Critical ELT Practices in Asia
Key Issues, Practices, and Possibilities

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This is the first, and long awaited work on critical approaches to teaching English for the purposes of democracy and social justice in Asia that challenges the current views of ELT, such as English being merely a tool for communication or the acquisition of basic skills or high test scores for advancement in education and the marketplace.

- A timely work and a fresh look at critical approaches to ELT in Asia.
- An invaluable work that simultaneously problematizes current ELT practices while introducing new possibilities for critical practices in localized contexts in Asia.
- An important work that shines a light on how the forces of globalization not only dictate the spread of English as an international language, but how these forces also dictate what is taught and how.
- An informative view on how ELT practices are being re-envisioned by critical educators in Asia.

This groundbreaking volume, compiling critical perspectives of English language teaching in China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Korea, and Sri Lanka, confronts colonial legacies observed in educational practices and policies that perpetuate a divide between the privileged and the underprivileged. The critical reflections scrutinize the nature of English as a commodified gatekeeper and simultaneously provide alternative visions for language education.

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Critical ELT Practices in Asia
Cultural studies provides an analytical toolbox for both making sense of educational practice and extending the insights of educational professionals into their labors. In this context Transgressions: Cultural Studies and Education provides a collection of books in the domain that specify this assertion. Crafted for an audience of teachers, teacher educators, scholars and students of cultural studies and others interested in cultural studies and pedagogy, the series documents both the possibilities of and the controversies surrounding the intersection of cultural studies and education. The editors and the authors of this series do not assume that the interaction of cultural studies and education devalues other types of knowledge and analytical forms. Rather the intersection of these knowledge disciplines offers a rejuvenating, optimistic, and positive perspective on education and educational institutions. Some might describe its contribution as democratic, emancipatory, and transformative.

The editors and authors maintain that cultural studies helps free educators from sterile, monolithic analyses that have for too long undermined efforts to think of educational practices by providing other words, new languages, and fresh metaphors. Operating in an interdisciplinary cosmos, Transgressions: Cultural Studies and Education is dedicated to exploring the ways cultural studies enhances the study and practice of education. With this in mind the series focuses in a non-exclusive way on popular culture as well as other dimensions of cultural studies including social theory, social justice and positionality, cultural dimensions of technological innovation, new media and media literacy, new forms of oppression emerging in an electronic hyperreality, and postcolonial global concerns. With these concerns in mind cultural studies scholars often argue that the realm of popular culture is the most powerful educational force in contemporary culture. Indeed, in the twenty-first century this pedagogical dynamic is sweeping through the entire world. Educators, they believe, must understand these emerging realities in order to gain an important voice in the pedagogical conversation.

Without an understanding of cultural pedagogy’s (education that takes place outside of formal schooling) role in the shaping of individual identity—youth identity in particular—the role educators play in the lives of their students will continue to fade. Why do so many of our students feel that life is incomprehensible and devoid of meaning? What does it mean, teachers wonder, when young people are unable to describe their moods, their affective affiliation to the society around them. Meanings provided young people by mainstream institutions often do little to help them deal with their affective complexity, their difficulty negotiating the rift between meaning and affect. School knowledge and educational expectations seem as anachronistic as a ditto machine, not that learning ways of rational thought and making sense of the world are unimportant.

But school knowledge and educational expectations often have little to offer students about making sense of the way they feel, the way their affective lives are shaped. In no way do we argue that analysis of the production of youth in an electronic mediated world demands some “touchy-feely” educational superficiality. What is needed in this context is a rigorous analysis of the interrelationship between pedagogy, popular culture, meaning making, and youth subjectivity. In an era marked by youth depression, violence, and suicide such insights become extremely important, even life saving. Pessimism about the future is the common sense of many contemporary youth with its concomitant feeling that no one can make a difference.

If affective production can be shaped to reflect these perspectives, then it can be reshaped to lay the groundwork for optimism, passionate commitment, and transformative educational and political activity. In these ways cultural studies adds a dimension to the work of education unfilled by any other sub-discipline. This is what Transgressions: Cultural Studies and Education seeks to produce—literature on these issues that makes a difference. It seeks to publish studies that help those who work with young people, those individuals involved in the disciplines that study children and youth, and young people themselves improve their lives in these bizarre times.
Critical ELT Practices in Asia

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To the late Joe Kincheloe, the mentor and friend, who guided so many of us in enlightening, edifying, and, of course, critical ways! He still continues to inspire us and our students to question and contest forms of literacy that are fundamentally unjust. His voice lives on in us.
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my aging mother who did more than everything to educate me by escaping from such a remote village to make a better life for their children. My sincere thanks to my wife who has done her best to raise two great sons, Kwang Hyun and Chi Hyun. You guys are the very force that keeps me going!

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This chapter investigates how the social practices within English Language Teaching (ELT), national educational and language policy, national politics, and globalization interact in ways that establish conceptions of native speakers of English (NS) and Standard English (SE) to serve as overarching norms in ELT practice. Employing a Foucauldian post-structural theory of representation as an analytic lens, this chapter examines how the representations of the NS, SE, and modernity are constructed, maintained, and reified to form a regime of truth within the global contexts of ELT and the specific context of ELT in Korea. The results of this analysis show how these representations affect the subjectivities of students, educators, and policies in ELT in ways that create social practices that benefit elite groups, rather than promoting classroom practices that foster a critical appropriation of language and culture. Finally, this chapter suggests that representational theory allows students and educators to not only better understand the actual contexts of their English teaching and learning, but to also engage in pedagogies that have the possibility of transforming these contexts in ways that promote social justice and enhance social agency.

INTRODUCTION

It was the fourth week of my TESOL Masters course in Teaching Listening and Speaking when I noticed that Choonkyung, a middle aged high school English teacher, was looking very uncomfortable and like she wanted to speak. After a few agonizing minutes she raised her hand and said: “I like what we’re learning in class, but I don’t feel that I’m qualified to teach listening and speaking.” I asked her why she felt that way and she merely repeated her earlier statement, but this time with nodding agreement from three other students who were also public school English teachers. Changing my approach, I then asked her about her educational background and her experience as a teacher and she replied that her undergraduate degree was in English education, that she had been a certified public school English teacher for nine years, and had been studying English for at least twenty years. I then asked her how it could be that a woman with her qualifications, experience, and obvious English competency could feel unqualified to teach?
Choonkyung looked even more uncomfortable and said: “My English is not suitable for teaching listening and speaking”. When I replied that her English seemed suitable to me and asked her why she felt it was not, she replied “My accent is not good and I make mistakes”. Again, many of her classmates nodded in agreement. I asked her if by “mistakes” she meant grammar, she agreed that it did. Finally I said: “So, what you are saying is that you are not a native speaker and because of that, you feel that you are not qualified to teach listening and speaking?”. Choonkyung’s head lowered somewhat and she simply said “Yes”. Three of Choonkyung’s classmates nodded their heads in sympathetic agreement.

It was the first class of the semester in my TESOL Masters course on Postmodernism and ELT and I was giving my usual opening interactive lecture designed to provide adequate background for forthcoming literature on discursive thought, when an incident occurred that brought to mind Choonkyung’s revelations from the previous semester. In order to frame the development of post-structural and postmodern epistemologies, I always begin my first class with a discussion of the Enlightenment, the development of the scientific method, and the nature of positivism. Naturally, the concept of modernity arises and is discussed. In answer to the question: “What is modernity?”, The initial responses revolved around consumer products, economics, and technology. On this occasion, Chihyun replied: “It’s about being an advanced culture...having advanced science, technology, and economy”. Slowly, as if there were some reluctance to answer, students began to respond that political systems, laws, fashion, and the arts were important aspects of modernity. After the discussion had gone on for a few minutes I asked: “Is Korea a modern country?”. The students appeared to be struggling for an answer for a couple of minutes, but made no response. When I responded to the silence by saying that Korea seemed to be as modern as any country I’d ever been in and asked why they did not respond to my question, I received muted, ambiguous responses to the effect that Korea had only been developing for a short period of time. Attempting to give my students a way to express their understandings of what modernity meant to them I asked: “Can you tell me what a modern person might look like?”. Again, there was a long period of silence until Youngae pointed her finger at me and said “You”.

In Korea it is not difficult to see the effects that modernization and globalization have had on local landscapes: sleek buildings, high-tech transportation and information systems, a plethora of high quality automobiles, people in fashionable clothing, and other trappings of modernity too numerous to mention. It is also not difficult to see the influences of western culture that have flowed in on the tide of globalization: fast food and fusion-food restaurants, high-end consumer products, media, the arts, and so on. What is not so easy to see, however, is how English language teaching (ELT) is inextricably tied to the phenomena of globalization,
cultural and ideological change, and the construction of individual and social identities.

As a teacher-educator of English education who has been in Korea for 10 years, the incidents related above were neither extraordinary nor surprising. However, they did serve to focus my thoughts in ways that brought other phenomena to mind, such as, the ubiquity of promotional flyers for private language institutes (Hakwons) that not only bear American sounding names, such as “Boston”, but also bear pictures of white children that appear to be affluent American children. Similarly, if one pays attention while walking through any high-end department store you will notice that the majority of the visual representations of people are large posters showing white, western people in fashionable clothing. Often, even ordinary consumer goods, such as packages of underwear, bear photos of white people in their packaging. It is also not uncommon to see middle aged to elderly men and women wearing T-shirts with English slogans, or longer texts that are sometimes grammatically incorrect, who likely do not speak much English or understand the texts they are displaying. It soon became clear to me that these disparate phenomena were interconnected to ELT in ways that were not only not critically examined, but were also potentially unwholesome.

But, what were the connections between ELT, the diverse phenomena listed above, and the incidents I experienced in my graduate teaching practice? The connections became clear when I made a connection between Choonkyung’s visceral belief that she was not qualified to teach English listening and speaking and a meeting I had with a Dean of a College of Foreign Languages at one of the top universities in China. In that meeting we were discussing the ownership of English (Higgins, 2003; Norton, 1997) and the Dean strenuously maintained that the ownership of English does, and must, reside in the hands of native speakers; specifically, native speaking linguists/applied linguists from the United States or Great Britain. He stated that there must be standards in order to teach and that the standards must be defined by native speaking professionals. It seemed to me that the beliefs of both the Dean and Choonkyung regarding English teaching and learning were dominated by the representations of the native speaker (NS) and Standard English (SE). I use the term “representation” here as the terms NS and SE have no definitive meanings, or may be said to exist in any real sense (Davies, 1991; Pennycook, 2004; Swales, 1993), and are more easily understood as beliefs or grand narratives that are constructed through various discursive forces such as education, media, and the various social practices within and without specific cultures. Thus, I reasoned that their ideologies of English teaching and learning were greatly influenced by the representations of the NS and SE.

In similar ways, it is both reasonable and theoretically sound to approach these diverse phenomena through theories of representation. The examples of my student’s beliefs on the meaning of modernity and the representations exhibited on the Hakwon flyers, in department stores, and on T-shirts seem to be different examples of representations of modernity, which may be seen as a code word for globalization (Appadurai, 1996; Ritzer, 1998). What connects the educational ideologies of Choonkyung and the Dean to these representations of modernity in
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Korean culture is a discursive regime of truth (Foucault, 1994) fuelled by the representations of the NS, SE, and modernity. The purpose of this chapter is not to investigate, through formal study, the phenomena presented here, but to demystify the discursive relations surrounding them for the purposes of illustrating the unequal power relations imbued within these discursive formations and, thereby, opening a critical space where current ELT practices may be discussed and transformed. In doing so, this chapter will examine relevant issues in Korean English education, the larger field of ELT, the phenomenon of globalization, and the representations of the NS, SE, and modernity.

REPRESENTATION

Representation is a theoretical term widely used across a multiplicity of disciplines including critical pedagogy (Giroux; 1997; Kincheloe & Steinberg, 1997), critical literacy (McLaren, 2005), cultural studies (Giroux, 2005; Hall, 1997), sociology (Bourdieu; 1991; Foucault, 1994), and applied linguistics (Kubota, 2001; Pennycook, 2001), to name a few. It is also a term that has become so ubiquitous across these disciplines that its meaning has become assumed and, as such, is rarely ever defined. This assumption of meaning may seem problematic as there is more than one theory of representation (Hall, 1997). However, it is clear that the common understanding of representation used in the majority of published literature in these disciplines is a discursive one, as Mitchell (2005) states:

I use “representation: as the master term for this field, not because I believe in any general, homogenous, or abstractable concept of representation, but because it has a long tradition in the critique of culture, and it activates a set of linkages between political, semiotic/aesthetic, and even economic notions of “standing or acting for” (p. 6).

Here, Mitchell describes a discursive approach to representation without clearly naming it as such by evoking an interconnected matrix of social phenomena. As this chapter will use a discursive understanding of representation as a means of analysis, a discussion of theories of representation is warranted.

According to Hall (1997), representation is the mediating factor that connects language and culture. Thus, representation is a process that both constructs the meanings we make of symbols, other tangible objects, and ideas as well as communicates them to others. It is important to note that within this overall view of representation, there are two separate systems of representations at work in the process: mental and symbolic (language). Hall states that there are three main theories of representation: reflective, intentional, and constructionist. The first two theories are relatively easy to understand as the reflective view places meaning on things in the objective world, whereas the intentional view places meaning solely within the realm of the locutor or producer of symbols, ideas, and artifacts. Obviously, these theories of representation are severely limited in terms of how they may account for the meanings of complex social phenomena. The constructionist approach, both semiotic and discursive, is more useful as it
theorizes that meaning is constructed through the interplay of language, the social conventions of culture, and the artifacts culture produces.

The semiotic approach focuses on how meaning is constructed through the encoding of denotative and connotative social and linguistic conventions into signs as the relationship between the signifier (symbol or object) and the signified (mental concept of the signifier) (Hall, 1997; Hawkes, 1977). Or more simply, semiotics focuses on how signs function within culture. The semiotic move in theories of representation was useful in that it not only allowed the mediation of the social world into the construction of meaning, but did so in a way that also allowed objects such as clothing and art to serve as signifiers in the construction and production of meaning (Hall, 1997). The semiotic approach, then, opened the way for visual representations to be “read” for meanings that were encoded through the interplay between linguistic and social conventions. This move extends the definition of a ‘text’ beyond print to visual representations, social practices, and artifacts. However, the semiotic approach to representation does not lend itself well to addressing how issues of knowledge and power form constellations of meaning that affect how representations are constructed and understood. For that understanding of representation, we must move on to a discursive view.

The theory of representation generally adopted in cultural studies, and thereby other “critical” disciplines, is the discursive view engendered by the post-structuralism of Foucault (Hall, 1997; Storey, 2003). According to this view of representation, “…things do not signify by themselves, what they mean has to be ‘represented’ in and through culture” (Storey, 2003; p 5). In other words, through discourse, the process of representation itself constructs and produces the meanings of specific representations, which form the mental representations subjects hold. Additionally, the unfixed nature of representation also means that subject’s interpretations of representational meaning affect the representations as well. As such, it may be said that representations construct the subject and the subject constructs the representations, thus illustrating the discursive nature of representation. The discursive nature of this process becomes clear through the understanding that not only is meaning made within discourse, but that it is mediated by the concomitant production of knowledge through power. Thus, within discourse, power and knowledge mutually co-construct each other to form what Foucault (1984) called ‘regimes of truth’, which construct subject positions that affect the ways people think (mental representation) and the social practices they engage in (symbolic representation).

This Foucauldian perspective on representation, then, theorizes that representation is a function of discourse and always lies within discourse[s]. As it is a point of theory that resistance always accompanies power (Bourdieu, 1991; Giroux, 1983), this not only means that the meaning of any specific representation may never be fixed, but also that multiplicities of meanings exist and are in constant flux. As with discourse, then, this view of representation allows for both dominant and subaltern readings of specific representations (Spivak, 1995). In other words, there is always a struggle for meaning within representation by different social groups, with the dominant meaning being decided by power.
Finally, the Foucauldian view of representation also stipulates that power is productive (Foucault, 1984; Storey, 2003). This means that power may not fruitfully be seen to exist in solely coercive terms: it must also be seen as a producer of realities in terms of how and what we think, the social structures we make, the artifacts we produce, and the social practices we engage in. As such, representational analysis allows us to examine key issues in ELT, such as the phenomena of the NS, SE, and globalization, in ways that not only illuminate how these seemingly unrelated issues are connected to each other, but also how they influence our individual lives and societies and, thereby, give us insight into how our lives and social systems may be changed for the better.

This discursive theory of representation is useful to the issues at hand as it allows for the analysis of something that might not be considered to objectively exist in reality, such as the representations of the NS and SE, but may exist in discourse, or in the minds of subjects within discourse. Through representation, then, it is possible to examine the how language, visual images, social practices, social artifacts, power, and knowledge form a discursive regime of truth that constructs representations that affect how we think and act, as well as how they affect the nature of the social structures we construct. In this way, the discursive theory of representation becomes a means of analysis in itself, and a critical one at that, as it allows for an analysis of these discursive elements to be examined over time and through a lens of social justice. Moreover, it also opens the way to transformation for the purposes of social justice through the unfixed nature of representation as, by definition, multiple ‘readings’ of specific representations must exist. Therefore, both dominant and subaltern ‘readings’ of a specific representation exist in ways that both support and resist the dominant ‘reading’ (Spivak, 1995). Pedagogically, this opens the way for the problematization of contested representations as well as the production of alternative representations that contest the dominant readings of specific representations. As such, alternative representations may serve as a vehicle for resistance and transformation. Finally, this theory of representation also makes possible the demystification of hegemonic systems through the illumination of points of power and complicity (Gramsci, 2000). By untangling the discursive workings of specific regimes of truth, representational analysis is able to theorize the how, where, and why of the exertion of power and how it may be resisted and transformed.

A REGIME OF TRUTH

I still remember my first day as a professor of TESOL in Korea when I walked into the building that housed the language institute (Hakwon) of my university, the English department (for undergraduate English degrees), and the TESOL Masters program. What I chiefly remember about that day was the moment that I entered the building I was suffused with feelings of wrongness and discomfort. For, the first thing anybody sees when they enter the building, if they are paying attention, is a large display board on the wall with some forty or so pictures of the English teaching faculty. The disturbing thing about this display is that all but a few of the
pictures were, and are, of white people, and predominantly male at that. Although I already had a few years of teaching practice in ESL in the United States and EFL in China, and had read much literature regarding the NS-NNS dichotomy, that was the first time that the power of the representation of the NS really hit me in a visceral way. It is also interesting to note that over the many years that I have worked in that building, I have asked many teachers and students (Korean and foreign) what the first thing they saw when they entered the building was, and only a very small percentage of them answered that they first noticed the picture display. The majority of responses regarded the physical characteristics of the building, such as the elevators, the main office, and the like, even though the display board is large, at eye level, and is right next to the elevators; it could hardly be missed. The obvious questions are: why is the display board there, and, why do people seem not to notice it? While these personal anecdotes, and the questions that arise from them, may be amusing, or disturbing, depending on your point of view, they are common occurrences in Korean English education in that they represent the very real power of the representation of the NS in Korean English education and society.

Much has been written about the NS-NNS dichotomy and its problematic nature in terms of the general ambiguity and lack of consensus of the definition of what an NS is, or might be (Davies, 1996; Pikeday, 1985), its effects on teaching and learning in EFL (Higgins, 2003; Spack, 1997), and the unequal relations of power it represents (Holliday, 2005; Kandiah, 1998; Kubota, 2001; Mufwene, 1997; Pennycook, 1998; Phillipson, 1992). While a thorough discussion on the intricacies of the debates on this issue is of interest to the questions at hand, the length of such a discussion would detract from other key issues that need to be examined. Therefore, this discussion will focus on the issues within this dichotomy that reveal how the representation of the NS is constructed, disseminated, and maintained. Specifically, this section will examine the disconnect between the validity of the NS designation and its widespread recognition, the relationship between the NS designation and SE, and how these representations are discursively bound to issues of power that affect individual and social subject positions and national and international EFL education in ways that make them an integral aspect of globalization.

The disconnect between theory and practice regarding the NS-NNS dichotomy is widely documented in ways that show that it makes little practical sense linguistically (Davies, 1991; Swales, 1993; White & Genesee, 1996), yet remains a force of power within ELT and the nations that are investing in public English education (Brutt-Giffler & Samimy, 2001; Pennycook, 1998, Phillipson, 1992; Rubdi, et al., 2001). While many scholars attempt to redefine the meaning of the NS (Paikday, 1985; Rampton, 1990), such as Cook’s (2005) ‘multicompetent speaker’, in doing so they also elucidate the many, often contradictory, models and definitions of the NS that exist in the professional literature. It was these conclusions that lead Davies (1991) and Moussu & Lurda (2008) to declare the NS a myth and other scholars to report that the NS had no sound theoretical or practical basis (Pennycook, 1998; Swales, 1993; White & Genesee, 1996). Yet,
personal experience and an abundance of professional literature relate that the NS-NNS dichotomy continues to exert real power in local, national, and international EFL contexts. Therefore, the NS exists, and doesn’t exist at the same time. It exists in practice in terms of government policy and rhetoric, in the everyday experience of teachers and students, and in testing regimes, such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and Test of English for International Communication (TOIEC), that are predicated on native-like competency, yet are deemed a myth in the professional literature.

As an EFL educator who has spent many years in Korea and has professionally visited many Asian countries it is easy to see that the representation of the NS is not only alive and well, but is in many ways becoming more entrenched. According to the Korean Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology (2009), there were a total of 33,162 native speaking English teachers teaching English in Korean public schools in 2009. While this number may seem staggering in itself, it represents only portion of the English teachers in Korea as there are also large unknown numbers of NS teachers working in Hakwons, universities, and corporations. Undoubtedly, the number is far higher now. It is also revealing that these teachers are defined as ‘native speakers’ in official government documents and in the public rhetoric of government officials (Kim, et al., 2008). As such, it is not unreasonable to assume that other Asian nations may also be giving increased credence to the power of the NS by greatly increasing their numbers of NS teachers, as has been shown in China (Cheung & Braine, 2007). These numbers are revealing in that despite the sweeping problematization of the NS-NNS dichotomy in the professional literature, which the majority of Korean EFL educators must surely be cognizant of, the belief in the necessity of NS teachers for English education remains strong. While it is clear that many Korean teachers and teacher educators do not like the current situation regarding NS teachers, particularly as they find many NS teacher underqualified, it is equally clear that many educators, administrators, and politicians favour NS teacher policies for their own benefit (Paik, 2005; Shin, 2010). In Korea, this belief in the necessity of NS teachers for effective EFL education is easily viewed in national education policy initiatives that aim to place at least one NS teacher in every middle school (Kim, et al., 2008). In addition, as NS teachers are often preferred to NNS teachers in certain contexts, such as teaching listening and speaking, for the ‘authenticity’ of their pronunciation, lexicon, and cultural knowledge (Mahboob, 2004; Moussu & Llurda, 2008), which arguably renders their practice to be little more than that of speaking robots. Clearly, the NS-NNS dichotomy has a strong presence in Korean English education.

It is equally clear that NS-NNS dichotomy exerts very real influence in the social world in terms of power relationships. Kachru’s (1981) ubiquitous theory of the “Circles of English” has gained much attention in applied linguistics literature in both positive and negative ways. As a definitional tool to better describe world Englishes (WE’s), the “Circles of English” has gained wide acceptance (Bhatt, 2001; McArthur, 1998). However, it has also been widely criticized for a variety of reasons including that it does not adequately acknowledge the fact that there are
more NNS’s than NS’s in the world today (Crystal, 1997; Graddol, 1999), that it hierarchizes English varieties in ways that favour what is conceived to be “standard” varieties of English (Kandiah, 1998; Mufwene, 1997), thereby marginalizing less legitimate Englishes, and that it “others” speakers of non inner-circle varieties of English (Holliday, 2005; Kubota, 2001). Moreover, scholars like Mufwene (1997) and Kubota and Lin (2006) assert that issues of ethnicity and race are central to how the dichotomy plays out in the real world. Other scholars assert that the language ideologies inherent in the NS-NNS dichotomy position non inner-circle speakers as consumers of neo-colonial constructions of the “other”, thereby reflecting a colonization of the mind (Skutnabb-Kanagas, 2000) that mirrors Bourdieu’s (1992) conception that “authority comes to language from the outside” (p. 168). Among the more prominent issues that arise from the problematization of the dichotomy are those of the construction of identity (Norton, 1997) and the ownership of English (Mufwene, 2001; Tickoo, 1996). Finally, the well known arguments of linguistic imperialism (Canagarajah, 1999; Phillipson, 1992) not only reject the designation of the native speaker as a fallacy, but also link the spread of English as an international *lingua franca* to other forms of imperialism, such as cultural and economic imperialism, to theories of western hegemony. What is important to understand here, of course, is that the construction of the NS-NNS dichotomy is a discursive process that not only has its roots in colonial practices, including language, education, economic, and cultural policies, but that many of these practices, and the theories and ideologies which underlie them, are still embedded within current theories and pedagogies in applied linguistics and ELT (Pennycook, 1998; Phillipson, 1992). Given the fecundity of literature on the NS-NNS dichotomy regarding its definitional ambiguity, refutation as a working model, and the very real effects it promulgates in the social world, it is reasonable to conclude that the NS has no basis in reality other than as a mental representation that exists in the minds of those that believe in it or operate within social structures that rely on it.

One of the particularly interesting things about the discussions of the NS-NNS dichotomy in applied linguistics literature is that its relationship to SE is rarely ever discussed in detail. Often, the relationship between the two is inferred through discussions of the WE’s model in ways that illuminate issues of power and inequality, but do not directly question the legitimacy of the SE model in terms of its discursive connection to the construction and maintenance of the dichotomy. These omissions are short sighted in that it is clear that adherence to the SE model is a major factor in the construction of the NS-NNS dichotomy (Harris, 2001; Lippi-Green, 1997).

Many recent books on SE relate that the vast diversity of dialects, even within so called inner-circle nations, renders any conception of SE unviable (Bex & Watts, 1999; Crowley, 2003; McWhorter, 2001). Lippi-Green (1997) goes so far as to entitle a chapter in her book *English with an Accent: Language, Ideology and Discrimination in the United States* “The standard language myth” (p. 53). While Lippi-Green’s work focuses on English within the United States, other scholars take up the issue of SE in international terms and agree that there is no general
consensus on a definition of SE (Bex & Watts, 1999; Crowley, 2003; McWhorter, 2001). Part of the confusion over SE lies in the differentiation between spoken and written English, with some scholars claiming that definitions of spoken SE are problematic due to dialectal variations, while written English, with its connections to educational institutions and high stakes testing, is in effect already codified (Harris, 2001; Lippi-Green, 1997). Other scholars assert that SE subsumes both written and spoken forms (Carter, 1999; Honey, 1997). The claim that written SE exists seems to have some validity as it quite obviously serves as the standard for the TOEFL and TOIEC tests, which then serve as standards for EFL curricula (Raimes, 1990).

However, there is wide agreement that SE is a construct promulgated by educational institutions for the purposes of evaluating potential students and regulating educational materials (Crowley, 2003; Lippi-Green, 1997). As such, it serves a gate-keeping function for entry into higher educational institutions and the corporate world, thus proffering “profits of distinction” upon those who prove mastery of this specific discourse (Bourdieu, 1991). Likewise, numerous scholars (Bhatt, 2001; Crowley, 2003; Kachru, 1996; Lippi-Green, 1997; Tollefson, 1995) assert that there is no objectivity in the construction and propagation of SE as the authority for SE is promulgated by diverse power loci such as educational institutions, the field of TESOL/applied linguistics, and corporations like ETS (Educational Testing Service). Moreover, these same scholars conclude that the practices that ensue from these discursive relations serve to uphold and reify linguistic, cultural, and economic privilege. Kachru (1996) and Bhatt (2001) maintain that SE constructs ideological and regulatory formations that marginalize perceived non-standard varieties of English by de-facto definitions of interlanguage, dooming speakers of these varieties to linguistic fossilization. In these ways, SE becomes an ideology in itself (Holliday & Aboshiha, 2009; Milroy & Milroy, 1999; Seargent, 2008). Whether myth or not, literature in the field seems to conclude that while there is no reasonable linguistic basis for SE or the NS-NNS dichotomy, they nonetheless have very real effects in the social world. Thus, the relationship between the representations of NS and SE may be more fruitfully understood as a discursive regime of truth as it constructs, legitimates, and promulgates a specific form of knowledge.

ENGLISH EDUCATION IN KOREA

The discursive relationship between SE and the NS-NNS dichotomy is easily seen in Korean English education. The Korean Ministry of Education has instituted mandatory English education in public schools beginning at grade 3 (Shim & Baik, 2000) and has placed an increasing emphasis on acquiring more NS teachers (Korean Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology, 2009). Korean government educational policy clearly states its belief that NS teachers are necessary for good English education in many ways. The presidential administrations of Kim Young Sam and Kim Dae Jung promoted the EPIK program (English Program in Korea), which mandated a rapid increase in the
number of NS teachers as a cornerstone of their educational policy (Kim, et. al., 2008). As part of the TaLK (Teaching and Learning in Korea) initiative instituted by the current government, Gong Jung Taek, the superintendent of the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education made the relationship between Korean English educational policy and the necessity of NS teachers very clear in a radio interview when he stated:

Entering into the globalization, we’ll do our best to develop students’ English communication competence by increasing English teachers’ professionalism, placing native English teachers to every public school, and installing the specialized classroom for English (YTN Radio Interview with the Superintendent of Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education, July 31, 2008).

Here, Gong not only makes the connection between language education policy and NS teachers very clear, he also connects the necessity of employing more NS teachers to conceptions of professionalism in EFL teaching and globalization. In these ways, the representation of the NS and SE may be seen to exert powerful influence over Korean English language educational policies.

The representation of the NS may also be seen to affect Korean education in general through the power of standardized testing. Many scholars have noted the dominance of standardized testing on Korean public and private educational curricula (Paik, 2005; Shin, 2010). According to Paik and Shin, Korean education’s emphasis on standardized testing is a product of the emergence of a hakbeol ideology that places high social and economic “profits of distinction” (Bourdieu, 1991) on students who are admitted to prestigious universities, with Seoul National University being the ultimate distinction. Apart from being a primary cause in high rates of university enrolments, the birth of specialized high schools (which also require high test scores), and socio-economic reproduction, hakbeol ideology is also tied to representations of the NS and SE as TOEFL and TOEIC test scores are increasingly important criteria for entrance to prestigious universities (Gukjeong Briefing special project team, 2007) and corporate positions (Jo, 2008; Park, 2008). The relationship among representations of the NS, SE, testing and Korean education may best be seen in the amount of money being spent on private education and language testing. According to Jeon & Choi (2006), in 2005 Koreans spent 1.3 billion dollars on private English education, such as hakwons and private tutors, and 650 million dollars on standardized English proficiency tests, such as TOEFL and TOEIC, numbers which are undoubtedly higher today. More disturbing is how hakbeol ideology is in turn the motivating factor in the phenomena of Korean students studying abroad in American and Canadian universities and public schools, with America being the preferred destination. That English education plays a key role in Korean Education is illustrated by the fact that Koreans spent 15 billion dollars on private education and foreign study in 2006 (Park, 2008). The amount of money being spent on English education and standardised testing, and its foundation in representations of the NS and SE, point to an inextricable discursive link to the processes of globalization.
The majority of curricula since the end of the Korean War have been focused on modernization (Shin, 2010). In recent years, the focus of the discourse of education in Korea has shifted to that of globalization. Globalization is often cited in Korean government rhetoric and Ministry of Education policies as a primary driving force for Korean education. In January 1995, President Kim Young Sam announced his plan for a national globalization project for all aspects of Korean society including education (Kim, 2000). This program, called *Segyehwa*, also emphasized the importance of English education as a spur for national competitiveness within the larger framework for globalization (Paik, 2005; Shin, 2010). As such, it is not surprising that Korea’s 7th National Curriculum, beginning in 2007, cited globalization as an important driving philosophy in the development of the new curriculum, which included a large expansion of English programs. Listing the main characteristics of the 7th national curriculum in terms of globalization, Lee, et. al., (2008) state: “The ultimate purpose of learning English is to contribute to creating our culture through understanding world culture in English as a universal language” (p. 63). On February 25, 2008, President Lee Myung Bak further emphasized the importance of education to *Segyehwa* during his inaugural address by stating that: “We must accept the global standards and infuse the education field with the spirit of autonomy, creativity, and competition... (Shin, 2010, p. 69). With the placement of globalization as an integral part of the Korean educational system, and with English also being a central aspect of this system, it is clear that the representations of the NS and SE are discursively connected with educational systems, global and national economies, and other cultural forms commonly associated with globalization. The discursive connections of these seemingly separate elements, therefore, discursively construct, and reconstruct each other to form a regime of truth that has the power to affect the subjectivities and social positionings of both the consumers and producers of educational systems and products. As such, mental representations of the NS, SE, and globalization become powerful forces in how people view education, their culture, and themselves.

GLOBALIZATION AND MODERNITY

Globalization is a term that is often heard in public and private discourse to the extent that its meaning has come to ubiquitously signify the current state of international social relations. It has also become a ubiquitous term in professional literature in diverse fields such as economics, sociology, cultural studies, education, and applied linguistics. As with all such terms, the difficulty of understanding it as a working theory is the wide range of interpretations, often contradictory, that emerge in the professional literature. Giddens’ (1990) approach to globalization is, perhaps, the most widely known and cited in literature on globalization, and theorizes globalization as the intensification of a discursive process between macro (global) and micro (local) social relations. Many scholars agree on the discursive global/local nature of globalization and conclude that this relationship compresses time and space in ways that enhance mobility, the
The dialectics between the global and the local are a point of contention between scholars who view globalization as a process that homogenizes cultures (Gray, 1998; Ritzer, 1998) and those who maintain that it also involves the heterogenization of cultures in ways that give rise to cultural and linguistic hybridity (Pieterse, 1995; Robertson, 1992). Many scholars have used this dialectic to better focus on the discursive constructions of the global and local by theorizing that globalization may be better understood as glocalization (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2007; Roudometof, 2005; Sung, 2007). Another point of contention focuses on the ideologies that drive globalization; with some scholars seeing neoliberalism and westernization as the driving force behind globalization (Fairclough, 2006; Fasenfest, 2010; Latouche, 1996; Macedo, et. al., 2003), while others view it as a process that differs according to local contexts that, therefore, produce hybrid forms of language and culture (Heller, 2003; Pennycook, 2007; Rampton, 2006). Finally, many scholars assert that English is one of the central components of globalization as English serves as a mediating factor for its continuing international expansion (Bottery, 2000; Chang, 2006). Such arguments give rise to conceptions of the hegemony of English as a world language (Macedo, et. al., 2003; Phillipson, 1992) as a reflection of the power and dominance that English asserts internationally. Regardless of the different theorizations of the concept, it is clear that there is general agreement that language and culture are key aspects of globalization and are, at least, heavily influenced by western cultures and ideologies.

While these conceptions of globalization are relevant to the discussion at hand, they do not give us much insight into how people in the contact zones (i.e., where globalization is a ubiquitous term in national discourses of development, competition, and education) envision the term and themselves. In other words, they do not adequately consider the mental representations that are constructed through the discourses of globalization that affect the lives of social agents within these contact zones, like Korean EFL educators and learners. It has been shown how conceptions of the NS and SE form discursive regimes of truth, thereby becoming representations that have the power to affect how individuals and cultures situate themselves within educational and linguistic discourses. It has also been shown how these representations are connected to discourses of globalization through educational policies and the economics of SE testing and their concomitant educational materials. However, the question arises as to how globalization, with its vast array of theoretical definitions, may be shown to be a representation in itself. Given its definitional ambiguity, it is difficult to conceive of its having a general or dominant representation circulating in the social world. However, the relationship between globalization and conceptions of modernity may give us insight into how the discourses of globalization become representations that signify specific meanings to the consumers and producers of ELT.

In order to better understand how globalization may be associated with representations of modernity, it is necessary to examine how diverse aspects of dissemination of information, and interconnectivity among cultures (Appadurai, 1996; Freeman, 2001; Heller, 2003; Waters, 1995).
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globalization viscerally intersect with lived experience. This exercise may seem problematic as such an analysis would seem to require a discussion of theories of modernity, which are as multitudinous as those of globalization. However, what is at issue here is not how scholarly discourse theorizes modernity, but how it may be subjectively viewed by individual agents: or modernity as it is experienced. Therefore, analysis of relevant literature on globalization and modernity may be used to theorize how representations of modernity may be constructed.

It is interesting that much of the literature on globalization does not specifically discuss modernity as an aspect of globalization, although it is often quite obviously implied or taken for granted. However, some theorists openly define globalization as a global expansion of modernity (Appadurai, 1996). Giddens (2000) metaphorically speaks of globalization in terms of late modernity, with modernity being a juggernaut that may not be stopped. This intersection between globalization and modernity is often expressed in terms of economic, political, cultural, and linguistic forces (Giddens, 1990; Harley, 1990; Tollefson, 1991). In addition, the discursive relations between economics, culture, and modernity are often discussed as manifestations of “Westernism” or “Americanism” (Fasenfest, 2010; Phillipson, 2008; Ritzer, 1998). Latouche (1996) asserts that cultures are being homogenized around an American cultural ideology that includes clothing fashions, foods, and the arts as well as attitudes towards working environments and conceptions of freedom. Similarly, Barber (1995) and Kincheloe (2002) see such phenomena as a McDonaldization of the world. In terms of ELT, and education in general, the socio-economic forces of globalization and modernization are manifested in educational policies and curricula that support and reify the positions of dominant social groups (Shin, 2010). In these ways, it may be seen that ELT educators in Korea and other Asian nations are being de-skilled and de-politicized by high stakes, standardized testing regimes that conform to norms dictated by groups that are heavily invested in globalization and its supporting regimes of truth, such as the representations of the NS and SE. As such, it may be said that the subjectivities of ELT educators are being influenced, if not programmed, into a specific form of naïveté where ELT is viewed as a linguistic exercise with smatterings of culture thrown in to satisfy the illusory curricular dictates of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).

As modernity is, at the very least, inferred to be a primary facet of globalization, it is reasonable to conclude that representations of modernity are bound to cultural products: both the tangible artifacts and the ideologies that form much of the real and imagined contexts of people’s lives. Appadurai (1996) expands on the relationship between globalization and modernity by theorizing how electronic media plays a key role in constructing how people visualize modernity. Bhabha (1994) and Canagarajah (2006) corroborate this view by asserting that such phenomena are connected to a dominant view of globalization. In addition, Bondebjerg (2003) and Phillipson (2008) relate that the international ubiquity of American media forms, such as film, TV, and music represent a lifestyle that approximates a visual world culture and, therefore, serves as the lingua franca of globalization. Clearly, when these diverse ways of viewing globalization and
modernization are considered as a whole, they imply the construction of a specific representation of modernity based around Western or American socio-economic culture. Given the power of the representations of the NS and SE, it is just as clear that the language of modernity is English, and preferably American English. As such, these different representations are discursively connected as constellations of knowledge that form a regime of truth (Foucault, 1994) that wields great power over individual and social subjectivities.

GLOCALIZED IDENTITIES

The preceding theoretical arguments have shown how conceptions of the NS, SE, and modernity function as representations that have the power to influence how EFL learners and educators view themselves and others, how these representations co-construct national policies and international socio-economic relations, and how they represent forms of knowledge that are discursively connected into a regime of truth. However, this line of reasoning is incomplete as it has not explicated how this regime of truth is implicated in the construction of individual and social subjectivities. As such, it is necessary to examine how the representations of the NS, SE, and modernity affect the construction of identity.

Theories of identity in the social sciences tend to focus on social (Gumperz, 1983; Morgan, 1997), cultural (Cole, 1996; Hall, 2006), or sociocultural (Lantolf, 2000; Norton, 2006) views of identity construction. While social theories of identity tend to focus on the dialectic between individuals, social structures, and institutions (Gumperz, 1983), cultural theories focus on ethnicity in terms of a dialectic of “becoming” that flows from and through the past, present, and imagined future (Hall, 2006). According to Norton (2006), sociocultural identity theory is an amalgam of theories that include social, cultural, post-structural, and feminist approaches that view the construction of identity as a dynamic, fluid, and contradictory process that is deeply implicated in issues of culture, power, and language. In this way, identity may be viewed as a discursive process affected by all the various domains of the social world, and as such, may also be seen as a site of cultural and ideological struggle. The importance of power in this view of identity is crucial as it takes a Foucauldian turn in that power is theorized as being both coercive and productive (Foucault, 1984). Pennycook (2001) makes this clear by stating that:

The notion of politics I am using here takes as its central concern the notion of power and views power as operating through all domains of life. Power is at the heart of questions of discourse, disparity, and difference (p. 27).

This aspect of identity is important to the discussion at hand as it necessarily includes language, education, economics, governmental policies, ideology, media, and other forms of visual representations into a vast corpus of tangible and intangible things that affect the construction of identity. Therefore, it may be seen that representations of the NS, SE, and modernity may have considerable effect on the construction of identity.
Another common aspect of the theories of identity listed above is that they all theorize that identities formed in the modern, globalized/glocalized world are necessarily hybrid identities. This view of the process of identity construction dovetails well with theories of glocalization as the dialectics between the global and the local obviously leads to hybrid cultural forms. The problem here is that this focus on hybrid identities seems to imply either an equality of input between the global and the local or, at best, an appropriation of the global to suit local needs. Or in other words, a situating of the global within a local context. The former is clearly problematic as the dialectics of power between any two social forces can never be theorized as being equal (Bourdieu, 1991). The latter is no less problematic as it assumes that the appropriation of the global is critical process wherein forms of culture and ideology are problematized prior to appropriation. Given the instrumental, test-based nature of Korean (Paik, 2005; Shin, 2010) and international educational systems (Kubota, 2001), the extent to which any meaningful critical appropriation of foreign language, culture, and ideology occurs is unclear at best, and is most likely to be minimal. While theorists of globalization and glocalization do not agree on the extent to which globalization is a manifestation of westernization (Fasenfest, 2010; Ritzer 1998) and/or Americanization (Latouche, 1996; Phillipson, 2008), there appears to be a general agreement that western culture and ideology is, at the very least, a strong force within globalization: a force that is in some measure promulgated through representations of the NS, SE, and modernity.

From this perspective, the beliefs of Choonkyung and her fellow students regarding their inability and lack of qualification to teach spoken English are in large measure attributable to the representations of the NS and SE. Not only do these representations appear to be internalized into their beliefs about English learning and teaching, but are continually reified through language education policy and government rhetoric on education and globalization. As such, Choonkyung and her fellow teachers are, in effect, “othering” themselves in ways that invoke theories of linguistic imperialism, and hence the discursive link between the hegemony of English and globalization (Canagarajah, 1999; Phillipson, 2008). Moreover, by uncritically internalizing the language ideologies embedded in the representations of the NS and SE, they demonstrate one of the ways in which complicity supports hegemonic systems. The adherence to SE and standardized testing is another obvious way in which complicity operates. It needs to be stated that it is not my intention to criticize of Choonkyung and her fellow students, but to explicate the ways in which an uncritical appropriation of foreign language, culture and ideology affects the way teachers and students feel about themselves, their culture, and others in ways that do not reveal an equality of hybridization or a necessarily positive one. It is also necessary to state that these issues, while being somewhat different according to context, exist wherever language, culture, and ideology are being contested and appropriated, including the United States (Lippi-Green, 1997).

In a similar way, my students’ difficulty in articulating their understandings of modernity may be seen as a manifestation of the regime of truth that discursively
connects representations of the NS, SE, and modernity. With the ubiquity and prestige of American media and high-end western consumer products, the governmental rhetoric on globalization, the positioning of large numbers of NS teachers as arbiters of language and culture, and the plethora of representations of white westerners in shopping areas and on Hakwon flyers, it is not difficult to see why my students not only did not place the imprimatur of modernity on their own nation, but pointed to me (an educated, white, American male) as a representation of what a modern person might look like. While my students viewed Korea to be a modern nation in terms of economics and technology, they did not consider Korean culture to be modern in terms of its politics, the arts, fashion, sports, and other cultural forms. It is significant that the majority of the cultural aspects named are generally dominated by western culture, the representations of which are internationally disseminated through media and the various forms of product marketing (Hall, 1997; Phillipson, 2008). Again, the question arises as to the equality of influence between the global and the local in the construction of hybrid identities. And, again, it appears that the weight of influence is more heavily shifted towards the global, and hence, the western.

CONCLUSION

It needs to be stated that this analysis is not intended to disparage my students, other EFL learners, or the Korean people as being unknowing dupes to global hegemonic systems, particularly as these same phenomena are occurring in many other places, including Europe and the United States (Kincheloe, 2002; Phillipson, 2008). Rather, the intent of this chapter is to raise questions as to how specific representations have the power to shape how we view ourselves and others and how we construct the institutions and discourses that shape our lives. Likewise, this analysis is not intended to paint a dismal or hopeless picture of how ELT intersects with the struggle between the global and the local. For, at least two points of potential transformation exist within the scope of this analysis. The first may be seen in representation theory itself: as representations are discursively constructed (i.e., they are not fixed, have more than one reading, affect us, and are affected by us), both dominant and subaltern representations must simultaneously exist (Bhaba, 1994; Hall, 1997). This means that not only may specific representations be problematized for the possibilities of alternative readings in the classroom, but that alternative representations may then be created and published through various media for the purposes of transformation and social justice. Obviously, such a pedagogical enterprise is particularly suited to applications of critical pedagogy to ELT. Examples of this kind of pedagogical work may be seen in the works of Moffatt and Norton (2005) who utilized a post-

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1 As a critical educator, I understand that this example could be read as a manifestation of my own power as an American educated professor (i.e., students’ telling me what they think I want to hear), or as an example of western patriarchy in practice as I may have been manipulating the discussion to get the response I desired. However, I have always ascribed to Fish’s (2008) notion that I never tell students anything, I merely present ideas to them and invite them to make their own meanings.
structural/feminist framework that allowed students to investigate and problematize representations of gender in Archie Comics, and in Beach & Myers’ (2001) Social Worlds curriculum that invited students to form inquiry groups that situated, deconstructed, and reconstructed social themes elicited from assigned literature and created representations through various media that expressed their own meanings. In similar ways, teachers may use the power of representation to construct forms of literacy in the classroom that allows students to contest, critique, and re-create the social meanings of the representations that are embedded in the language textbooks they use as well as the media forms and social relations that have very real meanings in their lives.

The second point of possibility for transformation may be seen in how the problematization of specific representations has the ability to demystify relations of power in ways that illuminate not only how power affects local cultures though the appropriation of foreign discourses, but how local populations are complicitous in the establishment of these relations. Understanding complicity is hopeful as it can identify points of outside domination, such as the TOEFL and TOEIC tests and the vast numbers of NS teachers being brought into Korea and other Asian nations, that may be transformed in ways that better suit local populations and weaken the discursive structure of domination. As such, it may be argued that this is what the critical appropriation, or glocalization, of foreign language, culture, and ideology should focus upon. For, focusing on the forces of domination holds little hope for transformation as it is not in the hegemon’s interests, as they see them, to change. Only the development of a critical consciousness (Freire, 1970) within an emerging educated citizenry could arm the consumers of ELT with the ability to demystify the discursive relations of language, culture, ideology, and power and thereby enable them to transform their world in ways that are more socially just and more suitable to their own local contexts.

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REPRESENTATION, GLOBALIZATION, AND THE NATIVE SPEAKER


ROD PEDERSON


KIWAN SUNG

2. CRITICAL PRACTICES IN ASIA: A PROJECT OF POSSIBILITIES IN THE ERA OF WORLD ENGLISHES

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides challenges and possibilities which language pedagogues face in the conceptualized world of globalization where both universalization and diversification are promoted to serve diverse stakeholders. Especially given changing aspects of the roles of education in the current domination of neoliberal market-oriented discourses, the roles of English and practices of teaching English in Asia, where there are more speakers of English than any other part of the world, shed important light on how English is perceived and mobilized to benefit certain groups of people over others. That is, in Asia, English has been considered a hard currency in securing a job for social success in the ever-more capitalized world. In such a context, both utilitarian and economical rationales of teaching and learning English have been rarely challenged but are accepted without close examination of historical, sociocultural, and political contexts of how English is adopted and promoted in various regions. Accordingly, this paper engages in an in-depth examination of to what extent current English teaching practices in Asia are structured and operating under the influence of historical, sociocultural, political, economic factors, which form complex relationships and dynamics among the people in various regions. In so doing, I problematize these issues and also put forward an extensive critique of the dominant practices of teaching English as a mere subject or tool for communication under the logic of global competition with relevant literature and concrete real-life examples. Then, discussed are some possible ways which language practitioners can bring criticality into their pedagogical contexts of teaching English to meet learners’ needs, value the process of assuming diverse and different identities, and, eventually, claim ownerships of their own use of World Englishes.

ELT IN ASIA: HISTORY, STAKEHOLDERS, AND REPRESENTATIONS

Given the dominance of skills-based teaching of English in the name of enhancing communicative competence, which has been a robust concept ever since it was introduced in ELT (Canale & Swain, 1983; Hymes, 1972; Savignon, 1983), ELT has focused on learners’ development of linguistic knowledge and functions for decades. As a result, traditional methods stemming from behavioristic and cognitive views of
teaching language through drills and rules are still widely used in most parts of the world, where the Western colonization and its legacy of neo-colonization still persist (Philipson, 2010). As a matter of fact, through globalization and internationalization, which supposedly started from business sectors, the concept of communication is now undermined to the extent that English learners have only to function in various socio-economic contexts as mere consumers or in job sectors where lifelong job security is no longer affordable. In addition, in the era of fast technology and social networking, one can transact ideas and information not only through face to face interaction but also through technology, which allows for the instant formation and dismantling of (hyper)real communities based on temporary desire and politics. In such a context, English is no longer a mere language but is a cultural tool which sets certain norms or helps learners adjust themselves according to the world’s needs and changes depending on how they use it. For example, as in many parts of the world, especially in Asian countries where business is still good such as in China and India, despite the current economic recession due to the U.S. oriented subprime mortgage and European financial crises in 2007-2008, English is touted as a must if one does not want to lag behind in the fast-changing society and ever-increasing competition in the world.

In order to delve into the complex situations in which English is put, it is worthwhile, first, to closely examine, when, where, how, and why one teaches, learns, and utilizes it in certain but not other ways. This is, however, done in a brief manner, first, to provide general backgrounds for those who are not familiar with the current status of ELT in Asia, and, second, due to the page limit. Such an effort is important given that ELT in Asia still subscribes to rather uniform and hegemonic views originated from the Western logics of positivism and reductionism where test scores, skills-based teaching, and match-and-mix methods are the means of evaluating both humans and educational apparatuses. Then, I closely examine some conspicuous pedagogical, sociocultural, and political phenomena related to English and its teaching and problematize how English is touted as a solve-it-all panacea for Asian peoples whether or not they want to learn or use English. In doing so, I also emphasize the possibility of using English as a tool to liberate oneself and resist oppression, especially for critical pedagogues to develop themselves as democratic change agents instead of being complacent in the status quo or becoming a mere critic of despair with nonchalant clichés or blames against others.

The historiography of the English language well documents that the spread of English was closely tied to (neo)colonialism since the 1800s (Pennycook, 2001; Philipson, 2010; Sung, 2002). That is, ELT in Asia is closely tied to the vicissitudes of the history and the politics of places depending on whether each country was colonized by reasons of proximity, trade, or political and military confrontation. For example, the countries in Southeast Asia such as India, Malaysia, or the Philippines have been under the British or U.S. influence due to historical, economical, and political reasons and their views of English may be quite different from those from East-Asian countries. For the former, it may have been the language of rulers for administration, trade, or enculturation in the midst of the expansion of the British
Empire due to trade as their countries or cities were flagship ports where multi-ethnic and multicultural groups of people mingled. For the latter, it is a language of the military government which enforced mostly Western forms of education and political structures, especially after the end of the World War II as in Japan, Korea, and the Philippines. From then on, such colonial practices of inculcating English into the minds of people were mutated into subtle neocolonial practices and yet domineering entities in the mid 1900s when these countries became independent. That is, though the colonizers’ overt and forceful policies or actions were no longer visible, those who had been connected to the colonizers and the people who were institutionalized and encultured by the colonizers’ world views and experiences maintained similar or superficially revised but inherently the same policies and ways of life (Bourdieu, 1991). As a result, in the former colonies or those countries under the influence of former imperialistic colonizers such as the U.S., or U.K., English was continuously used as a main medium for practical reasons such as conducting daily work or communicating with those who bought their services while schools, especially, higher educational institutes, continued to import curricular materials and instructional methods which sanctified Western-oriented knowledge and world views.

Given such a long history of the domination of English either for the sake of colonialists’ administrative efficiency in ruling their subjects to presumably enlighten or civilize them, no people can realize such an imperialistic legacy more acutely than the people and scholars of the former colonies of the West. These people vividly know or understand the nature of subjugation but may be suppressed by the omission of politics which incurs as in the logic of global capitalism at present. For example, teachers, learners, or parents in Korea may know that American English, not the British, is considered a standard in Korea due to the history of imperial contention in the East-Asian region at the turn of the 20th century, the missionary work of the Christians from the U.S. who also played a major role of establishing modernized schools, and the U.S.’s role in the Liberation from the Japanese colonization and the ensuing Korean Wars during the 1940s and 1950s. That is, American English (probably another misnomer given that there are many Americans whose origins are different and spread around in the American Continent, and so hereby U.S. English from now on) is viewed as the standard and most coveted form of English in Korea. Accordingly, many Korean people do not think highly of the British Standard English (SE) or other Englishes. Students or parents in Korea, more often than not, complain that they do not like teachers or materials with different and strange accents.

More seriously, what I found most interesting but rather mindboggling through more than a decade long interaction with some of the EFL scholars and teachers in Asia I met is that they appear quite uncomfortable and uneasy when they hear words such as (neo)colonialism or imperialism, or let alone power, identity, and critical consciousness (or pedagogy). They sometimes merely acknowledge such issues but change to more comfortable topics such as their educational and research backgrounds, jobs, or new teaching skills or technology use in class. Such inattention or maybe conscious avoidance of critical topics probably indicates the
common attitude of ELT teachers who think that they just teach language. For them, it is dangerous to include such controversial issues, which should be totally avoided or used at a minimum level as mere resources for teaching language as many observed (e.g., Kubota & Lin, 2006; Mustakova-Possardt, 2003). If not, they may be those who believe in and participate in positivistic education eagerly or unconsciously. In short, the legacy of (neo)colonialism continues even now in many parts of Asian in the era of globalization and postmodern or postcolonial diversity, whether a country was a former colony or not. That is, English in many Asian countries is still considered as an indispensable tool for daily communication with those from the former colonizing countries, for economic survival in the world of ever-increasing competition, or for academic and social mobility to work in high-paying domestic or transnational corporations.

ELT practitioners’ lack of awareness on critical perspectives of English and its roles is nothing new in the current terrain of English as a communicative tool in order to ensure the nation’s edge in the global competition or individual success. Different views also exist regarding the spread of English, though. Cha and Ham (2011) researched the world English adoption trends in the 20th century and suggest that the diffusion of English is universal and has occurred more due to the educational principle of empowering individuals through the expansion of supranational citizenship to meet global challenges rather than societal characteristics of each country, whether a country was previously colonized or not. That is, they report that more countries, particularly those which were not former colonies, adopted English as a first foreign language during the last century. They argue that such adoption appears not to be simply due to international trade, export partners, or economic belief as in the common belief of English for the survival in the globally competitive world. Instead, their variable of ‘global civil network’ was found to be the reason of adopting English more in the last half of the century. They view that despite the facts such as a dwindling number of world languages or invalidation of indigenous knowledge due to the wide adoption of English, English is adopted to realize the ideal of the development of human capacities and their identities through institutionally-oriented curricular policies.

Cha and Ham’s underestimation of political and economic influences in favor of offering a global citizenship network through English education, however, leaves many questions unanswered: First, it is not sure if the whole idea of supra-/trans-national citizenship is really what motivates the spread of English in order to construct “collective identities that empower future citizens in global society” (Cha & Ham, 2011, p. 201). Such a view is laudable but it does not take into account English as a hegemonic language where English is often considered superior and more educated. Given the view that English is spread due to the British and the U.S. political, military, and economical power in the 19th and 20th century (Crystal, 2003), rather than due to the superiority of the language itself or its innate functionality for communication and economic transaction, their views are dangerous and may conform to the ideology of monolingual superiority. Therefore, merely acknowledging potential conflicts between the view of English as a tool for global citizenship and global diversity such as multilingualism or multiculturalism
is not enough since such conflicts are real and reveal deeply ingrained historical, philosophical, political and sociocultural influences upon the nation and people in concern.

Second, the whole ideas of developing individuals as global citizens, and of making English a key subject by the nation-state to develop them as supra- or transnational citizens also appear to be more than wishful-thinking and clearly reflects the idea that English is beneficial to all, which is not true at all (Pennycook, 1994). For example, the view of providing “world-level educational norms and values” (Cha & Ham, 2011, p. 187) for individuals to adapt and function in global civic society appears problematic. That is, Cha and Ham appear to endorse the untenable position of the institution’s ability of providing such norms and values so that English can contribute to individual learners’ engagement in ‘international communication and global cooperation’ (Cha & Ham, 2011, p. 202). However, who gets to decide those norms or values and on what criteria?, will English educators make sure their learners beware of the danger of the English monolingual empire which decimates the world’s language and indigenous knowledge?, do researchers and practitioners in ELT, especially, in ESL/EFL contexts, build their curriculums or lessons around the issues such as identities, justice, and global citizenship especially in the current practice of prioritizing basic skills first?, what about other important school subjects such as math, science, social studies, arts, and physical education?, and are they not important in helping individuals develop as educated global citizens?

As a matter of fact, on the contrary to Cha and Ham’s view of providing ‘supranational citizenship’ in a globalized civil society, the difficulty of teaching social justice in ELT or in humanities in both EFL and English speaking countries, especially in the subjects not related to civic education, is well known in the current basic skills-oriented, corporatized programs in schools (e.g., Giroux, 2007; Pennycook, 1994, 2001; Nurenberg, 2011). That is, the majority of English curriculums in the world have not reflected civic or democratic issues for political or pedagogical reasons, for instance, to avoid controversial confrontations or to make sure students learn the basics first. More seriously, Cha and Ham’s study does not deal with important social issues such as the English Divide due to the socioeconomic gap between the rich and poor in the world (Baker, Resch, Carlisle & Schmidt, 2001; Shin, 2003; Tan, 2007) and the English Fever due to excessive zeal for private tutoring, study-abroad, and test-oriented ineffective practices for which cost incurred upon families regardless of their financial status such as in China and Korea (Dyer, 2010; Kang, 2009; Park, 2009). Accordingly, though I agree that many rational and functional justifications, (neo)colonialism, and institutional visions are all competing explanations for the worldwide spread of English, most ELT scholars or practitioners fall shy of addressing the political, the sociocultural, and the economical (Kubota & Lin, 2006).

I, more often than not, wonder whether it is a good thing for everybody that English has become a main subject worldwide as a result of globalization and its institutionalization. Rather, if one language, under the logic of globalization, becomes the measure of world standard and development, it is simply a disguised
manifestation of enforcing a hegemonic view of English as a panacea by the very few dominant and powerful people along with those who are in various institutions such as education or media. That is, the three perspectives on English diffusion (i.e., rational-functional, neocolonialist, institutionalist) Cha and Ham (2011) included in their study are not exhaustive at all and actually represent some limited facets of how English is mobilized. That is, diverse factors such as race, class, gender, power, identities, and desire are as much influencing or constructing various stakeholders such as policy-makers in governments, administrators in various institutions, teachers in local schools, and more importantly, parents and students, whose voices are least heard and represented. As a matter of fact, the bogus claim of the neutrality of the nationally-imposed curriculums and official pedagogical guidelines in Korea and other Asian countries provided to teachers and students results from the politics of omission frequently manifested in the typical invocation that all political and pedagogical acts are for teachers and students, especially in case of implementing controversial policies or rules for the rich and dominant. Accordingly, it should be investigated how these stakeholders participate in the construction of particular practices of designing and implementing policies and programs related to English and who benefits most through such practices, knowing or unknowingly. For example, prejudiced employment policies favoring native English speaking white young teachers from the English speaking countries are related to race issues while who can afford expensive short- or long-term study abroad programs or private tutoring is a clearly class issue. More importantly, one should look into why and how the current logic of essentializing English as the most important tool for students’ success is widely accepted and who benefits from such a view. As a result, EFL pedagogues can think about new and different ways of teaching English to meet diverse learners’ needs as well as political, sociocultural, economical, and more importantly, moral and democratic needs of society and nation. This is more so because I believe that globalization is passing. Now is the time for glocalization or localization (Pennycook, 2010), especially after the failure of market-oriented neoliberalism during the last few years, though it still lingers near.

ENGLISH AS A COMMODITY: APPROPRIATION OF DESIRE AND IDENTITIES

One of the most common assumptions in ELT is that it will procure material rewards, such as having a good job or elevating one’s status in society. Some Asian countries also consider English a key aspect in catching up with the so-called affluent countries. Thus, English is considered a big barrier or hurdle for individuals or a nation to overcome. For example, in his rather thorough analysis of changes related to English and ELT at present and in future, Graddol (2006) makes sure that English is tied to the issue of growing economic gaps and transnational business environments. In such a context, there is no discussion on how ELT can also contribute to the equality of the people, especially on why it is touted as the language to master to be rich and powerful (Yang & Sung, 2006). Therefore, English is not a mere tool for communication but a social marker for people to be on par with the haves in the era of globalization and internationalization. That is, whether people are from Inner
Circle (IC), Outer Circle (OC), or Expanding Circle (EC) countries (Kachru & Nelson, 1996), many English teachers and learners attach so many psychological, sociocultural, and ideological meanings to English. For them it is not just a subject or a tool but everything. Some people in the IC countries think that English should be a national or official language for unity and prosperity of the country and that it should also be protected for its purity by teaching a standard form. Aligned with such an idea, some OC and EC countries heavily promote the use of ‘right’ English or adoption of English as an official language (EOL). For example, in Singapore, despite the people’s use of mother tongues such as Mandarin Chinese, Malay, and Tamil, English is the main medium of instruction in education and students are advised to emulate native speakers of English (Jones & Mann, 1999; People Daily, 2006). Furthermore, beginning in 2000, the Speak Good English Movement (2011) was initiated to help their students speak ‘right’ English (Chng, 2008). Both in Japan and Korea, since the late 1990s where globalization and market economies were in full throttle, there have been continuing calls to adopt EOL by social elites and governmental officials (Bok, 2003; Butler & Iino, 2003). Business sectors and ELT industries back up the view of English skills as a key to economic development while media regularly report that some conglomerates, online companies, or government-related institutes conduct their business meeting in English online (e.g. ELTNEWS, 2010; Japanese Center for Economic Research, 2010; Samsung Economic Research Institute, 2010). Accordingly, such a zeal for teaching English became a catalyst for East-Asian countries to move up the starting age of children’s learning of English. For example, Korea began to offer English at the 3rd grade in 1997, China in 2005, and Japan offered it from 4th grade in 2011 (McCurry, 2011).

The logic of making EOL or teaching it to children early to ensure personal success and the national economic development is, however, reflective of the fact that language is closely tied to the formation of certain ideologies and identities (Kubota, 1998; Yoo, 2005). For instance, the discourses revolving around English for individual and national success is not necessarily true. There are many countries which adopt English as an official or main communicative tool for their own people but are not affluent due to other intervening factors. Think about some countries in Africa and Southeast Asia (no offense intended and, thus, no country names) rather than some rich European countries like Sweden, Finland, Hong Kong, or Singapore, which are often mentioned as good models to emulate. Many people in the former nations suffer due to the colonial and neocolonial legacy of politics, not from the lack of English proficiency. People in the latter nations are usually well-educated through their social welfare systems which include high levels of respect for teachers and less reliance on standard testing (Asia Society, 2011) or have rather a long history of conducting trade or financial transactions with the white, privileged entrepreneurs who have vested these countries’ interests for their own. In such a context, I assume it is much easier to unilaterally educate their people, whose number is a few million compared to the large populations of some other countries, to be fluent in English. However, this is not really true, either, in that, for instance, only a small portion of the people use English on a daily basis.
Those who associate English with economic benefits ought to consider why the market economy failed as manifested in the subprime mortgage disaster and the downturn of global economy a few years ago, which continues to impact the multitudinous poor of the world far more than the few rich. It is truly an oxymoron for anyone to insist that such crises happened due to the lack of English proficiency in the OC or EC countries. It is rather due to the greed of the haves and the blind followers in the governmental and business sectors despite the long-standing warning of the danger of such a mindless and inhuman endorsement of competition and marketization of the world (Ball, 2007; Commercialism in Education Research Unit, 2011; Macedo, 2004; Giroux, 2007; Smith, 2003). Accordingly, instead of naively accepting the logic of market-clad globalization, which views English as a must to survive, EFL practitioners and learners will be better off by thinking first about how their desire of being an English speaker is formed and mobilized by others, what aims they want to achieve in teaching and learning English, and how their identities are shaped in the current context of globalization. For example, they can critically examine whether they are forced to learn a certain type of English, such as SE, and buy certain English programs or materials constantly in the logic of preparing for the future, which is more uncertain than before. Especially, EFL pedagogues have to wonder why they as well as some of the educators and leading scholars are still entrenched in the logic of the simplicity of English as a solve-it-all entity. Then, one can easily understand that ELT in Asia is the product of its relation with Western countries throughout the colonial, neocolonial, and modern era. To be more emphatic, I strongly believe that current ELT in Asia is wielded by the market-oriented globalization of which the raison d’être stems from the political economy of viewing human knowledge, skills, information, and human institutes and activities in terms of marketability and capital gains. Therefore, I often think about what kinds of English I am selling to my students or wonder whether I naively believe in that they will be better off as the result of consuming English instructional materials and lesson content. I also wonder who benefits and is disadvantaged from such practices. All in all, one thing is clear: most learners get minimal benefits at this moment while teachers continue their teaching without changing the current status quo, which is characterized best by the English divide or English fever. In the current terrain of ELT in Asia, unless born with innate language abilities to master English or with the economic means and sociocultural capitals to study abroad or make inside connections with those who are in power, whether they are white or others, most learners are not that successful.

**ENGLISH EDUCATION AS A NEW COLONIZED SPACE**

It is clear that, in Asia, the widespread use of English is partly due to the colonialism and imperialism in the 19th century and mid-20th century. The former colonies are still at neocolonial stage in that despite their independence with
souvereignty they still have to rely on the political, social, and cultural systems of
the former colonialists to continue with their life. In other words, despite their
severing with the colonialists in a political and geographical sense, those who were
under colonization suffer from the instability and insecurity of being free and
taking charge in rebuilding key infrastructure of the country, which has been
exploited to the full for such a long time. As a result, they probably show a
tendency to revert back to old colonial life and thinking styles. This clearly
explains that despite an initial revolt against the colonial legacy, many former
colonies of the English speaking countries had to resort their old ways of being and
living, one of which was to adopt the policy of EOL especially after the emergence
of globalization (Cha & Ham, 2011). As for non-English speaking countries,
globalization is often cited as a main reason for adopting English in schools but it
may be another form of New Colonialism, especially if it continues to spread
Western knowledge and culture one-sidedly to other parts of the world (Kincheloe,
2008).

Globalization is an ideology, not a naturally occurring phenomenon. Accordingly, various stakeholders, especially, sociologists, economists, politicians, and industrial and media entities partake in forming extremely complex and complicated relationships to put forward their agenda related to English. That is, some of these stakeholders are collusive in creating a unjust world for the less powerful and knowledgeable. However, EFL teachers in the OC/EC countries do not realize this and, if they do, they do not seriously reflect on the far-reaching consequences of the New Colonialism which stems from (neo) colonialism and imperialism. As a matter of fact, given the wide diffusion of English and growing markets for it, now is the age of English Empire. As a consequence, while there are many discourses touting English as a must to teach and learn, many EFL teachers and learners end up teaching and learning limited sets of linguistic knowledge and skills packaged and delivered mostly by Westerners and their companies. For example, in the current EFL supermarket, you can buy many products such as skills-based, technology-savvy real-time or virtual programs, overseas language experience programs, and even instant access to interpreters or customers’ services from the remote countries regardless of where you are!

Understanding English and its role under globalization, however, is more complex and requires in-depth thinking and insights in order to escape from linear and myopic views. Though acknowledging that globalization may help some nations and people in exchanging knowledge and culture as well as materials, as humans always have been doing throughout the history, what is problematic is the practices of ELT rather than English itself. That is, under the name of English teaching, there are hegemonic and oppressive practices related to knowledge formation and distribution, human desire, and identity formation. For example, it is not uncommon that ESL or EFL learners’ cultures and learning styles are essentialized and ‘Othered’ as undesirable if not inferior to those from the IC countries. That is, in the dichotomy of the East-West, the Western ways of thinking and learning such as motivation, collaboration, and group work are always prioritized as if the East does not even have such concepts (Chen, Warden & Chang, 2005; Kubota & McKay, 2009). Other similar examples
also include, but are not limited to, preferential treatment of white English teachers from English speaking countries regardless of qualification while offering no proper orientation or training about hosting country and its students, prejudice against non-white ESL or EFL speakers who are discriminated in the job interview and salary regardless of their fluency and qualifications, universal implementation of the English subject all levels without proper curricular and instructional support, lack of communication between domestic and foreign teachers, and the use of test preparation materials mostly developed in the logic of psychometrical measurement principles from the West (Dave’s ESL Café, 2011; Qian, 2008; Qiang & Wolf, 2007a, b; Korea Institute of Curriculum and Evaluation, 2010; Sung, 2006a) as I elaborate more below.

One of common characteristics of ELT in Asia is the preference of so-called native speakers of English. In the hiring practice of English teachers, it is well documented that those who speak English as a mother tongue from the IC countries have been preferred over those from OC and EC countries. That is, under the governmental policies such as the Japan Exchange and Teaching Programme (JET), English Programs in Korea (EPIK), or Teaching and Learning in Korea (TaLK), there are discriminatory practices of employing English teachers based on what race or ethnic backgrounds they come from and what types of English they speak. In addition, it is estimated that there are more than 150,000 foreign teachers in China (China TEFL Network 2011) and 30,000 in Korea, legally or illegally, to teach English. The majority of them are, however, hired because they are white and English speakers from the IC country (Kim, Han & Han, 2005; Qiang & Wolf, 2007a, b). In Korea, it is also well-known, but not much investigated, that both administrators and directors at public schools or private institutes called hagwon favor white young teachers from the IC countries regardless of their qualifications or experiences just in order to showcase them to parents and students. In China, some foreign teachers are pushed to teach through textbooks or engage in more perfunctory events rather than actual teaching due to the excessive demand for them from all levels of schools.

In Korea, some administrators and teachers complain that foreign teachers are native speakers of English but are ignorant of school cultures and lack classroom management or administrative skills. For example, some of them are less qualified or not really serious about teaching as they are called “backpackers” who are more interested in travelling Asian countries as soon as the break starts (Qiang & Wolf, 2007a, b). Therefore, instead of building collaborative collegial relationships with foreign teachers, they consider foreign English teachers expatriates who leave after some years and these foreign teachers also act as such, after all. In a sense, foreign teachers are thought as migrant laborers who just come for easy or high paying jobs and do not making an effort to accommodate culture of the hosting country let alone teaching students well. In the meantime, foreign teachers may complain of the lack of information about governmental and institutional rules and regulations about hiring, visa extension as well as schools, curriculums, and daily events or long working hours on the weekend, especially in private institutes. So both construct the
world of their own and others’ without making enough efforts to understand each other or work together.

Such misunderstandings occur mostly due to hasty decision of implementing English education in the elementary levels under the logic of global competition and assumed benefits of English in many Asian countries. According to Graddol (2006), EFL is kind of doomed to failure in that most learners are taught a foreign language at puberty in a non-speaking English environments, probably by domestic teachers who are not proficient or use old teaching methods that are traditional or by underprepared English speaking teachers from the IC countries who came to Asia due to bleak job prospects in their own countries, which is not to be blamed at all given that people, whether you are teachers or laborers, move around legally or illegally to find a better job. In other words, whether it is a developed country or otherwise, most Asian countries do not have enough qualified domestic English teachers, either. Then, expecting to hire qualified foreign English teachers is impossible when there is also a lack of qualified English teachers in the IC countries. As a matter of fact, these well qualified domestic or foreign educators mostly have jobs at top-notch higher educational institutes or affluent areas as keenly pointed out in case of China (Qiang &Wolf, 2007). Therefore, the issue of qualification matters to both hosting and foreign teachers. Moreover, the issue of native and nonnative teachers of English is more than the issue of proficiency or teaching qualification and actually behooves us to go deeper why such confrontations and misunderstanding occur. In short, the preference for IC speakers of English over OC/EC speakers of English stems from historical legacy of colonialism, which actually manifests dynamics of power relationships such as linguistic hegemony or linguicism (Gramsci, 1971; Philipson, 1988, 1992). That is, particular identities of teachers and learners in relation to Western English-speaking white native speakers are forced upon Asian English speakers and are also assumed by some of these speakers in a complicitous manner. In such a context, progressive discourses such as multilingualism and multiculturalism seem more hollow and ideal, especially where new policies and approaches are introduced in the name of ensuring institutional accountability by raising students’ learning outcomes.

FALLACY OF SKILLS-BASED AND TEST-ORIENTED TEACHING OF ENGLISH

Many EFL classrooms in Asia use textbooks which limit the scope and sequence of what should be taught and learned and measure learners’ progress using standardized tests only. For example, large-scales standardized tests being used or developed are The College English Test in China, the Korean Scholastic Aptitude Test (KSAT), and the National Assessment of Educational Achievement for 6th, 9th, 10th graders which began in 1999 in Korea. There is also a newly developing National English Aptitude Test (KICE, 2011) along with the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), and the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) developed by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) or the Test of English Proficiency developed by Seoul National University (TEPS) in Korea (Choi, 2008). These long-standing English exams for college entrance and jobs have proliferated
test prep industry and cramming schools in Japan (Sasaki, 2008). In Japan, there is an increase of school-based English testing on a large-scale which includes oral skills component and benchmarking of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS). In Hong Kong, there are exams such as Hong Kong Certificate of Education Examination taken after the 5 year of secondary education and a new Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education expected to be implemented in 2012 (Qian, 2008). In India, there are a large-scale indirect English tests in rigid format due to its connection to ‘prestige and socio-economic mobility’ (Ross, 2008, p. 11; Ramanathan, 2008). In Thailand, large-scale high stake tests give rise to test-oriented teaching in secondary schools and private test preparation industry (Prapphal, 2008). Therefore the dominance of high-stake standardized tests in these countries is more likely to make EFL teachers deskilled and teach English to the test while learners are deprived of valuable opportunities to experience different variety of language and culture. Instead, the major trend of teaching English now is to ensure students’ acquisition of basic skills to communicate well with foreigners or of test scores for advanced schools and jobs.

Moreover, most material developers and those who teach in ELT still consider monolingual English speakers from the IC countries as ideological models (Seidlhofer, 2001) despite the changing terrain of ELT where diverse World English speakers (not non-native speakers of English) interact with each other rather than with the former (Graddol, 2006). Discourses revolving around English for communication are, in fact, diverse and are challenged for its ambiguity and divisive nature of distinguishing language in terms of accuracy or fluency. Accordingly, many new curricular and instructional programs and approaches have been suggested and implemented. For instance, instead of skills-based teaching, which wrongly gives idea of prioritizing one skill (mostly listening or speaking) over the other (reading or writing), some integrated approaches such as CLT or task-based activities are in use (Ellis, 2003), while some utilize whole language of which the because these practitioners commit to the view that language is not the sum of its parts (Hoffman & Goodman, 2009; Goodman, 1980).

Another trend is to offer more English classes depending on learners’ majors and their future use of such content as in ESP where bilingual or adjunct teachers collaborate to teach both language and subject matter. In addition, content-based language teaching (CBLT) or content and language integrated learning (CLIL; Brinton, 2003; Celce-Murcia, 2001; Graddol, 2006) are highly promoted in some European countries or in some special programs in ESL or EFL countries. For example, both the Seoul and Busan school districts in Korea are developing and experimenting with elementary level content-based teaching by merging math, science, and social studies with English under the name of Immersion English programs, which was proposed by the transitional team for the current government but was repealed after heavy criticism. However, it is not sure whether such programs are implemented also for those who have low proficiency in English or to teach content, language, and study skills simultaneously to develop their cognitive and academic skills as well as language skills altogether to help them become functional bilinguals. Furthermore, not many EFL teachers are trained or qualified to
teach in such programs given the short history in TESOL or CBLT (Celce-Murcia, 2001; Graddol, 2006). Therefore, such a program development will be just another showcase unless it serves all the children in the end. It may also prove that it is going to be different from some highly expensive private programs which supposedly use materials or methods imported from the IC countries.

Under the CLT framework, functional aspects of English are highly emphasized and materials to cover such functions are reproduced mostly by the political, industrial, and educational apparatus, which have both visible and invisible power to control when, where, whom, what, how, and why to teach English. And more importantly, in such a context, both teachers and students are forced to accept such realities as natural and beneficial and also to just follow curricular mandates no matter what happens. Therefore, rigid but ubiquitous practices of teaching English through commercial materials, which classify language into basic elements and functions, deskil teachers as technicians and learners as mere parrots or study machines. To no one’s surprise, ELT practitioners’ firm belief in teaching basic skills in scope and sequence is quite incorrigible in that it is easily seen in any conference where teachers often ask whether one can use innovative methods or technology for learners who don’t have basic vocabulary and grammar. This rigid belief in teaching basic skills first is also reflected in school curriculum where writing courses or other content-related courses such as Studies of World Events in English, Social Issues in English, or Advanced Writing are offered only for advanced learners, probably, as electives (Sung, 2009). Thus, without learning the basics, students are not supposed to know about important world issues or do not even have the chance to express their opinions in writing. I sometimes suspect this is why my undergraduate and graduate students write everything in a uniform way, summarizing the text as it is, for assignments such as reflection or thought papers as in my previous research (Sung, 2010). Their attachment to text is so tenacious as most ELT educators stick to the idea of basics first. That is why the current rigid system of teaching English without considering students’ lived experiences in specific contexts is constantly being reproduced as it is. How profound and far-reaching the indoctrination of how English should be taught and learned can be whether it be basic skills first or English as a communicative tool for individual success or national competitiveness!

Accordingly, what is peculiar in the current drive for more English at an earlier age is the lack of discussion on whether English should be taught at all levels in countries such as in China, Japan, Korea, or Malaysia. That is, there are almost 3.8 billion people in Asia, about 1.4 billion in China, 1.15 billion in India, and 127 million in Japan. Imagine that one third or even one-fourth of these people speak English at communicative levels by next two or three decades as a result of current zeal of teaching and learning English. Do we have enough jobs which require English use on a daily basis for them? Will they be so affluent that they will go on vacations in English speaking countries? Will the economy of these countries be better due to their people’s English abilities? Probably not. I suspect the industry of English education will move on to other Asian countries and sell the same ideologies or dreams attached to it as of now. Or current ELT business
will go down partly because the market is saturated because enough Asians have become fluent as Graddol (2006) indicates. Then, will people realize the whole logic of English for better jobs or life is a big scam after all? Or will they just continue to learn it as usual, probably clad with a post-globalization and more ecology-based theory of teaching English? No matter what happens, I believe that now is the time that English educators must look into what purposes and outcomes they promote in the context of teaching English and whether such goals are viable to the extent that their students are well prepared to lead the world by being good citizens and language users.

A PROJECT OF POSSIBILITIES FOR ELT IN ASIA

So far, I have documented, explained, and, more importantly, critiqued the current terrain of English teaching in Asia by extrapolating the historiography, hermeneutics, and critical analyses into a number of issues and phenomena and also exemplifying concrete cases and evidence related to them. However, due to my lack of knowledge and first-hand experiences with some of Asian countries and the page limit, it is true that I may have not done justice to all overarching issues and events but it is hoped that I touched upon some key generic concerns of EFL educators in Asia. However, acutely being aware of the numerous criticisms of using academic jargons and the discursive practices devoid of practical suggestions against critical lines of work, I risk here the danger of providing particular directions in resisting dominant hegemonic practices in ELT in the Asian context. So, readers’ discretion is required if some suggestions and implications I share here do not fit into their own contexts or are against their beliefs.

Understanding Politics of ELT

As I reiterated, English teaching is not neutral but political (Pennycook, 1994; Shannon, 2001). The dominant views such as English as part of general curriculum to get learners acquainted with advanced literature or culture, English for communication, or English for survival in global competition (Cha & Ham, 2008) are both educational and political constructs which have also close relationships with social and economic ideologies of learning English. Denying such linkages is typical among ELT teachers and the general public. However, such denial is the very evidence that the politics of ELT is so successful that it reaches a point where both EFL practitioners and learners even accept such a view without resistance! In short, denial of ELT’s association with politics and the economics of education is the strongest political position, which annihilates even a slightest possibility of looking into other possibilities. For example, if one doesn’t even consider the power and detrimental effect of standardized testing practices (Shohamy, 2001; Tierney, 2009) on the assumption that there are bullet proof tests to measure all types of learners objectively, s/he is driven by the political belief rather than educational one. Accordingly, in order to engage in critical practices of teaching English, one should be aware of one’s political position from various perspectives.
For example, if one follows a textbook from cover to cover, it is a political act to benefit self and others rather than students. If one uses a standardized test only and disregards alternative assessment tool, it is a political act to serve a particular type of test industry, not students. It is because, as Apple (1990) poignantly said, the power of reproducing the status quo in education is deeply engraved “in the rhythms and textures of culture, consciousness, and everyday life” (Apple, 1990, p. xi) as well as educational policies, systems, and artifact we deal with. Thus, the politics of English teaching should not undermine teaching of politics in the context of teaching English.

In order to become politically conscious EFL practitioners, we should revisit our past of learning English as a student and think about how such learning experiences have influenced our own teaching for the better or worse. Such reflection will surely create a critical space for us to think deeply about how our views and practices have been shaped in certain ways and by whom and also how such views and practices are shaping our students. In other words, it is incumbent upon EFL pedagogues to regularly reflect on whether they have frequently been conscientizing about their induction and performances in the field as a teacher no matter how many years of teaching experiences they have. This is because teaching is a profession, not a mere job. Thus, if teachers do not closely examine how their own identities as a teacher are shaped and influence their teaching behaviors by thinking ‘why I am doing what I am doing’ constantly, they are more likely to accept the dominant practices such as teaching skills first or managing students efficiently in class. They are more likely to excuse themselves not being reflective in their practices under the pretext of busy schedules of doing administrative work and nitty-gritty chores in school.

EFL pedagogues in Asia should realize that they are spreading interested knowledge and should always weigh benefits and harms done to themselves and others (Gee, 1990; Pennycook, 2001), especially to other people’s children (Delpit, 1995). As Pennycook strongly asserts, English teaching and its roles at present are neither natural, neutral, nor beneficial to all, at all. Thus, teaching skills first and only or reiterating the alleged benefits once someone masters English is problematic given that it is not always true but a constructed ideology by history and politics by a certain group of people in the past and at present. For example, if you think teaching English has nothing to do with human and social values such as peace, poverty, democracy, morals, environmental issues as many teachers often do, you have been successfully inducted into the positivistic and reductionistic world in which you are told to teach skills in a lock-step manner or see things objectively without linking them to multifaceted aspects of phenomena in the name of preparing your learners for future jobs. To put it simply, if you are tired of your work at the end of the day and only care about your own welfare or family and never thought about where your students mostly end up, you are already in such a world. If you are happier in the teachers’ lounge boasting of only a small number of best students who end up in top schools, engaging in never-ending tirades against less smart or poor students, and constantly speaking ill of your colleagues and administrators, you are in such a world. Then you are in the profession only for
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yourself. It is high time to get out instead of doing more harm to other people’s children who already have a very slim hope of being successful and wealthy as the gap between the rich and poor is widening in an unprecedented manner in the current world (Shin, 2003; Tan, 2007).

Being Sensitive to Discriminatory Practices against Human Beings

The current view of ELT in the discourse of political economy endorses the industrial tenet of productivity and efficiency for maximum benefits as also reflected in the schools’ and some teachers’ concerns for efficient management and accountability. Accordingly, teaching English is related to securing a job and social mobility but such should not be the only goal in that, in a practical sense, not all will be getting a job in transnational companies and use English. English is only one of the subjects in school that are important to their life. Therefore, learners should be given opportunities to think about why they need to learn English and how they will make use of it in the future instead of merely accepting the dominant view of EGL for individual success and prosperity. I argue that such a limited view is not viable and is rooted in industrial, utilitarian perspectives. It actually degrades both humans and learning as resources for economic capital.

Another immediate concern in ELT should be that all subject matter teachers as well as English teachers in Asia guard against their unintended collusion in safeguarding Western knowledge at the cost of their indigenous ones, which are just as valuable. In other words, as manifest in the analyses of EFL teaching materials, including only Western people and culture in the content or activities while superficially acknowledging multilingualism and multiculturalism, is tantamount to a direct infusion of Western superiority (Sung, 2008). As a matter of fact, given that the majority of EFL teaching materials are written and produced by the people and publishers from the IC countries, who probably consist of white people more often than not, it is the very evidence of the politics of whiteness especially when these books only include people, customs, and places that are nice, good, and attractive in their own standards. Such omission of diversity or mere inclusion of colored people and their culture such as holidays and food perpetuates the superiority of Western culture over other cultures even though there is no hierarchy in ways people think, act, and live (Hall, 2003; Moran, 2001; Kincheloe, 2007).

In relation to the hidden curriculum of whiteness (Sleeter & McLaren, 1995), EFL teachers of English should check their association with the dominant groups and see whose needs are more prioritized and served in their practices. For example, EFL practitioners should see whether they simply bank Western knowledge on the students’ heads and minds while denouncing indigenous knowledge culture (Freire, 1970, 2005). Conscientious EFL teachers had probably gone through a developmental stage of cognitive euphoria for TL culture but fortunately realized that there are conflicts as well as harmony in any cultural relationship. Thus, both EFL teachers and learners should be wary of privileging the dominant culture of TL language, which are especially represented in subtle ways in the curriculum or
instructional activities where Western styles of thinking and living are presented without any criticality. For example, listing famous people or world events without historical background and regional contextualization is dangerous because such information is partial. Take Helen Keller for example. She is one of the famous figures in English textbooks published in Asia and in the U.S. What our students know about her is limited to such facts as her blindness, her dedicated teacher, and a success she had achieved. However, such a story is only partial given that not many know about her after she grew up. She became a socialist and sided with the communists in order to protest the U.S.’s lack of support for the handicapped (Loewen, 1995). Adding to such a partiality, there is a serious disproportionality in presenting Asian history, politics, people, society and culture in English teaching materials. What is more astounding is that not many Asian scholars and teachers argue against such biases believing that they just teach language using the text given. However, such naiveté on the part of EFL practitioners condones the politics of omission, which results in the proliferation of so-called value-neutral and language- or skills-based commercial materials clad with colorful designs and up-to-date jargons such as CLT, integration, or diversity. Accordingly, EFL practitioners should examine how they are unconsciously forced to develop oppressed mindset of imitating white people’s thinking and actions and, as a result, naively transmit such a view to students with the false hope of mastering native-like pronunciation and proficiency in order to enjoy white privilege of living a high life as on T.V. or in movies.

Another example of inhumane practice, which is equal to organizational oppression in ELT, is the treatment of female teachers and the poor children in school. First, there are many more female teachers of English as we move down to lower grades such as elementary schools in general. However, even though it is improving in some countries, not many questions why there are few female administrators, supervisors, principals, or directors in schools. That is, both EFL practitioners and learners do not seem to problematize such a patriarchal system where social and male perceptions of women operate in certain directions to favor one group over another (mostly male over female). It may be that such a discrepancy is so naturalized now that it seems to be taken for granted. As a matter of fact, due to the overwhelming influx of female teachers who pass high-stakes teacher exams in Korea, there is some preferential treatment for male applicants for elementary schools but I am not aware of any kind of affirmative action to appoint more female teachers to high positions. Such negligence, however, is not accidental but an act of institutional discrimination condoned by the patriarchal society. How would African American children feel if all they see in school are a white principal and white teachers? Unless that a kid comes from a rich family, s/he will have difficulty in understanding such a discrepancy or take it as natural. In a similar vein, what kinds of service do we spare for children from poor families? It is a well-known fact from educational research that one’s socio-economic status accounts for more in his/her success in school and society than one’s intelligence and aptitude (Chang & Sohn, 2005; Phillipson & Phillipson, 2007). When children are from poor families, they have different understanding of
the world and probably different styles of learning. Does current ELT do its best to accommodate such differences? Accordingly, reporting success story of using innovative methods and tools without considering learners’ sociocultural and socio-economic backgrounds or developing so-called special programs such as English programs for the gifted or content-based English-Science or English-Math is actually an act of discrimination unless there is a concrete plan to serve these students who are from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds. As English Only is dangerous, so is English for the Few. Thus, mindful and conscientious teachers should do their best to create the world of English Plus for the More, if it were so important a subject in the world of the survival of the fittest as many claim (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2007).

**ELT as a Public Good or a Privatized Inheritance**

Related to the issue of poverty and the teaching of English, EFL teachers’ pedagogical approaches and belief systems will vastly differ whether they think education is a public good or a privilege for an individual. As Sehr (1997) rightly points out, the current formation of education for individual success stems from private democracy which was intentionally promoted by the powerful capitalists. The idea of global competition in automatically operating free markets also reflects the tenets of private democracy where individual capital gains and social success are considered prime. Therefore, despite multilingual and multicultural people living in the U.S. and the U.K. the mandate of English in schools and wiping out bilingual education by the Bush administration turned the original intent of teaching for the poor and minority into accountability issues as in No Child Left Behind in the U.S. or Every Child Matters. But in reality, it is, however, more close to All Children Left Behind or No Child Matters given the scale of attack on teachers and teacher unions through budgets cuts and privatization and marketization of schools, especially public schools (Compton & Weiner, 2008; Shannon, Edmondson, Ortega, Pitcher & Robbins, 2009). What is worrisome is that based on the inferiority complex and the western-oriented view of education, some Asian countries have began also to implement similar nationwide student evaluations and teacher evaluation schemes as accountability measures (Cho, 2009; Mok, 2006).

What is omitted in the promotion of this particular view mentioned above is that public democracy is rarely talked about and promoted in the trope of individual accountability and success in general. Admitting that individuals’ profits and wealth should be protected, practices of getting them, however, should not harm others for one’s own sake. Such practices should not be done while neglecting the majority of students who are not ready to learn or don’t perform well due mostly to socio-economic disadvantages. More importantly, if educating students for the sake of their own benefits is the only goal, I wonder what legitimacy there is to spend public funding or resources for it. What is the reason of teaching any democratic and philanthropic principle through any civic or moral education when the majority of English teachers work only for those who seek for their own benefits only? In fact, the dream of being rich and happy like wealthy white
educated elites and their associates in their own country by studying or mastering English is actually far from the truth, at least for most of the students. In other words, the current paradigm of teaching English for employment based on theories of self-regulating market and endless competition severely undermines the meaning of education as a public good as well as ELT’s potential to enrich students’ learning. Such a limited view on the role of English deprives students of possible choices they have in utilizing both language and knowledge in the context of social justice and equality for all (Apple, 2010, 2003).

Unfortunately, as in other subjects, there has been increasing trend of teaching English by using Western standards or standardized testing, which only favors certain types of students or social classes, especially those from the rich families whose discourse practices are already aligned with school discourses (Gee, 1990). In such a context, those who fall behind are stigmatized as “not intelligent, lacking in aptitude, or even slow and stupid.” Therefore, current education becomes more of a labeling or blaming game against teachers and teacher unions while lining up students according to test scores whether they be IQ, SAT, or TOEFL tests, or college entrance exams (Educational International, 2009a, b; Bloomberg Businessweek, 2009). Thus, the goal of preparing students for global competition is vague, at best, in that it is based on private democracy which views English as a resource to maximize self-realization of individual wealth and social success. Such a view is partial in that globalization can help establish harmony and collaboration among individuals by valuing diversity in language use and understanding cultural differences.

Accordingly, critically minded EFL practitioners should challenge the practice where English is considered a mere subject to be tested for college entrance or job market or a privilege for the few rich and elites who can afford private tutoring or a study-abroad and later come back to their own countries to wield their linguistic competence to maintain their power and social structure. Once EFL pedagogues realize that ELT does not stand alone as a single subject but that it is under the principle of education to maximize all students’ benefits, they will also know the danger of English as a tool of merely securing competitive edge in the future. To be honest, students’ future is not decided or threatened by their own domestic or foreign peers who are forced to compete for scarce jobs but by the downsizing of labor forces by multi- or trans-national companies or by those who possess the record-breaking wealth which history has never seen. In other words, due to the efficiency-oriented use of technology along with the constant attack on the unions, decent jobs with life-long benefits are scarce everywhere in the world. In such a context, preaching the idea of English as a gateway to better jobs or future success is not true but may be a promise broken even before students start to learn English (Shannon, 2007). Therefore, conscientious EFL practitioners should espouse the idea of English for all learners as it can be taught as a public good under the much-disregarded framework of public democracy. All in all, we don’t need any more teaching that is based on measuring one’s superiority or competitiveness but should rather base our teaching on a pedagogy of hope where everybody is given
opportunity to succeed and, if not, we can help out each other to live together (Freire, 1995).

**EFL Teachers’ Critical Consciousness and Agency for Change**

Conscientious EFL teachers who want to utilize the work of CT or CP may be discouraged thinking that they can’t do many things under the current situations where they are forced to follow rigid curriculums, teach to test, and conduct more administrative work than develop themselves. Though I sympathize with the teachers in such a situation, we cannot remain at a status quo. Especially if you understand all the downfall and detriments of teaching English for individual success and market needs, a day late means a day the grave disservice done to other people’s children. In other words, making excuses and succumbing to the limitations of the present is not going to make conscientious, critical EFL teachers comfortable. It will only shackle and entrench them in a world of despair. After all, school is a microcosm of a society with many conflicts and contradictions. So it is a detrimental politics of avoidance and despair if you lock yourself up in a classroom, thinking that I can teach my students well in my own way as many teachers do. They never realize that their awareness does not necessary equip them with solutions for their students’ troubles in school and in life.

EFL pedagogues with true critical conscientization or *conscientização* (Freire, 1970), therefore, will naturally have to engage in critical action to resolve problems perceived through on-going reflections of their own teaching behaviors. They will have to get the help from their learners and through-provoking colleagues who are in dialogic relationships with them, share concerns and find ways to solve those difficulties. So finding a network of supporters and changing things on a small scale but in a steady manner is important. For example, you can use multiple texts such as movies and alternative assessment tools to raise students’ critical awareness rather than one textbook or a test imposed by the school authority (Sung, 2006b). You can create online communities where students can really engage in critical dialogues about social and personal issues of their own and perform an inquiry project where they not only use a TL but learn valuable academic and social knowledge (Short, Harste & Burke, 1996; Sung, 2007b). Such a practice is more real than skills-based approaches for many learners. So the message is clear. If you are a teacher who rarely problematizes realities that you and your students face, you may force other people’s children to fit into the society and also accept the status quo at the same time (Bourdieu, 1991). One easy but profound question in such a case, as I often ask to groups of preservice and inservice teachers, is whether you would send your kids to yourself to learn English. More often than not, I see many teachers lower their heads to their desks and avoid eye contacts with me, which reveals what they do now in class but what they want to do-change themselves!

As an English teacher, if you do not want to reach for the level of conscientization, which is a priori to become change agents, there are a few choices. First, you can maintain your position as a teacher by believing that you are
no worse than others in school. As a matter of fact, in the EFL context, English teachers may enjoy a privilege by thinking that you are teaching one of the most important subjects in school. You can accept it with no guilty feelings at all. Such thinking is, however, untenable given that true conscientization will never allow one to justify oneself only to make a living for his/her own. Second, one may get out of the profession given that there is more chance in the globalized and market-oriented world where English is a hard currency. Since no teacher gets paid enough in the world anyway, you can make a fortune by selling English in many ways. If you, however, are afraid of being adventurous to risk your job by joining the business world of cut-throat competition, you have only one choice—you have to change yourself. That is, you can try to change yourself by developing your language or teaching skills by attending advanced graduate or post-graduate programs or by going to various conferences to gain new knowledge or skills to utilize on your own. However, there may be no guarantee of learning new things or changing yourself unless you really open your eyes and minds since you may seek for the same things in somewhat different manners without changing your attitudes or world views about yourself, your students, and communities. In other words, repeating long and arduous processing of sitting in graduate or teacher training programs may not be of great help especially when many of these programs are still from the positivistic framework and are probably full of posh techniques and new technology of delivering your class more efficient and effective ways. Such elements are not just sufficient enough to change oneself as manifested by teachers’ negative views about theory-based, decontextualized teacher education and development programs in general (Sung, in review).

So in order for EFL teachers to be change agents, they should not remain as a language teacher only. As a matter of fact, many calls have been made for ELT teachers to engage in action research and/or teacher research so that they can be leaders who learn from teaching rather than learn to teach (e.g., Hubbard & Power, 2003; Kincheloe, 2003; MacLean, Mohr & National Writing Project, 1999; Pinnell & Rodgers, 2002). Thus, it is a solemn duty for EFL pedagogues to engage in critical dialogues and actions related to diverse political, sociocultural, economical, and environmental issues and events. Both EFL teachers and learners should use their linguistic and cognitive abilities to engage in problematizing practices (Park, & Sung, 2003). One of the ways to do so is for EFL pedagogues to become critical researchers who investigate important political, sociocultural, and economic issues in relation to their English teaching in order not to fall into the trap of teaching skills first (Kincheloe, 2003). After all, there are many people who are smarter and more powerful without having any language skills whether it be English or not. When EFL pedagogues know how to link relevant issues and events that are critical to students’ lives, they no longer become a practitioner of delivering limited sets of knowledge and skills in a decontextualized manner, which is a biggest problem in current education. As a matter of fact, even though it is well studied and documented now that many EFL learners come to class with their own linguistic and cultural backgrounds upon which EFL practitioners can build higher order thinking skills, these learners should be guided to critically engage in
examining their own bias against people, culture, and the world in order to gain new and different perspectives. For instance, they can be guided to in-depth dialogues regarding English and its roles, both positive and negative impacts of their particular positions related to it, and, more importantly, how their own and others’ views on them resonate with power, identity, and socio-economic distribution. As a result, they become not only good language users of TL but also critical student-researchers as well, which is rarely done or addressed in the current transmission model of education (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1998). Relatedly, the hardly talked about but much-needed practice of empowering students as researchers, regardless of what they study, is a critical missing part in ELT and all education. Accordingly, ELT pedagogues should look into the actuality of students’ lived experiences and knowledge more in-depth and engage in more meaningfully situated practices of teaching English in real, particular places and space where the past becomes present, which, in turn, becomes future by interacting with diverse group of people instead of merely talking about ‘context’ devoid of human agency and desire (Gruenewald, 2003).

**WEs As a New Paradigm in the Era of Post-glocalized World**

Regarding the unexamined supremacy and preference for SE or a variety of English spoken by the speakers from IC countries, some scholars view that the concepts of nativeness and standards are not well defined and even problematic. They suggest new and different perspectives on the ownership of English. Kachru (1992) introduced the concept of World Englishes (WEs) in order to capture differences in English variety and approaches in teaching it. Then, Kachru and Nelson (1996, 2005) questioned the viability of IC speakers as norm providers and expound that different varieties of English exist in the OC countries in which people use English as a second language and the EC countries with the people who use it for their own or international purposes. Even though this model is still problematic in that the IC countries are placed at the center without considering many historical, political, sociocultural, and economical influences or in that they are mostly white western nations, the model is one of the most cited models documenting the ecological spread of English. There was, however, an earlier model of World English proposed by McAthur (1987), which had no country at the center and treated all the varieties as equal. Crystal (1997) also views that there are more regional dialects called ‘World Standard Spoken English’ and predicts that these regional varieties will probably be considered as parallel to so-called SE in terms of its functions. In addition, there are more people who use English as a foreign language and do not necessarily interact with IC speakers of English in the world (Graddol, 2006).

The change in the purposes of using English and the number of speakers in the world is quite unprecedented (Beare, 2011), probably due to the development of global communication networks aided by advanced technology. Therefore, it is clear that the concept of SE, which is more ideological than practical, is also changing. For example, the distinction between WEs and SE is not linguistic but political and ideological in that there are no particular superiority among the languages or their
varieties but are different perceptions and approaches of teaching it. As Kachru and
Smith (1985) indicate, what is considered SE is also another variety of English,
which is probably privileged by a certain group of people for reasons other than
linguistic ones. Thus, the views on different types of Englishes used by IC speakers
or second or foreign language speakers are rather leveled now in that these scholars
acknowledge the legitimacy of regional English or New Englishes, which may be
synonymous with WEs (Graddol, 2006). For example, Lee, Mo, Lee, and Sung
(2011, in review) conducted the surveys and interviews to examine the perceptions of
Korean and foreign speakers on three pairs of East-Asian speakers of English from
China, Japan, and Korea. It is reported that the Korean survey respondents and
interviewees revealed their ambivalence regarding SE and WE: They valued the
diversity of English pronunciation and would communicate with foreigners
regardless of their accents and yet strongly favored to learn SE, which is the English
variety from the U.S. in Korea. The NS and foreign speakers of English, however,
were more appreciative of WEs and were more willing to interact with those who
from the EC, especially when they had more experiences in living abroad and had
more foreign friends other than those who were from their own countries.

With the emergence of WEs, Jenkins (2002) proposes the concept of a lingua
franca core (LFC) and challenges the unfounded assumptions and superiority of SE
or a variety spoken by IC English speakers. That is, given that English is a lingua
franca (ELF) or a global language (EGL), Jenkins (2002, 2005a, 2007) views that
flexibility in pronunciation and grammar is necessary as long as one’s utterance is
intelligible and comprehensible between interlocutors. More specifically, she
explains that LFC is expanded from the view of ELF which is related to EGL where
diverse groups of people use their own unique Englishes based on their needs and
culture. In such a context, they have the legitimate ownership of such localized
English without reference to a variety such as SE spoken by IC or OC speakers of
English. Accordingly, she argues that one should allow the uniqueness or innovations
of ELF users. For example, she listed core features of pronunciation which are to be
kept in conditions like word initial /θ/ or aspirated /pʰ, tʰ, kʰ/, initial clusters of the
words, or contract between long and short vowels to be maintained but other non-
core features such as replacing /t/ and /d/ with /θ/ and /v/ or pronouncing /l/ as clear,
dark, or vocalized are permissible especially when such pronunciation reflects
speakers’ native language influence (Jenkins, 2000). She also considers code-mixing
and code-switching as natural and pragmatic strategies for bilingual learners of
English (Jenkins, 2002). Relatedly, Seidlhofer (2001) argues that the idea of the
superiority or fortune of being native speakers of English is still embedded in the
research and even in discourses which are in line with EGL. Accordingly, she calls
for more descriptive data analysis using actual language use collected from non-
native speakers of English for which there is no authority. In short, I believe that the
increased awareness of WL or LFC and new approaches of researching on these
diverse Englishes, in the end, can rupture the staunch SE and NS ideologies which
are still pervasive and adopted by local agencies and teachers in many EFL contexts.

With regard to Jenkins’ LFC, some scholars critique that the criteria for what
are permissible are not clear and, thus, are not practical enough to use them in real
teaching (e.g., Dauer, 2005). However, given that English is more used in diverse global contact zones (Gaughan, 2001; Pratt, 1991) and evolves as people see fit in terms of its function in localized context, English has become the language of not only IC speakers but also international speakers of English. What is important in Kachru’s proposal of WEs and Jenkins’ LFC is that the model of English based on educated while middle class IC speakers is eroding fast while OC and EC English speakers’ Englishes are being accepted in the real world. In line with such a change, Berns (2005) notes that there should be more research on how English is used by EC speakers given that such study is really lacking or has been given little attention despite S/FLA researchers call for valuing learner language. More importantly, in the context of upholding SE in most ELT classes, though its definition is more related to spoken English used by media or educated people, rather than pronunciation (Hughes & Trudgill, 1996; Trudgill, 1984; Trudgill & Hanna, 2002), increasing attention to the validity of WEs and LFC implicates that EFL pedagogues should know that their attitudes toward SE and WEs affect not only their own but also students’ identities. That is, As WEs and LFC suggest, English is now owned by speakers with diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds whose identities are different from whom they interact with. That is, both OC and EC speakers of English are now legitimate owners of their English and EFL pedagogues should not remain within the confine of teaching SE or English varieties used in the IC countries only (Seidlhofer, 2001). In other words, the advent of WEs and LFC means that there are real people using diverse types of English rather than a uniform version. Accordingly, the binary concepts of native vs. non-native, standard vs. non-standard, and right vs. wrong-in teaching and learning English should be deferred and, hopefully, abolished so that learners are exposed to real-world Englishes, not a reified prestigious model all the time.

To conclude, there is increasing awareness on the diversity of English among EFL practitioners and learners, which indicates that the concepts of WEs or LFC should be utilized in curricular and instructional plans. Consequently, current dominant and exonormative views on SE, good pronunciation, and native-like fluency should be disrupted and challenged while more inclusive and real-world research and teaching approaches will be utilized to enhance both teachers’ and learners’ understanding of a variety of English such as regional Englishes or New Englishes, WEs, and LFC (Jenkins, 2005a; Graddol, 2006). In addition, the issues of teacher and learner identity and changing views on the ownership of English should be examined more closely to see how teaching and learning English affect both teachers’ and learners’ understanding of and attitudes toward IC speakers or EFL speakers and their ownership (Yano, 2001). As discussed earlier, the OC variety of English used in India, Singapore, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and many African countries is accepted as they are, so are Englishes used in the EC circle as long as there are intelligible and comprehensible.
CONCLUSION

As reiterated over and over again, conscientious EFL pedagogues with critical conscientization, which eventually lead to critical actions, never stop problematizing the unsaid assumptions of teaching and learning English. They have to question and challenge the ideology of English for jobs, the practice of teaching to tests, narrow curricular delineation based on skills and functions, dominant use of commercial materials, decontextualized notion of communication, disenfranchised treatment of both speakers and teachers from the IC, OC, and EC countries, and, more importantly, the continuing infusion of the logic of markets into education. Such criticality should be considered one of important qualifications of EFL pedagogues who need to understand the political as well as educational nature of TEFL as manifest in the increasing influence of privatizing education for the few, which is the very act of detrimental encroachment of the concept of education as a public good (Ball, 2007; Bracey, 2001). Therefore, the present conceptualization of English for communication is rather vague and limited in that English is considered as a mere tool in assimilating oneself into the much hyped non-problematic world, which is not existing in reality. The logic of English for good jobs rather encapsulates English teachers and learners as expendables in the corporatized, transnational marketization of human resources as well as natural resources.

In such a context, what is missing is the role of English as a critical tool for expanding democracy and world citizenship as many scholars and researchers have suggested throughout history as discussed to some extent in this paper. Such a politics of omission was perpetuated because the concepts of democracy and citizenship are defined by the dominant groups who favor maximum individual profits and the survival of the fittest in the model of a competition-oriented market. Accordingly, as a critical EFL pedagogue, we all need to reexamine how we situate ourselves in current discourses of teaching English under the logic of globalization and internationalization. To be honest, as I go through all the literature and reflect on what I have been through and on who benefits and suffers from current curricular and instructional practices, I am more acutely aware that I would not have been able to achieve what I have done as a researcher, presenter, and teacher without my background studying in an English speaking country even though I can argue that I was not rich like those who are described as the elites with privileges. In the past, I had real ambivalence and indeterminacy between teaching good pronunciation and basic skills first and integrating critical issues in the lesson content, for example. I faced and am still facing doubts and threats from my inner self and others as I document here and elsewhere (Sung, 2007a). Through such a journey, however, I realize, and we all know, that both English pedagogues and learners are more than what curricular and hegemonic power have defined. That is, they are resilient beyond those policymakers’ and corporate marketers’ expectations and it is literally impossible to shackle them with rigid positivistic and reductionistic practices based on so-called scientifically objective and neutral research on human learning or consumption-oriented market theory.
Accordingly, despite my critique of current practices and occasional sarcastic tones against fellow researchers and teachers, I favor collaborative networking and practices over individual excellence and isolations. I believe in the solidarity and power of concerted resistance in order to achieve the unity of diverse groups and their perspectives in teaching English for a better world where more and more people can enjoy social and economic justice. The dominant and hegemonic groups do not have to talk about the unity or working collaboratively since they can always live with the same world views against certain ethnic groups, class, gender, and other differences psychologically and culturally. The powerful and privileged do not even have to discuss any particular agenda for certain issues or worry about implementing (rather forcing) them to others since it is their world. However, for critical EFL pedagogues, such is not the case. We need constant reflections and dialogues with self and others. We may have to agonize about who and what we are and may even have to stay up late envisioning the world that is to be created by constantly reminding ourselves that what we do matters to other people’s life and that how wonderful it will be once we achieve what we dream about!

No one can teach language without any conscience or conscientization just by believing that things will be okay if his/her students just learn English well. As you see, there are more who fail than succeed in learning English and such a result is not just by your students’ negligence or lack of efforts but more by the failure in providing necessary psychological, sociocultural, and economical supports. So if you think that you can teach English for communication with the latest innovative methods or using technology, you are on the wrong side of the world where your students do not have opportunities to experience different worlds but continue to struggle to fit into the confines of what adults want from them. Therefore, reciting the seemingly value-neutral discourse of learning good English is an act of brainwashing and deprives students of the opportunity to even think about different possibilities. As a matter of fact, critical EFL pedagogues constantly check what kinds of censorships exist and how to fight off undemocratic and inhumane practices by engaging in critical discourses or dialogues with students and colleagues. Such realizations will also lead to the importance of critical discourse analyses of the common assumptions or taboos we rarely talk about in our business of teaching language for language sake. Obviously, such an analysis should include how race, gender, class, power, identity, and other social markers in ELT shape teachers’ or students’ ways of accepting the roles and possibilities of the English language in the world, either passively or actively.

In order to deconstruct the current formation of TEFL and reconstruct it, critical EFL pedagogues have to change themselves by, first, learning from or through teaching rather than stop developing themselves after learning to teach at teachers’ colleges or other teacher preparation programs. Second, they will have to understand the importance of changing the relationships between the teacher and students in order to values students’ lived through experiences and the knowledge they bring in. Third, they should re-orient themselves as researchers, hopefully, with criticality so that they can eventually help students become researchers. Then, the current roles of
the teachers as knowledge transmitters and the students as mere recipients will disappear. Last but not least, they need to engage in critical practices of enhancing students’ intellectual growth so that they can value social justice and equality for all in the context of teaching both skills and content. In addition to these, there are many more things to be done, of course. But since CP in ELT is a matter of commitment rather than a method, I believe critical EFL pedagogues can find their own ways of helping their students with their critical lenses in language, culture, and power.

As Simon (1987) says, it is a failed project if forms limit ones’ capacity to fit into existing social systems (e.g., acquiring high scores in standardized tests, getting into top schools for nice jobs in future, travelling abroad or consuming cultural or materials products from high or foreign culture). In such a limited context, social forms are accepted as a status quo to be kept and human minds cannot even imagine the worlds where they can expand their potentials and create new forms where people are more equal and collaborate to make progress for mutual benefits.

After all, teaching is a process of developing and changing your own identities as you see fit in a specific space of interaction with your students where a multitude of historical, sociocultural, political, and economical factors come into play, knowingly and unknowingly, in various forms and functions. However, the quality of education can never exceed the quality of an educator who knows or makes a constant effort to understand all the ins and outs of complex and multifaceted relationships of these factors. Therefore, it is a solemn calling that we should be a change agent by making sense of all these complexities and guide our students through them to find their own ambitions and goals to achieve. English is not a language to be mastered or a solve-it-all means for all the problems one faces. So it is high time that we put it back in its own place by discarding the idea of imitating IC speakers of English. Rather, we should always tell our students that there is more to it: It is okay to be different and such a world is better after all.

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CRITICAL PRACTICES IN ASIA: A PROJECT OF POSSIBILITIES


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NOTES

1 I often mention that all English teachers in Korea may be violating the stipulation of the National Curriculum when they teach only basic linguistic knowledge and skills when it clearly documents that all the subjects should be taught to develop learners to become all-around individuals such as democratic and multicultural citizens by enhancing their creative and critical thinking, though very mouthful but truly lofty aims that all educators should pursue no matter what subjects they teach, I think.

2 To avoid the term native or non-native, which is a controversial binary term, I use the term IC speakers instead of the former and WE speakers for the latter (Kachru, 1996). As for those whose mother tongues include English, I would rather use multilingual English speakers. Whether you are using English as a mother tongue or not, we are all international speakers of English given the current ecology of English use in the world (See Crystal, 2003; Graddol, 2006; Kachru, 1992).