globalization trend sweeping across the world. Many have realized that it is much more than a feather in the cap; it is an absolute must if one wants to hitch one’s wagon to a star, not be left out of the global stage.

What is also becoming increasingly clear to many learners in these countries is that the kind of language skills they will need in future are not uniform across the board, but will depend on a number of variables, the most important of which would be the kind of use they will be required to make. Those involved in ELT in one form or another are slowly waking up to the fact that, no matter what their specific requirements might be, learners need to be prepared to face the world at large. The following observation by Schneider (2011: 135) is very pertinent in this context:

Globalisation has been the predominant trend of the late-twentieth century changes in the worlds of business, cultural exchange, and international travel and communication; it has also been the most visible, and perhaps the most influential, of all changes that have shaped the recent ‘contours’ of the English language.

Now, how are the contours of the English language affected by its unbridled spread across the world? Unlike the early expansion of the
language, when the language spread was mostly occasioned by settler colonization of the likes of America, Australia and New Zealand, the latter-day expansion of the language, be it through the establishment of colonies for the sole purpose of exploitation (as in the case of the countries that today belong to the British Commonwealth of nations), be it (and this was the case, especially after the Second World War) thanks to the emergence of the US as the free world’s only superpower, took place in circumstances that were essentially multilingual. In other words, English did not stifle the other, already existing languages out of existence, but had to learn to live side by side with them. Surely, its impact was felt on other languages, just as it still does. But, in turn, English is also affected by these languages.

That is the price any language has to pay for going global. All that those language puritans who complain that their language is losing its putative purity and ‘character’ can really do is just grin and bear it. The following excerpt from an article published in the journal English Language Teaching, the predecessor of the ELT Journal of today, gives us an idea of how upsetting this can be to some people:

So far little attempt has been made to deal with the phonetic origin of errors in spoken English in either training colleges or schools. There is a danger that an ‘East African English’ – characterised by its own pronunciation, intonation and sentence patterns – may become normal among educated Africans. This danger appears more acute when it is realised that more and more teaching of English will be done at all levels by African teachers who are themselves subject to these errors, and who have received little or no training in how to overcome them. (Perren, 1956: 3)

The underlying tone is one of lamentation of how things have come to pass: of things falling apart and the centre not being able to hold, a sentiment that George Orwell had already expressed in these words at the outset of his famous essay entitled ‘Politics and the English language’ (Orwell, 1946: 1):

Most people who bother with the matter at all would admit that the English language is in a bad way, but it is generally assumed that we cannot by conscious action do anything about it. Our civilization is decadent and our language – so the argument runs – must inevitably share in the general collapse.
An important about-turn in this regard may be observed in the following two quotes from Crystal, separated by a little less than a quarter of a century:

An important constraint on the criterion is that the language must be a culturally significant element. There must be an element of genuine ‘nativeness’ in the learning context. (Crystal, 1985: 8)

It may only be a matter of time before they [that is, expressions considered un-English by many until recently] are back. (Crystal: 2008: 6)

The ultimate challenge, then, for ELT professionals in Latin America and indeed in other parts of the world that still belong to the ‘expanding circle’ in Kachru’s (1985) terms, is how to prepare their learners to engage with a language that is a far cry from its so-called ‘native’ varieties to what has become a language (if that is the right word!) which is ‘nobody’s mother tongue’ and ‘belongs to everyone who speaks it’ (Rajagopalan, 2004: 111) in whatever capacity.

Points to ponder

1. In your view, what should be the ultimate aim of teaching English as a second or foreign language in South America?
2. How important is the figure of the ‘native speaker’ in teaching English as a foreign language?
3. In the case of a language such as English, which has long ceased to be the exclusive property of this or that nation, does it make sense to elect any one nation or a group of nations, as the sole proprietor of the language?
4. Is it possible that those who insist that the concept of ‘the native speaker of a language x’ is legitimate and scientifically sustainable are unwittingly being guided by influences other than purely linguistic or cultural ones?
5. What are the implications of saying that English has become a truly world language?

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Dialogizing ‘the Known’: Experience of English Teaching in Japan through an Assay of Derivatives as a Dominant Motif

Glenn Toh

Introduction

In this chapter, I examine ideological inconsistencies and contradictions I have encountered in the course of my work as an English for academic purposes teacher in a Japanese higher education institution. Beginning with a short preamble about financial derivatives, much maligned since the catastrophic fall of a well-known Wall Street giant in 2008, I will proceed to discuss my experiences of the workings of language, ideology and power relations teaching English in a Japanese institution. In the course of this discussion, I will draw parallels between my lived experience as a teacher and the workings of the financial derivative, which I will allude to as an enactment of inauthenticity, artificiality and contrivedness. It is not my intention in this discussion to be overly technical about derivatives per se, but to use them as a way of plumbing the phenomenal nature of illegitimate and inauthentic work-related practices. After a preamble on the workings of the financial derivative, I will illustrate how analogous situations can be found in: (1) practices relating to the dominance of standardized proficiency testing; (2) the latest move in Japanese institutions to deliver faculty content courses in English; and (3) practices and particularized enactments of native-speakerist ideologies in the employment and deployment of English teachers. Drawing on the work of critical literacy and critical pedagogy, I then examine two existential conditions confronting English language teachers, namely, what I call the ‘reflexive condition’ and the ‘derivative condition’, before concluding with a critical examination of why English teaching in Japan may persist with the inauthenticities and anomalies of a ‘derivative condition’.
I enter into the discussion as an English teacher of some 27 years’ experience teaching English as a foreign language, English for academic purposes, English for specific purposes in Australia, Hong Kong, Japan, Laos and my native Singapore. In the course of the discussion, I will draw on my experience as an English for academic purposes teacher at a liberal arts faculty of a university in the Kanagawa area of the Kanto region of Japan. This is in conformity with works that have validated the narratives of teachers’ experience as a base of professional knowledge and praxis (Hayes, 2010; Kumaravadivelu, 2009; Murphey, 2004; Rivers, 2013; Tsui, 2007). Consequently, I resonate with the manner in which Edwards and Usher (2008: 4–13) demonstrate the intertwining nature of professional praxis and lived experience: ‘Professionally, then, our auto/biographies are enfolded within that about which we write. In a sense, we have lived aspects of that which is the theme of this text … within which we are enfolded at the personal, professional and cultural levels.’

Preamble

Financial derivatives are instruments of exchange based on the value of some underlying asset, commodity, index or data like jet fuel, share market indices, currency exchange rates or interest rates. By entering into a derivative transaction, one party intends to insure itself from risk by foisting or passing this onto another party who is, in theory, rewarded with marginally higher returns through taking on these risks. Because derivatives have also been packaged for the mass retail market and sold to the person on the street who would buy (into) them because they are packaged to look like normal financial services like savings schemes or time deposits, retail customers may not be fully aware of the nature of the underlying variables upon which a derivative is packaged. Derivatives being complicated financial instruments, retail customers may buy into them without fully understanding their risks. Financial institutions have refashioned ‘risk … transferred to banks by customers’ to be ‘somehow … repackaged and possibly sold back to the same customers’ (Gorton and Rosen, 1995: 336). Glossy sales pamphlets belie underlying conditions in small print, often left undisclosed to retail buyers.

Using my Japanese work situation as a contextual backdrop, I hope to use the motif of the financial derivative to argue that much of what is extant in my experience of Japanese ELT are packaged derivative forms that are bought (into) by universities, higher education administrators, members of the teaching fraternity even, as well as parents and students. These packaged forms conceal their underlying...
Resistance to the Known

Epistemologies which are not commensurate with the value that stakeholders put on them.

**Financial motifs and metaphors**

Metaphorical allusions to the financial marketplace have emerged in discussions on language and language education. Bourdieu (1991) in his discussion of the relations between language, power and politics makes observations reminiscent of the mercenary behaviours of the marketplace, referring to symbolic capital, the way individuals pursue their own interests, the ‘structures of the linguistic market’, the opposition between ‘economism and culturalism’ or the development of an ‘economy of symbolic exchanges’ (Bourdieu, 1991: 37). Blommaert (2010: 28) notes that sociolinguistics is the study of language ‘as a complex of resources, of their value, distribution, rights of ownership and effects’ and of ‘concrete language resources in which people make different investments’. Blommaert (2010: 28) also notes the usefulness of economic metaphors like those developed by Bourdieu in the understanding of sociolinguistic patterns of inequality where, like the marketplace, changes and variations constitute ‘perforce a sociolinguistics of mobility’ where things are ‘less clear and transparent and … messier’. Writing about the complicity of language in corporate-driven globalization, Phillipson (2008: 5) discusses the ‘power of English as a symbolic system in the global linguistic market’ and how, as will be seen later with the case of the ‘Global 30’ universities project in Japan, the legitimacy of this ‘tends to be uncritically unaccepted’. This is amidst a general lack of critical awareness of the ideological processes involved with the ‘greater use of the English language product’ (Phillipson, 2008: 8), the teaching of which has become an ‘export item’ that in turn floods the market with ‘teaching materials, examinations, know-how, teachers et al. – for the British and Americans’ (Phillipson, 2008: 10).

Indeed, the English language has been linked to ‘the dominant economic system of capitalism’, ‘democracy’ and ‘freedom’, thereby paving the way for a ‘global’ English tied to ‘corporate interests’ (Phillipson, 2008: 3–4). One learns that ELT was first developed in the colonies before being brought to Britain (Pennycook, 1998). Written examinations ‘were first developed in relationship to the governance of Britain’s colonies and only then introduced into Britain’, while the English literary canon ‘was first developed in India as a means to … teach British culture and only then imported into Britain’ (Pennycook, 1998: 21). Hence, Pennycook (1998: 21) argues that ‘the theories and practices
of ELT were not so much products of Britain that were exported to the Empire but rather were products of the Empire that were imported to Britain'. Britain now exports English and English teachers (Phillipson, 1992) alongside American efforts at dominating the ‘linguistic market’ (Phillipson, 2008: 7), with the full realization that success lies in the control of ‘ideas, of representations, and mental universes’ (Phillipson, 2008: 3).

Resisting ‘the known’

Observers note that derivatives create kinks, distortions, imbalances and instabilities in the financial system (Schinasi et al., 2000). Whereas traditional banking involved extending loans from borrowed funds, the flooding of financial markets with derivatives trading has changed the nature of systemic risks. The problem as described by Pagliari (2012) is that regulation of financial markets cannot be left to market discipline or industry-driven self-regulation.

In relation to the theme of this book, my discussion will raise issues paralleling the abstruseness and incongruities of the financial marketplace. In the following section, I uncover and plumb analogous situations in Japanese ELT by looking at three derivative tranches (to use a word from the financial markets): (1) standardized proficiency testing as a derivative of business interests; (2) faculty content courses in English as a derivative of institutional survival; and (3) native-speakerist practices as a derivative of Japanese self–other complex(ities).

Standardized proficiency testing as derivative of business interests

The Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) is a bit-item test used widely by universities and businesses in Japan to measure English proficiency. TOEIC is administered by the Institute of International Business Communication (IIBC), a non-profit organization linked to the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan (Kubota, 2011). While the test enjoys amnesty as a non-profit operation in Japan such claims of non-profitability have actually been seriously disputed (Kubota, 2011). As a derivative of collaboration of business leaders and retired government officials, the underlying management structures of TOEIC reveal that it is actually a part of a larger business of testing and measurement operating ‘for-profit’ (Kubota, 2011: 250). TOEIC is undergirded by a substratum of business rhetoric: ‘corporate demands’, ‘test-taker fees’, ‘promotions and sales’, ‘market share of licensing and
certification tests’, ‘creating testing needs by means of research and publicity’, ‘subsidized by money generated by test fees’ (Kubota, 2011: 250). Kubota (2011: 258) questions ‘the ethical and legal legitimacy of the profit-making practice’ of a supposedly non-profit initiative, describing how TOEIC generates ‘by-products in the private sector, such as support materials and preparation programs, promoting the education industry’.

TOEIC is about creating and deriving generative demand for ‘testing and measurement’, allowing operational practices that generate a self-perpetuating demand for more and more of the same pattern of consumer demand: ‘the business interest of the testing industry further creates the perceived needs for developing human capital’ (Kubota, 2011: 258). It feeds into a larger neo-liberal network of ‘arithmetic particularism’ where the language abilities of depersonalized students are rationalized as disembodied numbers (Carlson and Apple, 1998: 9), in keeping with the exploitative notions of the ‘developing’ of human capital and ‘neoliberal policy prescriptions based on the revival of homo economicus’ (Peters and Roberts, 2012: 76). Discussions about employment, job placements, award of scholarships, suitability for study-abroad programmes and university admissions are in turn derivative of the numbers crunched from TOEIC-related figures, measures, statistics and printouts (see Pigott, this volume). This happens despite the caveat that ‘test scores do not necessarily indicate communicative competence’ (Kubota, 2011: 258), which remains secondary.

Self-regulation in these circumstances takes a back seat to the multiple derivations of business and profit through the use of standardized testing to herd, label, classify and channel people, en masse. The fact that language education is party to such activities is ironic.

**Faculty content courses in English as a derivative of institutional survival**

Higher education in the English medium is becoming increasingly popular (Rivers, 2010; Yamagami and Tollefson, 2011). This section discusses matters relating to Japan’s low birthrate, institutional survival and how universities have been increasingly turning to running content courses in English in the hope of attracting more students (Yamagami and Tollefson, 2011).

**English for institutional survival**

Japanese universities have been facing decreasing enrolments resulting from an imploding population. To meet shortfalls in enrolments, policy
makers have sought an increase in the number of international students coming to Japan. This is where the rhetoric of internationalization came in useful. A project called the Internationalization Hub Consolidation Project (the ‘Global 30’ Project for short) was launched as a government initiative, with a view to attracting 300,000 international students by 2020 (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2008). Beyond (or rather behind) the rhetoric of internationalization is a more pressing need for institutional survival, where content courses delivered in English are now seen as a way to garner enrolments (Burgess, 2010; Ito and Asano, 2012; Yamagami and Tollefson, 2011).

However, there are inherent contradictions in such a move. Firstly, Japanese education has no history of having academic content delivered in English. Japanese has incumbently been the one and only language of government, entrepreneurship and education (Heinrich, 2012; Hino, 2009): ‘the Japanese language is dominantly used for almost all domains of Japanese life’ (Hino, 2009: 103). Secondly, having English for academic purposes has many contradictions with the incumbent practice of measuring English proficiency through the use of TOEIC. Conducting degree programmes in English is not a matter of a cosmetic switching (McVeigh, 2006) of medium of instruction.

There are, moreover, different conceptualizations of what language learning means, with serious implications for the use of any language for academic purposes. A structural view of language sees language as subdivisible into atomized components like verbs, nouns, morphemes, phonemes or spelling, where language learning corresponds as mastery of a technical skill (Lea and Street, 2000). Another view looks at language learning as involving a mastery of specific societal and institutional text-types like narration, exposition or argument. A third view looks at language learning as a critical understanding of literacy practices of communities and institutions, in turn tied to sociohistorical realities and issues of language, power and privilege (Lea and Street, 2000). The point here is that beyond mastery of technical skills or specific genres, language for academic purposes actually entails an appreciation of complexities surrounding the nature of knowledge and meaning making, academic literacies and the situatedness of literacy practices (Barton, 2006) – something which may not be sufficiently appreciated when decisions are made to conduct content courses in English, while continuing to have TOEIC as a standardized measure of language proficiency.

Ironically, both academic content courses in English and TOEIC are used as selling points in recruitment advertisements even though they operate at cross-purposes. Toh (2013) describes how the conflation
of English for academic purposes with TOEIC is epitomized in one Japanese university in the Kanagawa area where none other than a TOEIC coordinator was appointed co-director of an academic English programme. Meanwhile, courses in English are represented in advertisements as opening up a brave new world of job opportunities for graduates (Yamagami and Tollefson, 2011). At the same time, advertisements also claim they can improve students’ TOEIC scores. The problem here is that parents may take this to mean that students weak in English may also apply, giving rise to a situation where such students (normally accepted for financial purposes) end up having to sit through lectures in English. In the course of my work as an English for academic purposes teacher, such a situation is not at all unusual. When it happens, it is much to the consternation of content professors who will have to lecture to students who are not ready to learn in English. Emphasis on TOEIC undermines the credibility and tenability of content courses in English.

As for the entrance examinations used for admitting students to content courses in English, I have found from my time on entrance exam committees that they are made up of bit-item test questions that do not reflect the academic English used for university study. Students are for example asked to choose appropriate responses from four alternatives of conversational exchanges at taxi stands or convenience stores, twice removed from the polemics of academic inquiry. Attempts to change testing practices meet with strong resistance (Murphey, 2004). Stanlaw (2004: 286) reveals that ‘the English in Japanese entrance examinations is … picayune, often Victorian, and unusually dull’. Elaborating on this observation, Stanlaw relates his own experience with a practice test:

... that a high school student was using ... As I was both baffled by the directions and the point of the questions my friend dutifully helped me take this test, which I barely passed ... Critics have long lambasted these examinations as being completely ... archaic with little measure of the competence of how well Japanese individuals might actually communicate with someone in English. (Stanlaw, 2004: 268–87)

**Double dealing – doing the opposite of the purported**

Such irony can also be explained metaphorically – as a case of selling one tranche of derivatives, while the institution is feeding (on) the fundamentals of another tranche. Similar instances of double dealing are not unheard of in the world of finance either (Pagliari, 2012).
One reason has been tendered for such an irreconcilable state of affairs. It concerns the status and teaching of English in Japan and the fact that local practices in Japan should not be compared with those in other situations, but be thought of as being uniquely Japanese (Stanlaw, 2004). This ‘fair dinkum’ argument is only to be undermined by the reality that Japan introduced content courses in English as part of a larger initiative to internationalize its universities (Burgess, 2010; Rivers, 2010). Universities cannot tap into the brave new world of English for academic purposes in the hope of attracting enrolments while at the same time remain monolithic in their conceptualizations of language teaching and testing. Neither can Japan have English as the language of ‘Global 30’ while maintaining a strongly nationalistic position against English as a language that causes cultural erosion of Japaneseness (Hashimoto, 2007; Yamagami and Tollefson, 2011). Japan cannot be selling the very derivatives whose underlying fundamentals it is betting against (see discussion on Japan’s ‘frontier within’).

Through repackaging, banks may be getting customers to take back the very risks that customers are paying them to absorb: ‘banks are able to repackage risk in ways that customers prefer to hold’ (Gorton and Rosen, 1995: 336). In the interests of fair dealing, financial regulators are already encouraging compliance among actors in derivative markets which involves ‘tearing up contracts that have essentially opposite positions over the same risk’ (Pagliari, 2012: 53). This is an unethical and unsustainable position.

Meanwhile, another tranche of derivatives awaits discussion.

**Synthesizing, distancing, offshoring and outsourcing**

Before discussing the native English teacher as derivative form, prior observations about the dehumanizing and oppressive tendencies (Freire, 2000) that accompany the increasing mobility of people, monies and commodities in an increasingly borderless world are appropriate (Edwards and Usher, 2008).

Williams (2010: 37) says that in recent times, there have been new phenomena in the marketplace where even intangibles like services are commodified, transacted and outsourced: ‘services which were once impervious to global competition have become tradable’. Williams illustrates what he says using the example of investment banks. He notes that ‘investment banks are hiving off high-intellect equity research and high-end development work to Budapest, South Africa and India’ (Williams, 2010: 37), whereas it was once argued that ‘distant Asian
companies can handle relatively simple tasks such as credit card application, they are unsuited for more complex transactions that western employers can deal with more effectively. The reasons given revolve around the centrality of nuances such as languages and cultural sensitivities’ (Williams, 2010: 37).

In contrast, Williams now notes that there is an intrinsic connection between mobility, the labour market and the role of language. He points out that ‘... the focus is on language as an object that links with other objects. In this sense, the language object is separated from the subjects who use it. These subjects are treated as citizens and workers’ (Williams, 2010: 22).

Given a backdrop of increasing depersonalization in education fuelled by powerful neo-liberal tendencies (Kumar and Hill, 2009), such distances, abstractions, disconnections and separations, between language as object and the subjects who use it, foment the exploitation of people as objects. Filipinos are employed thousands of miles away to do transcriptions of medical files from the United States while call centres are now situated in distant India, where labour costs are a fraction of what they are in the United States (Yamagami and Tollefson, 2011). Such outsourcing is derived from object-to-object linkages – Filipinos, Indians and the English language are all objectified in such an arrangement. Long intangible distances must undefined spaces suited for derivation of ideas for outsourcing and exploitation. Anything can be commodified, fixed, treated, synthesized, teased out, separated or centrifuged. Nothing is sacrosanct. Through the ingenuity of such ‘innovation and enthusiasm’ in financial markets before the ‘crisis of 2007–2009 and the Wall Street crash of 1929’ (Pagliari, 2012: 60), one can gain insights into the native English teacher as a veritable (valuable) outsource.

Offshoring and outsourcing and the ubiquitous native speaker teacher

For the Japanese, the native English teacher epitomizes outsourcing. In this section, I discuss outsourcing not just in a literal sense of why Japanese colleges are ‘increasingly outsourcing their “native speaker” positions’ (Heimlich, 2013: 171). The simple answer to this question would be ‘a concern for the financial “bottom line” [motivating] institutions to save money by outsourcing’ (Heimlich, 2013: 171). The sourcing of native English teachers is increasingly outsourced to NGOs, employment agencies, disembodied ‘Teach English in Japan’ websites and even evangelical organizations.
Beyond such literal outsourcing, there is the issue of the native English teacher as a derivative of distancing and othering, a product of the clever exploitation of sociocultural gaps precipitated by (and in turn accentuating) East–West, North–South dichotomies (Phillipson, 1992, 2008), as well as self–other, *uchi–soto* (insider–outsider) and Japanese–foreigner differentiations still prevalent in Japan (Makino, 2002; Masden, 2013; Stewart and Miyahara, 2011). Kubota (2002) and Honna (2008) tell of dominant conceptualizations of native speakers as being putatively white. Native English teachers are a veritable outsource because they are not *uchi* (insider) to the Japanese. They represent a *soto* (outsider) form to be held at a distance (Makino, 2002).

Outsourcing introduces questions of spatiality (Edwards and Usher, 2003), marginalization, distancing and othering, which Heimlich (2013) starkly pinpoints as being attributable to xenophobia, in Japan’s case: ‘The native speaker’s pure foreignness functions schematically to keep Japaneseness pure. The basic opposition here is “purely foreign teachers” versus “purely Japanese students”. Hybridized foreign teachers risk hybridizing Japaneseness’ (Heimlich, 2013: 175).

Outsourcing and the implications of discussing ‘space in relation to curriculum learning and knowledge production is also ... about how power is distributed and exercised’ (Edwards and Usher, 2003: 3), almost as if the Japanese employers prefer to distance themselves from native English teachers, preferring to stay at one remove from involvement with matters relating to foreignness and foreigners (Masden, 2013; Rivers, 2010; Stewart and Miyahara, 2011). This is understandable on odd occasions like the vivid instance of the rude, irascible and culturally insensitive native speaker job applicant, described in Oda (2007) (see Widin, this volume).

In sum, the white foreigner (Breckenridge and Erling, 2011; Heimlich, 2013; Rivers, 2013; Stewart and Miyahara, 2011) becomes a derivative founded on the divisiveness of *uchi–soto* (outsider–insider) dichotomies. The detrimental effects on the professionalism of English teachers are considered next.

**Derivatives and the teaching connection**

The financial derivative metaphor has been used in this discussion as an evocation (invocation) of inauthenticity, mendacity and contrived-ness. As sophisticated synthetic instruments, financial derivatives evoke multi-layered notions of commodification, dissimulation of hidden variables and a denial of underlying epistemologies. But what does all
this mean for the work of teachers? In this section, I will critically examine what the derivative metaphor reveals about the effects of systemic prevarications on teacher professionalism and subjectivity.

**Teacher disidentification**

These are supposedly happy days for English teachers. Japan has plenty of jobs available and some universities even do recruitment exercises in teachers’ home countries (Oda, 2007). Rivers (2013: 79) describes how native speaker teachers are ‘hired direct from their country of origin’ when university recruiters go on their ‘annual recruitment tour[s]’. Upon arrival in Japan, teachers go through set orientation programmes which quickly groove them into both methods and syllabi (Rivers, 2013). Teachers will see that extended reading programmes complete with graded readers and class sets come ready on department resource shelves. There are self-access programmes and self-access centres complete with PCs, printers, wi-fi, natural lighting and teaching assistants. For good measure, there are also well-established publishers ready with catalogues from which to choose even more resources. For proficiency assessment, there is the ubiquitous TOEIC test. Admittedly, this may be the result of a template mentality. But if one works well with templates, one is likely to derive a sense of security from them: pilots are said to rely on computers to fly their aircraft for all but four or five minutes of an entire ten-hour flight; cabin crew members follow scripted take-off and landing routines; banks have glossy brochures describing the derivatives they are selling.

Kumaravadivelu (2009) provides a personalized account of what it is like working in an environment where a template mentality prevails:

I was getting impatient with my chosen field of TESOL [Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages] that, I thought, was marked by a poverty of intellectual stimulus. I felt that the field was going round and round within a narrow perimeter, jealously guarding its own safe zone, and without opening itself to novel and challenging ideas from the outside world. For too long, I thought, we pretended (and some of us still pretend) that language teaching operates in a nonexistent ahistorical, asocial, and apolitical space. (Kumaravadivelu, 2009: 200)

Like Kumaravadivelu, teachers may also experience the disquiet of things not tallying or falling into place in their work situation, despite their faithfully following the well-recommended and well-trodden paths of ELT and TESOL. Such work-related impasses are symptomatic
of a need for deeper attention to the reflexive nature of teaching and learning (Freire, 1985, 2000, 2005).

The reflexive condition and the derivative condition

The critical educator Paulo Freire had a great concern that education does not present ‘mechanistic view[s] of reality’ (Freire, 2000: 130) and that as an emancipatory enterprise, education should enable people to move from a condition of ‘naïvete to a critical attitude’ through an ‘awakening of their consciousness’ which he called a process of conscientization (Freire, 2005: 38–9). To this end, he advocated that educators engage in a praxis of action and reflection (Freire, 1985, 2000), the outcome of which is a critical consciousness that in turn engenders the humanization of society (Freire, 2000).

In this section, I examine two existential conditions capturing the professional actualities that teachers can find themselves in, in the course of their discharging their duties. I call them the ‘reflexive condition’ and the ‘derivative condition’.

The reflexive condition

What I call the reflexive condition captures an ideal where teachers, ‘as beings of praxis’ (Freire, 1985: 155), are free and able to engender and encourage ‘acts of creation and re-creation’ of new realities and not have to be caught in a ‘naïve consciousness’ that sees reality as static (Freire, 2005: 39). The reflexive condition reifies the importance of professional introspection and struggles over disjunctures in meanings and outcomes of one’s work practices. Reflexivity recognizes a reality that ‘meaning is never truly fixed’ (Williams, 2010: 157) but is dynamic and dialectical (Freire, 1985). Reflexivity, furthermore, finds its place in the ‘essential ambiguity of meaning, and how meaning is manifested in … discourse formations’ (Williams, 2010: 154). As a condition of professional practice, it is actualized ‘when an actor cannot be fully in charge of any discourse’ and when ‘rationality is not only clearly limited but also reflexive’ (Williams, 2010: 154).

Hence, reflexivity is a condition that enables teachers to reject fixed or totalizing perspectives of reality to make room for a greater negotiation of ‘the uncertainties and ambivalence of the contemporary condition’, as well as an appreciation for the ‘endlessness to the processes of teaching and learning’ (Edwards and Usher, 2008: 167). Exigent human considerations like teacher motivation, student motivation, collegiality, and support from the administration are essentially reflexive and call
for deeper thought, apart from matters to do with the language curriculum and classroom delivery.

The derivative condition

The derivative condition on the other hand captures a form of fixity that denies the reflexive condition and the roles of histories and epistemologies in influencing knowledge and meaning. It is a condition that hides, denies and dissimulates. While promoting and legitimating the status quo, ‘knowing is no longer an act of creating and re-creating, but an act of “consuming”’ (Freire, 1985: 168).

The derivative condition is a depletive and devitalizing condition, where explanations of the hows, whys and wherefores fail to take shape, under a regime of ‘determinist rap(s)’ (Edwards and Usher, 2008: 11) and ‘pure transference of knowledge’ (Freire, 1985: 168). Essentialist, stereotyping, reductionist and formulaic views of language and teaching are reified. There is a denial of dialogic views of knowledge and meaning. It is a condition that causes seemingly ‘professional’ answers to be reductively cut and dried, right or wrong, obscuring richer debates around existing knowledge and power structures. Language teaching is taken as neutral, apolitical and ahistorical. Curriculum, methods and methodology, while prescriptive and circumscribed, fail to stand up to theoretical and/or critical scrutiny (Kumaravadivelu, 2009). Very importantly, it is a condition that lulls while it opposes new and alternative constructions of teaching and learning. Teachers become tied to teleological visions of reality (Edwards and Usher, 2008) and teaching becomes an automaton pattern of disconnectedness and discontinuity (Kumaravadivelu, 2009; Rivers, 2013).

Kumaravadivelu (2009: 225), speaking about a ‘pattern that comforts’, describes ironically how ELT routinely responds to periodic changes in teaching methods in a passive and uncritical fashion. What is upheld is a derivative condition, where each succeeding fad (grammar-translation, audiolingualism, communicative language teaching) follows an apathetic ‘pattern that comforts’, whereas more enlightened quarters have already entered into a post-methods condition, where flexibility and reflexivity have gained traction. The problem now is that of whether one can be moved out of the panoptics and inertia of a derivative condition and be able to ‘resist the temptation to be lulled by what is easily manageable and what is easily measurable’ and become ‘willing to work with [the] doubts and uncertainties’ of more reflexive practice (Kumaravadivelu, 2009: 226).
The derivative condition generates a pattern of paralysis and perplexity – making questions of disidentification like the following very difficult to answer.

- **Teacher motivation:** Why am I not feeling that I am doing something worthwhile? Why am I not finding space for creativity and dialogue in my job? Shouldn’t I be challenging students with a diversity of ideas, issues and representations? What can I do to bring spark and meaning back to my work, amidst a dehumanizing environment?

- **Student motivation:** Why are students not raring to engage with materials and activities despite all the talk about learning English for better opportunities? Why are students sleeping in class?

- **Collegiality and mentorship:** What is stifling collegial enthusiasm and imagination? Why are people around me habitually talking about proficiency tests, textbooks and graded readers, student feedback, assessment breakdowns at meetings rather than about how to inspire students by exposing them to current issues, new ideas, thought-provoking twitters and headlines? Why is there so much repetition at ELT conferences – of self-access centres, supervising part-time teachers, enforcing English-only regimes – rather than explorations of new and fresh meanings and ways to mean?

- **Support from administration:** Why am I treated as someone to be deployed as necessary for general duties and unrelated work as recruitment drives, preparation of exam venues, demonstration classes for parents and TOEIC proctoring? Why does administration not talk about how to inspire students at meetings but instead talk about students’ job hunting statistics, proficiency test statistics, student dropout rate, student recruitment and enrolment numbers at meetings?

As for Japan, teachers caught in a derivative condition may experience discontinuities between ‘external appearances (tatemae) and … reality (honne)’ which are said to permeate ‘virtually every level of [Japanese] society, down to small companies whose owners retire early and manage them from the background’ (de Mente, 2005: 131). De Mente relates how it is common for major decisions to be made from ‘behind the scenes’ while ‘contracts and laws are tatemae – facades that are general expressions of intent’ and ‘not meant to be binding’ (de Mente, 2005: 132). One is also reminded that much of the administrative actions of Japanese institutions can be extra-legal, not based so much on principle,
Resistance to the Known law or letter, but on more powerful agendas that are not immediately apparent (de Mente, 2005; Masden, 2013; McVeigh, 2002).

Reasons for perpetuation of the derivative condition among teachers

What are the reasons for the persistence of a derivative condition?

Coding and classification

Social anthropologist Charles Goodwin describes the notion of professional vision where members of professional communities define discursively the conceptual and perceptual parameters that govern their particular field of expertise. An archaeologist and a farmer will perceive soil samples differently; the archaeologist will read history into soil samples, while the farmer will think soil fertility. Such coding and categorization of meaning are discursive in nature and often reiterated by those higher up the professional ladder or institutional hierarchy. Discursive practices, especially the coding system, are carefully shaped and guarded frames of reference that determine the understanding of different phenomena (Goodwin, 1994). It is therefore difficult to reframe ways of perceiving different phenomena that are derivative of particularized professional or institutional codings and discourses.

Holliday (2005) relates how teachers struggle to break out of narrow professional categorizations that strongly influence ELT curriculum and methodology. He argues, for example, that the ubiquitous four-skills syllabus is part of a larger devised system of control in ELT planning and practice. Rivers (2011) similarly describes the narrowness of ‘English only’ regimes in Japan as being part of an entrenched belief in strict monolingual learning environments where the students’ first language is looked upon as a negative influence (see Rivers, this volume Ch. 4). Kumaravadivelu (2009) debunks the narrow concept of ‘method’, saying that it is unsuited to the broad diversities of global classroom situations. Hocking and Toh (2010) argue that early training in TESOL or TEFL certificates or diplomas focusing primarily on honing teachers into second language methodological practices, is an important reason why teachers remain in passive mode.

Challenging work situations

In toxic institutional environments, teachers can be subject to coercion or control to make them conform to certain professional codes or
modes of operation (Rivers, 2013). Oppressive and hegemonic agendas on the part of institutions oblige teachers to operate in particular ways. In Rivers’ (2013) case, it was to do with a contrived English-only regime derived from an environment where native-speaker teachers became symbols and stereotypes of a monolithic English-speaking culture. Such agendas are often associated with what Freire (2000) calls a ‘banking’ approach to education, where knowledge that is seen as static and pre-existent is deposited into learners without any recourse to raising their critical consciousness. These agendas may relegate teachers to a state of ‘fatalistic perceptions of their situation’ which a ‘banking method’ of education ‘directly or indirectly reinforces’ (Freire, 2000: 85). Teachers may themselves be products of a banking education that

... attempts, by mythicizing reality, to conceal certain facts which explain the way human beings exist in the world ... Banking education inhibits creativity and domesticates ... the intentionality of consciousness by isolating consciousness from the world, thereby denying people their ontological and historical vocation of becoming more fully human. (Freire, 2000: 83–4)

Pressures on teachers can furthermore come by way of fixed-term contracts, low salaries and other subjugating strategies that monitor and ensure compliance (Masden, 2013; Rivers, 2013). They could also result in willing subservience among those who comply because of promises of job promotions or job security (Rivers, 2013). The director of the university language centre described in Rivers (2013) for instance resorted to crass unethical tactics like instilling fear in a teacher who wanted to publish an academic paper perceived by the director to be critical of departmental ethos. Recalling his experience, Steven, an ELT instructor at the language centre, said that the director

... asked why I, with two young children and about to start a new position at a sister university, would want to would want to publish this [new] research and risk being fired for it. He said that there were Japanese faculty members who would read the published paper and alert the chairman and that as a result, I could very well lose my job. (‘Steven’ cited in Rivers, 2013: 86)

Needless to say, teachers operate in a derivative condition often not out of choice. Even change itself presents its own challenges (Kumaravadivelu, 2009).
Are derivatives all bad? The case of Japan

For all the dilemmas they create for bona fide programmes and well-meaning teachers, the derivative condition needs to be appraised alongside what I call its ‘niche role’ in the Japanese political economy. In many senses, I would argue that the derivative condition plays into the hands of important goals and agendas that Japan has laid down for itself and for future generations, and is part of a larger continuum of Japan’s post-war politics marked by its occupation by Allied forces.

The turn inwards

Hashimoto (2007) describes powerful inward-looking forces exerting their influence on Japanese society. She describes the workings of these forces in the following manner: that Japan’s future has to be envisioned and realized through explorations of potentials found within the country, its national history, traditions and cultural heritage. Drawing attention to a six-chapter report released by the Japanese government at the turn of the millennium (the ‘Prime Minister’s Commission on Japan’s Goals in the 21st Century’), Hashimoto (2007) also reveals that the motivations behind prevailing rhetoric on the teaching of English in Japan are sustained by an inward-looking agenda rather than one that seeks proper synergies with the international community. The teaching and learning of English are ironically more to do with self-preservation and management of increasingly porous sociocultural borders in a fast globalizing world (Edwards and Usher, 2008). For all the hype or supposed ‘interest’ in English, Japanese remains Japan’s first line of defence against the very changes and revitalizations that English is supposed to herald, a barrier against infiltrations of foreignness into Japanese society (de Mente, 2005; Heinrich, 2012). English has also been viewed negatively and suspiciously as being a source of discrimination, because it marginalizes Japanese speakers of English internationally. Japanese feel discriminated against precisely because they have to learn English (de Mente, 2005). Hence, commenting on the report’s subtitle, ‘The Frontier Within’, Hashimoto (2007) draws attention to its inward-looking bias by highlighting the fact that the word ‘globalization’ comes away with negative connotations in the report. Providing a revealing literal translation of the subtitle – Japan’s frontier lies within Japan – Hashimoto elaborates on how globalization is viewed with wariness:

It suggests that if ‘the good qualities of Japanese’ become ‘universal’, Japan can solve problems within Japan without seeking help from
the outside. In other words, if Japan manages to gain world recognition of the positive qualities of its people and society, Japan can work on its problems within the country without subjecting itself to the powerful forces of globalization. (Hashimoto, 2007: 30)

Commenting on Japan’s internationalization (kokusaika) initiatives in the 1980s and 1990s, Kubota (2002) similarly observes how the discourses surrounding kokusaika were strongly influenced by nationalistic agendas. Kubota (2002) notes with irony that kokusaika was in fact part of a way to reinforce Japaneseness and nationalistic sentiment. Burgess (2010) too observes how attempts at internationalizing higher education traces a push-and-pull pattern of tentativeness – suggesting a desire to protect and preserve national identity while contemplating the need to keep pace with global developments. Not surprisingly, a good number of Japanese universities have continued to show tentativeness or unwillingness to change when it comes to adjustments that will help internationalize their campuses (Houghton, 2013; Masden, 2013). Ito and Asano (2012) describe how universities and their administrators remain nonplussed about proposals to start the academic year in the autumn instead of spring to keep with the schedules of universities overseas. Reasons cited domestic concerns including whether such a change would fit in with Japanese society – like the fiscal year which starts in April, enrolment periods for primary and secondary schools and even how such a change will not work in tandem with athletic events traditionally reserved for the spring. This is apart from an abiding scepticism over the purpose of internationalizing universities and the likelihood of its success.

The deeper truth of repudiation

There may, moreover, be a perception among more conservative elements that Japan and Japanese culture may stand to lose by allowing English to penetrate into various spaces within Japanese society (Oda, 2007; Yamagami and Tollefson, 2011). Despite the immense popularity of English conversation classes (Kubota, 2011), one will observe that in the course of daily encounters, the well-toned gym instructors one meets in fitness clubs can hardly speak English. Post office staff, bank tellers and other people in front-line services, enthusiastic and effusively welcoming as they are, will not speak English. Certain colleagues at university will prefer not to speak English or work up a semblance of discomfort when they find themselves having to use English or as Houghton (2013) describes, there may even be ‘English prohibited’
Resistance to the Known

rules on university campuses, including English departments where English is *not* allowed in daily transactions. There will, moreover, be other colleagues who would not be supportive of having more English seep into the portals of academia (Rivers, 2010). From my own experience, people are generally effusively polite and quick to apologize for their ‘bad’ English or their lack of it. Such encounters are common to the extent that one can hardly put aside the question of whether they actually tell of a larger (but hidden) picture of a repudiation of English, apologies galore notwithstanding. To be sure, both reactions would not be inimical to resistance efforts against linguistic imperialism, the reprehensibility of which is well documented in Phillipson (1992).

What seems objectionable, however, is Japan’s quickness in coopting English into ‘Global 30’ where, in reality, there remains a solid bedrock of resistance against English in the first instance. The duplicity of this is very hard to explain away.

**Business as usual – continuity as trump and foil**

Looking into history, the American occupation’s initial enthusiasm for change succumbed to a perpetuation of Japanese statist conservative elements, with the advent of cold war paranoia (Dower, 1999). Ending up watering the seeds of nationalistic introvertedness (Dower, 1999), the occupation saw to the reassertion of the ultra-conservatives with the release of ‘wartime officials originally purged just after Japan’s surrender, three of whom – namely Hatoyama Ichiro, Ishibashi Tanzan, and Kishi Nobusuke – went on to serve as prime minister. In total, close to 360,000 purged Japanese returned to public life’ (Caprio and Sugita, 2007: 9). The moguls of big business were also given fresh starts (Dower, 1999), ultimately revitalizing a powerful economic autarchy (McVeigh, 2006). On such a basis, many attempts at post-war reform of wartime ultra-nationalistic ideologies met with strong if surreptitious resistance (Kramer, 2007; Nozaki, 2007). The abiding outcomes of such closedness are the ambivalences and anomalies to be found even in post-millennial educational initiatives like the ‘Global 30’ Project. New initiatives have invariably to deal with the derivative baggage of hardline policies from an earlier epoch – the ramifications of which endure to the present.

It is a case of Japan as a nation feeling that it is not able to afford to lose the ascendancy of the Japanese language in the fields of education, business, the law, policy making, governance and other social and political spaces where things Japanese have commanded incumbency. Viewed like this, English manifestly becomes a competitor where
Japanese now holds sway (Yamagami and Tollefson, 2011). Such fears are in many ways not hard to imagine. Greater access to English means a loss of assurance that the status quo remains the status quo, and that matters will not spiral down the long and slippery path into the uncharted unknown.

A derivative condition, in this sense, allows ELT in Japan a margin of time to remain ensconced on a bedrock of known and normalizing conventions. Riding on (rather than resisting) ‘the known’, such conventions travel on the beaten track of well-recognized well-honed practices in TESOL that permit safe, harmless but narrow and neutered forms of English teaching to proceed at a pace and in a fashion that society in general is able to countenance and tolerate. It remains in Japan’s interests to preserve a derivative condition.

**Called as bluff**

Unfortunately, useful and convenient as they are, derivatives have increasingly (and incisively) been the targets of many a critique by different writers writing in areas such as critical literacy, critical applied linguistics or critical pedagogy. Called as such, it may only be a matter of time before the bluff of the derivative condition will no longer be effective, in an increasingly critically beleaguering environment. For example, with increased exposés on native speakerism and the scepticism generated thereof (Holliday, 2013), the widespread use of native speakers may soon be curtailed or be consigned to the narrowest and most petty or inconsequential of situations – corner language schools, English camps for toddlers and retired people, contrived native speaker theme parks, cross-cultural friendship exchanges or sister-city immersion programmes even as it becomes more and more cumbersome or politically incorrect to be riding on such derivatives. Similar exposés on the TOEIC test will, in time, destabilize the derivative as what would have once been an unshakeable monolith.

**Conclusion**

The derivatives of ELT are designed and consigned to be just what they are – derivatives. They are not designed in the first instance for optimal efficiency, let alone effectiveness, except for the issuer. They are artefacts of business and double dealing, there to smooth out, hide or ameliorate risks, rough edges, systemic weaknesses, mendacities and dissemblances, as well as uncomfortable truths set on the tongue-tips of potential whistleblowers. Some of these derivatives are system-proof,
teacher-proof, teacher-defiant or are designed to sideline the teacher as person and professional in an agenda that is both impersonalizing and dehumanizing. While purporting to help teachers and students, they straitjacket and hamstring teaching practice and learning experience, creating a semblance of education while denying its emancipatory attributes. Like leeches, they suck at the discourses of honesty, equity and opportunity not least by secreting the enzymes of confusion, counterproductivity and substandard practice.

The quest to resist ‘the known’ has its work cut out.

Points to ponder

1. What do you think the author is seeking to expose about language teaching in particular by using the metaphor of the financial derivative?
2. Why do you think writings about the English language teaching industry are rife with descriptions using financial motifs and metaphors? What ideas or ideologies do you think these motifs and metaphors are drawing readers’ attention to?
3. What do you think working in a situation of contrived inauthenticity where knowledge and meaning are both viewed reductively will do to teacher morale and dignity?
4. How can a derivative condition be problematized, exposed and critically resisted?
5. Outsourcing and othering are enactments of ideologies that marginalize people. Think of instances in your situation where such ideological enactments in turn undermine teaching and learning.

References


The Impossibility of Defining and Measuring Intercultural Competencies

Karin Zotzmann

Introduction

Language learning and language use are generally viewed as being bound together with cultural elements, practices and processes. Being unaware of other perspectives might easily lead to ethnocentrism, stereotyping and prejudice. Fostering ‘intercultural competencies’ that reduce ethnocentric attitudes, such as the ability to reflect upon taken-for-granted assumptions and the willingness to acknowledge difference, are therefore important aims within contemporary foreign language teaching. The question the present chapter attempts to answer is whether the outcomes of intercultural learning can be adequately described as ‘competencies’. The term seems to suggest specific dispositions, knowledge, behaviour and strategies that can be applied effectively in situations where difference – as some authors would hold – either pre-exists and subsequently influences the communicative situation or, according to others, is made relevant and co-constructed by the agents involved. Despite differences in conceptualizing intercultural learning, the term ‘competence’ appears to be seen as useful and adequate by many authors across a wide range of perspectives.

In order to answer the question outlined above I depart from an exploration of the intercultural learning process as taking place at the boundaries between ‘the known’ (and the ‘taken for granted’) and ‘the unknown’: the experiences not yet lived and the perspectives not yet understood, as well as the discourses and other semiotic resources not yet encountered or appropriated. It will be argued that the boundaries between ‘the known’ and ‘the unknown’ in intercultural learning are to some extent influenced by social structures, relations and discourses. At the same time, these boundaries are also specific to individuals, and
can therefore only be redrawn subjectively. If we accept, however, that intercultural learning is essentially subjective and hence rather unpredictable, how can we describe the outcomes in advance as specific ‘competencies’ and attempt to teach or even assess them? Byram and Guilherme (2010: 5) have already pointed to the inherent contradiction of this terminology:

The expression intercultural competence seems to entail quite paradoxical meanings within it. The concept of competence is often used to seize the dynamics of something fluid and unpredictable implied by an intercultural relation and communication with notions of skills, abilities and capacities, and then to describe and evaluate them. On the other hand, the word intercultural expresses the impact of the unexpected, the surprising, the potential rather than the pre-structured, the foreseeable or the expectable.

I engage with ‘the known’ or ‘taken for granted’ in relation to the definition, acquisition and, ultimately, assessment of ‘intercultural competencies’ on two distinct but interrelated planes: the conceptual level and the level of educational policy. In relation to the former I review and compare, in the first instance, different conceptualizations of intercultural competencies and the respective philosophical assumptions that inform and underlie these views, following taxonomies developed by Spitzberg and Changnon (2009) and Risager (2007, 2011). The different approaches and their concomitant propensity to assessment will be discussed in the context of objections that different authors (e.g. Blommaert and Backus, 2011; Kramsch, 2009; Risager, 2007) have raised against a monolithic understanding of intercultural competence that is based on an essentialist notion of culture and/or the reification of intercultural learning through testing.

While sympathetic to these views, mostly pronounced from postmodern and post-structuralist perspectives, the argument put forth in the second section will both build upon and go beyond these critiques and focus on the role of values and subjectivity in intercultural learning. The ideal competent intercultural speaker is often portrayed as highly flexible, self-reflexive, open to accommodating others and willing to change in the process. Although these are undoubtedly valuable characteristics and desirable educational goals, such views do not necessarily do justice to lay normativity: people need to constantly evaluate their environment, others and themselves, as well as actions by others and by themselves and their reciprocal effects. They do so by drawing
upon sometimes competing values that they have come to hold and believe in for particular reasons and which cannot easily be relativized. As a result, it is important to engage with the reasons individuals have for valuing one form of being, knowing and acting in one particular context over another.

The pervasive trend to describe the outcomes of intercultural learning in terms of competencies needs to be understood to some extent, as I argue in the third part of this chapter, in the context of current neo-liberal education policies. The increase of economic pressure on education systems across national contexts has led to the unquestioned assumption, or ‘the known’, that schools and higher educational institutions have to respond primarily to the exigencies of the economic sphere. Consequently, curricula in different countries have become strikingly similar in their emphasis on vocationally relevant knowledge (i.e. employability), a form of knowledge that is immediately applicable in real-world contexts and that can be assessed for its market value (i.e. competencies). From this perspective individuals are expected to constantly update their ‘market value’ in the face of the rapidly falling half-life of their knowledge and lack of job security (i.e. lifelong learning).

Foreign language teaching and learning are affected by this international trend in different ways, among them the increasing demand to prepare learners for the exigencies of a multilingual and multicultural world in general and for international competition in the labour market. The need for intercultural competencies is therefore often justified by reference to social change, often subsumed under the buzzword of globalization. This is particularly pronounced in structuralist accounts which are based on fairly clear conceptual boundaries between the ‘native’ language and culture and the ‘foreign’ language and culture. For instance, in their Global People Competency Framework, Spencer-Oatey and Stadler (2009: 5) state:

When working across cultures, there are special challenges to drawing the right conclusions about the behaviours, ideas and perspectives we see around us. We tend to see the world through our own cultural filters, particularly when working from our home culture with little opportunity to immerse ourselves in other realities. When working with international partners, we can quickly misinterpret what we see, allowing negative stereotypes of others’ behaviour to replace the need for positive, flexible thinking. To achieve a greater ability to understand our international partners, we require a range of qualities.
Competence-based education (CBE) is, however, so ubiquitous in contemporary education policy that even some postmodern, anti-essentialist perspectives on intercultural learning seem to be in line with its main premises and underlying economistic mantra (see Rivers and Toh, this volume). The fourth and last section of this chapter will therefore try to capture the paradoxical relationship between post-modern views on intercultural communication as hybrid, fluid and performance-based and the output-oriented competence discourse.

The conceptualization of intercultural competence in foreign language education (FLE)

The variety of approaches in these initiatives [to intercultural learning] is so wide and eclectic that it seems difficult to provide a real synthesis. Yet, as the concept of interculturality is complex and tends to receive manifold interpretations, an archaeology of its understanding is necessary more than ever, if we wish to consider its assessment. (Dervin, 2010: 160)

Since the 1980s the field of FLE education has emphasized the interplay between language, culture and identity and promotes intercultural competencies alongside communicative competencies. As Witte and Harden (2010) point out, however, the term ‘intercultural competence’ is rather vague given that its components ‘intercultural’ and ‘competence’ are already ambiguous. Unsurprisingly, it has been associated with a variety of sometimes contradictory meanings designating a range of components in different combinations: attitudes or dispositions (such as self-reflectivity, respect, tolerance, curiosity, flexibility, openness, empathy), knowledge (for instance of foreign languages, or about similarities and differences in communicative conventions and practices), and behaviours, skills and strategies (related to communication and the effective interpretation and negotiation of meaning, for example).

Across different frameworks there seems to be a normative consensus about the dangers of stereotyping, prejudice and ethnocentrism, and hence the need to promote tolerance, open-mindedness and self-reflectivity. This is, however, as far as agreement and commonality reach as different authors arrive at different accounts of interculturality and recommendations for pedagogic practice based on their ontological, epistemological and normative assumptions and commitments. In order to review the main perspectives on intercultural competencies in foreign language education and to evaluate their propensity for
assessment systematically, I draw upon two existing taxonomies, one
developed by Spitzberg and Changnon (2009), the other by Risager
(2007, 2011). Spitzberg and Changnon classify models of intercultural
competence into five types:

- **Compositional models** identify individual components of intercultural
  competence, such as knowledge, skills and dispositions, without
  necessarily clarifying the relations between them or the way they are
  acquired and integrated.
- **Developmental models** also work on the basis of descriptors but empha-
  size the acquisition of individual components through a particular
  sequence of stages.
- **Causal path models** are more specific than developmental models as
  they attempt to identify the causal relationships between the acquisi-
  tion of different components and stages.
- **Co-orientational models** emphasize the inter or procedural aspects of
  intercultural communication; for example, the co-construction of
  meaning and identities.
- **Adaptational models** are similarly oriented towards communicative
  processes, but stress the way individuals adjust their attitudes, under-
  standings and behaviours to others. They downplay the factors that
  emerge from the interaction itself.

Underlying and cutting across different perspectives on intercultural
competence are ontological assumptions about the nature of culture,
and by implication language, communication and identity. Risager
(2007, 2011) distinguishes four main views on the role of culture in for-
alien language teaching. These views developed sequentially but coexist
in a variety of forms and combinations in research and actual pedagogic
practice: foreign-cultural, multicultural, intercultural and transcultural
approaches.

The foreign-cultural approach focuses on the characteristics of the
foreign or target culture that are often conceived of as ideational enti-
ties or ‘mindsets’ that overlap with nation state borders. It was thought
that when acquainted with another language and ‘culture’, learners
might initially become disoriented or even experience ‘culture shock’,
but would over time adjust and adapt. Models based on such essential-
ist assumptions could fall into any of Spitzberg and Changnon’s (2009)
categories except the co-orientational one. All other views are, at least
in principle, compatible with the assumption that participants enter the
communicative situation with fairly ready-made expectations, values,
identities and purposes that do not necessarily change throughout the interaction.

Risager’s second category, the multicultural approach, aims to overcome the limitations of nation-based classifications of people and acknowledges the internal diversity of contemporary nation states. At the same time, though, cultures are often still compartmentalized into fixed entities with clear boundaries, albeit below or above the national scale (for instance, ‘German Turks’ or ‘Kurds’). The *intercultural* as well as the *transcultural* approach are different in that they both focus on the processes of intercultural communication. Authors writing from an intercultural perspective recognize the need for socially appropriate ways of using language with people from other linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and also normally emphasize the co-construction of meaning and identities in communicative instances. Intercultural competencies from such perspectives could include, for instance, flexibility, adaptability, coping strategies, resilience, respect, empathy and tolerance (Spencer-Oatey and Stadler, 2009).

The most influential intercultural model was developed by Byram (1997: 58) who divides intercultural competence into five *savoirs*, which he defines as ‘knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in one’s own and in one’s interlocutor’s country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction’. *Savoir-comprendre* is culture-specific cognitive knowledge, defined as the ability to interpret and understand texts or other semiotic events from another culture and relate them to texts from one’s own culture. *Savoir-apprendre/faire* refers to the willingness to learn more about other cultural practices and ‘to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction’ (Byram, 1997: 61). *Savoir s’engager* is described as ‘critical cultural awareness/political education: an ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one’s own and other cultures and countries’ (Byram, 1997: 63). Finally, *savoir-être* is defined as particular culture-general dispositions, such as openness and the willingness to relativize taken-for-granted assumptions.

In the same publication Byram also laid the groundwork for the assessment of intercultural competence. Commissioned by the Council of Europe, the model was intended to provide clearly defined and measurable components of intercultural competence in the context of foreign language learning. However, it became apparent over the course of this project that intercultural learning was too complex in order to be captured by traditional testing instruments (Liddicoat, 2002;
Sercu, 2004). As a consequence, more qualitative assessment instruments were designed, such as the Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters (Council of Europe, 2004), which offers learners a medium to reflect upon, analyse and evaluate their reactions to their own intercultural experiences.

A more recent attempt to adapt a revised version of Byram’s model to the purposes of assessment was developed by Houghton (2013: 311), who assumes that the identity development of learners, as an integral part of intercultural competence, occurs through five distinct and sequential phases which can be made ‘visible in potentially assessable ways’. At the lower end of this sequence we find Stage 1 (analysis of self), which is largely about reflection upon one’s own values. This is followed by Stage 2 (analysis of other), which ‘involves student exploration of their interlocutor’s values by using non-judgmental, empathy-oriented communication strategies’ (Houghton, 2013: 312). Stage 3 (critical analysis) designates a developmental phase where students identify value similarities and differences between self and other. In Stage 4 (critical evaluation) students are supposedly able to evaluate values of self and other with reference to a clear standard. Finally, at Stage 5 (identity development) they decide whether or not to change in response to the dialogue with the interlocutor. This is, according to Houghton, the meta-reflective endpoint of successful intercultural identity development, which she calls savoir se transformer, the ability to change based on conscious decisions. I will come back to her framework later, but it is important to note that the author: (a) strongly emphasizes the importance of values in intercultural learning; (b) assumes that particular stages in the development of intercultural competence are identifiable and can therefore potentially be subjected to formative or summative assessment. Her perspective is hence more in line with what Risager calls the transcultural view.

Informed mainly by postmodernist and post-structuralist ideas, authors writing from Risager’s fourth, so-called transcultural view, emphasize strongly that culture and identity are multiple, co-constructed and in a constant state of flux and remaking. It is claimed that intercultural speakers not only create their own individual, hybrid and dynamic third space between different lingua-cultures but that instead, complexity, heterogeneity and hybridity are essential elements of any cultural process (Blommaert and Backus, 2011; Dervin, 2011; Kramsch, 2009; Risager, 2007). Kramsch (2009: 118), for example, stresses the need to see beyond the dualities of national languages and national cultures and calls for the development of ‘symbolic competence’, which she defines as ‘... less a collection of savoirs or stable knowledges and more a savviness, i.e., a combination of knowledge, experience and judgment’.
Holliday (2011), Kumaravadivelu (2008) and Canagarajah (2012) likewise argue, albeit from different philosophical positions, that culture is not an entity that pre-exists communication but a category that individuals draw upon when they co-construct identities in instances of communication. These discursive constructions, they argue, often tend to misrepresent both self and other, an imbalance that originates in the inequalities, for instance, between the colonial centre and countries at the periphery. All three authors therefore call for critical cultural awareness and the ability to deconstruct (neo)essentialist and unjust discourses and representations of self and other.

According to researchers who investigate the use of English as a lingua franca (ELF), learners should be encouraged to move beyond cultural stereotypes and become aware of the hybridity and fluidity inherent in all cultural communities and groups. It is suggested that intercultural competence should include ‘above all the acquisition of the pragmatic skills required to adapt one’s English use to the demands of the current communicative situation’ (Jenkins et al., 2011: 301). Of particular interest from this perspective are strategies multilingual individuals employ as they are deemed to be more experienced in relativizing their own beliefs, practices and values, and in accommodating and negotiating meaning in complex situations with speakers from different lingua-cultures. Nunn (2011: 11) similarly claims that intercultural competence includes the abilities to ‘negotiate interim pragmatic norms with interlocutors’ and to ‘adjust to unpredictable multicultural situations’ (Nunn, 2011: 8). According to Nunn, it is the transferability between contexts that is key to intercultural competence:

Competence is therefore partly defined in terms of the ability to transfer what is learnt in one context to other unpredictable (intercultural) contexts. Transferability is the aspect of international communicative competence that best distinguishes it from other aspects of communicative competence. [...] Transferability is the ability to use, adjust or develop knowledge and skills learnt in one context in unknown and often unpredictable contexts. All communication can require us to deal with the unpredictable but Intercultural Communicators need to be even more prepared for the unexpected. (Nunn, 2011: 11)

The emphasis on the decontextualization of intercultural competencies and the decentering of the subject is particularly pronounced by Finkbeiner (2009), who uses the metaphor of the global positioning system (GPS) in order to capture the constant relativization of one’s
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own perspective that is, according to her, necessary when dealing with difference. She argues that we are currently being ‘exposed, surrounded and influenced by many different cultural representations and perspectives’ (Finkbeiner, 2009: 152) and therefore need to be able to process and adapt to this multiplicity. One’s ‘prior knowledge, belief system and values’ (Finkbeiner, 2009: 155) have therefore to be constantly relativized in relation to incoming ‘new data’ from other incongruent perspectives. By accepting the inevitability of decentring, Finkbeiner believes that we can achieve a new, albeit ever-changing, position in the midst of fluidity and change.

Although it is complicated to summarize such a diverse range of views, Jones (2013: 237) probably comes closest by saying that intercultural research in the past decades has been ‘devoted to “disinventing” the notion of culture’ and moving away from a structuralist view that operates with nation-based categories. Instead of understanding culture in terms of what it supposedly is such as, for instance, a shared mindset or a set of traditions, the focus of attention is on what it does, namely the active construction of meaning. Culture, as Street (1993: 23) famously phrased it, ‘is a verb’. Despite substantial differences in theoretical perspectives, the terminology seems to bear witness to the trend of defining intercultural competence less often as cognitive knowledge and more in procedural terms: *savoir se transformer* (Houghton, 2013), symbolic savviness (Kramsch, 2009), and the pragmatic strategies and skills needed to accommodate others and to negotiate meaning (Jenkins et al., 2011). With reference to Bauman’s (2000) concept of liquid modernity, Dervin (2011) even promotes a liquid understanding of interculturality, as opposed to solid essentialist views that overemphasize the durability of cultural characteristics and dispositions.

Such a conceptualization does not lend itself easily to assessment. As a matter of fact, both post-structuralist and postmodern authors often do not aim to be prescriptive or contribute to the development of ‘objective’ tests. Kramsch (2009: 119), for example, stresses that we ‘should then measure what can legitimately be measured and refuse to measure the rest, even though it is essential that we teach it’ in relation to intercultural learning. ELF researchers likewise, albeit for different reasons, oppose testing as it usually presupposes norms and standards that stand in stark contrast to the acknowledgement of the diversity and equity of linguistic practices:

The native speaker has lurked at the top of proficiency scales since the 1950s, even though such scales, especially more recent ones,
tend to avoid such references, replacing them with terms such as ‘expert user’. But what an English as a lingua franca perspective on communication means is that when a native speaker is involved in ELF communication, his/her assumed privileges are no more; not all native speakers are equally good at ELF communication, which involves flexibility and accommodation, anticipation of communication difficulties and strategies for resolving them on the part of both interlocutors, regardless of their native speaker status. (Dewey, 2012: 145)

As a result essentialist and structuralist views still dominate the domain of assessment: a situation that will, according to McNamara (2012: 202; for a similar argument see also Shohamy, 2013) need to be ‘drastically revised’.

While post-structuralist and postmodern structuralist views on interculturality are decidedly different from structuralist perspectives in their emphasis on the fluid, hybrid and generally unpredictable nature of intercultural communication, they nevertheless conceptualize the outcomes and goals of intercultural learning as ‘competences’. This terminology, as I argue in the following section, carries particular associations: for instance, the promise of rendering learning outcomes identifiable, predictable and, at least in principle, measurable (Stevens, 2010). It is this output and performance orientation that aligns competence-based forms of education with political attempts in many countries to attune the education system with the business world. The question I discuss in the following section is whether such a conceptualization of the outcomes of intercultural learning can actually account for lay normativity, i.e. for the role that values and subjectivity play in this process.

**The nature of intercultural learning**

Few authors would disagree with the claim that intercultural learning takes place through an engagement with difference, although they might differ in terms of how to conceptualize this engagement or, for that matter, difference. Intercultural learning thus occurs at the boundaries between what one knows and has been taken for granted and the unknown: the experiences not yet lived, the perspectives not yet understood, as well as the discourses and other semiotic resources not yet encountered or appropriated. It is about crossing current subjective boundaries – which by no means have to be aligned with nation-based categories – and to rediscover the previously ‘known’ from a different
and hitherto ‘unknown’ perspective. It is important to note that empirical observation alone, or the application of a set of standardized procedures or strategies, would be insufficient for generating intercultural learning as both approaches leave the self unchallenged: they are bound to bring more of the same, an accumulation of facts about others based on one’s own pre-established categories and stereotypes.

In order to engage with and understand others’ socially and discursively mediated ways of being, acting and knowing, critical deliberation, self-reflectivity and a willingness to risk loss of control as one goes beyond one’s own interpretative frameworks are necessary, as identified by several of the above-mentioned authors. The ability to critically examine one’s own taken-for-granted assumptions, as well as the depth and quality of such reflections, is influenced, on the one hand, by external factors, such as discourses, social structures and conditions. These include situational factors: for example power relations between the agents involved, as well as more meso- and macro-contextual parameters. Institutions, for instance, are commonly endowed with discourses and values of dominant groups and advance their interests by defining what is regarded as normal. Normalcy, however, often leads to a sense of superiority: ‘Not only is it normal, it’s better. Differences get converted into “better or worse” with the attributes of the dominant group the winners’ (Goodman, 2011: 15).

On the other hand, the degree and depth of self-reflectivity applied in particular contexts essentially depend on the respective subject: individuals react in different ways to experiences that are incongruent with their current frames of reference; some are more reflexive, some might resist taking into account the viewpoints of others or changing on the basis of discrepancies (Archer, 2003). Individuals also differ in terms of previous experiences and critical events, which set the stage for their cognitive and emotional openness and in terms of their knowledge, understanding, judgements and creativity, among a variety of other capabilities that are essential for learning (Sayer, 2011).

In addition to this, altering one’s socioculturally influenced taken-for-granted assumptions and habitual practices is also an emotional endeavour that involves deep-seated values (Byram et al., 2002; Coulby, 2006). This is due to the fact that values are crucial to and inseparable from our perception and assessment of the world, even though such perceptions and evaluations might be misguided, fallacious or imbued with ideology. Humans generally aim to flourish and avoid suffering, and therefore need to continuously evaluate their environment, themselves and others, their actions and those of others,
and their reciprocal effects (Sayer, 2011). Values are thus essential to well-being as they refer to

... things we consider worth cherishing and realizing in our lives. Since judgments of worth are based on reasons, values are things we have good reasons to cherish, which in our well-considered view deserve our allegiance and ought to form part of the good life. (Parekh, 2000: 127)

Values are partly dependent on available discourses, and are partly subjective, but they also refer to a social- and material-based reality. In other words, people usually do not act upon and relate to the world in a hyperflexible manner, ready to adjust to and accommodate others and to relativize their own taken-for-granted assumptions. On the contrary, they commonly have a stake in particular situations and morally evaluate what they experience. Tolerance, for instance, is a concept that is often used in or underlies descriptions of intercultural competence, but is not a transferable disposition. Instead it is closely tied to an evaluation of a specific situation where it makes sense for specific individuals to display such an attitude. When interests are at stake, for instance, they might be less likely to be tolerant. The willingness to tolerate is also often dependent on pre-existing power relations. The appeal is thus generally made towards majorities with the resources to exert influence on minorities in the hope that they will refrain from doing so (Mendus, 1989).

While I agree with Houghton (2013) that an understanding of values is essential to any account of intercultural learning, my argument is that we need to engage with the actual reasons agents have for valuing the things they do. As much as it is important to understand individuals as having complex and dynamic value systems characterized by internal contradiction and conflict (which Houghton (2013: 312) terms ‘within-self diversity’) we also need to understand the social reality learners talk about – and the discourses they draw upon – in order to position themselves and express their views. Only if we directly engage with their value statements, their referents in the external world, and the discourse they draw upon, can we encourage them to become more reflective and critical of their taken-for-granted assumptions. My position is therefore probably closest to Kramsch’s (2009: 360) post-structuralist view that we need to understand the ‘discursive practices between people who speak different languages and occupy different and sometimes unequal subject positions’. But in order to do so, we actually need to
understand the social, economic and political conditions that enable particular subject positions and particular discourses.

Suggesting otherwise, namely that intercultural competencies can be identified and abstracted from concrete contexts, runs the risk of misunderstanding lay normativity. What is more problematic, though, is that on the basis of such a conceptualization we might not only foster particular behaviours, dispositions and knowledge in our students and marginalize important others, but also classify some students as more interculturally competent than others. From a post-structuralist perspective we could ask: Who is entitled to enunciate such a classification? Whose interests are being served by it? What discourses does the classification system draw upon? In order to answer these questions, it is important to historically contextualize CBE and analyse its associated baggage.

**Competence-based education**

Competence-based education (CBE) ranges from a narrow understanding that deals with measurable and observable behaviour at one end of the spectrum to more holistic views at the other. Although CBE takes different forms and shapes in different institutional contexts, it is only one of several possibilities for defining educational goals and concomitant contents and as such emphasizes particular issues while sideling others. The term ‘competence’ is hence not an empty signifier (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985) that allows different authors to articulate different, often contradictory meanings, while at the same time holding the discourse together; instead, the term carries particular connotations.

Originally, CBE was developed in the 1960s and 1970s for vocational education and training in Europe and the United States but has been disseminated in different national and institutional settings since then (Arguelles and Gonczi, 2000). In general, CBE attempts to turn novices into competent agents in professional or other areas. Effective performances of experts in specific task-based situations have to be identified, described and segmented in empirically defined competence standards before they can be used for the design of pedagogic interventions. In the case of intercultural competence, the experts could be, for instance, successful intercultural (multilingual) interlocutors (the conditions for behaviour to count as ‘successful’ would obviously need further clarification).

The rationale behind CBE is that students should be enabled to act on the basis of what they learned. Merely passing on knowledge for students to pass exams or teaching content that is not useful, i.e. that
cannot be applied in everyday or professional situations, is regarded as futile. The approach is hence output-oriented, i.e. the focus is not so much on the kind and quality of education or training individuals receive, as long as they are able to apply their knowledge effectively to real-world tasks. Competence-based curricula are therefore closely tied to the description of performance standards, as for instance in the case of the can-do descriptors of the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001). Standards, in turn, promise objectivity, clarity and transparency for the specification and assessment of learning outcomes.

According to Jones and Moore (1995) CBE makes intuitive sense but raises theoretical as well as pedagogical problems. In the first instance, it is unclear whether individual components of a particular competence can and should be taught separately and how and when training and teaching will bring about an integrated performance. Competence training at the narrow, behaviouristic end also appears to be insufficient to prepare learners for tasks that require innovation, creativity and flexibility, as it is based on descriptors of existing job performances. In addition to this, the fact that some tasks or problems might be ill-defined is not taken into consideration. In real-world contexts, individuals often need to use their judgement in order to re-evaluate situations to come up with innovative solutions.

The term ‘competence’ also disguises crucial differences between types of performances, as Fleming (2006: 50–1) points out in the case of teaching literature in foreign language learning:

There is a difference for example between a lower order achievement such as ‘can recognise a simile in a text’ and a higher order achievement ‘can understand and interpret critically complex literary texts’. The first statement is an action in the strict sense in that it can literally be performed. The second statement ‘can understand …’ is not an action in this narrow sense and would need further discussion and negotiation to provide the kind of transparency which competency statements are expected to deliver. What for example does ‘understand and interpret critically complex texts’ actually mean?

Time is another factor that raises concerns. Whereas experts acquire their often tacit practical knowledge through long-term continuous practice in real-world (often professional) contexts, students are assumed to reach similar performance levels in a far shorter time span. In addition to this, their learning mainly takes place in classrooms, i.e. under completely
different conditions and in the context of different interpersonal relations. In order to reach curricular goals, teachers consequently have to simulate real-world contexts and situations but their ability to do so is dependent upon the availability of resources. Extensive time for the preparation of lessons and opportunities to participate in professional development courses are simply not conditions that can be taken for granted in many national and institutional contexts. Given this range of challenges, Jones and Moore (1995: 81) conclude that CBE is attractive to policy makers for ‘disaggregation of different skills and measurable standards of performance, rather than its intrinsic viability’:

Essentially, the problem is that it is precisely those features that constitute its virtues from a policy point of view (the clear and simple operationalisation of disaggregated ‘skills’ and measurable standards of performance) that condemn it theoretically and methodologically. Any attempt to strengthen the model by moving in a holistic or relational direction disables it as a policy instrument.

Even if competence is understood as an integrated and holistic combination of knowledge, dispositions and skills, the emphasis remains firmly on task performance (Gonczi, 1994; Hager, 1995). The reduction of knowledge to performance-oriented abilities has not only given rise to a number of criticisms of CBE on theoretical and pedagogical grounds; various authors have also pointed to the ideological nature of its underlying assumptions (Barnett, 1994; Biemans et al., 2004; Hyland, 1994, 2001). As a pedagogic discourse CBE generally aims to attune the workforce to the needs of a highly competitive work environment while other education goals such as criticality, citizenship or aesthetic appreciation are often marginalized. Flexibility and adaptability are stressed in an environment that is characterized by unpredictability and job insecurity. The focus is therefore on the individual, who can and should constantly work on, improve and adapt his or her skills to existing and future demands.

For the context under discussion, I would claim that the term ‘competence’ is seemingly attractive for a number of reasons. On one hand, it is sufficiently vague for different researchers to articulate quite diverse viewpoints about it; on the other hand, the term suggests that:

- the desirable outcomes of intercultural learning are to some extent performance-based and can hence be applied in practice (for instance by graduates who enter the job market);
they are needed in situations where diversity becomes or is made relevant (for example in professional situations characterized as ‘international’);

- knowledge, dispositions and skills of ‘experts’, i.e. interculturally competent individuals, can be identified and then taught to or learned by novices;

- as these forms of knowledge, dispositions and skills are identifiable, they might – at least potentially – be subjected to assessment.

While authors writing from a foreign cultural or intercultural perspective would probably subscribe to these assumptions, it seems paradoxical that authors who stress the fluid, hybrid and unpredictable nature of intercultural communication would adopt a similar terminology. The aim of the next section is to analyse two interrelated factors which might partially account for this paradoxical wedding of two apparently contradictory discourses. These two factors are (a) the strong anti-essentialist stance and (b) the conflation of the perspective of the researcher with that of the lay person. A caveat: I understand postmodernism largely as a philosophical stance that emphasizes difference and epistemological relativism while at the same time rejecting essentialism, normativity and universalism. Different authors might articulate and prioritize these concerns in different ways, they might be influenced by different kinds of philosophical strands, and above all they might not consider themselves as ‘postmodernists’. As a matter of fact, I do not aim to categorize individual authors or their work, my intention is rather to isolate arguments and claims that feature postmodern influences.

Paradoxical relations

Postmodern anti-essentialism and intercultural competencies

As outlined earlier, over the past few decades research on interculturality has moved away from structuralist accounts of culture that operate within nation-based categories and stressed the fluidity, performativity and inherent hybridity of all cultural processes. The concept of hybridization, in particular, has become ‘an antidote to essentialist binaries’ (Block, 2012: 59). Friedman (2002: 24) describes this trend as caused by

... a fascination as well as a desire for the hybrid, not just as an interesting meeting between cultures but as a kind of solution to
what is perceived as one (if not the major) problem of humankind, *essentialism*, in the sense of collective identification based on similarity, imagined or real, on the shared values and symbols that are so common in all forms of ‘cultural absolutism’.

According to the same author, anti-essentialists not only critique nation-based categories in terms of their underlying essentialist concepts, categories and assumptions, they reject the entire ‘family of terms that convey closure, boundedness’ (Friedman, 2002: 25), attempt to reveal the constructed nature of such categories, and try to show the true hybrid and contingent nature of societies. Cogo (2012: 292), for instance, summarizes the central concerns in the ELF literature as including

... a focus on language as co-constructed and emergent from dynamic processes and practices; a separation of language from traditional associations with nation-states, or a particular ‘culture’ and ‘identity’; a view of speech community as formed in practice with a developed-in-common sociolinguistic repertoire; an emphasis on accommodation and adaptation to different groups and fluid ideas of normativity ...

Anti-essentialists are of course right in their critique of discourses and practices that label groups of people in ways that suppress difference. But while nationalism commonly departs from an essentialist idea of culture, essentialism is neither always associated with nationalist ideas nor is it essentially wrong:

... essentialists need not assert that all members of a class are identical, in every respect, only that they have some features in common. It is therefore not necessarily guilty of homogenising and ‘flattening difference’; it all depends which features are held to be essential, and it is a substantive, empirical question – and not a matter of ontological fiat – whether such common, essential properties exist. (Sayer, 2011: 456)

The problem, as the same author points out, is not the assertion of same-ness or difference, but the mistaken attribution or denial of particular characteristics (see Stanley, this volume). Racism, for instance, is wrong on both counts, as it is based on the one hand on ‘spurious claims about differences which actually have no significance, and on the other denial of differences – through the stereotyping characteristic of cultural
essentialism – which are significant’ (Sayer, 2011: 457). Conversely, denying sameness and ‘asserting instead difference to the point of implosion into “de-differentiation”’ (McLennan, 1995, quoted in Sayer, 2011: 455) runs into the danger of overlooking durable structures and power relations that influence individuals.

Evaluations and (mis)representations of others are not exclusively based on essentialist categories in people’s minds; they are often rooted in socio-economic differences and injustices. This, however, is the pressing question that an understanding of culture as fluid and procedural leaves open; namely what kind of meanings become articulated in a particular communicative situation, by whom and for what kind of reasons. In other words, we need to know about the distribution and accessibility of linguistic, cultural and symbolic resources before we can make claims about how they are mixed. I therefore agree with Fairclough et al. (2001: 7) who argue that we need to put

... semiotic processes into context. This means locating them within their necessary dialectical relations with persons (hence minds, intentions, desires, bodies), social relations, and the material world – locating them within the practical engagement of embodied and socially organised persons with the material world.

Postmodern anti-essentialist accounts of interculturality often try to avoid the ‘essentializing tendency to link’ identity with place or context (Coffey, 2013: 269) and have therefore turned to micro-interpersonal communication and meaning-making practices. Sayer (1999: 34) describes this theoretical perspective as ‘interpretivism’, designating a ‘tendency to reduce social life wholly to the level of meaning, ignoring material change and what happens to people, regardless of their understandings’ (see also Fay, 1996).

The disengagement with the social and material reality of language learners and users and thus with lay normativity probably has a variety of causes, among them the conflation of the perspective of the academic with that of the layperson. Academics dedicate part of their professional life to the deconstruction and reconstruction of concepts and categories without having to engage directly with the practical implications of their work. For them contexts are seen as neutral sites for research, while for the person involved the situation is immediately relevant to their life. Thus while essentialist categories might appear to be socially constructed to distant and detached researchers, it does not necessarily make them wrong for people who act in real-world contexts.
As Jones (2013: 238) points out, in order to think and talk about something we actually have to ‘detect its distinguishable features, a process that inescapably will involve essentialization’:

To say that culture is ‘socially constructed’ does not make it any less real for those who find themselves living within the confines of its material manifestation of laws, borders, passports, language tests, prisons, clinics, and classrooms. As Hacking (1999, p. 31) points out, ‘classifications do not exist only in the empty space of language, but in institutions, practices [and] material interactions with other people’. As much as culture is a verb, it is also, in a very real sense a noun, and for many people the solidity of its substance is hard to escape. (Jones, 2013: 238)

Woodin (2010) not only exemplifies in her study that using essentialist categorization is a necessary part of meaning-making, but also shows that it can serve diverse purposes. Among these are signalling similarity and difference in meaning, understanding perspectives and making oneself understood, and identifying a need for help from one’s interlocutor (for example helping with vocabulary, showing solidarity with the other through identifying with concepts like culture/country/language associated with their partner, and showing the relativity of one's or one's partner's perspective).

Contrary to the anti-essentialist perspective, I would argue that intercultural education has to engage with the actual circumstances and material reality learners refer to and have a stake in (Coffey, 2013). It needs to take the first person subjective relationship to the world seriously if it aims at fostering self-reflectivity, empathy, criticality and the transformation of meaning perspectives.

Conclusion

This chapter engaged with ‘the known’ or ‘taken for granted’ in relation to the acquisition and, ultimately, measurement of intercultural competencies on two distinct but interrelated planes: the conceptual level and the level of educational policy. I argued that intercultural learning is an embodied process that depends on a variety of external and internal factors, among them value commitments. The outcomes of such a complex, highly subjective and partially emotional learning process are therefore generally unpredictable and certainly do not lend themselves to assessment. My argument aligns with views put forth by
some post-structuralist authors such as Kramsch (2009), who advocates that educational institutions should test what is testable and teach what is valuable, namely critical awareness and reflectivity. Changing students’ perspective, by reaffirming or realigning their values and attitudes, would be regarded as a possibility but not an imperative; it would ultimately be left to individuals and their personal developmental trajectories and decisions.

I also discussed postmodern views on intercultural learning that envisage the intercultural learning process as being essentially about decen-tring and hybridization. Even though a general willingness to engage in self-reflection and an ability to pursue one’s own pragmatic objectives in communicative situations characterized by instability and difference are important, such dispositions and behaviours cannot be extrapolated from the specific contexts they occur in and relate to. By designing intercultural competencies as both context- and content-independent, anti-essentialist perspectives paradoxically share the shortcomings of reductionist competence-based forms of education. They assume that such abstract abilities exist, that they are performance-based and trans-ferable, that they can be taught, and that they might, at least poten-tially, be subjected to assessment.

The overall aim of this contribution was not to develop another model of intercultural competence, to identify new components, or to make claims about their interrelationship and their sequence of acqui-sition. Instead, the objective was to critically reflect upon taken-for-granted assumptions – or the ‘known’ – in relation to conceptualization of the outcomes of intercultural learning as ‘competencies’. The argument was based on and motivated by the idea that academic discourses about intercultural education shape ideas and practices of intercultural interaction. Since researchers provide cognitive and discursive resources for thinking about, relating to and communicating with others, it is important to reflect on the way interculturality is constructed, as indicated by Blommaert (1995: 5):

... we should not only worry about intercultural communication per se, but also about the way in which it is perceived, interpreted, construed, and structured by all kinds of people, including ourselves. In short, we should be committed to investigating the ideologies surrounding intercultural communication.

Motivated by a concern about the taken-for-granted nature of current ideas about the role of education as servant to the economy, I argue that
intercultural education should not be reduced to generating educational output or performance-based competencies. Intercultural education, as well as any other form of education, has to fulfil a vital social function: to develop individuals as socially responsible and open-minded people, to enable democratic debate and reflexivity, and to nurture and strengthen our moral imagination. It is therefore important to engage with individuals, the reality they experience and their concrete ethical commitments and concerns.

Points to ponder

1. How can we conceptualize the intersection of social and subjective factors that influence intercultural learning?
2. How can we encourage the subjective and normative intercultural experiences of our learners?
3. How can we include ethical and moral considerations in intercultural education?
4. How can we engage with the social and material world, as well as with political and economic aspects that are relevant to intercultural learning?
5. What conceptual alternatives exist to the concept of competence?

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Introduction

In many parts of the world foreign language education is synonymous with the teaching and learning of English. However in the UK and other contexts where English is the predominant language and the language used to teach most of the school curriculum, modern foreign languages and English (L1) are perceived as very separate subject areas, with their own curriculum, subject culture and pedagogical practices. This chapter explores and questions the subject boundaries between modern foreign languages and English in the UK context and looks at language teacher education programmes which attempt to create a dialogue between the two subjects in order to resist the traditional subject boundaries which exist in language education. The case studies reveal both the possibility of challenging ‘the known’ in relation to these subject boundaries within a teacher education context, but also the difficulties of maintaining such resistance within the school environment post-training.

Detailing ‘the known’

Within the structure of the current National Curriculum for England and Wales modern foreign languages and English are clearly treated as separate subject areas and in a British teacher-training context the majority of programmes are delivered through subject-specific work and grouping. The National Curriculum for 11–16 aged students (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2007) continues to be structured around traditional notions of subject and this has been seen as a strength by the chief executive of the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority.
Authority. In a speech in July 2007 (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2007) he stated, ‘The … curriculum builds on the best of the past by maintaining the discipline of subjects.’ Despite this statement the curriculum content for modern foreign languages reveals a good deal of overlap with English (L1) and the policy 2008 (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2007) does provide arguments for cross-curricular approaches. The modern foreign languages curriculum for 11–16-year-olds currently includes the following key concepts which are also relevant to the English (L1) National Curriculum:

- Knowledge, skills and understanding of listening, speaking, reading and writing in a range of situations and contexts.
- Applying linguistic knowledge and skills to understand and communicate effectively.
- Understanding how a language works and how to manipulate it.
- Recognizing that languages (and language varieties) differ but may share common grammatical, syntactical or lexical features.
- Using familiar language for new purposes and in new contexts.
- Using imagination to express thoughts, ideas, experiences and feelings.
- Appreciating the richness and diversity of other cultures.
- Recognizing that there are different ways of seeing the world, and developing an international outlook.

In addition the modern foreign language curriculum describes skills and learning strategies, the majority of which also apply to the learning of English as L1. For example school students need to be able to:

- identify language patterns.
- develop techniques for memorizing words, phrases and spellings.
- use previous knowledge, context and other clues to work out the meaning of what they hear or read.
- develop the ability to communicate effectively orally.
- use reference materials such as dictionaries appropriately and effectively.
- skim and scan written texts for the main points or details.
- respond appropriately to spoken and written language.
- write clearly and coherently, including an appropriate level of detail and redraft their writing to improve accuracy and quality.
- adapt language they already know in new contexts for different purposes.
• deal with unfamiliar language, unexpected responses and unpredictable situations.

One of the learning strategies identified in this curriculum specifically recommends that school students use their knowledge of English or another language when learning the modern foreign language. Since 2007 there have been attempts to introduce modern foreign languages into the curriculum at an earlier age, prior to 11 years. Interestingly the draft guidelines for a new modern foreign languages curriculum in 2014 for school students aged 9–11 years is based on the same concepts, skills and strategies as for 11–16 years (Department for Education, 2013). It also highlights that learning another language presents opportunities for the reinforcement of knowledge, skills and understanding developed in other curriculum areas including:

• aspects of English such as speaking and listening skills, knowledge and understanding of grammatical structures and sentence construction.
• songs, alphabet, poems, rhymes and stories in other languages.
• international or multicultural work, for example celebration of festivals, storytelling.

**Known subject boundaries**

Evans (1988, 1993), in his study of differences between English and modern foreign languages in a higher education context, distinguishes between notions of ‘discipline’ and ‘subject’. He is concerned with the seemingly arbitrary nature of subject boundaries between English (L1) and modern foreign languages. Discipline is understood as the term defining the body of knowledge, which constitutes the boundaries of the discipline. The term ‘subject’ is used to define how this body of knowledge is organized or institutionalized as part of a university or school curriculum. This can result in arbitrary boundaries between subjects. Evans goes on to suggest that it is perhaps a difference in perception and/or experience of a discipline which leads to institutionalized difference as subjects rather than intrinsic differences in discipline. This suggestion provides an explanation for the common ground identified earlier in the modern foreign language and English curricula; modern foreign languages and English share a body of disciplinary knowledge but government policy and therefore school organization of curriculum are structured around an institutionalized separation of
disciplinary knowledge into subjects. Bernstein (1996) also recognizes the institutionalized nature of differences between subjects; however his explanation for these is in terms of power relations at the societal level rather than individual perceptions and experiences. He refers to school subjects as ‘singulars’ and defines them as ‘knowledge structures whose creators have appropriated a space to give themselves a unique name, a specialized discrete discourse with its own intellectual field of texts, practices, rules of entry, examinations … Singulars are … protected by strong boundaries and hierarchies’ (Bernstein, 1996: 65).

Evans (1988, 1993) identifies the possible ways in which knowledge is constructed by institutions as ‘subject’ as having an influential effect on the ways in which individuals come to perceive subject boundaries and their identities as subject specialists. This institutionalization of a closed subject identity is usually transferred into the teacher-training context, thus a teacher-training programme with links to both school and higher education contexts provides an ideal site to contest these fixed subject boundaries. Bernstein (1996: 66) notes that ‘the organisation of discourse at the level of the school is firmly based in singulars, despite movements to regionalisation in higher education’. Bernstein (1996: 65) discusses the construction of ‘regions’ as a recontextualization of ‘singulars into larger units which operate both in the intellectual field of disciplines and in the field of external practice’. He argues that ‘regionalization as a discursive procedure threatens pedagogic cultures dominated by singulars and raises issues of legitimacy for such cultures …’ (Bernstein, 1996: 66). This is clearly relevant to an examination of the curriculum similarities of modern foreign languages and English (L1) and the tensions between these similarities and the construction of school subject.

The status and power of English

English, as well as a curriculum subject, is the national language and the language of instruction in most UK schools. It is accorded high status as a powerful global language and this has implications for modern foreign language education. There is an impact on the motivation to learn other languages, perceptions of need for modern foreign language education and consequently the status of modern foreign language education as a curriculum subject. For many years in the UK teachers of modern foreign languages have struggled to argue the case for the value of their subject and hence for resources and curriculum time. Eric Hawkins (1987: 4), an important national scholar and advocate for language teaching for many years, famously used the metaphor of
growing in ‘a gale of English’ to highlight the difficulties for modern foreign languages teachers caused by the power and status of English. Two important reports which highlight this struggle, the Nuffield Languages Inquiry (2000) and the Languages Review (Department for Education and Skills, 2006), were commissioned by the government in the last two decades in order to investigate and make recommendations to address problems of low motivation among school students for learning modern foreign languages. This struggle has often resulted in an emphasis on the differences between modern foreign language education and English (L1) in order to establish a stronger identity for the subject of modern foreign languages rather than on finding ways to establish a dialogue between the two subjects which recognizes their common ground within a discipline.

Multilingual, global social context

Many perceptions of ‘the known’ related to foreign language education derive from a pre-technological age with more limited global communications and hence clearer linguistic demarcations. Despite the power and status of English, the UK context for education is far from monolingual. The most recent census of England and Wales (Office for National Statistics, 2011) provides the following information about the linguistic diversity among the 56.1 million residents:

- 546,000 speak Polish.
- there are 562,000 Welsh speakers in Wales.
- there are more than 104 different languages or language groups.
- the 49 main languages have at least 15,000 speakers.
- 4.2 million, or 8 per cent of the total residents of England and Wales aged over three, have a main language other than English.
- after English, Welsh and Polish, the next largest language groups in England and Wales were the South Asian languages of Punjabi, Urdu, Bengali (including Sylheti and Chatgaya) and Gujarati which taken together account for close to a million people.
- these are followed by Arabic, French, Chinese and Portuguese.
- the majority of the 141,000 Chinese speakers in England and Wales do not count Mandarin or Cantonese as their main language but one of dozens of regional dialects such as Hakka and Hunanese.

These statistics indicate that there are numerous bilingual speakers in the UK with a varied and changing repertoire of linguistic skill and
knowledge. Indeed immigration, travel, economic and technical developments have introduced a wide diversity of languages and linguistic varieties into everyday life in UK society. However, despite the commonalities identified earlier between modern foreign languages and English (L1) this linguistic variety is not as fully reflected as it could be in the curriculum concepts and skills of either subject. Government documents supporting the English (L1) curriculum over the last decade, for example the various National Strategy Frameworks (Department for Education and Employment, 2001; Department for Education and Skills, 2003) and the cross-curricular Language for Learning (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority, 2000) document have focused on learning outcomes for the development of the English language with limited reference to pupils’ prior knowledge or use of other languages. Publications from the National Strategy for schoolchildren aged 5–16 years (Department for Education and Employment, 1998, 2001) focus attention on explicit knowledge and teaching of grammar at word, sentence and text level in English (L1). These policies and reports have presented various interpretations and models of language within education. On the whole these have been applied to the consideration of the English language rather than taking a broader perspective and viewing language as an area of study encompassing underlying principles which can relate to all languages and language varieties.

The most recent draft National Curriculum for modern foreign languages for school students aged 9–11 years proposes a limited list of languages for study as French, German, Italian, Mandarin, Spanish, Latin and Ancient Greek (Department for Education, 2013). The document also assumes that school students will in the main learn only one specific foreign language. Although this document does propose that students might be taught ‘how to make use of their knowledge of English or another language in learning the foreign language’ (Department for Education, 2013: 1), this link between English and other languages is not emphasized elsewhere in the document and appears to be an additional (optional) activity rather than a central objective.

The continued global status of English cannot be taken for granted in the future. Graddol (2000) suggests that rather than sustaining its status as the single most important global language, English is more likely to become one of an ‘oligopoly’ of important world languages with Chinese, Hindi/Urdu, English, Spanish and Arabic as the most significant in a hierarchy of world, regional, national and local languages. Thus any language education initiative for the future needs to examine English alongside other languages.
It is important to recognize that there is a failure in the institutionalization of ‘the known’ curriculum to acknowledge the potential for developing a language education which draws on the disciplinary similarities between modern foreign languages and English (L1), as well as the linguistic diversity of society, in order to prepare school students for the future.

Resistance to ‘the known’

Despite the power of ‘the known’ there have been some notable examples in the past of ‘resistance’ to the underlying assumptions of ‘the known’ curriculum in the UK. These examples have attempted to challenge traditional perceptions of English and modern foreign languages as curriculum subjects but have not been fully incorporated into government policy.

Eric Hawkins (1999: 124) reaffirmed his views on bringing together teachers of modern foreign languages and English (L1), ‘I proposed a new subject, “language”, to be taught as a bridging subject, linking English and the foreign language in the curriculum.’ In his seminal ‘Awareness of Language’ Hawkins (1984) advocates teaching about a number of areas of language including language varieties, language change, language acquisition, language as communication (including meaning), language uses, language structure and language learning. One of Hawkins’ key aspirations was for some integration of language work in schools across English (L1) and modern foreign languages. Further ideas about developing coherence across subjects in approaches to language education are also discussed by Brumfit (2001). He created a charter for language rights incorporating the study of modern foreign languages, English (L1) and students’ community or heritage languages. Hawkins and Brumfit’s ideas were focused on curriculum content rather than examining pedagogical approaches for this curriculum content. The Association for Language Awareness grew from the work of Hawkins and continues to thrive but now tends to be more concerned with form-focused language learning within L2.

One attempt to introduce some reference to other languages and language varieties into the English (L1) curriculum was made by the LINC (Language in the National Curriculum) project (Carter, 1990). This was set up to provide training and classroom materials for teachers to work with language in the English (L1) curriculum. It suggested five linked areas which would provide a ‘Knowledge about Language’ curriculum (see Department of Education and Science, 1988). The materials
produced stemmed from Halliday’s systemic functional grammar (see Halliday and Matthiessen, 2004), focusing on meaning and language as social construct and practice. These materials were criticized by government ministers of the time because the model which was being proposed stemmed from a broader sociolinguistic basis rather than exploring formal grammatical analysis as an area of study in its own right. However, the materials did contain a central focus on language diversity both within English and in relation to other languages.

Resistance through dialogue

It was against this background that in 1998 the authors began developing an approach to language teacher education which challenges the traditional separation of foreign language study as a school subject in the UK and questions the role of the language teacher. The approach aimed to train teachers to consider how learning and teaching a specific language (whether it be L1 or a modern foreign language) contribute to conceptual understanding of the nature of language as a whole. This was achieved through the development of a teacher language awareness education programme which brought together student teachers preparing to teach either modern foreign languages or English (L1) to school students aged 11–18 years. This programme occurred at various points during a yearlong postgraduate teacher training. At a later point the experience of this approach provided a basis for a further teacher-training programme introducing early foreign language learning to student teachers training to teach school students aged 5–11 years.

The pedagogical approach used in the teacher language awareness education programme created a new ‘discursive space’ in order to challenge and explore issues related to language education in both subject areas. Pavlenko and Lantolf (2000: 175) use the term ‘discursive space’ in their work on language and identity in relation to second language learners. They construct the use of dialogue as a powerful agent of change, a ‘participation’ metaphor which ‘allows for the opening of a new discursive space’. In this case the discursive space brought together the two subject communities of modern foreign languages and English (L1) in order to challenge the institutionalized constructions of the discipline as two subjects. At the start of their training course the student teachers’ views of language reflected the discrete subject constructions embedded in policy and institutional frameworks. An analysis of modern foreign languages student teachers’ views of subject knowledge revealed a concern with developing language skills in listening, speaking, reading
and writing as well as lexical and grammatical knowledge in a specific language. A similar analysis of English (L1) student teachers’ views of subject knowledge showed that ‘the majority responded with definitions which identified English [the L1] as including; creativity, text, self-expression and English as a tool for communication’ (Burley, 2005: 142).

The use of dialogue was central to this process for challenging ‘known’ subject constructions. A number of theorists concerned with the use of dialogue within professional learning have informed the authors’ attempts to transform and challenge student teachers’ constructions of modern foreign languages and English (L1) as curriculum subjects. Bohm (1996) has explored the nature of dialogue and contrasts dialogue with discussion, seeing dialogue as a process where meaning is socially constructed through collaboration and meaning is not static. This differs from discussion where individual ideas are asserted but a collaborative outcome is not necessarily intended. As Clinchy (1996: 208) stated, dialogic discourse takes place between ‘allies, even advocates, of the position they are examining’ and understanding the perspective of the other in the dialogue is an important step in this creation of meaning. Brockbank and McGill (2006) identify that dialogue with another is more able to bring about transformative learning through engaging at the edge of assumptions and beliefs. In Boud’s (2010: 34) discussion about reflection which is co-constructed in transdisciplinary relationships he describes the challenge of ‘creating common ground’. This process ‘involves the questioning of the taken-for-granted assumptions arising from the particular disciplinary background of the members ... being able to step aside from one situation and view it from the perspective of another’.

In order to further conceptualize the use of dialogue within a metaphorical discursive space it is useful to draw on the work of Hulme and Cracknell (2010: 56) who use ‘third space’ and ‘hybridity’ theories in order to conceptualize a space for the exploration of ‘professional cultural exchange and the development of trans-professional knowledge’. They describe ‘hybridity’ as examining ‘the condition of being “in-between” several different sources of knowledge’, stating that ‘hybridity applies to the integration of competing knowledge and discourses; to the reading and writing of texts and to individual and social spaces, contexts and relationships’ (Hulme and Cracknell, 2010: 57). They conclude that it is important to have a ‘space for dialogue between participants that is safe, secure and supportive, space that “stands outside” the formal areas of practice’ (Hulme and Cracknell, 2010: 57). They use Bhabha’s (1994: 56) ideas of the space being ‘an innovative site of collaboration, and contestation where border discourse takes place’.
In his work on language teacher education Roberts (1998: 45) emphasizes the importance of dialogue for constructing new knowledge. He states, ‘[the] social constructivist perspective recognizes dialogue, talk, to be central to teacher learning’. The dialogue within the discursive space allows for the fluid construction and reconstruction of notions of subject and language within subject. Such a dialogue, which is informed by the ‘other’ subject, challenges and explores underlying beliefs, assumptions and principles which student teachers hold in order to expand current subject boundaries and pedagogical approaches. This then affects the ways in which they perceive themselves as language teachers within their subject specialisms. The dialogue also provides opportunities for individuals to construct alternative perspectives, which draw from both subject areas, in order to guide their work with language in the classroom.

In order to exemplify the process of resistance to the traditional subject constructions the rest of this chapter is concerned with the presentation of the authors’ work in language teacher education which was carried out in a London university partnership. This will examine the dialogues which took place within a postgraduate teacher language awareness education programme for modern foreign language and English (L1) student teachers. These student teachers had already completed a first degree in a language-based subject, either L1 or a modern foreign language, and were embarking on a one-year teacher-training programme. Data for the exemplification of this process of resistance came from the following sources: narrative reflections from the student teachers; written and video recorded responses to the teacher language awareness programme and audio-recorded interviews.

Additional exemplification comes from a brief discussion of a language programme aimed at preparing student teachers for the introduction of foreign language education to school students aged 5–11 years.

A postgraduate teacher language awareness programme for modern foreign language and English (L1) student teachers

The teacher language awareness education programme set up dialogues in three broad areas:

1. Narratives of language teacher identity, linguistic and cultural diversity and language attitudes.
2. The systematic and changing nature of language exemplified through a range of languages and language varieties.
3. Developing ideas and theories about language and language pedagogy.
Dialogue 1

This dialogue encouraged a shared analysis of the language use, experience, knowledge and understanding of the two subject groups of student teachers. It began with a focus on links between language use and individual linguistic identity. This included examination of identity in relation to dialect or variety of language use, the world status and the social uses of languages or language varieties and the patterns and principles underlying language variety and change.

Data collected from narrative reflections showed the beginning of the process of widening student teachers’ awareness of linguistic diversity. An English (L1) student teacher acknowledged the linguistic diversity in her own background and recognized its relevance to her understandings of language, ‘My older sister was spoken to in Dutch from the moment she was born and acquired Dutch and English fluently at the same time.’ She was envious of her sister’s bilingualism and described it as a ‘luxury which did not apply’ to her. The powerful impact of first language experiences on personal identity, including in some cases the effects of language loss, was very apparent in these autobiographical reflections. When writing about the range of languages she had learned in different contexts and countries another student teacher discussed her relationship to her first language:

It would be wrong to think that these languages are pushing my Serbo-Croat away, but they are certainly weakening it as much as they are making it stronger ... they confirm that emotionally I best function in Serbo-Croat. It also shows that I can be a completely different person by simply switching to another language.

Additionally there was evidence of a developing understanding of the parallels which exist between diversity within a language and diversity of languages. In the dialogue they were able to articulate their perceptions of language status at various levels within society including family, peer group, professional and academic circles. A student teacher wrote about her use of ‘Patois’ (her term for Jamaican Creole):

Patois has a lot to do with my roots and my heritage, but for a long while I shunned it and saw it as ‘incorrect’ speech. I think this all comes from wanting to be viewed as the same as your peers. Inadvertently I was also shunning my Jamaican background, which is something that I now embrace and am extremely proud of.
Dialogue 2
The dialogue focused on language as a system considered the underly-
ing patterns and structures within a range of languages and language
varieties and their relationship to communication and meaning. For
example, student teachers worked in small cross-linguistic groups to
compare their implicit and explicit knowledge of sentence structure in
English and other languages and consider the function of metalinguistic
understanding in language learning. The analysis and construction of
nonsense sentences were used to exemplify implicit understanding of
underlying systems in English and other languages which led to a con-
sideration of prescriptive and descriptive grammars. As well as sentence-
level grammar, student teachers considered textual grammar through
the analysis of a series of adverts whose content ranged from image to
image plus written text. They analysed the range of structural features
which produce cohesion in a text and the relationship between cohesive
devices and meaning. The diverse range of cultural and linguistic
backgrounds within the student teacher group enabled them to explore
the effects that different linguistic and cultural experiences have on the
processes of understanding and making meaning.

The data showed some differences between English (L1) and modern
foreign languages student teachers in their articulation of implicit and
explicit knowledge about language which contributed to a more com-
plex exchange of perspective than would have been possible in a single
subject group. An English (L1) student teacher commented, ‘it has been
very valuable to work with someone from another subject area. MFL
(modern foreign languages) student teachers seem to comfortably access
knowledge about language bringing new terminology ...’. It enabled
them to describe grammar in both functional and structural terms.
However, modern foreign languages student teachers tended to use a
more prescriptive discourse demonstrating explicit knowledge while
English (L1) student teachers demonstrated a more implicit knowledge
through a greater recognition of change and fluidity in language struc-
ture. The inclusion of many different languages and varieties challenged
misconceptions about language as a system, particularly the beliefs held
by some that languages other than the English language have more
rigid grammatical systems. The process of making meaning at text level
also appeared to be approached differently by the English (L1) and
modern foreign languages student teachers. English (L1) student teach-
ers were usually more able to take the given information within a text
and together with prior knowledge construct a meaning or meanings
which arose from this process. Modern foreign languages student teachers appeared to respond to text in a way which suggested that they believed the meaning of a text is located within the text itself and it is the job of the reader to understand this. Thus the English (L1) student teachers’ articulation of the process of making meaning from text may have enabled a shift in perception for the modern foreign languages student teachers.

This evidence suggests that the cross-subject dialogue has had an impact by giving the student teachers of English (L1) and modern foreign languages new insights into language use within their subject. The English (L1) student teachers seemed to move towards a greater understanding of formal structure in language while the modern foreign languages student teachers were more willing to consider the place of context and meaning in the study of language.

An example of this impact is taken from the second interview with an English (L1) student teacher describing a lesson she taught in her first school placement. It shows how she drew on her own knowledge, experience and use of languages to inform the development of pedagogical approaches in her subject. She described using her knowledge of Italian and Latin to inform her work as an English (L1) teacher:

… the kids loved it … being taught … Italian and Latin in an English class … they were so focussed and engaged … at the end we did this big pop quiz … not one child in that room … was struggling with prefixes or the suffixes … I think it does help them if they learn a bit of Latin like a prefix … then (if) they get something like that in their Science test then they can work out the meaning of it by looking at it and picking it apart and that’s what I taught them.

Dialogue 3

This dialogue focused on the examination of language pedagogy and pedagogical strategies as central components of subject construction. The dialogue arose from the experience of a lesson taught to the student teachers in a language unfamiliar to them; for example, a science lesson on sinking and floating conducted entirely in Hindi asked the student teachers to test hypotheses about materials which sink or float in a tank of water. They drew on this experience to reflect on learning, teaching and communication strategies as well as the importance of affective factors and social context in developing communication in a new language. Additionally the student teachers began to apply the understandings gained to their future roles as language teachers and identify
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with the experience of the early stage language learner. Specifically they gained an understanding of the importance of peer support, talk and the use of first language knowledge to facilitate the learning process.

Student teachers also analysed and compared the different language teaching approaches encountered during their subject teaching placements in secondary schools. They identified and compared teaching approaches at word, sentence and text level and discussed approaches to the learning of sociocultural aspects of language. Similarities and differences in subject pedagogical practice were identified. Pedagogical understandings were further developed when student teachers collaborated to create teaching approaches to working with poems in the language classroom. In mixed subject pairs student teachers used poems in English (L1) and another language to plan activities which would enable pupils to analyse and understand the language in the poems.

The following responses demonstrate that the dialogue enabled the student teachers to review language in their subject area in terms of content and pedagogy. A modern foreign languages student teacher commented on the different approaches taken by the two subject areas:

While I started out with activities at word level the English (L1) teacher approached the poem by talking about the meaning. I think it is important for MFL teachers to focus more on meaning and not to get stuck at word level.

Another modern foreign languages student teacher described the mutual benefits of collaboration:

I think we had the same amount of things to offer each other ... a good idea that I heard was to use the title, which I hadn’t really thought of ... to show them the title and maybe they could work out what the poem could mean from there. And ... I was talking about patterns which repeat ... in every sentence, that’s maybe how I would approach it. I’d ask the students to look at the sort of words that they knew that were along the same lines ... and the English student hadn’t really thought of that, so ... it was very interesting for both of us. Both our ideas could be used.

The poetry session provided powerful evidence of the fusion, development and diversity of ideas generated by the dialogue between the two subject groups within the discursive space. As two student teachers reported, ‘I now see modern foreign languages on a different level’ and
‘I realise that I am teaching English as a language’. Another modern foreign languages student teacher said, ‘It made me realise how English and MFL are in fact related and the fact that it is really important for the two departments to be involved.’

**Transcending subject boundaries**

The three dialogues examined above describe the process of student teachers learning within a new discursive space which encouraged the process of questioning ‘the known’ barriers of their subject specialism in order to co-construct new perspectives on language education. Further data from video footage and questionnaires confirmed the impact of the new discursive space in reconstructing views of the subject. One student teacher stated, ‘I now believe that my subject is more open than originally thought.’ Another student teacher wrote about how ‘analysis of any texts, English (L1) or MFL can apply mutually’. A third student teacher saw such collaboration as ‘an excellent opportunity and should be implemented in schools … to gain new ideas into exploring language’. A fourth student teacher wrote, ‘I found the opportunity gave me a lot of insight on how to explore new materials. I had not yet used poems but now feel that I can use them and possibly explore new language resources.’

Interviews conducted at three different stages during the teacher language awareness programme supported this finding and provided a fuller account of the possible influence of the discursive space. Interviews were held in the first term before the first teaching placement (October), at the start of the second term following the first teaching placement (January) and at the end of the course (June). The three examples below all come from the third interview with modern foreign language student teachers. The first one commented:

I think we all came out of that … feeling we’d gained a lot from each other … I think through having worked with each other throughout the whole year … towards the end we started appreciating … the possibilities of what we could get out of working with each other.

The second example showed how the student teacher was also able to broaden her view of her subject as a result of discussions with the English (L1) student teacher placed in the same school. She said:

We’d spend a lot of time talking in school and whilst we were compiling our portfolios we were talking a lot about what kind of
information we had, what things that he thought maybe I could benefit from, I looked at his observation methods and the different way they planned. We talked a lot about the pros and cons of different ways of presenting the subject.

Further evidence of transcending subject boundaries is summed up by the following comment from another modern foreign languages student teacher:

... although the teaching methods used in the two subjects may vary, it seems very important for teachers of English and modern foreign languages to discuss pupils’ learning styles and strategies, their general language skills and abilities (including literacy) to devise a common teaching approach.

The continuing impact of these new perspectives in challenging and reframing subject boundaries and subject pedagogy can be seen in follow-up interviews conducted with the modern foreign languages and English (L1) student teachers a year later after they had completed their first year of teaching. These interviews explored the impact, if any, of the dialogues and discursive space provided by the teacher language awareness education programme at this stage in their career. An analysis of this data revealed the following positive attitudes towards shifting the institutionalized subject boundaries identified by Bernstein (1996) and Evans (1988, 1993):

1. The teachers from both subjects showed a willingness to make informal contact with teachers of the other subject, for example through personal language learning and social contact and a positive attitude towards the idea of collaboration with the other subject.
2. Some tentative links between the two subjects had been made, for example a modern foreign languages teacher said, ‘I read an article or I see something interesting on the newspaper. Even in English (L1) … I think … what can they do with the text in English.’ An English (L1) teacher cited regular use of different languages and language varieties in her teaching, for example ‘So we’ve got all like key words that you would say in an English class, and we’ve got them all written up in things like Somali, Arabic …’.
3. Teachers from both subjects were using their linguistic identity as part of their teaching role, for example a modern foreign languages teacher said, ‘You know this is not just text book stuff. It’s stuff that we’ve lived and if they know that I’ve lived through it … they can get
interested as well.’ An English (L1) teacher reported, ‘I started telling them about my background in Italy and they went, “Oh Miss, talk to us in Italian”, so I did and I taught pretty much the whole lesson in this dialect that I speak’.

**Returning to ‘the known’**

Despite the evidence provided above, which clearly shows some resistance to ‘known’ subject boundaries, the interviews with first-year teachers also revealed the difficulties of sustaining this resistance beyond the discursive space of the teacher language awareness education programme. Bernstein’s recognition of the way subjects are organized at the level of school as being firmly based in ‘singulars’, legitimized by power relations, is evident in the data and shows the limitations on teachers’ ability to effect change in the language curriculum and pedagogy of both subjects. The interview data contains examples of teachers’ rationalizations of their failure to change school practices to incorporate a more coherent approach to language education across the subjects of English (L1) and modern foreign languages. Some evidence of a narrower view of their curricular subject was expressed once they were in their first teaching posts. An English teacher reported that she was trying to ‘push it (the English curriculum) towards the skills base … they (the pupils) can see the relevance of it’ and a modern foreign languages teacher presented her subject as defined by ‘getting the best grade that we can from this’.

Many practical difficulties were also offered as reasons why collaboration between the two subjects was not happening during this first year of teaching. Evidence in the data of barriers to continuing a dialogue with the other subject included physical distance between subject departments, resistance from school management, workload and pupil motivation. For example, when asked if she had had an opportunity to work with modern foreign languages teachers, one English (L1) teacher reported, ‘… we were trying to do more but it hasn’t worked out as well, just because of staffing problems’.

**A postgraduate programme on language education for teachers of younger learners**

The experience of developing a dialogue about language education between student teachers of English (L1) and modern foreign languages provided a valuable basis for a later project (2007–2010) with a different group of postgraduate student teachers who were training to teach
younger learners and were preparing for the proposed introduction of modern foreign languages in primary schools (for the 5–11 age group). This project also exemplified the use of discursive space for the construction of a dialogue of resistance to traditional subject boundaries and a ‘return to the known’ outside this space.

Teachers of 5–11-year-olds are usually trained to deliver all or most curriculum subjects to their classes regardless of the subject of their first degree. This would appear to be an ideal context for cross-disciplinary thinking and specifically for challenging the separation of English (L1) from modern foreign language study and providing opportunities to explore linguistic diversity and develop a broad conception of language education. However, although the policy framework encouraged making cross-curricular links, the traditional ‘known’ assumptions of separation between English (L1) and modern foreign languages prevailed in national preparations for this proposed curriculum change. Studies of the pilot introduction of early foreign language learning in England showed that the focus of teacher preparation tended to be the teaching of specific languages in discrete lessons. French was by far the most dominant language introduced, with Spanish a second most popular choice (Muijs et al., 2005; Wade and Marshall, 2009). Moreover student teachers on school placements often reported experiencing modern foreign language teaching provided by a peripatetic specialist teacher with minimal involvement of class teachers and with limited links with the rest of the curriculum, including the curriculum for English (L1).

Following the experience of the teacher language awareness programme outlined above, a programme was set up which allowed student teachers of 5–11-year-olds to engage in dialogues in order to make links between their own diverse linguistic knowledge and experience and that of their pupils. They also developed skills and knowledge for approaching language education in a way which integrated the teaching and learning of English (L1), English as an additional language (L2) and modern foreign languages, including foreign languages and heritage or community languages spoken by members of the school community.

The dialogue about language among this group of student teachers drew on a rich diversity of language knowledge and experience. An audit of the student teachers’ languages skills revealed that a cohort of 50 student teachers had at least a basic knowledge of 30 different languages in addition to English. Many of the student teachers recorded knowledge and use of languages often used by children in local schools including Albanian, Arabic, Amharic, Bengali, French, Greek, Gujarati,
Hindi, Portuguese, Turkish and Urdu. Some examples of the stimulus for the dialogue were:

- Observation and analysis of models of language teaching and learning practices in English, French and Turkish.
- Reflections on the implications for language learning of learning in a multilingual context, including issues of identity, cultural heritage and social and affective aspects.
- Input and reading on first and second language and literacy acquisition.
- Micro-teaching in a range of languages with follow-up analysis of teaching and learning strategies.
- Comparison of language structures, sound patterns and idioms in different languages and varieties of English.
- Demonstration of practical planning for language development across the curriculum based on a Turkish nursery rhyme.
- Opportunities to plan and practise teaching language as well as cross-curricular themes incorporating languages.

Evaluations of this programme used survey questionnaires and a focus group discussion with student teachers after experiencing the programme. These revealed the following:

- A shift in attitude from more neutral to very positive views of the prospect of language teaching in primary schools.
- A clear overall development of knowledge and confidence among future class teachers the majority of whom, prior to the programme, did not perceive themselves as participating in foreign language teaching in their future teaching careers, although the teaching of English (L1) and English as an additional language (L2) were assumed to be an important part of their role.
- A shift in perceptions of class teacher roles and responsibilities related to language teaching and an expectation of active involvement in a range of multilingual activity.
- Awareness of the complexities surrounding decisions about which language(s) to introduce in primary schools in the UK.
- A strong awareness of pedagogical links between language subjects and other curriculum areas.
- Strong enthusiasm to learn new languages or further develop existing language skills.
One of the most striking outcomes of the dialogue was a change in the way in which the student teachers perceived their future roles as mainstream (non-specialist) class teachers. In a survey of student teachers’ expectations before experiencing the dialogue, the majority perceived the introduction of modern foreign languages to younger learners as involving a specialist teacher of a specific language coming into their classroom and perceived their mainstream class teacher role as very separate. Many of them said they did not expect to have a role at all but would leave the modern foreign language teaching to the specialist teacher. They stated their lack of knowledge in languages as a reason for this. However, following the experience of the dialogue, members of the evaluation focus group produced a range of ideas about roles and responsibilities they could undertake. These ideas included the following:

- Working with the school community: staff, parents and others in a range of languages.
- Inputting languages into topic areas linking with other subjects (e.g. geography).
- Providing class teacher support and continuity for a specialist language teacher.
- Drawing on a variety of life experiences of using and learning languages (including English) in the family and community as well as in school.
- Setting up an after-school language club.

Thus, as with the teacher language awareness programme outlined above, there was an enthusiastic response from student teachers to a cross-subject language education dialogue while in a teacher-training context. However, even when teaching younger learners, it was often very difficult for them to transfer the ideas they had gained from this dialogue to the school context, where more institutionalized perceptions of subjects prevailed. While on school placement most student teachers who had observed and participated in language lessons in French or Spanish found them disappointing because of a lack of continuity or connection with the rest of the curriculum. One of the student teachers reported that a specialist teacher taught the class Spanish for twenty minutes once a week but after the lesson Spanish was not mentioned for the rest of the week. She felt that the level of learning remained very basic because of this lack of continuity. A student teacher who was more positive about her school placement experience reported
language learning in French being reintroduced alongside English throughout the school day, such as during assembly or during a maths activity, consequently the children were very enthusiastic about foreign language learning. However such integration between subject learning experiences was unusual during school placements for this group of student teachers. It seems that even for those teaching younger learners, the traditional institutionalized separation between English (L1) and modern foreign languages has a strong influence on the approach taken to language education in schools.

Conclusion

The chapter has identified a tension between an innovative model of teacher language education which challenges conventional subject boundaries and the constraints of national and institutional policies and practices. The chapter has used Bernstein's concepts of ‘singualrs’ and ‘regionalization’ to theorize constructions of subjects and explore processes of reconstruction and integration across subject disciplines. The chapter has shown that it is possible to extend and/or problematize the boundaries of English (L1) and modern foreign languages through teacher language education programmes which set up a discursive space where student teachers’ understandings and practices can be scrutinized and broadened through the use of dialogue. However it is clear from the data that changes in the student teachers’ subject approaches to language are thwarted by institutional constructions of subject boundaries. This links with Bernstein’s notion of ‘regionalization’ threatening ‘singular’ pedagogic cultures.

In an opening statement given by the Council of Europe (2006), a representative from the language policy division stated that the Council of Europe...

... promotes international cooperation in language education policy and practice among its 46 member states ... While work has until recently concentrated mainly on foreign/second language learning ..., the languages of school education are now becoming a major focus both in their own right and as part of the Council’s goal to promote a global, coherent approach to language policy in education. (Council of Europe, 2006: 13)

Whilst this is a laudable aim, recent UK national policy documents whilst not excluding a more coherent approach to language education in schools do not provide a strong enough steer in order to overcome
‘the known’ institutionalized practices which still insist on separating the study of language into discrete subject areas.

Points to ponder

1. Examine the curricular and pedagogical similarities and differences in L1 and modern foreign languages in your context. Can you identify the boundaries between these as subjects? In your view are they part of the same discipline?
2. How would you describe the relative status of English and other languages and language varieties in your context? How do you think this impacts on the teaching of these languages?
3. How useful is the concept of discursive space for releasing the potential for change and challenge to ‘the known’ in language education? What opportunities might there be in your context to create such a space? Who might participate?
4. What questions, activities or tasks could stimulate challenge to known language subject and teaching boundaries in your context?
5. How realistic is Eric Hawkins’ notion of ‘language’ as a school subject? What might be the advantages and disadvantages of an integrated approach to language education?

References


English-as-Panacea: Untangling Ideology from Experience in Compulsory English Education in Japan

Julian Pigott

Introduction

This chapter draws attention to some of the ways in which those involved in compulsory English education in Japan tend to be harnessed into a certain type of ideological machinery that frames their debates and shapes their notions of objectivity. Among other components, this machinery consists of the discourses of English-as-panacea and Japanese uniqueness, institutionalized standards of professional practice, and applied linguistics theory which views the acquisition of English principally as a matter of motivation and technique rather than arising from need. These disparate elements form a heterogeneous ideological orthodoxy, or ‘regime of truth’ (Foucault, 1980) which, in line with the theme of the present volume, I shall refer to as ‘the known’.

A common belief in Japan is that compulsory English education is technically dysfunctional because the majority of its recipients fail to develop practical English skills. However, this is only part of the story, as it fails to account for the political, historical, cultural and ideological forces acting beneath the surface of policy, curriculum and pedagogy. By problematizing aspects of ‘the known’, alternative understandings present themselves. To give one example: the discourse of Japanese uniqueness can be seen to instil in the learner the notion that there is something quintessentially Japanese in failing at English. Rather than the conventional understanding that this handicap is simply something to be overcome, we could instead acknowledge the social and/or political benefits that arise from the reinforcement of a sense of national and cultural exclusivity.
Further, we might observe that such reinforcement is at odds with prevalent neo-liberal ideologies of internationalism, multiculturalism and globalization. Japan’s English education policy can therefore be seen to be covertly undermining the ideologies it purports to support: failing at English is simultaneously an act of resistance against globalization. I am not suggesting that English education in Japan is a conspiracy, rather that diagnosing it in terms of ‘the known’ – as a flawed but sincere movement to cultivate English ability among the general population, for example – gives, at best, a rather unsophisticated understanding of its nature. If it is the role of a critical educator to get to the bottom of things, remaining within the framework defined by ‘the known’ is unacceptable.

At the heart of any effort to resist ‘the known’ lies the need to deconstruct key concepts on which it is built. Perhaps the clearest example is that of the term ‘English’ itself. Students in Japan are said to study English. A common-sense interpretation of such a matter-of-fact statement would be that English refers to a practical skill – something students learn to speak, write, read and listen to. Within Japan, however, it is often used to refer to testable knowledge of certain linguistic aspects of English. Another example is the term ‘education’, which is commonly conflated with schooling or test performance in Japan (and elsewhere). Goodman (1971: 30) refers to such a state of affairs as a failure of metaphysics:

We are so mesmerized by the operation of a system with the appropriate name, for instance ‘Education’, that we assume that it must be working somewhat, though admittedly not perfectly, when perhaps it has ceased to fulfil its function altogether and might even be preventing [its purported] function.

Thus, the idea of ‘English education in Japan’ is not as straightforward as it may at first appear. If we referred to it (arguably more accurately) as the institutionalized practice of memorizing certain linguistic aspects of English for the purposes of passing tests, ‘English education in Japan’ would appear more like an institution in need of replacement than improvement. If critical educators do not pay sufficient attention to the use of terminology they therefore risk operating at a superficial level that is likely to reinforce ‘the known’. They will tend to preoccupy themselves with questions of technique – the operation of the system – instead of more fundamental questions about the nature and functioning of the system. This chapter aims to convince the reader that such questions should not be overlooked.
In order to frame my arguments, I start with the following statements about foreign language learning and language policy which I take to be axiomatic:

- A foreign language is learned if one either has a real-world need to learn it and/or one wants to learn it (the distinction is somewhat arbitrary).
- If no widespread need for a language exists within a society, one would expect only a minority of people to learn it.
- If policymakers wish people to learn a language, they must create need or desire either directly through ideological manipulation, or indirectly through the establishment of compulsory classes, or institutional barriers to school/university entrance and employment. This can only occur within an authoritarian education system. If the explicit espousal of such an approach is unfashionable, it must be dressed up in politically correct language of opportunity (autonomy, student-centredness, etc.).
- Applied linguistics ought to have something to say about the extent of real-world need for a language. However, the way in which authorities attempt to manufacture need or desire, and their justifications for doing so, may quite reasonably be understood to lie outside its purview. This means that a great deal of the applied linguistics research into language learning is inherently limited in explanatory power when applied to a specific context.

In the first part of this chapter I show that ‘the known’ is primarily ideological rather than empirical in nature. I argue that applied linguistics theory is ill-equipped to draw attention to this seemingly obvious state of affairs because it is disconnected from what Midgely (2011: 104) – in a commentary on methodological and theoretical reductionism in the physical sciences – refers to as ‘larger tangles’:

The standards of clarity that we manage to impose in our well-lit scientific workplaces are designed to suit the preselected problems that we take in there with us, not the larger tangles from which those problems were abstracted.

One characteristic of applied linguistics research which protects it from dealing with these tangles is theoretical specialization. Put simply, the time a researcher spends on examining a specific aspect of language learning precludes spending time on understanding the importance (or
not) of said language learning in the first place. A second limitation is the way that the problems which applied linguists preselect for analysis tend to be dictated by ‘the known’, within which English learning is regarded as both vital and essentially benevolent in nature. One could go further, arguing that the symbiotic institutional relationship between academia and the English teaching industry means that the former has no choice but to remove itself from the ‘larger tangles’ so as not to upset its paymaster. For proof that I am not being melodramatic, I advise the reader to visit the Japanese Association for Language Teaching (JALT) annual conference and marvel at how many ‘academic’ presentations and speakers are sponsored by commercial entities, often textbook publishers from the UK, US and Japan – countries renowned for their backwardness in foreign language learning (Gray and Block, 2012; Philippson, 1992).

Debunking the myth of English-as-panacea

In 1974 a contentious debate on language policy (reported in Aspinall, 2013) took place between Hiraizumi Wataru, a Liberal Democratic Party of Japan politician and former diplomat, and Watanabe Shoichi, a professor at Sophia University. Hiraizumi submitted a report to the cabinet critiquing English education in Japan, arguing that only 5 per cent of Japanese needed to be able to speak English. He further argued that it should be an elective from the second year of junior high school and removed completely from the university entrance examination system. His opponent, Watanabe, sidestepping the 5 per cent argument, insisted that all students should have a background in English, taught through the traditional yakudoku (roughly ‘grammar translation’), sharing with many the belief that communicative proficiency could be built upon this purported grammatical foundation at a later date if and when necessary. Watanabe’s perspective won the day, and the rest, as they say, is history. Currently, every Japanese child must legally attend five years of compulsory English classes. Students who continue through high school to university will attend at a total of at least nine years of compulsory classes. Harasawa’s (1974: 71) observation that ‘the time and energy our students devote to English is mostly wasted’ stands 40 years after it was made, with Japan scoring consistently poorly on standardized tests of ability such as the TOEIC and TOEFL tests (Jackson and Kennett, 2013).

Interestingly, in the 40 years since the Hiraizumi/Watanabe debate, the question of the degree to which English is needed within Japan has largely disappeared from education policy discussion – it is simply taken for granted. Or, to put it another way, the notion that English
is of vital importance to Japan, in particular for its future economic prosperity (Hashimoto, 2009), has become an item of faith. This faith can be seen in the following manifestation of ‘the known’ taken from a white paper, released by the administrative body sitting at the top of the Japanese educational hierarchy, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT), entitled ‘Regarding the Establishment of an Action Plan to Cultivate “Japanese with English Abilities”’ (Okuno, 2007: 138):

For children living in the 21st century, it is essential for them to acquire communication abilities in English as a common international language. In addition, English abilities are important in terms of linking our country with the rest of the world, obtaining the world’s understanding and trust, enhancing our international presence and further developing our nation … Cultivating ‘Japanese with English Abilities’ is an extremely important issue for the future of our children and for the further development of our country.

Variations on this nationalist/economic theme, along with the discourse of English-as-opportunity (Yamagami and Tollefson, 2012), are the grist of policy statements, media articles, conversation school sales blurbs and university English department prospectuses around Japan. Naturally, there are more pressing, direct issues for the Japanese economy: the global economy, prices of raw materials, national debt, geopolitical events, and the ageing population (see Toh, this volume). The case for the relative necessity of English as an indirect economic catalyst is undermined by the fact that Japan has a relatively low dependence on foreign trade as reflected in the proportion of domestic to overseas trade revenue (31.7 per cent) compared to Korea (92.2 per cent), Hong Kong (348.8 per cent) and Singapore (360.3 per cent) (Kobayashi, 2013). Historical precedent, too, offers little support to ‘the known’: Japan’s explosive post-war boom was in no way contingent on the English ability of its citizens.

The case for the hypothetical future need for English, weak as it is, constitutes the core of English-as-panacea ideology. If we turn instead to the concrete present need for English, any remaining legitimacy crumbles. Kubota (2012) reports that hiring advertisements for the employment security bureau, Hello Work, in October 2007 stipulated the need for English ability in less than 2 per cent of job advertisements – this in the most multicultural of all Japanese cities, Tokyo. English may not even be widely needed among employees of businesses involved in overseas trade. In an interview study of executives working in international
companies in the city of Hasu, Kubota found that an average of only 15 per cent of employees used English regularly at work, and that this use mainly entailed reading and responding to emails. True, the multinational retailers Uniqlo and Rakuten have decided to conduct meetings solely in English to much ballyhoo in the media, but these are only two companies out of 1675 blue chip companies listed on the Tokyo Stock Exchange.

Despite the evidence, hidden in plain sight, that the Japanese need for English is at best significantly exaggerated, the discourses of English-as-panacea and English-as-opportunity hold pervasive discursive power. They emerge, for instance, in conversations with university students. In an informal discussion about education I held with a class of non-English majors in a relatively prestigious university faculty recently, students gave the following reasons in support of compulsory English education: (1) companies require English proficiency; (2) English enables Japanese to work overseas; and (3) English allows communication with people from abroad. However, when asked about their individual plans, the majority of the students in this particular class admitted that they have no desire to work overseas and little need for English in everyday life, nor any particular desire to use it in their future careers. In other words ‘the known’ is true, but not for me. This bivalent world view is also found in the academic literature. In a discussion of the position of English within Japanese society, Yano (2011: 133) describes how ‘Japan … depends heavily for its survival and prosperity on foreign trade, which makes it vital for the Japanese to be able to use English [my emphasis]’ before going on to state:

... the majority of people do not feel the need to learn English [my emphasis]. Do they have opportunities to use what they have learned? No. English is never used among the Japanese, while a language must be used if it is to be effectively learned.

Which is it to be? Can English be both unnecessary and vital? It seems to me that Yano could avoid the contradiction by simply using ‘some Japanese’, rather than ‘the Japanese’. Perhaps talk of ‘the’ Japanese reflects the idea of schooling as a standardized (or fair, depending on one’s inclination) treatment, or perhaps it is representative of the view typical of nihonjin literature (see next section) of the Japanese as a homogeneous entity.

Just because ‘the known’ is a powerful influence on people’s thinking does not mean that everybody is in thrall to it. In an analysis of
government pronouncements on English, Hashimoto (2009: 23) suggests that MEXT policy is based on a particular understanding of ‘how TEFL contributes to the nation’s economic success and to the formation and maintenance of national identity in an era of globalization’. She argues that the discourse of English-as-panacea disguises the hidden aim of creating an elite group who can help Japan ‘cope’ with the outside world – what Kariya and Rappleye (2010: 45) call an ‘immune response’ to globalization. Research by Terasawa (in Kobayashi, 2013) offers some empirical support to Hashimoto’s hypothesis, showing that the real ‘Japanese with English abilities’ do indeed belong to a financial and educational elite, with English proficiency functioning as ‘a signature of middle-class status, [a] gatekeeper through career advancement, or a language accessory that may not linked to actual communicative needs’ (Kubota, 2012: 107).

I have so far argued that the need for English is widely exaggerated, and that such need that there is exists among a minority of Japanese. This state of affairs presumably explains the low levels of general proficiency. However, since the issue of need is taken as an article of faith, and discussion of it is absent from the discourse of policymakers and academics, and therefore precluded as a possible explanation for low levels of acquisition within the discourse, how then is the failure to acquire English en masse rationalized?

**Rationalizing failure**

Two rationalizations are commonly given to explain the ‘failure’ of English education in Japan. The first is associated with *nihonjinron*, theories of Japaneseness. They focus on how the unique geographical, historical, cultural and even physiological characteristics of the Japanese preclude successful English acquisition. An example of such discourse can be found on the English webpage of a university specializing in teaching foreign languages in the Kansai region:

> To master a foreign language ... is not an easy task for Japanese. One of the reasons for this sad truth lies in our linguistic system, which has a peculiar structure. Another reason is non-linguistic. We have exclusively developed our own customs and traditions through our unique historical and geographical background. In other words, people in a country surrounded by the sea such as Japan tend to have far more trouble in learning a foreign language than those residing in countries bordering immediately on others. Thus [*sic*], we believe
that having linguistic talent is not good enough to overcome this handicap; we Japanese must have incessant drive and go through thousands of repetitions to acquire foreign languages. (Kyoto University of Foreign Studies, 2013: 2)

The text is notable for the absence of any mention of need. Success or failure is ascribed completely to the learner, who is handicapped by being Japanese. Expressions of nihonjinron are ubiquitous in the Japanese mass media. Jackson and Kennett (2013: 10) show that the media reinforce the idea that speaking English requires Japanese ‘to enact personality traits presumed to be non-Japanese’, and, to take a specific example, that edutainment English TV programmes lower aspirations of its English-learning viewers through the conflation of language and ethnicity, a reification of the native speaker, and defeatism towards English learning. This strengthens not only the perception that ‘compulsory English was for the vast majority of Japanese, an onerous and largely unsuccessful experience’, but that this cannot really be helped due to the natural ineptitude of Japanese in learning English. In this environment, it is of little surprise that, as Kobayashi (2013: 6) observes wryly, English education has been a great success in producing ‘young monolingual Japanese who willingly ascribe their poor English skills to their pure, genetic, innate Japaneseness’. Liddicoat (2007) argues that English education is effectively a process of Japanization.

The second rationale for failure is applied linguistics-based. Aspinall (2013) notes that there are a number of obstacles standing in the way of successful acquisition of English:

- Students have little need to speak English in junior or senior high school.
- They study for too little time.
- They have little opportunity outside the classroom to practise.
- They concentrate mainly on grammar and vocabulary.

To these points we might add that the university entrance exams are seen as having a significant deleterious washback effect on junior and senior high school English education. Note that Aspinall’s first and third observations stop short of stating that students do not need English, choosing instead to present the situation in logistical terms. Naturally, problems theorized in applied linguistics terms can be solved with solutions drawn from applied linguistics. It is these solutions to which I turn in the following section.
Motivational research to the rescue (of ‘the known’)

Only if one discounts need, and accepts the applied linguistics rationale for failure, does the view that motivation, aptitude and personality are the keys to success in language learning (Dörnyei, 2005; Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Noels, 2001) become axiomatic. Since it is politically incorrect to blame aptitude or personality for failure, motivation becomes a target for manipulation in the quest to improve learning. Common sense dictates that the teacher must provide motivating lessons and perhaps intervene more directly by means of strategies culled from the literature (Dörnyei, 2001; Hadfield and Dörnyei, 2013). The distinction between motivational theory and practice becomes blurred. For example, one of the strengths of his L2 motivational self-system, Dörnyei (2009: 9) argues, is that it ‘... has considerable practical implications as it opens up a novel avenue for motivating language learners’. But one crosses an ethical threshold when one moves from theory to practice, from motivation to motivating. When one seeks to motivate students to a certain end, when one places upon them the expectation to like or study English, one is acting politically. Disinterest, or a-motivation, can be a legitimate response to a flawed system or authoritarianism. Taken to extremes, the idea that students require motivating can result in statements such as the following, from the chancellor of the foreign language university referred to previously:

The formidable challenge that the university faculty face today, though perpetual it may seem, is in what ways and means instructors inspire their students with sufficient motivation to study and with the academic enthusiasm to keep on studying. No doubt the key to the problem is largely in the hands of individual faculty members. (Matsuda, 2013: 1)

Students, the implication is, have never been intrinsically interested in studying. Like Sisyphus’s boulder, motivating is the eternal burden of the teacher. By ignoring the wider sociocultural context of language learning, the motivation and autonomy literature may give the appearance of principled practice while conforming to the expectations of the dominant authoritarian discourse promoting English. Rivers (this volume Ch. 4) draws attention to the absurdity of the promotion of autonomy within a non-negotiable English-only language policy. How can professionals talk of autonomy when attendance and participation are compulsory? How does a proponent of needs analysis respond to a
student who does not need English? How does a student-centred learning advocate deal with a student who has no interest in anything other than getting a course credit? The answer is that they cannot, because their theories and belief systems are built within ‘the known’ while their students and their needs exist outside of it.

Authoritarianism has never gone out of fashion, but openly espousing it has never been less culturally or politically acceptable. It must therefore be clothed in liberal attire. The philosopher and cultural critic Slavoj Žižek (Planet Janet, 2008) offers the following parable illustrating the danger of such dressing up: The authoritarian father says to his son ‘We are going to visit grandma. I don’t care what you think. We are going.’ By contrast, the father who believes himself to hold liberal ideals reasons with his son: ‘We could visit grandma. We don’t have to, but you know how much Grandma loves you … it’s your choice.’ The child, knowing full well that this is not a real choice, not only has to visit Grandma, but has to be seen to love her too. Language learning autonomy theory and motivational strategies can, when placed at the service of ‘the known’, act as Žižek’s pseudo-liberal father. Not only do students have to study English, they have to do it for their own good, in service of their own best interests.

**When theory does more harm than good**

In this section I examine the way in which the preference for terminological and theoretical reduction within applied linguistics renders it impotent in facilitating real change within English education in Japan (and, I assume, within other contexts). Since it is the field with which I am most familiar, I focus on research into the relationship between motivation and language learning.

As is true more generally with the ideology of English, how concepts are defined is key to problematizing teaching-related applied linguistics theory. Well-worn terms such as *motivation, language learning, English, EFL* and *TEFL* mean different things to different people. Students sitting in the language classroom may be considered *language learners* by teachers or researchers, but as *friends enduring a boring lesson* by the students themselves. Motivation may appear integrative to the target community, but a form of abandonment to the learner’s home community. Such concepts are blurred and ambivalent, and this knowledge must lead us to question realist approaches to their investigation, in particular those whose legitimacy lies in claims to universality (see Rivers, this volume Ch. 4). In the motivation field, for example, motivation as it pertains to language learning has been reduced theoretically to the concept of ‘language
learning motivation’ (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009), replete with its own psychological construct (the L2 motivational self-system) based on Markus and Nurius's (1986) theory of possible selves from general psychology. The lack of debate about the fundamental usefulness of the concept of motivation itself, or the ethics of using techniques derived from theory to manipulate students, can in part be understood as a consequence of specialization along these lines: these matters may be important, but they are outside the researcher’s purview, thus abdicating him or her from culpability over the practical ends to which the theory is put.

The social nature of research and the aforementioned symbiotic relationship between the English teaching industry and applied linguistics research complicates matters further. Kuhn (1962) and Feyerabend (1978, 1992) challenged the accumulation model of scientific progress, arguing that most research fields tread water, biding time until a genuinely new direction suddenly makes an appearance. Faced with the pressure to publish, many researchers find themselves thrown into research in areas in which they have no more than a cursory interest. A research-by-numbers realist approach is favoured because it is less painful than having to deal with philosophical, ontological and epistemological matters with which qualitative research, if done properly, is required to grapple. Rather than generating theory of their own germane to a specific context, motivation researchers tend to pick a construct such as the L2 motivational self-system (Dörnyei, 2005), the socio-educational model of language learning (Gardner, 1985) or self-determination theory (Deci and Ryan, 1985), then proceed to validate their chosen model within a certain context. Alternatively (and ill-advisedly, given that one can extrapolate from a sample to a population but not the other way around) they may attempt to interpret a particular context through a given model. The researchers rarely jump ship from one school to another, the models always get validated, and the contexts can always be explained in the models’ terms, because the models are all necessarily simplistic (hence their universality) variations on the same theme – that learning a language involves a community, goals, hard work and so on.

Occasionally, a new perspective will be released by a prominent member of the research community. Glad of the change of theoretical scenery, teachers and researchers adopt the new perspective, and academic publications and presentations can continue to be produced. The recent movement to incorporate complex dynamic systems theory (CDST) into the study of motivation (Dörnyei, 2014) is one such example (see Kostoulas, this volume). To researchers grounded in the use of aggregate statistical generalizations, a CDST perspective on motivation
may appear revolutionary. To those working in the qualitative paradigm, in which motivation is seen as ‘emergent from relations between real persons, with particular social identities, and the unfolding cultural context of activity’ (Ushioda, 2009: 215), this is less likely to be the case. The point here is that movements such as these are in part a genuine attempt to understand better the psychosociology of language learning in the name of truth-seeking, but always a social activity dictated by less noble ideals. Power, personalities, trends, egos and academic sectarianism all play a role, as do the demands of their paymasters – in the case of applied linguistics in Japan, compulsory English education and the TEFL industry. An ‘amoral’ or, to use researchers’ preferred term, ‘objective’ approach, is far less likely to rock the boat. The potential for change in such a system is limited.

Improvement within the bounds of ‘the known’

By framing compulsory English education as in need of improvement (as opposed to abolishment or replacement) its basic modus operandi is presumed to be unproblematic. Seargeant (2009: 47) refers to the conceptual space in which such improvement occurs as taking place within the ‘problem frame’. In the Japanese context, Kubota (2012: 47) notes that discussions of language learning tend to ‘foreground the presence of a “problem” within the current system and this becomes the default position from which arguments are built; a generic convention for addressing the issue’. Responsibility for solving these problems is seen as a technical matter (the machine itself does not need replacing). Technical ideals such as systematization and standardization guide the improvement. Learning is reduced to a definable, systematic process mediated by the use of textbooks and curricula which ‘bring about’ predetermined aims and objectives (being systematic). Control over technique and content requires mechanisms to be put in place to monitor the process (accountability) (Gray and Block, 2012). In order to maintain control over an increasingly bureaucratic system, teaching and evaluation are homogenized (standardization, fairness, objectivity) regardless of students’ different personalities, circumstances, proclivities, backgrounds and future aspirations. A technocratic approach to teaching and learning becomes the norm (good practice). It becomes standard practice to use a textbook regardless of the level of the learners. Their prefabricated lessons inhibit the teacher’s ability to conceptualize and design courses suited to a specific group of learners (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1985). Teachers who renounce this corporate intrusion may
be asked to justify such a radical decision, and to produce their own materials for inspection. The idea that materials might not be necessary, or that students might provide their own, is considered outlandish, because such an approach cannot be laid out beforehand as a detailed, systematic syllabus.

Some students may find such an approach satisfactory, particularly when it is applied to simple skills education. Others will find the content of lessons irrelevant. Since opting out is unthinkable (not to mention illegal, depending on age), pseudo-learning is adopted – they study in order to pass tests. Success, both on an individual and systemic scale, is determined according to whether targets are being hit, and how well the machine is working according to its own success criteria. Educational philosophy, reflection on the role of English within society, and any consideration of real-world need for English are mere distractions from the all-important predetermined results. The system, through constant improvement, desecrates the ideals it purports to uphold. A general disillusionment arises among both among teachers and students. To resolve this, solutions, targets and action plans are devised by technical experts. The cycle continues.

Resisting ‘the known’

Any theoretical attempt to critique ‘the known’ must engage with Midgely’s (2011) tangles of the world by resisting overspecialization and unnecessary generalization, and challenging divisions within fields by embracing interdisciplinary research. More qualitative approaches allowing the voices of those involved in English education to be heard would be most welcome. Within the far more prevalent (especially in Japan) deductive approaches, one way to resist overspecialization would be through the use of more general psychosocial theories. Instead of the L2 motivation self-system, for example, language learning can be studied through the selves theory from which it was derived. Examining language learning in terms of taxonomies of more fundamental needs or desires has the advantage of giving it some perspective. A hypothetical example: in his hierarchy of needs, Maslow (1943: 391) placed the need for self-actualization at the top of a hierarchy of lower-level needs (physiological, safety, love/belonging, esteem). According to Maslow, all these needs

... must be understood not to be exclusive or single determiners of certain kinds of behaviour ... any behavior may be a channel
through which flow various determinants. Or to say it in another way, most behavior is multi-motivated.

More recently, Riess (2004: 179) stipulates that there are 16 basic desires ‘largely unrelated to each other and [which] may have different evolutionary histories’. There is no ‘language learning motivation’ in either of these taxonomies. From the outset, the motivations to learn a language are brought down to size, so to speak, to be conceptualized as being tied in with more fundamental motivations. Viewing motivation more holistically has the advantage of allowing ethics – sorely lacking in the field as it stands – to be brought into the theoretical fold. For example, the Maslowian concept of self-actualization is something of inherent value in a way that language learning per se is not. If compulsory English education is not working to nurture self-actualization, it can therefore be brought into question through the use of this particular motivation theory alone. Riess’s theory tells us that intellectual activity may be something that many people are motivated to avoid, rather than engage in. It follows that it may be unrealistic to expect students without a pressing need for a language to do anything more than pretend to learn in a compulsory, test-based schooling context.

These examples support the contention that viewing language learning in the context of more general theories of motivation may offer both a richer theoretical perspective, and an ethical dimension relevant to a consideration of the relationship between theory and practice in an area – education – where ethics are, or at least should be, of paramount importance. By resisting overspecialization the researcher is confronted with the humbling theoretical and practical realization that there are more important things in life than English teaching or learning.

Researching, teaching and learning are sociopolitical activities with consequences for people’s lives. Taking an uncritical view towards ‘the known’ entails operating in an epistemological and ethical vacuum which does little to change the status quo. It can work only if those in charge are competent and ethical. The odds against this being the case are high. At the same time, we need to be careful how we define ‘work’. The status quo works very well indeed for many people in education. This writer, for example, has his career to thank for it. Given that it contributes to keeping tens of thousands of English teachers, applied linguists and textbook publishers in employment, it is perhaps no surprise that outright resistance to ‘the known’ from within is a minority
Resistance to the Known

Teachers are likely to challenge it informally. Privately, some researchers at the university level will acknowledge that a lot of their research is donkey work aimed at gaining tenure. Within the formal literature, such heresy is safely contained within the field of critical applied linguistics (e.g. Canagarajah, 1999; Pennycook, 2001, 2007; Phillipson, 1992, 2008). Textbook publishers, of course, make no money from critiquing the goose that lays the golden egg, and therefore produce no criticism.

A number of proposals suggested by researchers in the Japanese context involve resisting ‘the known’ by targeting the hegemony of English and the ideology of globalization. Kubota (2012) suggests that glocalization – ‘the interpenetration of the global and the local resulting in unique outcomes in different geographical areas’ (Ritzer, 2004: 73) – should guide language education in Japan, and that students should be made aware of how the façade of English-as-panacea hides a more complicated reality. If Kubota’s recommendations were to be implemented, reactions to globalization would likely range from cosmopolitan embrace to nationalist entrenchment. Tsuda (1990, 1993) suggests raising awareness of discourses of the superiority of English-speaking foreigners and the English language, recognizing that such favouritism exists, and that it has real consequences for people. To this I would add that students could be made aware of how compulsory language education in its current manifestation in Japan leads to a warped and superficial view of the other which inhibits, rather than aids, cross-cultural understanding. My own view is that problematizing ‘the known’ from any angle is to be welcomed, but perhaps the most effective way is to bring the issue of need back into the debate on English education policy in Japan, whether this debate is between theoreticians in journals or students in class. Laing (1983: 124) claims that ‘to be genuinely scientific means to have valid knowledge of a chosen domain of reality’. Currently, a great deal of research within applied linguistics tends to adopt a limited, technical perspective on language learning and teaching.

Conclusion

If compulsory English education were to be abolished in Japan, and the opportunity to learn English and other languages supplied in its stead, I contend that the average English proficiency of citizens would rise, Japan’s cultural exchange with the rest of the world would be conducted with less anxiety, and the hiring practices of major companies would
be amended to reflect more responsibly the real demand for English. Such a claim might appear outlandish, but only to the degree that we are invested in ‘the known’. Feyerabend (1992: 229) wrote of the moon landings:

It needed millions of dollars, thousands of well-trained assistants, years of hard work to enable some inarticulate and rather limited contemporaries to perform a few graceless hops in a place nobody in his right mind would think of visiting – a dried out, airless, hot stone.

Condescension aside, Feyerabend’s account is provocative principally not because it is demonstrably untrue, but because it is an act of blasphemy against faith in Western scientific and technological progress. Feyerabend challenges us to see the familiar anew or to ‘resist the known’. Doing so may entail facing up to our complicity in the unethical, the unnecessary and the counterproductive. Could the $100 billion (in today’s money) Apollo budget have been better spent elsewhere? Is the TEFL movement parasitic? Does English education in Japan have more to do with indoctrination than education, erecting not breaking down barriers between cultures? The answers to these questions are unlikely to be simple yes/no affairs, and will no doubt vary considerably among people, but it surely behoves the conscientious academic and the critical educator to raise them, thus challenging ‘the known’ rather than serving it.

Points to ponder

1. What would you say to a junior high school student who, complaining about English classes, remarks: ‘We don’t need English because we are Japanese’?
2. Do you consciously attempt to motivate students? If you do, what is your rationale?
3. Dewey (1938/1997: 47) observes how ‘almost everyone has had occasion to look back upon his school days and wonder what has become of the knowledge he was supposed to have amassed during his years of schooling’. How does this apply to your own school days, in particular compulsory language classes?
4. How do you talk about teaching English in the workplace, and how do you talk about it casually? What can you say of each type of discourse?
5. To what extent are the points raised in this chapter relevant to your own context?

References


When this volume was first conceived it was done so with a clear understanding that the excessive valorization of otherness – or an embodiment of ‘anti-this-and-that postmodernism’ (Kachur, 2012: 1) – would not be a productive channel of exploration. Postmodern resistance within political landscapes, such as schools, has often been accused of contributing to the formation of dualisms, and thus legitimizing, the original stimuli to be resisted: ‘by justifying ideologically the current Radical Right economic, political and educational project, whether intentionally or not, plays into the hands of those who gain from the various attempts to stabilise global and national capital’ (Cole and Hill, 1995: 178). While being unashamedly forthright in an ambition to resist and deconstruct, the fundamental sentiment underpinning this volume does not withhold the hand of reconciliation, recreation and reconstruction. Despite wishing to be cautious not to advocate the replacement of one ‘known’ with another, ‘working against myths that deform us’ (Freire, 1998: 75) does not have to become a struggle ‘to survive among the remnants’ (Cole and Hill, 1995: 178).

... personal and social conditions need to be continually created, recreated, and reinforced that will encourage, respect, and value expressions of difference. Yet if the valorization of otherness precludes the search for some common good that can engender solidarity even while it recognizes and respects that difference, we will be left with a cacophony of voices that disallow political and social action that is morally compelling. If a concern for otherness precludes community in any form, how can political action be undertaken, aimed at establishing a common good that disarms patriarchy, racism and social class oppression? (Beyer and Liston, 1992: 380–1)
Under certain conditions where self-interest and professional vanity are suspended for a more socially worthwhile cause, resistance has the potential to be the catalyst that prompts moves toward ‘the unknown’ in unison with our former oppressors. Searching for even the barest threads of unity within difference can therefore only be described as a project of creation, a project of becoming, and most importantly a project of hope:

Hope is the acknowledgement of more openness in a situation than the situation easily reveals; openness above all to possibilities for human attachments, expressions, and assertions. The hopeful person does not merely envisage this possibility as a wish: the hopeful person acts upon it now by loosening and refusing the hold that taken-for-granted realities and routines have over imagination. (Simon, 1992: 3)

The chapters contained within this volume do not seek to celebrate our collective imprisonment and subjugation at the hands of ‘the known’. Instead, the diverse acts of resistance presented demonstrate the fundamental characteristics of a responsible pedagogy, namely the twin arts of ‘voluntary insubordination’ and ‘reflected intractability’ (Foucault, 1978/1997: 47), attributes which are so often absent from language education practices, pedagogies and policies. This volume was motivated by the professional balance between inaction and action, comfort and risk, tipping beyond the point of no return in favour of pursuing the latter. It reflects a desire to remind all educators that our role is multifaceted, continual and cast in service not of our special interest groups, our institutional paymasters, or ourselves, but rather of the individual students who trust that our professionalism will support them in a self-authoring and empowering educational experience without compromising their integrity as human beings.

1 June 2014
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