Second Language Teacher Education

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I recently wrote about my experience designing and delivering a 120-hour TESL Canada pre-service teacher training course for the Trinity FTCL Diploma. There are many useful frameworks for Second Language Teacher Education (SLTE), and several are outlined below. Richards (1998) asserts that there are six domains of SLTE and that these must be considered when designing any SLTE programme.

1) Theories of Teaching
2) Teaching Skills
3) Communication Skills
4) Subject Matter Knowledge
5) Pedagogical Reasoning and Decision Making
6) Contextual Knowledge

Zahorik (1986) classifies teaching into three areas: Art/Craft, Theory/Philosophy and Science/Research. Richards (1998) expands on this and views teaching as operating on a developmental plane or continuum, with the acquisition of basic teaching skills, which he compares to science/research, as a place for trainees to begin. Ultimately, they can progress to in-depth reflection, which he views as similar to an art/craft, in which teaching decisions are made based on student needs, rather than on a method or set of externally prescribed practices.

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Zahorik's Theory/Philosophy can also be viewed as teacher belief. Almarza (1986) asserts that teachers have a 'filter,' i.e. their belief system, through which they view education, although this is not necessarily static. Johnson (1992) writes that teacher beliefs affect ideas about SLA, effective teaching practices, as well as the roles of teachers and learners. Similarly, Richards and Lockheart (1994) argue that teacher beliefs create a 'culture of teaching' which permeate all aspects of teaching.

Another useful SLTE framework is Teaching Maxims (Richards 1998), which focus on teaching beliefs as they are translated into classroom reality. The Maxims of Involvement, Planning, Encouragement, Order, Accuracy, Efficiency, Conformity and Empowerment provide a way for teachers to examine their beliefs and practice, although these maxims are not mutually exclusive, nor are they permanent.

Classifying teaching into macro and micro skills assists trainers in evaluating trainees and determining course content. Macro teaching skills are generally high-inference and include teacher-student rapport and interactive decision-making, which significantly affect learning, but are difficult to teach and evaluate. Additional macro skills include 'creativity, judgement and adaptability' (Britten 1985 in Richards 1990, p. 9). Gebhard, Gaitan and Oprandy (1990) assert that there is no best way to teach, but by emphasising macro skills such as autonomy, trainers can prepare trainees for successful teaching. Awareness raising, reflection and meaningful practice allow trainees to develop macro skills. Micro approaches are much easier to impart and measure, as they involve low-inference, easily observable teaching skills such as the use of questions or talk time.

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English as a Lingua Franca and pedagogy

Symposium at the 8th International Conference of English as a Lingua Franca, Beijing, China (25th - 27th August 2015)

Martin Dewey (King's College London) and Andrew Blair (University of Sussex)

English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) research has inspired extensive debate regarding the pedagogic relevance of lingua franca settings and interaction, increasingly so in publications

directly oriented to language teaching. There are many ways in which ELF engenders implications for language pedagogy, but the practical implementation of these has so far proven to be a complex matter. This symposium discusses attempts to engage with teachers and extend their understanding of ELF, with a focus on how the widely discussed implications of ELF research may be examined in a more practice-oriented manner, with a specific focus on the importance of adopting an ELF perspective in language teacher education. The two papers presented address in turn some of the issues concerning initial language teacher training and in-service teacher development. The symposium will also include a short focus group discussion task, with the aim of eliciting a range of views on both the perceived obstacles and proposed solutions to the questions arising from applying ELF perspectives to pedagogy and teacher education.

ELF and initial teacher education

The role of English as a global lingua franca is continuing to drive language education policy. This is having substantial impact on pedagogy in many contexts worldwide: English is being introduced as a compulsory subject at an ever earlier age; the number of tuition hours is growing, both at primary and secondary levels; there is growing pressure on teachers to adopt 'new' (usually CLT oriented) approaches, and to adopt English as the main (or in extreme cases only) medium of instruction; and we have seen considerable recent growth in the promotion of CLIL (content and language integrated learning), in which an additional language is used for non-language based subject teaching. In addition, there is an incremental significance being attached to English language proficiency as a requirement for university entrance (regardless of subject area).

In short, the stakes are high for English language learners to do well, but in light of the global role of English there is a compelling need to reexamine the means by which we model English and assess language and communication. In addition, as a corollary between the continued globalization of ELF and the global diffusion of ELT, we have seen in recent years greater external pressure on the profession, with a substantial increase in the need for professional teacher training, greater demand for more specialist English language subject teachers, and a need for subject teachers not traditionally involved in ELT to receive additional training in the use of English as medium of instruction.

In light of all these developments, it is essential that teachers become aware of the arguments put forward in ELF, as this represents arguably the most important research field currently of relevance in ELT. ELF has major implications for the syllabus content of professional qualifications, our conceptualization of subject knowledge, and the current (im)balance and relationship between practical teaching skills and theory. It is thus essential that we address ELF in initial teacher preparation courses. This is especially notable when we take account of current syllabus guidelines for accredited language teaching awards, many of which now make explicit reference to ELF and/or Global Englishes. This paper considers the relevance of ELF in initial teacher education, examining the role an awareness of ELF has to play in the development of professional expertise among English language teachers.

ELF and experienced teachers: moving from awareness to application

There are arguably signs of growing awareness of the relevance of ELF research and perspectives to the practice of English Language Teaching (ELT) (e.g. Matsuda, 2012; Sewell, 2013; Baker, 2015). ELF potentially changes everything, yet at the same time is grounded in

fundamentals of language and communication, which change very little and are essentially social in nature. ELT in its myriad global and local contexts, and language teacher education, cannot ignore the sociolinguistic and demographic realities of ELF use (Dewey, 2012; Sifakis, 2014). Notions of competence, proficiency, knowledge and skill are being revisited, and teaching goals redirected towards developing what is most required by learners/users of ELF, as appropriate to their communicative contexts. Or are they? In reality, are the pedagogic fundamentals still largely unaffected by academic discourses on language change, intercultural awareness and lingua franca use? Moving from awareness through reflection towards action is perhaps easier said than done.

This paper draws on findings from a study of English language teacher development, mostly within the UK higher education context, but with reference to diverse ELT settings. It raises questions about the impact of ELF research and related ideas on experienced teachers, in terms of their professional identities and sense of competence. The focus is on their responses to such ideas, their level of awareness and their belief in potential or actual application to pedagogic practice. How they and other practitioners can reconcile perceived tensions between standard language learning models and variable lingua franca communicative goals is key to the acceptance of a more appropriate, 'ELF-aware' form of teacher education. The extent to which teachers engage with ELF perspectives is therefore central to a more effective application of a reimagined basis for language pedagogy.

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From our students

Exploring Teachers' Attitudes towards Continuing Professional Development: A Case Study

Deborah Edeson, MA ELT postgraduate
Dissertation summary

[Note: This paper was submitted and shortlisted for the 2015 British Council ELT Masters Dissertation Award.]

There is no shortage of empirical research into teacher development in the literature on mainstream education, yet there is comparatively less on language teacher development, particularly relating to the private language school sector in the UK. Despite this, some suggest that teacher development, specifically, continuing professional development (CPD) is experiencing a growth in importance at the institutional level (e.g. Dunlop 2013), but the

literature does not address the extent to which this enthusiasm is shared by language teachers themselves. In fact, experience gained from working at an accredited UK language school would seem to suggest that some teachers exhibit noticeable reluctance to engage in developmental activities.

This qualitative study was conducted to investigate the extent of this issue, focussing on teachers' attitudes to CPD, and explore the underlying reasons for any negativity towards it, with a view to using this information to implement any necessary changes and, ultimately, improvements. In terms of research methods, a questionnaire followed by semi-structured interviews were employed to probe deeper into certain issues suggested by the teachers in the case study, in particular, to try to elicit reasons for these opinions and examples of related experiences.

By drawing on both Huberman's (1995) model of the teacher career cycle and recent research into possible selves theory as a factor in teacher motivation for development (Hiver 2013; Kubanyiova 2009), findings highlighted that some teachers appeared to exhibit characteristics from different career stages, and that those negative traits can be said to inhibit participation in CPD. Moreover, many of the teachers in this study seem to be motivated by the desire to approach their ideal language teacher selves, which was clearly reflected in their intrinsic, ego-related views on the content of in-house teacher development sessions. Also, the data suggested that discrepancies between the teachers' actual and ought-to selves are significant barriers to engagement with the CPD programme, especially when this centres on the contextual factors of time, money and obligation.

The study posits the view that these teachers would benefit from a revised CPD programme which places more emphasis on a bottom-up approach to teacher learning and supports collaborative activities, while minimising the negative impact of the inhibitive contextual factors through changes in school developmental policy. Through a range of proposed changes, teachers would take greater responsibility for their own development, reflecting their own needs and interests, and would include a supported structure for teachers to engage in action research projects. In addition to improving the CPD offering at the school at the centre of this research, it is hoped that those responsible for CPD in similar contexts could benefit from the insights gained through this study.

According to Hiver (2013) it has only been in the last 10 years that empirical research into possible selves theory has been undertaken within applied linguistics, and more recent than that that it has been applied to language teacher development. It would suggest a relatively new and under researched branch of our field, primed for investigation. Studies which could offer a greater understanding of the role of possible selves in motivating language teachers' behaviour would ultimately provide stakeholders at both the macro and micro level of our industry the necessary input for discussion and reflection on the changes necessary to facilitate language teachers' CPD.

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Linguistic and cultural experiences of non-native speaker nurses working in the United Kingdom: a thematic analysis

Henrik Andersen, MA ELT postgraduate
Dissertation summary

With increasing intakes of non-native speaker nurses to cover a rising demand from an increasing hospitalised population, the National Health Service (NHS) is facing a huge task of integrating new employees. Recent statistics from 2013/14 revealed 175,000 written complaints about the NHS (HSCIC, 2015), and a report from the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (2015) shows that 42% of its received complaints about the NHS are due to communication failure. Examples show that these figures reflect a flawed system that is stretched on resources which affect patient care. If the NHS is seeking to lower the number of complaints, it not only needs a change in culture and resources, but also provide better support for its non-native speaker nurses to help them adapt, linguistically and culturally.

This study captured the experiences of non-native speaker nurses working in the UK and examined how they can have better support to meet the linguistic and cultural challenges they face, working in the UK. This was done through a thematic analysis based on semi-structured interviews with five non-native speaker nurses (N1-N5) and two native-speaker nurses (N6-N7). Five themes arose from the interviews: 1) attitude; 2) cultural challenges; 3) professional challenges; 4) communicative challenges; 5) motivation. An interview with an audiologist was also conducted (A1), which provided insight to patients with hearing-impairments. It was found that, although the non-native speaker nurses in this study participate in a well-designed induction course, there is a need for further support after they join their wards.

It is suggested that it is possible to improve non-native speakers' cultural and linguistic competence through a culture change within the NHS, which involves language lessons that applies the communicative approach; communities of practice, which provides shared knowledge and peer-support; and professional development, using mentors and the Salmon Line (Salmon, 1984, cited in Butt, 2012).

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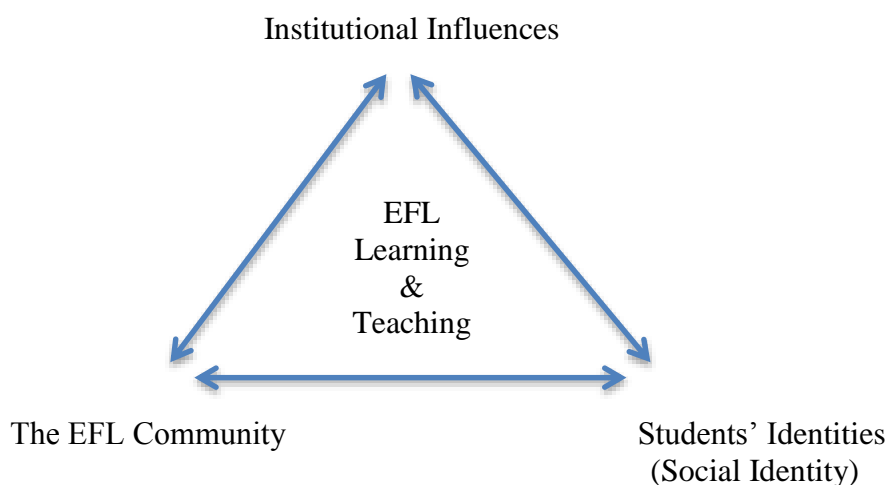
Identity and English language learning: A case
Study of EFL learners in an English language programme in Saudi Arabia.

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Summary and Research Questions

This research investigates EFL learning and teaching in higher education, and more specifically the EFL programme in King Abdul-Aziz University at three different levels, namely institutional influence, students' identities and the community within the EFL programme. However, in order to understand how these variables relate to the overall context of my study, I intend to use Engestrom's (1987) Activity theory. Activity theory is used here as an overarching framework to generate a model of students' learning experiences in the EFL programme by identifying different variables. Activity theory does not offer any conceptual insights into the notions of institutional influences, identity and community. It merely highlights how I identified and decided to focus on these specific variables. Furthermore, a structure-agency outlook is adopted in this study in order to investigate the students' learning experiences from a sociological approach. Therefore, I have decided to use the concept of identity in relation to the students and teachers in the EFL context, the concept of community to examine interactions within the EFL programme and the concept of institutional influences as a way to understand how the policies and practices of the EFL programme are shaped by the position of the university in the field of higher education (see model below).

Institutional Influences

EFL
Learning
&
Teaching

The EFL Community   Students' Identities
                               (Social Identity)

This understanding of EFL learning and teaching will help in answering the overarching research question of my study 'How do students experience teaching and learning in the ELF programme in King Abdul-Aziz University?' Within this overarching question the following questions will be addressed in greater detail:

1. How do the institutional influences affect the teaching and learning in the EFL programme?

Students' learning experiences in EFL programme are influenced by a number of different variables. Yet, these variables are not free of structural influences. The question above highlights the structural part of my research. In order to answer this question, I examine the institutional influences on teaching and learning in higher education in general and on the EFL programme in particular. These influences are highlighted by looking at the position of King Abdul-Aziz University in the field of higher education in Saudi, the university's policies and practices and the impact of these polices on the EFL programme as well as other variables.

2. How do students' identities interact with the EFL programme?
    2.1. How do students' social class identities interact with the EFL programme?
    2.2. How do students' rural identities interact with the EFL programme?

In this study, identity is understood as structure-agency driven and, in my opinion, will be the central focus of my study. For the purpose of this study, two categories of identities (social class, rural) are considered. Note that new categories may be added as I start writing the second chapter. My final question is related to the well-known concept of 'community of practice'.

3. How do students interact with teachers and peers in the community of the EFL programme?

Please note that sub-questions may be added as each chapter is developed.

[Editor's note: this is a good example of a work-in-progress paper from a research student investigating an aspect of language learning. The above summary was written after the first year of the PhD programme, prior to starting the proposed field research.]

Details of future *Research on ELT* and *Language and Culture* talks are available on the SCLS website:
Sussex Centre for Language Studies: http://www.sussex.ac.uk/languages/

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