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# QUARTERLY

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*A Journal for Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages  
and of Standard English as a Second Dialect*

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## QUARTERLY

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### *In This Issue*

■ When TESOL invited me to consider publishing a special issue to mark the organization's 40th anniversary, it seemed presumptuous to propose a state of the art edition. It was just 15 years back that we had published the first (and only) issue to celebrate the accumulated wisdom in our field. However, our professional clock has not been running its normal course. It has been running hurriedly, at times chaotically, these past few years. Fundamental changes have occurred in the way we perceive and practice our profession. More than our scholarly ingenuity, it is the radical transformations in the social and cultural milieu that have facilitated these changes. It is prudent, therefore, to take stock of recent developments.

Just planning this issue conveyed to me the radical nature of the changes that have taken place in the profession. We couldn't model this issue on the template of the 25th anniversary edition. Some topics are simply new. Digital communication and World Englishes have risen to prominence after the 1991 issue, affecting almost all the other domains of language teaching. Certain other topics have to be framed differently. It seems unwise to discuss the four skills in separate articles when the field widely accepts that they are interconnected, with pedagogies and curricula being developed to teach them together. Second language acquisition cannot be discussed separately from language socialization when psycholinguists and sociolinguists lay equal claim to the territory. The review of methods cannot feature the latest fad but must discuss the end of *methods* as we know them. Our colleagues are exploring how to proceed when there is widespread agreement that the search for the best method is futile. Other well-entrenched domains like testing, teacher education, and English for specific purposes show the deep influence of ethics, power, and subjectivity—concerns that were peripheral (at best) 15 years back. Although the movement that initiated these concerns—critical pedagogy—qualifies as a new topic worthy of a separate article, the contributions to this issue show that during the past 15 years it has influenced the profession so deeply that it informs almost every domain of teaching. Eventually, a separate article for critical pedagogy will seem redundant.

This issue is made up of articles solicited from distinguished scholars and some that came through the regular submission process. Because of space constraints, the articles focus specifically on the developments of the past 15 years (since the last state of the art issue was published). Readers will see a very diverse group of scholars contemplating on the field as they know it. In addition to those in the United States, scholars located in New Zealand, Armenia, and the United Kingdom and with South Asian, East Asian, and Russian backgrounds contribute to this issue. Though this issue does not represent the full diversity of our profession, the broadened authorship is a reminder of the changes in TESOL's composition. It is time our slogan in the silver jubilee issues, "25 Years as an International Family," started bearing fruits for our pedagogical and scholarly mission. I am thankful to our authors and referees for their willingness to work diligently within a short duration of time to bring out this issue.

However diverse the authorship and comprehensive the coverage, it will be impossible to capture the state of TESOL with any completeness or consensus. This issue represents only one reading of the profession. The state of our art will be understood differently by different colleagues. The purpose of this issue is not to make a final statement on our professional knowledge but to open it up for scrutiny. In the coming days, we expect discussion and debate on the trends identified here—as the 25th year issue did before. Because the pages of the journal are not sufficient for this purpose or congenial for a protracted exchange of ideas, we invite readers with shorter responses to use the *TQ* Online Forum (<http://communities.tesol.org/~tq>).

Suresh Canagarajah  
Editor

# TESOL Quarterly

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In Press, June 2006

***The June issue will contain articles focusing on the role of vocabulary in language pedagogy.***

THE EFFECT OF TYPE OF WRITTEN EXERCISE  
ON L2 VOCABULARY RETENTION

*Keith Folse, University of Central Florida*

FROM RECEPTIVE TO PRODUCTIVE: IMPROVING ESL LEARNERS'  
USE OF VOCABULARY IN A POST-READING COMPOSITION TASK

*Siok Lee, Burnaby School District #41 and Simon Fraser University  
James Muncie, University of Evora*

NATIVE SPEAKERS OF ARABIC AND ESL TEXTS: EVIDENCE FOR THE  
TRANSFER OF WRITTEN WORD IDENTIFICATION PROCESSES

*Rachel Hayes-Harb, University of Utah*

EFFECTS OF INPUT ELABORATION ON VOCABULARY ACQUISITION  
THROUGH READING BY KOREAN LEARNERS OF ENGLISH  
AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

*Youngkyu Kim, Ewha Womans University*

THE EFFECTS OF LISTENING SUPPORT ON  
LISTENING COMPREHENSION FOR EFL LEARNERS

*Anna Ching-Shyang Chang, Hsing-Wu College  
John Read, Victoria University of Wellington*

THE ENGLISH DEVELOPMENTAL CONTRASTIVE SPELLING TEST:  
A TOOL FOR INVESTIGATING SPANISH INFLUENCE ON  
ENGLISH SPELLING DEVELOPMENT

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# *TESOL at Forty: What Are the Issues?*

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**A. SURESH CANAGARAJAH**

*Baruch College and Graduate Center, City University of New York  
New York, New York, United States*

This overview delineates the direction of pedagogical developments since the 25th anniversary issue of *TESOL Quarterly*. Three tendencies characterize our professional practice: (a) a continuation along the earlier lines of progression (i.e., in opening up the classroom to learning opportunities, integrating skills, and teaching for specific purposes); (b) a radical reorientation along new paradigms (i.e., in understanding motivation and acquisition in terms of social participation and identity construction; in developing methods from the ground up, based on generative heuristics; in widening testing to include formative assessment; in accommodating subjective knowledge and experience in teacher expertise); (c) unresolved debates and questions about the direction in certain domains (i.e., when and how to teach grammar; whether to adopt cognitivist or social orientations in SLA, testing, and teacher education). Our professional knowledge gets further muddled by the new movements of globalization, digital communication, and World Englishes, which pose fresh questions that are yet to be addressed. However, grappling with these concerns has engendered realizations on the need for local situatedness, global inclusiveness, and disciplinary collaboration that are of more lasting value.

**W**e live in an age when metanarratives or grand theories that attempt to provide unifying and totalizing explanations for social and intellectual developments are viewed with suspicion. In this context, publishing a state of the art issue on TESOL requires caution. Such an issue is not only about where we are now but how we got here. In other words, this issue is an attempt to understand the current state of the profession in the light of its history. However, histories are always partial and partisan because they involve the adoption of a particular narrative viewpoint. It is not just that any description of the state of the art is informed by the describer's perspective; many would go further to question the effects and intentions behind such descriptions. For the state of the art serves to define what is legitimate knowledge in the field. That is to say, the description will become the new orthodoxy. Therefore,

the histories we narrate not only reflect but shape history. Such awareness makes writing the state of the art a controversial and contested activity.

If histories are actually stories (from specific locations and locutors), let us acknowledge up front that there are *multiple* stories of TESOL. I will tell the TESOL story differently if I am narrating it from my postcolonial setting in rural Jaffna, Sri Lanka, where I learned ESL and taught for a while, or if I narrate it from my current setting in the postmodern metropolis of New York City, where I teach transnational multilingual students. The plural stories of TESOL are already colliding in the publications in our field. For example, compare Howatt's (2004) self-assured *History of English Language Teaching*, which traces the progress in constructing efficient methods and materials as ELT marched on from medieval England to become an autonomous discipline, with Spack's (2002) painful *America's Second Tongue*, which narrates the imposition of English on Native American children—both insightfully reviewed from another location (Oaxaca, Mexico) by Angeles Clemente (2005) in the pages of this journal. We must also be careful not to give the impression that TESOL is only 40 years old. While Howatt's book starts in 1400, Spack starts in 1860 (for the convenience of studying recorded history, although the history of the particular language teaching enterprise she investigates goes further back). Even rural Jaffna has a history of TESOL from at least 1780. Therefore, we mustn't encourage the confusion of the name of our organization for the name of our field.

Even within this circumscribed scope—the 40-year story of TESOL the organization—it is difficult to represent the state of the art with any completeness. The telling of a story (or even a history) brings with it its own genre conventions, which shape time and space in different ways. The story has to develop in a particular direction, bring out certain themes, employ dominant metaphors, and manifest specific organizing principles. For example, let us consider in some detail the dominant metaphors that organize the story in the 25th anniversary issues (Silberstein, 1991b): *growth*, *solution*, and *stability*.

Regarding, first, the metaphor of growth, Silberstein (1991a) describes all the articles in her editor's note: "Taken together these comprise a portrait of our profession as it enters its institutional and intellectual maturity" (p. 229). Larsen-Freeman (1991) takes this metaphor to great lengths in her comprehensive treatment of SLA research. After reminding readers how she had referred to "the field of SLA in transition from infancy to adolescence" in a 1980 publication, and later as having "arrived at older adolescence . . . while still enjoying the vigor of youth" in 1985, Larsen-Freeman states: "If I may be permitted to extend the analogy once again, I would have to say that developmentally SLA has entered young adulthood" (p. 338).

Brown (1991) employs the second metaphor, the problem-solution dialectic, when he discusses “this quarter century of accomplishment” in terms of “the major issues and challenges that are currently engaging us, and that, in the course of time, will one day be better resolved” (p. 245). Similarly, Celce-Murcia (1991), in her article on grammar teaching, proposes a “decision-making strategy for resolving [the] controversy” of when and how grammar should be taught (p. 459). She is hopeful of “finding effective ways” to resolve the dilemmas teachers face (p. 477). These efforts are further informed by the objective of finding our way “out of the woods”—the title of Raimés’s (1991) article on teaching writing.

Yet others writing in the 25th anniversary issues express themselves in terms of the metaphor of stability: the hoped-for arrival of harmony and synthesis after an uncertain period of confusion and disequilibrium. In the keynote article, Ashworth (1991) considers the TESOL field in relation to international relations and (invoking Tennyson’s *Locksley Hall*) wishes: “Perhaps the future will continue to hold for us that swing of the pendulum—peace to war and back; compassion to hatred and back; feast to famine and back. . . . Does TESOL have a role in creating a better world? Without doubt” (p. 241). Larsen-Freeman (1991, p. 315) connects the growth metaphor with stability when she hopes that our professional maturity will encourage the different ideological camps in SLA to develop integrated knowledge and cease their territorial wars.

It is tempting to continue with these metaphors and describe how we have achieved greater maturity, awareness, and stability in TESOL’s 40th year. This is the happy conclusion to our professional story that our readers would expect. Thus, Kumaravadivelu (this issue) can’t resist playing with these metaphors in his contribution: He traces the development of the field from the “awareness” of the 25th anniversary issues to the “awakening” of the 40th anniversary issue and hopes that the golden jubilee volume of 2016 will celebrate “attainment” (p. 76). Perhaps the heady progress in our understanding of methods inspires Kumaravadivelu to adopt these metaphors. However, when we consider the picture emerging from the articles in this 40th anniversary issue as a whole, we are unable to continue thinking with metaphors of finality and ultimate attainment. What we see instead are new controversies, irreconcilable differences, and unresolved questions. Thus, in his article on grammar in this volume, Ellis organizes his discussion around eight ongoing “controversial issues.” He insists that “there are no clear solutions currently available” and that his aim “is not to identify new solutions to existing controversies” (p. 83). Celce-Murcia’s (1991) desire for a resolution of controversies in this area thus lies undeveloped 15 years later. Similarly, though Larsen-Freeman (1991) hoped that SLA theorists would remember the “responsibilities” that come with their “privileges of

adulthood” (p. 338) and move toward a pluralist framework incorporating cognitive and social perspectives on SLA, we know that many scholars are still bickering. Thus, while Larsen-Freeman hoped that the field would move toward a synthesis, Zuengler and Miller (this issue) see the two branches as so ontologically disparate and professionally divided that they will remain in “parallel SLA worlds” for some time to come (p. 35). SLA specialists have stopped “staking out the territory” (the title of Larsen-Freeman, 1991); they have simply divided it up for occupation.

The paradigms in our field have changed so radically that it is questionable whether we are still proceeding along the lines of development sketched out in the 25th anniversary issues. For example, in the case of methods, we are no longer searching for yet another more effective and successful method; instead, we are now questioning the notion of *methods* itself. We are rightly concerned about their neutrality, instrumentality, and their very constitution. In terms of language skills, we now recognize that all four skills are integrated, and we are developing our curricula in terms of other organizing principles—projects, purposes, tasks, or portfolios, which draw from skills variously for their accomplishment (see Hinkel, this issue). In fact, certain current topics in the field are of such novelty that they don’t have a distinct tradition to draw from. Thus, the articles in this issue on World Englishes (Jenkins, this issue) and digital technology (Kern, this issue) represent domains that have quickly gained significance and centrality in the field. Compounded by globalization, these developments raise new questions throughout the field that are unlikely to be answered for years to come. For this reason, the articles in this issue on testing (Leung & Lewkowicz, this issue) and ESP (Belcher, this issue) don’t end with neat syntheses. Instead, the authors see on the horizon many new concerns that might radically redefine everything that has been developed in their areas. Critical practice has also introduced new questions of ethics, power, and subjectivity that have put virtually all of our professional domains on a new footing. To complicate matters still further, the earlier constructs and models are also still with us: In the articles on SLA and grammar in this issue, we see accurate representations of older traditions that are still alive and kicking.

Although we cannot easily apply metaphors of growth, solution, and synthesis to describe the articles in this 40th anniversary issue, there is no story without an organizing principle. Therefore, I would like to revisit the story Douglas Brown started narrating in the 25th year issue. (Hence the evocation of his title in this article.) More specifically, I would like to consider Brown’s (1991) “four major themes [that] appear to be running through ESOL teaching and research efforts at the present time” (p. 245): those relating to the learner, subject matter, method, and sociopolitical and geographical issues. In writing the article, Brown

provides an insightful map of the complex developments in the profession at that time. Although this structure provides me a helpful way to discuss the articles in this issue, it will soon become evident that it is difficult to sustain Brown's story line or provide narrative closure. In the 40th anniversary issue, what we see instead is continued questioning and searching. Perhaps new metaphors are coming into prominence to describe the current state of our profession? Perhaps even the story itself has changed?

I must quickly clarify that the story in this issue is not "We were once lost, but now we are found!" or, even worse, "*They* were lost, but *we* are out of the woods!" When perceiving the history of the profession through the spectacles of the present discourses, it is natural that the positions of the past appear unsatisfactory. However, it is difficult to make comparisons of this nature because the conditions are not the same. The ground has been shifting under our feet, and the professionals of the different periods are simply attempting to respond to the changing needs and conditions. In fact, many of the authors in the present issue participated enthusiastically in the dominant pedagogical movements during the 90s. Similarly, if the authors of the 25th anniversary issue were to write their articles today, they would write them differently. Indeed, they are adopting radically complex models now to discuss their work. Consider, for example, Larsen-Freeman's (2002) use of chaos theory to theorize SLA. Furthermore, even in the articles of the 25th anniversary issue, the authors showed remarkable openness. Despite an interest in charting the progress in the field, they discussed their themes in terms of "recognitions" (see Raimés, 1991, p. 407), "foci" (Larsen-Freeman, 1991, p. 315), and "challenges" and "perspectives" (Brown, 1991, p. 245) rather than axioms and rules. This brings out another rhetorical dilemma: Though we are all conscious of our professional moment in time as complex and fluid, the exercise of trying to describe it (which involves identifying trends and formulating charts and models to represent them) ends up reducing its complexity and making it static. Can we work against such rhetorical constraints to construct a less triumphalist and self-congratulatory story? In concluding this overview, I will return to these considerations.

## **REVISITING THE STORY**

### **Focus on the Learner**

Brown grounded his first theme—focus on the learner—in the effectiveness of intrinsic motivation and its compatibility with learner empowerment. Fifteen years later, we are forced to first problematize the

identity of the learner before we discuss motivation or empowerment. For example, we now recognize that (a) because English is nativized in many communities (featuring diverse norms), we cannot treat these speakers as less legitimate “nonnative” English speakers; (b) because identities are hybrid and multiple, and most of the world is multilingual, we must conceive of learners as having identities that often accommodate English seamlessly with other languages; (c) as English has become an active additional language in many countries untouched by Anglophone colonialism, the distinction between an ESL and EFL learner is fast eroding; and, (d) even within English-dominant communities, the children of migrants form new in-between identities (e.g., *generation 1.5 learners*; see Harklau, Losey, & Siegal, 1999). Suffice it to say that we are now compelled to orient ourselves to our learners in more specific ways, taking into account their diverse learning contexts and needs.

In terms of motivation, in 1991 we were already moving away from Gardner’s instrumental versus integrative distinction, with the latter treated as more conducive to acquisition (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). We recognized that not all learners are motivated by a desire to communicate with English-dominant communities or use English only for socializing purposes. Brown discussed how this realization made us move further into the psychology of the learner, distinguishing between learning for self-accomplishment and personal interest (i.e., *intrinsic motivation*) and learning under external compulsion or to attain institutional rewards (*extrinsic motivation*). Many of us would have concurred with Brown (1991) at that time that “an overwhelming body of research now shows the superiority of intrinsic motivation in educational settings” (p. 247). However, the latter set of constructs, even more than Gardner’s, fails to take account of the contextual forces influencing motivation. In fact, both sets of constructs—intrinsic/extrinsic and integrative/instrumental motivation—give the impression that one only needs the right motivation to succeed in language acquisition. Yet there are serious sociocultural considerations that shape one’s motivation and the power to attain one’s objectives. Furthermore, motivation can be multiple, contradictory, and changing. The strategies one adopts to negotiate the contextual constraints on his or her motivation will have an effect on one’s mastery of the language.

We now have a range of perspectives that put motivation on a different footing, integrating psychological considerations with social conditions. For example, we can consider motivation in terms of identity formation. In the process of learning a new language, one is engaging in the construction of a new (or at least different) sense of self. Bonny Norton Peirce (1995) has used the term *investment* to demonstrate how commitment to gaining important symbolic and material resources helps

learners develop counter-discourses and oppositional identities for voice in the new language. Others relate motivation to the practice of gaining membership in a new community of practice. They use the model of *legitimate peripheral participation* (Lave & Wenger, 1991) to consider language learning as a social activity for attaining one's objectives through situated practice and purposive participation in the relevant community (see Toohey, 1998; Morita, 2004). Though it is becoming easier to find counterexamples to the dominant motivational constructs (such as the recent case for *required motivation* among Chinese students—see Chen, Warden, & Chang, 2005), it is more important to acknowledge the diversity of motivations and reorient them in a more holistic and richer framework of SLA (see Zuengler & Miller, this issue).

For Brown, intrinsic motivation facilitated empowerment—although he was perceptive enough to acknowledge that “this [latter] term has lately become an overused buzzword” (p. 248). He then provided a chart of pedagogical shifts that favor empowerment:

<i>We are moving from:</i>	<i>and shifting toward:</i>
a focus only on product	a focus on process
authoritarian structures	egalitarian structures
preplanned, rigid curricula	flexible, open-ended curricula
measuring only performance	gauging competence and potential
praising only “correct” answers	encouraging calculated guessing
championing analysis	valuing synthesis and intuition
	(Brown, 1991, p. 249)

The values underlying these shifts are fairly clear. Practices that are process-oriented, autonomous, and experiential are considered empowering. The shift from the previous product-oriented and teacher-fronted pedagogies certainly reduced the passivity of students and encouraged greater involvement. This shift was also consonant with the philosophical changes led by the antibehaviorist psychology of Chomskyan linguistics, which placed emphasis on the linguistic creativity of the human mind. However, this is only one orientation to empowerment. Brown's own definition of *empowerment* is more robust. He defines it as enabling students “to become critical thinkers, equipped with problem-solving strategies, poised to challenge those forces in society that would keep them passive” (1991, p. 248). However, another problem quickly arises: We must distinguish the popular version of critical thinking (CT) that informs Brown's definition from critical practice (CP), as it has recently evolved in our profession (see Benesch, 1993).

CT typically treats thinking as an individual activity, divorced from an active engagement with social positioning, as teachers introduce reasoning strategies and logical skills. Students apply objective, linear approaches of reasoning to problem-solving. CP, on the other hand, is

more dialogical and reflexive in that it encourages students to interrogate thinking in relation to material life, one's own biases, and one's social and historical positioning. In fact, the student's life experience may itself generate critical insights into issues without the student having to learn critical thinking anew. Furthermore, for CP, thinking cannot be divorced from ethical considerations of justice, democracy, and inclusiveness. Thinking is also integrated with practical struggles for social change and institutional advocacy. This engagement fundamentally shapes the tenor of one's thinking and provides deeper insights into experience. CT may see such social engagement as extraneous to (or even distorting) the thinking process. Finally, just as action interacts with thinking, there are other channels of critical thinking that CP acknowledges. Passion, imagination, art, and even popular culture mesh in complex ways to enhance critical thinking, whereas CT seems to glorify impersonal rationalism. It is important to observe these distinctions to prevent empowerment from becoming a cliché.

Since 1991, CP has made rapid progress in TESOL, exploring empowerment from diverse orientations. The special topic issue of *TQ* on critical pedagogy in 1999 moved empowerment beyond a buzzword to wrestle with unresolved new questions and problems: Do we provide marginalized students access to dominant discourses or help them develop voice in order to resist them? Do we critique the machinations of power "outside" in history or "inside" in human subjectivity? Do we initiate changes at the macro level of educational policy or the micro level of classroom practice? *TQ's* special topic issue on language in development (2002) then took empowerment beyond thinking issues to material and structural considerations, exploring the role of English in the social and educational development of various nations. Similarly, recent studies have socially situated the learner, exploring how their diverse subject positions interact in the learning experience. For example, gender is an important area of emerging research and pedagogy—as represented in the *TQ* special topic issue (2004) on gender in TESOL. Race, as well, is gaining importance in TESOL, with a special topic issue of *TQ* scheduled for September 2006. Queer identities have also become the focus of research (Nelson, 1999). In all these projects, TESOL researchers adopt a constructivist orientation, perceiving how language is constituted, negotiated, and modified in discourse. In doing so, they move away from treating identity as essentialized (reduced to certain dominant traits) or overdetermined (conditioned by social and material forces, without the possibility of change). Crucial to this shift is the exploration of the way one subject position interacts with others in students' language practices. So researchers are exploring how identities

like gender, race, ethnicity, or one's immigrant and "nonnative" status impact language learning.

We have certainly traveled far from the 1991 practice of addressing empowerment for the generic learner. As TESOL moves toward considering the fluid construction of identities at microsocial levels, it will need to align this orientation with structural and material considerations. There is a felt need to correct the romantic and volitionist perspectives on empowerment and develop a more dynamic and balanced orientation by conducting a nuanced reading of the interface between the micro and the macro, mind and body, classroom and society as they are negotiated in language learning (see, e.g., Gebhard, 2005; Hawkins, 2005; Menard-Warwick, 2005 in this journal). There are no easy answers for teachers here. They are themselves compelled to learn from students and develop engaged positions of agency as they provide learning environments that better enable critically negotiating language.

In the context of these developments, we must return to the six pedagogical shifts charted by Brown (in the list presented earlier) to see what is now happening in those areas. First, having moved from product to process over the last 15 years, we now seem to be seeing a fresh appreciation and integration of product, although not in its former dichotomistic sense. Thus, corpus linguistics, genre analysis, and content-based instruction in EAP/ESP reveal how form can be integrated with process (see Belcher, this issue). Second, we now realize that it is not easy to move from authoritarian to egalitarian structures. At best, we can only consider the relative autonomy of classroom and educational sites where students must still negotiate unequal structures. Third, we are now more alert to the irony of teachers setting up open-ended curricula for their students (Allwright, 2005) as we struggle to make pedagogy more participatory. Fourth, social practice perspectives (such as those based on identity and community reviewed earlier) show that performance and competence facilitate each other in complicated ways. Fifth, we are moving away from achieving or approximating correctness to negotiating, modifying, and reconstructing it in relation to different genres and contexts, while developing greater language awareness. Finally, it is no longer analysis, synthesis, or even intuition that our attention is limited to, but a reflexivity toward critically understanding our own and others' learning strategies and objectives. All this is to say that the progression from one pedagogical practice to another has not been linear. In some cases, we have integrated the earlier construct in a new way; in others, we have moved away from the previous line of development in an altogether different direction.

## Focus on Subject Matter

Brown's second major theme, focus on subject matter, concerned the "rapid growth of content-centered programs, whole language approaches, and task-based classroom activities" (1991, p. 252). Although content-centered education is certainly alive and well as TESOL turns 40, there have been fundamental shifts in its conceptual and methodological orientation. No more is the language teacher or researcher in charge of defining the content, however conscientious and objective the approach. While orientations like corpus linguistics and genre analysis still focus on objectively describing content in a fine-grained manner, there is also a move to understand the psychological and social reality of content and genres. As Belcher describes in this issue, EAP/ESP approaches are now considering the gap between target language and current learner proficiencies, variations in the same genre as practiced by diverse speech communities, and complementing needs analysis with an understanding of the learner's self knowledge, life goals, and instructional expectations. Also, socially grounded research orientations like ethnography and critical practice negotiate the problematic effects and ramifications of adopting genre or content in pragmatic terms, challenging the dominant utilitarian attitude. Approaches like rights analysis are complementing needs analysis to sensitize students to competing social interests in the genres and languages of diverse domains (Benesch, 2001). Challenges are also experienced in describing new genres of communication in the context of globalization, technology, and World Englishes, forcing practitioners to learn from communities outside the professional center. Although Johns and Dudley-Evans (1991) made a sensitive attempt to present ESP as "international in scope, specific in purpose" (p. 297) in the 25th anniversary issues, we still have a long way to go in pluralizing genre descriptions and accommodating linguistic and geographical diversity.

It is the international dimension that also complicates "peace and environmental education"—a variety of content-based education discussed by Brown (1991, p. 254) and prominently featured in the keynote article by Ashworth (1991). This curriculum sounds quaint now as "human issues" (the label in Brown's article, p. 254) have become more complex, shaping not just the topics discussed in class but the very approaches adopted to teach them. Human issues are not an add-on (or sweet coating) to a pedagogy for utilitarian and pragmatic purposes. Rather, human issues shape everything we do in the classroom. More important, the nature of this discourse has changed. Peace education, for example, cannot be conducted in terms of the dominant groups in our profession. Thus, we see professionals from elsewhere questioning

the meaning, scope, and ramifications of international peace and inclusiveness (e.g., Karmani, 2005; Makoni & Meinhoff, 2004). It is this interrogating spirit that influences the teaching of many other human issues—environmental protection, animal rights, immigration, weapons and viruses of mass destruction, race, gender, and sexual orientation. Teachers now have to problematize these issues in engaging with their students and develop critical and more inclusive representations of them. There are also efforts to go beyond mere consciousness raising to engage students in participatory action (Auerbach et al., 1996) and service learning (Herzberg, 2000).

Brown goes on to present curricula as increasingly shaped by whole language education and task-based teaching, both of which integrate the four skills. We have now progressed far enough along this route that talk of whole language education as a fashionable or even distinct movement has died down. Likewise, the integration of skills has become basic to language teaching in many contexts. Technology and economic globalization have also left their mark on language, generating new genres of communication that integrate the skills in novel ways, as we see in Kern's and Belcher's articles in this issue. Curricula now focus on projects that integrate language and skills according to communicative tasks that students endeavor to accomplish (see Warschauer, 2000; for an exemplary curriculum, see Zuengler & Cole, 2003). However, task-based instruction has been glorified into another successful method, deviating from its moorings in communicative competence. Scholars are critiquing the ways in which tasks have now become a mere pedagogical construct, with questionable connection to communicative tasks in social practice (see Leung, 2005; Widdowson, 2004). As Belcher states in her article in this issue, the challenge in fact is to define communicative tasks in more context-bound and situation-specific ways.

## **Focus on Method**

Regarding his third main theme, focus on method, Brown (1991) delineated the shift in our pedagogical focus from the language to the learner, culminating in “communicative, cooperative, student-centered teaching” where “we are looking at learners as partners in a cooperative venture” (p. 255). Here again, however, it appears that new approaches and realizations have often found themselves uneasily accommodating to traditional practices. Thus, Allwright (2005) has recently pointed out how teachers still control the curriculum for student-centered learning, reluctant to compromise their own teaching agendas. He proposes a more radical program for relinquishing the “teaching points” of the

instructor and committing ourselves to providing “learning opportunities” (p. 9) that students will exploit for their own purposes. Allwright proposes a curriculum designed inductively, in ongoing engagement with our students and their agendas, preserving the richness of educational experience. In this approach, he sees the possibility for teaching and research to go hand in hand. Teachers would now plan lessons that not only offer more resources for proficiency but also enable a self-reflexive understanding (for teachers as well as students) of what language learning involves.

The challenge is of course to resist the temptation to give yet another label to this approach and market it throughout the world as the most effective method. The most radical pedagogical realizations in our field recently are that all methods are *interested* (Pennycook, 1989) and that there is no best method (Prabhu, 1990; Kumaravadivelu, 1994). This understanding has led to the formulation of conditions that will guarantee maximum learning opportunities in classrooms (see Kumaravadivelu, this issue). The *postmethod condition* that is upon us frees teachers to see their classrooms and students for what they are and not envision them through the spectacles of approaches and techniques. This orientation ensures the creativity and critical practice that Brown hoped for when he called upon teachers to be “transformative intellectuals” (invoking Giroux’s label; see Brown, 1991, p. 257).

Brown saw learner strategy training as working hand in hand with the intrinsic motivation his students should desire and the empowerment he desired for his students. In this sense, it could be argued that the learner strategy approach is a realization of postmethod forms of instruction—that is, strategies are different from traditional methods in that they are not prescriptively defined nor do they have to be applied rigidly across learning contexts. Strategies thus function as *heuristics* by which appropriate pedagogies can be developed from the bottom up. However, there are significant differences between the way learner strategies and postmethod pedagogies are conceptualized and operationalized. Defined at the most micro level of consideration in somewhat individualistic and psychological terms, learner strategies may lack direction without a larger set of pedagogical principles. Although the pluralism of learning strategies is desirable, there should also be clear principles guiding the selection of strategies according to varying contexts and conditions. For this reason, postmethod approaches articulate a set of macrostrategies that are well motivated by research considerations to function as larger frameworks within which learner strategies should be employed. Kumaravadivelu defines these *macrostrategies* as “broad guideline[s], based on which teachers can generate their own situation-specific, need-based micro-strategies or classroom techniques” (1994, p. 32), and lists the following macrostrategies as examples: maximize learning opportunities,

facilitate negotiated interaction, minimize perceptual mismatches, activate intuitive heuristics, foster language awareness, contextualize linguistic input, integrate language skills, promote learner autonomy, raise cultural consciousness, and ensure social relevance (Kumaravadivelu, this issue, p. 69). Such macrostrategies complement the microstrategies articulated by learner strategy practitioners, facilitating critical and constructive learning rather than indulgence in one's own preferred styles and strategies. Negotiating divergent and competing strategies can develop a metapedagogical awareness of the different potentialities of language and learning. Relating personal learning agendas to larger educational and social objectives can encourage critical reflection. Postmethod realizations thus initiate a significant shift away from the traditional paradigm, representing alternatives to the impersonal packaging of methods on the one hand and individualistic learner-centeredness on the other.

## **Focus on Sociopolitical and Geographical Issues**

If one prophecy in the 25th anniversary issues has come true, it is the dire one that “there will be increasing debate and polarization over the issue of English Only versus English Plus as a guiding principle for U.S. society” (Brown, 1991, p. 251, quoting Richard Tucker, personal communication). If we can qualify this prediction a bit, we might say that English-only rhetoric has become less harsh as the immigrant vote has increased in importance in electoral politics. At the same time, however, federal and state laws have become increasingly stringent in proscribing English plus, just as the federal institution responsible for overseeing the education of immigrant and generation 1.5 students has itself been renamed, from Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs (OBEMLA) to Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA). The new office limits the role of bilingual education and provides less scope for non-English languages in terms of helping students transition to English. As a result, many states have sued the U.S. Department of Education because they have not been provided sufficient funding and because the regulations are unrealistic. Furthermore, since Brown wrote his introduction in 1991, California, Massachusetts, and Arizona have essentially gotten rid of bilingual education through the initiative process in favor of *structured English immersion* (SEI). A lot of research has now been done which shows that SEI doesn't work well, or works no better than various types of bilingual education, especially when compared to high quality two-way immersion programs (for an overview, see Ricento & Wright, in press). This one-size-fits-all approach reduces flexibility and severely limits the amount of time learners are given ESL

instruction before being fully mainstreamed into regular classes. U.S. society is thus still mired in a troubling *multilingualism as a problem* perspective (see Ruiz, 1984).

It is intriguing that in the 25th anniversary issues such policy concerns were discussed only in relation to the United States. But English has also become controversial in many countries in the context of globalization. Even in Europe, the increasing power of English in the emerging context of the European Union has generated much concern (Modiano, 2004; Phillipson, 2003). In postcolonial communities, recent edited collections on language policy articulate the dilemmas involved in planning the relative status of local languages and English in society and education (Canagarajah, 2005a; Lin & Martin, 2005; Street, 2001). For example, in communities where the vernacular has been given primacy as a form of affirmative action against the disparities suffered during colonization, local people subtly resist in favor of English (e.g., for Malaysia, see David & Govindasamy, 2005; for Iran, see Riazi, 2005). In communities where policy makers have encouraged English in deference to the economic and educational opportunities it may provide in the context of economic globalization, there is a near-chauvinistic resurgence of nationalism (e.g., for Brazil, see Rajagopalan, 2005; for India, see Ramanathan, 2004). Many scholars have now described the unresolved tensions these dilemmas bring out for such communities in policy and practice. We see the deviations from the avowed policy of using English only in classrooms in Eritrea (Wright, 2001), India (Annamalai, 2005), South Africa (Probyn, 2005), Tanzania (Brock-Utne, 2005), Kenya (Bunyi, 2005), Brunei (Martin, 2005), and Hong Kong (Luk, 2005), to mention just a few, as teachers and students mix local languages with English in subtle ways to negotiate their desired values, identities, and interests.

Classroom codeswitching raises questions about the appropriate corpus for acquisition planning in local communities. World Englishes (WEs) raise similar challenges. With remarkable prescience, Brown identified WEs as a new force to contend with in TESOL. Although the topic was not given much consideration in the 25th anniversary issues, Brown should be commended for placing WEs on our pedagogical agenda. However, before we can take stock of developments in WEs, it must be acknowledged that English at the global level has changed rapidly, calling for further paradigm revisions. Thus, Kachru (1986) should be credited for pluralizing the English language by showing the rule-governed nature of the new varieties that have emerged in postcolonial communities. His well-known three circles model charts the historical spread and functional differences of the language by developing a sensitivity to the *expanding circle* (where English was beginning to be used as a foreign language), *outer circle* (where English was a second language with its own well-established varieties since colonial times), and

the *inner circle* (where ownership of English was claimed and norms originated). Kachru called these communities *norm-dependent*, *norm-developing*, and *norm-providing*, respectively, to indicate their relative status.

However, geopolitical changes related to new forms of globalization have more recently reconfigured the relationship between English varieties and speech communities, sending us in search of new models. Notable among the changes are the following:

- Whereas Kachru's model legitimizes each outer circle variety in terms of its national identity (i.e., Indian English is valid for Indians, Nigerian English for Nigerians, etc.), these varieties have started to leak outside their national borders. The national varieties have found new homes because of migration and diaspora communities. They have found new visibility through technology and media. They have found new currency because of transnational economic and production relationships. For example, inner circle speakers now have to conduct important domestic and personal transactions with outsourced offshore companies, negotiating diverse Englishes.
- Speakers in the expanding circle do not use English for extra-community relations alone. For countries in East Asia, South America, and Europe, English also performs important functions within their own borders (see Jenkins, this issue). This development calls into question the ESL/EFL distinction, and demands that we take account of the increasing intranational use of English in the expanding circle.
- More important, we are learning that expanding circle communities are developing new norms as they use English for lingua franca communication. Multilingual speakers don't seem to defer to inner circle norms when they communicate with each other in English (see Jenkins, 2006; Seidlhofer, 2004). Therefore, we cannot treat the varieties they speak as norm dependent anymore.
- The centrality of inner circle communities to the life of English is increasingly being questioned. The oft-cited statistics of Graddol (1999) and Crystal (1997) show that the number of English speakers outside the inner circle is now greater than those within. Likewise, in terms of the currency of the language, there is evidence that English is more commonly used in multinational contexts by multilingual speakers than in homogeneous contexts by monolingual speakers (see Graddol, 1999). In other words, English's greatest use is as a contact language. Therefore, the outer and expanding circles are quite central to the currency of English today, recasting claims of ownership and reconfiguring relationships between varieties.

In light of these changes, many TESOL professionals have started working with Crystal's (2004) notion of English as "a family of languages" (p. 49), sympathetic to the heteroglossic models of those like McArthur (1987) and Modiano (1999), which envision a more egalitarian relationship among the national varieties. For example, we are moving toward an understanding of American English and Sri Lankan English as local varieties for intranational purposes, with a possible *lingua franca core* (Jenkins, 2006; Seidlhofer, 2004) serving purposes of contact between all communities. From this perspective, it is now an understatement to say that WEs puts "a new light on curriculum design and the specific focus of classroom activities, especially in nonnative-English-speaking countries" (Brown, 1991, p. 250). In actual fact, WEs has implications for English education everywhere, including inner circle communities. Some scholars, such as Horner and Trimbur (2002), have even questioned the wisdom of teaching only standard American English in writing programs designed primarily for Anglo-American students themselves. To understand the new pedagogical challenges for all of us, we have to broaden the context of discussion.

## **BROADENING THE STORY**

So far, I have revisited Brown's (1991) four "major themes" which were finding expression in TESOL circa 1990. But we are now in a new century, with new social movements that require special consideration. In addition to WEs, two new developments in particular generate fresh pedagogical challenges, at the same time affecting all the domains of TESOL discussed so far. They are globalization and digital technology. These movements are so radical that we simply can't predict how the profession will respond to them in the years to come. They not only spread English far and wide, they also benefit from English for their own centrality. As a way to understand the social context in which the state of the art in TESOL finds (or loses) its current shape, it is important to consider these movements.

Although it was earlier waves of globalization, in the form of colonization, that originally spread English starting some 500 years back, more recent forms of globalization operate according to different social principles, creating fresh problems and promises for the English language. What might be called *postmodern globalization* has several distinctive features (see also Appadurai, 1996; Hall, 1997):

- The economic and production relationships between communities are multilateral (i.e., they involve multinational participation at diverse levels).

- National boundaries have become porous as people, goods, and ideas flow easily across them.
- Space and time have become compressed, enabling us to shuttle rapidly between communities and communicative contexts, in both virtual and physical space.
- Languages, communities, and cultures have become hybrid, shaped by the fluidity of social and economic relationships.

These changes have created a radical shift in worldwide attitudes toward English. Thus, while non-Western communities were busy with decolonization—resisting English and other colonial languages in favor of building autonomous nation-states, and reviving local languages and cultures—globalization has made national borders almost irrelevant and reasserted the importance of English and other linguistic and cultural influences. The nation-state is also facing pressures toward pluralization from within (see May, 2001), as the claims of diverse social groups and ethnic communities within national borders have become more assertive. English has become a contact language for intra- and international relationships, serving as a relatively unmarked language for many communities (see Kachru, 1986). Such developments have created certain significant changes in discourse, calling for a different orientation to language rights. People are no longer prepared to think of their identities in essentialist terms (as belonging exclusively to one language or culture), their languages and cultures as pure (separated from everything foreign), or their communities as homogeneous (closed to contact with others). As these constructs are losing their status as bounded and objective entities, and we begin to better recognize their constructed, fluid, and hybrid nature, scholars are beginning to doubt that sound policies can be based on them (see Brutt-Griffler, 2002). While we respond to these debates with suitable modification in the ways we articulate language rights, May (2001) insists that we mustn't simplify the significance of power differences in language, the strength of identities and groups in social life, or the need for policies protecting local languages. Because TESOL professionals are committed to teaching English, the question for them is not whether but how to teach English globally. It is clear that teaching English in a manner that complements rather than competes with local languages and local interests, leading to additive bilingualism, is the new challenge.

The second social movement, digital technology, has transformed communication so radically that (as Kern presents it in this issue) within a short period of time we have moved from using computers to assist language learning to learning the language of computer communication. In the process, our earlier notions of linguistic communication have been radically changed: Digital technologies have led to new genres

of communication, new conventions of language use, and new vocabulary and grammar rules for English (see Murray, 2000; Warschauer, 2000). Consider, for example, how our notions of literacy are changing. Because of the resources available in computers and the World Wide Web, texts have become polysemic, multimodal, and multilingual. That is, texts now include symbols other than the alphabet (such as icons, images, and sound), modalities other than writing (such as speech, graphics, and moving images), and languages other than English embedded in otherwise English texts (as diverse dialects, registers, and languages now commonly inhabit the same textual space). As texts have changed, so have our practices of reading and writing them. For example, reading is not a linear processing of solely words. Similarly, some scholars have given up the term *composing* and started talking of *designing* (Faigley, 2004), as writing becomes more about orchestrating multiple symbol systems to display information by exploiting the resources of multimodal textual space. Literate competence therefore means something very different today from what it did a few years ago: We have now started talking of *multiliteracies* to describe texts and competence (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000).

The combined forces of technology, globalization, and World Englishes raise new questions for our profession. What does it mean to be *competent* in the English language? What do we mean by *correctness*? What is the best corpus of English or communicative genres for teaching purposes? What do we mean by *language identity* and *speech community*? In the face of such questions, it is understandable that so many of the authors in this state of the art issue end their articles with anticipation of things to come rather than closure based on how things are (e.g., Belcher, this issue; Leung & Lewkowicz, this issue; Zuengler & Miller, this issue).

To begin to address these new questions, we have to recognize that language norms are relative, variable, and heterogeneous. A proficient speaker of English today needs to shuttle between different communities, recognizing the systematic and legitimate status of different varieties of English. Rather than simply *joining* a speech community, then, we should teach students to shuttle *between* communities. To be really proficient in English in the postmodern world, one has to be multi-dialectal. Not only must we possess a repertoire of codes from the English language, we must also learn to use it in combination with other world languages. Gone are the days in which we could focus on a singular *target language*. These concerns gain importance as we begin to question the distinctions *native/nonnative* and *standard/nonstandard* and give due recognition to speakers of WEs. (Of course, there are expert and novice users of each variety, with different degrees of proficiency—see Rampton, 1990.) We realize that rather than teaching *rules* in a normative way, we should teach *strategies*—creative ways to negotiate the norms operating in

different contexts. Rather than judging divergence as error, we should orientate to it as an exploration of choices and possibilities. Having lost the innocence of teaching English for instrumental purposes, we should now encourage students to represent their voices and identities. While mastering the system of the language, students should also appropriate the system to serve their interests on their own terms.

These changes in English teaching demand a fundamental shift in our professional discourse and relationships. From the *us/them* perspective of the past (when language norms and professional expertise flowed unilaterally from the center to the periphery as the “native” speakers had the unchallenged authority to spell out orthodoxy for “nonnative” communities) we are moving to a *we* perspective that is more inclusive (see Holliday, 2005). Teaching English as an international language needs to be conducted with multilateral participation. Teachers in different communities have to devise curricula and pedagogies that have local relevance. Teaching materials have to accommodate the values and needs of diverse settings, with sufficient complexity granted to local knowledge. Curriculum change cannot involve the top-down imposition of expertise from outside the community, but should be a ground-up construction taking into account indigenous resources and knowledge, with a sense of partnership between local and outside experts. Orthodoxy can’t be defined one-sidedly by experts from centers of scholarship and research, divorced from pedagogical ground conditions, but must be decided in negotiation with practitioner knowledge in actual settings. We need to learn from diverse traditions of professionalization in different communities to develop a richer TESOL discourse. Calls for a plural professional knowledge and inclusive relationships are beginning to be heard loud and clear (Canagarajah, 2005b; Holliday, 2005; Widdowson, 2004).

## **SO WHAT IS THE STORY?**

The story of TESOL at 40 is inconclusive. In some cases we do see a continuation of trends along the same lines—as in opening up the classroom to learning opportunities, integrating skills, and teaching for specific purposes. In others, we have radically reoriented ourselves—as in understanding motivation and acquisition in terms of social participation and identity construction; in developing methods from the ground up, based on generative heuristics; in widening testing to include formative assessment; in accommodating subjective knowledge and experience in teacher expertise. Yet a third trend is the epistemological tensions within specific professional domains of great importance to the TESOL enterprise. For example, research on grammar teaching seems

to continue inconclusively, with earlier controversies unresolved; second, an “epistemological gap” in teacher education has led to tension and contention over “how L2 teacher cognition is conceptualized, how L2 teachers are prepared to do their work, and how L2 teachers and their practices are constructed in the public settings where they work” (Johnson, this issue, p. 237); and, third, the ontological conflict in SLA between cognitive and sociocultural orientations to acquisition seems irreconcilable (Zuengler & Miller, this issue).

To understand this unsettled state of the art, we have to remind ourselves of a major philosophical change that characterizes our social context. Our quest for objective, absolute, universal knowledge has been shaken by the questioning of Enlightenment thinking and modernist science. Our faith in certitude died when the positivist view of a rational, closed universe was called into doubt. As a result of this epistemological change, we now have a plethora of theoretical positions and philosophical assumptions shaping research and teaching. Needless to say, this diversity of available approaches informs many of the tensions within the profession today. The debates between the positivists and relativists in SLA and teacher education are just a more direct and visible expression of the dilemmas in all the other pedagogical domains.

So what are our options as we confront the diversity of approaches and practices in the field? Some of us may simply be confused by this variety and apparent chaos. Others may say, with Mao Tse Tung, “Let a hundred flowers bloom, let one hundred schools of thought contend” (cf. Lantolf, 1996). However, an alternative, more cynical response is to say that the field represents a supermarket of ideas and practices that we can choose from at will for our purposes. This response can encourage playfulness, complacency, and a superficial commitment to principles—which attitude is also a cultural phenomenon of the late capitalist period, widely known as *ludic postmodernism*. A more constructive response is seen in the way multiple orientations are brought to bear in explaining complex linguistic and pedagogical issues. For example, Magnan (2004) describes how cultural studies, literature, and applied linguistics come together to provide a richer perspective on the oral and literate texts of learners as they struggle for voice through language acquisition (see also Byrnes, 2002; Kramsch & Kramsch, 2000). It is ironic that at the culmination of what Howatt (2004) presents as the long march toward our disciplinary autonomy, we are back to integrating TESOL with knowledge from other relevant fields. There are other ways, as well, in which history is repeating itself, shocking scholars out of the Western predilection for teleological progress: Internationalism and multilingualism are back. For example, “nonnative” English teachers are regaining the agency they had in the formative period of 14th-century Europe (see

Howatt, 2004). Also, as at that time, English is integrated with other languages in its teaching, moving toward a multilingual pedagogy favoring a multicompetence model (see Cook, 1999).

Scholars may sometimes have fun with this plurality of assumptions and practices, but teachers will want to know what options these new trends suggest for teaching on Monday morning. A possible response is the one Ellis (this issue) adopts at the end of his discussion of controversies in grammar teaching. He formulates a personal strategy in line with his philosophical assumptions, listing 10 principles that he finds useful for teaching purposes. Widdowson (2004) adopts another approach after reviewing the inconclusive cycle of TESOL pedagogical fashions and trends in his concluding article to the *History of English Language Teaching* (Howatt, 2004). Here, Widdowson favors a “shift to localization” (p. 369): Seeing that a one-size-fits-all approach is no longer available, he recommends fashioning our approaches from the ground up, in relation to local contexts, needs, and objectives. Such an attitude can be creative and liberating to teachers. It is also more intellectually honest and socially responsible. Rather than looking at communities and classrooms through professional spectacles, we see them for what they are as we design specific approaches to suit them. Treating this as a fundamental “change in attitude,” Widdowson explains that “local contexts of actual practice are to be seen not as constraints to be overcome but conditions to be satisfied” (p. 369). Such an ecological approach additionally has the advantage of keeping all the variables and contextual richness intact as we teach or research English in diverse contexts.

The conclusion to the story of where TESOL is at 40 is simple yet unsettling: “ELT has . . . lost its innocence”—to quote Widdowson’s (2004, p. 362) own conclusion to the history of our profession. Indeed, the field has lost its innocence in many ways. We have lost our faith in finding final answers for questions of language acquisition and learning. We have given up our march toward uniform methods and materials. More important, we have become aware that assumptions about English and its teaching cannot be based on those of the dominant professional circles or communities. If TESOL has been moving toward an international family (as envisioned in the logo of the 25th anniversary issues), it will not be in terms of the center. The international family will be achieved through mutual questioning, active negotiation, and radical integration.

Our internationalism has been questioned, and so has everything else in the profession. What we have now are not answers or solutions, but a rich array of realizations and perspectives. We should consider this a healthier—even exciting—state of the art. It will be disconcerting only to those who expect neat formulas and convenient axioms to guide their

teaching. Perhaps we should all be licking our lips in anticipation, as Zuengler and Miller (this issue) do when they conclude their description of the “parallel worlds” in SLA: “We are eager to see what unfolds” (p. 52).

## **A DIFFERENT STORY, NEW METAPHORS**

If we can't hold on to the metaphors of growth, solution, and stability, are there new metaphors emerging to guide our professional life? We haven't produced many earth-shaking solutions or findings, but we have learned a lot from the very march toward disciplinary identity, sharing and drawing on each others' experiences as we have constantly reexamined our assumptions and enriched our knowledge in the process. What about the metaphorical shift behind the notions that it is not the comfort of *solutions* that matters but the vigilance of the *search*, not the neat *product* but the messy *practice* of crossing boundaries, mixing identities, and negotiating epistemologies? In this sense, I am reminded of a folk tale from my South Asian community: A group of pilgrims once undertook an arduous journey to the top of a tall mountain where they were told they would find a golden temple in which dwelled God. After many days of trudging together, they reached their destination. However, they were distraught to find only an empty, tumbledown hut instead of God and his golden temple. Then, as they started to lose all hope and return home as disconsolate unbelievers, an old man emerged from the nearby woods. Hearing what they were looking for, he answered cryptically: “God is not here. You met God on the way!” After some confusion, the pilgrims realized that their journey, with all its sacrifice, pain, and anxiety, matched by acts of generosity, dignity, and courage, indeed represented the divine. They marched back home with a new sense of themselves, their community, and life.

## **THE AUTHOR**

Suresh Canagarajah teaches undergraduate-level composition, linguistics, and literature, and graduate-level courses in the teaching of writing. He taught in Sri Lanka before joining the faculty of the City University of New York.

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# *Cognitive and Sociocultural Perspectives: Two Parallel SLA Worlds?*

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**JANE ZUENGLER**

*University of Wisconsin–Madison  
Madison, Wisconsin, United States*

**ELIZABETH R. MILLER**

*University of Wisconsin–Madison  
Madison, Wisconsin, United States*

Looking back at the past 15 years in the field of second language acquisition (SLA), the authors select and discuss several important developments. One is the impact of various sociocultural perspectives such as Vygotskian sociocultural theory, language socialization, learning as changing participation in situated practices, Bakhtin and the dialogic perspective, and critical theory. Related to the arrival of these perspectives, the SLA field has also witnessed debates concerning understandings of learning and the construction of theory. The debate discussed in this article involves conflicting ontologies. We argue that the traditional positivist paradigm is no longer the only prominent paradigm in the field: Relativism has become an alternative paradigm. Tensions, debates, and a growing diversity of theories are healthy and stimulating for a field like SLA.

**I**n this article, we characterize the several most important developments in the SLA field over the past 15 years. Although research and findings in the early decades of SLA were major accomplishments, we believe that the developments of the past 15 years are better characterized as ontological,<sup>1</sup> manifested in part as debates and issues. More specifically, we address the arrival of sociocultural perspectives in SLA and then discuss two debates, one whose tensions involve cognitive versus sociocultural understandings of learning and a second, related

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<sup>1</sup> *Ontology* asks “basic questions about the nature of reality” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998, p. 185). We focus on ontological debates, which we consider a development particularly prominent within the past 15 years. These ontological debates have emerged with the arrival of sociocultural perspectives in SLA. In contrast, since the beginning of the field of SLA, there have been debates and discussion regarding *epistemology* (or how we come to know the world, Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Some recent discussions can be found in Jordan (2004), Lazaraton (2003), Ortega (2005), and Thorne (2005).

debate involving disagreements between positivists and relativists over how to construct SLA theory.

## THE CONTINUATION OF COGNITIVE PERSPECTIVES AS TRADITIONAL SLA

In one of two special issues of *TESOL Quarterly* published in 1991 to celebrate its twenty-fifth anniversary, Diane Larsen-Freeman contributed an article that discussed the important topics that had emerged during SLA's first 20 years, from 1970 to 1990. Perhaps the most important SLA topic, as Larsen-Freeman (1991) saw it, was research attempting to describe and then explain the process of second language learning. Though the research varied somewhat regarding the particular theory invoked (e.g., universal grammar [UG], interactionism, connectionism), the phenomena that were researched (input, transfer, output, etc.) were conceptualized as psycholinguistic entities. That is, the SLA process was considered, almost unanimously, to be an internalized, cognitive process. (Though Larsen-Freeman did not mention this in her 1991 survey, the theories and research she surveyed were cognitively based.)

Writing as we are, 15 years later, the cognitive continues to dominate SLA. (However, it is not without critique nor is it the only paradigm; we discuss this in more detail later.) For many, the metaphor that Michael Sharwood Smith used in his plenary at the 1991 Second Language Research Forum in Los Angeles remains apt. Defining SLA for the audience, Sharwood Smith (1991) said the "cake" of SLA is cognitive, while its "icing" is the social. A perusal of four of the major refereed journals publishing SLA research in the 15 years since Sharwood Smith's remark bears testimony to the continuing domination of cognitively oriented SLA research. *Language Learning*, *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, *Applied Linguistics*, and *TESOL Quarterly* each continue to publish SLA articles that are cognitively based and, in the case of the first two journals listed, are devoted almost entirely to work within a cognitive paradigm. New volumes and articles providing surveys of SLA research either offer cognitively based research as virtually the only orientation (e.g., Doughty & Long, 2003; McGroarty, 2005; Pica, 2005) or at least give it a major role (though cf. Sealey & Carter, 2004). After all, as DeKeyser and Juffs (2005) write: "Nobody would doubt that language, whether first or second, is an aspect of human cognition" (p. 437).

Moreover, if one considers predictions made by some prominent SLA researchers, one might envision a future SLA field in which the cognitive has an even more expanded position than it currently has. Writing on the occasion of his stepping down as editor of *Language Learning*, Alexander Guiora (2005) addresses the future in what he referred to as

“the language sciences.” Though he points to what he sees as a “new and exciting chapter” in the field, with more developed technology and greater “multidisciplinarity of research” (pp. 185–186), Guiora envisions these developments through a cognitive lens. The greater disciplinarity of research involves, for him, the greater inclusion of cognitive science and neuroscience; the new technologies that will bring a more complex understanding of language will offer the “real possibility of establishing direct relationships between observed behaviors and their neurobiological substrates without *mediating constructs*, that is, a set of words, thus allowing for first-order explanations of these phenomena” (p. 186).

In the concluding chapter to their *Handbook of Second Language Acquisition*, Long and Doughty (2003) view the SLA future quite similarly. While discussing how the fields of cognitive science and SLA are related, Long and Doughty end their extensive volume with this vote of confidence for cognition:

For SLA to achieve the stability, stimulation, and research funding to survive as a viable field of inquiry, it needs an intellectual and institutional home that is to some degree autonomous and separate from the disciplines and departments that currently offer shelter. Cognitive science is the logical choice. (p. 869)

We wish to make clear, before going further, that we see nothing problematic or aberrant in continuing a certain perspective or theory in a given field. In showing evidence that the cognitive orientation continues to dominate SLA, we intend to clarify the context within which our discussion occurs. In other words, to understand the new kids on the block and, later, some tensions and arguments in the neighborhood, it is necessary to understand what the neighborhood has been and who has dominated it. We turn now to the newer arrivals.

## THE ARRIVAL OF SOCIOCULTURAL PERSPECTIVES ON SLA

These more recent arrivals to the field of SLA—*sociocultural perspectives*<sup>2</sup> on language and learning—view language use in real-world situations as fundamental, not ancillary, to learning. These researchers focus not on language as input, but as a resource for participation in the kinds

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<sup>2</sup> We use the term *sociocultural perspectives* to refer to varied approaches to learning that foreground the social and cultural contexts of learning (as discussed in Zuengler & Cole, 2004; see also Thorne, 2005). One such approach to learning is what we call *Vygotskian sociocultural theory*. However, we recognize that for some, the term *sociocultural theory* is equivalent to Vygotskian theory.

of activities our everyday lives comprise. Participation in these activities is both the product and the process of learning.

We provide brief summaries of the sociocultural perspectives we find typically invoked in recent SLA research, mentioning relevant studies. We do not, however, refer to all studies that draw on these perspectives. Readers are urged to see Lantolf (2000) for an overview of Vygotskian SLA studies and Zuengler and Cole (2005) for a review of language socialization research in second language learning. The order we have chosen is somewhat arbitrary. We begin, however, with Vygotskian sociocultural theory and language socialization because one or the other is often positioned as the primary theoretical framework. These two also seem to be invoked more frequently than situated learning theory, Bakhtinian approaches to language, or critical theories of discourse and social relations—the remaining perspectives we discuss. Segregating these sociocultural perspectives into their own sections allows us to address their unique disciplinary roots and contributions to SLA. Though we believe researchers must take care in how they bring together these varying approaches, given their distinctiveness, we suggest that the “hybrid interdisciplinarity” that many SLA scholars practice (Rampton, Roberts, Leung, & Harris, 2002, p. 373) has been productive and mirrors the increasing interdisciplinarity found in much of the current social science research.

## Vygotskian Sociocultural Theory

SLA research using Vygotskian sociocultural theory first began to appear in the mid-1980s (Frawley & Lantolf, 1984, 1985) but quickly gained momentum in the mid-1990s with a special issue of the *Modern Language Journal* (Lantolf, 1994), devoted to sociocultural theory and second language learning. That same year, an edited volume appeared (Lantolf & Appel, 1994), and the first of a series of annual meetings dedicated to sociocultural research in SLA convened in Pittsburgh. Since then, conference presentations and publications taking this approach to SLA have only increased.

Like traditional cognitive approaches to learning, Vygotskian sociocultural theory is fundamentally concerned with understanding the development of cognitive processes. However, its distinctiveness from traditional cognitive approaches can best be highlighted by citing Vygotsky: “The social dimension of consciousness [i.e., all mental processes] is primary in time and fact. The individual dimension of consciousness is derivative and secondary” (1979, p. 30). Lantolf and Pavlenko (1995) clarify that even though Vygotskian sociocultural theory does not deny a role for biological constraints, “development does not proceed as the

unfolding of inborn capacities, but as the transformation of innate capacities once they intertwine with socioculturally constructed mediational means” (p. 109). These means are the socioculturally meaningful artifacts and symbolic systems of a society, the most important of which is language. Of significance for SLA research is the understanding that when learners appropriate mediational means, such as language, made available as they interact in socioculturally meaningful activities, these learners gain control over their own mental activity and can begin to function independently. And as Lantolf (2000) notes, “according to Vygotsky, this is what development is about” (p. 80).

SLA researchers have focused on learners’ linguistic development in the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD), Vygotsky’s conception of what an individual can accomplish when working in collaboration with others (more) versus what he or she could have accomplished without collaboration with others (less). The ZPD points to that individual’s learning potential, that is, what he or she may be able to do independently in the future (Adair-Hauck & Donato, 1994; Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; Anton, 1999, 2000; DiCamilla & Anton, 1997; Nassaji & Cumming, 2000; Ohta, 2000; Swain & Lapkin, 1998). Others have focused on the use of *private speech* or speech directed to oneself that mediates mental behavior. Private speech manifests the process in which external, social forms of interaction come to be appropriated for *inner speech* or mental development (Anton & DiCamilla, 1998; McCafferty, 1994, 2004b; see also McCafferty, 2004a). Still others have focused on activity theory and task-based approaches to second language teaching and learning (Coughlan & Duff, 1994; McCafferty, Roebuck, & Wayland, 2001; Parks, 2000; Storch, 2004; Thorne, 2003).

## Language Socialization

Language socialization researchers, including those in SLA, closely identify with Vygotskian sociocultural approaches to learning (see Ochs, 1988; Schiefflin & Ochs, 1986; Watson-Gegeo, 2004; Watson-Gegeo & Nielson, 2003). But in contrast to a disciplinary history in psychology and a focus on cognitive development, this theory emerged from anthropology with an interest in understanding the development of socially and culturally competent members of society. In her introduction to an edited volume comprising language socialization studies among children in a variety of cultures, Ochs comments that she and her co-editor, Schieffelin (1986), “take for granted . . . that the development of intelligence and knowledge is facilitated (to an extent) by children’s communication with others,” and instead emphasize the “sociocultural information [that] is generally encoded in the organization of conversational

discourse” (pp. 2–3). As such, language socialization research has investigated the interconnected processes of linguistic and cultural learning in discourse practices, interactional routines, and participation structures and roles.<sup>3</sup>

Although language socialization research in the 1980s largely investigated ways in which children are socialized into the social practices of a community, by the mid-1990s the language socialization approach was being applied to adult second language learners (see, e.g., Duff, 1995; Harklau, 1994; Poole, 1992). Whether at home, in the classroom, at work, or in any number of other environments, language learners are embedded in and learn to become competent participants in culturally, socially, and politically shaped communicative contexts. The linguistic forms used in these contexts and their social significance affect how learners come to understand and use language.

In a recent review of language socialization research in SLA, Zuengler and Cole (2005) observed that even though some studies portray socialization as a smooth and successful process (e.g., Kanagy, 1999; Ohta, 1999), many other studies, mostly classroom based, demonstrate “language socialization as potentially problematic, tension producing, and unsuccessful” (p. 306). For example, some researchers have found that school socialization processes can have negative effects on second language learning (Atkinson, 2003; Duff & Early, 1999; Rymes, 1997; Willet, 1995) and others have observed contradictory home and school socialization processes, which often result in students’ relatively unsuccessful socialization to school norms (Crago, 1992; Moore, 1999; Watson-Gegeo, 1992). These findings, among others, point to the shifting emphasis in language socialization research to the sociopolitical dimensions of discourse and social organization and their implications for language learning (Watson-Gegeo, 2004). Like language socialization, *situated learning theory*, to which we now turn, underscores the role of social identity and relationships as well as the historical and practical conditions of language use in learning.

## LEARNING AS CHANGING PARTICIPATION IN SITUATED PRACTICES

Typically, situated learning—most notably represented by Lave and Wenger’s (1991) notion of *community of practice*—has not been positioned as the primary learning theory in SLA research in the same way that

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<sup>3</sup> See, however, Watson-Gegeo (2004) and Watson-Gegeo and Nielsen (2003), who insist that investigating and understanding cognitive development should not be abandoned in language socialization research.

Vygotskian or language socialization theories have been. For example, though Toohey's ethnographic research (2000) and the related work by Day (2002) both draw heavily on Lave and Wenger's community of practice, they also invoke Vygotskian sociocultural theory and Bakhtin's dialogic perspective (see next section). Lave and Wenger note that they could have adopted a socialization model, but they found that the apprenticeship model helped them conceptualize "learning in situated ways—in the transformative possibilities of being and becoming complex, full cultural-historical participants in the world" (p. 32). As suggested in this comment, *situated learning* foregrounds learners' participation in particular social practices, understood as habitual ways people (re)produce material and symbolic resources, often attached to particular times and places, and comprising communities of practice in complex, often overlapping ways.

Lave and Wenger's (1991) conception of *legitimate peripheral participation* is meant to describe the changes of engagement in particular social practices that entail learning. Thus, we can consider second language learners who demonstrate a change from limited to fuller participation in social practices involving their second (or additional) language as giving evidence of language development (much as language socialization views children or novices being socialized into more appropriate participation in the social practices of their communities). Elsewhere, Wenger (1998) maintains that learning is "not a separate activity. . . . [but] is something we can assume—whether we see it or not. . . . Even failing to learn what is expected in a given situation usually involves learning something else instead" (p. 8). Toohey (1999) agrees, suggesting that this approach can help us avoid consigning poor success in second language learning merely to an individual's failure to learn. Legitimate peripheral participation allows us to see instead that some members learn to take a less empowered position in a community of practice because of the kinds of participation made available to them by "processes of exclusion and subordination [that] operate locally" (p. 135). Toohey adds that it might be less helpful to see learners as marginalized than to view them as "very much integrated" into schools or other communities of practice but in positions that maintain their peripheral participation (p. 135). This shift in focus away from language and learning as an individual achievement aligns with Bakhtin's view of language as constituted in particular sociohistorical contexts.

## **Bakhtin and the Dialogic Perspective**

Given Mikhail Bakhtin's view of the fundamentally social nature of language and his metaphor of appropriation to conceptualize how

people take others' utterances in coming to own a language—within a specific social space and historical moment, Bakhtinian theory overlaps in important ways with situated learning. Though Hall (1995, 2002) and Johnson (2004) have extensively discussed Bakhtin's ideas and their applicability for understanding second language learning, most second language researchers have drawn on select concepts from Bakhtin's philosophical writings and, as with situated learning, have folded them in with other sociocultural frameworks.

Like the sociocultural theories already described, we find that Bakhtin (1981) stresses the sociality of intellectual processes in claiming that “language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the border between oneself and the other” (p. 293). One of the key concepts in Bakhtin's writings frequently invoked in SLA research is *dialogism*: the mutual participation of speakers and hearers in the construction of utterances and the connectedness of all utterances to past and future expressions. Thus, the linguistic resources we use and learn can never be seen as merely part of a “neutral and impersonal language”; rather, Bakhtin viewed our use of language as an appropriation of words that at one time “exist[ed] in other people's mouths” before we make them our own (pp. 293–294). Hall (2002) explains that, in this view, an utterance “can only be understood fully by considering its history of use by other people, in other places, for other reasons” (p. 13). Within this framework, Toohey (2000) describes language learning as a process in which learners “try on other people's utterances; they take words from other people's mouths; they appropriate these utterances and gradually (but not without conflict) these utterances come to serve their needs and relay their meanings” (p. 13).

Packaged with dialogism is Bakhtin's understanding of the inherently ideological nature of language. In agreeing that “all language is political,” Hall (1995) asserts that the “authority and privilege residing in certain interactive resources result from sociopolitical and historical forces surrounding their use” (p. 214). Every utterance we produce reveals our stance toward the interlocutors involved, signaling our social positioning within the local interaction and in response to larger sociopolitical forces. This ideological nature of language is foregrounded by critical theorists, who see the role of power relations as primary for understanding the social world, both in broader social worlds as well as in our very local social practices.

## Critical Theory

From the point of view of critical theory, being socialized into the practices of a community includes learning one's place in the sociopolitical

organization of those practices. Researchers who incorporate critical theory into their exploration of second language learning argue that one must account for relations of power in order to gain a fuller understanding of the practices and interactions in which learners participate—and thus of their learning processes. But what is more important, these researchers contend that this understanding should then lead to social and educational change such that more equitable social relations can be effected, particularly in the interests of disenfranchised groups and individuals. It is interesting that, in contrast to the theory of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave & Wenger, 1991) in which learners are viewed as learning their marginalized participation, critical theorists tend to view marginalized members of a community as having their access to learning blocked because they may be prevented from participating meaningfully in target-language social practices. The critical focus in second language learning has been strongly influenced by the work of Pennycook (1990, 1999, 2001) as well as Norton (1995, 1997b, 2000) and Canagarajah (1993, 1999, 2005).

Though the range of critical research is outside the scope of this discussion, we highlight one area of interest, language and identity, that has gained footing in the field and become a research area in its own right. It has been addressed in a special issue of *TESOL Quarterly* (Norton, 1997a) as well as in numerous other publications. From a sociocultural perspective, our identities are shaped by and through our language use (Norton, 1995, 1997b, 2000; Pavlenko & Blackledge, 2003). Although issues of identity and learning have been treated in all of the sociocultural approaches to learning that we have discussed so far, we think it is appropriate to mention them here because they often explore and critique the ways in which the patterning of power relationships can legitimate some identities and forms of participation but devalue others. As such, language learners have much more at stake than merely developing competence in an additional linguistic code. As Morgan (1998) notes, “language ‘conditions’ our expectations and desires and communicates what might be possible in terms of ourselves—our identity—and the ‘realities’ we might develop” (p. 12).

## **COGNITIVE AND SOCIOCULTURAL: TENSIONS AND DEBATES**

As we have seen, the SLA field in the past 15 years has expanded from a largely cognitive orientation to include sociocultural approaches such as those just documented. This expansion, we believe, is one of the main reasons the SLA field has during the past 15 years witnessed debates and tensions that, in their cross-paradigm criticisms and

ontological disagreements, are more fundamental than the (largely) intraparadigm issues surrounding, for example, the relative validity of options for eliciting speech that received attention in the earlier decades of SLA. This said, we would not, however, go as far as Larsen-Freeman (2002) in describing the current SLA field as being “in a state of turmoil” (p. 33). We prefer Lantolf’s (1996) more positive, accepting portrayal of the SLA field as “incredibly, and happily, diverse, creative, often contentious, and always full of controversy” (p. 738).

In this section, we discuss two debates that originated within the past 15 years and still continue. These debates are arguably the most important given their ontological differences, the great amount of attention the SLA field has paid them at conferences in the literature, and, on a more cynical note, the wrestling for academic territory that some have seen in them. Each debate shakes out as the cognitivists and socioculturalists arguing with each other for reasons we hope to make clear. However, we feel that such labels (*cognitivists*, *socioculturalists*), if used as the primary characterizations of the debates, would obscure the more basic ontological differences that underlie the arguments. Though the two debates are related, each originated in and focused on different conceptions, conceptions that we feel are more important means of framing and understanding each of the debates. Framing by conception, then, we first discuss the debate around understandings of learning<sup>4</sup> and after that, the debate about theory construction in SLA.

## The Debate Around the Understanding of Learning in SLA

At the 1996 annual conference of the International Association of Applied Linguistics (AILA) in Jyväskylä, Finland, Alan Firth and Johannes Wagner (1996) organized a symposium in which they delivered a paper arguing that SLA had long been dominated by cognitive views of the learner and learning as individualistic, mentalistic, and as functioning independent of the context and use of the language. Following their paper, several presenters took a variety of positions vis-à-vis Firth and Wagner’s critique. (One of the authors attended that symposium and remembers that the atmosphere was quite electric.) Although Firth and Wagner were not necessarily the first to raise such criticism of the field (see, e.g., Bremer, Roberts, Vasseur, Simonot, & Broeder, 1996; Hall, 1995; Rampton, 1987), attention to Firth and Wagner’s criticism in particular, with prominent respondents (e.g., Joan Kelly Hall, Gabriele

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<sup>4</sup> Though earlier SLA work sometimes differentiated *learning* from *acquisition*, following the distinction made by Krashen (e.g., 1982, 1985), we understand the two terms as synonymous. Our understanding reflects the field’s current position, given that Krashen’s theory has fallen out of favor.

Kasper, Nanda Poulisse, Michael Long) from varying orientations offering support or declaring opposition, was guaranteed when, in 1997, their symposium papers were published along with additional response papers in the *Modern Language Journal* (see Firth & Wagner, 1997). The debate intensified further after the *Modern Language Journal* published Susan Gass's (1998) response to Firth and Wagner, and Firth and Wagner's (1998) response to Gass.<sup>5</sup>

Firth and Wagner (1997) criticize the field of SLA for its overwhelmingly cognitive orientation in defining and researching the learner and learning. Such an approach too strongly emphasizes the individual, the internalization of mental processes, and "the development of grammatical competence" (p. 288). Meaning does not occur, they argue, in "private thoughts executed and then transferred from brain to brain, but [as] a social and negotiable product of interaction, transcending individual intentions and behaviours" (p. 290). Like other humans, a language learner should be considered a "participant-as-language-'user' in social interaction" (p. 286). It is time, they say, to question the field's division of language use (as consigned to the social) from language learning (as the individualized, decontextualized domain of the cognitive). An SLA field reformulated according to Firth and Wagner's argument would help us gain more comprehension of "how language is used *as it is being acquired through interaction*, and used resourcefully, contingently, and contextually" (p. 296). Reiterating their view of learning in their response to Gass (1998), they invoke Vygotsky in asserting that "cognitive structures are influenced and, indeed, developed through engagement in social activity. . . . From this perspective, it can be said that language use forms cognition" (Firth & Wagner, 1998, p. 92).

Firth and Wagner's argument that learning (or acquisition) occurs through use would find support not just in Vygotsky but also in the other sociocultural perspectives discussed in this article. In fact, Kramsch (2002) points out that the unifying thread running through her edited collection "is a common dissatisfaction with the traditional separation between language acquisition and language socialization" (p. 4), language socialization being one of the sociocultural perspectives prominent in current SLA. Some go further. In her contribution to the Kramsch collection, Larsen-Freeman (2002) appears to be beyond "dissatisfaction" in declaring that "the failure to consider language use" is one of the "most trenchant criticisms of mainstream SLA research" (p. 34), the other being the lack of balance between the social and the cognitive.

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<sup>5</sup> For reprints of some of the papers as well as commentary, see Seidlhofer (2003). Larsen-Freeman (2002) provides a very concise summary of the debate.

Although some of the respondents (namely, Hall, 1997, and Liddicoat, 1997) support Firth and Wagner's argument, it is the opposing respondents whose position we summarize, particularly those—Long (1997), Kasper (1997), and Gass (1998)—who assert strong opposition to Firth and Wagner's claim that we should not separate acquisition and use because use is actually how learning takes place. Perhaps because they share a cognitive orientation, all three give basically the same response, maintaining a strong split between acquisition and use. To Kasper (1997), the "most nagging problem" with Firth and Wagner's paper is that it "has in fact very little to say about L2 *acquisition*" (p. 310) because, as she sees it, although social context can influence SLA, the SLA process itself is essentially cognitive. Long (1997) completely agrees, ending his response by offering his "skepticism as to whether greater insights into SL *use* will *necessarily* have much to say about SL *acquisition*" (p. 322). And though Gass (1998) concedes that perhaps "some parts of language are constructed socially," that in itself does not imply that "we cannot investigate language as an abstract entity that resides in the individual" (p. 88), maintaining, in so doing, her view of learning as largely an individualized mental process. Drawing a figure characterizing the field, Gass (1998) presents "SLA" and "SL Use" as together making up research on "Second Language Studies," but it is important that she draws "SLA" and "SL Use" as branches that are separate and unconnected (p. 88).

As Larsen-Freeman (2002) points out, this debate is irresolvable because it involves two different ontological positions that reflect "fundamental differences in the way they frame their understanding of learning" (p. 37). What one might hope for, though, is that "we agree to disagree," as the expression goes, and accept that contrasting views of learning can stimulate rather than befuddle the field.

## **The Debate on Theory Construction in SLA: Positivism Versus Relativism**

During the past 15 years, the SLA field has devoted more attention to metatheoretical and methodological concerns than it had in earlier decades. The most prominent debate has concerned theory construction in SLA. Though others have written (and continue to write) on theory construction,<sup>6</sup> we have selected a set of authors and articles, ranging from 1991 to 2000, that comprise a coherent debate for discussion. The discussion we profile of theory construction—in fact, any discussion of theory construction—addresses a complex subject that raises a number

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Atkinson (2002), McGroarty (1998), and van Lier (1991, 1994).

of questions. We have distilled from the discussion the authors' debate on positivism versus relativism in theory construction. The tensions and differences it raises reflect a new dynamic entering the field, one that continues and that results from, we believe, the arrival on the SLA scene of the sociocultural perspectives we discussed earlier.<sup>7</sup>

Beretta (1991) framed a discussion of theory construction by addressing issues such as whether or not (what he saw as) a diversity of theories and criteria in SLA represents a problem; that is, should this diversity be reduced to one or a few theories? Considering different approaches to theory building, Beretta arrives at a clear conclusion in favor of few, rather than many, theories, viewing the former as the result of "rationality" and the latter, the outcome of "relativism" (p. 495). Comparing SLA to the "already-successful sciences" (p. 497; i.e., the so-called hard sciences), Beretta says that because these fields do not, unlike SLA, have "multiple rival theories" (p. 497), it is not beneficial for SLA to have many theories, either. He goes on to state that the "most anarchic criterion of all" is that of "no criterion" (p. 501). Referring to what he calls "extreme relativism," Beretta's nightmare scenario is one in which phenomena are not independent of but "always relative to the values of individuals and communities" (p. 501). This "whatever" position (to use a current slang term) implies that "poetry, voodoo, religion, and nonsense are no less valid bases for belief than 'science'" (p. 501). Clearly, then, Beretta supports theory building only from a rationalist/positivist<sup>8</sup> paradigm, and certainly not from a relativist one. He is not alone. Although Crookes (1992) does not address relativism, his agreement with Beretta is implicit in his adherence to a positivistic notion of science as the gold standard in considering theory construction.<sup>9</sup>

The debate continued with the publication of a special issue of *Applied Linguistics* in 1993 titled "Theory Construction in SLA," which contains papers from a 1991 conference at Michigan State University titled "Theory Construction and Methodology in Second Language Research." Almost all of the contributors (i.e., Beretta, Long, Crookes, Gregg)<sup>10</sup> take

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<sup>7</sup> To follow the debate, the reader should consult, in this order, Beretta (1991); Crookes (1992); Beretta (1993); Block (1996); Gregg, Long, Jordan, & Beretta (1997); Lantolf (1996); and Gregg (2000).

<sup>8</sup> Though Beretta states that positivism is not a viable paradigm any longer, he appears to be keeping to positivism nevertheless, taking perhaps a postpositivistic stance instead. For information on the two positions (which are within the same paradigm), see, for example, Guba and Lincoln (1998). Because we see positivism and postpositivism as matters of degree rather than substance, and because *positivism* is the better known term in the field, we will use *positivism* to describe Beretta's and others' positions.

<sup>9</sup> Such a characterization of science (as equivalent to positivism) may be simplistic. We thank one of the anonymous reviewers for pointing this out.

<sup>10</sup> The exception is Schumann (1993), who argues, to oversimplify it, that art and science are not that different. Because Schumann's position is similar to that of the other relativists that we discuss, we will not focus on him here.

a similar position that although it does not necessarily mention relativism explicitly, nevertheless implicitly opposes it by supporting positivism as the (sole) paradigm for cognitive research on SLA. Beretta and Crookes (1993) dismiss the argument that the social can cause the content of theories; they argue that social conditions are not only not sufficient but are not necessary “for scientific discovery” (p. 253). Gregg (1993), like Beretta and Crookes (1993), does not attack relativism directly. Nevertheless, it is clear that Gregg (1993) opposes relativism: “In SLA . . . the overall explanandum is the acquisition (or non-acquisition) of L2 competence, in the Chomskyan sense of the term” (p. 278). And the criteria that Gregg chooses for discussing theory construction, transition theories and property theories, come from psychology (i.e., Cummins, 1983). Thus, in what becomes an ongoing metaphor in the debate, Gregg’s “Let a Couple of Flowers Bloom” does not advocate a relativist’s acceptance of a multiplicity of theories, but advocates “a couple” as opposed to many and within a cognitive and positivistic framework.

Adapting Gregg’s metaphor, Lantolf’s (1996) article, subtitled “Letting All the Flowers Bloom!,” not surprisingly supports relativism and opposes positivism. Though Block’s (1996) article is more wide-ranging, he, too, argues for relativism: “Reality is a social, and, therefore, multiple, construction. . . . there is no tangible, fragmentable reality on to which science can converge” (p. 69, citing Lincoln, 1990). However, that does not mean that everything is acceptable, Block asserts. Though he acknowledges that relativism and positivism are two fundamentally different ontologies, he argues, again citing Lincoln (1990), that rather than throwing their hands up at the situation, relativists attempt to find patterns, “working hypotheses, or temporary, time-and-place-bound knowledge” (Block, 1996, p. 69). Coming from a similar position, Lantolf (1996) provides a “postmodernist critical analysis” of the theory-building literature of Gregg, Long, Crookes, and others, pointing out that they are all clearly dedicated to the rationalist/positivist paradigm in the SLA field and adding ironically that they “share . . . a common fear of the dreaded ‘relativism’” (p. 715). In fact, Lantolf coins a term for this condition: *relativaphobia* (p. 731). In a detailed set of points, Lantolf argues against what he sees as the hegemony of the positivistic, echoing Block’s (1996) accusation of “science envy” (p. 64) in accusing Gregg and the others of having “physics envy” (p. 717). Where Gregg and the others consider the existence within SLA of multiple and incommensurable theories an obstacle to the development and maturation of the field, Lantolf (1996) encourages “Letting All the Flowers Bloom,” warning that otherwise, “once theoretical hegemony is achieved, alternative metaphors are cut off or suffocated by the single official metaphor;

subsequently, those who espouse different world views . . . cease to have a voice” (p. 739).

Both Block (1996) and Lantolf (1996) generated response articles; Gregg, Long, Jordan, and Beretta (1997) critiqued the Block article, while Gregg (2000) responded to Lantolf (1996) by presenting a negative summary of postmodernism. Writing from within their positivist paradigm, Gregg, Long, Jordan, and Beretta (1997) accept Block’s criticism that they have “science envy”:

Let us grant that many or even all of us in the field have the occasional twinge of envy for the accomplishments of other sciences; given the fairly feeble progress made so far in SLA, and the magnificent intellectual achievements of the more successful sciences, such envy would certainly be unsurprising. (p. 543)

Unfortunately, their stance becomes both smug and naïve. For example, Gregg and his colleagues (1997) declare a state of “disbelief” in Block’s point that controlling for extraneous variables in SLA research is “probably not even desirable” (p. 544, quoting Block, 1996, p. 74). Continuing, they declare: “Do we actually need to point out the disastrous consequences of Block’s ‘stance’ for SLA, or indeed for any intellectual inquiry?” (p. 544). No one invoking a positivist paradigm would disagree with their critique because one of the paradigm’s principles is indeed the manipulation of variables, which includes controlling wherever possible for extraneous variables. However, what Gregg and colleagues (1997) fail to recognize is that Block’s statement comes from a different (relativist) paradigm, rendering their response irrelevant.

In his critique of Lantolf (1996), Gregg (2000) does not directly reiterate the anti-relativist, pro-positivist argument that he and his colleagues had already published elsewhere. Instead, he begins by summarizing (negatively) postmodernism, the approach that Lantolf (1996) takes in his article. Describing postmodernism, Gregg discusses its stance that, among other things, instead of written texts having objective meaning—that of the text’s author—meaning is generated as the reader interacts with the text. Gregg’s response to this stance reveals his reluctance (or inability?) to think outside of his paradigm: “Such a perspective strikes me as nonsense” (p. 386). On the other hand, he takes “the common-sense position . . . that the meaning of sentences can usually be agreed upon, and that there generally are correct and incorrect interpretations of (meaningful) sentences” (pp. 386–387).

Concluding his discussion of postmodernism, Gregg (2000) asserts, again from within his paradigm:

It is no accident that postmodernism originated as a movement among literary critics and cultural philosophers. . . . It flourishes, that is, precisely in those areas of intellectual activity where decisive evidence is extremely hard to find. . . . Faced with a range of disciplines that are actually making progress . . . the postmodernists tried to turn the tables on the sciences. . . . Rather than claiming that the grapes of science are sour, the postmodernist assures us that there are no grapes. . . . To put it a bit differently, one can see postmodernism as a sophisticated way for academics in the humanities to overcome their own “physics envy.” (pp. 389–390)

With that memorable point of view, we will end our discussion of the theory construction debate. On the positive side, we agree that debates like this stimulate a field. And debates being debates, it is not necessary or relevant to try to come to agreement. After all (as we indicated in discussing the debate about learning), the debate on theory construction is occurring across very different paradigms with contradictory views of reality. Although the debate can be framed as occurring between cognitivists and socioculturalists, we have emphasized a more fundamental difference. Like Lantolf (1996), we view as positive a field in which possibly incommensurable theories proliferate and are debated rather than allowing one theory to dominate without being problematized. We are only sorry that so much energy has gone into some participants’ refusal to admit (or understand?) that these positions on theory are incommensurable because they stem from contradictory ontologies. And the smug tone that some of the debate takes is therefore not only naïve but unfair.

Though we have discussed a debate whose outcome is incommensurability, some argue for cognitive-sociocultural integration. Authors take varying approaches in making their argument. For example, Larsen-Freeman (2002) proposes chaos/complexity theory as a means of accommodating both sociocultural and cognitive perspectives within SLA. Block (2003) cites several pieces of research that argue for the complementarity of cognitive and sociocultural views, namely, Ellis (2000), Swain and Lapkin (1998), Tarone and Liu (1995), and Teutsch-Dwyer (2001). However, Block himself does not take a clear position supporting integration. Instead, he advocates a “more multidisciplinary and socially informed future” for those following the input-interaction tradition (p. 139). Making a somewhat different argument, Watson-Gegeo (2004) sees a possible new “synthesis” of the cognitive with the sociocultural because of developments in the field that view cognition as a phenomenon which “originates in social interaction and is shaped by cultural and sociopolitical processes” (p. 331). Thorne (2005) and Lantolf (2000) envision Vygotskian theory in particular as providing a lens for viewing social context as central to the development of cognition (see also Johnson, 2004).

## **IMPLICATIONS OF SOCIOCULTURAL PERSPECTIVES FOR CLASSROOM PRACTICE**

Hall (2002) observes that traditional SLA approaches seek to identify good pedagogical interventions that will most effectively “facilitate learners’ assimilation of new systemic knowledge into known knowledge structures” (p. 48). However, given their different understandings of language learning, socioculturally informed studies offer much different recommendations for improving classroom practice. For example, in seeing learning as participation, as relational and interactive, and as constrained by unequal power relations, Lave and Wenger’s perspective asks educators to consider how the practices of school relate to those outside of school, how schools and classrooms themselves are organized into communities of practice, and what kinds of participation are made accessible to students.

Other studies taking sociocultural perspectives have examined classroom interactions or discourse patterns with an eye toward identifying those that best facilitate student participation (Gutierrez, Rymes, & Larsen, 1995; Nassaji & Wells, 2000; Nystrand, Gamoran, Zeiser, & Long, 2003; Tharp & Gallimore, 1991). Still others have examined such topics as the kinds of guided or scaffolded assistance from teachers (or other experts) that can move students along within their ZPD (Aljaafreh & Lantolf, 1994; Anton, 1999; McCormick & Donato, 2000; Nassaji & Cumming, 2000), the effectiveness of goal-oriented dialogue between peers to mediate learning (Donato, 1994; Ohta, 2000; Swain & Lapkin, 1998), and the need for dialogic and contextually sensitive approaches to language assessment (Johnson, 2001, 2004). These studies are only a few among many, but they share the sociocultural awareness that highly situated classroom participation promotes language learning.

We acknowledge that we do not specify general recommendations for transforming classroom practices, primarily because we are aware of the limits of what can be generalized across classroom contexts. Hall (2000) speaks to the situatedness of learning processes in saying that “effecting change in our classrooms will not result from imposing solutions from outside but from nurturing effectual practices that are indigenous to our particular contexts” (p. 295). Clearly, this is no easy task for educators. It requires ongoing and intense work with every group of students and reflective awareness of how the affective and political dimensions of classroom life affect individual students’ participation. However, with the increased awareness and sensitivity to local contexts that sociocultural perspectives bring us, we have reason to hope that we are closer to understanding and creating the kinds of classroom communities that learners need.

## FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Although it is difficult to make predictions about the next 15 years in such a dynamic field, we end our article by looking forward to some developments we consider exciting and worth watching. Among them is work in conversation analysis investigating language learning as it occurs in the turn-by-turn development of conversational processes (see, e.g., Markee, 2004); developments in discursive psychology (not yet emergent in SLA but relevant for researchers interested in learner positioning within social practices; see, e.g., Davies & Harré, 1990); a growth in work focusing on postcolonial, transnational, and World Englishes (e.g., Canagarajah, 2000; Jenkins, 2003, also this issue; Kachru, 2001; Pennycook, 1998; Rampton, 1995); and explorations in the new kinds of discursive practices that language learners engage when using new technologies (see especially Gee, 2003; Kern, this issue; Lam, 2000; Thorne, 2003; and Warschauer, 1997). We are eager to see what unfolds.

## THE AUTHORS

Jane Zuengler is a professor in the English Department at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Her research and teaching interests include second language acquisition and use, classroom discourse analysis, critical perspectives on language, and the global spread of English.

Elizabeth R. Miller is a doctoral candidate in the English Department at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. Her research interests include second language acquisition and use, microanalytic discourse analysis, and critical and poststructural perspectives on language, pedagogy, and ideology.

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# TESOL Methods: Changing Tracks, Challenging Trends

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**B. KUMARAVADIVELU**

*San José State University*

*San José, California, United States*

This article traces the major trends in TESOL methods in the past 15 years. It focuses on the TESOL profession's evolving perspectives on language teaching methods in terms of three perceptible shifts: (a) from communicative language teaching to task-based language teaching, (b) from method-based pedagogy to postmethod pedagogy, and (c) from systemic discovery to critical discourse. It is evident that during this transitional period, the profession has witnessed a heightened awareness about communicative and task-based language teaching, about the limitations of the concept of method, about possible postmethod pedagogies that seek to address some of the limitations of method, about the complexity of teacher beliefs that inform the practice of everyday teaching, and about the vitality of the macrostructures—social, cultural, political, and historical—that shape the microstructures of the language classroom. This article deals briefly with the changes and challenges the trend-setting transition seems to be bringing about in the profession's collective thought and action.

In this state-of-the-art essay,<sup>1</sup> I trace the major trends in TESOL methods since the 1991 publication of the 25th anniversary issue of *TESOL Quarterly*. I shall, therefore, refer to two overlapping periods of time: before 1990 and after. To somewhat pre-empt my central thesis: If the first period is called a *period of awareness*, the second may be called a *period of awakening*. I focus on the nature and scope of the transition from awareness to awakening, along with the contributions and consequences associated with it. For the sake of synthesis, organization, and presentation,

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<sup>1</sup> A state-of-the-art essay is mostly a summary statement of instant history with all its attendant subjectivities. A subject like TESOL methods, with its multiple issues and multiple players, is bound to carry multiple perspectives. In putting together my understanding of the field, I received help from three anonymous reviewers and from the *TESOL Quarterly* editor. I am indebted to them. I have not accepted all their suggestions and, therefore, I'm responsible for any remaining errors in judgment. For a detailed treatment of some of the issues discussed in this article, see Kumaravadivelu (2006).

I frame this overarching transition in terms of three principal and perceptible shifts: (a) from communicative language teaching to task-based language teaching, (b) from method-based pedagogy to postmethod pedagogy, and (c) from systemic discovery to critical discourse. By opting for a from-to frame of reference, I do not suggest that one concept has completely replaced the other; instead, I consider the transition as work in progress.

Before I proceed, a caveat and a clarification are in order. The caveat relates to the constraints on space. The editorial stipulation on length has necessitated a limited selection of the literature on TESOL methods and a limited focus on general goals and strategies rather than on specific objectives and tactics. The clarification pertains to a widely prevalent terminological ambiguity. In the practice of everyday teaching as well as in the professional literature, the term *method* is used indiscriminately to refer to what theorists propose and to what teachers practice. Clearly, they are not the same. Mindful of such a disparity, Mackey (1965) made a distinction four decades ago between *method analysis* and *teaching analysis*. The former refers to an analysis of methods conceptualized and constructed by experts, and the latter refers to an analysis of what practicing teachers actually do in the classroom. Method analysis can be done by reviewing the relevant literature, but teaching analysis can be done only by including a study of classroom input and interaction. This article is about method analysis, not teaching analysis.

## **FROM COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING TO TASK-BASED LANGUAGE TEACHING**

The 25th anniversary issue of *TESOL Quarterly* contains a state-of-the-art article devoted exclusively to *communicative language teaching* (CLT), thus highlighting the pre-eminent position it held during the 1980s. In it, Savignon (1991) notes that CLT is a broad approach that

has become a term for methods and curricula that embrace both the goals and the processes of classroom learning, for teaching practice that views competence in terms of social interaction and looks to further language acquisition research to account for its development. (p. 263)

The phrase “competence in terms of social interaction” sums up the primary emphasis of CLT, whose theoretical principles were derived mainly from concepts oriented to language communication, particularly Austin’s (1962) *speech act theory*, which explains how language users perform speech acts such as requesting, informing, apologizing, and so on, Halliday’s (1973) *functional perspective*, which highlights meaning

potential, and Hymes' (1972) theory of *communicative competence*, which incorporates interactional and sociocultural norms.

According to American (e.g., Savignon, 1983), British (e.g., Breen & Candlin, 1980), and Canadian (e.g., Canale & Swain, 1980) commentators, CLT was essentially concerned with the concepts of negotiation, interpretation, and expression. They and others point out that underscoring the creative, unpredictable, and purposeful use of language as communication were classroom practices largely woven around sharing information and negotiating meaning. This is true not only of oral communication but also of reading and writing. Information gap activities that have the potential to carry elements of unpredictability and freedom of choice were found to be useful. So were games, role plays, and drama techniques, all of which were supposed to help the learners get ready for so-called real world communication outside the classroom. These activities were supposed to promote grammatical accuracy as well as communicative fluency.

During the 1980s, CLT became such a dominant force that it guided the form and function of almost all conceivable components of language pedagogy. A steady stream of scholarly books appeared with the label *communicative* unfailingly stamped on the cover. Thus, there were books on communicative competence (Savignon, 1983), communicative grammar (Leech & Svartvik, 1979), communicative syllabus (Yalden, 1983), communicative teaching (Littlewood, 1981), communicative methodology (Brumfit, 1984), communicative tasks (Nunan, 1989), communicative reading (Bowen, 1990), and communicative testing (Weir, 1990). To transfer the burgeoning CLT scholarship to the language classroom, scores of communicative textbooks were produced in various content and skill areas.

CLT was a principled response to the perceived failure of the audiolingual method, which was seen to focus exclusively and excessively on the manipulation of the linguistic structures of the target language. Researchers and teachers alike became increasingly skeptical about the audiolingual method's proclaimed goal of fostering communicative capability in the learner and about its presentation-practice-production sequence. The proponents of CLT sought to move classroom teaching away from a largely structural orientation that relied on a reified rendering of pattern practices and toward a largely communicative orientation that relied on a partial simulation of meaningful exchanges that take place outside the classroom. They also introduced innovative classroom activities (such as games, role plays, and scenarios) aimed at creating and sustaining learner motivation. The focus on the learner and the emphasis on communication made CLT highly popular among ESL teachers.

Subsequent research on the efficacy of CLT, however, cast serious

doubts about its authenticity, acceptability, and adaptability—three important factors of implementation about which the proponents of CLT have made rather bold claims. By *authenticity*, I am referring to the claim that CLT practice actually promotes serious engagement with meaningful negotiation, interpretation, and expression in the language classroom. It was believed that CLT classrooms reverberate with authentic communication that characterizes interaction in the outside world. But a communicative curriculum, however well conceived, cannot by itself guarantee meaningful communication in the classroom because communication “is what may or may not be achieved through classroom activity; it cannot be embodied in an abstract specification” (Widdowson, 1990, p. 130). Data-based, classroom-oriented investigations conducted in various contexts by various researchers such as Kumaravadivelu (1993a), Legutke and Thomas (1991), Nunan (1987), and Thornbury (1996) reveal that the so-called communicative classrooms they examined were anything but communicative. In the classes he studied, Nunan (1987) observed that form was more prominent than function, and grammatical accuracy activities dominated communicative fluency ones. He concluded, “There is growing evidence that, in communicative class, interactions may, in fact, not be very communicative after all” (p. 144). Legutke and Thomas (1991) were even more forthright:

In spite of trendy jargon in textbooks and teachers’ manuals, very little is actually communicated in the L2 classroom. The way it is structured does not seem to stimulate the wish of learners to say something, nor does it tap what they might have to say. (pp. 8–9)

Kumaravadivelu (1993a) analyzed lessons taught by teachers claiming to follow CLT, and confirmed these findings: “Even teachers who are committed to CLT can fail to create opportunities for genuine interaction in their classroom” (p. 113).

By *acceptability*, I mean the claim that CLT marks a revolutionary step in the annals of language teaching. This is not a widely accepted view, contrary to common perceptions. Several scholars (e.g., Howatt, 1987; Savignon, 1983; Swan, 1985; Widdowson, 2003) have observed that CLT does not represent any radical departure in language teaching. As Widdowson (2003) points out, the representation of CLT given in popular textbooks on TESOL methods such as Larsen-Freeman (2000) and Richards and Rodgers (2001) “as a quite radical break from traditional approaches” (p. 26) is not supported by evidence. For instance, Howatt (1987) connects several features of CLT to earlier methods such as direct method and audiolingual method. According to him, “CLT has adopted all the major principles of the 19th century

reform” (p. 25) in language teaching. Swan (1985) is even more emphatic:

Along with its many virtues, the Communicative Approach unfortunately has most of the typical vices of an intellectual revolution: it over-generalizes valid but limited insights until they become virtually meaningless; it makes exaggerated claims for the power and novelty of its doctrines; it misrepresents the currents of thought it has replaced; it is often characterized by serious intellectual confusion; it is choked with jargon. (p. 2)

In fact, a detailed analysis of the principles and practices of CLT would reveal that it too adhered to the same fundamental concepts of language teaching as the audiolingual method it sought to replace, namely, the linear and additive view of language learning, and the presentation-practice-production vision of language teaching. The claims of its distinctiveness are based more on communicative activities than on conceptual underpinnings (see Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

By *adaptability*, I mean the observation that the principles and practices of CLT can be adapted to suit various contexts of language teaching across the world and across time. Holliday (1994) suggests a plan for designing an *appropriate methodology*, a modified CLT that is sensitive to different sociocultural demands. Savignon (2001) identifies five components of a communicative curriculum for the 21st century and predicts confidently that CLT “will continue to be explored and adapted” (p. 27). Such optimistic observations have been repeatedly called into question by reports of uneasiness from different parts of the world. Consider the following: From India, Prabhu (1987) observes that the objectives advocated and the means adopted by CLT are so inappropriate for the Indian situation that he thought it necessary to propose and experiment with a new context-specific, task-based language pedagogy. From South Africa, Chick (1996) wonders whether the “choice of communicative language teaching as a goal was possibly a sort of naive ethnocentrism prompted by the thought that what is good for Europe or the USA had to be good for KwaZulu” (p. 22). From Pakistan, Shamim (1996) reports that her attempt to introduce CLT into her classroom met with resistance from her learners, leading her to realize that she was actually “creating psychological barriers to learning” (p. 109). From South Korea, Li (1998) declares that CLT has resulted in more difficulties than one can imagine. From China, Yu (2001) speaks of considerable resistance to CLT both from teachers and learners. From Japan, Sato (2002) reports practical difficulties in implementing CLT. From Thailand, Jarvis and Atsilarat (2004) observe how, in spite of the Thai government’s official endorsement, teachers and learners consider CLT inappropriate and

unworkable. These and other reports suggest that, in spite of the positive features mentioned earlier, CLT offers perhaps a classic case of a center-based pedagogy that is out of sync with local linguistic, educational, social, cultural, and political exigencies. The result has been a gradual erosion of its popularity, paving way for a renewed interest in task-based language teaching (TBLT), which, according to some, is just CLT by another name.<sup>2</sup>

## What's in a Name? A Task Is a Task Is a Task

The trend away from CLT and toward TBLT is illustrated in part by the fact that *communicative*, the label that was ubiquitous in the titles of scholarly books and student textbooks published in the 1980s, has been gradually replaced by another, *task*. Within a decade, several research-based books have appeared on task-based language learning and teaching (Bygate, Skehan, & Swain, 2001; Crookes & Gass, 1993; Ellis, 2003; Nunan, 2004; Prabhu, 1987; Skehan, 1998). In addition, there are specifically targeted textbooks that provide tasks for language learning (Gardner & Miller, 1996; Willis, 1996), tasks for language teaching (Johnson, 2003; Nunan, 1989; Parrott, 1993), tasks for teacher education (Tanner & Green, 1998), tasks for classroom observation (Wajnryb, 1992), and tasks for language awareness (Thornbury, 1997).

In spite of the increasing number of publications, a consensus definition of *task* continues to elude the profession. One finds in the literature a multiplicity of definitions, each highlighting certain aspects of TBLT (for a compilation, see Johnson, 2003; Kumaravadivelu, 1993b). Nearly 20 years ago, Breen (1987) defined *task* broadly as “a range of workplans which have the overall purpose of facilitating language learning—from the simple and brief exercise type to more complex and lengthy activities such as group problem-solving or simulations and decision-making” (p. 23). In a more recent work, Ellis (2003) synthesizes various definitions to derive a composite one:

A task is a workplan that requires learners to process language pragmatically in order to achieve an outcome that can be evaluated in terms of whether the correct or appropriate propositional content has been conveyed. To this end, it requires them to give primary attention to meaning and to make use of their own linguistic resources, although the design of the task may predispose them to choose particular forms. A task is intended to result in language use that bears a resemblance, direct or indirect, to the way language is used in the real world. Like other language activities, a task can engage productive or

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<sup>2</sup> One of the reviewers, for instance, raises the following question: “Is TBLT simply an updated emphasis on CLT designed to generate sales of teaching materials?”

receptive, and oral or written skills, and also various cognitive processes. (p. 16)

Ellis has deftly crafted a definition that includes almost all the major points of contention in language pedagogy: attention to meaning, engagement with grammar, inclusion of pragmatic properties, use of authentic communication, importance of social interaction, integration of language skills, and the connection to psycholinguistic processes.

The definition also highlights differing perspectives that scholars bring to bear on TBLT, perspectives that offer a menu of options ranging from an explicit focus on form to an exclusive focus on function. Reflecting such a diversity, Long and Crookes (1992) present three different approaches to task-based syllabus design and instruction. In a similar vein, Skehan (1998) refers to two extremes of task orientation: structure-oriented tasks and communicatively oriented tasks. “They share the quality,” he writes, “that they concentrate on one aspect of language performance at the expense of others. The structure-oriented approach emphasizes form to the detriment of meaning, while an extreme task-based approach focuses very much on meaning and not on form” (p. 121). He then stresses the need for a third approach in which “the central feature is a balance between form and meaning, and an alternation of attention between them” (p. 121). Long (1991; Long & Robinson, 1998) has consistently argued for a particular type of focus on form in which learners’ attention is explicitly drawn to linguistic features if and when they are demanded by the communicative activities and the negotiation of meaning learners are engaged in.

It is precisely because a task can be treated through multiple methodological means, Kumaravadevelu (1993b) argues, that TBLT is not linked to any one particular method. He reckons that it is beneficial to look at task for what it is: a curricular content rather than a methodological construct. In other words, different methods can be employed to carry out language learning tasks that seek different learning outcomes. Using a three-part classification of language teaching methods, he points out that there can very well be language-centered tasks, learner-centered tasks, and learning-centered tasks. *Language-centered tasks* are those that draw the learner’s attention primarily to linguistic forms. Tasks presented in Fotos and Ellis (1991) and in Fotos (1993), which they appropriately call *grammar tasks*, come under this category. *Learner-centered tasks* are those that direct the learner’s attention to formal as well as functional properties. Tasks for the communicative classroom suggested by Nunan (1989) illustrate this type. *Learning-centered tasks* are those that engage the learner mainly in the negotiation, interpretation, and expression of meaning, without any explicit focus on form. Problem-solving tasks suggested by Prabhu (1987) are learning centered.

In spite of its methodological disconnect, TBLT has been considered an offshoot of CLT (Nunan, 2004; Savignon, 1991; Willis, 1996). As an anonymous reviewer correctly points out, the reason for this impression is that the initial work on language-learning tasks coincided with the development of CLT (e.g., Candlin & Murphy, 1987). Regardless of its origin, TBLT has clearly blurred the boundaries of major methods. These and other developments have led Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell (1997) to wonder “whether it makes any sense to talk about CLT at all” (p. 148). They recognize that “the development of language teaching theory has arrived at a postmethod condition, which requires a reconsideration of some of the metaphors used to describe methodological issues” (p. 148), and that it has provided “a coherent enough framework for teachers to make it unnecessary to use higher-order terms such as CLT” (p. 149). In making these remarks, they were prompted by a shift that has been fast unfolding.

## **FROM METHOD-BASED PEDAGOGY TO POSTMETHOD PEDAGOGY**

The best way to understand the ongoing shift from method-based pedagogy to postmethod pedagogy is to start with two groundbreaking papers published in *TESOL Quarterly*: Pennycook (1989) and Prabhu (1990). Pennycook was persuasive in his argument that the concept of method “reflects a particular view of the world and is articulated in the interests of unequal power relationships” (pp. 589–590), and that it “has diminished rather than enhanced our understanding of language teaching” (p. 597). Equally persuasive was Prabhu, who argued that there is no best method and that what really matters is the need for teachers to learn “to operate with some personal conceptualization of how their teaching leads to desired learning—with a notion of causation that has a measure of credibility for them” (p. 172). He called the resulting pedagogic intuition a teacher’s *sense of plausibility*. The challenge facing the profession, he noted, is not how to design a new method but how to devise a new way “to help activate and develop teachers’ varied senses of plausibility” (p. 175).

In short, Pennycook sought to put an end to the profession’s innocence about the neutrality of *method*, while Prabhu sought to put an end to its infatuation with the search for the best method. But they were not the only ones to raise serious doubts about the concept of method. Quite a few others expressed similar doubts, most notably Allwright (1991), Brown (2002), Clarke (1983), Jarvis (1991), Nunan, (1989), Richards (1990), and Stern (1985). It was even declared, rather provocatively, that

method is dead (Allwright, 1991; Brown, 2002). These scholars are prominent among those instrumental in nudging the TESOL profession toward a realization that the concept of method has only a limited and limiting impact on language learning and teaching, that method should no longer be considered a valuable or a viable construct, and that what is needed is not an alternative method but an alternative to method. This growing realization coupled with a resolve to respond has created what has been called the *postmethod condition* (Kumaravadivelu, 1994).

Among several attempts that have been or are being made to provide the practicing teacher with a compass for navigating the uncharted waters of the postmethod condition, three stand out.<sup>3</sup> Stern's (a) *three-dimensional framework*, (b) Allwright's *exploratory practice framework*, and (c) Kumaravadivelu's *macrostrategic framework*. These frameworks, developed more or less at the same time, present wide-ranging plans for constructing a postmethod pedagogy. Even though I present these as examples of postmethod perspectives, it should be remembered that Stern and Allwright do not invoke the label *postmethod*. A common thread, however, runs through the three frameworks: the authors' disappointment with and a desire to transcend the constraining concept of method.

## Postmethod Perspectives

Published posthumously in 1992, Stern's framework consists of strategies and techniques. He uses *strategy* to refer to broad "intentional action" and *technique* to refer to specific "practical action" (p. 277). Strategies operate at the policy level, and techniques at the procedural level. He emphasizes that strategies "are not simply another term for what used to be called methods" (p. 277). His framework has three dimensions: (a) the L1-L2 connection, concerning the use of the first language in learning the second, (b) the code-communication dilemma, concerning the structure-message relationship, and (c) the explicit-implicit option, concerning the basic approach to language learning.

Each dimension consists of two strategies plotted at two ends of a continuum. The first dimension refers to intralingual-crosslingual strategies that remain within the target language (L2) and target culture (C2) as the frame of reference for teaching. The *intralingual strategy* adheres to the policy of coordinate bilingualism, where the two language systems are kept completely separate from each other, while the *crosslingual strategy* believes in compound bilingualism, where the L2 is acquired and

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<sup>3</sup> Other initial proposals include Rivers (1992) and Brown (1994, 2002), both of whom suggest a set of broad principles for interactive language teaching.

known through the use of the L1. The second involves explicit focus on the formal properties of language, that is, grammar, vocabulary, and notions on the one hand, and message-oriented, interaction-based communicative properties on the other. The third concerns the key issue of whether learning an L2 is a conscious intellectual exercise or an unconscious intuitive one. Stern uses familiar words, explicit and implicit, to refer to the two strategies. His framework, thus, deals directly with major contentious dichotomous issues that have marked the pendulum swing in language teaching methods.

Allwright's exploratory practice (EP) is premised on a philosophy that is stated in three fundamental tenets: (a) the quality of life in the language classroom is much more important than instructional efficiency, (b) ensuring our understanding of the quality of classroom life is far more essential than developing ever "improved" teaching methods, and (c) understanding such a quality of life is a social, not an asocial matter (Allwright, 2000, 2003; Allwright & Bailey, 1991). From these fundamental tenets, Allwright derives seven broad principles of language teaching: (a) put quality of life first, (b) work primarily to understand language classroom life, (c) involve everybody, (d) work to bring people together, (e) work also for mutual development, (f) integrate the work for understanding into classroom practice, and (g) make the work a continuous enterprise.

These broad principles inform specific practices. According to Allwright and Lenzuen (1997) and Allwright (2000), EP involves a series of basic steps including (a) identifying a puzzle, that is, finding something puzzling in a teaching and learning situation; (b) reflecting on the puzzle, that is, thinking about the puzzle to understand it without actually taking any action; (c) monitoring, that is, paying attention to the phenomenon that is puzzling to understand it better; (d) taking direct action, that is, generating additional data from the classroom; (e) considering the outcomes reached so far, and deciding what to do next, which involves determining whether there is sufficient justification to move on or whether more reflection and more data are needed; (f) moving on, which means deciding to choose from several options to move toward transforming the current system; and (g) going public, that is, sharing the benefits of exploration with others through presentations or publications. Thus, the central focus of EP is local practice.

Kumaravadivelu's (1992, 1994, 2001, 2003) macrostrategic framework is based on the hypothesis that language learning and teaching needs, wants, and situations are unpredictably numerous, and therefore,

we cannot prepare teachers to tackle so many unpredictable needs, wants and situations; we can only help them develop a capacity to generate varied and

situation-specific ideas within a general framework that makes sense in terms of current pedagogical and theoretical knowledge. (1992, p. 41)

A product of the postmethod condition, his framework is shaped by three operating principles: particularity, practicality, and possibility. *Particularity* seeks to facilitate the advancement of a context-sensitive, location-specific pedagogy that is based on a true understanding of local linguistic, social, cultural, and political particularities. *Practicality* seeks to rupture the reified role relationship between theorizers and practitioners by enabling and encouraging teachers to theorize from their practice and to practice what they theorize. *Possibility* seeks to tap the sociopolitical consciousness that students bring with them to the classroom so that it can also function as a catalyst for identity formation and social transformation (see Kumaravadivelu, 2001).

The construction of a context-sensitive postmethod pedagogy that is informed by the parameters of particularity, practicality, and possibility entails a network of ten macrostrategies derived from the current theoretical, practical, and experiential knowledge base. They are (a) maximize learning opportunities, (b) facilitate negotiated interaction, (c) minimize perceptual mismatches, (d) activate intuitive heuristics, (e) foster language awareness, (f) contextualize linguistic input, (g) integrate language skills, (h) promote learner autonomy, (i) ensure social relevance, and (j) raise cultural consciousness. Using these macrostrategies as guidelines, practicing teachers can design their own microstrategies or classroom activities. In other words, macrostrategies are made operational in the classroom through microstrategies. It is claimed that by exploring and extending macrostrategies to meet the challenges of changing contexts of teaching, by designing appropriate microstrategies to maximize learning potential in the classroom, and by monitoring their teaching acts, teachers will eventually be able to devise for themselves a systematic, coherent, and relevant theory of practice (see Kumaravadivelu, 2003).

The three frameworks represent initial attempts to respond, in a principled way, to a felt need to transcend the limitations of the concept of method. They seek to lay the foundation for the construction of postmethod pedagogies. They merely offer certain operating principles pointing the way. Any actual postmethod pedagogy has to be constructed by teachers themselves by taking into consideration linguistic, social, cultural, and political particularities. The importance of addressing pedagogic particularities has been strengthened by yet another shift in the field.

## FROM SYSTEMIC DISCOVERY TO CRITICAL DISCOURSE

During the 1990s, the TESOL profession took a decidedly critical turn. It is probably one of the last academic disciplines in the field of humanities and social sciences to go critical. Simply put, the critical turn is about connecting the word with the world. It is about recognizing language as ideology, not just as system. It is about extending the educational space to the social, cultural, and political dynamics of language use, not just limiting it to the phonological, syntactic, and pragmatic domains of language usage. It is about realizing that language learning and teaching is more than learning and teaching language. It is about creating the cultural forms and interested knowledge that give meaning to the lived experiences of teachers and learners.

Slow to start, the profession acted fast. Within a decade, the flagship journal of the profession, *TESOL Quarterly*, has brought out five special volumes on themes that are, in one way or another, connected to critical pedagogy: language and identity (Norton, 1997), critical approaches to TESOL (Pennycook, 1999), language in development (Markee, 2002), gender and language education (Davis & Skilton-Sylvester, 2004), and race and TESOL (Kubota & Lin, in press). Various aspects of pedagogic operations including teaching for academic purposes (Benesch, 2001), testing techniques (Shohamy, 2001), discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995) and classroom interaction (Kumaravadivelu, 1999) have been explored from critical pedagogic perspectives.<sup>4</sup> For a detailed treatment of applying critical pedagogy in TESOL, see Canagarajah (2005b), Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005, chapter 12), Morgan and Ramanathan (2005), and Norton and Toohey (2004). In fact, the volume of work in this area is considered to have reached a critical enough mass to propose a new subfield called *critical applied linguistics* (Pennycook, 2001).

From a methodological point of view, critical pedagogy has been prompting new ways of looking at classroom practices. Auerbach (1995) has showed us how participatory pedagogy can bring together learners, teachers, and community activists in mutually beneficial, collaborative projects. Morgan (1998) has demonstrated how even in teaching units of language as system, such as phonological and grammatical features, the values of critical practice and community development can be profitably used. Based on a critical ethnographic study of Sri Lankan classrooms, Canagarajah (1999) has revealed creative classroom strategies employed by teachers and students in periphery communities. His holistic methodological approach not only “involves a reflexivity on the discourses and

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<sup>4</sup> For instance, this anniversary issue carries contributions on teacher development, language acquisition, and language testing in which the authors refer to the impact of critical pedagogy.

strategies students bring with them” (p. 186) but also productively exploits students’ own linguistic and cultural resources. In a similar vein, finding the use of the learner’s L1 and L2 very useful in her Hong Kong classrooms, Lin (1999) has designed critical practices that “connect with students and help them transform their attitudes, dispositions, skills, and self-image—their *habitus* or social world” (p. 410). Benesch (2001) has suggested ways and means of linking the linguistic text and sociopolitical context as well as the academic content with the larger community for the purpose of turning classroom input and interaction into effective instruments of transformation. Kubota (2004) has advocated a critical multicultural approach that “can potentially provide learners with opportunities to understand and explore a multiplicity of expressions and interpretations” (p. 48).

Perhaps as a spin-off of the critical turn, a new horizon of explorations has opened up in hitherto neglected topics that have a significant impact on classroom methodological practices—topics such as learner identity, teacher beliefs, teaching values, and local knowledge. We have learned how

it is only by understanding the histories and lived experiences of language learners that the language teacher can create conditions that will facilitate social interaction both in the classroom and in the wider community, and help learners claim the right to speak. (Norton, 2000, p. 142)

We have learned how the structure of teachers’ beliefs, assumptions, and background knowledge play a crucial role in their classroom decision-making process (Johnson & Golombek, 2002; Woods, 1996), how “language teaching and learning are shot through with values, and that language teaching is a profoundly value-laden activity” imbued with moral meaning (Johnston, 2003, p. 1), how a systematic exploration of knowledge production in periphery communities can yield hitherto untapped resources about different pedagogical cultures and educational traditions (Canagarajah, 2005a), and how the exploration of local realities can reveal the deep division between English as a global language and vernacular languages that informs curricular and methodological decisions teachers and students make (Ramanathan, 2005).

## **CHANCES AND CHALLENGES**

The three shifts—from communicative language teaching to task-based language teaching, from method-based pedagogy to postmethod pedagogy, and from systemic discovery to critical discourse—constitute the major transition in TESOL methods during the past 15 years. This

transition is still unfolding, opening up opportunities as well as challenges. The shift from CLT to TBLT has resulted in, and has benefited from, a body of empirical research in L2 acquisition to such an extent that TBLT is considered more psycholinguistically oriented compared to CLT, which is more sociolinguistically oriented. A volume edited by Crookes and Gass (1993) addresses acquisition-related issues such as task complexity, task sequencing, task performance, and task evaluation. Another collection edited by Bygate, Skehan, and Swain (2001) takes up the same issues but with deeper psycholinguistic understanding and with more rigorous investigative procedures. A 387-page comprehensive work by Ellis (2003) reveals the richness of the current knowledge base in TBLT.

But still, vexing questions remain to be resolved. I highlight two major ones. The first pertains to the relationship between form and meaning and its attendant issue of how the learner's attention resources are allocated. Calling the allocation of attention "the pivotal point" in L2 learning and teaching, Schmidt (2001) argues that it "largely *determines* the course of language development" (p. 11, italics added). The crux of the problem facing TBLT is how to make sure that learners focus their attention on grammatical forms while expressing their intended meaning. Doughty and Williams (1998) note that a crucial methodological choice

is whether to take a proactive or reactive stance to focus on form. That is to say, a proactive approach would entail selecting in *advance* an aspect of the target to focus on, whereas a reactive stance would require that the teacher notice and be prepared to handle various learning difficulties as they arise. (p. 198, italics in original)

but at present, "there is no definitive research upon which to base a choice of one over the other, rather, it seems likely that both approaches are effective, depending upon the classroom circumstances" (p. 211).

That brings up yet another concern: the issue of context. As mentioned earlier, one of the central claims of CLT as well as TBLT is that it can be contextualized to meet various learning and teaching needs, wants, and situations. It should be remembered that advocates of both CLT and TBLT have been using the term *context* mainly to refer to linguistic and pragmatic features of language and language use. They seldom include the broader social, cultural, political, and historical particularities. Ellis (2003) articulates this problem rather briskly:

Task-based teaching is an Anglo-American creation. Irrespective of whether it is psycholinguistically justified, it must be considered in terms of social and cultural impact it has on consumers, especially in non-western contexts, and

also in terms of whether the language practices it espouses are “transformative,” i.e. enable learners to achieve control over their lives. (p. 331)

He further asserts that

a critical perspective on task-based teaching raises important questions. It forces us to go beyond the psycholinguistic rationale for task-based instruction in order to examine the social, cultural, political, and historical factors that contextualize teaching, and influence how it takes place. (p. 333)

The inadequacy of CLT and TBLT in addressing such broader contextual issues has led some to call for a *context approach* to language teaching (e.g., Bax, 2003; Jarvis & Atsilarat, 2004).

The shift from CLT to TBLT may be described as an internal shift within the boundaries of a method-based pedagogy. The shift from method-based pedagogy to postmethod pedagogy, however, is seen as much more fundamental because it seeks to provide an alternative to method rather than an alternative method. There are, however, dissenting voices. Liu (1995) has argued that postmethod is not an alternative to method but only an addition to method. Likewise, Larsen-Freeman (2005) has questioned the concept of postmethod saying that “Kumaravadivelu’s macro-microstrategies constitute a method” (p. 24). While declaring that method and postmethod are so compatible that they “can together liberate our practices,” Bell (2003) laments that “by deconstructing methods, postmethod pedagogy has tended to cut teachers off from their sense of plausibility, their passion and involvement” (p. 333). This observation is rather puzzling because it was only during the heyday of CLT that we found that “in our efforts to improve language teaching, we have overlooked the language teacher” (Savignon, 1991, p. 272). Postmethod pedagogy, on the contrary, can be considered to put a premium on the teacher’s sense of plausibility.

Because of its unfailing focus on the teacher, postmethod pedagogy has been described as “a compelling idea that emphasises greater judgment from teachers in each context and a better match between the means and the ends” (Crabbe, 2003, p. 16). It encourages the teacher “to engage in a carefully crafted process of diagnosis, treatment, and assessment” (Brown, 2002, p. 13). It also provides one possible way to be responsive to the lived experiences of learners and teachers, and to the local exigencies of learning and teaching. It “opens up new opportunities for the expertise of language teachers in periphery contexts to be recognized and valued” and “makes it more feasible for teachers to acknowledge and work with the diversity of the learners in their classrooms, guided by local assessments of students’ strategies for learning rather than by global directives from remote authorities” (Block &

Cameroon, 2002b, p.10). The emphasis on local knowledge and local teachers, however, represents a problematic aspect of postmethod pedagogy because it is premised on a transformative teacher education program that does not merely lead to “the easy reproduction of any ready-made package or knowledge but, rather, the continued recreation of personal meaning” on the part of teachers (Diamond, 1993, p. 56). The profession has just started focusing on such a challenging teacher education program (Freeman & Johnson, 1998).<sup>5</sup>

The idea of a transformative teacher education program dovetails nicely with the ongoing shift from systemic discovery to critical discourse. The emphasis on critical discourse has, however, met with skepticism in certain quarters. For instance, the subject does not even find a place in Kaplan’s (2002) encyclopedic volume *The Oxford Handbook of Applied Linguistics*. Its chief editor writes:

The editorial group spent quite a bit of time debating whether critical (applied) linguistics/critical pedagogy/critical discourse analysis should be included; on the grounds that critical applied linguistics rejects all theories of language, expresses “skepticism towards all metanarratives” (Lyotard, 1984) and rejects traditional applied linguistics as an enterprise because it has allegedly never been neutral and has, rather, been hegemonic (Rampton, 1997), the editorial group decided not to include the cluster of “critical” activities. (Kaplan, 2002, pp. v–vi)

Taking a slightly different view, Widdowson (2003) observes that the fundamental assumption governing critical pedagogy, namely, social justice, is something that “everybody, overtly and in principle, would espouse” (p. 14). Therefore, he does not see the need “to give it the label ‘critical’ and put it on polemical display” (p. 14). Although one can readily disapprove of any polemical display, one sees no harm in giving critical pedagogy, as Shakespeare’s Duke Theseus would say, *a local habitation and a name*.

Yet another skepticism pertains to the investigative methods followed by the practitioners of critical discourse analysis, and, by extension, critical pedagogy (Toolan, 1997; Widdowson, 1998). Toolan suggests that critical discourse analysts should be more critical in their argumentation by following robust research design and by providing stronger evidence. Dubbing (drubbing?) critical linguistics as “linguistics with a conscience and a cause,” Widdowson (1998, p. 136) questions its “less rigorous operation” (p. 137) that involves “a kind of ad hoc bricolage which takes from theory whatever comes usefully to hand” (p. 137). Undoubtedly, these deserved admonitions demand serious attention. The criticism about research in critical pedagogy could, in fact, be extended to

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<sup>5</sup> For more details, see Johnson, this issue.

research in TESOL in general and TESOL methods in particular, warranting the search for robust research design. We should at the same time remember, however, that language teaching, not unlike anthropology, is “not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning” (Geertz, 1973, p. 5). Searching for meaning, particularly at the initial stages of pedagogic exploration, runs the risk of becoming a speculative exercise. And today’s speculative exercise may lead to tomorrow’s specialized knowledge. Along with Candlin (1998)

I make no apology for this commitment to speculation. While it is natural to speculate at the outset of enterprises, it is also important to continue to do so, especially when we are some way along the route, if only to check our compasses, as it were, and resight some of our objectives. (p. 229)

While the chances provided and the challenges posed by the three changing tracks in TESOL methods will keep us all busy for some time to come, there are other developments on the horizon that confront us. We have just started investigating the inevitable impact that the emerging processes of globalization (Block & Cameron, 2002a) and the renewed forces of imperialism (Edge, in press) will have on language teaching practices. But, that’s another story.

## **THE END AS THE BEGINNING**

“We’ve come a long way”—declared Brown (1991, p. 257) as he concluded his essay for the 25th anniversary issue of *TESOL Quarterly*. He was actually referring to the progress the TESOL profession was making during the 1970s and 80s in achieving desired goals such as shifting its focus from product-oriented teaching to process-oriented teaching, and from a rigid curriculum to a more flexible one. Even those modest shifts, according to him, had created a new state of awareness in the profession. Considering the more significant trend-setting shifts that have marked the 1990s, we can claim with some justification that we have now reached a much higher level of awareness. We might even say, with a good measure of poetic license, that we have moved from a state of awareness toward a state of awakening. We have been awakened to the necessity of making methods-based pedagogies more sensitive to local exigencies, awakened to the opportunity afforded by postmethod pedagogies to help practicing teachers develop their own theory of practice, awakened to the multiplicity of learner identities, awakened to the complexity of teacher beliefs, and awakened to the vitality of macrostructures—social, cultural, political, and historical—that shape and reshape the microstructures of our pedagogic enterprise.

We've certainly come a long way in identifying and understanding some of the central issues that will orient the future course of action. Although we can be proud of what has been accomplished, this is no time for complacency. What is clear is the laudable transition from awareness to awakening. What is not clear is how this awakening has actually changed the practice of everyday teaching and teacher preparation. Admirable intentions need to be translated into attainable goals, which, in turn, need to be supported by actionable plans. I hope that the person who will be writing a state-of-the-art essay for the golden jubilee volume of *TESOL Quarterly* in 2016 will be able to narrate a possible transition from awakening to attainment. After all, the end of all awakening must be the beginning of attainment.

## THE AUTHOR

B. Kumaravadivelu is a professor in the Department of Linguistics and Language Development at San José State University, San José, California, United States. His research interests include critical discourse analysis, postmethod pedagogy, and the learning and teaching of culture.

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# *Current Issues in the Teaching of Grammar: An SLA Perspective*

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**ROD ELLIS**

*University of Auckland  
Auckland, New Zealand*

The study of how learners acquire a second language (SLA) has helped to shape thinking about how to teach the grammar of a second language. There remain, however, a number of controversial issues. This paper considers eight key questions relating to grammar pedagogy in the light of findings from SLA. As such, this article complements Celce-Murcia's (1991) article on grammar teaching in the 25th anniversary issue of *TESOL Quarterly*, which considered the role of grammar in a communicative curriculum and drew predominantly on a linguistic theory of grammar. These eight questions address whether grammar should be taught and if so what grammar, when, and how. Although SLA does not afford definitive solutions to these questions, it serves the valuable purpose of problematising this aspect of language pedagogy. This article concludes with a statement of my own beliefs about grammar teaching, grounded in my own understanding of SLA.

This article identifies and discusses a number of key issues relating to the teaching of grammar in a second language (L2) and, by drawing on theory and research in SLA, suggests ways to address these problems. It points to a number of alternative solutions to each problem, indicating that more often than not there are no clear solutions currently available. The aim, therefore, is not to identify new solutions to existing controversies, nor even to present new controversies. Rather it addresses within the compass of a single article a whole range of issues related to grammar teaching, problematises these issues, and by so doing, provides a counterweight to the advocacy of specific, but also quite limited, proposals for teaching grammar that have originated in some SLA quarters. However, I conclude with a statement of my own position on these issues.

The questions that will be addressed are

1. Should we teach grammar, or should we simply create the conditions by which learners learn naturally?
2. What grammar should we teach?

3. When should we teach grammar? Is it best to teach grammar when learners first start to learn an L2 or to wait until later when learners have already acquired some linguistic competence?
4. Should grammar instruction be massed (i.e., the available teaching time be concentrated into a short period) or distributed (i.e., the available teaching time spread over a longer period)?
5. Should grammar instruction be intensive (e.g., cover a single grammatical structure in a single lesson) or extensive (e.g., cover many grammatical structures in a single lesson)?
6. Is there any value in teaching explicit grammatical knowledge?
7. Is there a best way to teach grammar for implicit knowledge?
8. Should grammar be taught in separate lessons or integrated into communicative activities?

## **DEFINING GRAMMAR TEACHING**

Traditionally, grammar teaching is viewed as the presentation and practice of discrete grammatical structures. This is the view promulgated in teacher handbooks. Ur (1996), for example, in her chapter titled “Teaching Grammar” has sections on “presenting and explaining grammar” and “grammar practice activities.” Hedge (2000) in her chapter titled “Grammar” similarly only considers “presenting grammar” and “practising grammar.” This constitutes an overly narrow definition of grammar teaching. It is certainly true that grammar teaching *can* consist of the presentation and practice of grammatical items. But, as will become apparent, it need not. First, some grammar lessons might consist of presentation by itself (i.e., without any practice), while others might entail only practice (i.e., no presentation). Second, grammar teaching can involve learners in discovering grammatical rules for themselves (i.e., no presentation and no practice). Third, grammar teaching can be conducted simply by exposing learners to input contrived to provide multiple exemplars of the target structure. Here, too, there is no presentation and no practice, at least in the sense of eliciting production of the structure. Finally, grammar teaching can be conducted by means of corrective feedback on learner errors when these arise in the context of performing some communicative task. The definition of grammar teaching that informs this article is a broad one:

*Grammar teaching* involves any instructional technique that draws learners’ attention to some specific grammatical form in such a way that it helps them either to understand it metalinguistically and/or process it in comprehension and/or production so that they can internalize it.

## SHOULD WE TEACH GRAMMAR?

This question was motivated by early research into naturalistic L2 acquisition, which showed that learners appeared to follow a natural order and sequence of acquisition (i.e., they mastered different grammatical structures in a relatively fixed and universal order and they passed through a sequence of stages of acquisition on route to mastering each grammatical structure). This led researchers like Corder (1967) to suggest that learners had their own built-in syllabus for learning grammar. In line with this, Krashen (1981) argued that grammar instruction played no role in acquisition, a view based on the conviction that learners (including classroom learners) would automatically proceed along their built-in syllabus as long as they had access to *comprehensible input* and were sufficiently motivated. Grammar instruction could contribute to learning but this was of limited value because communicative ability was dependent on *acquisition*.

There followed a number of empirical studies designed to (a) compare the order of acquisition of instructed and naturalistic learners (e.g., Pica, 1983), (b) compare the success of instructed and naturalistic learners (Long, 1983) and (c) examine whether attempts to teach specific grammatical structures resulted in their acquisition (e.g., White, Spada, Lightbown, & Ranta, 1991). These studies showed that, by and large, the order of acquisition was the same for instructed and naturalistic learners (although there were some interesting differences<sup>1</sup>), that instructed learners generally achieved higher levels of grammatical competence than naturalistic learners and that instruction was no guarantee that learners would acquire what they had been taught. These results were interpreted as showing that the acquisitional processes of instructed and naturalistic learning were the same but that instructed learners progressed more rapidly and achieved higher levels of proficiency. Thus, some researchers concluded (e.g., Long, 1988) that teaching grammar was beneficial but that to be effective grammar had to be taught in a way that was compatible with the natural processes of acquisition.

Subsequent research, such as Norris and Ortega's (2000) meta-analysis of 49 studies, has borne out the overall effectiveness of grammar teaching. Further, there is evidence that, contrary to Krashen's (1993) continued claims, instruction contributes to both acquired knowledge (see Ellis, 2002a) as well as learned knowledge. There is also increasing

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<sup>1</sup> For example, Pica (1983) notes that some structures (e.g., plural-s) were used more accurately by instructed learners and some (e.g., Verb-ing) by naturalistic learners. In other structures (e.g., articles) there was no difference.

evidence that naturalistic learning in the classroom (as, e.g., in immersion programmes) does not typically result in high levels of grammatical competence (Genesee, 1987). In short, there is now convincing indirect and direct evidence to support the teaching of grammar. Nevertheless, doubts remain about the nature of the research evidence. Many studies (including most of those reviewed by Norris and Ortega) measure learning in terms of *constrained constructed responses* (e.g., fill in the blanks, sentence joining, or sentence transformation), which can be expected to favour grammar teaching. There is only mixed evidence that instruction results in learning when it is measured by means of *free constructed responses* (e.g., communicative tasks). Also, it remains the case that learners do not always acquire what they have been taught and that for grammar instruction to be effective it needs to take account of how learners develop their interlanguages. As we will see, there is controversy regarding both how interlanguage development occurs and how instruction can facilitate this.

## WHAT GRAMMAR SHOULD WE TEACH?

Assuming, then, that grammar teaching can contribute to interlanguage development, the next logical question concerns what grammar we should teach. This question can be broken down into two separate questions:

1. What kind of grammar should we base teaching on?
2. Which grammatical features should we teach?

Linguistics affords a broad selection of grammatical models to choose from, including structural grammars, generative grammars (based on a theory of universal grammar), and functional grammars. Traditionally syllabuses have been based on structural or descriptive grammars. Structural syllabuses traditionally emphasised the teaching of form over meaning (e.g., Lado, 1970). Though the influence of structural grammars is still apparent today, modern syllabuses rightly give more attention to the functions performed by grammatical forms. Thus, for example, less emphasis is placed on such aspects of grammar as sentence patterns or tense paradigms and more on the meanings conveyed by different grammatical forms in communication. Some attempt was once made to exploit the insights to be gleaned from generative theories of grammar (see, e.g., Bright, 1965), but in general, syllabus designers and teachers have not found such models useful and have preferred to rely on modern descriptive grammars, such as Celce-Murcia and Larsen-

Freeman's (1999) *Grammar Book*. This resource is especially valuable because it not only provides a comprehensive, clear, and pedagogically exploitable description of English grammar but also identifies the kinds of errors that L2 learners are known to make with different grammatical structures. Such information is important because it helps to identify which structures and which aspects of a structure require special attention. The *Grammar Book* is also ideal in that it presents information not only about linguistic form but also about the semantic and discursal meanings realised by particular forms. As VanPatten, Williams, and Rott (2004) emphasise, establishing connections between form and meaning is a fundamental aspect of language acquisition. Thus, any reference grammar that fails to describe the form-meaning connections of the target language must necessarily be inadequate. In general, then, the choice of which type of grammar to use as a basis for teaching is not a major source of controversy; descriptive grammars that detail the form-meaning relationships of the language are ascendant.

In contrast, the choice of which grammatical structures to teach is controversial. Two polar positions can be identified and various positions in between. At one end of this continuum is Krashen's minimalist position. Krashen (1982) argues that grammar teaching should be limited to a few simple and portable rules such as 3rd person-*s* and past tense-*ed* that can be used to monitor output from the acquired system. He bases his argument on the claim that most learners are only capable of learning such simple rules—that more complex rules are generally not learnable or, if they are, are beyond students' ability to apply through monitoring. Krashen's claim, however, is not warranted. There is now ample evidence that many learners are capable of mastering a wide range of explicit grammar rules. Green and Hecht (1992), for example, found that university-level students of English in Germany were able to produce clear explanations for 85% of the grammatical errors they were asked to explain, while overall the learners in their study (who included secondary school students) managed satisfactory explanations for 46% of the errors. Macrory and Stone (2000) reported that British comprehensive school students had a fairly good explicit understanding of the perfect tense in French (e.g., they understood its function, they knew that some verbs used *avoir* and some *être*, they were familiar with the forms required by different pronouns, and they were aware of the need for a final accent on the past participle). Hu (2002) found that adult Chinese learners of English demonstrated correct metalinguistic knowledge of prototypical rules of six English structures (e.g., for the definite article *specific reference* constituted the prototypical rule) but were less clear about the peripheral rules for these structures (e.g., *generic reference*).

At the other pole is the comprehensive position: Teach the whole of

the grammar of the target language.<sup>2</sup> This is the position adopted by many course book writers (e.g., Walter & Swan, 1990) or authors of grammar practice materials (e.g., Murphy, 1994). Such a position would also seem unwarranted because learners are clearly capable of learning a substantial amount of the L2 grammar without instruction and because most teaching contexts have limited time available for teaching grammar so some selection is needed.

What then should selection be based on? The answer would seem obvious—the inherent learning difficulty of different grammatical structures. The problem arises in how to determine this. To begin with, it is necessary to distinguish two different senses of *learning difficulty*. This can refer to (a) the difficulty learners have in understanding a grammatical feature and (b) to the difficulty they have in internalising a grammatical feature so that they are able to use it accurately in communication. These two senses relate to the distinction between learning grammar as explicit knowledge and as implicit knowledge, which is discussed later. Clearly, what is difficult to learn as explicit knowledge and as implicit knowledge is not the same. For example, most learners have no difficulty in grasping the rule for English third person–s but they have enormous difficulty in internalising this structure so they can use it accurately. These two senses of learning difficulty have not always been clearly distinguished in language pedagogy, with the result that even when the stated goal is the development of implicit knowledge, it is the anticipated difficulty students will have in understanding a feature that guides the selection and grading of grammatical structures. Third person–s, for example, is typically taught very early in a course.

How then has learning difficulty been established? Traditionally, factors such as the frequency of specific structures in the input and their utility to learners have been invoked (Mackey, 1976), but these factors would seem to have more to do with use<sup>3</sup> than with inherent cognitive difficulty. Here I consider two approaches that have figured in attempts to delineate cognitive difficulty.

1. Teach those forms that differ from the learners' first language (L1).
2. Teach marked rather than unmarked forms.

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<sup>2</sup> Of course, it is not possible to specify the whole grammar of a language. Though the grammar of a language may be determinate, descriptions of it are certainly not. The Longman *A Grammar of Contemporary English* (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Svartvik, 1972) ran to 1081 pages (excluding index and bibliography) but doubtlessly does not account for all the known facts of English grammar. Nevertheless, there is a recognized canon of English structures that, in the eyes of syllabus designers and textbook writers, constitutes the grammar of English.

<sup>3</sup> Structures like English articles that are very frequent in the input can impose considerable learning difficulty. Structures such as English conditionals may be very useful to learners but are also difficult to learn.

The first approach was, of course, the one adopted in many early structural courses based on a contrastive analysis of the learner's L1 and the target language. Although the contrastive analysis hypothesis as initially formulated is clearly not tenable (see Ellis, 1985, chapter 2), SLA researchers still generally agree that learners transfer at least some of the features of their L1 into the L2. For example, there is ample evidence (Trahey & White, 1993) to show that French learners of English produce errors of the kind *Mary kissed passionately John* because French permits an adverb to be positioned between the verb and the direct object. Nevertheless, contrastive analysis does not constitute a sound basis for selecting grammatical structures. In many teaching contexts, the learners come from mixed language backgrounds where it would be impossible to use contrastive analysis to tailor grammar teaching to the entire group because the learners have different L1s. Also, we simply do not yet know enough about when difference does and does not translate into learning difficulty, and in some cases, learning difficulty arises even where there is no difference.

The second approach, however, is also problematic. *Markedness* has been defined in terms of whether a grammatical structure is in some sense frequent, natural, and basic or infrequent, unnatural, and deviant from a regular pattern (Richards, Platt, & Weber, 1985). Thus, the use of an infinitive without *to* following *make*, as in *He made me follow him* can be considered marked because *make* is one of the few verbs in English that takes this kind of complement and because this pattern occurs only infrequently. The general idea is that we should teach the marked features and leave the learners to learn the unmarked forms naturally by themselves. The problem is that, as the definition suggests, markedness remains a somewhat opaque concept, so that it is often difficult to apply with the precision needed to determine which structures to teach.

The selection of grammatical content, then, remains very problematic. One solution to the kinds of problems I have mentioned is to base selection on the known errors produced by learners. In this respect, lists of common learner errors such as those available in Turton and Heaton's (1996) *Longman Dictionary of Common Errors* and Swan and Smith's (2001) *Learner English: A Teacher's Guide to Interference and Other Problems* are helpful.

The problems of selection probably explain why grammatical syllabuses are so similar and have changed so little over the years; it is safer to follow what has been done before. Of course the selection of what to teach will also depend on the learner's stage of development. The problems that the learner's stage of development involve are discussed in subsequent sections.

## WHEN SHOULD WE TEACH GRAMMAR?

There are two competing answers to this question. According to the first, it is best to emphasise the teaching of grammar in the early stages of L2 acquisition. According to the second, it is best to emphasise meaning-focused instruction to begin with and introduce grammar teaching later, when learners have already begun to form their interlanguages. I will briefly consider the arguments for both positions.

A key premise of behaviourist theories of language learning is that “error like sin needs to be avoided at all costs” (Brooks, 1960). This premise holds that once learners have formed incorrect habits, they will have difficulty eradicating them and replacing them with correct habits. Thus, it is necessary to ensure that learners develop correct habits in the first place. This was one of the key premises of the audiolingual method (Lado, 1964). Other arguments can be advanced in favour of beginning to teach grammar early. The alternative to a form-focused approach emphasises meaning and message creation, as in task-based language teaching (Skehan, 1998), but many teachers believe that beginning-level learners cannot engage in meaning-centred activities because they lack the necessary knowledge of the L2 to perform tasks. Thus, a form-focused approach is needed initially to construct a basis of knowledge that learners can then use and extend in a meaning-focused approach. Finally, current connectionist theories of L2 learning, which give primacy to implicit learning processes based on massive exposure to the target language, also provide a basis for teaching grammar to beginners. N. Ellis (2005) has suggested that learning necessarily commences with an explicit representation of linguistic forms, which are then developed through implicit learning. He suggests that teaching grammar early is valuable because it provides a basis for the real learning that follows. This seems to echo Lightbown’s (1991) metaphor, according to which grammar instruction facilitates learning by providing learners with “hooks” which they can grab on to. The idea behind this metaphor is that a conscious understanding of how grammatical features work facilitates the kind of processing (e.g., attention to linguistic form) required for developing true competence.

The argument against teaching grammar early on derives from research on immersion programmes (e.g., Genesee, 1987), which shows that learners in such programmes are able to develop the proficiency needed for fluent communication without any formal instruction in the L2. For example, learners of L2 Spanish do not need to be taught that adjectives follow nouns in this language; they seem to be able to learn this naturalistically from exposure to communicative input (Hughes, 1979). Similarly, learners of L2 English can master simple relative clauses

(e.g., clauses where the relative pronoun functions as subject and the clause is attached to a noun phrase following the verb). There is ample evidence to show that learners can and do learn a good deal of grammar without being taught it. This being so, why bother to teach what can be learned naturally? A second reason for delaying grammar teaching to later stages of development is that early interlanguage is typically agrammatical (Ellis, 1984; Perdue & Klein, 1993). That is, learners rely on a memory-based system of lexical sequences, constructing utterances either by accessing ready-made chunks or by simply concatenating lexical items into simple strings. Ellis (1984) gives examples of such utterances in the early speech of three classroom learners:

*Me no* (= I don't have any crayons)

*Me milkman* (= I want to be the milkman)

*Dinner time you out* (= It is dinner time so you have to go out)

Such pidginised utterances rely heavily on context and the use of communication strategies. They are very effective in simple, context-embedded communication. Arguably, it is this lexicalised knowledge that provides the basis for the subsequent development of the grammatical competence needed for context-free communication. This, then, is a strong argument for delaying the teaching of grammar until learners have developed a basic communicative ability.

In general, I have favoured the second of these positions (see Ellis, 2002b). Given that many classroom learners will not progress beyond the initial stages of language learning, it seems to me that a task-based approach that caters to the development of a proceduralised lexical system and simple, naturally acquired grammatical structures will ensure a threshold communicative ability and, therefore, is to be preferred to an approach that insists on grammatical accuracy from the start and that, as a consequence, may impede the development of this communicative ability. Task-based language teaching is possible with complete beginners if the first tasks emphasise listening (and perhaps reading) and allow for nonverbal responses. However, it is possible that such an approach can be usefully complemented with one that draws beginners' attention to some useful grammatical features (e.g., past tense-*ed* in English) that they might otherwise miss. This is the aim of *input-processing instruction* (VanPatten, 1996, 2003), which is discussed later.

## SHOULD GRAMMAR TEACHING BE MASSED OR DISTRIBUTED?

This question is logically independent of the preceding question. That is, irrespective of when grammar teaching commences, we need to consider whether it should be concentrated into a short period of time or spread over a longer period. Remarkably little research has addressed this question.

The research that has been undertaken reports on the relative effects of massed and distributed language instruction on general language proficiency rather than the effects on grammar learning. Collins, Halter, Lightbown, & Spada (1999) summarise the available research as follows:

None of the language program evaluation research has found an advantage for distributed language instruction. Although the findings thus far lead to the hypothesis that more concentrated exposure to English may lead to better student outcomes, the evidence is not conclusive. (p. 659)

Collins and colleagues then report their own study of three intensive ESL programmes in Canada, one (the distributed programme) taught over the full 10 months of one school year, one (the massed programme) concentrated into 5 months but taught only to above average students, and the third (the massed plus programme) concentrated into 5 months, supplemented with out of class opportunities to use English and taught to students of mixed ability levels. The main finding was that the massed and especially the massed-plus students outperformed the distributed programme students on most of the measures of learning, including some measures of grammatical ability, although this finding might in part be explained by the fact that the massed programmes provided more overall instructional time.

Collins et al.'s study points to the need for further research, especially through studies that compare massed and distributed instruction directed at specific grammatical structures. Ideally such a study would compare short periods of instruction in a particular structure spread over several days with the same amount of instruction compressed into one or two lessons.<sup>4</sup> Received wisdom is that a cyclical approach to grammar teaching (Howatt, 1974) is to be preferred because it allows for the kind of gradual acquisition of grammar that is compatible with what is known about interlanguage development. However, the results of

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<sup>4</sup> Given the problems that arise in controlling extraneous variables in evaluations of entire programmes, it might prove much easier to conduct rigorous studies of massed and distributed learning when these are focused on specific grammatical structures.

Collins et al.'s study suggest, at the very least, that such a position needs to be investigated empirically. Here, then, is an issue about which nothing definitive can be said at the moment.

## **SHOULD GRAMMAR TEACHING BE INTENSIVE OR EXTENSIVE?**

*Intensive grammar teaching* refers to instruction over a sustained period of time (which could be a lesson or a series of lessons covering days or weeks) concerning a single grammatical structure or, perhaps, a pair of contrasted structures (e.g., English past continuous vs. past simple). *Extensive grammar teaching* refers to instruction concerning a whole range of structures within a short period of time (e.g., a lesson) so that each structure receives only minimal attention in any one lesson. It is the difference between shooting a pistol repeatedly at the same target and firing a shotgun to spray pellets at a variety of targets. Instruction can be intensive or extensive irrespective of whether it is massed or distributed. The massed-distributed distinction refers to how a whole grammar course is staged, while the intensive-extensive distinction refers to whether each single lesson addresses a single or multiple grammatical feature(s).

Grammar teaching is typically viewed as entailing intensive instruction. The present-practise-produce (PPP) model of grammar teaching, which underlies most discussions of grammar teaching in teacher handbooks (see, e.g., Hedge, 2000; Ur, 1996), assumes an intensive focus on specific grammatical structures. Although such discussions acknowledge that learners' readiness to acquire a specific structure limits the effectiveness of teaching (no matter how intensive it is), they also assume that with sufficient opportunities for practice, learners will eventually succeed in automatising the structures they are taught. As Ur says, "the aim of grammar practice is to get students to learn the structures so thoroughly that they will be able to produce them correctly on their own" (p. 83). Thus, the idea that practise makes perfect is the primary justification for the intensive approach. *Practise*, however, must involve both drills and tasks (i.e., opportunities to practice the target structure in a communicative context).

It is perhaps less easy to see how grammar teaching can comprise extensive instruction. A teacher would probably not elect to present and practise a whole range of grammatical structures within a single lesson. Extensive grammar instruction of a kind, however, has always had a place in grammar teaching. Some 30 years ago, while teaching in a secondary school in Zambia, I regularly gave lessons where I illustrated and

explained some of the common errors that I had observed my students making in their written compositions. Similarly, in the context of task-based teaching, some teachers have been observed to note the errors that learners make and then to address them when the task is over (Basturkmen, Loewen, & Ellis, 2004). However, extensive grammar teaching can occur *within* a learning activity, not just as some kind of postscript. Teachers provide corrective feedback in the context of both form-focused and meaning-focused lessons, and although feedback in form-focused lessons may be directed primarily at the structure targeted by the lesson, in the meaning-focused lessons it is likely to be directed at whatever errors learners happen to make. Studies of corrective feedback (e.g., Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Ellis, Basturkmen, & Loewen, 2001) demonstrate that in communicative lessons a wide variety of grammatical forms are addressed incidentally through corrective feedback.

There is little doubt now that intensive grammar lessons can be effective. Though earlier research showed that learners do not always learn what they are taught, especially when learning is measured in terms of spontaneous production (e.g., Kadia, 1987), more recent research (e.g., Spada & Lightbown, 1999) indicates that even if learners are not ready to learn the targeted structure, intensive grammar teaching can help them progress through the sequence of stages involved in the acquisition of that structure. In other words, teaching a marked structure intensively can help learners learn associated, less marked structures even if it does not result in acquisition of the marked structure. Intensive instruction also helps learners to use structures they have already partially acquired more accurately (e.g., White, Spada, Lightbown, & Ranta, 1991).

There are also theoretical arguments and some empirical evidence in favour of an extensive approach. Cook (1989) has argued from the perspective of universal grammar that learners require minimal evidence to set a particular parameter for the grammar they are learning. Other researchers have emphasised the importance of negative evidence through corrective feedback for grammar learning by adults. Loewen (2002) has shown that even very brief episodes of corrective feedback are related to correctness on subsequent tests. In that study, Loewen identified the errors that teachers addressed incidentally in the context of communicative language teaching and then developed tailor-made tests, which he administered to the learners who made the specific errors either one day or two weeks later. These tests showed that the learners were subsequently often able to identify and correct their own errors.

There are pros and cons for both intensive and extensive grammar instruction. Some structures may not be mastered without the opportunity for repeated practice. Harley (1989), for example, found that anglophone learners of L2 French failed to acquire the distinction

between the preterite and imparfait past tenses after hours of exposure (and presumably some corrective feedback) in an immersion programme but were able to improve their accuracy in using these two tenses after intensive instruction. However, intensive instruction is time consuming (in Harley's study the targeted structures were taught over a 6-month period), and thus, time will constrain how many structures can be addressed. Extensive grammar instruction, on the other hand, affords the opportunity to attend to large numbers of grammatical structures. Also, more likely than not, many of the structures will be addressed repeatedly over a period of time. Further, because this kind of instruction involves a response to the errors each learner makes, it is individualized and affords the skilled teacher real-time opportunities for the kind of contextual analysis that Celce-Murcia (2002) recommends as basis for grammar teaching. However, it is not possible to attend to those structures that learners do not attempt to use (i.e., extensive instruction cannot deal effectively with avoidance). Also, of course, it does not provide the in-depth practise that some structures may require before they can be fully acquired.

Arguably, grammar teaching needs to be conceived of in terms of both approaches. Therefore, grammar teaching needs to be reconceptualised in teacher handbooks to include the kind of extensive treatment of grammar that arises naturally through corrective feedback.

## **IS THERE ANY VALUE IN TEACHING EXPLICIT GRAMMATICAL KNOWLEDGE?**

The distinction between explicit and implicit knowledge was mentioned briefly earlier. *Explicit knowledge* consists of the facts that speakers of a language have learned. These facts are often not clearly understood and may be in conflict with each other. They concern different aspects of language including grammar. Explicit knowledge is held consciously, is learnable and verbalisable, and is typically accessed through controlled processing when learners experience some kind of linguistic difficulty in using the L2. A distinction needs to be drawn between explicit knowledge as analysed knowledge and as metalinguistic explanation. *Analysed knowledge* entails a conscious awareness of how a structural feature works, while *metalinguistic explanation* consists of knowledge of grammatical metalanguage and the ability to understand explanations of rules. In contrast, *implicit knowledge* is procedural, is held unconsciously, and can only be verbalized if it is made explicit. It is accessed rapidly and easily and thus is available for use in rapid, fluent communication. Most SLA researchers agree that competence in an L2 is primarily a matter of implicit knowledge.

Whether there is any value in teaching explicit knowledge of grammar has been and remains today one of the most controversial issues in teaching grammar. To make sense of the different positions relating to the teaching of explicit knowledge, it is necessary to consider three separate questions:

1. Is explicit knowledge of any value in and of itself?
2. Is explicit knowledge of value in facilitating the development of implicit knowledge?
3. Is explicit knowledge best taught deductively or inductively?

I partly addressed the first question when I considered what grammar to teach. I noted that researchers disagree over learners' ability to learn explicit knowledge, with some (e.g., Krashen, 1982) seeing this as very limited and others (e.g., Green & Hecht, 1992) producing evidence to suggest that it is considerable. There is, however, a separate issue related to the first question. This issue concerns the extent to which learners are able to use their explicit knowledge (whatever that consists of) in actual performance. Again, one position is that this ability is limited. Krashen argues that learners can only use explicit knowledge when they *monitor*, which requires that they are focused on form (as opposed to meaning) and have sufficient time to access the knowledge. There is also some evidence that teaching explicit knowledge by itself (i.e., without any opportunities for practising the target feature) is not effective. Studies by VanPatten and Oikennon (1996) and Wong (2004) indicate that experimental groups that received explicit information alone performed no differently on interpretation and production tests than a control group did. But other positions are also possible. I have argued that explicit knowledge is used in the process of formulating messages as well as in monitoring and that many learners are adroit in accessing their explicit memories for these purposes, especially if the rules are, to a degree, automatised. However, this does require time. Yuan and Ellis (2003) showed that learners' grammatical accuracy improved significantly if they had time for *on-line planning* while performing a narrative task, a result most readily explained in terms of their accessing explicit knowledge.

Irrespective of whether explicit knowledge has any value in and of itself, it may assist language development by facilitating the development of implicit knowledge. This issue is addressed by the second of the two questions. It concerns what has become known as the *interface hypothesis*, which addresses the role explicit knowledge plays in L2 acquisition. Three positions can be identified. According to the *noninterface position* (Krashen, 1981), explicit and implicit knowledge are entirely distinct with the result that explicit knowledge cannot be converted into implicit knowledge. This position is supported by research suggesting that

explicit and implicit memories are neurologically separate (Paradis, 1994). The *interface position* argues the exact opposite. Drawing on skill-learning theory, DeKeyser (1998) argues that explicit knowledge becomes implicit knowledge if learners have the opportunity for plentiful communicative practice. The *weak interface position* (Ellis, 1993) claims that explicit knowledge can convert into implicit knowledge if the learner is ready to acquire the targeted feature and that this conversion occurs by priming a number of key acquisitional processes, in particular *noticing* and *noticing the gap* (Schmidt, 1990). That is, explicit knowledge of a grammatical structure makes it more likely that learners will attend to the structure in the input and carry out the cognitive comparison between what they observe in the input and their own output. These positions continue to be argued at a theoretical level. Although there is plentiful evidence that explicit instruction is effective in promoting L2 learning (e.g., Norris & Ortega, 2000) no published study has directly tested whether explicit knowledge converts directly into implicit knowledge or simply facilitates its development. One reason for the lack of research is the problem of measurement, that is, the difficulty of ascertaining which type of knowledge learners employ when they perform a language task or test.

The three positions support very different approaches to language teaching. The noninterface position leads to a *zero grammar* approach, that is, it prioritizes meaning-centred approaches such as immersion and task-based teaching. The interface position supports PPP—the idea that a grammatical structure should be first presented explicitly and then practised until it is fully proceduralised. The weak interface position also lends support to techniques that induce learners to attend to grammatical features. It has been used to provide a basis for consciousness-raising tasks that require learners to derive their own explicit grammar rules from data they are provided with (Ellis, 1993; Fotos, 1994). It is likely that all three approaches will continue to attract supporters, drawing on different theories of L2 acquisition and citing research that lends indirect support to the preferred approach. It is unlikely that this controversy will be resolved through research in the near future.

The third question assumes there is value in explicit knowledge and addresses how best to teach it. In deductive teaching, a grammatical structure is presented initially and then practised in one way or another; this is the first P in the present-practise-produce sequence. In inductive teaching, learners are first exposed to exemplars of the grammatical structure and are asked to arrive at a metalinguistic generalisation on their own; there may or may not be a final explicit statement of the rule. A number of studies (see Erlam, 2003, for a review) have examined the relative effectiveness of these two approaches to teaching explicit knowledge. The results have been mixed. For example, Herron and Tomosello

(1992) found a clear advantage for inductive instruction, Robinson (1996) found that a deductive approach was more effective, while Rosa and O'Neill (1999) found no significant difference in effectiveness. Erlam's (2003) own study revealed a significant advantage for the group receiving deductive instruction. Perhaps the main lesson to be learned from the research to date is the need for a differentiated approach to both researching and teaching explicit knowledge. It is likely that many variables affect which approach learners benefit most from, including the specific structure that is the target of the instruction and the learners' aptitude for grammatical analysis. Simple rules may best be taught deductively, while more complex rules may best be taught inductively. Learners skilled in grammatical analysis are likely to fare better with an inductive approach than those less skilled.

## IS THERE A BEST WAY TO TEACH GRAMMAR FOR IMPLICIT KNOWLEDGE?

To answer this question it is necessary to identify the instructional options for teaching grammar. I have attempted this in a number of publications (e.g., Ellis 1997, 1998, 2002b).<sup>5</sup> I will consider just two: the difference between input-based and production-based instruction and between different types of corrective feedback.

The case for the input-based option is based on a computational model of L2 acquisition, according to which acquisition takes place as a product of learners comprehending and processing input. Such approaches, when directed at grammar, seek to draw learners' attention to the targeted structure(s) in one or more ways: simply by contriving for numerous exemplars of the structure(s) to be present in the input materials, by highlighting the target structure(s) in some way (e.g., by using bold or italics in written texts), or by means of interpretation tasks (Ellis, 1995) directed at drawing learners' attention to form-meaning mappings. VanPatten (1996, 2003) has developed a version of the input-based option that he calls *input processing instruction*. This is directed at helping learners to overcome the *default processing strategies* that are a feature of interlanguages (e.g., assuming that the first noun in a sentence is always the agent). A case for the output-based option can be found in both skill-building theory (see previous discussion) or in a sociocultural theory of L2 learning, according to which learning arises

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<sup>5</sup> I distinguish between psycholinguistic and methodological options (cf. Ellis, 1998). *Psycholinguistic options* are related to some model of L2 acquisition. *Methodological options* are evident in instructional materials for teaching grammar. Here I consider only psycholinguistic options.

out of social interaction which scaffolds learners' attempts to produce new grammatical structures (Ohta, 2001). A number of studies have compared the relative effectiveness of input-based and production-based instruction, with mixed results, resulting in ongoing debate about the relative merits of these two options (VanPatten, 2002; DeKeyser, Salaberry, Robinson, & Harrington, 2002). It may be that, in classrooms, this comparison is ultimately meaningless because, in practise, both options are likely to involve input-processing and production. For example, it is quite conceivable that in an input-based approach, individual students silently produce the target structure, while in a production-based approach, an utterance produced by one student serves as input for another. It is, therefore, not surprising that both options have been shown to result in acquisition.<sup>6</sup>

There is a rich descriptive literature on corrective feedback (i.e., teacher responses to learner errors) but remarkably few studies have investigated the relative effects of different types of feedback on acquisition. Key options are (a) whether the feedback is implicit or explicit and (b) whether the feedback is input or output based. *Implicit feedback* occurs when the corrective force of the response to learner error is masked, for example, a *recast*, which reformulates a deviant utterance correcting it while keeping the same meaning:

NNS: Why he is very unhappy?

NS: *Why is he very unhappy?*

NNS: Yeah why is very unhappy? (Philp, 2003)

Or, as in this contrived example, a request for clarification:

NNS: Why he is very unhappy?

NS: *Sorry?*

NNS: Why is he very unhappy?

*Explicit feedback* takes a number of forms, such as direct correction or metalinguistic explanation. There is some evidence that explicit feedback is more effective in both eliciting the learner's immediate correct use of the structure and in eliciting subsequent correct use, for example, in a post-test (Carroll & Swain 1993; Lyster 2004). But some evidence and

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<sup>6</sup> There is also controversy regarding how to measure the effectiveness of these two (and other) instructional options. Norris and Ortega (2000) have shown that the effectiveness of instruction varies depending on whether it is measured using metalinguistic judgements, selected response, constrained constructed response, or free constructed response. Most SLA researchers (and teachers, too, perhaps) would consider the last of these the most valid measure. Ellis (2002a) reviewed a number of studies that examined the effects of different kinds of instruction on learners' free constructed responses, reporting that instruction can have an effect on this type of language use.

some strong theoretical reasons exist to support implicit feedback (see Long 1996, in press). Indeed, this type of feedback is more compatible with the focus-on-form approach discussed earlier because it ensures that learners are more likely to stay focused on meaning. However, as Muranoi (2000) notes, implicit feedback is probably more effective when it is targeted intensively at a preselected form than when it occurs extensively in incidental focus on form. In the latter, explicit attention to form may be more effective.

*Input-based feedback* models the correct form for the learner (e.g., by means of a recast). *Output-based feedback* elicits production of the correct form from the learner (e.g., by means of a request for clarification). Again, there is disagreement about the relative effectiveness of these two feedback options and no clear evidence for choosing between them. Some descriptive studies have shown that output-based feedback is more likely to lead to learners correcting their own initial erroneous utterances in what is referred to as *uptake*. However, uptake is not the same as acquisition.

In short, although considerable progress has been made toward identifying those instructional options that are likely to be of psycholinguistic significance, as yet, few conclusions can be drawn about which ones are the most effective for acquisition. It is possible to point to studies and theoretical arguments that suggest that each of the major options discussed can contribute to acquisition.

## **SHOULD GRAMMAR BE TAUGHT IN SEPARATE LESSONS OR INTEGRATED INTO COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES?**

In Ellis (2001) I considered three broad types of form-focused instruction, as shown in Table 1. “Focus on forms” refers to instruction involving a structure-of-the-day approach, where the students’ primary focus is on form (i.e., accuracy) and where the activities are directed intensively at a single grammatical structure. This approach, then, involves teaching grammar in a series of separate lessons. *Focus on form* entails a focus on meaning with attention to form arising out of the communicative activity. This focus can be *planned*, where a focused task is required to elicit occasions for using a predetermined grammatical structure, as, for example, in Samuda (2001). In this approach, attention to the predetermined grammatical structures will also be intensive. Alternatively, focus on form can be *incidental*, where attention to form in the context of a communicative activity is not predetermined but rather occurs in accordance with the participants’ linguistic needs as the activity

**TABLE 1**  
**Types of Form-Focused Instruction**

Type	Primary Focus	Distribution
1. Focus on forms	Form	Intensive
2. Planned focus on form	Meaning	Intensive
3. Incidental focus on form	Meaning	Extensive

*Note.* This table is adapted from Ellis (2001, p. 17).

proceeds. In this approach, it is likely that attention will be given to a wide variety of grammatical structures during any one task and thus will be extensive. Focus on form implies no separate grammar lessons but rather grammar teaching integrated into a curriculum consisting of communicative tasks.

There is considerable theoretical disagreement regarding which of these types of instruction is most effective in developing implicit knowledge. Long (1988, 1991) and Doughty (2001) have argued strongly that focus on form is best equipped to promote interlanguage development because the acquisition of implicit knowledge occurs as a result of learners attending to linguistic form at the same time they are engaged with understanding and producing meaningful messages. Other researchers, however, have argued that a focus-on-forms approach is effective. DeKeyser (1998), for example, has argued that grammatical structures are learned gradually through the automatization of explicit knowledge and that this can be achieved by means of a focus-on-forms approach. This approach acknowledges the value of teaching explicit knowledge and subsequently proceduralising it by means of activities (drills and tasks) that practise *behaviours* (i.e., involve meaning) rather than *structures*. It is worth noting, however, one point of agreement in these different positions: Instruction needs to ensure that learners are able to connect grammatical forms to the meanings they realise in communication. So far, the debate has addressed the difference between focus on form and focus on forms. There has been little discussion of the relative merits of planned and incidental focus on form. In effect, this discussion would involve a consideration of whether instruction should be intensive or extensive, a question we have already considered.

## CONCLUSION

Grammar has held and continues to hold a central place in language teaching. The zero grammar approach was flirted with but never really

took hold, as is evident in both the current textbook materials emanating from publishing houses (e.g., Whitney & White, 2001) and in current theories of L2 acquisition. There is ample evidence to demonstrate that teaching grammar works.

Although there is now a clear conviction that a traditional approach to teaching grammar based on explicit explanations and drill-like practice is unlikely to result in the acquisition of the implicit knowledge needed for fluent and accurate communication, there continues to be disagreement regarding what should replace this. It seems appropriate, then, to finish with a statement of my own beliefs about grammar teaching, acknowledging that many of them remain controversial:

1. The grammar taught should be one that emphasises not just form but also the meanings and uses of different grammatical structures.
2. Teachers should endeavour to focus on those grammatical structures that are known to be problematic to learners rather than try to teach the whole of grammar.
3. Grammar is best taught to learners who have already acquired some ability to use the language (i.e., intermediate level) rather than to complete beginners. However, grammar can be taught through corrective feedback as soon as learners begin to use the language productively.
4. A focus-on-forms approach is valid as long as it includes an opportunity for learners to practise behaviour in communicative tasks.
5. Consideration should be given to experimenting with a massed rather than distributed approach to teaching grammar.
6. Use should be made of both input-based and output-based instructional options.
7. A case exists for teaching explicit grammatical knowledge as a means of assisting subsequent acquisition of implicit knowledge. Teaching explicit knowledge can be incorporated into both a focus-on-forms and a focus-on-form approach. In the case of a focus-on-forms approach, a differentiated approach involving sometimes deductive and sometimes inductive instruction may work best.
8. An incidental focus-on-form approach is of special value because it affords an opportunity for extensive treatment of grammatical problems (in contrast to the intensive treatment afforded by a focus-on-forms approach).
9. Corrective feedback is important for learning grammar. It is best conducted using a mixture of implicit and explicit feedback types that are both input based and output based.

10. In accordance with these beliefs, grammar instruction should take the form of separate grammar lessons (a focus-on-forms approach) and should also be integrated into communicative activities (a focus-on-form approach).

Many (if not all) of these statements are open to challenge. They constitute a personal interpretation of what the research to date has shown. It may also seem that I am hedging my bets by encompassing a wide number of options and that I am suggesting that anything goes. It is certainly true that I do not believe (and do not think the research demonstrates) that there is just one preferred approach to teaching grammar. The acquisition of the grammatical system of an L2 is a complex process and almost certainly can be assisted best by a variety of approaches. But what is important is to recognize what options are available, what the theoretical rationales for these options are, and what the problems are with these rationales. This is the starting point for developing a personal theory of grammar teaching.

The fact that so much controversy exists points to the need for more research. One of the greatest needs is for research that addresses to what extent and in what ways grammar instruction results in implicit knowledge. Ideally, this would require methods of measuring acquisition that tap into learners' ability to use the grammatical structures they have been taught in communication (especially oral communication). Studies that employ such methods are still few and far between. Another need is for longitudinal studies that investigate the effects of instruction over time. Although most recently published studies include delayed post-tests, they typically incorporate instructional treatments of a relatively short duration. Longitudinal studies that employ qualitative as well as quantitative methods will help to show not just if there is a delayed effect for instruction but also its accumulative effect. The effects of corrective feedback, for example, are most likely to become evident gradually when learners are repeatedly exposed to feedback on the same grammatical structures. Further research, even if it does not succeed in providing clear-cut answers to the questions raised in this article, will deepen our understanding of the issues involved and afford better defined provisional specifications (Stenhouse, 1975), which teachers can experiment with in their own classrooms.

## THE AUTHOR

Rod Ellis is a professor in the Department of Applied Language Studies and Linguistics at the University of Auckland, New Zealand. He has published widely in the field of SLA. His latest books are *Analyzing Language Learning and Planning* and *Task Performance in a Second Language*.

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# *Current Perspectives on Teaching the Four Skills*

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**ELI HINKEL**

*Seattle University*

*Seattle, Washington, United States*

This article presents an overview of recent developments in second language (L2) teaching and highlights the trends that began in the 1990s and the 2000s and are likely to continue to affect instruction in L2 skills at least in the immediate future. Also highlighted are recent developments in instruction as they pertain specifically to the teaching of L2 speaking, listening, reading, and writing. In the past 15 years or so, several crucial factors have combined to affect current perspectives on the teaching of English worldwide: (a) the decline of methods, (b) a growing emphasis on both bottom-up and top-down skills, (c) the creation of new knowledge about English, and (d) integrated and contextualized teaching of multiple language skills. In part because of its comparatively short history as a discipline, TESOL has been and continues to be a dynamic field, one in which new venues and perspectives are still unfolding. The growth of new knowledge about the how and the what of L2 teaching and learning is certain to continue and will probably remain the hallmark of TESOL's disciplinary maturation.

Today, it is a truism to say that each era in the history of second language (L2) teaching has been marked by expansions of knowledge and pivotal advancements in disciplinary theory and practice. One unfortunate side effect of ongoing disciplinary innovation and a search for the best teaching method is what Richards (2005) referred to as “the theoretical flavor of the month” (n.p.), alluding to recurrently fashionable theories of language learning and use that claim to be based on the findings of current research. However, implicit in a view of the ongoing development of L2 teaching is an expectation that what is current, innovative, and central in L2 pedagogy today is likely to become a stepping-stone in the expansion and refinement of disciplinary knowledge. This overview of the current perspectives in L2 teaching highlights the trends that began in the 1990s and the 2000s and are likely to continue to affect instruction in L2 skills at least in the immediate future.

In the current dynamic perspectives on foundational L2 skills, four

overarching themes can be identified: the decline of methods, the significance of both bottom-up and top-down skills in L2 learning, the applications of new knowledge about the English language to L2 pedagogy, and the teaching of integrated and multiple skills in context. The overview begins with these four trends, which are the hallmarks of current pedagogy in all L2 skills.<sup>1</sup> Recent developments in instruction are then highlighted as they pertain specifically to the teaching of L2 speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

## FOUR THEMES IN CURRENT L2 PEDAGOGY

Several crucial factors have combined to shift current perspectives on L2 teaching: (a) the decline of methods, (b) a growing emphasis on both bottom-up and top-down skills, (c) new knowledge about English, and (d) integrated and multiple skills taught in context. These factors have had a profound influence on classroom instruction and curriculum development in practically all L2 skills and across learner proficiency levels.

### Decline of Methods

*Recognition of the essential roles of the teacher and the learner and of the need for situationally relevant language pedagogy has brought about the decline of methods, with their specific philosophies and prescribed sets of classroom procedures.*

As early as the mid-1980s, a small number of researchers and methodologists began to voice growing apprehension about the worldwide applicability of any particular method to the enormous diversity of learners and learning needs. Since that time, many L2 professionals have come to see specific teaching methods as overly prescriptive and inapplicable in divergent learning contexts (e.g., Brown, 2001; Kumaravadivelu, 2003, 2005). For example, although communicative skills can occupy a high priority for ESL students who need to interact in their L2, for EFL learners, communicating in English may have a reduced value relative to preparing for entrance exams or tests for securing employment. The past two decades have seen a shift in the responsibility for curricular and

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<sup>1</sup> The 25th anniversary issues of *TESOL Quarterly* reflected the general trend of treating the foundational language skills separately. A broad overview such as this one may well represent an innovation in itself to evince the maturation of L2 teaching as a discipline as well the influential expansion of integrated instructional models (discussed in the section Integrated and Multiple Skills Taught in Context).

instructional decisions from the prevailing teaching methods to classroom teachers and learners, who are best suited to implement appropriate, relevant, and effective instruction (e.g., Breen & Littlejohn, 2000). For instance, Larsen-Freeman (2000) recommends that teachers practice “principled eclecticism” and create their own teaching methods “by blending aspects of others in a principled manner” (p. 183).

The centrality of key learner variables, such as learning needs and goals, as well as cognitive processing and resources has been widely recognized in research and pedagogy (e.g., see Bialystok, 2002; Fotos, 2001). Investigations into the social, cultural, economic, and political contexts of L2 learning have provided much insight into populations of learners and their specific learning goals. While some may need to speak and write in L2 academic and professional settings, others set out to develop L2 conversational or reading skills for different purposes. Such fundamental factors as who given L2 learners are, why and where these individuals undertake to learn an L2, and what their available resources are (e.g., time, cognitive, financial) should and often do determine how particular L2 skills are taught and learned (e.g., Breen, 2001; Breen & Littlejohn, 2000).

## **Bottom-Up and Top-Down Skills**

*Based on recent research on the role of cognition in L2 learning, L2 pedagogy in practically all skills has come to recognize the importance of both accuracy and fluency and both bottom-up and top-down language skills (discussed in the sections on teaching speaking, listening, reading, and writing).*

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, a number of studies were carried out to determine whether exposure to and communicative interaction in the L2 enables learners to attain L2 speaking facilities that address fluency and accuracy in language production (e.g., Lightbown & Spada, 1990; Schmidt, 1993; Swain, 1991). Research findings demonstrate that, without explicit and form-focused instruction, extensive exposure to meaning-based input does not lead to the development of syntactic and lexical accuracy in an L2. Currently, in the teaching of the four skills, curricula and instruction strive to achieve a balance between the linguistic and the schematic aspects of learner language development. At present, practically all teacher education textbooks on the essentials of language instruction include material on how to address both bottom-up and top-down abilities (e.g., Adger, Snow, & Christian, 2002; Brown, 2001; Carter & Nunan, 2001; Celce-Murcia, 2001; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Nunan, 1999, 2003).

## New Knowledge About English

*The analyses of large spoken and written English language corpora have allowed much insight into how native speakers of English use language features in real life and across various dialects. New empirical knowledge about the English language has had an important influence on curricula and content in L2 pedagogy.*

The findings of corpus analyses have identified variations of language features in spoken or written registers and across several types of genres, such as academic or journalistic prose, as well as formal or conversational speech. These analyses of real-life language in use have delved into, for example, the frequencies and patterns of syntactic, morphological, lexical, pragmatic, or discursal features that tend to occur in particular types of text (see Conrad, 2005, for a detailed overview).

Applications of corpus analyses findings to L2 teaching, however, have not been without controversy. Some language corpora are specifically created and analyzed with the intent to benefit L2 instruction and improve the efficiency of learning. For example, studies of vocabulary frequencies and ranges in introductory university courses across such diverse disciplines as economics, history, and biology are very useful in teaching academically bound or professional L2 learners (e.g., Hazenberg & Hulstijn, 1996; Nation, 1990, 2001). Other analyses of English language corpora are primarily focused on the empirical study of language to obtain detailed descriptions of its properties that can be applied to the refinement of language theories. Some prominent experts in L2 teaching and linguistics have questioned the value of applying corpus findings to L2 teaching. For instance, according to Widdowson (1990, 2000, 2003) and Cook (1997, 1998), learners in EFL settings, who in effect have few opportunities to interact with native speakers of English, do not need to be particularly concerned with the frequencies of linguistic features in native speaker corpora. These authors also argue that, in many cases, corpus findings are too culturebound and narrowly specific to a particular variety of English to be useful for learners who have no access to that culture or variety. Furthermore, the issues of difficulty, learnability, usefulness, relevance, and pedagogical sequencing have to be taken into account in corpus-based L2 teaching and instructional materials (e.g., Aston, 1995; for a discussion, see also Conrad, 2005). Many L2 methodologists believe, however, that corpus findings can make L2 teaching far more effective and efficient by identifying the language features that learners must know to achieve their learning goals (e.g., Byrd, 2005; Byrd & Reid, 1998; Conrad, 2000).

## Integrated and Multiple Skills Taught in Context

*In an age of globalization, pragmatic objectives of language learning place an increased value on integrated and dynamic multiskill instructional models with a focus on meaningful communication and the development of learners' communicative competence.*

In many locations around the world, learning English has the objective of learners' gaining access to technical, educational, or professional opportunities (Canagarajah, 2002, 2005). Commonly accepted perspectives on language teaching and learning recognize that, in meaningful communication, people employ incremental language skills not in isolation but in tandem. For example, to engage in a conversation, one needs to be able speak and comprehend at the same time. To make language learning as realistic as possible, integrated instruction has to address a range of L2 skills simultaneously, all of which are requisite in communication. For instance, teaching reading can be easily tied to instruction on writing and vocabulary, and oral skills readily lend themselves to teaching pronunciation, listening, and cross-cultural pragmatics (Hinkel, 2001; Lazaraton, 2001; McCarthy & O'Keeffe, 2004).

Integrated and multiskill instruction usually follows the principles of the communicative approach, with various pedagogical emphases, goals, instructional materials, activities, and procedures playing a central role in promoting communicative language use. At present, the models for integrated teaching with a communicative focus include an extensive array of curricula and types of instructional models, such as content based (including theme based), task based, text based (also called genre based), discourse based, project based, problem based, literature based, literacy based, community based, competency based, or standards based (and this is not a complete list by any measure). In fact, Richards and Rodgers (2001) note that, as long as instruction engages learners in meaningful communication and enables them to attain the curricular objectives, the range of models and teaching materials compatible with integrated language teaching is "unlimited" (p. 165).

It is safe to say, however, that few movements in foreign language (FL) and L2 teaching take place without contest, and integrated language instruction is certainly no exception. Currently, task-based and content-based instruction are probably among the most widely adopted integrated models. However, some leading specialists in L2 teaching and applied linguistics have maintained that the superiority of, for example, task-based instruction over traditional teaching has not been demonstrated empirically and that to date research has had little to say about its effectiveness (e.g., Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Seedhouse, 1999; Swan, 2005; Widdowson, 1990, 1993, 2003). Critics also contend that in many

ESL and EFL situations worldwide, the implementation of content-based and task-based instruction may be simply inappropriate and impractical (e.g., Swan, 2005; Ur, 1996). For example, FL or L2 proficiency cannot be developed when learning is limited to 1–3 hours of classroom instruction and input (e.g., Lightbown, 2000; Lightbown & Spada, 1990). Additionally, when instruction in content areas, such as science or math, is carried out in English in EFL settings, teachers often find it difficult to maintain expertise in both English and the subject matter, and learners who need to prepare for examinations often concentrate only on school subjects without much interest in learning the language. In task-based, multiskill instruction, with its focus on the development of language fluency, issues of content or linguistic accuracy are of secondary importance, thus limiting the usefulness of the task-based model for schooling and academic preparation (see Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Widdowson, 1990, 2003). Based on their experience, however, many L2 teachers and curriculum designers believe that integrated FL/L2 instruction can increase learners' opportunities for L2 purposeful communication, interaction, real-life language use, and diverse types of contextualized discourse and linguistic features, all of which have the goal of developing students' language proficiency and skills (for detailed discussion, see, e.g., Ellis, 2003; Fotos, 2001, 2002; Snow, 2005).

The remainder of this article delves into a more detailed overview of the prevailing currents in the teaching of the L2 foundational skills: speaking, listening, reading, and writing. This traditional division has the sole purpose of easing the reader's navigation through the article's contents, and some generally accepted ways to integrate the teaching of L2 skills will be addressed as a matter of course.

## **TEACHING SPEAKING SKILLS**

The complexity of learning to speak in another language is reflected in the range and type of subskills that are entailed in L2 oral production. Learners must simultaneously attend to content, morphosyntax and lexis, discourse and information structuring, and the sound system and prosody, as well as appropriate register and pragmalinguistic features (Tarone, 2005). In an interaction that typically involves speaking and comprehending at the same time, L2 speakers need to self-monitor so that they can identify and correct production problems at the fast pace of a real conversational exchange. Research on the characteristics and development of L2 oral skills has shown conclusively that communicating in an L2 is a cognitively demanding undertaking, not to mention that the success of an interaction often depends on production quality (e.g., McCarthy & O'Keeffe, 2004). Thus, speaking in an L2 requires fluency,

accuracy, and a sufficient lexicogrammatical repertoire for meaningful communication to take place.

In the 1990s, many researchers concluded that exposure to and communicative interaction in an L2 enables learners to attain L2 speaking fluency. However, the extent of fluency development was not matched by learners' syntactic and lexical accuracy in oral production (e.g., Lightbown & Spada, 1990; Schmidt, 1993; Swain, 1991). These and many other studies demonstrated that although, for example, immersion learners can speak fluently and with ease, their speech contained numerous grammatical, lexical, and pragmalinguistic errors.

Within communicative and task-based approaches to teaching, various methodological modifications in L2 speaking pedagogy have been proposed that permit an integration of fluency and accuracy foci (e.g., Fotos, 2002). For instance, according to Ellis (2003), the task-based teaching of L2 speaking skills has built-in opportunities for online planning that result in more accurate and complex uses of language. Ellis explains that carefully designed tasks can foster the development of various aspects of L2 oral production: Narratives and descriptions can be effective in fluency-focused teaching, and, for example, debates and problem-solving tasks can promote increased grammatical and lexical complexity in learner language use. Another advantage of using tasks in L2 oral instruction is that rehearsal (or task repetition) affords learners an opportunity to accommodate the competing cognitive demands of fluency, accuracy, and linguistic complexity. For example, advance planning and rehearsals of content and formulation, that is, what to say and how to say it, lead to substantial improvements in the amount of spoken discourse and in grammatical, lexical, and articulatory accuracy. In content-based and task-based instruction, contextualized uses of specific grammar structures and vocabulary can be emphasized to connect the subject matter and language learning activities (for a thorough overview, see Snow, 2005).

## **Speaking Integrated With Other Language Skills**

### ***Speaking and Pronunciation***

The rapid pace of the internationalization of English has led to changing perspectives on the teaching of pronunciation. In general terms, as Tarone (2005) points out, the goal of pronunciation teaching has shifted from targeting a nativelike accent to targeting intelligibility, that is, the degree to which the listener understands the speaker's utterance. In an age when English has become a primary medium for international communication, most cross-cultural interactions take place

between nonnative speakers of English rather than between native and nonnative speakers (e.g., Canagarajah, 2005; Jenkins, 2000, and this issue). Thus, today, L2 pronunciation pedagogy has the objective of helping learners achieve overall intelligibility rather than drastic accent modification (e.g., McKay, 2002). To this end, teaching has to address the issues of segmental clarity (e.g., the articulation of specific sounds), word stress and prosody, and the length and the timing of pauses. The current approach to teaching pronunciation is generally based on three principled criteria: (a) Pronunciation and intonation are taught in context and in conjunction with speaking skills, (b) instruction in pronunciation serves broader communicative purposes, and (c) the teaching of pronunciation and intonation is based on realistic rather than idealistic language models (e.g., Chun, 2002).

### *Speaking and Pragmalingistic Skills*

As an additional outcome of increased global mobility and the internationalization of English, instruction in L2 speaking skills has been placing a greater emphasis on the sociocultural features of communication and oral production. The 1990s saw a remarkable growth of publications associated with the importance of L2 sociocultural and pragmalinguistic competence. For this reason, current oral pedagogy has the objective of enabling nonnative speakers to communicate effectively and to negotiate cross-cultural interactional norms successfully (Kasper & Roever, 2005; McKay, 2002). The teaching of L2 sociopragmatic skills elucidates the issues of power in communication, such as the impact of social status, social distance, and linguistic register on L2 speech.

At present, pedagogy on L2 sociopragmatic norms of speaking typically incorporates effective communication strategies; discourse organization and structuring; conversational routines (e.g., small talk); conversational formulae (e.g., forms of address); and speech acts, such as requests, refusals, compliments, or clarification questions (e.g., McKay, 2002; Yule & Tarone, 1997). According to Kasper's (2001) overview of several empirical studies on teaching L2 pragmatics, explicit teaching and direct explanations of the L2 form-function connections represent a highly productive means of helping learners improve their L2 sociopragmatic skills. For example, *turn the radio down* and *could you please turn the radio down* have the same function (request) but different pragmalinguistic forms, and, depending on the context, one is likely to be more effective than the other. Implicit instruction in various communication tactics and appropriate language uses (i.e., when pragmatic features are practiced in context without descriptions and explanations)

can be far less effective than explicit explanations and teaching (see Kasper & Roever, 2005, for further discussion).

### *Linguistic Features of Spoken Register*

Analyses of English language corpora, as noted earlier, have been able to identify the specific lexical and grammatical features that distinguish, for example, oral and written discourse, or casual conversations and formal speech. Noticing and analyzing divergent linguistic features frequently encountered in, for example, conversations or university lectures are useful in teaching both speaking and listening for interactional, academic, or vocational purposes (see also Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000; Master, 2005). In fact, curricula that attend to the distinctions between conversational and formal oral production can prepare learners for real-life communication in EFL and ESL environments alike (Lazaraton, 2001).

## **TEACHING LISTENING**

During the 1970s, listening pedagogy largely emphasized the development of learners' abilities to identify words, sentence boundaries, contractions, individual sounds, and sound combinations, that is, bottom-up linguistic processing. The 1980s saw a shift from the view of L2 listening as predominantly linguistic to a schema-based view, and listening pedagogy moved away from its focus on the linguistic aspects of comprehension to the activation of learners' top-down knowledge. In top-down processing, aural comprehension hinges on listeners' abilities to activate their knowledge-based schemata, such as cultural constructs, topic familiarity, discourse clues, and pragmatic conventions (e.g., Celce-Murcia, 1995; Mendelsohn, 1994; Rost & Ross, 1991). In the practice of teaching L2 listening, however, neither approach—a focus on bottom-up or top-down processing—proved to be a resounding success: Learners who rely on linguistic processing often fail to activate higher order L2 schemata, and those who correctly apply schema-based knowledge tend to neglect the linguistic input (e.g., Tsui & Fullilove, 1998; Vandergrift, 2004).

Advances in the studies of spoken corpora and conversation analysis have illuminated the complexity of oral discourse and language. The findings of these analyses have made it evident that, in many cases, employing authentic language in listening instruction can be of limited benefit because of a variety of constraints, such as the fast pace of speech, specific characteristics of spoken grammar and lexicon (e.g., incomplete

sentences and ellipses, as in *he did what?*), cultural references and schemata, and dialectal colloquial expressions. Although L2 pedagogy continues to underscore the value of authentic teaching materials, the research on the effectiveness of L2 listening instruction broadly recommends learner training in metacognitive strategies to facilitate the development of L2 aural abilities.

In L2 listening pedagogy, two complementary approaches reflect current perspectives on more effective learning. One emphasizes the integrated teaching of listening for communication and in conjunction with other L2 skills, such as speaking, sociopragmatics, grammar, and vocabulary. The other moves to the foreground the learner's use of metacognitive and cognitive strategies to bolster the learning process (Mendelsohn, 1994; Rost, 2005; Vandergrift, 1999, 2004).

## **Listening Integrated With Other Language Skills**

### *Listening, Discourse, and Linguistic Skills*

Generally speaking, a variety of techniques in L2 listening instruction have withstood the test of time and are largely recognized as essential, for example, prelistening, making predictions, listening for the gist or the main idea, listening intensively, and making inferences. These teaching strategies can be useful in a broad range of teaching contexts and can meet diverse learning needs. For instance, prelistening activities can be employed in teaching learners to notice the cultural schema and to raise their awareness of the effect of culture on discourse organization, information structuring, and pragmatics (see, e.g., Rost, 2005; Vandergrift, 2004). In addition, learning to listen to conversations provides a fruitful venue for focusing on morphosyntax, lexical parsing, and phonological variables, thus adding new dimensions to the teaching of grammar and vocabulary. Analyses of L2 conversations can similarly emphasize L2 sociocultural norms and pragmatics to expand learners' repertoire of common speech acts and discourse structuring. As has been mentioned, the teaching of pronunciation skills is also ubiquitously integrated with both speaking and listening instruction.

The linguistic and schema-driven staples of teaching listening have found applications in current integrated approaches, such as task-based or content-based instruction (see Snow, 2005, for overviews). The design of listening practice can incorporate a number of features that make the development of L2 listening abilities relevant and realistic. Listen-and-do tasks, for instance, represent a flexible source of listening input for beginning or intermediate learners. According to Ellis (2003), the

content of tasks can be easily controlled in regard to their linguistic and schematic variables, such as frequent occurrences of target syntactic and lexical structures in the context of a meaning-focused task (also referred to as *enriched input*), such as grammar constructions, words and phrases, or conversational expressions. Academic listening tasks and note-taking are an age-old technique for teaching more advanced learners. Taped (or live) listening selections, such as academic lectures, can be designed to concentrate on specific topics and contents with directed grammar and vocabulary loads, and cultural and discourse schemata, integrated with reading, writing, and speaking practice.

## **Teaching Listening and Teaching Strategies**

In the 1990s, in addition to linguistic and schematic considerations in L2 listening, a number of studies identified the difficulties learners experience when coping with comprehension problems and making inferences. Researchers have also been interested in the metacognitive and cognitive strategies of successful L2 listeners (e.g., Rost & Ross, 1991; Vandergrift, 1999, 2004). The findings of these investigations have led L2 listening experts to advocate the teaching of metacognitive and cognitive strategies specifically for L2 listening comprehension. The most important difference between skills and strategies is that strategies are under learners' conscious control, and listeners can be taught to compensate for incomplete understanding, missed linguistic or schematic input, or misidentified clues (see Rost, 2005, for a discussion).

Thus, current L2 listening pedagogy includes the modeling of metacognitive strategies and strategy training in tandem with teaching L2 listening. A consistent use of metacognitive strategies is more effective in improving learners' L2 listening comprehension than work on listening skills alone (e.g., Vandergrift, 2004). The key metacognitive strategies widely adopted in L2 listening instruction include planning for listening, self-monitoring the comprehension processes, evaluating comprehension, and identifying comprehension difficulties (e.g., see Rost, 2005, for a discussion). Learners at beginning and intermediate levels of proficiency may benefit from instruction that concentrates on bottom-up and top-down listening processes, together with selective strategy training. For more advanced learners, an addition of cognitive strategies, such as discourse organization, inferencing, elaboration, and summation, also represent an effective approach to teaching listening (Rost, 2001; Rost & Ross, 1991).

## TEACHING L2 READING

Recent research has shed a great deal of light on the processes and the learning of L2 reading. Similar to L2 listening, L2 reading entails both bottom-up and top-down cognitive processing, and in the 1980s, the prevalent approach to teaching sought to activate learners' L1 reading schemata and prior knowledge to foster the development of L2 reading skills. Over time, however, it has become evident that, despite many years of schooling and exposure to L2 reading and text, not all learners succeed in becoming proficient L2 readers. In his important overview of reading research, Eskey (1988) examines what he called "a strongly top-down bias" (p. 95) in L2 reading pedagogy and neglect of learners' weak linguistic processing skills. Eskey's analysis explains that L2 readers are fundamentally distinct from those who read in their L1s and that essential "knowledge of the language of the text" (p. 96) is required before learners can successfully process the L2 reading schema. The primacy of the bottom-up processing in L2 reading and the need for teaching the language in L2 reading are similarly noted by Paran (1996), Birch (2002), and Koda (2005), who view the top-down reading skills as additive or compensatory once fluent bottom-up processing is achieved.

### Reading Integrated With Other Language Skills

#### *Bottom-Up and Top-Down Skills*

The bottom-up processing of reading involves a broad array of distinct cognitive subskills, such as word recognition, spelling and phonological processing, morphosyntactic parsing, and lexical recognition and access (e.g., Eskey, 2005). The reader needs to gather visual information from the written text (e.g., letters and words), identify the meanings of words, and then move forward to the processing of the structure and the meaning of larger syntactic units, such as phrases or sentences. A number of studies, such as those by Koda (1999), Chikamatsu (1996), and Shimron and Savon (1994), have shown that visual processing of words and letters represents a cognitively complex task. These and other researchers found that readers whose L1 orthographies (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, or Hebrew) are markedly distinct from the L2 orthography may be slowed down in their reading progress by the need to attain fluent L2 word recognition before they can acquire text-processing skills. Furthermore, positive L1-to-L2 transfer of reading skills does not occur when the writing systems in the two languages are fundamentally different (e.g., Birch, 2002; Koda, 1999, 2005). On the other hand, L2

readers' word-processing skills develop significantly faster when L1 and L2 orthographies are similar (as in English and Spanish).

The findings of L2 reading research on the key role of bottom-up processing, word recognition fluency, and the recognition of the morphophonemic structure of words and phrases have led to substantive shifts in reading and literacy instruction to young and adult L2 learners alike. For example, in 1999, the far-reaching National Literacy Strategy in the United Kingdom introduced work on phonics, word recognition, and graphic knowledge prior to sentence and text levels of instruction.

In teacher education, current methodology textbooks reflect the change in the perspectives on teaching L2 reading, literacy, and writing (see also the section Teaching Writing). Such influential publications as those by Celce-Murcia (2001), Carter and Nunan (2001), McKay (1993), Nunan (1999, 2003), and Wallace (1992) contain at least a chapter on teaching bottom-up reading skills usually followed by instruction in top-down and strategic reading. For example, Ediger (2001) cautions that L1 reading skills do not readily transfer to an L2. In the case of young school-age and older learners alike, teachers need to begin with work on the visual appearance of words (e.g., a *sight-word approach*, p. 157), sound-letter relationships (e.g., the *look-say approach*, p. 157), and the development of word recognition fluency before delving into top-down skills in both reading and writing. Similarly, Wallace (2001) reviews research on fostering the learner's ability to decode words as a prerequisite to reading. Based on the conclusions of various studies, Wallace explains that a strong link exists "between phonemic awareness, the ability to process words automatically and rapidly, and reading achievement" (p. 23). In her practical book for teachers, Birch (2002) advocates teaching L2 reading by beginning with processing letters, then moving forward to the English spelling system, morphophonemics, and vocabulary learning. According to Birch, although both bottom-up and top-down processing skills are necessary to learn to read in an L2, the reading fundamentals must be in place before top-down instruction can benefit learners.

### ***Reading and Vocabulary***

In other venues, the foundations-first perspective on L2 reading pedagogy also extends to today's views on teaching and learning vocabulary. Enormous amounts of research carried out in the past two decades have been devoted to the role of vocabulary in L2 reading as well as to vocabulary learning and acquisition. Although in the 1970s and 1980s the teaching and learning of vocabulary was considered to be largely secondary to the teaching of other L2 skills, at present a great deal more

is known about the connections between L2 reading and vocabulary knowledge (e.g., Nation, 1990, 2001). For instance, Hu and Nation (2000) indicate that an L2 reader needs to understand approximately 98% of the unique words in such texts as short novels or academic materials. In real terms, this represents about 5,000 word families (a family is a base word with its related words and their inflected forms, e.g., *child, children, childhood*). On the other hand, according to Hazenberg and Hulstijn (1996), the vocabulary range in introductory university textbooks largely overlaps with that in the general corpus of frequent words. Therefore, irrespective of their aspirations to enter universities, L2 learners need to acquire a substantial vocabulary to achieve competencies in practically all L2 skills, such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking (e.g., Coady & Huckin, 1997). In general terms, a vocabulary of approximately 2,000 words may serve as an essential base needed for daily interaction and speaking, whereas 5,000 base words are typically considered to be a minimal L2 learning goal to comprehend texts intended for a general, nonspecialist audience (Nation, 1990; see also Hulstijn, 2001, for an overview).

The techniques for teaching vocabulary have also been thoroughly examined. Among other prominent publications, Nation's (2001, 2005) work highlights significant trends in productive and efficient vocabulary teaching. In the past two decades, a vast body of research has established that explicit teaching represents the most effective and efficient means of vocabulary teaching. Researchers have also voiced caution that incidental learning leads to significantly lower rates of vocabulary retention and that a word needs to be encountered 12–20 times to be learned from context (e.g., Coady, 1997). According to Nation (2005) and Hulstijn (2001), research has not supported the contention that meaning-focused use and encounters with new words in context are the best way to learn vocabulary. These authors underscore that the converse approach is probably true, that is, deliberate attention to decontextualized words is far more likely to lead to learning, although new vocabulary can certainly be reinforced in the context of other L2 skills. In general terms, to result in learning, activities with new words, such as reading or listening, have to meet the following conditions: “interest, repetition, deliberate attention, and generative use (the use of a word in a new context)” (Nation, 2005, p. 585). Teaching word families rather than individual words can dramatically increase the rate of learning.

## **Extensive Reading and Reading Fluency Development**

A pedagogical approach usually referred to as *extensive reading* (or *sustained silent reading*) has been very popular among reading teachers

and methodologists. Extensive reading is based on the principles adopted in L1 reading and literacy instruction, and, intuitively, it can be appealing because of its emphasis on reading large amounts of material for enjoyment. In fact, Eskey (2005) points out that “the relationship between reading and vocabulary is well documented and reciprocal” (p. 567), and the more one reads, the larger his or her language base becomes. The goal of extensive reading is to read relatively quickly and to understand general ideas rather than to focus on the details. It is generally recognized that extensive reading can provide learners with exposure to new and old vocabulary and facilitate the development of reading fluency (e.g., Coady, 1997; Eskey, 2005; Nation, 2001). According to Hu and Nation (2000), the usefulness of extensive reading is contingent on the density of unknown words, which should not exceed 1 for every 50 words of text. Also, vocabulary should recur at fairly regular intervals to promote retention. For less proficient learners, graded or simplified readers with controlled vocabulary loads may be the optimal choice, even though many teachers dislike graded reading materials. As Nation (2005) mentions, “Without graded readers, reading for a second language learner would be one continuous struggle against an overwhelming vocabulary level” (p. 588).

## **TEACHING L2 WRITING**

Although in the 1980s much in the teaching of L2 writing was based on L1 writing research, in the past two decades, a number of publications have emerged to address the important differences that exist between learning to write in one’s L1 and in one’s L2 (e.g., Hinkel, 2002; McKay & Wong, 1996; Silva, 1993). Based on his synthesis of 72 studies, Silva (1993) concludes that significant differences exist between practically all aspects of L1 and L2 writing. He emphasizes that the learning needs of L2 writers are crucially distinct from those of basic or proficient L1 writers and that L2 writing pedagogy requires special and systematic approaches that take into account the cultural, rhetorical, and linguistic differences between L1 and L2 writers. Similarly, Hinkel’s (2002) large-scale empirical analysis of L1 and L2 text showed that even after years of ESL and composition training, L2 writers’ text continues to differ significantly from that of novice L1 writers in regard to most linguistic and rhetorical features. Even advanced and trained L2 writers continue to have a severely limited lexical and syntactic repertoire that enables them to produce only simple text restricted to the most common language features encountered predominantly in conversational discourse (Hinkel, 2003).

## Writing Integrated With Other Language Skills

### *Bottom-Up and Top-Down Skills*

As with L2 reading, L2 writing pedagogy has begun to pay increasing attention to the integration of bottom-up and top-down skills because learners need both if they are to become proficient L2 writers. Many prominent researchers, such as Cope and Kalantzis (1993, 2000) and Johns (1997), have pointed out that learners can achieve social access and inclusion through a facility with language and writing. Achieving proficiency in writing requires explicit pedagogy in grammar and lexis and is important because one's linguistic repertoire and writing skills often determine one's social, economic, and political choices. Such experts in L2 teaching as Celce-Murcia (2001), Christie (1998), and Martin (1992) have similarly argued that a lack of instruction in L2 grammar and lexis disadvantages L2 learners in their vocational, academic, and professional careers and ultimately reduces their options. These researchers have continued to emphasize the importance of language quality in L2 writing because grammar and lexis are inextricable from meaning in written discourse and because L2 writers are ultimately evaluated based on their control of language and text construction in their written discourse.

To address the shortfalls of the writing pedagogy widely adopted in the 1980s, the practice of L2 writing instruction has begun to take a more balanced view of learning to write in an L2 (Silva & Brice, 2004). For instance, Frodesen (2001) states that "the wholesale adoption of L1 composition theories and practices for L2 writing classes seems misguided in light of the many differences between first and second language writers, processes, and products" (p. 234).<sup>2</sup> According to Frodesen, the neglect of language instruction for L2 writers is most prevalent in the United States, where many continue to believe that comprehensible input is sufficient for language acquisition. Frodesen and other experts, such as Birch (2005), Byrd (2005), Byrd and Reid (1998), and McKay (1993) point out that curriculum design in L2 writing instruction has to include grammar and vocabulary to enable L2 writers to communicate meaningfully and appropriately. With this objective in mind, prominent current positions advocate the integration of grammar and vocabulary curricula with L2 writing instruction.

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<sup>2</sup> In the teaching of rhetoric and writing, the process/product debate originated in the late 19th and early 20th century, when English departments were formally separated from, for example, philosophy departments in many U.K. and U.S. universities. These debates have continued unabated for more than a century now, but in the 1970s and 1980s, they aided in the institutionalization of composition studies in the United States—but not in other countries.

New insights into the properties of written and spoken texts, combined with the growing recognition that L2 writing requires a substantial range of grammar and lexical skills, have led to considerable modifications in L2 writing instruction. At present, the grammatical and lexical features needed to construct formal academic writing and discourse are discussed and foregrounded (often under the umbrella term *academic literacy*) in many teacher education textbooks, such as those by Adger, Snow, and Christian (2002), Birch (2005), Brown (2001), Byrd and Reid (1998), Carter and Nunan (2001), Celce-Murcia (2001), Celce-Murcia and Olshtain (2000), Ferris and Hedgcock (2005), Hinkel (2004), Liu and Master (2003), and Weaver (1996).

### ***Teaching Writing to Young Learners***

Along these lines, the current approaches for teaching L2 writing to school-age children are similarly based on the premise that learners need to attain fundamental proficiency in spelling and in letter and word recognition, followed by a focus on the syntactic parsing of morphemes, phrases, and sentences (e.g., Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000). During the subsequent stages of learners' writing development, more complex tasks are introduced to include emotive (or personal) writing, for example, narratives that tell about personal experiences, letters to friends, and diaries. Then instruction begins to advance to school-based writing, usually integrated with reading as well as with grammar and vocabulary learning (Adger, Snow, & Christian, 2002; Birch, 2005; Schleppegrell, 2004).

### ***Integrated and Content-Based Teaching of Writing***

Much of the current integrated instruction in L2 writing, grammar, and vocabulary takes place in conjunction with reading, content-based, and form-focused instruction to improve the overall quality of L2 prose (e.g., Cope, & Kalantzis, 1993; Hedgcock, 2005; Williams, 2005). For example, to promote learners' noticing of how particular grammar and lexis are employed in authentic written text and discourse, teachers can select readings from a wide array of genres, such as narrative, exposition, or argumentation. Based on reading content, practice in text analysis can become a useful springboard for an instructional focus on the specific uses of grammar structures and contextualized vocabulary. Similarly, instruction can address the features of written register by bringing learners' attention to the situational variables of language in context, such as e-mail messages, news reports, or written academic prose, and their attendant linguistic and discourse features (Celce-

Murcia & Olshtain, 2000; Hinkel, 2002, 2003, 2004; Larsen-Freeman, 2002; Nattinger & DeCarrico, 1992).

Another integrated approach to teaching writing together with reading is rooted in the foundations of the systemic functional linguistics and genre theory that examines the uses of language in texts written for particular, mostly academic and specific, purposes. Genre-based instruction seeks to enable L2 learners to analyze academic discourse while reading and to produce academic writing that adheres to the sociocultural norms of a particular academic (or professional) genre (e.g., Christie, 1998; Cope & Kalantzis, 1993, 2000; Martin, 1992). However, use of a genre-centered approach in educational contexts has not been without controversy. Many experts believe that genres and their linguistic features may be subjective, vaguely defined, unstable, or even irrelevant to diverse types of ESL/EFL learners (for detailed discussion, see, e.g., Silva & Brice, 2004; Widdowson, 2003).

## **A FINAL WORD**

In part due to its comparatively short history as a discipline, TESOL continues to be a dynamic field, one in which new venues and perspectives are still unfolding. In the past two decades or so, to a great extent, the innovations in the teaching of L2 skills have been driven by (a) new knowledge about the learner and the English language, (b) a greater balance in the teaching of both bottom-up and top-down L2 skills, and (c) a proliferation of integrated instructional models. The purposes for which people learn English today have also evolved from a cultural and educational enterprise to that of international communication. The growth of new knowledge about the how and the what of L2 teaching and learning are certain to continue and will probably remain as hallmarks of TESOL's disciplinary maturation.

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## THE AUTHOR

Eli Hinkel has taught ESL and applied linguistics, as well as trained teachers, for more than 20 years and has published numerous books and articles on learning second culture, and second language grammar, writing, and pragmatics. She is also the editor of Lawrence Erlbaum's ESL and Applied Linguistics Professional Series.

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# *English for Specific Purposes: Teaching to Perceived Needs and Imagined Futures in Worlds of Work, Study, and Everyday Life*

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**DIANE D. BELCHER**

*Georgia State University  
Atlanta, Georgia, United States*

This overview of the current state of English for specific purposes (ESP) begins by surveying ongoing debates on key topics: needs assessment and its goals, specificity in instructional methods, and the role of subject knowledge in instructor expertise. Two strands of current theory and research are next surveyed, namely, genre theory and corpus-enhanced genre studies, and critical pedagogy and ethnographies, followed by examples of research and theory-informed pedagogical strategies for literacy and spoken discourse. Topics in need of further inquiry are suggested.

*The reason we have an English program starting is . . . the hotel's focusing on more guest services . . . and trying to . . . have each employee be a host to each guest rather than Oh it's the front desk job to . . . greet people and if I'm a housekeeper I can just . . . say hello and that's it. . . . The way the company put it to show our Aloha. . . . Sometimes we get . . . ah . . . negative comments cards . . . they say things like . . . I asked for this and I didn't get it but mostly is like and can't you even get staff that speak English?*

Hotel human resources perspective

*Simple English like go see doctor yeah? then . . . ah . . . meet a friend you know. . . . I just want learn the simple English . . . you know when we go travel we need English. . . .*

Hotel housekeeper's perspective (Jasso-Aguilar, 1999, pp. 41–43)

For those who are at all familiar with the approach to English language teaching known as English for specific purposes, or ESP (also known as LSP<sup>1</sup>), the descriptors likely to spring to mind probably include such terms as *needs-based*, *pragmatic*, *efficient*, *cost-effective*, and *functional*: a view of ESP encapsulated by Hutchinson and Waters (1987) in the statement, “Tell me what you need English for and I will tell you the English that you need” (p. 8). For those of a more critical bent, however, ESP may conjure up more critically evaluative terms such as “accommodationist,” “assimilationist,” “market-driven,” and even “colonizing”—suggesting that ESP is too often untroubled by questions of power, by whose needs are served by programs such as that for the hotel housekeepers cited earlier. The mental associations may be somewhat different again, though, for those immersed in ESP practice today, engaged with ESP’s growing body of research and theory, and ever-diversifying and expanding range of purposes: from the better known English for academic purposes (EAP) and occupational purposes (EOP), the latter including business, medicine, law, but also such fields as shipbuilding and aviation,<sup>2</sup> to the more specific-mission-oriented ESP that Master (1997) has labeled “English for sociocultural purposes,” for example, for AIDS education, family literacy, and citizenship, or for those with highly specialized needs, such as learners who are incarcerated or who have a disability (Johnstone, 1997; Master, 2000). Those familiar with all of these permutations may understandably find ESP increasingly difficult to summarily describe (or dismiss). What once looked to many like a straightforwardly needs-oriented, a- or pan-theoretical (aligned with no particular theory but employing many), and, some would add, ideologically oblivious approach, now, like the constantly changing learning targets it addresses, is itself becoming harder and harder to capture in anything like a single stop-action frame. Contributing to the complexified picture of ESP are more methodologically, technologically, and theoretically enriched assessments of language use and learner needs, and a growing array of means to meet them, in a *glocalized* world (Robertson, 1995), where local and global needs meet and merge, collide and conflict, and new culturally and linguistically hybrid “thirdness[es]” (Mauranen, 2001, p. 51) emerge. ESP can now, for instance, with its multiple analytical

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<sup>1</sup> Teachers of English have no monopoly on specific-purpose instruction, an approach employed for the teaching of many languages other than English, and often referred to, consequently, as *language/s for specific purposes* (see Johnstone, 1997; Swales, 2000). However, because this article focuses on English-language instruction, the narrower term *English for specific purposes* will be used throughout.

<sup>2</sup> The goals of EAP and EOP are not always easily separable. Consider, for example, EALP, *English for academic legal purposes*, for law students; EABP, *English for academic business purposes*, for business students; or EAMP, *English for academic medical purposes*, for students in the health sciences. The specific purposes can generate a seemingly endless string of acronyms.

methods, discern the needs of hotel workers at one particular site (e.g., a Waikiki hotel) in more detail than ever before, yet with awareness of how this picture is alternately enhanced and blurred by the perspectives of multiple stakeholders (e.g., transoceanic tourists, a transnational hotel industry, and the locally situated learners themselves). In the following sections, I look at some of the major challenges ESP specialists face today in attempting to meet the needs of people hoping to more fully participate in school, work, and neighborhood communities; survey how research, theory, and reflective practice can increase awareness of what learners' needs are and how to address them; and consider a number of looming issues on which further inquiry could benefit ESP, but probably everyone in ELT (English language teaching) as well.

## **PROBLEMATIZING A PURPOSE-DRIVEN, PROBLEM-SOLVING APPROACH**

Although hard to pin down, ESP does have some prominent distinguishing features on which many involved in ESP would likely agree. Needs assessment, content-based teaching methods, and content-area informed instructors have long been considered essential to the practice of specific-purpose teaching, yet how these concepts are defined and realized at the teaching site has been and continues to be the subject of much debate.

### **Reassessing Needs Assessment: Which Needs and Whose Goals?**

Like other educational endeavors, ESP assumes there are problems, or lacks, that education can ameliorate, but unlike many other educational practices, ESP assumes that the problems are unique to specific learners in specific contexts and thus must be carefully delineated and addressed with tailored-to-fit instruction. ESP specialists, therefore, are often needs assessors first and foremost, then designers and implementers of specialized curricula in response to identified needs. It is probably no exaggeration to say that needs assessment is seen in ESP as the foundation on which all other decisions are, or should be, made. Because of this emphasis on needs, the dividing lines in ESP between researchers and teachers, or curriculum designers, materials developers, and teachers, are frequently blurred. Since even the earliest days of ESP (the 1960s), practitioners have viewed assessment of specific needs as requiring research skills and creative approaches to novel situations, and needs assessment itself has been seen as in need of continual reassessment.

Among the groundbreaking early insights of ESP practitioners, perhaps most significant was the realization that teacher intuition and knowledge of language systems were insufficient, and that understanding of language use in specific contexts was essential (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Robinson, 1991). Though this “understanding” initially took the form of frequency counts of lexicogrammatical features, or “lexicostatistics” (Swales, 1988, p. 189), this approach was succeeded by consideration of macro-level discourse features and rhetorical motivations. Whole text analysis, with exemplar texts from the learners’ fields of study or work, and often informed by the perspectives of subject-area specialists (see Selinker, 1979), not the ESP professional working in isolation, has become common in ESP.

Because target language description alone provides limited direction to classroom practitioners, needs analysis evolved (in the 1970s) to include “deficiency analysis,” or assessment of the “learning gap” (West, 1997, p. 71) between target language use and current learner proficiencies. Just as ESP professionals were determined not to decide a priori what language features to teach, they also decided not to make assumptions about individuals’ language abilities vis-à-vis specific language varieties or tasks. Though obviously a deficit conceptualization of the learner, deficiency assessment enabled teaching “English to specified people” (Robinson, 1991, p. 5), or specific learners in specific situations rather than a generalized language learner.

Since the 1980s, however, many ESP specialists have questioned whether collecting expert- and data-driven “objective” information about learners is enough (Tudor, 1997). Many wondered whether ESP specialists should also tap into the ongoing subjective needs of learners: their self-knowledge, awareness of target situations, life goals, and instructional expectations (Tudor, 1997). Inspired by the learner-centered movement (Nunan, 1988), ESP became more *learning-centered* (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987), focusing not just on what people do with language but how they learn it and encouraging learner investment and participation.

As helpful as the combined objective and subjective foci on individual learners in specific contexts are, some in ESP have also felt the need to know more about those contexts, or target discourse communities, and not just from a text-linguistic, *language audit* vantage point but from a more social perspective as well (Robinson, 1991). Douglas (2000) sums up this more complex view of context, or “discourse domain,” as “dynamic, continually changing . . . constructed by the participants in a communicative situation” (p. 89). Such a view of context requires the kind of emic perspective gained not just through surveys, interviews, and text analysis, but also case studies and community ethnographies (Robinson, 1991).

Although clearly a crucial step forward, acknowledging context as socially constructed has not satisfied everyone. Discourse domains do not, after all, exist in vacuums (Pennycook, 1997). Any community is part of larger socioeconomic and political systems, with members holding multiple race, class, and gender subject positions. Along with this more layered view of context has come greater awareness of the conflicting perspectives of privileged members and novices and of learners as members of many other communities beyond work and study—as parents, consumers, citizens, members of vernacular communities (Canagarajah, 2002), and of communities they dream of joining (cf. Cadman's, 2002, p. 101, reinterpretation of EAP as “English for academic possibilities”).

No longer viewed, ideally, as one-shot, preessional data collection, needs assessment is now more often seen as a matter of “agreement and judgment not discovery,” negotiated by learners, other community members, and instructors inevitably influenced by “ideological preconceptions” (Robinson, 1991, p. 7, citing Lawson, 1979). Equally if not more important has been the more recent recognition that learners, as reflective community members, should be empowered to participate in needs assessment alongside ESP professionals (Benesch, 2001; Johns, 1997).

### **In Search of Needs-Meeting Methods: Which Means to What Ends?**

If ESP specialists have set and implemented their own needs-clarifying research agendas, they could also be described as methodological free thinkers. Some, such as Hutchinson and Waters (1987), have even claimed that “there is . . . no such thing as an ESP methodology” (p. 18). ESP is often seen as a materials-driven rather than methods-driven enterprise (see, e.g., Master, 1997), with preference given to materials that authentically represent the communities in which learners seek membership. Yet *authenticity* has long been a vexed term: One person's authenticity may not be another's. Widdowson's (1979) observation is commonly invoked: Authenticity resides not in texts but in the interaction between texts and intended contexts. According to this reasoning, texts taken out of context are inauthentic as soon as they enter the classroom. Yet, although many ESP specialists may agree that context is important, they may also feel that contexts can be more or less authentic (or simulated), often with the help of so-called authentic tasks (see Bhatia, 1993; Ferguson, 1997, on text/task relationships, but see also Corbett, 2003, p. 42, on authentic target-language materials as valuable

cultural artifacts without need of “simulacrum”). Texts, as classroom materials, can be viewed as exhibiting varying degrees of authenticity: from clearly authentic materials found in the target discourse community, to semi-authentic materials produced by the ESP practitioner, to obviously inauthentic textbooks mass-produced by publishers. Even textbooks, though, can be more or less authentic and specific in their conceptualization of learner-audience needs (see Harwood, 2005, who cites Swales & Feak, 2000, as an exemplar from the more specific end of the textbook spectrum).

It can be argued, however, that still more fundamental decisions drive materials selection than definitions of *authenticity*. Many assert that the overarching approach of ESP is content-based instruction, or CBI (Crandall & Kaufman, 2002; Master, 1997), and that ESP’s reach extends beyond its traditional focus on adults to children in CBI programs, with target-language-medium instruction in subject areas (Master, 1997; Robinson, 1991). *Content*, though, like authenticity, is open to interpretation. Does CBI simply mean *theme based*, using any relevant, potentially high-interest topics teachers feel comfortable with (Stoller, 2002)? Or, should *content* be more narrowly defined and CBI more directly related to the target discourse community, for example, business cases as the content in language classes for business students? The one prerequisite of appropriate content on which most CBI/ESP teachers would likely agree is that it not consist of information about language but instead function as a carrier of language (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998), a means of making language use meaningful (Johns, 1997), thus enhancing language acquisition and task performance (Carson, Taylor, & Fredella, 1997).

Yet one might well next ask, what guides the choice of carrier content and related content-based tasks? The choice is likely guided by how the language and task-proficiencies learners need are conceptualized: whether narrowly, as immediately useful domain-specific language and related tasks, or more widely, as common-core language and language-learning strategy for an ever-expanding realm of unpredictable domains and tasks (see Bloor & Bloor, 1986). Arguments frequently advanced for a wide-angle approach, especially for EAP, include recent corpus-linguistic findings that a core of 2,000 basic high frequency words together with 570 reasonably frequent academic words “will give close to 90% coverage of the running words in most academic texts” (Coxhead & Nation, 2001, p. 260). If this is the case, then any subject-area content that the instructor chooses should serve the purposes of most language learners, at least in EAP, and, of course, language-learning strategies, such as intensive and extensive reading, can be taught with any carrier content.

Narrow-anglers, on the other hand, argue that if any content will do, why not choose content that is most relevant to learners’ goals and most

likely to motivate learners (see Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001)? Corpus linguists have also pointed out that technical terms, though a small percentage of the total vocabulary of academic texts, can be crucial to task performance, for example, fluent reading and learning through meaning (Coxhead & Nation, 2001). Also in support of the narrow angle approach is the observation that there are many ways for ESP instructors to compensate for their limited field-specific knowledge—a reason often given for avoiding the narrower route. Among the more popular compensatory strategies are team teaching with a content-area specialist (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998), taking a sustained (one subject area per term) content-based approach with lower-grade-level materials (Weigle & Nelson, 2001), and linking language and subject-area classes (Johns, 1997).

To many ESP practitioners, however, the wide versus narrow approach debate is a nonissue because instructional decisions should have more to do with the learners themselves than with instructor preference or beliefs: low-literacy level adults and undergraduates without majors, for instance, may benefit from a wide-gauge approach (Hirvela, 1998, but see also Hyland, 2002), while other learners, such as, graduate students, pilots, or nurses, may gain most from a narrower approach. Also, as Murray and McPherson (2004) have found, instructors are not always good judges of what will interest and motivate their own students. At the very least, such findings support an argument for allowing learners a voice in content selection.

## **Rescripting Instructional Roles: Who Teaches Whom?**

If there were a television reality show called *The ESP Apprentice*, with prizes in the form of ESP faculty appointments, it seems unlikely that multitudes of ELT professionals would vie to appear on it, especially considering the ESP ideal: combined needs assessor, specialized syllabus designer, authentic materials developer, and content-knowledgeable instructor, capable of coping with a revolving door of content areas relevant to learners' communities. Few graduate programs prepare students for the challenges of ESP (especially in the United States), and as humanities majors more often than not, many language teachers may find the technical content areas of such ESP learners as chemical engineers or air traffic controllers unfamiliar, uninteresting, and even intimidating. Abbott (1983) no doubt spoke for many when wondering in how many content areas, realistically speaking, any instructor could acquire even a "layman's outline knowledge" (p. 35).

How much subject knowledge is enough for ESP instructors, especially when taking a narrow-angled approach, is still very much an open

question. Some have argued that it is enough to know about an area, its values, epistemological bases, and preferred genres (Ferguson, 1997). In a similar vein, Dudley-Evans (1997) and Robinson (1991) have suggested that, rather than deep content knowledge, the most critical qualifications to cultivate are respect for learner knowledge and perspectives, intellectual curiosity and flexibility, and enjoyment of improvisational problem-solving. Others have noted, however, that since outsiders can only approximate what community insiders know and do, and perhaps not very successfully (White, 1981; Zuck & Zuck, 1984), they may actually do more harm than good in attempting a narrow-gauge approach. Robinson (1991) and Crofts (1981) argue that ESP specialists should not attempt to be “pseudoteacher[s] of subject matter,” (Robinson, p. 87) but teachers “of things not learned as part of courses in . . . specialisms” (Crofts, p. 149). It is, of course, concern with limited content knowledge that often drives the urge to collaborate, the team teaching and linked classes referred to earlier. Yet some view even this solution (i.e., collaboration) as far from perfect (Goldstein, Campbell, & Cummings, 1997), and institutional constraints and unwillingness of would-be collaborators can be major obstacles to teaching partnerships. Dual professionalism, training in both the target subject area, for example, law or medicine, and applied linguistics (Feak & Reinhart, 2002) would seem to provide the best of both worlds but requires a breadth and depth of commitment to two fields that few are willing to make.

A learner-centered solution to the content knowledge dilemma has been offered by Dudley-Evans (1997), who feels it essential for ESP teachers to learn how to learn from and with their students, engaging with them in genuinely participatory explorations of discourse domains. Benesch (2001), at the same time, warns of being overly respectful of subject knowledge, especially that of content experts, whose handling of content may fail to factor in the needs of second language learners or of such so-called minorities as female students. Snow (1997), likewise, suggests that ESP/EAP professionals can be valuable resources to subject specialists, who may not know how to help L2 learners even when they want to. Perhaps even more than others in ELT, ESP practitioners, because of their work with field-specific discourse, need to remind themselves that they are far from lacking a content area of their own.

## **WHAT THEORY AND RESEARCH HAVE TO OFFER**

Though ESP has a reputation for being eclectic in its use of theory and has long valued practitioner research, this does not mean that ESP professionals have not been informed by research and theoretical developments beyond their own immediate instructional contexts. Cur-

rent ESP curriculum and materials design owes much to genre theory, especially as enhanced by corpus linguistics, and ESP's conceptualizations of both the learners' goals and its own as a field owe much to recent contributions from critical pedagogy and ethnography.

## Genre Theory and Corpus Data

Although ESP is itself considered a school of genre studies, it has willingly embraced, in its usual eclectically pragmatic way, the insights of two other schools of genre theory known as the Sydney School and New Rhetoric (see Belcher, 2004; Hyland, 2004; Johns, 2002). Both the Sydney School and New Rhetoric, along with influential ESP genre theorists such as Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993), have been instrumental in moving ESP toward a more sociorhetorical view of genre, or as Bawarshi (2003) says, away from a "container view of genre" as "only transparent and innocent conduits that individuals use to package their communicative goals" (p. 23).

The Sydney School has contributed arguably the most systematically theoretical grounding of all the major approaches to genre (Hyland, 2004), informed as it is by Hallidayan systemic functional linguistics (SFL, see Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004), that is, interested in context as well as text, and field and tenor, or ideational and interpersonal discourse dimensions, as well as mode, or generic channel. Also noteworthy about the Sydney School is its commitment to bringing *genres of power*, or literacies of the privileged, to children and low-literacy adult immigrants, populations ESP had not traditionally focused on (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; but see also Pennycook, 1997). Sydney School pedagogy addresses these populations' needs with Vygotskian scaffolding, or staged, SFL-informed instruction that moves from the assistance of more knowledgeable others to gradually more independent text generation (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; Feez, 2002).

The New Rhetoric School, in contrast, has been still more interested in context and greatly inspired by theories of situated cognition and cognitive apprenticeship (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Miller's (1984) New Rhetorical redefinition of genre as "typified rhetorical actions based in recurrent situations" (p. 159) has been especially influential in encouraging an appreciation of how people "enact and are enacted by [genres]" (Bawarshi, 2003, p. 22). Perhaps not surprisingly, New Rhetoric puts relatively little faith in explicit instruction, seeing immersion in target situations as essential for genuine acquisition of genres (Freedman, 1993). While the Sydney School has had much to offer genre-based ESP pedagogy, especially in EAP, New Rhetoric has shed more light on the genred spaces EOP focuses on, the "stabilized-for-now" (Schryer, 1993, p.

200) shapes, uses, and acquisition processes of genres in a multitude of professional sites (Hyland, 2004; Swales, 2004).

Genre scholars, thus, tend today to view genre as more contextual than simply textual, dynamic than static, varied than monolithic, and interesting in its shaping of and being shaped by people (Bawarshi, 2003; Bhatia, 2004). Mindful of these recent developments, Swales (2004) argues that the concept of genre serves us most productively as metaphor. Genres can be seen as “*frames* for social action” (Bazerman, 1997, p. 19; italics added), *chains* of sequential communicative events, *sets* of related occupational and institutional practices, *networks* of intertextuality, and purposeful activity *systems*, or *spheres* of communication, that human actors engage in, affected by and affecting countless other systems (Bawarshi, 2003; Swales, 2004). This increasingly complex conceptualization of genre, and of life as genrefied (Swales, 2004), clearly affords a far fuller view of the world in which learners must function than the templates and taxonomies that many may still too readily think of when they think of *genre*.

Considering genre theory’s top-down, contextualized, sociorhetorical view of discourse, it might seem that the more bottom-up, relatively decontextualized, and lexicogrammatically “atomized” (L. Flowerdew, 2005b, p. 324) view of language use offered by computer-enabled corpus linguistics would be at odds with genre theory’s more macro-level perspective. Flowerdew (2005b; see also Swales, 2004), however, has pointed out, that the two approaches, in fact, have much to offer each other. Especially promising, Flowerdew (2004, 2005b) and others (e.g., Connor & Upton, 2004) note, are small corpus studies of academic and professional genres, of whole (not partial) expert and learner texts, compiled, hand-tagged for *move structure* (rhetorical stages) and qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed by ESP specialists familiar with the texts’ contexts, producers, and intended audiences. The speed with which corpus data can now be compiled and analyzed pushes ESP still farther in directions it has valued—away from “intuitive laundry lists of common core features” (Hyland, 2002, p. 392) and toward empirically based understanding of language used for specific purposes.

## Critical Pedagogy and Ethnography

Just as genre theory and corpus studies may at first glance seem an unusual pairing, critical pedagogy may also initially appear the polar opposite of ESP itself, considering the pragmatic efforts of ESP to help learners succeed in established, often exclusionary and hierarchical, communities. Although many ESP professionals may see meeting learn-

ers' needs as empowering, in a world where English opens doors to technology, research findings, and educational and job opportunities, critical pedagogists (e.g., Canagarajah, 2002; Pennycook, 1997; Phillipson, 1992) may see such efforts as a form of domination, supporting the spread of English, and thus strengthening, in EFL settings, the hold of the developed world on the less developed (but see also Seidlhofer, 2004), and in ESL settings, aiding and abetting a too pervasive melting-pot process that effaces cultural identity. In fact, however, some EAP-experienced critical pedagogists, perhaps most notably Pennycook (1997) and Benesch (2001), have constructed conceptual bridges between critical and pragmatically needs-based perspectives on pedagogy.

Pennycook (1997) offers the concept of *critical pragmatism* as a much-needed change of course, or in Morgan and Ramanathan's (2005) terms, *invigoration* (p. 156), for ESP/EAP, turning it away from its superficially neutral, norms-reinforcing *vulgar pragmatism*, ideologically naïve in its service to the status quo. More than a utilitarian approach to language, critical pragmatism requires awareness of the role of English in "the spread of particular forms of culture and knowledge" (Pennycook, 1997, p. 258). The critically aware practitioner neither simply abandons language teaching nor continues trusting that ELT will open doors without closing any, but instead gives priority to helping learners appropriate English for their own purposes—to accept, resist, and even push back, to glocalize the global, asserting ownership of English in forms useful in users' own communities.

Benesch (2001), similarly, suggests that a more critical approach requires expansion of needs analysis to include *rights analysis*, which is much more than a reactive determination of learner needs based on institutional or expert expectations. Acknowledging that learners and their instructors should not completely ignore target situation needs, Benesch encourages a language curriculum enriched by "a framework for understanding and responding to power relations" that instills learners with confidence in their right and ability to challenge "unreasonable and inequitable arrangements" (p. 108). Such a learning outcome is only likely, Benesch observes, if instructors themselves "discover what is possible, desirable, and beneficial at a certain moment with a particular group of students" (p. 109), that is, if instructors engage in rights analysis.

Critically aware qualitative research, or ethnographic *thick description* (Geertz, 1983), often for the sake of needs assessment, is also heightening awareness of the need for a more critically pragmatic ESP conscious of what Brandt and Clinton (2002) call the "limits of the local" (p. 337), that is, of a perspective so focused on the local context that "tensions among different immediate and remote forces at play" are ignored

(Reder & Davila, 2005, p. 174).<sup>3</sup> For example, in her study of hotel maids' language needs, Jasso-Aguilar (1998) used critically-aware methodology, which included working alongside the hotel maids in her study, and discovered a mismatch between the language actually needed to perform the usual hotel housekeeping duties and the welcoming "aloha" language that the hotel corporation felt the maids needed. The increased language skills desired by hotel management clearly had more to do with wanting to increase business than with meeting either the actual immediate work-related needs or long-term goals of the hotel housekeepers.

In another ethnographic account, Storer (1999) too identified conflicting perspectives on the needs of learners, in this case, Thai bar-based sex workers. One morally righteous perspective would deny the bar workers language instruction that might encourage them to stay in the bars. The business-minded bar managers had another view, discouraging the workers from using language to negotiate safer interactions with foreigners. The workers themselves were only too aware of the risks, to life and livelihood, of being unable to establish ground rules with their clients. Storer, like Jasso-Aguilar (1998), emphasizes the value of seeing learners' needs emically, from their vantage point, which includes gaining an understanding of the pressures that others' demands place on them.

The ESP class itself can also be a site of ongoing critical qualitative exploration of more and less transparent contexts. Boshier and Smalkoski (2002), for example, found that discussing language needs in class with immigrant nursing students and reading their journals placed their language learning needs in a larger context, a culturally influenced gendered space, where, as one student put it, "there are things the female won't talk about as it is ok with the male" (p. 70), all of which underscored a need for assertiveness training. Similarly, qualitative research methods, including ongoing evaluation by the students themselves of their own strengths and weaknesses, and the author's own close observation of his students' struggles with assignments helped Holmes (2004) understand why an imported genre-based EAP curriculum was so ineffective at a school in Eritrea. Accessible, relevant, engaging materials and tasks were developed only after local needs and interests, as well as the impact of years of deprivation, were taken into account.

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<sup>3</sup> We should note that ethnography has also been very productively used, especially in combination with textual analysis, in genre studies (Corbett, 2003), and genre analysis has proven to be a powerful tool for critical discourse analysts (Fairclough, 1995). Corpus linguistics, too, in the service of critical discourse analysis (see, e.g., Sotillo & Wang-Gempp, 2004), holds enormous potential for increasing critical awareness of the needs of ESP learners and the means of empowering them.

## **THEORY- AND RESEARCH-INFORMED ESP PEDAGOGY**

Although I have separately surveyed genre theory and corpus-enhanced genre studies, and critical pedagogy and ethnographies, they need not be seen as mutually exclusive, especially with respect to pedagogical implications. Genre theorists (e.g., Bawarshi, 2003; Devitt, 2004; Hyland, 2004; Swales, 2004) have more recently expounded on the critical consciousness-raising capability of genre-based pedagogies. It is not uncommon for contemporary genre theorists to speak of ethical responsibility to, in Bawarshi's (2003) words, "make . . . 'genred' discursive spaces . . . visible . . . for the sake of enabling students to participate in these spaces more meaningfully and critically" (p. 18). Critical pedagogists, at the same time, have pointed to the need for learner empowerment and agency not just in literacy practices, the primary focus of much genre study, but in face-to-face (or virtually face-to-face) communication as well (see Auerbach, 2000; Benesch, 2001).

### **Academic Literacies: Promoting Learner Autonomy and Decentered Authority**

Given the multitude of genres that confront learners just in academia alone, not to mention their careers and other avenues of life, the pedagogical task of deciding which genres to focus on is a daunting one. Devitt (2004) has suggested one reasoned way to cope with this situation: Rather than attempting to teach specific genres, we teach "critical awareness of how genres operate so that they [students] . . . learn the new genres they encounter with rhetorical and ideological understanding" (p. 194). Devitt reasons that focusing learners' attention first on "antecedent genres" (p. 202), or familiar genres such as personal letters or wedding announcements, will equip them with a learning strategy, a meta-awareness of the benefits and constraints of genre, which can be applied to all new genres they meet.

Although concurring with Devitt (2004) on the advantages of introducing "homely" genres first, Johns (1997, p. 38) is interested in promoting more than critical awareness. Focused primarily on the needs of at-risk undergraduates, Johns aims at jump-starting acquisition of literacy genres required for academic survival. Although again like Devitt, Johns urges equipping students with genre-learning strategies, she also encourages broader and deeper ethnographies of classroom and authentic genres, with students compiling reading and writing portfolios comprised of genre samples and their own genre performances and analyses. A primary goal, Johns (2001) argues, should be to

“destabilize the students’ rather limited theories of genres” by revealing that “there is a very large world beyond the academic essay” (pp. 70–71).

Johns’ and others’ use of academic literacy portfolios for undergraduates in EAP classes has a still more basic motivation: the realization that reading and writing are similar and synergistic sociocognitive processes, both involving the construction of meaning, and that it makes little sense to approach them pedagogically as discrete modalities. Literacy portfolios and reading-to-write tasks in general have been further encouraged by observations such as Carson and Leki’s (1993) that “reading can be, and in academic settings nearly always is, the basis for writing” (p. 1). More recently, Hirvela (2004) has called attention to the impact that writing can have on reading, noting that activities such as summarizing, synthesizing, and responding, not only can tell us much about students as L2 readers but can also help the students themselves become more aware of what they learn as they read and be more likely to read and reread texts purposefully, analytically, and critically.

For L2 graduate students, Hirvela (1997) advises an approach similar to Johns’ strategy with EAP undergraduates: compilation of disciplinary portfolios, for which students follow Swales and Feak’s (1994; see also 2004) advice to “examine and report back” (p. 87) on genres in their own fields of study, where they, not their EAP instructor, are the content experts. Hyland (2002) points out that if classes in which such ethnographic work is done are disciplinarily heterogeneous, “the specificity of their circumstances” can be exploited through the opportunity to compare various disciplinary observations, thus nudging the students toward the realization “that communication does not entail adherence to a set of universal rules but involves making rational choices based on the ways texts work in specific contexts” (p. 393). Lee and Swales (2006) have taken the learner-as-disciplinary-ethnographer model into more high tech realms by helping L2 graduate students produce what, in effect, are electronic portfolios. After compiling their own corpora of electronically retrieved professional texts and self-authored texts, the students were taught to concordance and analyze them, thus gaining both technical and discourse analytical skills likely to benefit them throughout their school and professional careers. Lee and Swales argue that use of such learner-produced corpora effectively decenters language standards away from the authority of the native speaker, teacher, grammar text, and stylistic conventions by facilitating students’ discoveries about language use with texts, written and spoken, generated by professionals in their fields, “not all of whom are necessarily native speakers” (p. 71). In another pilot concordancing course for L2 graduate students, Starfield (2004) likewise concluded, after observing her students’ use of the course’s software, that this *technicist* learning strategy can be empowering:

What I found exciting was that she [one of Starfield's students] was using the concordancing strategy to develop her ability to insert herself into the text she was writing. There was a sense that she was lessening the very unequal relations of power that positioned her as a foreign student with poor English skills and was beginning to occupy her research space as someone who has a history with its own discourses to bring to the Australian academy. (pp. 152–153)

## **SPEECH GENRES AND OTHER DIALOGIC FUNCTIONALITIES: REAL TIME, REAL LIFE NEGOTIATION**

While written (and hence read) genres may be the chief currency of academia, the means by which the greatest amounts of knowledge are communicated and assessed, more immediately dialogic genres, or *speech genres*, to use Bakhtin's (1986) term to underscore their interactional quality, also have significant roles to play inside and outside of academia. Many of the means of negotiating with more powerful others that Benesch (2001) fostered in her own linked EAP classes can, in fact, be seen as speech genres: raising questions in class, querying faculty during office hours, questioning the rationale of a syllabus or assignments. No longer the relatively neglected area it once was in ESP, spoken discourse now has a wealth of new technology-enhanced resources. One especially noteworthy example of these is the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE; English Language Institute, 2002), a public database of over 150 speech events, including such interactions as dissertation defenses, advising sessions, and seminar discussions. Such resources (see also Biber, Conrad, Reppen, Byrd, & Helt, 2002) offer new ways of studying and teaching spoken genres—and understanding how less powerful initiates can negotiate them.

Not all of the new resources for teaching spoken discourse involve technology. Face-to-face human interaction itself becomes a resource when authentic interaction opportunities are built into curricula in the form of community-based service learning, or “participatory learning communities,” in which learners actively participate in making their own lives and worlds better (Auerbach, 2000, p. 146). As Johns (2001) remarks, community-based projects can offer students a chance to assume a mentoring role with less proficient others that encourages articulation of subject matter and literacy knowledge for the benefit of both the mentees and the mentors themselves. Johns observes that such projects at her own university have proved to be powerful metacognition and confidence builders, especially noticeable in the student-mentors’

poised oral presentations on university life to large audiences of both faculty and younger students. Flowerdew (2005a) tells of another approach in Hong Kong for tertiary EAP students, who chose a real-world university problem to investigate, address, and report on orally. The in-class presentation project was often a report on real world action, with students feeling empowered by having taken their suggestions, for example, for more Mandarin instruction for business-inclined biology students, to the university authorities. Starfield (2001) has called for more instructional practices of this kind, focused on the “strategies of students’ discursive empowerment,” in order “to help our students develop . . . the linguistic and critical abilities to negotiate the complex sociopolitical learning environments in which they find themselves” (p. 146).

Outside of academia, technology facilitates ESP learners’ participation in their communities in some unexpected ways. Garcia (2002) reports on a union-sponsored English program for immigrant textile workers in Chicago that focused on more than their factory-floor oral communication needs by “target[ing] the gaps” in other areas of their work and nonwork lives, such as the need for training in computer use, which learners identified as important for “professional mobility and personal growth” (p. 170). Computer training proved a potent motivator for language learning. Outcomes of this program, interestingly, however, were measured not by increased phonological or grammatical control, although shop-floor communication breakdowns decreased, but in increased union solidarity, participation in union meetings and contract negotiations, and use of union services. Boudin (1993) reports a very different connection between technology and community involvement in her account of a course for incarcerated women that used a Freirean problem-posing approach and AIDS awareness as the content. The students wrote, produced, and videotaped a play, which not only motivated their own critical reflection and language and literacy learning, but also became a “community-building” tool (Auerbach, 2000, pp. 145), a means of reaching out to and dialoguing with the entire prison community. The discursive strategies and communication skills development supported by such approaches as just discussed are clearly aimed at producing more than linguistically proficient workers (or inmates): They serve as gateways to more confident, able, and likely participation in discourse communities both narrow and wide.

## **FURTHER INQUIRY**

Considering the already extensive scope of ESP—its numerous and varied sites all over the world of EAP and EOP practice based on teacher

research (see Johns & Dudley-Evans, 1991, on the international appeal and practice of ESP)—it may appear odd to call for more diversity in ESP research, but a case can be made for certain research areas as having received far less attention than they deserve. The reasons for this neglect probably have more to do with resource distribution than with any prioritization based on research needs (see Canagarajah, 1996).

Although there have been numerous studies of academic and professional genres, the ESP gaze has been focused more often on written than spoken genres and on products rather than processes. Perhaps because of ESP's traditional interest in materials development and literacy (Johns & Dudley-Evans, 1991), textual description has remained popular and useful among ESP specialists. The time sensitive nature of most ESP needs analysis, curriculum development, and the very real-world needs of learners, may have militated against the more time-consuming investigations of processes and contexts, and of more ephemeral spoken interactions, which are difficult to capture. However, technology, such as digitized video and audio-streaming, is now helping address the latter gap in particular, by facilitating recording, archiving, and analysis of speech events (Murray, 2005). We should note too that computer-mediated communication, with its hosts of new hybrid written/spoken genres, such as blogs and vlogs (Web logs and video logs), is also providing increasingly varied, appealing, and accessible but still largely underexamined means of motivating both oral and literate L2 proficiencies. It remains to be seen (and researched) to what extent specific-purpose language learning, particularly in areas where learners have few opportunities for exposure to target language use, can be catalyzed by Internet access and involvement in such interactive e-forums as subject-specific discussion groups, chatrooms, and *live journals* (see Six Apart, 2005). Warschauer (2003) argues for the need to consider a very complex matrix of resources—physical and digital as well as human and social—when examining technology use for any educational purposes (see, e.g., his analysis of the “Hole-in-the-Wall” experiment in New Delhi, 2003, p. 1).

Another reason that texts and literacy have so often been the object of ESP research attention has to do with the dominance of EAP (see Johns & Dudley-Evans, 1991, and the *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, especially its premiere issue, Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002). EAP professionals, often situated in higher education, are likely to be better positioned than EOP professionals to do research (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001). Thus, though EOP spans an enormous number of domains, much less evidence of EOP than EAP knowledge construction appears in print, and when it does, the focus is often on business, law, and medicine, among the most lucrative professions. The move toward more informal publication on personal or community Web pages, with less gate keeping

and demand for formal research genres, may make a difference, but the visibility of such sites may remain limited in the foreseeable future.

Resources also help explain the continuing influence of the center countries (e.g., the United Kingdom, United States, Australia, Canada), where most so-called international journals are published. Although published ESP research is among the most diverse in origin and consumption in ELT—with issues of *English for Specific Purposes* now often dominated by contributions from noncenter countries, and more readers of the journal outside the center than in it—the opportunities for sharing ESP knowledge and practices in refereed forums are still limited. As others have noted, when “many of the superior, but localized, ESP projects are not discussed in international publications, [it is] a great loss for teachers and materials designers everywhere” (Johns & Dudley-Evans, 1991, p. 303; see also Swales, 1988). Projects such as Muangsamai’s (2003) use of Internet resources to revitalize an EAP curriculum for premedical students in Thailand have the potential, with greater visibility, to benefit many, perhaps especially those in noncenter communities where material resources may be meager. A promising development, however, is the start-up of new journals based in noncenter countries, such as the *Review of Applied Linguistics in China* and *ESP in Taiwan*, which will be especially appreciative of local perspectives but not limited to local audiences, given the possibility of electronic distribution. Certainly having more refereed publication opportunities available beyond a limited number of prestigious center journals will be a welcome development.

Thus it is not surprising that the center influences not only who but what gets published. ESP prides itself on investigating a broad range of specific varieties of English, but these varieties are related mainly to domain not “linguacultural background” (Seidlhofer, 2004, p. 230). *Variety* seldom refers to World Englishes in published ESP research. Seidlhofer (2001), who is herself addressing the need for more attention to lingua franca English through a corpus project, observes that there has been “very little empirical work [anywhere in ELT] . . . on the most extensive contemporary use of English worldwide . . . among ‘non-native’ speakers” (p. 133). Nickerson (2005), with ESP and especially business purposes in mind, adds to this agenda the need for research that is not exclusively focused on English but that examines its use as one of a number of languages in contexts where being multilingual is the norm.

Further attention to varieties of English as an international language may help ESP rethink its conceptualization of *expertise*, or proficient specialist language use, long the target of ESP research efforts. How often are domain experts and native or native-like speakers synonymous in ESP studies? Again with multilingual international business contexts in mind, Nickerson (2005) calls attention to another needed develop-

ment, a shift in focus away from proficiency to strategic communication—strategies that are communicatively effective “regardless of whether the speaker/writer is a native or non-native speaker” (p. 369). Perhaps with this shift would come more attention to the strategic competence needs, or deficiencies, of center English speakers communicating with noncenter-English-speaking interlocutors. In an interesting turning of the tables, global English is now returning to the center morphed into new glocalized forms spoken by those in positions of power. At a Japanese-owned auto plant in the Midwestern United States, for example, on-site ESP classes have been offered for the English-speaking Japanese managers, but, to my knowledge, no one has demanded classes on communication strategies useful for American workers conversing with Japanese English-speaking managers. As Seidlhofer (2001) has trenchantly remarked, “uncoupling” English from its native speakers “holds the exciting, if uncomfortable, prospect of bringing up for reappraisal just about *every* issue and tenet in language teaching which the profession has been traditionally concerned with” (p. 152). Accustomed as they are to addressing newly identified learner needs and their own needs in new pedagogical contexts, ESP professionals should be able to face the prospect of reappraising the role of English language teaching in a rapidly glocalizing world with a ready array of professional resources.

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## THE AUTHOR

Diane Belcher is associate professor and director of graduate studies in the Department of Applied Linguistics/ESL at Georgia State University. She currently co-edits the journal *English for Specific Purposes* and a teacher reference series titled Michigan Series on Teaching Multilingual Writers. She has also guest-edited several issues of the *Journal of Second Language Writing*.

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# *Current Perspectives on Teaching World Englishes and English as a Lingua Franca*

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JENNIFER JENKINS

*King's College*

*London, England*

The purpose of this article is to explore recent research into World Englishes (henceforth WEs) and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF),<sup>1</sup> focusing on its implications for TESOL, and the extent to which it is being taken into account by English language teachers, linguists, and second language acquisition researchers. After a brief introduction comparing the current situation with that of 15 years ago, I look more closely at definitions of WEs and ELF. Then follows an overview of relevant developments in WEs and ELF research during the past 15 years, along with a more detailed discussion of some key research projects and any controversies they have aroused. I then address the implications of WEs/ELF research for TESOL vis-à-vis English language standards and standard English, and the longstanding native versus nonnative teacher debate. Finally, I assess the consensus on WEs and ELF that is emerging both among researchers and between researchers and language teaching professionals. The article concludes by raising a number of questions that remain to be investigated in future research.

As I was about to deliver a paper at a British university a few months ago, the conference organiser hesitated midway through introducing me, pointed to the phrase *World Englishes* on the biographical information I had provided, and asked whether the plural form was a mistake. I mention this incident purely to highlight how unusual it has become in recent years for those working in the TESOL and applied linguistics profession anywhere in the world to query the *-es* and, by the same token, how far knowledge about the spread of English has advanced among the profession. Back in 1991, when *TESOL Quarterly*

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<sup>1</sup> Put simply, *WEs* is used in this article to refer to the indigenized varieties of English in their local contexts of use. *ELF* refers to English when it is used as a contact language across lingua-cultures whose members are in the main so-called nonnative speakers. Further elaboration on these terms is provided in the next section.

had its last anniversary, by contrast, WEs as a topic was notable for its absence in the 25th anniversary issues. Where it had any presence at all, this was either by implication or as a peripheral issue in articles devoted to other subjects. The only article that prioritised WEs to any noticeable degree in 1991 was written by Douglas Brown, part of which explored a number of sociopolitical issues relating to the spread of English. Even there, however, WEs was not mentioned by name, but was discussed under the somewhat ambiguous rubric of *English as an international language* (I will discuss this term later).

By coincidence, 1991 was also the year in which Braj Kachru responded to Randolph Quirk in a cross-Atlantic disagreement that subsequently became known as the *English Today* debate (see Seidlhofer, 2003, which presents a number of major controversies between prominent scholars in the field of applied linguistics). Their opposing positions were labelled by the two protagonists themselves as *liberation linguistics* (Quirk, 1990, referring to Kachru's position) and *deficit linguistics* (Kachru, 1991, referring to Quirk's position). We will return to this issue later in the discussion of English language standards. For now, suffice it to say that the controversy attracted the attention of a wider audience of TESOL professionals not traditionally interested in WEs and was no doubt in part responsible for their growing awareness of the subject. This awareness has, in turn, been reflected in journals such as *TESOL Quarterly*, which, in the period since 1991, have published an increasing number of articles whose authors consider the teaching and learning of English in relation to the realities of the language's current spread and use. Equally significant is the fact that whereas in 1991 WEs and ELF were neglected in the *TESOL Quarterly* anniversary issues, they have been assigned a dedicated slot in this 40th anniversary issue. Also worth mentioning in this regard is a recent issue of *TESOL Quarterly* edited by John Levis (2005), in which pronunciation is approached from a variety of WEs and ELF perspectives rather than, as is more often the case, as an isolated feature of second language (L2) English acquisition whose only desirable endpoint is a so-called native-like accent.

On the other hand, as will become clear, much work remains to be done, even at the level of theorising, let alone in practice. Articles oriented to WEs still tend to be the exception rather than the rule in *TESOL Quarterly*, while nothing at all was published on ELF until 2003, and then only in the Brief Reports and Summaries section (a short piece by Mauranen discussing her corpus of ELF in academic settings). And the same is true of comparable TESOL and applied linguistics journals published in the United States, the United Kingdom, and elsewhere. This is bizarre considering the fact that—as countless scholars have pointed out—speakers of WEs and ELF vastly outnumber those of

English as a native language (ENL) and even those of English as a second (immigrant) language (ESL)<sup>2</sup> and English as a foreign language (EFL).<sup>3</sup>

## WES, ELF, AND WORLD STANDARD ENGLISH

As Bolton (2004, p. 367) points out, there are three possible interpretations of the expression *World Englishes*. Firstly, it serves as an “umbrella label” covering all varieties of English worldwide and the different approaches used to describe and analyse them. Secondly, it is used in a narrower sense to refer to the so-called new Englishes in Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean (Kachru’s *outer circle*).<sup>4</sup> In this article, I am using the term in this narrower sense. Thirdly, it is used to represent the pluricentric approach to the study of English associated with Kachru and his colleagues, and often referred to as the *Kachruvian* approach, although there is considerable overlap between this and the second interpretation of the term. The first use is also sometimes represented by other terms, including *World English* (i.e., in the singular), *international English(es)*, and *global English(es)*, while the second is in fact more commonly represented by the terms *nativised*, *indigenised*, *institutionalised*, and *new Englishes* or *English as a second language*. And still other terms are currently in circulation (see Erling, 2005; McArthur, 2002, 2004). Despite the range of interpretations of the term *World Englishes* and its alternatives, however, the links between them are so strong, and the field now so well established, that there seems to be little confusion over the intended reference.

The same cannot be said, by contrast, for ELF, despite Larry Smith’s visionary work on English as an international language dating way back to the 1970s and 1980s (see, e.g., Smith, 1976, 1983). One complication

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<sup>2</sup> This use of *ESL* should not be confused with another frequent use of the term, that is, to describe the English use of speakers for whom it is an indigenized language in countries such as India, Nigeria, and Singapore.

<sup>3</sup> As was pointed out by an anonymous reviewer, there is considerable overlap between ELF users and EFL learners, partly because many of those who start out thinking they are learning English as a foreign language end up using it as a *lingua franca*.

<sup>4</sup> For ease of reference, I am using Kachru’s well-known three concentric circle model of the spread of English (see, e.g., Kachru, 1985, 1988, 1992). Although this model is still used regularly by many WEs and ELF scholars (myself often included) as the standard framework, a number of scholars have suggested that it requires some updating as a result of changed circumstances since the 1980s. Comments have been made and/or alternatives suggested by, among others, Crystal (2003), Graddol (1997), Kandiah (1998), Modiano (1999a, 1999b), Seidlhofer (2002), Toolan (1997), Tripathi (1998), and Yano (2001). Kachru (2005) has responded at length to some of these comments and suggestions (as outlined in Jenkins, 2003), describing them as “misrepresentations of the model’s characteristics, interpretations and implications” (Kachru, p. 220).

for ELF is the fact that *international English* is sometimes used as shorthand for *English as an international language*, or *EIL*, itself an alternative term for ELF. Used in this way, it can be misleading because, as Seidlhofer (2004) points out, “it suggests that there is one clearly distinguishable, codified, and unitary variety called International English, which is certainly not the case” (p. 211). Thus, in one sense (Bolton’s second), *international English* is used to refer to the local Englishes of those non–mother tongue countries where it has an intranational institutionalised role, although some researchers (e.g., Görlach, 1990; Trudgill & Hannah, 2002) also include the mother tongue English countries (Kachru’s *inner circle*) in their definitions. On the other hand, *international English* is also used in another sense (not discussed to by Bolton) to refer to the use of English as a means of international communication across national and linguistic boundaries (primarily, but not exclusively, across the countries of Kachru’s *expanding circle*). These two meanings, as Seidlhofer (2004) observes, are therefore in “complementary distribution” (p. 210). It is because of the potential for confusion of the word *international* that ELF researchers prefer the term *English as a lingua franca* to *English as an international language*, although to add to the confusion, both terms are currently in use.

A further problem relates to the so-called phenomenon of *World Standard (Spoken) English* (W(S)SE). This is a hypothetical, monolithic form of English that scholars such as Crystal (e.g., 2003), Görlach (e.g., 1990),<sup>5</sup> and McArthur (e.g., 1987, 1998) believe is developing of its own accord, although Crystal (2003) considers that “U.S. English does seem likely to be the most influential in its development” (p.188). This form recalls Quirk’s (1985) “single monochrome standard form” (p. 6; see also Quirk, 1995) based on the native speaker English that he advocates for nonnative speakers of English regardless of their communicative context. (I will return to this notion later.)

Unfortunately, some WEs scholars assume that ELF (EIL) refers to the same phenomenon as WS(S)E and then criticise ELF (EIL) for promoting a monocentric view of English based on American or British norms rather than a pluricentric view based on local norms. However, nothing could be further from the truth. Firstly, far from prioritising inner circle norms, ELF researchers specifically exclude mother tongue speakers from their data collection. Indeed, in its purest form, ELF is defined as a contact language used only among non–mother tongue speakers. For example, according to House (1999), “ELF interactions are defined as interactions between members of two or more different linguacultures in

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<sup>5</sup> Görlach refers to it as *International English*, thus contributing to the confusion over the term *English as an international language* pointed out by Seidlhofer.

English, *for none of whom English is the mother tongue*" (p. 74, italics added). The majority of ELF researchers nevertheless accept that speakers of English from both inner and outer circles also participate in intercultural communication (albeit as a small minority in the case of inner circle speakers), so do not define ELF communication this narrowly. In their search to discover the ways in which ELF interactions are *sui generis*, as House (1999, p.74) puts it, they nevertheless restrict data collection to interactions among non-mother tongue speakers. And if the point is reached when ELF forms can be codified, they believe that as far as ELF interactions are concerned, any participating mother tongue speakers will have to follow the agenda set by ELF speakers, rather than vice versa, as has been the case up to now. This is a very long way from Crystal's proposed WS(S)E, whose main influence will (he believes) be American English.

Secondly, it is not the case that ELF research, like WS(S)E, is proposing the concept of a monolithic English for the entire world. Although ELF researchers seek to identify frequently and systematically used forms that differ from inner circle forms without causing communication problems and override first language groupings, their purpose is not to describe and codify a single ELF variety. The existence of ELF is not intended to imply that learners should aim for an English that is identical in all respects. ELF researchers do not believe any such monolithic variety of English does or ever will exist. Rather, they believe that anyone participating in international communication needs to be familiar with, and have in their linguistic repertoire for use, as and when appropriate, certain forms (phonological, lexicogrammatical, etc.) that are widely used and widely intelligible across groups of English speakers from different first language backgrounds. This is why accommodation is so highly valued in ELF research. At the same time, ELF does not at all discourage speakers from learning and using their local variety in local communicative contexts, regardless of whether this is an inner, outer, or expanding circle English.

The tensions nevertheless remain, and some scholars of outer circle Englishes continue to contest the legitimacy of ELF, much as the legitimacy of outer circle Englishes was contested in the past (see Seidlhofer, in press-a, for possible reasons). Such scholars continue to describe the expanding circle Englishes indiscriminately as EFL varieties, in other words, English learned as a foreign language for use in communication with native speakers. For example, Bolton (2004), in his survey of the world's Englishes, outlines Kachru's three circle model, which characterises expanding circle varieties as "norm-dependent" (p. 376, i.e., dependent on British or American norms), without further comment and does not mention ELF (or EIL) at all. Thus, he ignores the fact that the three circle model "is not designed to deal with the

characteristic functioning of the language in the Expanding Circle, as a *lingua franca*” (Seidlhofer, 2002, p. 202). One frequent and misplaced criticism of ELF made by WEs scholars is that it supposedly ignores the pluricentric nature of English. For example, in the call for papers for their edited collection (Rubdi & Saraceni, in press), the editors claimed that

an alternative viewpoint to EIL is one which acknowledges the polymorphous nature of the English language worldwide, identifying different varieties under a World Englishes paradigm, [whose emphasis] is not on prescribing either a reduced or extended form of standard English, but on questioning the very concept of “standard,” and on advocating a pluricentric model rather than a monolithic one.<sup>6</sup>

Kachru (1996a, 2005) in fact argues against the entire notion of ELF on the basis that the term is not being used in its original sense, and that it is “loaded” (2005, p. 224), although he does not explain how.

Despite the controversy surrounding ELF research, the phenomenon seems slowly to be gaining recognition in East Asia, Europe, and to a lesser extent, Latin America. (Later in this article, I discuss controversies emanating from inner and expanding circle sources.) It is also beginning to gain the approval of sociolinguists in the way that the outer circle Englishes have already done. Whether in another 15 years, it will have made progress comparable to that made by the indigenized Englishes over the past 15, and whether either ELF or WEs will have made greater inroads into TESOL practice, remains to be seen.

## **OVERVIEW OF RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN WEs AND ELF RESEARCH**

Regardless of the relatively limited uptake of WEs and ELF research findings by TESOL practitioners and even fewer mainstream second language acquisition (SLA) researchers, productivity with potential relevance for SLA has been growing apace. As Y. Kachru<sup>7</sup> (2005) points out, “researchers . . . are interested in all aspects of the emergence, grammars, sociolinguistics, ideological issues, creative literatures, and teaching and learning” (p. 157). WEs has been concerned with these issues for around three decades. However, during the period in question, research activity has increased substantially. Y. Kachru (2005, pp. 157–159) neatly categorises WEs research interests as follows: the historical

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<sup>6</sup> Seidlhofer (in press-a) is responding directly to this accusation against ELF/EIL.

<sup>7</sup> Unless Y. Kachru is specified, references to Kachru are to B. B. Kachru.

background to the spread of English; the linguistic processes responsible for features among varieties; the sociocultural contexts of English use; intelligibility both across varieties and within indigenized varieties in their local settings, together with the role of code-mixing and code-switching; the impact of English on local languages, or *Englishization* and, conversely, the impact of local languages on English, or *nativization*; bilingualism and multilingualism; literary creativity in institutionalised settings; the functional allocation of varieties within English-using communities; the communicative needs of users which underlie observed linguistic differences; and, most relevant to the context of this article, the teaching and learning of English in the outer and expanding circles. In each of these categories, there is a growing body of publications, some of which will be singled out in the following discussion.

Starting with corpus-based research, most corpora to be collected have tended to focus on British and American Englishes. However, this 15-year period is noteworthy for the small but growing availability of corpora that include outer circle Englishes, with expanding circle corpora in the pipeline. For example, the International Corpus of English (ICE) project draws on 18 countries from both inner and outer circles (cf. Greenbaum & Nelson, 1996). One of the few corpus projects drawing exclusively on the expanding circle, Vienna Oxford International Corpus of English (VOICE), will be discussed at greater length later.

This period has also seen an increase in dictionaries and grammars of different Englishes such as *The Macquarie Dictionary* (1997), which includes words from a range of Southeast Asian Englishes. Other such descriptions are included in the large number of book-length treatments of WEs that add to the existing body of scholarly books in the field, such as Kachru's earlier volumes (e.g., 1982, 1986), and Platt, Weber, and Ho (1984). Like these older works, many of the recent books deal with Englishes in the Asian context. For example, the Hong Kong University Press has published a series including Pennington (1998) and Bolton (2002) on Hong Kong English; Adamson (2004) on China English; Stanlaw (2004) on Japanese English; and Kachru (2005) on "the Asianness in Asian Englishes" (p. xv).<sup>8</sup> In the same period, Kachru's groundbreaking 1982 volume was republished in a revised and updated edition (1992). Other important books on Asian Englishes published in this period include Pakir's (1992) collection of studies of Singapore English lexis, Brown, Deterding, and Ee Ling (2000), and Deterding, Brown, and Ee Ling (2005), both on the pronunciation of Singapore English, and Bolton (2003) on China English. Meanwhile, a number of edited

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<sup>8</sup> Although not a book-length treatment, Shim (1999) represents an important early stage in the description and codification of South Korean English.

collections (e.g., Ho & Ward, 2000; Kirkpatrick, 2002) cover a range of Asian Englishes along with implications for their teaching and learning.

European Englishes have lagged some way behind their Asian counterparts in terms of research. This lag has been caused at least in part, it seems, by an assumption that European Englishes (along with the other so-called foreign Englishes) are not legitimate varieties because they did not arise through colonisation and have not undergone a process of institutionalisation.<sup>9</sup> Regardless of their perspective on the legitimacy question, some researchers have recently been attempting to redress the balance. As a result, the teaching, learning, and use of English in Europe has been brought onto centre stage in a number of edited collections, such as Cenoz and Jessner (2000), Gnutzmann (1999), Gnutzmann and Intemann (2005), Lesznyák (2004), and Meierkord (1996). There are as yet no entire books covering English in Latin America. However, an issue of the journal *World Englishes* has been devoted to this neglected subject (Berns & Friedrich, 2003). Meanwhile Phillipson (2003) takes a more critical look at the current role of English in Europe and its potential to threaten the vitality of the smaller European languages.

Speakers of European Englishes are typically also speakers of ELF, to the extent that they learn and use English more for interlinguacultural communication than to communicate with speakers who share their first linguaculture (or, for that matter, with native English speakers). The same is true of many English speakers in other regions of the world, such as parts of East Asia (e.g., China, Japan, Korea, and Thailand) and throughout Latin America. Despite the fact that those who use English primarily as a lingua franca are thought to constitute the world's largest group of English speakers, research into ELF only began around 1990. As a result, ELF has so far been the exclusive focus of very few dedicated books (e.g., Jenkins, 2000, on pronunciation issues, and McKay, 2002, on pedagogical matters). However, two more books are in the pipeline (Jenkins, in press; Seidlhofer, in press b), and numerous articles have been written on the subject during the past decade. These include Lowenberg (2002), whose research focus had hitherto been the outer circle, but who demonstrates that the linguistic processes involved in ELF are, in essence, no different from those involved in language change in the inner and outer circles.

Since 1991, there has also been a dramatic increase in broader-based

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<sup>9</sup> The problem seems to afflict European and Latin American Englishes to a greater extent than noninstitutionalised Asian Englishes such as China English and Japanese English. The Asian Englishes technically fall into the same (noninstitutionalised) category as European and Latin American Englishes, yet this has not prevented book-length publications featuring them. On the other hand, the fact that they are the subjects of books does not necessarily mean that they are accepted as legitimate varieties of English.

publications dealing with the spread of English. Cheshire (1991), for example, presents a number of empirical studies of nativised and mother tongue Englishes. Trudgill and Hannah (2002) in their fourth, and most comprehensive, edition describe the features of a similar range of Englishes mainly, but not entirely, on the basis of their own observations. McArthur (2002) includes discussions of ELF and noninstitutionalised varieties such as Euro-English in his wide-ranging but less detailed (in terms of features) guide. A number of volumes dealing with WEs in the Kachruvian sense also cover a broad range of WEs (e.g., Smith & Forman, 1997; Thumboo, 2001), while other broadly based volumes focus on teaching-related issues (e.g., Candlin & Mercer, 2001; Kelly Hall & Eggington, 2000). Some publications take a more historical perspective. These include two popularising accounts, McCrum, O'Neill, and Cran (2002, originally 1986) and Crystal (2003, originally 1997), both of which have been criticised for their perceived triumphalism (see, e.g., Phillipson's 1999 critique of Crystal, 1997). More scholarly historical approaches include Crystal (2004), McArthur (1998), and Watts and Trudgill (2002). On the other hand, apart from a short historical introduction, Graddol (1997), looking forward rather than back, is currently working on a new publication that will revisit his 1997 book and suggest new ways of understanding the future role of English.

Others researching WEs during the past 15 years have adopted a more critical stance toward the spread of English. The genre could be said to date back to the publication of Bailey (1991), although as Bolton (2004) points out, "the discourse on world English(es) changed gear dramatically in 1992 with the publication of Phillipson's book *Linguistic Imperialism*" (p. 384). Pennycook (1994) had a similar impact, and these two authors together "have been influential in establishing the agenda for the critical discussion of world English(es)" (Bolton, p. 385), one which has recently begun to filter through to (some members of) the TESOL profession even in English mother-tongue countries. Other important publications in this vein have followed, including Parakrama (1995), Pennycook (1998), Canagarajah (1999), Holborow (1999), De Swaan (2001), Kubota (2002), Tollefson (2002), and Mair (2004). The critical linguists can be divided into *anti-imperialists* such as Phillipson, who would prefer English(es) not to be the most widely used world language, and those such as Canagarajah and Parakrama, whose concern, like Kachru's, is more with resisting the hegemony of native speaker standards and appropriating English for their own local use. Taking a very different approach, though one which shares some common ground with that of the latter group of critical linguists, is Brutt-Griffler (2002), who presents the spread of WEs as resulting from the agency of its non-mother tongue speakers rather than from their passivity and exploitation. This is a position that she shares with ELF researchers.

Demonstrating the view that WEs and ELF can no longer be considered optional extras, some editors are starting to include them as independent entries in their handbooks of applied linguistics, second language acquisition, and language teaching and learning. See, e.g., the entries by Bolton (2004), Gnutzmann (2004), Y. Kachru (2005), and the review article by McArthur (2001). The same perspective underpins the appearance of books on WEs and ELF designed for study in English linguistics and teacher training programmes at university level (e.g., Jenkins, 2003; Kirkpatrick, in press; Melchers & Shaw, 2003). During the past 15 years, too, three dedicated journals, *World Englishes*, *English World-Wide*, and *English Today*, have been supplemented by others such as *Asian Englishes* (published in Tokyo). Overall, then, it is evident that the WEs seeds sown by the Kachrus and others in the 1980s have blossomed and flourished during the past 15 years, and that ELF, too, has more recently become a vibrant area of study. The implications of this vast WEs and ELF activity for TESOL practice and SLA research are profound.

## **SOME KEY RESEARCH PROJECTS AND CONTROVERSIES**

As I pointed out in the previous section, WEs and ELF research during the past decade and a half has been prolific. This large body of work means that I will be able to single out only a very small proportion for more detailed discussion. Even selecting from those that have the most direct relevance to TESOL is no easy matter and (like all such selections) is bound in any case to be partial in reflecting my own personal preferences. Having said that, I believe that certain projects stand out in their significance for the teaching of English. In the case of WEs, these projects relate to challenges to interlanguage theory and to work exposing and resisting linguistic imperialism. In the case of ELF, the projects concern empirical descriptions of this emergent phenomenon currently being carried out in East Asia and Europe.<sup>10</sup> However, the division into WES and ELF relates more to the geographic orientation of the researchers than to the object of the research itself because the two areas overlap considerably and are mutually relevant. As almost always occurs when old paradigms are challenged and/or new approaches suggested, all these projects are proving controversial.

Starting with research of those working in the field of WEs, the first

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<sup>10</sup> This is not to minimise the importance of other work, particularly the linguistic and sociolinguistic profiles of Englishes in both outer and expanding circles that have, hitherto, been relatively unexplored. These include Bolton's (2002) and Joseph's (2004) work on Hong Kong English, Bolton's (2003) on China English, and Stanlaw's (2004) on Japanese English.

project to be considered is not strictly speaking research so much as scholarly debate. I refer here to the challenge which has been taking place since the early 1990s to the concept of interlanguage (IL), a challenge which I believe has as much relevance for ELF and expanding circle varieties of English as it does for the Englishes of the outer circle. According to IL theory (e.g., Selinker, 1972, 1992), a second language speaker's competence lies on an *interlanguage continuum* at some point between their first language (L1) and their second language (L2), in this case, English. Any differences between their output and standard British or American English are to be regarded as errors caused mainly by L1 *interference* (or, less pejoratively, *transfer*), while the point at which these so-called errors become fixed within the individual learner's repertoire is attributed to a phenomenon known as *fossilization*. Apparently not influenced by the findings of WEs scholars in the intervening period, Selinker reproduced his IL theory in expanded form in 1992. It seems to have been this recycling of the theory, and particularly his applying of fossilization to WEs contexts, that stimulated the renewed and strengthened challenge to the theory by a group of WEs scholars (e.g., Kachru, 1996b; Y. Kachru, 1993, 1994; Kachru & Nelson, 1996; S. N. Sridhar, 1994; Sridhar & Sridhar, 1994).

The main arguments presented against IL theory are that outer circle English speakers are not attempting to identify with inner circle speakers or to produce the norms of an exonormative variety of English grounded in an inner circle experience. Such norms, they contend, are irrelevant to the sociolinguistic reality in which members of the outer circle use English, and attempts to label the English of whole speech communities as deficient and fossilized are thus unjustifiable because these labels ignore the local Englishes' sociohistorical development and sociocultural context. In a nutshell, they are the result of a monolingual bias that is unable to comprehend the bilingual experience. Brutt-Griffler (2002) has recently added to the debate by arguing that a major problem with traditional SLA is its focus on individual acquisition and IL error, rather than acquisition by entire speech communities and new varieties. This critique is as relevant to ELF and the emerging Englishes of the expanding circle as it has always been for the outer circle varieties.

Other important challenges to the mainstream SLA perspective share common ground with the critique of interlanguage theory. For example, a number of scholars have recently investigated the role of identity in language learning: Norton (1997, 2000) and Block (2003) bring issues of power, ownership, and identity into the equation; Norton Pierce (1995; Norton, 2000) considers identity and investment in language learning; Kramsch and Lam (1999) examine issues of identity and voice; and Lin, Wang, Nobuhiko, and Mehdi (2002) investigate developing hybrid English speaker identities. Further challenges to SLA have come from

the sociocultural theorists such as Lantolf (2000), who consider such issues as the transformative agency of L2 learners; from Cook (1999, 2002b) and Firth and Wagner (1997), who critique the native speaker goal of traditional SLA and TESOL; from Dörnyei and Csizér (2002), who question the widely accepted meaning of *integrativeness* in the light of WEs; and from Mufwene (2001), who considers the roles of language contact and accommodation in a much more profound and insightful way than SLA researchers have ever done.

Despite the accumulating evidence against IL theory, the literature on teaching English still regularly contains advice for teachers in both outer and expanding circles on how to reduce IL errors and how to reverse fossilization, while the testing of English remains wholly predicated on the concept. There is still little if any awareness among TESOL practitioners and SLA researchers<sup>11</sup> that learners may be producing forms characteristic of their own variety of English, which reflect the sociolinguistic reality of their English use, whatever their circle, far better than either British or American norms are able to.

A second WEs project, this time empirical, concerns the controversial phenomenon known as *linguistic imperialism*. As mentioned earlier, Phillipson's (1992) book, *Linguistic Imperialism* (based on the analysis of documents and interviews with linguistic scholars) had a major impact both on subsequent WEs research and, at least in theory, on the TESOL profession. In fact the phrase *linguistic imperialism* is now almost a household word among teachers and applied linguists, regardless of their orientation to it. Taking up the theme of linguistic imperialism, and drawing on his ethnographic research, Canagarajah (1999) demonstrated—this time from an insider perspective—how linguistic imperialism can be challenged and resisted in practice and the language appropriated for local use. He carried out his research in an outer circle context (the Sri Lankan Tamil community), but as he points out, it is also relevant to a number of expanding circle countries, such as South Korea and Vietnam, who have “come under the neo-imperialist thrusts of English-speaking center communities” (p. 4). Indeed, as the use of English continues to expand globally, and its influence on non-mother tongue communities of either circle grows, Canagarajah's example of practical ways of appropriating English during the learning and teaching process could become increasingly relevant to the lives of English users of either circle.

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<sup>11</sup> A very small number of SLA publications are, nevertheless, beginning to mention the need to consider sociolinguistic influences. Mitchell and Myles (2004), for example, include a final chapter on sociolinguistic perspectives. Even here, however, their purpose is to explore the sociolinguistic factors involved in learners' achievement (or not) of the assumed target, that is, native-like English, rather than to consider other targets altogether.

However, the linguistic-imperialist view of the spread of English has not gone uncontested. Whereas Canagarajah and others take linguistic imperialism as a given and consider how to resist it, still others such as Bisong (1995), Brutt-Griffler (2002), and House (in press) do not believe it has (or had) a major role in the spread of English in the first place. Canagarajah's book has nevertheless received wide acclaim, perhaps in part because it is grounded in firsthand experience and because of its pro-active approach to the linguistic imperialism it identifies. On the other hand, although it has run to several reprints, Phillipson's book has received approbation and criticism in roughly equal measure, the latter perhaps provoked by its rhetorical style (see Berns, Barrett, Chan, Chikuma, Friedrich, Hadjidimos, et al., 1998).

Despite the widespread distribution of the research into linguistic imperialism, it has not so far led to noticeable changes in English teaching and teacher education policy. The best that can be said to date is that it has raised many teachers' and teacher educators' awareness of the extent to which the spread of English works in native speakers' interests and sometimes marginalises nonnative speakers. And on a small scale, it does seem that efforts are being made to reduce the "native-speakerist" element in some teaching materials (e.g., by the inclusion of more non-mother tongue speakers).

The final research projects relate to ELF. As mentioned earlier, a number of studies into ELF in different regions and in relation to different linguistic levels have been carried out. These studies include Deterding and Kirkpatrick (2005), on the pronunciation of East Asian ELF; House (1999), on the pragmatics of ELF; Jenkins (2000), on ELF phonology; James (2000), on ELF in the Alpine-Adriatic region; Kirkpatrick (2004), on East Asian ELF; and Mauranen (2003), on spoken academic ELF. Probably the largest, most advanced, and best known ELF research project to date is Seidlhofer's corpus, VOICE. Seidlhofer, in a groundbreaking paper (2001), pointed out the conceptual gap in relation to uses of English as a lingua franca in the expanding circle and argued forcefully for descriptions of ELF and, possibly, its eventual codification. VOICE is her means of putting this into practice.

Although the corpus aims to provide a basis for research into any aspect of ELF, Seidlhofer (2004) herself has focused so far on ELF lexicogrammar, presumably because of its importance to language pedagogy. Her objective is to find out which items are used systematically and frequently, but differently from native speaker use and without causing communication problems, by expert speakers of English from a wide range of L1s. The research so far has, she says,

brought to light certain regularities that at least point to some hypotheses. . . .  
In particular, typical "errors" that most English teachers would consider in

urgent need of correction and remediation, and that consequently often get allotted a great deal of time and effort in English lessons, appear to be generally unproblematic and no obstacle to communicative success. (p. 220)

The following are some of the potential salient features of ELF lexicogrammar that Seidlhofer (2004, p. 220) has identified in VOICE:

- non-use of the third person present tense-s (“She look very sad”)
- interchangeable use of the relative pronouns *who* and *which* (“a book who,” “a person which”)
- omission of the definite and indefinite articles where they are obligatory in native speaker English and insertion where they do not occur in native speaker English
- use of an all-purpose question tag such as *isn't it?* or *no?* instead of *shouldn't they?* (“They should arrive soon, isn't it?”)
- increasing of redundancy by adding prepositions (“We have to study about . . .” and “can we discuss about . . . ?”), or by increasing explicitness (“black colour” vs. “black” and “How long time?” vs. “How long?”)
- heavy reliance on certain verbs of high semantic generality, such as *do, have, make, put, take*
- pluralisation of nouns which are considered uncountable in native speaker English (“informations,” “staffs,” “advices”)
- use of that-clauses instead of infinitive constructions (“I want that we discuss about my dissertation”)

On the other hand, one of the main causes of communication breakdown that Seidlhofer's research has identified, is *unilateral idiomaticity* (Seidlhofer, 2004, p. 220). This occurs when one speaker uses a native speaker idiomatic expression such as an idiom, phrasal verb, or metaphor, that the interlocutor does not know.

Obviously the implications of ELF research for TESOL are far reaching. At the time of writing, however, ELF is proving highly controversial, among those who share Quirk's deficit linguistics frame of mind<sup>12</sup> as well as among those WE scholars who mistake ELF for a version of World Standard English. So although ELF reflects the sociolinguistic reality of the largest group of English users, that is, the majority of those in the expanding circle, it may prove difficult to put it into practice.

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<sup>12</sup> Many of the aspects of ELF that are found controversial, however, are based on misconceptions of the nature of ELF (see Seidlhofer, in press a; in press b).

## IMPLICATIONS FOR TESOL

From what has been said so far, it will be evident that the research into WEs and ELF has immense implications for TESOL practice in all three circles and above all in terms of the kind of language we teach. The debate between the *monocentrists* and *pluricentrists*, or what Bolton (2004) calls the “centrifugal” and “centripetal” view of English (p. 368), over the (in)appropriateness of native-speaker standard English began before the period in question, but it accelerated with the *English Today* debate and Kachru’s (1992) call for a “paradigm shift” (p. 362; repeated in Kachru, 1996b; see also Kachru & Nelson, 1996). The discussion then moved on apace with Widdowson’s (1994) widely quoted commentary on the *ownership of English*, which brought the issues home even more starkly to native-speaking teachers in the United States and United Kingdom.

One of the most recent critiques of the weaknesses in the monocentrist centrifugal perspective on English is that of Seidlhofer (2005), in which she revisits Quirk’s (1985, 1990) position on standard English and demonstrates how prevalent it still is today. She points out in particular that standard English is extremely difficult to define,<sup>13</sup> and that there is therefore considerable confusion and disagreement about what standard English actually is. She goes on to argue that “in terms of numbers of speakers and domains of use, an insistence on StE [standard English] as the only option for all purposes is . . . difficult to justify” (p. 159), a perspective which she characterises as “Anglo-Saxon attitudes” (p. 167). Seidlhofer makes a strong case for the rights of expanding as well as outer circle speakers to develop their own norms rather than continuing to defer to those of the so-called educated native speaker. An important development in this respect is recent work demonstrating how teachers and students accommodate other varieties of English into their multilingual classrooms (see, e.g., Heller, 1999; Heller & Martin-Jones, 2001).

Despite the strength of the counter arguments, the belief in native speaker ownership persists among both native and nonnative speakers—teachers, teacher educators and linguists alike, although it is often expressed with more subtlety than it was in the past. Even the sociolinguist Trudgill (in press), an unlikely supporter of either native speaker ownership or exonormative standards, contends that “even if native speakers do not ‘own’ English, there is an important sense in which it stems from them, especially historically, and *resides in them*” (italics added). If a sociolinguist can retain the attachment to the native speaker standard implied in Trudgill’s comment, then it is not surprising that a

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<sup>13</sup> In fact the closest I can find to a definition is that of Honey (1997), who argues that standard English is the variety used by educated native speakers and that the way to identify an educated native speaker is from their use of standard English: a circular argument indeed.

similar position is still held by the majority of English teachers, teacher educators, and SLA researchers, not to mention the ELT examination boards and publishing industry. It is telling that Widdowson (2003, 2004) needed to return to the ownership and standard English issue 10 years later in two important books on English language teaching.

Seidlhofer (2005) argues that much of the problem results from a mismatch between the meta level, where WEs and ELF scholars are asserting the need for pluricentricism, and “grassroots practice,” where there is still “(unquestioning) submission to native-speaker norms” (p. 170). However, the situation seems to me to be even more serious, especially for ELF because many academics (e.g. SLA researchers, applied linguists and the like) are conducting a counter discourse at the meta level. The indications are that much more progress, particularly in empirical and descriptive work, will have to be made before the implications of WES and ELF research are widely acknowledged even in theory, but especially at the practical level, in terms of the relevance of varieties other than standard American or British English.

Another critical debate of this period that remains stuck at the meta level concerns the relative merits of native and nonnative teachers of English, itself a product of the various discourses on the concept of the *native speaker*. See, for example, Leung, Harris, and Rampton (1997) and Rampton, (1990, 1995), who argue against the native-nonnative distinction as contrasted with, for example, Davies (2002) and Mukherjee (2005), who are broadly in favour of the distinction.

With standard American or British English being the only varieties considered worth learning in many parts of the world, then equally, those considered best-placed to teach English in those places are its native speakers. It is this perspective which informs the so-called English villages recently established in Japan and Korea, where learners are immersed in native speaker English for weeks at a time. It also underlies schemes to bring native speaker teachers to parts of East Asia, for example, the NET scheme (Hong Kong), the JET scheme (Japan), and similar schemes being devised for Korea and Thailand. Such teachers may have little or no training other than a short preservice course, and few have experience of teacher education. As a result, their knowledge of the language and their teaching skills can compare badly with those gained in lengthy university degrees by nonnative teachers. But again, much of the discussion takes place at the meta level (see, e.g., Braine, 1999; Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 2001; Cook, 2002a; Seidlhofer, 1999), while employers continue to argue that they are obliged to provide the (native speaker) teachers that learners (and in many cases, their parents) prefer.

Some progress has nevertheless been made since 1991, such as the establishing of the Nonnative English Speakers in TESOL Caucus. At the

same time, there has been more research into the concerns of nonnative teachers. See, for example, Kamhi-Stein's (1999) discussion of ways in which nonnative teacher educators can become "agents of curriculum change" (p. 157), and Nemtchinova's (2005) survey of the largely positive evaluation by learners and host teachers of the strengths of nonnative teachers. The extent to which such initiatives manage to alter attitudes of nonnative and native speakers alike toward nonnative teachers and their varieties of English nevertheless remains to be seen.

Finally, the principal methodology of Western-led TESOL for the past 30 years, so-called communicative language teaching, with its heavy bias toward Western communicative styles and mores, has received its most serious challenge to date from Leung (2005; see also Luk, 2005). Again, it remains to be seen whether this challenge will translate into what Holliday (1994) describes as *appropriate methodology* for learners in different (and very often, non-Western) contexts of language learning and use.

## **EMERGING CONSENSUS AND REMAINING ISSUES AND QUESTIONS**

Despite the somewhat pessimistic impression I may have given, the past 15 years has undoubtedly seen some progress in terms of an emerging consensus both among WEs and ELF researchers, and (to a more limited extent) in responses from teachers, applied linguists, SLA scholars, and others to their research. In particular, there is a growing consensus among researchers on the importance of language awareness for teachers and teacher trainers and educators in all three circles (see, e.g., Bolton, 2004; Canagarajah, 2005b; Seidlhofer, 2004). Teachers and their learners, it is widely agreed, need to learn not (a variety of) English, but about Englishes, their similarities and differences, issues involved in intelligibility, the strong link between language and identity, and so on.

Awareness raising fits well with another area of broad agreement among WEs and ELF researchers: the need for a pluricentric rather than monocentric approach to the teaching and use of English. This approach, it is believed, would enable each learner's and speaker's English to reflect his or her own sociolinguistic reality, rather than that of a usually distant native speaker.<sup>14</sup> To this end, it is gratifying to observe that the study of the subject *World Englishes* is growing around the world, on

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<sup>14</sup> The same applies to L2 speakers of English who happen to be living in inner circle environments. The critical question to ask is, with whom do L2 speakers of English (want to) interact? This is a crucial question for TESOL in countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom, but one that is rarely asked.

both undergraduate and masters university programmes (less so on teacher training programmes), although the paradigm shift has not yet started to filter through into language teaching itself, where much more needs to be done to raise learners' awareness of the diversity of English. For less proficient learners this awareness raising could involve exposure to a range of WEs and ELF varieties, while for more proficient learners, it could include discussion of the reasons for the spread of English, the development of diverse standards, the relationship between language and identity, and the like. This exposure is likely to encourage learners' confidence in their own English varieties, and in turn reduce the linguistic capital that many learners still believe native-like English to possess. However, as Holliday (2005) demonstrates, such a shift in attitudes and practices will not be implemented without a struggle.

Awareness raising and pluricentricity both link to another area of growing consensus among researchers: the importance of accommodation skills. Instead of speaking a monolithic variety of English, it is considered more important for speakers of WEs and ELF to be able to adjust their speech in order to be intelligible to interlocutors from a wide range of L1 backgrounds, most of whom are not inner circle native speakers. See, for example, Jenkins's (2000) empirical demonstration of the role of accommodation in intercultural communication. Again, this consensus remains largely in the realm of theory and is yet to be considered seriously by the majority of practitioners.

Many issues and questions nevertheless remain for the future, but I have space to mention only a few. One of the most pressing problems will be to find a way of incorporating a WES-ELF perspective into testing (Canagarajah, 2005a). Solving this problem will involve devising the means to distinguish between learner error and local variety, thus enabling testers to recognise systematic forms from outer and expanding circle Englishes as correct where they happen to differ from inner circle forms. It will also involve finding ways of identifying accommodation, so that candidates are able to adjust their English for the purposes of showing solidarity with, or promoting intelligibility for, an interlocutor, without the risk of being penalised because their resulting speech does not defer to native speaker norms. Both pluricentrism and accommodation in the teaching and testing of English are logical developments of WES and ELF research and far more relevant to the majority of learners than the acquisition of native-like competence. For, as Canagarajah (2005b) points out, "new competencies [are] required for communication and literacy in today's world," so that a single dialect of English "fails to equip our students for real-world needs" (p. xxv).<sup>15</sup> But until the

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<sup>15</sup> Ironically, a number of publications for learners (e.g., dictionaries) that are based on inner circle corpora still persist in describing their contents as real English. In fact, nothing

examination boards acknowledge the importance of these new competencies, teachers and curriculum planners will not do so either, for fear of jeopardising their students' examination prospects. In this respect, the examination boards are unlikely to be spurred into action by much of what is written on testing, which tends to fall back on acceptance of a native-speaker standard, despite the authors' expressions of sympathy with a WEs perspective. Davies, Hamp-Lyons, and Kemp (2003) are a case in point (and see Tickoo's 2004 response).

Related to the testing issue is the need to abandon the native speaker as the yardstick and to establish empirically some other means of defining an *expert* (and *less expert*) speaker of English, regardless of whether they happen to be a native or nonnative speaker. By the same token, inner circle ELT and applied linguistics publishers will need to find ways of promoting a more WES-ELF perspective in their teaching materials and books for teachers (see Matsuda, 2003). In a similar vein, editors of mainstream applied linguistics journals need to acknowledge the lack of empirical evidence showing the relevance of native speaker norms for international intelligibility and learn to recognise written norms that do not conform to those of an inner circle variety (see Ammon, 2000; Hu, 2004). In all these cases, further research into WES and ELF will provide invaluable support to those who are being asked to make such major shifts in perspective. Finally, to enable WES and ELF research to progress optimally over the next 15 years, we need to find ways of bringing WES and ELF scholars together in recognition of their shared interests, whatever their circle or research focus.

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## THE AUTHOR

Jennifer Jenkins is a senior lecturer in applied linguistics at King's College London, England, where she teaches World Englishes, phonology and phonetics, and sociolinguistics, and supervises doctoral research in World Englishes. She has been researching English as a lingua franca for more than 15 years and is currently writing her third book on the subject.

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could be further from the truth as far as the majority of learners' future communication needs are concerned.

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# *Perspectives on Technology in Learning and Teaching Languages*

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**RICHARD KERN**

*University of California  
Berkeley, California, United States*

Rapid evolution of communication technologies has changed language pedagogy and language use, enabling new forms of discourse, new forms of authorship, and new ways to create and participate in communities. The first section of this article identifies and discusses four key issues arising from the recent technology-related literature (the status of CALL, its theoretical grounding, its cultural embeddedness, and its effectiveness). The second section synthesizes research findings from three current areas of research: computer-mediated communication, electronic literacies, and telecollaboration. The third section develops implications for teaching and research, highlighting the importance of the teacher, new understandings of language and communication, critical awareness of the relationships among technology, language, culture, and society, and new trends in research methods.

**W**e live, work, learn, and play in a rapidly changing communication landscape. Cell phones transmit text messages and photos as well as voice, small digital cameras take sound videos as well as stills, handheld “personal digital assistants” allow us to connect to the Internet from any location served by a wireless network, webcams provide visual contact between Internet interlocutors. Images, animation, color, and visual design interact with language in Web-based communication. E-mail, instant messaging, chat rooms, Usenet groups, MOOs, blogs, and wikis enable new forms of discourse; new forms of authorship; new forms of identity construction; new ways to form, choose, and maintain learning communities and affinity groups that cross national boundaries. How do these changes affect the ways we learn, use, and teach languages?

This article explores some of the issues involved in addressing that question, identifying what we have learned so far and what we have yet to understand. Although space does not permit an exhaustive research review (for recent reviews, see Chapelle, 2003; Kern, Ware, & Warschauer, 2004; Salaberry, 2001; Thorne & Payne, 2005; Warschauer & Kern, 2000;

Zhao, 2003), I focus on key issues arising from the recent technology-related literature (mostly from the past 5 years). The first section outlines four controversies related to information and communication technologies: the status of CALL, theoretical grounding for technology-based teaching and research, notions of effectiveness, and the cultural neutrality of computer environments. The second section presents research findings from three current areas of research: computer-mediated communication, electronic literacies, and telecollaboration. I conclude by considering implications for teaching and future research.

First, however, a note on what I mean by *technology*. A truly comprehensive overview of technology and language learning would have to include the technologies of writing, sound recording, film, and video. However, because these technologies have become somewhat invisible or “normalized” (Bax, 2003, p. 23), I will restrict my discussion to digital technology. In this article, that means principally computers, although the rapid functional convergence of computers, televisions, telephones, and other telecommunications devices leads to the first controversy: how to label this area of research.

## CONTROVERSIES

### Should CALL Still Be Called CALL?

The following two definitions—the first from 1997 and the second from 2005—indicate important changes in perspective:

*Computer-assisted language learning (CALL)* may be defined as “the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning.” (Levy, 1997, p. 1)

CALL means learners learning language in any context with, through, and around computer technologies. (Egbert, 2005, p. 4)

Whereas the first definition prioritizes “applications of the computer” in its information structure, the second definition not only prioritizes “learners learning language” but also broadens the potential types of relationships between computer technologies and language learning.

Given the high level of integration of digital technology in people’s everyday lives in many (but not all) parts of the world, Warschauer (1999a) has argued that the term *computer-assisted language learning* has outgrown its usefulness as a construct for teaching and research. The problem, Warschauer states, is that a CALL framework posits the computer as an “outside instrument rather than as part of the ecology of

language use” (n.p.). While this may have been fine in the early days of CALL when computers were used to perform structural drills, it is no longer appropriate when online communication has become a normal part of daily life. For Warschauer, the use of computers should not be framed as a special case but rather as an integral aspect of language learning and language use:

The truly powerful technologies are so integrated as to be invisible. We have no “BALL” (book-assisted language learning), no “PALL” (pen-assisted language learning), and no “LALL” (library-assisted language learning). When we have no “CALL,” computers will have taken their place as a natural and powerful part of the language learning process. (Warschauer, 1999a, n.p.)

Bax (2003) agrees, but views “normalisation” (p. 23) as an end goal of CALL rather than a current reality, given the still incomplete integration of computer technology and education. For Bax, the success of CALL integration will be marked by the disappearance of the term *CALL*.

Another dimension of the question has to do with differentiating computers from other tools. It is revealing to note that in the introduction to *CALL Research Perspectives* (Egbert & Petrie, 2005), Egbert does not explicitly mention computers in her “CALL equation”:

<b>learners</b>	(with their thoughts, behaviors, motivations, experiences, and understandings)
+ <b>language</b>	(including its status and structure)
+ <b>context</b>	(physical and temporal environment and the social, economic, cultural, and linguistic influences)
+ <b>one or more tools</b>	(and the affordances the tool provides)
+ <b>tasks/activities</b>	(content, structure, and organization)
+ / – <b>peers and teachers</b>	(or others who can affect the process)
<hr/>	
= CALL	(Egbert, 2005, p. 5)

Egbert generalizes the computer to “tool” status. The epistemological question for our profession, then, is whether computers can be broadly treated as tools, and if so, whether we need to have a special category for computer-assisted language learning.

A third dimension of the question has to do with the evolution of technology itself. As suggested in the introduction, the rapid convergence of functionality across digital devices, and our growing reliance on such devices for communication, means we may soon need to refer broadly to information and communication technologies rather than specifically to computers in our research.

## Which Theories?

Another controversy related to technology and language learning research has to do with the appropriate theoretical grounding for the field. Chapelle, in her groundbreaking (1997) article titled “CALL in the Year 2000: Still in Search of Research Paradigms?,” argues that although CALL research understandably draws on theories from diverse disciplines, general theories from fields like psychology, computational linguistics, and educational technology will lack the specificity needed to design and improve CALL pedagogy. What we need, she argues, is to ground CALL in instructed SLA theories. Chapelle recommends the interactionist approach to SLA (see Pica, 1994) as a particularly productive basis for generating hypotheses, and discourse analysis as a primary research method to explore what she considers two essential questions: “What kind of language does the learner engage in during a CALL activity?” and “How good is the language experience in CALL for L2 learning?” (p. 22). Chapelle acknowledges that these are not the only questions that one could ask about CALL, but she argues that real progress in CALL depends on alignment with the questions and methods of instructed SLA researchers (p. 28).

Writing 8 years later, Chapelle (2005) cites a substantial body of CALL research in the interactionist tradition and concludes that “the use of discourse and interactionist perspectives for the study of CALL has helped to place CALL research on more solid grounding relative to other areas of applied linguistics” (p. 63).

Though this is certainly true, Egbert and Petrie (2005), the editors of Chapelle’s (2005) chapter, argue for the current need to re-enlarge the theoretical palette. Claiming that books currently used in CALL teacher education courses “generally address only one theoretical foundation (e.g., interactionist) or one research methodology (e.g., discourse analysis)” (p. ix), their goal is to present a variety of ways to think about and conduct research on computers and language learning. Egbert (2005) explains that multiple theoretical perspectives are particularly important in times of rapid change (a) as social and cultural contexts of technology use expand; (b) as technologies diversify, both in terms of devices and in terms of modes of expression and interaction; and (c) as the goals, content, and structure of CALL pedagogy evolve.

For example, one significant limitation of interactionist SLA theory is that it deals exclusively with linguistic dimensions and lacks provision for dealing with cultural dimensions of language learning. Because cross-cultural exploration is one of the important goals of many project-based applications of CALL (e.g., Brander, 2005; Furstenberg, 2003; Gray & Stockwell, 1998; Kern, 1996; Osuna, 2000), alternative theoretical frameworks are needed.

Sociocultural theory, like interactionist SLA, emphasizes the importance of learner interaction, but it is interested less in negotiation-evoked adjustments in input than in the social and cultural situatedness of learner activity, learners' agency in co-constructing meanings (as well as their own roles), and the importance of mediation by tools and signs. O'Rourke (2005) points out that features of computer-mediated environments are not fixed "givens" but are often negotiated, sometimes subverted, by their users (p. 434), and from this perspective many conventional interactionist CALL studies appear overly reductionist (p. 435). Sociocultural theory has grounded a considerable number of computer-mediated communication studies (e.g., Belz, 2002; Darhower, 2002; Osuna, 2000; Thorne, 2003; Warschauer, 1999b, 2005) and some researchers (e.g., O'Rourke, 2005) have profitably added a sociocultural dimension to interactionist approaches. In a somewhat similar vein, Felix (2005) argues for social constructivist paradigms that incorporate cognitive constructivist elements.

Systemic-functional linguistics offers another framework for CALL research, especially in studies involving advanced level learners (Mohan & Luo, 2005). Analysis of field, tenor, and mode is particularly important in understanding registers and genres for different purposes across diverse computer-mediated communication (CMC) environments. Mohan and Luo argue that the rapidly changing social dynamics and conventions of CMC are much better addressed by a systemic-functional approach than by an SLA framework (p. 95).

Anthropology, and particularly ethnographic research methodology, is becoming an especially relevant discipline as more and more technology-mediated language learning and language use takes place (a) outside of educational institutions and even outside of educational frameworks, and (b) across diverse social, cultural, socioeconomic, and political contexts. Key examples are Warschauer's (1999b) research in Hawaii and in Egypt (Warschauer, Said, & Zohry, 2002), Miller and Slater's (2000) work in Trinidad, and Lam's (2000, 2003, 2004) research in Chinese-American adolescent communities.

Since multimedia authoring arrived on the scene, semiotic theories (e.g., Halliday, 1978; Kress, 2003; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; Peirce, 1966) have been increasingly relied on to deal with relationships among visual, audio, and textual modes of signification (see the section in this article on electronic literacies).

In considering this issue, it is important to bear in mind that SLA is itself informed by a rich variety of theoretical frameworks and has consistently resisted a single overarching theory (Kramsch, 2000). Maintaining theoretical grounding in SLA is imperative, but this grounding need not mean privileging any single paradigm of SLA. Given the complexity and diversity of goals, contexts, and problems in CALL

research, a one size fits all approach will not work. Rather, on the micro level of the individual study researchers should rigorously work within the SLA paradigm that most adequately suits their particular research questions, and on the macro level they should look to the synergy of multiple perspectives and paradigms to best inform their understanding and future research.

## Questions of Effectiveness

Do computers improve language learning? This question has traditionally driven CALL research. It is considered an important question because it is tied to funding decisions and curricular overhaul. It is not, however, a question that can be answered with a simple yes or no, any more than we could answer a similar question about the effectiveness of books, films, newspapers, or study groups. As with other learning resources, we need to refine the question to examine the myriad ways in which computers are being used, by whom, in what contexts, and for what purpose. When these parameters are pinned down, the answer is sometimes yes, often no, sometimes yes for some learners but not for others.

In his recent literature review and meta-analysis, Zhao (2003) identifies three problems with assessing the effectiveness of technology. First is the problem of defining what counts as technology (videos, CALL tutorials, and chat rooms, for example, are obviously very different). The second problem is separating a technology from its particular uses. Because any given technology may be used in a variety of ways, some effective, some not, it is difficult to generalize about the effectiveness of a technology itself. The third issue has to do with the effects of other mediating factors, such as the learners, the setting, the task(s), and the type of assessment. Zhao attempted to address these issues by performing a meta-analysis of stringently selected studies published between 1997 and 2001. Including technologies ranging from video to speech recognition to web tutorials, Zhao found a significant main effect for technology applications on student learning. However, Zhao's analysis was limited to only nine studies that provided sufficient data for a meta-analysis (whereas his original search showed almost 400 technology-related language studies published during the period). Moreover, Zhao points out that most studies had small sample sizes, seldom used random sampling, and were often directed by the students' teachers, introducing the possibility of a Pygmalion effect.

Although Zhao conducted his meta-analysis meticulously, it is hard to know how to interpret and make use of his positive finding. As Zhao himself points out and others have echoed (e.g., C. Jones, 1986), it is not

the technology per se that is effective or ineffective but the particular ways in which the technology is used.

These days, given the common presence of computers in many institutions of learning, we may be past the point of deciding whether or not to use computers in language teaching. But we still need to know how to make the best uses of them to accomplish specific goals. Moreover, it is important to ask what it means to use computers for learning and using a language, that is, to reflect critically on the social, cognitive, cultural, as well as educational implications.

If we look at language learning from a broad semiotic perspective, we will be less interested in whether learners successfully acquire a particular linguistic structure and more interested in how they attempt to deal (sometimes successfully, other times less so) with specific communicative situations and with the linguistic, cognitive, social, and material resources available to them. This perspective puts the accent on learners' agency and teacher responsibility rather than on the effect of technology itself. Questions of overall effectiveness limit us to yes-no-maybe answers that are sometimes hard to interpret without thick description of the context, content, people, and procedures involved. Looking at effectiveness also inadequately accounts for the symbolic or prestige dimension of using computers (i.e., the computer's association with progress can lead some programs and schools to promote CALL activities regardless of whether they are shown to improve student learning). In sum, the complexity of the issues involved in technology and language learning is pushing us to look beyond gross decontextualized measures of effectiveness to understand effectiveness in terms of the specifics of what people do with computers, how they do it, and what it means to them.

## Computers and Culture

Some pundits like Negroponte (1995) and Rheingold (1993) portray computers as culturally neutral tools, offering universally adaptable media fostering global communication and, ultimately, global communities. A number of researchers, however, contend that digital technologies, as cultural products shaped by cultural environments, cannot be culturally neutral, and they have begun to study the cultural particularities of computer-mediated environments.

Reeder, MacFadyen, Roche, and Chase (2004), for example, identify a foundational but invisible culture of efficiency reflected in the design of WebCT (a widely used course management system) and similar Internet-based communication platforms. This culture values *speed*, *reach*, *openness*, *quick response*, *questions/debate* and *informality* in communication (p. 92). R. H. Jones (2004) notes that young computer users "almost never

use [computers] to do only one thing at one time” (p. 27) and that what he (following Scollon, Bhatia, Li, & Young, 1999) calls *polyfocality* (i.e., simultaneously following multiple attentional tracks) seems “to be part of the very *ethos* of new communication technologies” (p. 27). Bowers (2000) decries the proliferation of decontextualized data on the Internet and suggests that “computer-mediated communication should be viewed as a degraded form of symbolic interaction—one that reinforces the rootless individual who is comfortable with the expressions of self-creation that the computer industry finds profitable to encourage” (p. 47). Putting a more positive spin on the question, Kramsch, A’Ness, and Lam (2000) find that although the computer medium “imposes its own aesthetic logic on the creation of the material” (p. 95), it promotes an enhanced sense of agency among users: “authorship becomes the privilege of any language user, at equal par with any other” (p. 96).

What may be natural values to those who are well socialized into computer culture, may seem quite foreign to those who are not. Hawisher and Selfe’s (2000) collection of essays on computer-based literacy practices from countries around the world explores the interaction between global computer uses and local cultures. For example, Dragona and Handa (2000) suggest that the logic and navigational procedures of hypertext are not universally intuitive and may be “a mode of thinking that reflects cognitive constructs and connections that are particularly English” (p. 53). They speculate that the novelty of multimodal texts may short-circuit people’s critical sensibilities and make the texts appear “more as ‘pure’ information and ‘pure’ entertainment rather than a medium fraught with cultural baggage” (p. 53).

Reeder et al. (2004) found that learners’ online “self-introduction” postings differed significantly in terms of their underlying notions of how identity is established online and attributed these differences to the gap between the individual learner’s communicative culture and that of the computer (p. 93). They concluded that “the kind of e-tools for communication and education such as bulletin boards, which cater to publicity, and learning platforms such as WebCT, which are based on the notion of Western-style efficiency, are not necessarily appropriate tools for international groups of learners, even though one of the main driving forces of Internet-based learning is internationalization of education” (p. 100).

Thatcher (2005) found that his Ecuadorian students were frustrated using e-mail and hypertext because these media lacked familiar social cues. One student, who reported that “I lose all the emotion on email and the Internet . . . I cannot communicate all that I want to,” ended up using the telephone instead so that she “could be more herself” (p. 289). On the positive side, however, Thatcher notes that the lack of physical context in e-mail and hypertext permitted more abstract group discus-

sions, which many of his students found more “objective,” “reasoned,” and “productive” (p. 289). Thatcher speculates that the use of e-mail and the Internet might ultimately foster a less collective approach in other forms of Ecuadorian communications, including standard writing.

Ess (2005) discusses the idea of CMC as “computer-mediated colonialization,” that is, the notion that CMC technologies impose Western values and practices on peoples whose cultural values and communicative preferences are very different (p. 162). However, he does not capitulate to a black and white distinction between “a homogeneous McWorld and a fragmented plurality of disconnected cultures and people” (p. 162). Rather, he argues that by studying the values and communicative preferences embodied in Western CMC technologies we can succeed in developing models for “middle grounds . . . that conjoin global connectivity with a plurality of local cultural identities” (p. 162).

As educators, we need to recognize two points. First, because computer environments have their specific cultures, we need to attend to both the positive and negative valences of the value categories we create and think with. When do speed and informality become glibness? When does polyfocality become distractedness? When does agency become rootless individualism? Second, we need to recognize that computer cultures are subject to transformation not just by hardware and software design but also by computer users. As more and more people from different cultural backgrounds, speaking languages other than English, come to use computers, the communicative cultures of computer environments will change correspondingly.

## CURRENT RESEARCH

The role of technology in CALL can be thought of in terms of the metaphors of tutor, tool, and medium.<sup>1</sup> In the *tutor* role, computers can provide instruction, feedback, and testing in grammar, vocabulary, writing, pronunciation, and other dimensions of language and culture learning (for a pedagogical and SLA-based discussion of research, see Chapelle, 1998). Voice interactive CALL (e.g., Ehsani & Knodt, 1998) can also simulate communicative interaction. In the *tool* role, computers provide ready access to written, audio, and visual materials relevant to the language and culture being studied. They also provide reference

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<sup>1</sup> These metaphors extend Levy’s (1997) distinction between tutor and tool roles of the computer in CALL, which he in turn derived from Taylor’s (1980) distinction of tutor, tool, and tutee roles. Whereas Levy would categorize CMC applications as tools, it seems to me that *medium* (or *environment*) better reflects how users think about chat, instant messaging, e-mail, and other media.

tools such as online dictionaries, grammar and style checkers, and concordances for corpus analysis. The Internet and databases can serve as tools for research. In the *medium* role, technology provides sites for interpersonal communication, multimedia publication, distance learning, community participation, and identity formation.<sup>2</sup>

Although CALL research originally focused on tutorial applications, in the past 10 years or so the general trend in CALL research has been toward tool and especially medium roles. Hubbard and Siskin (2004) point out that despite its marginalization from the pedagogical mainstream, tutorial CALL is very much alive and well at specialist conferences. Debunking common myths about tutorial CALL, Hubbard and Siskin argue convincingly for its significant promise for developing learners' conscious knowledge of the language, for improving listening and reading comprehension, and for improving pronunciation. Although tutorial CALL is not currently a dominant area of research, it nevertheless represents an important area to observe in the future.<sup>3</sup>

Recent tool-oriented CALL research has been predominantly in the area of concordancing and corpus analysis.<sup>4</sup> Corpus analysis provides data on the real-world contexts of the occurrence of words and collocations across various genres, registers, and language varieties. Pedagogically it can be used to support *data-driven learning*, that is, a learner-centered, form-focused approach aimed at consciousness raising (Rutherford, 1987), in which students are encouraged to make and test hypotheses about language features based on corpus evidence. A number of books on corpus linguistics have appeared recently (e.g., Granger, 1998; Granger & Petch-Tyson, 2003; Hunston, 2002; Partington, 1998), and a special issue of *Language Learning & Technology* (Tribble & Barlow,

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<sup>2</sup> These categories are not, of course, mutually exclusive. Some of the most ambitious technology-based projects, for example Furstenberg's *A la rencontre de Philippe, Dans un quartier de Paris*, and *Cultura* (Furstenberg & Levet, 1999; Furstenberg, Levet, English, & Maillet, 2001; Furstenberg, Murray, Malone, & Farman-Farmaian, 1993), combine elements from all three metaphors.

<sup>3</sup> A sampling of recent studies of tutorial CALL include the following topics: voice interactive CALL (Ehsani & Knodt, 1998), error correction (Heift, 2004), using software to teach intonation and prosody (Hardison, 2005; Levis & Pickering, 2004), listening comprehension (Zhao, 1997), and glossing and multimedia annotations (Al-Seghayer, 2001; Chun & Payne, 2004; Chun & Plass, 1997; L. C. Jones & Plass, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> Corpus linguistics developed in the 1960s when linguists began to use computers to develop concordances for text analysis. Whereas the 1961 Brown Corpus of Standard American English consisted of 500 American texts and included a million words (W-3 Corpora Project, 1998), today's corpora are vast by comparison. For example, the Cobuild Bank of English corpus now includes hundreds of millions of words of English text from British, U.S., Australian, and Canadian sources ("Collins Cobuild Bank of English," 2004). Most corpora focus on written language, but several corpora are dedicated to spoken English (e.g., the London-Lund Corpus, the IBM/Lancaster Spoken English Corpus, the British National Corpus).

2001) is devoted to the topic. So far, however, empirical research on corpora and language learning outcomes has been sparse. Like tutorial CALL, this is an area to watch in the future.

The bulk of current research focuses on technology as medium, and most studies can be roughly grouped into three areas: CMC, electronic literacies, and telecollaboration. This line-up reflects the current dominance of interactionist SLA, discourse analysis, and sociocultural theory in discussions of technology-mediated language learning.

## COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION

The forms and functions of CMC have been explicated most notably by Murray (1988, 1989, 1996, 2000), Herring (1996, 1999, 2001), and Crystal (2001). It is clear that CMC is not a single, uniform genre of language use, but rather a constellation of genres related partly to the particular medium (e.g., instant messaging, e-mail, chat groups, blogs, MOOs) and partly to the particular social and cultural contexts of a given act of communication.

Although certain CMC environments such as Wimba (see <http://www.horizonwimba.com>) allow speech, the bulk of CMC is still currently written via keyboard. CMC ranges along a continuum from product-oriented forms resembling paper-based writing (e.g., Web sites, most e-mail) on one end to more process-oriented interactive discourse that shares many features of speech (e.g., chat, instant messaging) on the other end (Baron, 2000, p. 158). Blogs and wikis would be situated in between, and MOO discourse would be variably placed, depending on the nature of the particular session. On the product-oriented end of the continuum, messages are composed as wholes before being released to their readership. On the process-oriented end, utterances may be more fragmentary, and multiple participants can communicate spontaneously and simultaneously (even contributing comments at the same moment), and several turns may be required to accomplish a single message. Communicative motivation or purpose tends to vary along the continuum as well: The product end is biased toward information exchange, whereas the process end is biased toward phatic communion (Malinowski, 1923), reinforcing social contact in and of itself. The interactive and fragmentary nature of chat and instant messaging makes them seem somewhat speech-like. However, unlike spoken discourse, the binary on/off nature of the communication does not allow backchanneling (*uh-huh*, *right*, shaking of head, etc.) from a partner while one is communicating. CMC lacks backchanneling because information is communicated principally in textual form, making it a leaner overall medium than face-to-face communication, where auditory, tactile, olfactory as well as

visual channels operate, allowing eye contact, context perception, gestural and prosodic information, and thereby enriching communication (Herring, 1996; Reeder et al., 2004).<sup>5</sup> The relative leanness of CMC creates a different dynamic from spoken communication, and this difference may well be significant for language learning contexts that are exclusively CMC based (e.g., tandems).

From a teaching perspective, CMC clearly brings issues of register and genre to the fore. Many observers note that CMC language is often less correct, less complex, less coherent than other forms of language use. Herring (2001) points out that nonstandard features are generally not due to inattentiveness or not knowing the standard forms but are often deliberate choices to minimize typing effort, to imitate speech or sounds, or to be inventive (p. 617). Warner (2004) echoes this perspective, demonstrating the importance of language play in online communication. Crystal (2001) adds that simplification (e.g., omission of prepositions, copulas, auxiliary verbs) is not just a matter of typing economy but likely represents dialect features, reflecting the pressure to accommodate many diverse group members (p. 188). Sometimes accommodations go beyond simplification and become multicultural hybrid forms. For example, Lam (2004) documents the socialization of two bilingual immigrant Chinese girls' experiences in a chat room in which the participants develop a hybrid language variety that distinguishes them from both their English-only peers and their Cantonese-only peers. Similarly, Bloch (2004) shows how Chinese learners of English drew on Chinese rhetorical tradition when communicating in a Usenet group in English, thereby creating a hybrid form of English for that particular context.

Koutsogiannis and Mitsikopoulou (2004) point out, however, that the hybrid vernacular varieties that learners develop in CMC environments may not have much in common with the language that needs to be learned in school contexts. As they put it, "the global media of the Internet may well allow immigrants the opportunity of language socialization in a less stifling environment than that of the average school, but we must bear in mind that this process will involve forms of literacy which may differ significantly from traditional forms of school literacy" (p. 84). Furthermore, because language learners may not have any intuitions about what constitutes standard versus nonstandard forms, they may end up learning the nonstandard forms rather than the standard ones (Crystal, 2001, p. 237). From a pedagogical standpoint, this difficulty with distinguishing forms raises the issue of teaching students how to use

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<sup>5</sup> Speech and visual communication are becoming increasingly possible as audioconferencing and Webcams now provide audiovisual contact. See Lamy (2004) and Blake (2005).

different registers appropriately in different communicative contexts (see *Electronic Literacies*, in this article).

As noted earlier, interactionist SLA theories have been especially influential in CMC studies. CMC provides learners with the opportunity for social interaction, but because the interaction takes place primarily in writing, it also provides learners with ample opportunity to focus on form and content. A number of studies have explored the question of how best to promote meaning negotiation online. Comparing jigsaw, information-gap, and decision-making tasks, Blake (2000) found that the jigsaw tasks proved the best at promoting negotiations online. Smith (2003), on the other hand, found that decision-making tasks supported online negotiation more than jigsaw tasks. Knight (2005), experimenting with face-to-face versus e-mail performance of a hybrid jigsaw and decision-making task, found that, to preserve interactional benefits, face-to-face tasks have to be modified in CMC contexts (in this case, staggering of information). Smith (2005) studied the relationship between negotiation routine complexity, degree of uptake (i.e., learner responses to corrective feedback), and acquisition of vocabulary in a chat environment. He found that the complexity of negotiation routines did not influence uptake and that degree of uptake bore no relationship to vocabulary learning. Smith hypothesizes that uptake may play a diminished role in CMC and that we may need to attend to more subtle indications of acquisition in CMC environments.

Unlike early CALL studies that tended to test technologies, current studies more often test SLA-derived hypotheses and thus represent a considerable evolution in the field. All told, by introducing new genres of communication, CMC has complexified and problematized our notions of interaction, registers, negotiation of meaning, and uptake. As we move toward increasing degrees of multimodality in CMC environments (e.g., Blake, 2005; Lamy, 2004; Levy & Kennedy, 2004), we can expect to see communication dynamics continue to change.

## **Electronic Literacies**

Given the predominantly text-based nature of CMC, reading and writing are obviously key modes of online language use. However, because the Internet (a) introduces multimedia dimensions that go beyond print textuality, (b) alters traditional discourse structures, (c) introduces new notions of authorship, and (d) allows users to participate in multicultural learning communities, it requires a complexified view of literacy that goes well beyond the skills of encoding and decoding texts.

To address the wide array of conventions, genres, and skills in computer use, Warschauer (2003) argues for the need to develop

*electronic literacies* (i.e., computer literacy, information literacy, multimedia literacy, CMC literacy). Warschauer (1999b) studied how people used electronic literacies in four contexts: an ESL course for international graduate students at a public university, an ESL class for international undergraduate students at a private Christian college, a Hawaiian language course for undergraduates at a public university, and a community college English class enrolling mostly immigrants and second language learners. He found that the sociocultural context in these settings significantly shaped the nature of online teaching and learning. Contrary to the view that technology will in and of itself transform learning, Warschauer found instead that technology had an amplifying effect, reinforcing teachers' underlying instructional approach, whether it was based on second language writing as a form of discipline, liberation, vocation, or apprenticeship.

Another of Warschauer's key findings was how seriously learners took learning new semiotic skills in online media, as compared to completing computer-based instructional tasks. Warschauer's notion of electronic literacies thus developed as an alternative to the concept of CALL when applied to online instruction. Shetzer and Warschauer (2000, 2001) further refined the notion of electronic literacies, as well as a pedagogy focused on issues of communication, construction of knowledge, research, and autonomous learning.

Lam (2000) presents an ethnographic case study of Almon, a Chinese immigrant teenager who felt negatively about his English ability despite living in the United States for 5 years. Through instant messaging (ICQ) and then through creating his own Web site about a Japanese pop music idol, Almon discovered his own expressivity in English as well as a newfound solidarity with his Internet peers. Lam argues that by appropriating, rearticulating, and redesigning discourses and narrative roles for his own purposes, Almon developed a new identity that had not been available to him in his immediate community and school in the United States. A key contribution from this study is the notion of *textual identity* for understanding how texts are composed and used to represent and reposition identity in networked computer media. In her larger dissertation study, Lam (2003) presents three additional case studies of Chinese immigrant youths, showing how they also came to occupy new social positions and identities by appropriating new discourses in online environments. Lam's research is important because it considers not only how social contexts shape language use in online environments but also, and most important, how online communication shapes social contexts and participants' identity formation. Furthermore, her work draws attention to the ways in which language functions in relation to other forms of online semiosis.

One important area of electronic literacies is dealing with multimedia.

Whereas early multimedia language environments were developed by teachers (e.g., Chun & Plass, 1996), it is increasingly common that students themselves author their own multimedia documents. Kress (2003) defines *multimodal texts* as “texts made up of elements of modes which are based on different logics” (p. 46), that is, texts that integrate writing, speech, images, color, sound, animation, and that therefore combine logics of time and space.

Digital storytelling is just one example of multimedia authoring in which textualization is a central concern. Digital storytelling involves developing filmic narratives using video, photographs, drawings, animation, voice, text, and music. Hull and Nelson (2005) report on the Digital Underground Storytelling for You(th) (DUSTY) Project in West Oakland, California, which makes multimedia composing tools available to children and adults who would not otherwise have access, and showcases local authors’ digital stories at local theaters and other public venues. Digital stories take the form of autobiographical narratives, poems, raps, reports, interviews, social commentary, or re-adaptations of stories or movies. Hull and Nelson draw on Peircian semiotic theory as well as Labovian narrative theory to study the respective logics of modalities and how they function synergistically in digital storytelling. They are particularly interested in the blendings between new and old textual forms and find that digital stories have much more in common with traditional narratives than they do with associative digital forms like hypertext. Nelson (in press) argues for the need to develop broader semiotic approaches to L2 composition. Based on Kress’s (2003) notions of transformation, transduction, and synaesthesia, Nelson works on composition principles via digital storytelling with first-year university ESL students. His analysis identifies a number of benefits of multimedia authoring, including resemiotization through repetition, recognition of language topology, and new forms of authorship. Drawbacks he noted in his study included genericization of expression and over-accommodation of audience.

Does multimedia authoring improve learners’ language use in terms of accuracy, fluency, and appropriateness in offline contexts? We don’t know. But the value of such projects may be found elsewhere. Nelson, for example, is not looking at language learning in the traditional sense of acquisition of morphosyntax or vocabulary, or even academic writing. Rather, he is looking at learners’ acquisition of a metacommunicative ability to reflect broadly on signifying practices and specifically on textualization, considering language as just one dimension of semiosis.

As Warschauer (2002, 2004) has argued, technology in English language teaching is now less about using computers as tools to teach English effectively and more about teaching English to help people use computers effectively. What is important about literacy on the Internet is

not just the ability to read and write in comprehensible language but also the ability to negotiate new roles and identities. Identity construction and socialization are inherently intertwined with language and can have either a facilitating effect (e.g., Lam's subjects) or a constraining effect (e.g., when limited to local community or school setting) on the resources learners come to acquire and use.

## **Telecollaboration**

A recent development in network-based language teaching is a shift in focus from single classrooms to long-distance collaborations involving two or more classrooms, often in different countries. This shift expands the focus from language learning to an emphasis on culture (i.e., intercultural competence, cultural learning, and cultural literacy).

Intercultural projects have the potential to enhance learners' communication skills and to enrich their knowledge of another culture, as well as to provide a context for viewing one's own culture from another group's perspective. A number of recent studies have explored the viability of online telecollaboration for developing intercultural competence and understanding. Some of these studies have found positive results through student self-reports, interviews, or surveys (Furstenberg et al., 2001; Kinginger, 2000; Meskill & Ranglova, 2000; Müller-Hartmann, 2000; von der Emde, Schneider, & Kötter, 2001). Other studies indicate that intercultural contact in and of itself does not naturally lead to cultural understanding (Belz, 2002, 2003; Coleman, 1998; Fischer, 1998; O'Dowd, 2003; Ware, 2003, 2005), and some have questioned whether online contact can reduce stereotypes and prejudice (Ware & Kramersch, 2005). Several studies have identified potential impediments to cross-cultural understanding, such as social and institutional constraints and resource accessibility (Belz, 2002; Belz & Müller-Hartmann, 2003; O'Dowd, 2003).

In showing that intercultural understanding does not necessarily emerge from online interaction, these studies point to a number of questions: What kind of cultural contact is afforded by the technological medium? If the medium itself changes the ways in which communication takes place, what does it mean to be a competent communicator in a virtual world? A number of scholars have explored these questions, showing that differences in communicative genres (Hanna & de Nooy, 2003; Kramersch & Thorne, 2001), medium (Thorne, 2003), task type (Salaberry, 2000; Smith, 2003), linguistic style (Belz, 2003), academic cultures (Belz & Müller-Hartmann, 2003), and institutional and cultural characteristics (Belz, 2002) can all affect the degree to which language learners can negotiate meaning and cultural understanding. These

factors signal the important role of the teacher, who is familiar with both cultures and who can set appropriate goals and tasks, monitor communication, and assist in negotiating communicative difficulties.

Sometimes the problem is not one of miscommunication but of what Ware (2003, 2005) calls *missed communication*. Ware explored the factors that contributed to limited interactional involvement in a telecollaborative project linking German students of English and American students of German. She found that in the wake of misunderstandings, students tended to avert joint development of topics and instead to revert to a task-based approach to their assignments (cf. Belz, 2003). Although both groups of students participated beyond course expectations, they engaged in surprisingly little real interpersonal interaction (as marked by response to direct questions, use of second person pronouns, elaboration, etc.). In a qualitative analysis of student attitudes, Ware found that time pressures and institutional constraints negatively influenced students' communicative choices, leading to disengagement, or missed opportunities for intercultural learning. The key significance of Ware's findings is that many forms of CMC can actually facilitate missed communication. For example, the delayed response time and the lack of social consequences for dropping topics in many online contexts allows participants to be less active conversational partners. Furthermore, expectations about appropriate communication in the online medium may pose challenges for learners developing intercultural competence; an online discourse norm that often favors speed and brevity over sustained attention may impede their ability to engage in communication at a deep level of intercultural inquiry.

Language competence per se does not appear to be a key variable in the success of intercultural exchanges. Hanna and de Nooy (2003) point out that linguistic accuracy and politeness do not get one very far in an online forum in a foreign language. More important is a willingness to be socialized into and to follow the online community's discourse rules. More generally, a key ingredient for successful intercultural exchanges appears to be personal involvement. O'Dowd (2003) reports variable success of a year-long e-mail exchange between classes in Spain and Britain but notes that successful pairs tended to invest a lot of time in their messages. Specifically, they were sure to include personal (i.e., off-task) messages, to acknowledge their partners' comments, and to respond to their questions. They also tended to take the sociopragmatic rules of each other's language into account and included questions that encouraged feedback and reflection. Students were more interested (and tended to write more, to learn more, and to change their attitudes toward the other culture) when they received reactions from partners after having explained aspects of their own culture. (In the Belz and Ware studies, German students had wanted more personal involvement

from the Americans, who tended to be more task-oriented in their self-presentations.) O'Dowd also stresses the importance of teacher involvement and close guidance throughout all phases of a project.

Taken together, these studies point to (a) the importance of investigating what *successful participation* means in different contexts (e.g., different CMC contexts, different cross-cultural contexts, different pedagogical contexts), (b) the importance of the personal in intercultural projects—learners' sensitivity to one another's cultural identities and communicative styles, and (c) the importance of teacher involvement in discerning, explaining, and reflecting on culturally contingent patterns of interaction with their students.

## IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING AND RESEARCH

### Teaching

There is consensus in CALL research that it is not technology per se that affects the learning of language and culture but the particular uses of technology. This emphasis on use highlights the central importance of pedagogy and the teacher. Success in CMC, multimedia authoring, and distance-learning projects has been repeatedly shown to depend largely on teachers' efforts in coordinating learners' activities (Belz, 2003; Müller-Hartmann, 2000; O'Dowd, 2003; Parks, Huot, Hamers, & H-Lemmonier, 2003), structuring language and content learning (Levy, 1997), and helping learners to reflect critically on language, culture, and context (Kern, 2000; Ware & Kramsch, 2005). Belz and Müller-Hartmann (2003) emphasize the need to move beyond reductive accounts of the teacher as a guide on the side and stress the importance of the teacher in identifying and explaining culturally contingent patterns of interaction in electronic discourse.<sup>6</sup>

Technology-based language teaching is not a method but is integrated into various pedagogical approaches. Most research to date has focused on communicative task-based, project-based, and focus-on-form approaches in CMC environments, but the literature has begun to address uses of corpora in data-driven learning. Because the dynamics of interaction (and feedback-uptake relationships) in online environments differ from those in face-to-face interaction, teachers must be prepared for new ways of structuring tasks, establishing exchanges, guiding and

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<sup>6</sup> For practical classroom activities and projects involving technology, see Boswood (1997), Dudeney (2000), Hanson-Smith (2000), Swaffar, Romano, Markley, & Arens (1998), Warschauer (1995), and Warschauer & Kern (2000).

monitoring interaction, and evaluating performance, not to mention mastering the relevant computer applications. In the area of intercultural CMC exchanges, success has been mixed, but a number of researchers have made recommendations for optimal results. For example, Furstenberg and her colleagues (2001) identify three essential ingredients for project success: (a) an equal degree of commitment on the part of all teachers involved, (b) agreement on what will be the central focus (e.g., a particular theme), and (c) continual attention to logistics (e.g., scheduling, Web site maintenance). Müller-Hartmann (2000) and O'Dowd (2003) add that the creation of personal relationships among learners, attention to curricular integration, and close monitoring of student exchanges are also crucial to the success of telecollaborative projects.

Educators using online environments to foster cross-cultural communication also need to consider how the different groups involved relate to the electronic medium as a cultural tool of communication, to better understand how social constraints and opportunities affect intercultural communication (Lam, 2003; Thorne, 2003). Belz (2002) argues that spontaneous clashes revealing cultural fault lines should not be smoothed over or avoided but should be actively explored. Chapelle (2003) reminds us that TESOL educators “need to be critically aware of the connections among technology, culture, and ideology, and specifically about the ways in which technology amplifies and constrains aspects of language learning and research” (p. 9). Applied to pedagogy, this stance is consistent with what Kling (1996) calls the *heads-up view* of computer systems. Whereas a *heads-in view* focuses on the computer screen and the vast amounts of information it can display, a heads-up view “examines the social choices of whether and how to computerize an activity, and the relationships between computerized activity and other parts of our social worlds” (p. 2). An important component of developing a heads-up view is familiarizing oneself with the relevant research literature.

## Research

Whereas early CALL research generally sought out relatively simple cause-effect relationships between human-computer interaction and learning, current research seeks to understand complex relationships among learners, teachers, content, and technology within particular social and cultural contexts. Consequently, research on technology and language learning has broadened the theoretical perspectives it draws on. Although second language acquisition remains central, it now increasingly overlaps with literacy studies, discourse analysis, sociocultural theory, sociolinguistics, and anthropology (especially ethnographic

methods). As a result, research has become on the whole less quantitative and more qualitative.

To maximize validity in CALL studies, Ortega (1997) urges researchers to diversify data sources, combining classroom and school observation, interviews, self-report data from questionnaires or think-aloud protocols, and computer-collected data to seek relationships across self-reports, observed behavior, and linguistic performance. In multiclass projects, Müller-Hartmann (2000) stresses the necessity that all teachers collaborate in research teams. The triangulation of researchers' perspectives will enhance the reliability of findings, especially when considering learning processes that involve culture as well as language. Chapelle (2003) also calls for creating teams for research and materials development by bringing together three types of people: technologically minded people (to realistically assess technical issues and feasibility), socially minded people (to deal with pragmatic and social dimensions), and critically minded people (to deal with ethical implications). By doing this, she argues, we can achieve the most balanced research. Given that the vast majority of CALL studies have been of short duration (and many have looked at very short-term treatments), it is crucial that researchers pursue more longitudinal studies of long-term linguistic development and intercultural competence.

A final methodological note concerns ethics in data collection, a critical issue in all CMC research. Given the ease with which researchers can collect data without subjects' knowledge or consent and the fuzzy boundaries between what is private and public on the Internet, it is essential that researchers obtain participants' informed consent. This issue is discussed sporadically in the literature (e.g., Crystal, 2001; Lotherington, 2005) but Frankel and Siang (1999) address it in depth.

## Future Research

*Transversal relationships:* Over the past 15 years, we have learned a great deal about the features of learner interactions and language use within online environments, but we still know little about how those abilities might be transferred across different environments, communicative genres, and modalities. For example, does proficiency in e-mail carry over to instant messaging or chat, or even to essay writing? What benefits might multimedia authoring have for linguistic expression (or communicative potential)? Is there a relationship between, say, digital storytelling and performance of writing or face-to-face speech?

*Reading and writing electronically:* We know something about different genres and registers in various online environments, but we know less

about how the emergence of new discourse practices in CMC affects reading and writing processes. How are our definitions of reading and writing affected? How are people socialized into electronic literacy practices and communities? What communicative, cognitive, and social strategies do people use in CMC environments? What are the multi-media interpretation and authoring abilities that people acquire, and how do they acquire them?

*Curricular issues:* We know the importance of teaching electronic literacies, but what are the implications of electronic literacies for curriculum? How might we need to reframe or reconceptualize learning tasks? What are the implications for the way learners' performance is assessed?

*Sociopolitical issues:* We know that different groups of people have different degrees and kinds of access to technology (Dutton, 2004; Warschauer, 2003). What are the implications of differential access to electronic literacy tools and the social capital needed to use them effectively—both in educational institutions and in society at large? What are the implications of commercial versus open-source software in terms of people's access to resources and how they make use of them?

## CONCLUSION

The Pew Internet and American Life Project reports that “The Web has become the ‘new normal’ in the American way of life” (Rainie & Horrigan, 2005, p. 59). Crystal (2001) muses that computer-mediated language could become “the community’s linguistic norm” (p. 241). As language educators, our job is to reflect on norms—to explore their underpinnings, their contexts of operation, and their implications—not only to make the norms understandable to our students but also to model for them the very process of reflecting critically on the social practices they participate in and observe. Technology offers us a means by which to make the familiar unfamiliar, to reframe and rethink our conceptions of language, communication, and society. It is through this process of analysis and reflection that we can best decide how we can and should use technology in language learning and teaching.

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## THE AUTHOR

Richard Kern is an associate professor of French and director of the French language program at the University of California at Berkeley, in the United States. He teaches courses in French language, linguistics, and foreign language pedagogy, and supervises graduate teaching assistants. His research interests include language acquisition, literacy, and relationships between language and technology.

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# *Expanding Horizons and Unresolved Conundrums: Language Testing and Assessment*

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**CONSTANT LEUNG**

*King's College  
London, England*

**JO LEWKOWICZ**

*American University of Armenia  
Yerevan, Armenia*

Since the last *TESOL Quarterly* commemorative issue 15 years ago, there have been too many important developments in language testing and assessment for all of them to be discussed in a single article. Therefore, this article focuses on issues that we believe are integrally linked to pedagogic and curriculum concerns of English language teaching. Although the discussion has been organized into two main sections, the first dealing with issues relating to formal tests and the second to broader concerns of assessment, we highlight the common themes and concerns running through both sections in the belief that testing and assessment are two sides of the same educational coin. In the first section we address the issue of test authenticity, which underscores much of language testing enquiry. We consider developments in the field's understanding of this notion and suggest that relating test authenticity to target language use may be necessary but insufficient without considering authenticity as it is operationalised in the classroom. In the second section, acknowledging current concerns with standardized psychometric testing, we broaden the discussion to issues of validity, ethics, and alternative assessment. We first consider the intellectual climate in which the debates on such issues has developed and the relevance of these deliberations to pedagogy and curriculum. We then discuss some of the key issues in current classroom-based teacher assessment that are related to and can inform student second language competence and teacher professional knowledge and skills. We end by projecting how the current globalization of English may affect the understanding of authenticity and how this understanding is likely to affect testing and assessment practices worldwide.

In the 15 years since the last *TESOL Quarterly* commemorative issues, 25 *Years as an International Family* (Silberstein, 1991), there has been a high and sustained level of research and development in English language testing and assessment. The field is now served by two specialist international journals, *Language Testing* and *Language Assessment Quarterly*. Articles on English language testing and assessment appear regularly in other applied linguistics, language education, and education journals. And there are numerous books on language testing and assessment in the current lists of the major publishing houses. In this article, we discuss the prominent testing and assessment issues in the past 15 years or so that can be linked to the pedagogic and curriculum concerns of English language teaching (ELT).

Some of the debates and developments we mention in this article, of course, stretch back 30 or more years in one form or another. Our focus certainly reflects our interests and perspectives, but we hope that this discussion will promote further understanding of the shared concerns and common foundations between testing and assessment, and pedagogy. It is not our intention to present a survey or a critical review of developments in second language (L2) testing and assessment. (For recent reviews, see Alderson & Banerjee, 2001, 2002; Bachman, 2000.)

In the educational measurement literature, *assessment* is a superordinate term for all forms of assessment, and *testing* is a term for one particular form of assessment. The form that has been most prevalent in ELT all over the world in the past 50 or more years has been standardized, psychometrically oriented testing. Tests such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) are almost household names in professional circles. However, the 1990s also saw a good deal of developmental work in alternative conceptualizations and practices of assessment, such as classroom-based teacher assessment and student portfolio assessment. We have noticed that the terms *testing* and *assessment* have appeared together in many recently published discussions on the expanding conceptual bases of validity and ethics, indicating the authors' awareness of the need for precision in delineating intellectual perspectives and research affiliations. In our discussion we maintain the distinction between the terms *testing* and *assessment* where warranted. Our discussion covers a variety of contexts in which the teaching, testing, and assessment of EFL, ESL, and English as an additional language take place. We attempt to be explicit about context when appropriate.

## TESTING TIMES: IN SEARCH OF AUTHENTICITY AND USEFULNESS

### Test Task Authenticity

In 1991, Alderson, reviewing progress made in the field of psychometric language testing, asked, How far have we come? How far have we to go? Fifteen years later, despite the mushrooming of interest in the field of language testing, these rhetorical questions remain equally apt. Although there is an increasing body of literature on ESL testing covering theoretical issues as well as test design, the answers to such fundamental questions as *What is language ability?* and *How should test scores be interpreted?* are still on the current research and development agenda. Does that mean we in the language testing and assessment community have been walking on a treadmill, or can we point to advances in understanding? In our view, the debate over the past 15 years that is most relevant to ELT pedagogy and curriculum concerns test authenticity.

We note in passing that the developments we describe in this article are broadly in line with what was happening in education generally. Discussions of ELT curriculum included considerable attention to the types of texts and tasks that should be used to promote communication, and in general education there was concern that students be engaged in more complex, holistic tasks that provided an intellectual challenge and for which the nature of the outcome was of paramount importance (Carlson, 1991, p. 6). Yet these discussions remained to a large extent on parallel tracks, failing to draw on each other.

Over the past 30 years, language ability and language use were reconceptualised by theorists such as Savignon (1972, 1983), Canale and Swain (1980), and Canale (1983, 1984). This reconceptualisation, perhaps the single most significant development in applied linguistics during that period, laid the foundation for the communicative approach and subsequently spurred the debate on authentic testing. This debate, though well rehearsed, continues to the present. Initially it centered on the issue of whether test tasks should and could mirror those in the real world in the way proposed by Morrow (1979). The debate focused on the nature of test input, that is, the perceived need to use reading and listening texts extracted from real-life sources and to develop test tasks that simulated the tasks that test takers could be expected to perform in the real world outside the classroom or test situation. Authenticity, thus, was seen as inherent in the test—either present or absent—and no regard was paid to the interaction that would arise between the test taker and the test input. The language testing and assessment field now

recognizes this view of authenticity as oversimplified, one that did not go unchallenged in the 1980s (see, e.g., Lewkowicz, 2000, for a fuller discussion of this early debate).

The Bachman (1990) model, which views language as multicomponential, goes some way toward addressing the question of language ability raised earlier. Building on the work of Hymes (1972), Canale and Swain (1980), and others, Bachman proposed an interactional model of language test performance in which language ability (language knowledge and metacognitive strategies) is seen as interacting with test method (characteristics of the environment, rubric, input, expected response, and the relationship between input and expected response) to produce a performance that can be described and reported. This model is perhaps the most widely adopted model of language ability in language testing. It has provided a principled, systematic basis for the development of language tests, such as the English proficiency test for nonnative English language teachers in Australia (McDowell, 1995). Yet the model has drawn criticism on the grounds of being difficult to operationalize. As Widdowson (2003) points out, the model breaks language competence down into multiple “static” components that “cannot account for the dynamic interrelationships which are engaged in communication itself” (pp. 169–170).

A primary concern of test development is to ensure test usefulness. For tests to be useful, Bachman and Palmer (1996) propose that developers need to consider six test qualities: reliability, construct validity, authenticity, interactiveness, impact, and practicality. Of these, construct validity and reliability pertain specifically to tests, whereas the others may be of concern for both language testing and language pedagogy. These six qualities are regarded as complementary; no single quality in its own right is more important than the others. Test developers need to reflect on and maximize each of these qualities according to the requirements of the test being developed. In essence, therefore, the importance of authenticity in the test development process has been reappraised. At the same time, echoing Breen’s (1985) and Widdowson’s (1978, 1979) notion that the quality of learner outcome arising from the input provided in pedagogic situations was of the essence, Bachman and Palmer’s (1996) treatment of authenticity is more complex than that conceived by early proponents of authenticity such as Morrow (1979) in that they attempt to account for test takers’ involvement in test tasks. In this view, tasks are not necessarily authentic or inauthentic in any intrinsic and absolute sense. Authenticity can be seen in terms of the extent to which a test or assessment task relates to the context in which it would normally be performed in real life. Given the amount of time people spend in formal education (up to one-third of their lives), apparently contrived classroom language-learning tasks can appear

authentic to language learners and test takers. Authenticity is after all a matter of perception, and research suggests that what some perceive as authentic, others may view as inauthentic (Lewkowicz, 1997). Thus, for many language learners, grammar exercises may be necessary real-life activities for practising and consolidating their language knowledge. Real language taken out of its original context would not be any more authentic for these learners (or test takers)—it would need to be “authenticated” by them (Widdowson, 2003, p. 105).

Bachman and Palmer (1996) define *authenticity* as “the degree of correspondence of the characteristics of a given language test task to the features of a TLU [target language use] task” (p. 23), moving it away from a simple one-to-one correspondence of test task to real-life task toward a quality that can only be determined in relation to “the characteristics of the test takers, the TLU domain, and the test task” (p. 39). In terms of test development, this approach requires that the test developer identify the characteristics of TLU domain, from which test takers’ language is to be sampled in the test situation. Identifying this domain is itself no mean feat, especially when the test population is heterogeneous. It is becoming increasingly difficult because the globalization of English has made the norms of written and spoken English harder to specify. Experience has shown that, in practice, this abstract notion of authenticity is thus quite difficult to describe in detail. This difficulty may explain why the disjuncture persists between the theoretical understanding of authenticity and the ability to implement maximally authentic language tests. Nevertheless, Bachman and Palmer posit that authenticity is important for two reasons. It is the feature of a test that facilitates score interpretation, thus allowing generalizations to be made from test to nontest situations (the ultimate purpose of any test). It may also affect “test taker perceptions of the test and, hence, on their performance” (p. 24). Lewkowicz (2000), however, questions this notion: She found that test takers tend to be very pragmatic and more concerned with the test’s difficulty than with its authenticity.

Despite the considerable complexity, or because of it, the work on authenticity has certainly been both intellectually stimulating and challenging, and it has fostered some changes in the way a *task* in testing is operationalized. The foregrounding of authenticity was a breakthrough that accelerated a number of major changes in the type of tasks included in language tests (e.g., in the Communicative Use of English as a Foreign Language [CUEFL] examination<sup>1</sup>) and brought with it greater harmony

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<sup>1</sup> This, Hargreaves (1987) reports, was the first large-scale examination that focused on language use rather than language usage. It was the precursor to the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate’s (UCLES) Certificates in Communicative Skills in English.

between testing practices and the way language was being taught. Informed by changing classroom practices and the developments in English for specific purposes and English for academic purposes, both general- and specific-purpose tests of language have come to include more authentic, performance-type tasks based on materials that were not specifically designed for pedagogical or testing purposes. Thus, the interest in authenticity in language testing can be seen as part of the more general move in curriculum toward conceptualizing language ability and language use in context. At the same time, however, discrete-point tests assessing individual skills continued (and continue) to be popular in many of the major standardized examinations (e.g., TOEFL).

## Unresolved Issues

Over the past 15 years, the types of tasks that are reportedly used in test situations have changed significantly, with real performances in the form of, for example, role plays and situated discussions becoming much more prevalent (though as Alderson, 2004, cautions, reports on what is happening in the field of language testing may not be representative of what is happening worldwide). From a theoretical point of view, however, the debate on test authenticity and test usefulness more generally has left a number of questions unanswered. It has failed to adequately address two persistent problems, both of which seem to relate to the multifaceted nature of authentic testing.

First, performance tests that strive to be highly authentic are often extremely complex. This complexity makes judging the degree of success or failure of any performance susceptible to a variety of extraneous influences that may affect the score awarded, thus opening up a Pandora's box (McNamara, 1995). In particular, as McNamara points out and Alderson and Banerjee (2002) reiterate, Bachman's (1990) model has not accounted for social aspects of language performance, such as the relationship during an oral proficiency test between the test taker and interlocutors (other test takers in pair or group tests or the examiner in an interview situation). Factors such as the asymmetrical relationship between the tester and test taker(s) as well as the personality characteristics of the interlocutor and test taker may affect test performance and the awarded score. Quite clearly, these considerations need to be taken into account. Research in areas such as test-taker characteristics (e.g., Kunnan, 1995; O'Sullivan, 2000), candidates' familiarity with test tasks (e.g., Foster & Skehan, 1996; Wigglesworth, 1997), personality types (e.g., Berry, 2004), testwiseness (e.g., Storey, 1997), and interlocutor behavior (e.g., Lumley & Brown, 1998) is informing the field's understanding of how these factors may affect test performances. However,

beyond the more comprehensive use of pair and group oral tests, there is, as yet, little evidence that these factors are being taken into account in live, high-stakes test situations. Rather than allowing for differences among test takers, testing authorities such as UCLES seem to be trying to limit possible variations or accommodations by standardizing the procedures in the name of fairness. They seem not yet to consider the fact that such oral performances are essentially co-constructed through social interaction and that all participants in the interaction are likely to affect individual performances (e.g., A. Brown, 1995; Luoma, 2004).

The second problem, readily acknowledged by Bachman (2002), is associated with an inability to account for task difficulty. This problem seems to persist because all current models consider difficulty “essentially an artifact of test performance” (p. 453), inseparable from test-taker and test-task characteristics. Despite the extensive research into task difficulty in language teaching and testing (for a discussion of task-based approaches to testing, see, e.g., Brown, Hudson, Norris, & Bonk, 2002; Skehan, 1998), there is still little agreement about how to control for this aspect of language in test situations. It may be that the difference in task purpose in classroom and test situations is confounding the results emerging from studies of task difficulty (Elder, Iwashita, & McNamara, 2002). It is hoped that the continuing efforts in this area, including work using item response theory and Rasch analyses (see, e.g., McNamara, 1991; North, 1995a, 1995b) will advance the field’s understanding.

Our account so far suggests that the search for authenticity has encountered a number of complex issues that are far from being resolved. Yet these knotty issues are closely related to classroom pedagogy. If authenticity were not reflected in test situations, it could have a negative impact on classroom practice, reducing the range and type of task employed. At present, testers seem to be focused on TLU tasks and ways to best represent such tasks in a test situation, and bypassing the pedagogic implementation of the concept of task in the classroom. Perhaps classroom practice also needs to be brought into the process of characterizing test tasks.

As the foregoing discussion shows, the development and widespread adoption of Bachman’s (1990) model over the past 15 years has provided an anchor for test development and design. It has also brought to the fore a number of outstanding issues concerning the nature of language ability and how the language testing and assessment community collects evidence of students’ ability to use language. Furthermore, it has brought the discussions within teaching and testing closer together, at least at the conceptual and theoretical level. Issues such as task specification and task difficulty are clearly of interest to both testers and teachers. Yet, the Bachman model appears to have had much less impact on achievement testing within the classroom than on large-scale proficiency

testing. Given the model's complexity, this may not be surprising. What goes on at the classroom level of test development, however, may not be widely reported in the literature (Alderson & Banerjee, 2001), and the language testing community may not be aware of all that is happening.

At this juncture, viewing authenticity as an integral aspect of test usefulness may be more helpful than treating it as an entity in its own right. Perhaps test developers should foreground the notion of *construct validity*, that is, what testers are trying to measure (as perceived by Messick, 1989, and discussed in greater detail in the section Assessment: Broadening Concerns). This would bring us back to a consideration of the central relationship between language ability and how that ability is assessed—put more precisely, the need to understand “what language is and what it takes to learn a language, which then becomes the basis for establishing ways of assessing people's ability” (Alderson & Banerjee, 2002, p. 80).

## ASSESSMENT: BROADENING CONCERNS

In the inaugural issue of *Language Assessment Quarterly*, Cumming (2004) calls for broadening the scope of language assessment studies. The interest in going beyond standardized language testing as the default form of assessment has not occurred in an intellectual vacuum. The common use of tests to make selection and placement decisions about students, for instance, has long been known to have a margin of error at the level of individual students. Wiliam (2001) calculates that, for instance, for a test with scaled scores, an average score of 100, a standard deviation of 15, and reliability of 0.75,

someone who scores 115 . . . might really have a true score of just 100 . . . or as high as 130. . . . We must be aware that the results of even the best test can be wildly inaccurate for individual students. (p. 18)

Spolsky (1997), drawing on the knowledge accumulated since the late 19th century concerning the inaccuracies in test or examination scores, declares that “my concern is . . . with the gatekeeping function itself, the use of examination results to determine qualifications for positions or for training for positions” (p. 242). In addition to this caution about the accuracy and reliability of standardized tests as a technical facility, test developers acknowledged in the early 1990s that L2 testing as a domain of expertise, indeed L2 education in general, knew little about the nature of L2 proficiency development. In the same address to fellow professionals mentioned earlier, Alderson (1991) had this to say: “We know very little about how, about how long it takes, under what

conditions, and therefore we know little about how to measure the progress of learners. . . . We lack sensitive measures” (p. 12).

Again, this perceived need to go beyond the affordances of the established principles and technology of psychometric testing was not confined to L2 testing and assessment. In relation to the developments in educational measurement and assessment generally, Broadfoot (2005) observes that “we use what are a very blunt set of instruments to intervene in the highly sensitive and complex business of learning” (p. 127). Reflexive questioning of the nature and adequacy of one’s own professional knowledge and practice is clearly not restricted to the language testing and assessment community.

## Expanding the Concept of Validity

### *Value Bases of Assessment*

A good deal of this reflexive thinking has been triggered by Messick’s (1989) groundbreaking work on validity, which has served as a point of departure for alternative ways of conceptualising L2 assessment. *Validity*, in traditional psychometric terms, refers to the extent or degree to which a test measures what it has been designed to measure. The study of validity has tended to focus on three aspects: *construct validity*, *content validity*,<sup>2</sup> and *criterion validity*.<sup>3</sup> Of these three, construct validity is most directly relevant to this discussion. Construct validity is a psychological concept—“an attribute, proficiency, ability, or skills that happens in the human brain and is defined by established theories. For example, overall English language proficiency is a construct” (J. D. Brown, 2000, p. 7). For a test to claim construct validity, it has to demonstrate that it is measuring the targeted construct. (For further discussion, see Alderson & Banerjee, 2002; Bachman & Palmer, 1996; A. Brown, 1995.) This conceptualization of construct is clearly based on the idea that a human ability or a particular proficiency inheres in the individual.

If language proficiency is taken as a case in point, this view would suggest that proficiency is something that resides within the individual language user. In this view, the language tester’s job is to design an appropriate instrument—a test—to tap into this posited individual ability or capability. In other words, testers can sample and observe

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<sup>2</sup> Content validity is concerned with the degree to which a test or a test item is representative of the content of the test objective or specification (e.g. how much do the items on a speaking test resemble the kind of spoken language the test is meant to sample?).

<sup>3</sup> Criterion validity refers to “the correlation of the test being validated with some well-respected outside measure(s) of the same objectives or specifications” (J. D. Brown, 2000, p. 7).

people's language performance and use this information to infer their language proficiency. What people say (or write) during a test, so to speak, represents what they know. But the viability of this neat, one-to-one correspondence between what people do with language (observable performance) and what they know (inferred proficiency or competence) depends on the notion that using language is always a matter of self-expression and that the self is indifferent or insensitive to the social, that is, what others may say or do in the immediate context of language use and in wider society. This seemingly arcane point about the nature of language proficiency or competence, briefly touched on in our discussion of performance tests, in fact goes to the heart of language assessment and language pedagogy.

Within the realms of psychometric testing principles, which assume that qualities or traits reside in an individual, the job of a test is to encourage the display of the target quality or qualities through some form of performance. So if you wish to know whether your students can produce a piece of written language for a specific purpose at a particular level, your job is to devise a test to elicit the required performance. McNamara (2001) asks provocatively, "What if the direction of action is reversed, so that the act of testing itself constructs the notion of language proficiency?" (p. 339). At one level, it seems obvious that tests and assessment schemes do construct proficiency through rating scales (criteria and level descriptors). Grammar items, for example, are assigned to different levels according to some form of ranking of difficulty, appropriateness, or both. In everyday practice, these rating scales tend to be treated as if they represented an objective reality, something natural and real in the world. But a moment's reflection shows that a good deal of the objective reality has been filtered through social values. For instance, the premium placed on the ability to use the definite article *the* correctly and to use polite language appropriately in many language assessment scales is deeply entrenched in the community values of language teaching and assessment professionals, if nowhere else. For language users unconcerned with measurement of grammatical control, the omission or inconsistent use of the definite article in English may suggest a lack of control of that particular grammar form, but it does not necessarily mean a breakdown in communication; and politeness is clearly a social preference, not an intrinsic language learning requirement.<sup>4</sup> Any analysis of the existing proficiency rating scales and assessment frameworks would reveal different emphases and approaches in respect to the different aspects of language development and language

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<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the growing literature in the field of English as lingua franca points to possible alternative conceptualizations of phonological, grammatical, and pragmatic competences (e.g., Jenkins, 2000; Seidlhofer, 2004).

skills. (See, e.g., Scott & Erduran, 2004, for a comparison of the ESL Bandscales and *ESL Standards for Pre-K–12 Students*.)

At the classroom level, researchers (e.g., Brindley, 1998, 2001) have long recognised variations in the ways teachers operationalize and interpret assessment descriptors. Davison's (2004) comparative study of two groups of teachers in Hong Kong and in Melbourne, Australia, provides a close-up picture of how published criteria in assessment schemes can influence individual teachers' decision making. The think-aloud protocol of a Melbourne teacher, towards the end of marking a piece of writing produced by an ESL student, shows this:

So, we'll total that [the marks given to different aspects of the writing according to a particular set of marking criteria] and probably be horrified at the high score he's got. Four highs which gives him—that's a total of 16. Gives him a B plus. My instinct now comes in and I think really he's not worth a B plus. This now my subjective—I would probably be more inclined to give him a B. But I'm going to be honest and I'm going to give Vince a borderline B plus. Which I think is generous and I think perhaps a B would have been a much more appropriate mark. (p. 315)

This protocol shows a teacher wrestling with the difference between the criteria-derived score and the subjective feel of a piece of student writing. The decision to be "honest" and allow the consequence of criteria-referenced marking shows that student performance, and indeed achievement, can be constructed through the use of assessment schemes.

In the same study, Davison also discusses the apparent differences in the ways teacher participants in Hong Kong and Melbourne used the published assessment criteria. A majority of the teachers in Melbourne, who were used to working with published assessment schemes, appeared to juggle published criteria and professional judgment when coming to a decision, but they had considerable (teacher) community support for this delicate balancing act. The Hong Kong teachers seemed more concerned with prioritizing different criteria (e.g., grammatical accuracy and creativity). Davison suggests that "this is not surprising given the present reliance on norm-referencing . . . and the lack of any system-wide common assessment criteria for evaluating work at school level" (p. 320). The situation was exacerbated by some schools choosing to value accuracy and other formal features of writing while others preferred to promote creativity.

Other researchers have observed that teacher variations can be associated with wider social views and values. In a study of the models of spoken English operated by elementary teachers in England, Leung and Teasdale (1997) show that, when asked to judge video recorded, noncontrived instances of language use by linguistic minority students, a group of ESL teachers working in schools within a particular education

authority appeared to operate using criteria such as *native-speaker-like* and *accent*, which were not in the official published assessment scheme. In different ways, these findings suggest that, in addition to published assessment schemes, teachers' judgments are influenced by wider social and community practices and values. (For a further discussion on teacher mediation of assessment scales and criteria, see Arkoudis & O'Loughlin, 2004; Brindley, 1998; Leung, 1999, 2005a.) Values enter into assessment in another, perhaps more ideological, sense. For instance, Johnson and Kress (2003) observe that, although real-life literacy practices in societies such as Australia, Britain, and the United States are increasingly multilingual and multimodal, recent official approaches to pedagogy and assessment have tended to favour the traditional basics. (Also see Wyatt-Smith & Cumming, 2003.) In different ways, these studies all demonstrate that assessment, whether based on published rating scales or based on wider community values, indeed constructs proficiency.

The debate on the value bases of assessment has shown that language proficiency is an artefact created at least in part after the image, as it were, of the design of language assessment schemes. From the point of view of ELT pedagogy and curriculum, any achievement benchmarks, goals, and targets, if they are derived from a testing or assessment framework, quite clearly should be evaluated critically with students' interests in mind. The need to be critically aware of the nature and type(s) of knowledge and skills that different assessment frameworks prioritize and foreground as criteria is particularly important at a time when, for the purposes of public accountability and reporting progress, many curriculum authorities in Australia, Europe, New Zealand, and North America have introduced systemwide standards- and outcomes-based assessment schemes. Current examples of these systemwide assessment regimes include the statutory tests at the ages of 7, 11, and 14 in the English National Curriculum and the legally required assessment schemes developed under the aegis of the No Child Left Behind Act (2001) in the United States. The educational value of some of these schemes can be questioned. McKay (2005) argues that governments may embrace standards as a managerial tool to raise standards by

- (1) establishing competition between individuals, teachers, schools and States, (2) commodifying the curriculum (making it measurable through standards), and (3) measuring, publishing and then rewarding or punishing achievement. (p. 244)

Recently, the Welsh Assembly Government (with devolved powers within the British state) decided to abandon standardized tests at ages of 11 and 14 within Wales beginning in 2007. This decision came after the

publication of the Daugherty Report (Daugherty Assessment Review Group, 2004), which, among other things, states that

it is clear that test preparation and practice, a narrowing of curriculum coverage and styles of learning that contribute to good test performance have become prominent features of the Year 6 experience of pupils in many schools. . . . The Group has considered whether end-of-key-stage testing, in terms of the “hard” data it gives us on pupil attainments and the targets it gives some pupils to aspire to, is of sufficient value to compensate for the evident impoverishment of pupils’ learning that is occurring at a critical stage in their educational development. (Section 3.4)

Brindley (2001) reports a contentious case in Australia in which researchers argued that literacy benchmark testing was having a dumbing-down effect on achievement because of the official desire to report progress by focusing on reporting minimum standards, which in effect meant including more easy items in tests. McKay (2005) also notes that, in many educational jurisdictions, English-as-a-mother-tongue assessment criteria have been inappropriately applied to L2 learners. In short, systemwide standards- and outcomes-based assessment frameworks are often introduced by dint of political arguments and ideological commitments. They are not necessarily motivated by sound educational or pedagogic principles.

### *Ethics and Consequences of Assessment*

Messick’s (1989) article on validity embraces a concern for the relevance of a test or an assessment to its intended purpose and its utility in the social context for which it has been designed. From the point of view of an expanded notion of validity, it is perhaps more significant that Messick also highlights the social value implications of test score interpretations and the social consequences of using test scores in education and other social contexts. During the second half of the 1990s, testing and assessment researchers exerted strong efforts to explore the social and ethical dimensions of assessment. Lynch (1997) discusses a number of different types of ethical issues. For instance, the issue of consent raises questions about the use of test scores for educational, social, and administrative purposes that are not communicated to test takers. The issue is whether test takers have been given the requisite information to understand what is being done with their test scores. A related issue is deception. Lynch asks, “Is it morally deceptive to have an individual engaged in an activity that he or she cannot clearly see as being directly related to the ability supposedly being tested?” (p. 317). In education this kind of covert, extracurriculum assessment is as likely to be caused by

unreflective professional common sense as by the sins of commission. For instance, Norton and Starfield (1997) found that, at a university, subject departments (e.g., arts, science, and engineering) did not appear to have a clear and collective position on the extent to which language proficiency counted in content assessment. The following were two responses from science staff to a research questionnaire:

Students are not penalised for small errors. They must be able to read and write English at a level adequate to express biological concepts and information.

We believe that the expression and use of English for communication and expression is important. We don't consciously take it into account. (p. 286)

Norton and Starfield (1997) suggest that, among other things, "institutions develop a culture of accountability around assessment practices, particularly with reference to the assessment of L2 students" (p. 291).

Another ethical concern is the effect of a test or assessment framework on pedagogy, in other words, *washback*. As Hamp-Lyons (1997) and others have observed, washback can be beneficial or detrimental to students' learning. If teachers teach to the test or assessment requirements and the consequence is a narrowing of the curriculum, the effect is educationally undesirable. On the other hand, if a particular testing or assessment requirement leads to teaching practices that promote and broaden learning, the effect is positive. These examples show that the concern for values and social consequences has opened up new questions, many of which are deeply and directly connected to language pedagogy and curriculum design. (For further discussion see Kunnan, 2000, Section 1.)

The discussion on ethics and social and educational consequences, in one way or another, is about the impact of testing and assessment on individual students, institutional practices, and educational policies. Quite clearly, the impact of any testing and assessment regime ultimately depends on the exercise of political power and social control. The arguments for ethical testing and assessment, in a sense, have been advanced from the perspective (and on behalf) of the test takers and students who, hitherto, generally have not had much control over the proceedings. In a mood of advocacy, Shohamy (2001) discusses the need for democratic assessment that encourages test takers and students to participate actively in the construction and use of tests and assessment systems. In relation to language testing she argues that the field needs to adopt a critical language testing perspective, which, among other questions, asks,

Who are the testers?

What are their agendas?

Who are the test-takers?

What are their contexts . . . ?

Who will benefit from the tests . . . ?

What will their results be used for?

What areas are being tested, and why . . . ? (p. 377)

Posing these questions sheds light on the exercise of power underlying testing and assessment practices, thus making it easier to redress power imbalances.

Bachman (2005) makes the point that the discussions on ethical concerns and democratic and critical language assessment have been important from an educational standpoint, but so far they have been an addition to, rather than an integral part of, the consideration of validity. In other words, the work on social values and consequences in L2 assessment that has been influenced by Messick's (1989) expanded unitary concept of validity has in fact treated questions of ethics and use separately from validity issues; "we are . . . left with validity at one end and consequences at the other, with no link between" (Bachman, p. 7). Bachman suggests that claims of validity and use should be investigated in a procedure that has two connected stages. First, the test's validity claim, the warranted interpretation of a test score, should be assessed and established. Once that has been achieved, then the validity claim itself becomes the datum for the assessment of use. The integral nature of this two-stage procedure can be seen in some of the legitimation criteria used for the assessment of use, for example,

*Relevance* (that the score-based interpretation is *relevant* to the decision to be made). . . . *Utility* (that the score-based interpretation is actually *useful* for making the intended decision). . . . *Intended consequences* (that the *consequences* of using the assessment and making intended decisions will be beneficial to individuals, the program, company . . . or to society at large). (Bachman, pp. 18–19)

These considerations are likely to raise very interesting questions in the future because, as Lynch and Shaw (2005) argue, "depending on the validity perspective, how educators define *harm* and *coercion* and the degree of ethical responsibility that they attribute to those in the assessment context may differ" (p. 270). In other words, Bachman's (2005) criteria for assessing legitimacy of use may themselves open up further questions.

The work discussed in this section has direct implications for the way the language assessment and testing community conceptualizes assessment generally, whether the topic is standardized testing or other forms

of assessment. In passing, we note that the impact of Messick's (1989) expanded conceptualization of validity can be felt not just in L2 testing and assessment but in educational assessment very generally. For instance, Broadfoot and Black (2004) note that during the past decade, the limitations of the traditional concerns in assessment have been acknowledged and perspectives have been widened to include the social dimension. A wide range of approaches now exist in the assessment of different subjects, but "the underlying principle is the same, namely that educational assessment must be understood as a social practice, an art as much as a science, a humanistic project with all the challenges this implies" (p. 8).

## **Classroom-Based Formative Assessment**

Another important development in the past decade is the growing interest among educators and policy makers in alternative forms of assessment, such as student portfolio, work samples, and classroom-based teacher assessment. In a context where awareness of the social consequences of assessment is increasing, the recent attention to classroom-based teacher formative assessment is not surprising, given the key role it is meant to play in the teaching and learning process. Black and Wiliam's (1998) review of research literature—a massive undertaking covering 681 articles and chapters up to 1997—provides "quantitative evidence that innovations in formative assessment can lead to improvement in the learning of students" (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & Wiliam, 2003, pp. 6–7). There is now a substantial body of literature on formative assessment (for an overview, see Broadfoot & Black, 2004). So what does formative assessment look like in the classroom? The Assessment Reform Group (2002) sets forth 10 principles of classroom practice that include the following statement:

Assessment for learning should be part of effective planning of teaching and learning. A teacher's planning should provide opportunities for both learner and teacher to obtain and use information about progress towards learning goals. . . . Much of what teachers and learners do in classrooms can be described as assessment. That is, tasks and questions prompt learners to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills. What learners say and do is then observed and interpreted, and judgements are made about how learning can be improved. These assessment processes are an essential part of everyday classroom practice and involve both teachers and learners in reflection, dialogue and decision making. (p. 2)

These principles have received strong professional endorsement and have been incorporated, in various manifestations, in policy statements

in such diverse jurisdictions as Australia, England, and Hong Kong. In relation to L2 education, the principles quoted above are intuitively appealing, but the question now is, are there specific L2 issues in formative assessment?

At least three main issues require attention. First, as shown by the earlier discussion on the teachers in Hong Kong, Australia, and England, teachers can interpret assessment criteria differently. So the idea that teachers should observe what learners say and do, interpret their work, and then provide guidance for improvement is an uncertain business. Much depends on teachers' knowledge of L2 development, their knowledge of students' learning trajectories and preferences, and ultimately the kind of assessment schemes they are working with. (For further discussion on these points, see Leung, 2004, 2005a.) Teachers who teach ESL students alongside English L1 students in mainstream subject classrooms (e.g., state-sector schools in England) may face an even more complex task: meeting the demands of the subject content learning and the demands of L2 learning at the same time. For example, in a history class, ESL students may simultaneously have to learn about a historical event and have language learning needs. Teachers working in such circumstances have to integrate the two sets of demands. (See Leung & Mohan, 2004, for further discussion.)

Second, a teacher's formative judgement may conceivably be incompatible with the requirements of a published official assessment scheme, for either summative or formative purposes. For instance, in education or school systems where ESL students are integrated into the mainstream without an official complementary ESL curriculum, teachers are likely to find themselves in this kind of intellectual and professional conflict if they apply their own formative ESL assessment criteria to ESL students. Furthermore, if, as is the case in a great many education systems in the world today, standardized, summative assessment continues to have higher status, and broader political endorsement and public recognition, any attempt to carry out formative assessment, possibly using an alternative set of assessment criteria, would seem an effort not worth making (see Leung, 2005c).

Third, the principles of formative assessment we have cited give an impression that teachers readily adopt the kind of practice suggested. But it is far from clear that this is the case. Broadfoot and Black (2004), for instance, report some evidence suggesting that teachers do not distinguish between formative and summative assessment and, in some circumstances, may even resist reforms that challenge their preference for summative assessment. Instead of assuming that all teachers will be able to adopt a formative approach in recommended ways, it may be a good idea to first find out what teachers think and do when carrying out classroom assessment. Detailed observations of classroom practice, such

as those provided by Rea-Dickens (2001) and Gardner and Rea-Dickens (2002), are much needed. At the heart of this assessment issue is a question concerning teachers' professional knowledge and skill, and the educational values that inform their everyday professional practice.

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

In this discussion we have attempted to show how some of the debates and developments in the field of language testing and assessment are related to some fundamental concepts and issues in ELT pedagogy and curriculum. The search for authentic testing has broadened the concept of task performance to include the part played by test takers (and others involved). The inclusion of ethics and consequences in test validation has led to not only greater knowledge of socially responsible ways of using assessment outcomes, but also a growing awareness of the need to link test validity and test use in an integrated way. The work in classroom-based formative assessment has shown how intimately assessment is connected to curriculum affordances and constraints, teacher knowledge, and teacher professionalism. The reflexive examination of social values in assessment schemes has helped make explicit the curriculum-induced and socially constructed nature of language proficiency. All this strongly suggests that work in testing and assessment is deeply relevant to language pedagogy and curriculum development, and vice versa.

In a sense, this discussion has largely been retrospective. But we cannot sign off without mentioning a rapidly developing real-world phenomenon that will inevitably affect language testing and assessment in the near future. For some time now, the field has understood that the English language comprises different (codified) regional and national varieties (e.g., Kachru, 1986, 1992). Some of these are recognized as metropolitan native speaker varieties, such as Australian, British, and North American, whereas others are regarded as nonnative varieties, such as Indian, Nigerian, and Singaporean. The existence of these Englishes has generated some very keen and interesting discussions on specific features of the different varieties and on the contested notion of *native speaker* (see Davies, 2003; Jenkins, 2000, for an overview). In terms of English language testing, particularly high-stakes, large-scale proficiency testing administered by international bodies, it would be fair to say that, in terms of language norms, language functions, and pragmatics, the metropolitan native speaker varieties have held sway. But the growing knowledge of English as lingua franca (ELF) in the past few years is beginning to make this self-imposed normative insulation untenable.

ELF can be understood as both a medium for social interaction and a constellation of language features (if not yet codified as stable varieties in

the conventional sense). The continuing spread of English in domains such as international trade and supranational political development (e.g., the European Union [EU]) now means that very often English is the shared and chosen medium for communication in situations where no native speaker of English is present. In this sense ELF, unlike the more territorially bound concept of a variety of English (e.g., Australian English or Indian English), is a use- and context-driven phenomenon not primarily tied to any particular ethnic or racial group, nation, or geographic space. The use of ELF in effect represents a kind of varieties-in-contact space where, without constant monitoring and control by native speakers, English is potentially open to innovations, development, and change. Seidlhofer (2004) observes that “ELF has taken on a life of its own, independent to a considerable degree of the norms established by its native speakers” (p. 212). Research in ELF has produced stable descriptions of some discernible phonological, lexicogrammatical, and pragmatic features (e.g., Jenkins, 2000; Meierkord, 2002; Seidlhofer, 2004; *VOICE: The Vienna-Oxford International Corpus of English*, n.d.). In addition, many of the ELF-medium interactions take place in what House (1999) refers to as “influential frameworks” (p. 74) such as EU political meetings and multinational business conventions.

The progressive establishment of a stable body of knowledge of ELF features and the use of ELF in a wide range of contexts will no doubt generate new momentum for a renewed debate on language norms and the nature of language proficiency for teaching and assessment of English (e.g., Brutt-Griffler, 2005; Davies, 2005; Leung, 2005b). The next few years will very likely see a finer-grained discussion on greater recognition of use- and context-referenced language norms to accommodate both ELF and local varieties of English in some types of contextualized assessment of English. Brown and Lumley’s (1998) attempt to take account of Indonesian English in the development of a test of English for teachers is a good example of a recent attempt to recognise the legitimacy of a local variety. In a world with accelerating movements of peoples from diverse ethnolinguistic backgrounds, the language testing and assessment community will in all likelihood need to take a fuller account of local varieties, ELF, or both. Canagarajah (2005) argues that in the hypothetical case of a Sri Lankan student moving to New York to do graduate studies, a context-sensitive approach to language testing and assessment will have to take into account proficiency in Black or Caribbean varieties for neighbourhood interaction, Indian or Chinese varieties to understand some of the professors, and so on. This scenario can be multiplied a thousandfold in every domain of life. All this, however, does not mean that there is no place for the metropolitan varieties, particularly the metropolitan standard English variety that has been adopted in many existing tests. After all, as Davies

(2002) observes, standard English is (probably) best described and most readily used globally for many purposes. But the case for maintaining a universal English proficiency in assessment has been weakened.

The issues of World Englishes and ELF have returned us in a roundabout way to where this discussion started, authenticity. Authenticity, whether in terms of task, test-taker perception, or language variety and norms, seems likely to remain prominent in the future research agenda.

## THE AUTHORS

Constant Leung is a professor of educational linguistics in the Department of Education and Professional Studies at King's College London, and he is the director of a master's program in English language teaching and applied linguistics. He has written and published widely on additional and second language education and language assessment issues.

Jo Lewkowicz is an associate professor and acting associate dean at the American University of Armenia, where she teaches in the graduate TESOL programs. She has taught in Hong Kong, China, Kenya, Egypt, and Poland. Her research interests include language testing and postgraduate literacy.

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# *The Sociocultural Turn and Its Challenges for Second Language Teacher Education*

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**KAREN E. JOHNSON**

*The Pennsylvania State University  
University Park, Pennsylvania, United States*

Although the overall mission of second language (L2) teacher education has remained relatively constant, that is, to prepare L2 teachers to do the work of this profession, the field's understanding of that work—of who teaches English, who learns English and why, of the sociopolitical and socioeconomic contexts in which English is taught, and of the varieties of English that are being taught and used around the world—has changed dramatically over the past 40 years. This article examines the epistemological underpinnings of a more general sociocultural turn in the human sciences and the impact that this turn has had on the field's understanding of how L2 teachers learn to do their work. Four interrelated challenges that have come to the forefront as a result of this turn are discussed: (a) theory/practice versus praxis, (b) the legitimacy of teachers' ways of knowing, (c) redrawing the boundaries of professional development, and (d) "located" L2 teacher education. In addressing these challenges, the intellectual tools of inquiry are positioned as critical if L2 teacher education is to sustain a teaching force of transformative intellectuals who can navigate their professional worlds in ways that enable them to create educationally sound, contextually appropriate, and socially equitable learning opportunities for the students they teach.

As *TESOL Quarterly* marks its 40th anniversary, the preparation of teachers to teach English to speakers of other languages remains complex and multifarious. Although the overall mission of second language (L2)<sup>1</sup> teacher education has remained relatively constant, that is, to prepare L2 teachers to do the work of this profession, the field's understanding of that work—of who teaches English, of who learns English and why, of the sociopolitical and socioeconomic contexts in

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<sup>1</sup> I use the term *L2* throughout to refer to the teaching and learning of English as a second, additional, or foreign language.

which English is taught, and of the varieties of English that are taught and used around the world—has changed dramatically over the past 40 years. Many factors have advanced the field's understanding of L2 teachers' work, but none is more significant than the emergence of a substantial body of research now referred to as *teacher cognition* (in L2, see Borg, 2003; Freeman, 2002; Woods, 1996). This research has helped capture the complexities of who teachers are, what they know and believe, how they learn to teach, and how they carry out their work in diverse contexts throughout their careers.

However, over the past 40 years, the ways in which educational research has conceptualized teacher cognition, which has in turn informed the activity of teacher education, has shifted dramatically. In the mid-1970s, when research focused on teaching behaviors and the student learning outcomes they produced (Dunkin & Biddle, 1974), teacher education centered on ensuring that teachers had mastered the content they were expected to teach and could deliver it through efficient methods that led to greater gains in student achievement (Hunter, 1982). In the mid-1980s, cognitive learning theories and information-processing models shifted the focus of research to questions about what teachers actually know, how they use that knowledge, and what impact their decisions have on their instructional practices (Shavelson & Stern, 1981). Teacher education continued to focus on content knowledge and teaching practices, but teachers were conceptualized as decision makers and were expected to benefit from making their tacit knowledge and decisions explicit (Clark & Peterson, 1986; Freeman, 1991; Johnson, 1992).

Yet, once research began to uncover the complexities of *teachers' mental lives* (Walberg, 1977; also see Freeman, 2002), teacher educators could no longer ignore the fact that teachers' prior experiences, their interpretations of the activities they engage in, and, most important, the contexts within which they work are extremely influential in shaping how and why teachers do what they do. The positivistic paradigm that had long positioned teachers as conduits to students and their learning was found to be insufficient for explaining the complexities of teachers' mental lives and the teaching processes that occur in classrooms. Rather, an interpretative or situated paradigm, largely drawn from ethnographic research in sociology and anthropology, came to be seen as better suited to explaining the complexities of teachers' mental lives and the various dimensions of teachers' professional worlds (see Elbaz, 1991). This shift did not occur in isolation but was influenced by epistemological shifts in how various intellectual traditions had come to conceptualize human learning; more specifically, historically documented shifts from behaviorist, to cognitive, to situated, social, and distributed views of human cognition (Cobb & Bower, 1999; Greeno, Collins, & Resnick, 1996; Paker

& Winne, 1995; Putman & Borko, 2000; for reviews of parallel shifts in conceptualizations of language and second language acquisition [SLA], see Firth & Wagner, 1997; Lantolf, 1996).

I begin my contribution to this 40th anniversary issue by highlighting the epistemological underpinnings of a more general sociocultural turn in the human sciences and the impact of this turn on how the field of L2 teacher education has come to understand L2 teacher cognition. I then outline four interrelated challenges that have come to the forefront as the field works to be epistemologically consistent with current understandings of how L2 teachers learn to do their work. I conclude by arguing that, despite this sociocultural turn and the challenges it has created for L2 teacher education, it has yet to infiltrate the positivistic paradigm that continues to dominate the public discourse surrounding the professional activities of L2 teachers. Coming to terms with the epistemological gaps between how L2 teacher cognition is conceptualized, how L2 teachers are prepared to do their work, and how L2 teachers and their practices are constructed in the public settings where they work will be critical to the advancement of L2 teacher education in the TESOL profession.

## THE SOCIOCULTURAL TURN

The epistemological stance of the sociocultural turn defines human learning as a dynamic social activity that is situated in physical and social contexts, and distributed across persons, tools, and activities (Rogoff, 2003; Salomon, 1993; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991). Although rooted in divergent intellectual traditions, several compatible theories have helped explicate this turn. Theories of situated cognition argue that knowledge entails lived practices, not just accumulated information, and the processes of learning are negotiated with people in what they do, through experiences in the social practices associated with particular activities (Chaiklin & Lave, 1996; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998). Moreover, social activities are regulated by normative ways of reasoning and using tasks and other resources in collective activity, or what Lave and Wenger (1991) have termed a *community of practice*. Thus, the knowledge of the individual is constructed through the knowledge of the communities of practice within which the individual participates.

Sociocultural theories also argue that the way in which human consciousness develops depends on the specific social activities in which people engage. However, in order to understand human learning, or higher cognitive development, one must look at the social activities that the individual engages in and see how they reappear as mental activities in the individual (Leont'ev, 1981; Vygotsky, 1978, 1986; Wertsch, 1985,

1991; for L2, see Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf & Appel, 1994). Learning, therefore, is not the straightforward appropriation of skills or knowledge from the outside in, but the progressive movement from external, socially mediated activity to internal mediational control by individual learners, which results in the transformation of both the self and the activity. And because social activities and the language used to regulate them are structured and gain meaning in historically and culturally situated ways, both the physical tools and the language practices used by communities of practice gain their meaning from those who have come before.

Critical social theories support the notion that social activities simultaneously reflect, create, and recreate historically situated ways of knowing, social relations, and material conditions (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977; Foucault, 1980; Habermas, 1998). Central to these theories is the role that language plays in social practices (Fairclough, 1989; Gee, 1996), in particular, how language is implicated in the ways in which social class, race, sexuality, ethnicity, and linguistic identity are constructed and reconstructed through human relationships, especially in terms of how power and inequity are enacted in both social and institutional arrangements and the ideological discourses that support them (Pennycook, 1989, 2001). Knowledge and knowing, therefore, depend on point of view, a sort of social positioning, that is constituted in and emerges out of how the individual is constructed in different social and physical contexts.

Despite the different ways in which these perspectives foreground and background the dynamic between the social, the cognitive, and language, and despite the varied research agendas of the people who use these perspectives in their work, the epistemological stance of the sociocultural turn supports the notion that humans develop as “participants in cultural communities” and that “their development can be understood only in light of the cultural practices and circumstances of their communities—which also change” (Rogoff, 2003, pp. 3–4). Thus, both participation and context are critical to human cognition. The sociocultural turn stands in stark contrast to the cognitive learning theories of the positivistic paradigm that defined learning as an internal psychological process isolated in the mind of the learner and largely free from the social and physical contexts within which it occurs (Lenneberg, 1967).

Historically grounded in the positivistic paradigm, L2 teacher education has long been structured around the assumption that teachers could learn about the content they were expected to teach (language) and teaching practices (how best to teach it) in their teacher education program, observe and practice it in the teaching practicum, and develop pedagogical expertise during the induction years of teaching. Yet the

emerging body of research on L2 teacher cognition has begun to construct a very different characterization of how teachers learn to do their work (see Borg, 2003, Freeman, 1996, 2002; Freeman & Johnson, 1998a; Golombek, 1998; Johnson & Golombek, 2003; Woods, 1996). This research depicts L2 teacher learning as normative and lifelong, as emerging out of and through experiences in social contexts: as learners in classrooms and schools, as participants in professional teacher education programs, and later as teachers in the settings where they work. It describes L2 teacher learning as socially negotiated and contingent on knowledge of self, students, subject matter, curricula, and setting. It shows L2 teachers as users and creators of legitimate forms of knowledge who make decisions about how best to teach their L2 students within complex socially, culturally, and historically situated contexts. And most significantly, it exposes an epistemological gap between how L2 teacher educators have traditionally prepared L2 teachers to do their work and how L2 teachers actually learn to teach and carry out their work. To redress this gap, in other words, for the activity of L2 teacher education to be epistemologically consistent with the current conceptualization of L2 teacher cognition, several interrelated challenges have come to the forefront—challenges that will by necessity reorient the ways in which L2 teachers are prepared to do their work.

### **Challenge 1. Theory/Practice Versus Praxis**

Since the publication of the *TESOL Quarterly* special-topic issue on English language teacher education (Freeman & Johnson, 1998b), a public debate has continued over what should stand at the core of the knowledge base of L2 teacher education (Bartels, 2004; Freeman & Johnson, 2004, 2005a; Tarone & Allwright, 2005; Yates & Muchisky, 2003). Fundamental to this debate is whether the knowledge base should remain grounded in “core disciplinary knowledge about the nature of language and language acquisition” (Yates & Muchisky, 2003, p. 136) or focus more centrally on how L2 teachers learn to teach and how they carry out their work (Freeman & Johnson, 1998a). Some have charged that any sort of repositioning would lead to greater attention to the personal and experiential at the expense of the empirical and theoretical (Yates & Muchisky, 2003). Others have argued that it would take away the subject matter (i.e., language and how to teach it) that makes L2 teachers and their teaching unique (Tarone & Allwright, 2005) or erode the authority and thus professionalism of L2 teachers (Widdowson, 2002). Counterarguments rebut that although it is certainly important for L2 teachers to know about theories of language and SLA, the cumulative effect of studying what language is and how it is acquired may

not necessarily translate into effective L2 teaching practices (Freeman & Johnson, 1998a, 2004, 2005a; Johnson, 2003a). A similar position has been articulated in general educational research, especially in U.S.-based mathematics education, where teachers' mathematical knowledge for teaching, as opposed to knowledge of mathematics, has been found to have a significant impact on student achievement (Hill, Rowan, & Ball, 2005).

Perhaps the traditional theory/practice dichotomy, which seems to permeate this debate, is counterproductive in light of the sociocultural turn outlined above. Instead of arguing over whether or not L2 teachers should study, for example, theories of SLA as part of a professional preparation program, attention may be better focused on creating opportunities for L2 teachers to make sense of those theories in their professional lives and the settings where they work (Freeman & Johnson, 1998a; 2004). From this perspective, the construct of *praxis* (Freire, 1970) is more suitable for the preparation of teachers because it captures how theory and practice inform one another and how this transformative process informs teachers' work (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Edge & Richards, 1998; Simon, 1992).

A recent account of L2 teachers' praxis is *The TESOL Quarterly Dialogues: Rethinking Issues of Language, Culture, and Power* (Sharkey & Johnson, 2003). In this collection of dialogues between *TQ* readers (classroom teachers) and *TQ* authors (researchers), *expert knowledge* (Kennedy, 1999) as codified in previously published *TQ* articles provides *TQ* readers with theoretical constructs and multiple discourses through which they express their emerging understandings of language, culture, and power in L2 teaching. *TQ* readers actively link this expert knowledge to their own experiential knowledge as they reframe the way they describe and interpret their lived experiences. These new understandings enable *TQ* readers to reorganize their experiential knowledge, and this reorganization creates a new lens through which they interpret their understandings of themselves and their classroom practices. Thus, praxis, as a form of expertise, has a great deal of experiential knowledge in it, but it is organized around and transformed through theoretical knowledge. Not only are teachers' understandings of theory populated with their own intentions and in their own voices (Bakhtin, 1981; Ball, 2000; Freeman, 1991), but teachers also become active users and producers of theory in their own right, for their own means, and as appropriate for their own instructional contexts (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Johnson, 2003b).

From the epistemological stance of the sociocultural turn, knowledge that informs activity is not just abstracted from theory, codified in textbooks, and constructed through principled ways of examining phenomena, but also emerges out of a dialogic and transformative process of

reconsidering and reorganizing lived experiences through the theoretical constructs and discourses that are publicly recognized and valued within the communities of practice that hold power. And, although teachers do, in fact, engage in the sort of theorizing captured in the construct of praxis, whether as part of officially sanctioned professional development programs or through self-initiated professional activities, a critical challenge for L2 teacher education is to create public spaces that make visible how L2 teachers make sense of and use the disciplinary knowledge that has informed and will continue to inform L2 teacher education. Public spaces, such as Sharkey and Johnson's (2003) *The TESOL Quarterly Dialogues*, help legitimize the complex ways in which L2 teachers come to understand their experiences through the multiple discourses that theory has to offer and highlight how teachers co-construct and use knowledge that informs their practice.

## **Challenge 2. The Legitimacy of Teachers' Ways of Knowing**

If one accepts the notion that L2 teachers are users and creators of knowledge and theorizers in their own right, then an additional challenge is to position teachers' ways of knowing that lead to praxis as legitimate knowledge in L2 teacher education. General educational research indexes research on how teachers come to know what they know as *new scholarship* (Schön, 1995; Zeichner, 1999) or *practitioner knowledge* (Hiebert, Gallimore, & Stigler, 2002). This research typically emerges out of questions posed by teachers in their work settings, and it enables them to bring a new sense of meaning and significance to their work. Largely ethnographic and descriptive in nature, this research has positioned teachers' ways of knowing as having the potential to infuse the traditional knowledge base of teaching with insider knowledge that includes the complex and multilayered understandings that teachers possess as natives to their work settings (Clandinin, 1986; Clandinin & Connelly, 1991, 1995; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, 1998, 1999; Johnson & Golombek, 2002).

The reflective teaching movement (Lockhart & Richards, 1994; Schön, 1983; 1987; Zeichner & Liston, 1996), action research (Edge, 2001; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Somekh, 1993; Wallace, 1998), and the teacher research movement (Burns, 1999; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Edge & Richards, 1993; Freeman, 1998) have helped legitimize teachers' ways of knowing and ways of coming to know by highlighting the importance of reflection on and inquiry into teachers' experiences as mechanisms for change in classroom practices. Although teacher research stems from teachers' own desires to make sense of their classroom experiences, it is defined by ordered ways of gathering, recollecting, and

recording information; documenting experiences inside and outside the classroom; and creating written records of the insights that emerge. Thus, teacher research positions teachers as investigators of and interveners in their own practice while making their investigations and interventions, in essence their learning, visible to others.

Because this enterprise takes an emic perspective, in that it seeks to capture the meanings and perspectives of teachers and their learning, the use of narrative has emerged as a predominant means of understanding and documenting teachers' ways of knowing (Carter, 1993; Doyle, 1997). Elbaz (1991) argues that

story is the very stuff of teaching, the landscape within which we live as teachers and researchers, and within which the work of teachers can be seen as making sense. This is not merely a claim about the aesthetic or emotional sense of fit of the notion of story with our intuitive understanding of teaching, but an epistemological claim that teachers' knowledge in its own terms is ordered by story and can best be understood in this way. (p. 3)

Equally important is the notion that narratives connect phenomena, infuse them with interpretation, and thus uncover teachers' interpretations of the activities they engage in. Therefore, narratives situate and relate facts to one another, and the essence of truth is not static or a given but in how phenomena are connected and interpreted (Doyle, 1997).

In order to recognize teachers' ways of knowing as legitimate knowledge, L2 teacher education must accept the multiple forms that their ways of knowing and their ways of coming to know may take. And although teachers' ways of knowing, by design, do not necessarily lead to the development of generalized principles of what works, they place teachers in the position of asking much more substantive questions, such as these: For whom does their instruction work? Why? Who might be left out? What are the social and educational consequences that their instructional practices may have for the intellectual and social lives of the students they teach? Moreover, simply legitimizing teachers' ways of knowing will not automatically lead to praxis. This will occur only when teachers have multiple opportunities to connect their ways of knowing to theory, both emic and etic, through modes of engagement that lead to praxis and, more importantly, when they are deeply embedded in communities of practice that seek to ask these more substantive questions.

Teachers' ways of knowing that lead to praxis can enrich L2 teacher education precisely because they are generated in and emerge out of teachers' lived experiences, they highlight the interconnectedness of how teachers think about their work, they are deeply connected to the problems of practice, and they are situated in the contexts in which such

problems are constructed. They reflect both the processes of teacher learning and the impact of that learning on teachers' classroom practices and students' opportunities for learning. And although they have value for the individual teacher, they also have value for L2 teacher education when they are made public, accessible, and open to review (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993; Hiebert, Gallimore, & Stigler, 2002; Johnson & Golombek, 2002).

The end goal is the articulation, documentation, and public recognition of teachers' ways of knowing that lead to praxis, as legitimate knowledge and as legitimate ways of coming to know. The challenge for L2 teacher education will be to position teachers as knowers and to position their ways of knowing that lead to praxis alongside the disciplinary knowledge that has dominated the traditional knowledge base of L2 teacher education.

### **Challenge 3. Redrawing the Boundaries of Professional Development**

If one embraces the notion that teacher learning is social, situated in physical and social contexts, and distributed across persons, tools, and activities, then an additional challenge for L2 teacher education is to redraw the boundaries that have typically defined professional development. This will entail looking at sites of teacher learning beyond visible professional development activities such as course work, workshops, and seminars for teachers organized by others to include teachers' informal social and professional networks and the extent to which their classrooms are sites for professional learning.

In some educational contexts, top-down professional development models, in which innovations are imposed on teachers with little attention to how to integrate them into existing classroom practices, have begun to give way to alternative professional development structures that allow for self-directed, collaborative, inquiry-based learning that is directly relevant to teachers' classroom lives. Alternative structures designed to foster and sustain teachers' professional development, for example, teacher inquiry seminars (part of the Teacher Knowledge Project; see School for International Training, 2003), peer coaching (Ackland, 2000), cooperative development (Edge, 1992), teacher study groups (Burns, 1999; Clair, 1998; Dubetz, 2005), narrative inquiry (Bell, 2002; Golombek & Johnson, 2004; Johnson & Golombek, 2002), lesson study groups (Takemura & Shimizu, 1993), and critical friends groups (Bambino, 2002), are all designed to create more equitable social roles and typically take place in settings that are more connected to the daily

activities of teachers and students. Common to these structural arrangements is the recognition that participation and context are essential to teacher learning, and therefore that the classrooms where teachers spend the majority of their time represent legitimate sites for teacher learning. In addition, they encourage teachers to engage in ongoing, in-depth, and reflective examinations of their teaching practices and students' learning (Rogers, 2002) while embracing the processes of teacher socialization that occur in classrooms, schools, and teachers' wider professional communities. Finally, they create both public and private spaces for teachers to theorize about their work.

New technologies are also redrawing the boundaries of professional development. The availability of online teacher certificate programs, various configurations of online and face-to-face instruction, and the use of synchronic and asynchronous computer-mediated communication (CMC) tools such as online bulletin boards, chat rooms, and blogs, have helped create virtual communities where teachers can engage in discussions about and inquiry into their own learning and the learning environments that they seek to create for students. The integration of CMC tools in L2 teacher education has been found to foster qualitatively different forms of participation than face-to-face instruction does, create more equitable social roles as teachers engage in inquiry about their own learning and teaching, foster greater collaboration among teacher learners, and decrease the sense of isolation L2 teachers in disparate locations often experience (Kamhi-Stein, 2000a, 2000b). Although not a panacea for the delivery of L2 teacher education, new technologies have the potential to increase the power that teachers and their learners have over their own learning or, as Cummins (2000) argues, "the potential to promote language learning in a transformative way when it is aligned with a pedagogy oriented towards promoting collaborative relations of power in the classroom and beyond" (p. 539). However, critical to the successful integration of new technologies in teacher learning is the instructors' role in organizing and facilitating what learners attend to in CMC environments (see Belz & Muller-Hartmann, 2003; Ware & Kramsch, 2005).

An important caveat for redrawing the boundaries of professional development is not to assume that simply creating alternative structures will necessarily translate into "significant and worthwhile change" in teachers' practices (see Richardson, 1990). Critical to this challenge will be systematic exploration into the kinds of participation these alternative structures engender, their impact on teacher learning, and the kinds of learning environments teachers in turn create to foster student learning. Largely unexplored in the current research on L2 teacher cognition is the relationship between teacher learning and student learning, a dimension of the teaching-learning equation that is often misconstrued

as “a causal conditional” rather than “a relationship of influence” (Freeman & Johnson, 2005b, pp. 76–80). In other words, although teaching does not necessarily cause student learning, there is clearly a relationship of influence between what teachers learn, how they organize their classroom activities, and what students learn from engaging in those activities (Freeman & Johnson, 2005a; Hill, Rowan, & Ball, 2005). Understanding the complexities of this relationship will be critical to the advancement of the research on teacher cognition in L2 teacher education.

Finally, an equally important challenge will be getting school administrators and educational policy makers to recognize the legitimacy of alternative forms of professional development and to provide the financial support that will enable teachers to sustain them over time. Because professional development has long been assumed to happen outside of teachers’ classrooms, redrawing the boundaries of professional development and demonstrating the utility of such experiences for both teacher and student learning will be absolutely critical for the future of L2 teacher education.

#### **Challenge 4. Located L2 Teacher Education**

A fourth challenge for L2 teacher education is the recognition that the professional development of L2 teachers takes place in ever-changing sociopolitical and socioeconomic contexts around the world. This recognition calls into question the assumption that there can or should be uniformity in what L2 teachers should know and be able to do. Both the content and the activities of L2 teacher education must take into account the social, political, economic, and cultural histories that are located in the contexts where L2 teachers learn and teach. Context is not necessarily limited to specific geopolitical boundaries but can be sociopolitical, sociohistorical, and socioeconomic contexts that shape and are shaped by local and global events, for example, the globalization of English or the recognition of World Englishes.

Studies from around the globe find L2 teachers enacting their practices in styles that suit the normative ways of teaching and learning that are historically embedded in their local contexts (Canagarajah, 1999, 2005; Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996; Li, 1998; Probyn, 2001; Simon-Maeda, 2004). More specifically, although questions about the exportability of Western methods have been raised for some time (Burnaby & Sun, 1989; Li, 1998; Scovel, 1986; Ting, 1987), ministries of education, national educational policy makers, and other legislative bodies continue to set educational policies that import Western methods without taking into account the local constraints that will ultimately affect the

extent to which L2 teachers are willing or able to implement curricular innovations. As a case in point, South Korea's ministry of education's sixth and seventh national curricula for public schools mandate that communicative language teaching replace traditional grammar-translation and audiolingual methods and that teachers teach English through English using task-based activities that engage learners in meaningful language use. Yet, both mandates fail to account for the limited oral language proficiency of the local teaching force, the washback effect of the grammar-translation-oriented examination system, and the normative ways of schooling that South Korean teachers and their students are socialized into. Thus, English language teachers in South Korea have, not surprisingly, been found to enact these curricula in very traditional, noncommunicative ways (Kim, 2005; Li, 1998). The implication for located L2 teacher education is not to expect L2 teachers to succumb to the hegemonic practices that are imposed on them but, for example, to expose L2 teachers to the pedagogical value of helping L2 students create alternative identities (i.e., "I don't need to sound like a native speaker of English") or creating discursive spaces both inside (i.e., safe houses; see Canagarajah, 2003) and outside (i.e., new technologies) the classroom, where L2 students can try on new linguistic and cultural identities in ways that support their L2 learning (Gebhard, 2004).

Located L2 teacher education must also enable L2 teachers to scrutinize and navigate the consequences that broader macrostructures, such as educational policies and curricular mandates, have on their daily classroom practices. For example, the U.S. educational reform movement legislated by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 has created a host of challenges for the assessment of and accountability for the achievement of limited-English-proficient students. Although the act was intended to raise the academic profile of English language learners to be on par with their English-fluent counterparts, inconsistent classification mechanisms, lack of clarity over how proficiency is defined, and undue test performance pressure have created a contested and often contradictory work environment for L2 teachers and administrators (Abedi, 2004; Freeman & Riley, 2005). High-stakes tests, such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), must also be scrutinized to ensure that teachers' professional judgments about the communicative abilities of their L2 students are not trumped by the TOEFL scores students receive (see Johnson, Jordan, & Poehner, 2005).

Located L2 teacher education begins by recognizing why L2 teachers do what they do within the social, historical, and cultural contexts within which they work and from there works to co-construct with L2 teachers locally appropriate responses to their professional development needs. Of course, this will be both a macro- and microenterprise because it requires attending to the social and ideological structures that shape and

are shaped by the contexts in which L2 teachers live and work as well as recognizing the complexities of classroom life and the relative autonomy that can exist there. Equally important is the need for located L2 teacher education to engage L2 teachers in the professional discourses and practices that are evolving beyond their localities as a means to critique their local knowledge and context. When L2 teachers engage in reflexive inquiry, their local knowledge evolves out of an engagement with wider professional discourses and practices and can lead to praxis (Canagarajah, 2002).

An additional element in creating locally appropriate responses to L2 teacher education is the close examination of the way L2 teachers are constructed in their work settings and the relative status of L2 teaching in those settings. Those who have explored how L2 teachers negotiate their identities cite a combination of biographical and contextual factors that keep those identities in a continual state of flux (Duff & Uchida, 1997; Mantero, 2004; Pavlenko, 2003; Varghese, Morgan, Johnston, & Johnson, 2005). In addition, despite scholarly efforts at dislodging the myth of the native speaker (Kachru, 1992; Kramsch, 1997; Medgyes, 1994), nonnative-speaking L2 teachers continue to face inequitable hiring practices, hold marginalized teaching assignments, and be positioned as less competent than their expert-speaker counterparts (Arva & Medgyes, 2000; Braine, 1999). Navigating and sustaining a sense of professional expertise, regardless of one's linguistic biography, is critical to how L2 teachers will ultimately position themselves and their work in the contexts in which they teach (Johnston, 1997; Tsui, 2004). Constructing locally appropriate responses to support the preparation and professionalism of L2 teachers will continue to be a challenge for L2 teacher education. It will entail recognizing how changing sociopolitical and socioeconomic contexts affect the ways in which L2 teachers are positioned, how they enact their teaching practices, and, most importantly, the kinds of learning environments they are willing and able to create for their L2 students.

## **THE INTELLECTUAL TOOLS OF INQUIRY VERSUS THE POLITICS OF ACCOUNTABILITY**

Although the understanding of how L2 teachers learn to do the work of this profession has enabled the field to think about the professional development of L2 teachers in longitudinal and developmental terms, as being both overt and covert, and as influenced by both participation and context, most L2 teachers continue to work in institutions in which they, their students, and their instructional practices are constructed by the positivistic paradigm that defines good teaching in terms of student

performance on standardized tests and conceptualizes learning as internal to the learner. Compounding this predicament is the fact that most L2 teachers are products of this same paradigm, having been socialized into normative ways of thinking about L2 teaching and learning, and then finding themselves in L2 classrooms that are largely regulated by these same normative practices. Add to this the oppressive nature of global educational policies and curricular mandates that hold teachers accountable for student learning based on standardized assessment instruments and dictate what content is to be taught, when, and how, and it becomes painfully obvious that the politics of accountability has infiltrated the public discourse surrounding L2 teaching, L2 learning, and the professional preparation of L2 teachers. In light of these realities, it is not surprising that L2 teachers struggle to reject a teach-for-the-test mentality, are frustrated by being positioned as managers of curricula rather than as facilitators of the L2 learning process, and increasingly feel professionally disempowered within the contexts in which they work (for L1 see Cochran-Smith, 2005; for L2 see Gebhard, 2005; Gutierrez, Larson, & Kreuter, 1995).

For L2 teachers to work productively in an educational climate of standardization and accountability, they need, now more than ever, to function as *transformative intellectuals* (Giroux, 1988; see also Pennycook, 1989, 2001). In other words, they need the intellectual tools to position themselves as

professionals who are able and willing to reflect upon the ideological principles that inform practice, who connect pedagogical theory and practice to wider social issues, and who work together to share ideas, and exercise power over the conditions of more humane life. (Giroux & McLaren, 1989, p. xxiii)

More than a half-century ago, the progressive educational philosopher Dewey (1933) characterized the intellectual tools of inquiry as the means by which humans make experience educative. He argued that it is through the attitudes of open-mindedness (seeking alternatives), responsibility (recognizing consequences), and wholeheartedness (continual self-examination) that teachers come to recognize their own assumptions about themselves as teachers, about their students, about the curriculum they teach, and about the nature and impact of their teaching practices. Foundational to the principles of reflective teaching (Zeichner & Liston, 1996), when teachers inquire into their experiences through these attitudes, the intellectual tools of inquiry enable them to confront the taken-for-granted assumptions about what is and is not possible within the context in which they teach, systematically problematize their own everyday practices, and regularly ask the broader questions of

not just whether their practices work, but for whom, in what ways, and why.

For L2 teachers to function as transformative intellectuals, the intellectual tools of inquiry must permeate all dimensions of their professional development experiences. Using these tools to inquire about their professional identities, L2 teachers come to recognize their own beliefs, values, and knowledge about language learning and language teaching and become aware of their impact on classroom practices (Johnson, 1999). Through such inquiry they come to terms with the fact that they teach from somewhere; that their knowledge, beliefs, values, and practices are socially situated and socially constituted; and that those practices have social, cultural, and academic consequences for the lives of L2 students (Johnston, 2003). Using the intellectual tools of inquiry to investigate the disciplinary knowledge that is codified in journal articles and scholarly books, L2 teachers reflect on and relate to such knowledge in ways that foster an understanding of experience through the multiple discourses of theory, and such inquiry cultivates the co-construction of knowledge that informs their practice (Ball, 2000; Sharkey & Johnson, 2003). Using the intellectual tools of inquiry to investigate the English language, L2 teachers develop an awareness of the integral nature of language form, function, and use. Although knowledge about language, its grammar, its phonology, and its semantics is insufficient if L2 teachers lack knowledge of its use, function, and pragmatics (Andrews, 2001; Widdowson, 2002), L2 teachers who are *linguistically aware* (Wright, 2002) or function as *critical discourse analysts* (Belz, 2004) can challenge commonly held notions about standardized English ideology and nativespeakerness (Cook, 1999; Cortazzi & Jin, 1996); recognize the complex nature of multilingualism and language learner identity (Norton, 2000); and see how language teaching practices are related to broader social, cultural, and political relations (Pennycook, 2001). Using the intellectual tools of inquiry to investigate L2 students and their language learning, L2 teachers build upon the linguistic and interactional competencies that L2 students bring to the L2 classroom (Gebhard, 2005; Johnson, 1995), recognize the physical and symbolic tools that mediate L2 student learning, and examine the relationship between how they organize the social activities that constitute their classrooms and what L2 students learn (or do not learn) from engaging in those activities (Freeman & Johnson, 2005b). Using the intellectual tools of inquiry to investigate the institutionally sanctioned policies, curricular mandates, and assessment practices that shape their work, L2 teachers not only recognize how their daily practices constitute broader social and political issues but also use such realizations to work against the consequences that these macrostructures can have on their classroom activities and thus students' opportunities for L2 learning.

The emergence of the L2 teacher research movement (Burns, 1999; Edge, 2001; Freeman, 1998; Wallace, 1998) has made significant inroads in altering the nature of the activities in which L2 teachers are asked to engage in their L2 teacher education programs and beyond, and this, in itself, has helped challenge many of the unfair hierarchies that exist in the TESOL profession. Using the intellectual tools of inquiry to investigate their professional worlds, L2 teachers come to understand the ideological principles that inform the social practices that constitute them, their students, and their teaching practices—in other words, the complex social, cultural, political, and institutional factors that affect L2 teachers, L2 teaching, and L2 student learning. An overarching challenge for L2 teacher education is to ensure that whatever L2 teachers inquire about, the substance of that inquiry will enable L2 teachers to function as transformative intellectuals in the settings where they learn and work. The substance of their inquiry must, according to Dewey (1920/1962), take into account

observation of the detailed makeup of the situation; analysis into its diverse factors; clarification of what is obscure; discounting of the more insistent and vivid traits; tracing the consequences of the various modes of action that suggest themselves; regarding the decision reached as hypothetical and tentative until the anticipated or supposed consequences which led to its adoption have been squared with actual consequences. This inquiry is intelligence. (p. 164)

Looking ahead to the next 40 years of *TESOL Quarterly*, the field should expect to no longer think about L2 teacher education as something that is done to L2 teachers. Instead, the view of L2 teacher education should be broader, one that encompasses externally sanctioned as well as internally initiated and controlled professional development experiences that L2 teachers engage in for their own purposes and are, by their own design, appropriate for their contexts. A reclaiming of professional development for teachers, by teachers, recognizes that they have not only a right to direct their own professional development but also a responsibility to develop professionally throughout their careers. What is now known about how L2 teachers learn to do the work of this profession has much to offer L2 teacher education. Redressing the epistemological gap outlined here will no doubt help sustain an L2 teaching force of transformative intellectuals who can navigate their professional worlds in ways that enable them to create educationally sound, contextually appropriate, and socially equitable learning opportunities for the L2 students they teach.

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## THE AUTHOR

Karen E. Johnson is a professor of applied linguistics at the Pennsylvania State University. Her research focuses on teacher learning in L2 teacher education, the knowledge-base of L2 teacher education, and the dynamics of communication in L2 classrooms. She recently co-edited *Teachers' Narrative Inquiry as Professional Development* (2002), published by Cambridge University Press.

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# INFORMATION FOR CONTRIBUTORS

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*TESOL Quarterly*, a professional, refereed journal, encourages submission of previously unpublished articles on topics of significance to individuals concerned with the teaching of English as a second or foreign language and of standard English as a second dialect. As a publication that represents a variety of cross-disciplinary interests, both theoretical and practical, the *Quarterly* invites manuscripts on a wide range of topics, especially in the following areas:

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Baruch College of the City University of New York  
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E-mail: [Tesol\\_Quarterly@baruch.cuny.edu](mailto:Tesol_Quarterly@baruch.cuny.edu)

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John Flowerdew  
City University of Hong Kong  
83 Tat Chee Avenue  
Kowloon  
Hong Kong SAR China

John M. Levis  
TESL/Applied Linguistics  
Department of English  
Iowa State University  
Ames, IA 50011-1201 USA

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#### Research Issues:

Patricia A. Duff  
Department of Language  
and Literacy Education  
University of British Columbia  
2125 Main Mall  
Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z4  
Canada

#### Teaching Issues:

Bonny Norton  
Department of Language  
and Literacy Education  
University of British Columbia  
2125 Main Mall  
Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z4  
Canada

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Because of the importance of substantive findings reported in *TESOL Quarterly*, in addition to the role that the *Quarterly* plays in modeling research in the field, articles must meet high standards in reporting research. To support this goal, the Spring 2003 issue of *TESOL Quarterly* (Vol. 37, No. 1) contains guidelines (pp. 157–178) for reporting quantitative research and three types of qualitative research: case studies, conversation analysis, and (critical) ethnography. Each set of guidelines contains an explanation of the expectations for research articles within a particular tradition and provides references for additional guidance. The guidelines are also published on TESOL's Web site (<http://www.tesol.org/pubs/author/serials/tqguides.html>).