

English Across the Fracture Lines

Edited by Elizabeth J. Erling



**English Across the Fracture Lines:
the contribution and relevance of
English to security, stability and peace**

Elizabeth J. Erling

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10 Spring Gardens
London SW1A 2BN, UK

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About the Editor

Elizabeth J. Erling has been engaged with international ELT for over twenty years, working in the contexts of Austria, Bangladesh, Germany, India, Korea and the UK. Previously Senior Lecturer in English Language Teaching and International Teacher Education at the Open University, UK, she is now Professor of ELT Methodology at the University of Graz, Austria. Her research explores the value attributed to English as a language of economic development, social mobility and intercultural understanding, and she is particularly interested in how these values shape language education policy and contribute to the growth of English-medium instruction. She has undertaken several research projects with the British Council and is also co-editor of the book *English and Development: Pedagogy, Policy and Globalization* (Multilingual Matters, 2013).

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my daughters, Ylva and Marie, and to all of our daughters and sons, who deserve a hopeful future and who drive all of our efforts to promote security, stability and peace in the world.

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This small endeavour seems like a microcosm in which intercultural understanding, empathy and tolerance have been practised and also serves as an example of how English can forge relationships and optimism. These chapters represent our collective critical hope and peaceful resistance in difficult times. I am indebted to all of the contributors, not only for their work on their own chapters, but for their reviews of other chapters in the book.

We are also grateful to our anonymous external peer reviewers, and to others who have offered feedback and critical insight, including Cyril Owen Brandt, John Knagg, Amy Lightfoot, Sarah Mercer, Adrian Odell, Mike Solly, Uschi Stickler, Caroline Tagg, Danny Whitehead and Anne Wiseman. I am particularly grateful to Amy Jo Minett, who went out of her way to support me in the editorial process.

Foreword

The British Council works for a safer, more inclusive and more prosperous world. We do this through programmes which connect people internationally and which we hope contribute to increased intercultural understanding and mutual respect between peoples. Language plays a critical part in international communication, both in terms of the languages chosen to communicate with, and the words and tone of voice that we choose. The languages that we speak contribute a great deal to our sense of personal identity, and politicians use language policy to forge national identities. Looking at peoples around the world, we see that multilingualism is the norm rather than the exception and that people use different languages in different domains and for different purposes. Social cohesion is fostered by accepting and encouraging such multilingualism, and in particular by allowing and helping people to use the languages that they want to use. Language and language policy can be used to resolve conflict and to increase social cohesion, and it can be used for the opposite effect, to divide, to exclude, and even to incite violence. This book focuses on the positive potential of language and of language learning and teaching in a variety of different and difficult contexts.

The British Council has a particular remit to develop a wider knowledge of English in the world and we work with individuals, institutions and governments to that end in a global context where English has come to assume a role as a language of international communication in an increasing number of contexts and domains. In helping to develop this wider knowledge of English, including giving access to that knowledge to wider and less advantaged groups, we must always remember that the role of English is to add to a person's linguistic competence, and not to replace nor to relegate the languages they already have.

National foreign policies are often articulated in terms of increasing prosperity and security in both the home nation and the wider world. The acquisition of competence in English as a means to access international communication and opportunities is often seen as a way of increasing individual economic prosperity. In this book, however, we wanted to look at the contribution English and the teaching of English can make to security, safety, peace and international understanding. We wanted to look at security in its widest sense, not just the use of English in the avoidance of war or violent conflict, but also its potential to contribute to intercultural understanding and social cohesion. We also wanted to include the potential of language learning to develop the resilience of individuals in difficult contexts and to develop skills such as tolerance and forgiveness that contribute to healthy societies.

I would like to thank our editor Beth Erling and the contributors to this book for allowing us to fulfil our objectives through a series of inspiring practical case studies which encompass both the use of English and the potential of English language teaching and learning, and which cover an impressive range of contexts from all over the world – we are confident that there will be something new for every reader. We hope that these stories can motivate others to use languages and language learning to create a better, more secure international future for all of us.

John Knagg OBE FAcSS
The British Council

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Introduction

English Across the Fracture Lines: the contribution and relevance of English to security, stability and peace

Elizabeth J. Erling, Vienna

In summer of 2015, around the time that the idea for this book was being generated, I was starting the process of moving my family from one country to another. As part of this process, I spent a good bit of time travelling on trains between my husband's family home in southern Germany and what was to become our future home in Vienna, Austria. During this summer, and on into autumn, these trains going from Austria to Germany were full of an unprecedented number of refugees – more than a million travelled to Europe in 2015 alone – who were fleeing conflict in Syria or ongoing violence in Afghanistan, Iraq and other contexts in order to seek entry into the European Union. While I felt a sense of affinity with these people, I was also keenly aware of the disparity between our experiences and of my family's privilege in being able to voluntarily and deliberately choose to migrate. And though the process of moving home and settling in has been a challenge, we recognise how the jobs, credentials, passports and languages that we possess have smoothed our path and allowed us to bypass the majority of the struggles and injustices that many migrants face. Certainly the languages that we speak – both the host country language of German and the international language of English – have helped smooth the transition.

English has long been recognised as a language of travel and now also of migration. Being the dominant language of a number of countries that have traditionally taken in a large number of migrants, there is a wealth of research on the benefits of knowing English for migrants (for an overview of this research, see Erling, et al., 2016). For migrants moving to countries with other dominant national languages (e.g. Arabic, German, Korean), skills in English can help with this transition, but ultimately it is knowledge of the host country language that supports integration and economic stability. And, of course, home languages continue to serve as a link between families and communities, both in the host and the origin countries. This multilingual situation is described in the children's book *Bestimmt wird alles gut* (translated as *Everything will be alright*) by Kirsten

Boie (2016), a story which attempts to provide insight into the refugee crisis for young people, and to create empathy towards migrants living in Europe. In the book, Boie describes how the father of a Syrian family travelling by train through Europe – without money or the appropriate documents – uses English to communicate with, and seek understanding from, a ticket collector, who responds empathetically once he understands the situation. The family arrives in Germany, the young children learn German at school and slowly integrate into the community. This example reflects the importance of English in seeking information and making connections between migrants and their hosts, often as an interim language until the national language can serve this function.

This edited volume attempts to capture some of these moments when people use English as a language to create bridges across fracture lines – as an attempt to seek understanding or express kindness, to make human connections across linguistic and national borders, to ameliorate a struggle or to communicate messages to a wider audience. What in this volume are referred to 'fracture lines' are difficult situations stemming from political, religious, ethnic or environmental instability. Of course, migration is only one of these pressing challenges. To this list must be added the often-interrelated challenges of civil unrest, violent conflict, poverty, environmental degradation and health emergencies. There are a multitude of crises in contexts around the world today about which one could write, and this volume only refers to a handful of them. Violent conflict has spiked dramatically since 2010 and is driving forced migration. Two billion people now live in countries where development outcomes are affected by fragility, conflict and violence, and this number is on the rise (World Bank, 2017). In fact, given the extent of crises facing the world today, along with the rise of nationalist and isolationist tendencies in the UK, the US and several European countries, it can be difficult to keep hope alive with regard to achieving security, stability and peace. Even during the final stages of editing of this book, international relations with North Korea have become even more tense following the country's nuclear test on 03 September 2017. This has resulted in the British government suspending the British Council-led English language teacher

education programme described in a chapter in this book, a programme which had been attempting to promote intercultural understanding and cultural relations there since 2000.

However, despite – or perhaps because of – the great number of challenges we face globally, challenges which I think it is no exaggeration to say run the risk of undermining civilisation, we have decided with this volume to provide a space for the expression of hope. We do so in full recognition of the problematic history of the field of English language teaching (ELT) and its contribution to some of the world's fracture lines. ELT was once openly hailed as a legitimate means of spreading western culture and values, supporting economic development through participation in global markets, and promoting social cohesion in ethnically and linguistically diverse communities. However, the profession has had to come to terms with the strong criticism of its role in promoting ideals of English as the language of education, power and wealth, thereby contributing to social inequality and the erosion of cultural identities and less powerful languages (cf. Erling, 2017; Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1994; Piller, 2016). This is a tension noted by several contributors to this volume (e.g. Minett, Sutherland, Widin). While fully recognising the validity of this critique, this volume chooses to focus on one aspect of the complex web of issues surrounding the global spread of English and ELT – an aspect that focuses not on its detrimental nature but provides a glimmer of hope in difficult times: the contribution and relevance of English and ELT to security, stability and peace. In doing so, I am keen to avoid engaging in what Pennycook (2002:18) has described as a 'colonial celebration' of English. The aim of this book is to provide a critical space for the voices of people involved in educational and research initiatives around the world who have noted opportunities for using English and English language education as a means of promoting intercultural understanding and empathy. This trend, it must be noted, is primarily occurring between non-native speakers of English in contexts beyond what has traditionally been identified as the 'inner circle': countries where English serves as the official or dominant language (Kachru, 1989). In all of the contexts described in this volume, English is part of people's multilingual repertoires; it serves as one language among many, sitting beside and among home, school, community, national, regional and other international languages, all of which serve varying functions in the creation of identities, communities and intercultural communication.

Some scholars have pointed out the futility of learning English as a language of development,

particularly given the ineffectiveness of many national English language education systems, noting that resources might be better targeted towards other outcomes, such as local literacy development (cf. Bruthiaux, 2002; Hamid and Baldauf, 2008; Nunan, 2003), particularly given the lack of evidence connecting English language skills with economic gain (see Erling, 2017). In this volume the aim is to steer away from promoting English as if it is a panacea for poverty and skills development, fully cognisant of the fact that English accrues with other socio-economic variables and is only likely to be acquired if there is a strong base of general education and literacy in the home language. However, it is impossible to deny the important role of English in international organisations, for global peacekeeping initiatives, and in the delivery of many systems of higher education. Related to this is the importance attributed to English language education by a large number of countries and individuals around the world, many of whom see English as a language of opportunity, hope and aspiration. A poignant example of this can be found in an article written by Frances Vavrus in 2002 in which she follows the trajectories of Tanzanian youth on Mount Kilimanjaro who had learned English as part of their secondary school education. These are young people who face profound economic and social hardships, and who hardly ever encounter an actual need for English. Vavrus (2002), however, finds that optimism plays an important role in mediating the hardships that these students face, and part of this optimism was created through learning English. These young people felt that, even if they had limited uses for the language in their current situation, without English there was no possible future in which they might be able to find better jobs and connect to the wider world outside their deprived communities. Moreover, their skills in English made them feel that they could find ways to cope under these challenging circumstances – in other words, it gave them resilience.

Similar narratives were recounted in research that I was involved in in rural Bangladesh, where the marginalised and poor hoped for better futures for their children through education and English (cf. Erling, et al., 2014), and such messages also come through in many of the chapters in this volume (e.g. Garson and Widin). If the English language and the English language classroom have any role to play in mediating people's hardship, in creating hope in situations of deprivation and despair, in promoting moments of connection and kindness in a world so in need of tolerance and empathy – even if these moments are brief or imagined – I would not wish to close that hope down. This does not mean that we in the field of ELT should stop working towards

dismantling the larger structures that perpetuate inequality and limit people's opportunities, nor that we should stop promoting local language instruction, multilingual education and the need for critical approaches. But if English language education is going to be a powerful force in the world – which seems likely given the strong ideologies attached to it and the resulting global demand – we should work to ensure that English language education promotes some of the values and skills we so need to promote security, stability and peace.

Starting from this position, this book provides new insights into the various communicative needs in 'fracture lines' around the world, and shows the impact and potential of ELT programmes that encourage resilience, environmental sustainability and intercultural understanding as essential aspects of security, stability and peace. The chapters in this book offer a space for reflection on how ELT can nurture wellbeing by equipping learners with a language in which not only injustice and pain are articulated and expressed to the wider international community as a means of resistance, but also forgiveness and empathy. Several chapters report on education programmes in contexts in the Middle East, such as East Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq, and also Afghanistan, where education and English language learning are seen as a means of supporting sustainable peace and stability. Other chapters refer to what have been traditionally known as 'developing country' contexts such as Bangladesh, Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Lao PD, North Korea (DPRK) and Sierra Leone, where English language skills are often positioned as a means of supporting economic development and stability, both at the individual and national level. Finally, there are chapters which address issues in 'developed country' contexts, which often serve as destinations for political, economic and education migrants, such as Australia, Malta and the UK. In these contexts, English language classrooms can serve as a site for promoting integration, empathy, critical thinking and intercultural communication. The chapters featured here do not intend to represent every type of fracture line – there is no lack of material in which conflict and strife is not an issue. It should also be recognised that people working across fracture lines often do not have time or resources to work on publications like this, and the absence of these untold stories is just as conspicuous as the voices that are present.

Summary of chapters in the volume

While there is overlap between them, this volume is grouped into two main themes. The first theme relates to pedagogic practice and the English

language classroom as a site for promoting resilience, empathy and resistance. The second explores the role of the English language more generally in creating and maintaining relationships and stability locally and globally.

Theme 1: The English language classroom as a site for promoting resilience, empathy and resistance

This volume is not the first to explore the relationship between ELT and aspects of peacebuilding. Education is widely recognised as essential to addressing the root causes of violence, as seen both in Sustainable Development Goal 16, which promotes peaceful and inclusive societies, and the 2015 UNICEF programme that promotes Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy. As noted by UNICEF (2014):

Education is arguably the single most transformative institution that can touch every citizen, female and male, when it is equitably available, good quality, relevant and conflict-sensitive. It forms the bedrock of a country's economy, good governance, gender equality, identity and culture. The contributions of education to peacebuilding are wide ranging ...

However, it has also been recognised that in order to be transformative and to contribute to social cohesion and participatory citizenship, education programmes need to be conceived with the appropriate conflict-sensitive curriculum and pedagogy (cf. Cunningham, 2014). Many of the chapters in the first theme of this volume describe educational initiatives in which conflict-sensitive curricula and pedagogy are being developed for use in the English language classroom and among English language teachers, and how these initiatives can support the development of empathy, forgiveness and inclusion. While recognising that peace and intercultural cultural understanding can be promoted anywhere in the curriculum, some argue that the language classroom is particularly conducive to this (e.g. Levine and Phipps, 2011). With English being one of the most commonly learned languages in the world and widely used in intercultural communication, the English language classroom often becomes the most likely site for the introduction of pedagogic initiatives promoting intercultural understanding and peace. In the past, 'culturally unspecific, 'task-based' communicative language teaching materials may have dominated the ELT landscape. However, the inadequacy of such materials can be easily perceived in this anecdote about an English learning initiative for migrant youth in Austria. The teaching materials used in the programme are run-of-the-mill textbooks, featuring activities in which students are to practise talking to

each other about their families, their hobbies and their holidays. A teacher I met recounted how, when she first started working in this programme, she naively undertook one such activity, asking a boy about his family. He responded matter-of-factly: “My family is dead.” With several years’ experience now under her belt, this teacher now approaches such activities with caution, knowing that these students do not have time or resources for hobbies and that they only dream of taking a holiday someday. But this teacher is left with a nagging dilemma: should she avoid such activities altogether? Should she critically engage with them? If so, how should she do it? Her teacher education so far has not equipped her to engage with students’ responses. Some of the chapters in this theme present options for how we in the ELT profession can start to respond to such issues (e.g. Birch and Nasser; Harvey and Delaney).

Other chapters build on research such as that by Levine and Phipps (2011), which focuses on the importance of curriculum and pedagogy in (English language) education in terms of promoting peacebuilding and conflict transformation (see also Arikana, 2009; Kennett, 2011). They also draw on Friedrich (2007), who provides guidance for how to very practically promote linguistic peace education and social justice in the English language classroom, arguing that the goals of English learning should include empowerment, offsetting imperialism and focusing on peace instead of conflict. Moreover, the work of Birch (2009) has paved the way for the current volume, as it introduces what she calls ‘pedagogies of transition’ and provides the justification and guidance for English language teachers to contribute to peace locally and globally. Both Friedrich (2007) and Birch (2009) draw attention to the importance of pedagogy in fostering respect, justice and inclusiveness and argue for the critical role of teachers – and indeed English language teachers – in nurturing this in students. Thus, instead of drilling students in ‘correct’ grammar and pronunciation, preparing them for standardised exams and rehearsing them in banal dialogues, English language teachers should recognise their transformative power, one that has wider social repercussions. This is in line with Pennycook’s (1994:146) call to situate the English language classroom as a ‘site of cultural politics’ where different versions of how the world is and should be are struggled over, and with Gee’s (1994:190) argument that English language teachers ‘stand at the very heart of the most crucial educational, cultural and political issues of our time.’ Such ideas are picked up and developed in this book, particularly in the chapter by Birch and Nasser (this volume), who argue:

... if we teachers who are involved in the teaching of English limit our pedagogical goals to correct pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary, if we restrict our attention to sanitised speech functions, facile interactions and simplistic intercultural communication, we fail to imagine realistic alternatives to the status quo. We waste our strategic positions and power to educate for a peaceful and more sustainable world.

In this book, ELT and English language teachers are positioned as being pivotal in shaping attitudes and promoting dialogue that allow us to bridge the range of fracture lines faced in our societies today. The chapters in Theme 1, each described briefly below, offer practical ideas and solutions for teachers working in difficult contexts.

In this chapter, **Amy Jo Minett** provides a platform for the all-too-rarely featured voices of Afghan and Iraqi English teachers, sharing how they view the role of ELT in contributing to security and peace in their countries. She explores these teachers’ unwavering determination to continue to support education and English language learning in these fragile and dangerous contexts, in some cases even risking their lives to do so. Briefly describing the great efforts necessary to find a platform through which participants could safely share their stories, Minett shows that these teachers remain committed to teaching the English language because of their belief in its power to bring people together across national and religious boundaries; because they are committed to the idea of their students gaining access to ideas which open their minds; and because they want to share their plight globally. She, however, also reflects on how tremendously challenging it can be to use English as a language of intercultural communication and peace when the activities of English language teachers and students are viewed with suspicion and can even bring them into dangerous situations. Participants describe how colleagues were attacked by extremist groups or how former students whose English language proficiency had afforded them jobs in Western companies were killed for working for those same companies. By sharing these stories, Minett reminds all of us engaged in the ELT profession of our moral debt to seek out every opportunity to achieve, maintain and promote intercultural understanding, security and peace through the English language teaching initiatives that we are involved in.

Maria Grazia Imperiale, Alison Phipps, Nazmi Al-Masri and Giovanna Fassetta explore the values and goals of English language education in the context of the Gaza Strip in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Gaza has been subject to siege for over ten years, resulting in restrictions on mobility,

considerable loss of life and infrastructure, increasing poverty and unemployment, and a crisis in education. In their chapter, the authors consider intercultural language education in the context of siege and forced immobility, where Palestinians' opportunities to live the life they have reason to value are severely restrained by socio-economic and political factors. In their study with pre-service English language teachers, they found that the English language is viewed as a means of creating counter-discourses which manifest Palestinians' voices and existence to the world outside the Gaza Strip. English and technology also offer the possibility to nurture relationships by breaking the isolation, letting the wider world know about the challenges the siege imposes. English offers a way to resist and keep hope alive. They thus recommend that ELT pedagogy should nurture learners' wellbeing by equipping them with a language in which hopes, dreams, injustice, experiences of pain and pressure are articulated and expressed to the wider international community.

In their chapter, **Barbara Birch** describes how her interests in English language teaching and peace led her to the work of **Ilham Nasser**, who was involved in research on teaching for forgiveness with more than 500 teachers in schools in five countries in the Middle East. Both authors are interested in the idea of forgiveness and how (English language) education can be mobilised to promote forgiveness – arguing for the inclusion of promoting forgiveness in education at any level. They argue that teachers are particularly well placed to model forgiveness and offer alternatives to destructive cycles of conflict and violence in deeply divided societies. Birch and Nasser present ideas for identifying the type of skills students need in order to make the choice to forgive, including empathic, communicative and problem-solving skills that help students negotiate conflicts. They show how teachers and curriculum planners can collect – or elicit – ‘forgiveness stories’, which can be used as a basis for a contextually relevant forgiveness curriculum. They consider in particular how the English language classroom can be used as a site for promoting dialogue and forgiveness, thus contributing to sustainable peacebuilding and a socially just world. Their work can serve as a model for other teachers who are willing and able to explore local social, cultural and linguistic resources to increase their understanding of forgiveness on a local level.

Roslyn Appleby explores the complex links between environmental degradation and migration, and considers how English language education might promote environmental awareness and intercultural understanding, and work towards stability and

sustainability in a fragile world. Emphasising how environmental degradation threatens livelihoods and promotes intercultural conflict, and showing how populations all around the world are affected in one way or another, Appleby argues that English language educators should take up the challenges of living in precarious times, to focus attention on environmental crises, and play an important role in building a safe and sustainable environment for present and future generations. Appleby provides many ideas for how ELT can incorporate not just the ‘shallow environmentalism’ often present in ELT coursebooks, but critically address the underlying cultural, social, economic, political and psychological causes, such as consumerism and the addiction to economic growth. She presents her own small project, which drew on personal experiences together with analyses of textual representations, and encouraged students towards a more explicit engagement with the natural world around them, thereby fostering empathy and intercultural understanding around issues of environmental sustainability. Her argument that ELT offers students opportunities to address the pressing problems of our times and to work towards building a safer, more stable and environmentally sustainable world is central to this book.

Working from this context of Malta, an island situated in the Mediterranean Sea between Europe and North Africa and thus a logical first step for refugees seeking a new life in Europe, **Daniel Xerri** explains how he started to notice an air of intolerance among students towards the growing number of refugees in their community. In an urgent attempt to promote empathy and cohesion, he describes how he turned to multicultural poetry in the English language classroom to provide students with vicarious experiences that enable them to develop an appreciation of diversity and the difficult circumstances in other people's lives. Arguing that poetry is particularly well suited to promoting empathy and transporting people into other's minds, he provides inspiration for the types of multilingual poems that can be used in the English language classroom and the ways in which teachers might maximise them to use the classroom as a space where attitudes and beliefs in relation to migration are questioned and developed, and cultural fractures are healed.

Juliet Thondhlana and **Roda Madziva** investigate the types of English language provision available to the 20,000 Syrian refugees the UK government promised to resettle. Using the theoretical framework of ‘linguistic capability’ (Tikly, 2016), they explore the significant role of language as a tool for fostering immigrants' integration into the host community and

describe initiatives for English language provision as employed by institutions that are supporting the integration of Syrian refugees. These include language immersion (i.e. English only) and bilingual programmes that draw on both Arabic and English. Findings from interviews with a sample of Syrian refugees suggest that, after an initial period during which bilingual approaches were used, children seemed to cope well with and indeed prefer immersion approaches for learning English. However, the adult Syrian participants found approaches which draw on translanguaging to be far more helpful in terms of learning English and learning about their host culture. The study also found a critical need for well-resourced schools that are able to support students with special needs (in this case students who are deaf), and also their parents who need additional support to help their children with language learning and integration. Given the complex range of needs of the refugees involved in the study, the authors argue that there is no single model for integration and language learning that can be successfully used across a range of contexts, and that it is therefore important to embrace a multi-pronged, multi-agency approach to language learning and integration.

Lucy Costa describes the importance of improving practice in teaching English and French as a foreign language as a means of integrating Syrian refugee primary school students into the Lebanese school system and society. In her chapter, she describes the approach taken in STEPS (Strengthening Teacher Education in a Plurilingual Society) – a British Council-supported English and French language teacher training programme rolled out in the Lebanese state school system. This programme was designed to build children’s resilience by providing them with the language tools they need to help them recover from their experiences of conflict and from traumas caused by displacement.

Karin Harvey, Training and Development Co-ordinator for the British Council in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, became familiar with the work of **Marie Delaney** when looking for practical advice in facing the challenges of teaching English to groups of children and youth at a British Council teaching centre in East Jerusalem. Their chapter describes the difficulties that teachers and students encountered in this context, and the solutions that they sought together to promote teachers’ wellbeing and support their professional development. They also recommend ways in which the activities common to the English language teaching classroom can be maximised to strengthen students’ resilience and allow them to work through their experiences of trauma.

The strategies put forward in this first theme suggest that ELT can be used as a powerful tool for conflict and violence prevention. While these strategies are appropriate for ELT initiatives in sites of conflict, they could also be adapted and applied in host communities, or in any environment where issues of social justice arise. Collectively, the chapters in this theme suggest that the ELT classroom can:

- offer the possibility for individuals to explore values of openness, tolerance, critical thinking, affiliation and cosmopolitan education
- open up possibilities to create counter-discourses that oppose dominant narratives
- be used to create a shared emancipatory space in which new ideas, concepts and ideologies can be voiced, allowing forgiveness and transition to be discussed and imagined
- help to shape young people’s attitudes and beliefs in relation to migration and integration
- play a role in building a safe and sustainable environment.

Theme 2: The role of English in creating and maintaining relationships and stability locally and globally

The second theme in the book explores the role of English in creating and maintaining relationships and stability locally and globally. English is often regarded as the ‘hyper-central language (de Swaan, 2001) or ‘the super international language’ (Whitehead, 2011), operating as it does in the specific domains of global business, regional and international communication, primarily among multilingual speakers for whom it is not the first language. Given its prevalent use in these domains, English is widely seen as a language of economic development and stability, as shown by several contributors to this volume (e.g. Solly, et al., Widin; cf. Erling and Seargeant, 2013). Of course, there is nothing about the English language in itself that makes it particularly appropriate to be used in promoting security, stability and peace. Any language – or indeed any school subject – could be used to promote intercultural understanding and empathy. Likewise, English could be (and is) used to incite hate and intolerance. But, given the widespread use of English internationally, there has been a wealth of research – much of which is drawn on by authors in this book – that has looked at the role of English in international relations, conflict resolution and reconciliation (e.g. Crossley, 2008; Footitt and Kelly, 2012). While dialogue may occur in any language, in a large number of recent global conflicts, English provides one of the main media for global dialogue and for peacekeeping efforts.

Thanks to scholars like Lo Bianco (2011; 2016), there is an increasing recognition not only of the role of language issues in conflict but their role in promoting social cohesion, two issues explored further in this theme. In earlier work conducted in Sri Lanka's post-war state, Lo Bianco (2011:36) examines how English, previously considered by nationalists to be 'a knife that sliced through the natural conversations of local people,' has been transformed into 'a knife' which helps to support regional and national economic interests and minimise social turmoil. In more recent work which addresses the role of language in Southeast Asian conflict zones (particularly Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand), he argues that there are both slow- and fast-acting effects of language in conflict, with fast-acting effects arising from hate speech and slow-acting effects being the entrenchment of intergenerational inequality through asymmetrical access to literacy and powerful language (Lo Bianco, 2016a; 2016b). However, his research also shows how language can function as a resolver of conflict and how adaptive, negotiated multilingualism –involving English – can be a way of moving beyond fracture lines towards more socially cohesive multilingual societies (cf. Lo Bianco and Slaughter, 2016). The chapters presented in Theme 2 add to the examples of how multilingual policies and practices can foster inclusive, sustainable communities that are better equipped to bridge fracture lines and face the economic and social challenges they encounter.

Sean Sutherland offers a perspective on how English is being used globally to communicate messages beyond boundaries and to unite groups of people together under a particular cause. Using critical discourse analysis, he examines the signs used by non-native English-speaking campaigners during the Egyptian anti-government uprising of 2011. His analysis suggests that these campaigners used English-language signs to present themselves as 'humorous, technologically-inclined modernists' – and thus not all that different from the audiences globally that were watching the events unravel in the media. While much previous research has focused on the detrimental effects that the increasing worldwide use of the language might have on different language users across the globe, Sutherland shows how the use of English gives voice to those who might not otherwise be heard internationally, creates and maintains relationships with those abroad in an attempt to build a community of practice of like-minded individuals, and thus contributes to empathy, intercultural understanding and peace worldwide.

Marilyn Garson considers the role of English and local languages in developing enterprises with a social mission. She reflects back on three social

enterprises in Cambodia, Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the Gaza Strip, Palestine. These enterprises all aimed to offer stable employment opportunities and hence sustainable economic development in communities. Garson shows how, over time, these enterprises developed strategies for language use that allowed for a more participatory work environment, one in which the staff were enabled to express their voice and their needs, while also being provided with opportunities for growth, development and language learning. Over time, she noticed that English could act as a barrier to employment and career progression for some; however, the use of multilingual practices in these enterprises offered the staff a wider range of opportunities. Garson's willingness to learn the local languages, and to enable staff to use their own languages to communicate with each other and to succeed, provided a model for an all-encompassing professional learning environment that was central to the success of these social enterprises. Her case studies of these three unique and fascinating contexts show that while English was important in each of them, particularly for marketing products internationally and retrieving information beyond the local context through the rapidly spreading Internet, it added its greatest value as one language among many.

In their chapter, **Mike Solly, Qumrul Hasan Chowdhury, Elizabeth J. Erling and Philip Seargeant** draw on research with participants in a village in rural Bangladesh who had returned from working temporarily in the Middle East. This chapter examines the participants' language needs, considering language not only as a necessary skill for work, but also as a tool for negotiating and dealing with the threats, sometimes very serious, the participants faced. Like the participants in Minett's study in Afghanistan and Iraq, the participants disclosed experiences of the danger, exploitation and vulnerability they faced in the process of migration, and how English sometimes worked to minimise this – even in some cases quite literally saving their lives. The study shows how linguistic competence in relevant languages (in this case Arabic and English) was partially able to promote the protective factors needed to build resilience. The chapter finishes with recommendations for providing language and skills education to migrants in order to increase their intercultural competence and, in doing so, decrease their vulnerability to alienation, abuse and trauma.

Jacqueline Widin offers an interesting and relevant case study in the spread of power and language in Lao PDR. She charts the role of English during the Lao–Soviet alliance and, after 1989, the impact of the

Lao government regularising its relationship with English language in the face of its complex relations with the 'West' in previous decades. European, US and Australian aid programmes replaced the meagre economic support formerly provided by the USSR. English language training for both teachers and government officials was a significant component of the aid programmes, and many former teachers of Russian (and fewer of French) were re-trained as English teachers. In the early 1990s, English was perceived as the way forward in both economic and social terms and, as a result, the provision of ELT grew at an exponential rate. This case contributes to understandings about the way shifts in language policies, either imposed or due to other political pressures, are fundamentally linked to economic factors designed to lead to greater security and stability of the country. However, the case study also shows that without the resources to implement the policy and to develop the education and economic systems, such developments are significantly hindered.

Working from another extremely challenging context – arguably the most isolated state in the world – **Ewan MacRae** describes the British Council's work (currently suspended) of promoting intercultural understanding through English language teaching programmes in North Korea, officially the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). MacRae provides insights into the special considerations required for promoting intercultural understanding in a country where there is extremely limited access to other cultures and languages, where textbooks and teaching materials are carefully vetted and tightly controlled, where trainers are not afforded access to the national curriculum for English and have little knowledge of what is being studied outside of their own classes. One of the key aims of British Council programmes is to develop critical thinking skills through ELT, although in doing so there is always the danger that they might be perceived as promoting dissent. As a result, students are reluctant to openly share their opinions. This example shows how difficult it can be to strike a balance between promoting the language and critical thinking skills required for intercultural understanding and the British Council's cultural relations work of building trust and understanding between two countries through English language teaching. Given that this programme was suspended indefinitely in September 2017, this example also shows how vulnerable work in the field of education and ELT is in contexts of political volatility.

Joseph Kaleba Walingene and **John Tombola Barabara**, both active members of English Clubs, argue that English is used as a language of

community problem solving and conflict resolution in English Clubs in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Their chapter first describes the teaching environment that Congolese English teachers and learners often encounter in a conflict zone and the resulting need for extracurricular, non-formal education initiatives that create spaces for students to practise their English. The authors, who have both been involved in supporting the activities of English clubs in the DRC, suggest that English Clubs offer participants not only opportunities to practise their English for purposes that they find immediate value in, but also to develop the empathic and critical thinking skills to heal from the trauma of recurrent conflict. Their experience with these clubs suggests that they are helping to solve community problems and empower youth to become active agents of change in this post-conflict nation. The authors express hope that English Clubs can offer a platform through which Congolese and Rwandese students can be brought together to promote mutual understanding, stability and peace between the neighbouring countries.

Peter Hare, Andy Keedwell and **Vesna Tasevska-Dudeska** analyse support provided by the British Council for the English language skills development of military and security forces involved in conflict resolution and peacekeeping. Providing insights from four projects in Macedonia, Mongolia, Ethiopia and Afghanistan, the authors describe how these projects have developed successful models for English language learning, teacher education and stakeholder development, which develop participants' confidence, attitudes to learning and collaboration, autonomy and critical thinking skills. As also suggested by Thondhlana and Madziva, the authors find that changing global demands and UK development strategies mean that there is no one ideal model for project delivery; however, the sustainability of these projects for supporting the long-term goals of peace is more likely if they are embedded in the local context.

Arifa Rahman describes how Bangladesh, a country most widely known for its development status, has become a top troop-contributing nation to United Nations Peacekeeping missions – with Bangladeshi peacekeepers being celebrated as being particularly successful in this role. Undertaking a case study of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), Rahman explores the role of the English language in the peacekeeping process in fragile and conflict-affected regions, where English is regularly used both as a lingua franca between peacekeeping contingents, who came from countries such as Canada, China, India and Ukraine, and also for communication with the local population in Sierra

Leone. Rahman presents a case for considering that the English language skills, attitudes and behaviour of the Bangladeshi peacekeepers were essential in carrying out the mandate they were entrusted with. She therefore considers how English language educators can broaden language teaching practices into areas that promote intercultural awareness and social justice in order to further support the use of English to promote peace and intercultural understanding.

While the contexts and situations in the chapters described above vary widely, some clear messages come across. The first is that language learning is a valuable activity – not only in terms of the specific skills in the language but in terms of the experience of learning a language (in this case English) and the different perspectives and attitudes that can be acquired by doing so. Curriculum and pedagogy play an important role in the delivery of language learning that can help to promote security, stability and peace. However, in many of the chapters – and in research conducted elsewhere (e.g. Erling, et al., 2017; Erling, et al., 2016) – the difficulty of implementing student-centred active learning practices and quality education in multilingual contexts becomes evident. It can also be seen that English can work as a divider and contributor to social injustice (Erling, 2017; Piller, 2016). But in certain contexts, and when the curriculum and pedagogy allow for it, English language education can be an outlet for hope and a means of resistance and protest, particularly if multilingual language policies and practices are in place. People use English as a shared language to attract media attention and to engage with an international audience, to draw connections and seek empathy and understanding. Moreover, the use of local languages and English within social enterprises can help to (re-)build sustainable and socially just economies and communities.

Perhaps this edited volume will be criticised for being naïve or too hopeful in highlighting moments in intercultural encounters in English which create empathy between speakers; for being too quick to celebrate the aspects of English education initiatives that have been perceived as contributing to people's wellbeing and the development of critical perspectives; for momentarily reflecting on the potential role of English and ELT professionals in helping alleviate conflict and perhaps even pain. However, the examples and perspectives of the contributors to this volume collectively suggest that while English and English language teachers are certainly not the only solution to supporting security, stability and peace in the world, they can be an important part of positive steps in this direction.

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**Theme 1: The English language classroom
as a site for promoting resilience, empathy
and resistance**

2

English language teachers on the fracture lines: voices and views from Afghanistan and Iraq

Amy Jo Minett

Introduction

Research into the impact of English language teaching (ELT) on security, peacebuilding and stability – especially in conflict and post-conflict countries – may well originate in questions posed first by Robert Phillipson 25 years ago. In his groundbreaking work *Linguistic Imperialism* (1992:2), he asked: ‘How can one relate the micro level of ELT professionalism to the macro level of global inequality?’ And then, importantly:

How can we, in a theoretically informed way, relate the global role of English, and the way in which language pedagogy supports the spread and promotion of the language, to the political, economic, military, and cultural pressures that propel it forward? How can analysis probe beyond individual experience and reflection to the processes and structures which are in operation at the international, national, group and personal levels? (Phillipson, 1992:2)

Since 1992, critical research in ELT has consistently underlined issues resulting from pressures Phillipson delineates: how ELT may perpetuate social inequities (Hastings and Jacob, 2016), both hinder and help a person’s – or nation’s – development, and even be (in cases of compulsory instruction), in Piller’s (2013) words, ‘a meaningless waste of time.’ Clearly, analysis must continue to examine the complex forces which sustain and forward the global role of English. This volume takes on one dimension of that analysis: the contributions and relevance of English and ELT to stability, security and peacebuilding.

Of significance, I write this chapter at a time when the US President has attempted to ban Syrian refugees and citizens from primarily Muslim countries from entering the United States (US). In Europe, too, populism – with its anti-immigrant, Islamophobic underpinnings – has surged in the wake of Brexit. Moreover, after years of seemingly interminable war in Iraq and Afghanistan, the global refugee crisis has reached historic proportions (Ritzen, 2016), just as the US and many European countries are turning their backs on – and closing their borders to – the most desperate and vulnerable people fleeing

violence from state and non-state actors alike. A terrible uncertainty persists, and a terrible irony, one which parallels Millsap’s (2016) concerns for our ‘wartime allies’: that is, the thousands upon thousands of Afghan and Iraqi translators and security forces who have served with coalition forces in their countries fighting the Taliban, al Qaeda, and now ISIS (Daesh). As Millsap contends, these Afghans and Iraqis who have served in the fight against terrorism are ‘the best and the brightest’ hope for the ‘future in a post-conflict world.’ Yet many have been driven into hiding or made to flee as refugees, given that their service to coalition forces has put them at grave risk from terrorist groups and rival government factions alike. While Millsap goes on to discuss ways that US visa programs may be failing these ‘high-risk allies,’ in this chapter I extend Millsap’s concern to a population at similar risk: Afghan and Iraqi English teachers, whose voices and work contribute – directly, indirectly, profoundly – to intercultural understanding, peacebuilding and security in their countries.

Accordingly, this chapter foregrounds and provides a global platform for voices too rarely heard in media or research conversations aiming to work towards a post-conflict world: the local voices of Afghan and Iraqi English teachers sharing how *they* view the role of ELT in contributing to security and peace in their countries.¹ Specifically, this chapter explores how Afghan and Iraqi English teachers describe the *affordances and constraints* that communicating in English allows them in *their* particular contexts. Hearing their voices can provide us with a vital and urgent insight into our work in the areas of ELT in conflict and post-conflict countries. Indeed, given the current horrors in Syria, the election of an isolationist and xenophobic US President, and the aftershocks of Brexit rippling through the European Union and the world, I argue that in our work intersecting language and development, we must attend to these voices in order to recognize and continue to seek opportunities to achieve, maintain and promote intercultural understanding, security and peace.

¹While acknowledging the risks of coupling the contexts of Afghanistan and Iraq, when the differences between them are vast, charting these differences goes well beyond the scope of this chapter. For a preliminary examination of the two contexts and wars, see Orchard and Mandel (2007) and Rashid (2003).

Theoretical framework: affordances and constraints

As Tello and Harjanne (2007:501) discuss, the constructs of ‘affordances’ and ‘constraints’ are now oft-used terms in language teaching research with various interpretations. The words originate with psychologist Gibson’s (1979) work in visual perception. Drawing from ecology, he described the interdependent relationship between organism and environment: what the environment ‘offers the animal, what it provides or furnishes, either for good or ill,’ and how different animals in turn see and use various aspects of that environment for various purposes (ibid.:127). The definition of ‘affordances’ has since evolved dramatically: from describing the affordances of new tools and technologies in the language classroom (Haines, 2015) to Tello and Harjanne’s (2007:502) construction of ‘affordances’ as ‘the linguistic and social potential that the world and our environment “affords” to us or puts at our disposal’. For van Lier (2004:92), *learner agency* related to affordances and constraints is central: ‘learning opportunities arise as a consequence of participation and use.’ In the same way, ‘constraints’ impose limits on or barriers to learning opportunities. Seargeant (2012:2) uses the term as this chapter will use it. In reference to the global role of English, he reminds us that “[l]anguage operates as a vital resource in society in terms of its communicative affordances (what we are able to do through the use of it) and as a marker of identity and a means of social distinction”. This chapter uses the lens of affordances and constraints to understand how Afghan and Iraqi English language teachers view the resource of the English language – and their work in ELT – in contributing to security and peace in their countries.

Some background

Since 2008, I have had the privilege to listen and learn from Afghan and Iraqi voices while working on various English-in-peacebuilding initiatives. In Afghanistan, teachers have suffered both under the Taliban and right up to the present day. According to the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (GCPEA), for decades now the Taliban and other groups have besieged schools, teachers and students, disrupting and limiting access to education. School buses have been bombed, educational officials have been assassinated, school girls have been poisoned and have had acid thrown in their faces. By 2012, more than 590 schools were closed in areas at greatest risk (GCPEA, 2017). In Iraq, too, as Schweitzer (2013) reports, ‘Conflict, assassinations, diaspora and suppressed freedom of speech have handicapped centres of higher education, gutted research facilities, and silenced the academics

staffing them.’ I have thus been awed by how, against this backdrop of violence and atrocities, my Afghan and Iraqi colleagues have been unwavering in their determined dedication to continue their work as English teachers generally and for the specific projects I worked on, overviewed in brief here.

For the World Bank’s Strengthening of Higher Education Project (SHEP), I worked in concert with Afghan faculty on English teacher education and curriculum development. Separately, in 2011, I partnered with the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs Institutional Reform (FAIR) project to help develop and deliver an English for Diplomats curriculum at the Institute of Diplomacy in Afghanistan (Management Systems International, 2011). The gravity of this project was noteworthy, given the upcoming International Afghanistan Conference in Bonn, Germany, during which 85 countries and 15 international organisations affirmed their commitments to working with Afghanistan to ensure ‘security, the peace process, economic and social development, and regional co-operation’ (International Afghanistan Conference, 2011).

In Iraq, too, in 2013–14, I was honoured to work with Iraqi teachers involved in the Women’s Digital Literacy and English Project, which sought to ‘build the professional skills of 2,500 Iraqi minority women through classroom training in both business English and digital literacy’ (FHI360, 2016). By happenstance, this project dovetailed with an opportunity to lead a group of Iraqi Fulbright scholars in a program focused on human capacity building in TEFL/Applied Linguistics, one part of the larger Fulbright mission ‘to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries’ (The Fulbright Program, 2016). Also by happenstance, both projects dovetailed with the onset and onslaught of the so-called Islamic State – or ISIS, ISIL, Daesh – against Iraq, beginning in Mosul and Tikrit. When I first arrived in Erbil in the north, I could see on the horizon one cloud of black smoke rising before I gathered with teachers and set to work.

This, then, is the backdrop against which I foreground the voices of English teachers in these fragile and dangerous contexts. The central research question asked of those voices is: What affordances and constraints do Afghan and Iraqi English language teachers identify related to the role of ELT in security and peacebuilding in their countries?

Methods, security and vulnerable subjects

Qualitative research such as proposed in this study – research which underscores the importance of local voices of English language teachers in conflict

and post-conflict countries – is scant. Through on-the-ground surveys, Edwards (2014) – in his capacity as a civilian assistant professor at the United States Military Academy – explores digital literacy instruction in English with Afghan teachers he mentored; Rasa (2014) focuses on pedagogy in the Afghan English conversation classroom; Rashid (2016) considers the effects of war on Iraqi elementary English learners; and Abdul-Ameer (2014) explores vocabulary learning for young Iraqi learners of English. To date, no studies have explored how Afghan and Iraqi English language teachers perceive the impact of their work teaching English on security and peacebuilding in their countries.

The research I conducted for this chapter was sorely restricted. Face-to-face interviews were out of the question, given travel restrictions to Afghanistan and Iraq and State Department warnings of kidnappings, terrorist attacks and landmines. I had to approach research participants through an open-ended questionnaire sent digitally.

But even gathering data digitally was not business as usual. When I approached Afghan and Iraqi friends and colleagues with whom I have stayed connected via social media, my preliminary questions immediately raised red flags. One person replied: 'I cannot trust technology. Terrorists can use it with expertise.' Another contact wrote, poignantly: 'I am a civil person and have no international defense. I have to keep my life.' Shaken, I began to understand the true vulnerabilities of these populations, which I made clear to my university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) responsible for Ethical Human Subjects Research.

After consulting with colleagues across departments and disciplines at my university, I was connected finally with a journalism professor who works with journalists, bloggers, dissidents, and activists from around the world. Trained through and involved with the Global Investigative Journalism Network, she was able to provide an understanding of best (viable) practices for conducting my research digitally ('viable' given technology and access barriers in Afghanistan and Iraq). The short form is this: while 'perfect security' is not possible, there are ways to make digital breaches of researcher and participant email correspondence less likely.²

As one security step, I asked participants to download the free Tor Browser to use for all of our communications, which I also used. Macrina (2015) articulates reasons to not only use, but to champion, Tor:

The Tor Browser was built from an 'onion routing' project of the US Navy, which was designed to protect military communications, and was turned into an independent (non-military) project by developers Roger Dingledine and Nick Mathewson in 2002. Onion routing bounces traffic from the original user across a network of three relays, providing three layers of encryption (like the layers of an onion, hence 'onion routing,' and the Tor onion logo) and masking the original IP address from the user's computer. Today, it's used by about four million people worldwide to evade censorship and surveillance, allowing users to access blocked websites in Internet-restrictive countries like Iran and China (because typically websites rely on IP location information to restrict access), keeping journalistic sources safe, and masking the identity of whistleblowers. Reporters Without Borders recommends that journalists reporting from dangerous places use Tor to protect themselves.

Interestingly, many of the participants I contacted already used the TOR Browser and were familiar with the protections it provides, so downloading and using this additional browser proved to be no barrier to the research.³

With security measures detailed in a consent form and firmly in place, I obtained IRB approval to proceed with the research in 2016. I first recruited potential participants through an extensive network of Afghan and Iraqi colleagues I had worked with and met during various project work in Afghanistan and Iraq. I invited contacts at multiple universities to participate, sharing with them the summary of goals, purposes and methodologies of research. Importantly, I only reached out *directly* to Afghan and Iraqi English language teachers *who already had a strong presence on social media* (primarily Facebook), in order to ensure that their participation in this research put them at no greater risk than their current interactions on social media. Between the two countries, I contacted 20 teachers in total, half in Iraq and half in Afghanistan. In the end, I received questionnaires back and was able to ask follow-up questions from a total of eight participants. Questionnaires were distributed in English and responses are cited here verbatim. I agreed to use pseudonyms (chosen and assigned) for participants; I agreed not to mention any identifiers such as names of places or institutions; with one exception (and at the participant's request), I even agreed not to divulge with which country – Afghanistan or Iraq – pseudonyms were affiliated.

²For more on digital security, see discussion at the Global Investigative Journalism Network, available online at <http://gijn.org/resources/digital-security/>

³Other suggestions to enhance security proved technologically unwieldy for this research project but may be useful to readers of this volume: for example, the encryption program 'Pretty Good Privacy' (PGP); a suite of GPG tools for greater email security; the RiseUp email service; ProtonMail through servers in Switzerland; and Peerio, an open source software with unique avatars and high encryption levels.

The fact that these participants were willing – despite security risks – to participate in this project is testimony to their belief in the importance of English for intercultural understanding and their hope that by voicing their views in English in a project like this one, they may positively influence security and peace in their countries.

The affordances of English in contributing to security and peace in Afghanistan and Iraq

Participants were enthusiastic when discussing the role of ELT in contributing to security and peace in their countries, and from their words emerged their recognition of the affordances of English to achieve and promote intercultural understanding, security and peace. Ali, for example, identified multiple affordances of English and affordances that English language teachers can utilize.

English and intercultural understanding

Ali began by referring to the work of teachers *and* teaching English: ‘The role of the teacher is very important in this respect. He can make English contribute to security and peace.’ When I asked him to elaborate, he continued:

For example, 1- I can tell my students about my experience [abroad]. 2- I can tell them that Americans are civilized. The majority of them disagree with the atrocities made by some US military units (killing innocent civilians randomly). That happened in my city. 3- I can tell them that ISIS does not represent Islam. 4- I can also tell them to be ambassadors of peace to the English speaking societies by conveying the true picture of Islam. Islam is the religion of peace, equality, showing respect to others, no compulsion to convert religion. ISIS introduced a deformed picture about Islam.

From this first response, two salient themes emerge. Ali introduces the affordances of English in contributing to intercultural understanding, as English had provided him the opportunity to study abroad and, in turn, meet Americans who did not support military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. He in fact met Americans who were ‘civilized’ and against the violence by US and coalition forces, a message he could deliver to students in his English classes.

Another participant, ‘Joy Maker’, shared views similar to Ali, describing the affordance of English – and the travel it can facilitate – as a means to up-end assumptions of groups of ‘others’ and promote intercultural understanding. Just as Ali emphasized that ‘Americans were civilized’ (in a lovely reversal of development and postcolonial dichotomies, see

Pennycook, 1994) and did not support atrocities committed by military forces, Joy Maker’s views of Americans were expressed this way: ‘I participated in some programs in the United States. They helped brighten the image of the American policy.’

Participant Saleh spoke also of travel opportunities afforded by English language aid programs: ‘Some of the students (about six) have been sent to the USA under the sponsorship of the US Consulate, as well as some teachers. I myself visited UK universities and attended a couple of conferences. The events were sponsored by the British Council (TESOL Arabia, Dubai and IATEFL Seminars, in the UK)’. Participant Misa was in succinct agreement and articulated the role of intercultural understanding directly: ‘It [English] enables its learners to communicate with western people and acts as a link for exchanging thoughts, ideas, understanding cultures and sharing experience.’

On a chillier note, participant Malik shared another (disturbing) way the affordance of English can contribute to intercultural understanding. He wrote: ‘Language can be used as a weapon to defend yourself from people, especially those who speak English when they have mistaken you for their enemy.’ His next sentence, a fragment, signified a weighty pause. ‘Coalition Forces.’ Here, what I didn’t realize at first was that Malik was describing English as a means to identify oneself as a ‘friend’ to the English-speaking military in the country, in order that he or she not be arrested or shot. When I finally understood and visualized such an interaction, intercultural understanding took on new, unsettling connotations.

English and Islam

A second theme Ali introduced, that of using English ‘to convey the true picture of Islam,’ was repeated in the responses of other participants, by participant Job most passionately:

Through the use of English, we build bridges between nations that have been divided by nationalism and other silly notions that parted us. At the end of the day we are humans and language is the means to converse with one another. As ALLAH said in the Holy Quran 49:13, in Surah Al-Hujurat (The Inner Apartments), ‘O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other)’. Of course, knowing and establishing a relationship between nations and societies happens by using language.

By describing this affordance of English, Job beautifully elevates language as a way we ‘may know each other’ and not ‘despise each other,’ a reference to the Holy Quran and far from the ‘deformed picture

of Islam’ about which Ali was concerned. It is likely, too, that both participants were aware of a larger, English-speaking audience who might eventually read publications from the research they were participating in, such as this chapter—the ‘global platform’ I referenced earlier – providing them yet another affordance of English in communicating their crucial views of Islam. Participant Misa responded similarly: ‘Speakers of English can build a network of people who fight extremism spread these days in Muslim communities and spread peace instead.’

English, employment and security

One less surprising affordance of English that participants describe relates to jobs and economic security. Misa observed, for instance: ‘Speaking English is a very important quality which gives its speaker a credit to get jobs with good income. It thus works as an economical stabiliser, leading to prevailing peace and community settlement.’

Joy Maker, too, acknowledged a relationship between English, economics and security. His words were hopeful:

English language teaching could be one of the issues that helps in improving security, for we need competent negotiators with foreign companies, which usually hire foreign employees to fill translation positions. This may result in too much misunderstanding due to cultural differences between the translator’s own culture and our culture. Once we have local translators, we could break the culture barrier. As a result, security will flourish.

Job also notes this connection, though in so doing he provides a cynical critique of the ‘for-profit’ sector of ELT and private language schools:

Teaching English attracts a great deal of people since all of them want to pursue a degree in English and find a job with international NGOs to improve their economic status. Nowadays, learning English is a profitable business. Some companies capitalize on it and advertise for it in a way to make money, nothing else.

Cynical though he is, Job’s mention of work with NGOs does offer up another way the affordance of English can contribute to creating security and peace. Ali’s example explains:

Some teachers of English I know are now working with aid organizations such as ‘Doctors without Borders.’ Some BAs in English are now working as interpreters with US contractors (whose main job is to train security forces). Their job is definitely to establish peace in Iraq.

English and access to information

A second less surprising affordance of English multiple participants referenced was its value in providing access to the global wealth of essential information in English. Participant Ahmed linked this access directly to peace:

I believe there are relationships between English Language teaching, peacebuilding and security in my country. One factor behind instability in my country is illiteracy. We need to enhance the awareness of people and we can do this through teaching English and letting them explore the world by reading English sources. There are thousands of resources available in English Language which can make our people open minded. I strongly don’t agree that any language, in particular English, has any negative effect on peacebuilding.

Job echoed Ahmed’s point in a very matter-of-fact tone, stating that his students study English ‘since it is the language of science, technology and advancement of the developed world.’ He then elaborated with another key affordance of English, that of English serving as a link language between different ethnic groups:

Most definitely it [ELT] promotes security and peace to the country. People resort to using English to voice their concerns and express their views to the outside world. It is also a fact that sometimes both Arabs and Kurds unite when they do not know the language of the other. Consequently, they exchange views and opinions [in English] with each other and hold productive dialogue.

English as a means to communicate local issues

Just as English affords Ahmed, Job and the people of their countries access to news and information from around the world, so also does it provide an important means to communicate to the world issues from their countries. Job explains this affordance starkly and with impassioned bitterness, particularly toward the Kurdish government (he is the one respondent who wanted place name to be included):

I think learning English will make people vociferate their views to the outside world. People are tired with Kurdish corrupt officials so they want to use English to tell the world how much they suffer because of both external and internal suppressions, by Kurds’ enemies and Kurdish politicians who sell nationalism. People are tired of them since their only concern is to enrich themselves and trade oil and become oil mafias.

After this quite fierce introduction to the issue, Job continues, significantly:

Teaching English most definitely contributes to the security and peace of the country. For example, the civil activists and anti-corruption activists use English to tell the West and the developed world of what is going on in the country, like telling the West that Kurds were gassed with chemical weapons in Halabja and what the mainstream media of Kurdish political parties are doing to embellish their corrupt rule over the country in Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan.

Job's condemnation of corruption is devastating, as is the history of Halabja, which the affordance of English helped communicate to 'the West.' What he describes here is both deeply political and deeply personal, and it leads us, appropriately, away from opportunities that English affords these teachers to constraints they experience directly and indirectly because they are English language teachers.

Constraints: English, security and peace

The central question of this study sought to identify not only affordances but also constraints Afghan and Iraqi English language teachers experience due to English. Insight into these constraints are equally germane to our work in ELT.

English, politics and the curriculum

Most participants expressed an understandable reluctance to engage their students in discussions that risked being too political. Saleh, for example, said this:

Sometimes when I teach discourse analysis I have to refer to some political issues or to politicians. I always try to be sensitive in my language. For my students, politicians are liars and burglars. We as teachers usually avoid politics and religion. I try not to talk about such topics with my students.

Ali and Misa helped explain this reluctance in their troubling responses. First, Ali:

We have regulations from superiors (the Dean, the University President, the Minister of Higher Education) that the University campus must be away from politics, so I do not talk about ... these things. Some students support, like, defend the militants (viewpoints) who fought the US troops. Talking about the positive role [the Western organization] played in [my country] will definitely jeopardize my life. It is very, very dangerous to talk to my students about the positive role of the [coalition forces]. I will be accused of being a traitor, collaborator with the enemy, agent, spy.

Misa writes in language hauntingly similar to Ali's, though they live and work in dramatically different locales:

English may also have a negative impact on peacebuilding and security. It may bring riskiness to its speakers who might be attacked by extremist groups accusing them of speaking the language of 'disbelievers!' For example, having the only center for teaching English in my town, I was obliged to close it after the invasion of ISIS to my governorate and its control of some areas for a period of time. I was even accused of being a traitor and a spy for Americans and coalition countries.

In these examples, we begin to learn about the great risks these English teachers have taken on in their chosen professions. Both Ali and Misa faced great personal danger in their work. Ali was direct:

Working with [Western Organization] jeopardized my life many times. The militia put my name on their hit list. I quit 2 times and moved to another city. Then I moved to [another] University.

Other participants told similar stories of the dangers of being an English language teacher. Participant Saleh:

After 2003, there was a large number of foreign companies that came to my region. They began to recruit employees of different majors. Mostly, they preferred people with English degree. Those companies, in addition to other contractors, have contributed to the wellbeing of citizens' standards. But, unfortunately, from 2003 to about 2008 there was a horrible wave of assassinations for those who worked for the coalition forces as interpreters. Most of them were English degree holders. In about 2006, there were 23 interpreters working for the Police academy. On their way from the academy to the city center, their bus was cut off and all of them were killed. Most of them were graduates of the College of Education and Department of English.

Joy Maker adds to this bleak picture, in the process underscoring the very personal nature of these tragedies:

During the period between 2004 and 2008, teaching English was considered a curse for many of our students who worked for foreign companies and British and American troops. Many of them were assassinated. So, knowledge of English contributed negatively to security and peace at that time. The situation is much better now.

At the same time, for Ahmed's students, it was a lack of English which constrained opportunities for security and peacebuilding in the country:

Students have different opinions regarding peace, security and safety. One of the examples I can share here is that one of my students said that the

reason why we have a war-weary and backward country is all due to inexperienced diplomats, that they did not have good communication skills and they did not know the language of politics (language of diplomacy).

Conclusion

War-weary? No doubt. 'Backward'? After this very brief glimpse into the worlds and lives of these teachers and their students, I strongly doubt this word would occur to any reader. The voices shared here resonate with the ways English can provide affordances into greater security and peace in these countries and these worlds. They also resonate with the dangers these teachers and students face each day in their efforts to avail themselves of those affordances. They should remind us of the enormity of the moral and cultural weight and import of the work of peacebuilding and security, locally and globally; and they should instil in us, I believe, both hope and caution as we consider how the project of ELT and English in development can promote the hard work of intercultural understanding, security and peace presented by the voices herein.

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3

Pedagogies of hope and resistance: English language education in the context of the Gaza Strip, Palestine

Maria Grazia Imperiale, Alison Phipps, Nazmi Al-Masri and Giovanna Fassetta

Introduction

This chapter explores the values and goals of English language education in the context of the Gaza Strip. The Gaza Strip, in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, has been subject to siege for over ten years, with significant restrictions on mobility and three wars resulting in considerable loss of life and infrastructure, increasing poverty and rates of unemployment, and crises in education, health, environment and food safety. As a result, the Gaza Strip is quickly becoming an ‘unliveable place’ as warned by several reports issued by the official supranational organisations (e.g. UNCTAD, 2012; UNRWA, 2013; The World Bank, 2016).

This chapter reflects on the work of one of five case studies which examine the use of languages in contexts of duress, such as that of the Gaza Strip, where the borders of the body, language, law and the state are implicated in the freedoms to speak and translate. This research was funded as part of the Art and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Large Grant ‘Researching Multilingually at the Borders of Language, the Body, Law and the State’, within the ‘Translating Cultures’ strand. The five case studies that are part of the project looked at languages in different contexts and as used by different actors: in detention estates and with reception centres and NGOs at the Bulgarian and Romania borders; with former child soldiers in Uganda; with unaccompanied minors in Glasgow; on the US/Mexican Border in Arizona; in the Law Courts at bail and appeal stage for asylum seekers in both the Netherlands and Scotland; and, in the case study discussed here, in the Gaza Strip, Palestine.⁴

The Gaza case study was generated from within the Gazan context and in response to the acute levels of youth graduate unemployment, often reaching up to 64 per cent among graduates in education (PCBS, 2016). The aim of the case study was to explore and to develop a grounded, participatory and

contextualised approach to foreign language education in a context of occupation, pain and pressure. Our case study comprised two separate teacher training courses: one for teachers of English as a foreign language (TEFL) (Imperiale, 2017) and one for teachers of Arabic as a foreign language (TAFL) (Fassetta, et al., 2017).

In this chapter we reflect on the TEFL part of the case study and on the role of English in the Gaza Strip, and present some of our findings in relation to the values and goals of English education. The chosen research methodology was an interrupted cycle of critical participatory action research: 13 undergraduates of the English department at the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG) took part in a TEFL training course on ‘The use of the Palestinian Arts of Resistance in English Language Teaching’. During the teacher training course, Palestinian participants reflected and co-constructed with the researcher critical and creative language pedagogies, suitable for engaging with and representing the context of pain and pressure in which they live. The workshops and the data collected through a variety of methods (e.g. follow-up interviews, focus groups, evaluation forms, etc.) were analysed thematically through the lenses of critical intercultural pedagogy (Freire, 1994; hooks, 1994), which sees language education as engaging with the practice of hope, and by drawing from the capabilities approach (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 1997; Crosbie, 2014).

English language education: between linguistic imperialism and linguistic resistance

In this section we discuss the literature which inspired the content of the TEFL teacher training course. We outline the complex role of English as both dominating and facilitating global linguistic exchanges, drawing from post-colonial literature as well as from work in critical applied linguistics.

English is associated with world or global audiences and, in recent years, the ‘global flows’ of English and

⁴In this chapter, we use the names ‘Gaza Strip’ and ‘Gaza’ synonymously.

its contested role have been theorised from a number of perspectives that range from 'lingua franca', to a set of world repertoires that allow translingual practice and 'linguistic resistance' (Canagarajah, 2003). In critical applied linguistics, it has been claimed that, as a dominant language, English contributed to imperialism and colonialism, and to structural inequalities between groups on the basis of languages (Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1994; Canagarajah, 2003). Dismantling the idea that English is 'neutral, natural and beneficial' (Pennycook, 1994:9), scholars argue for problematizing the spread of English and of English language teaching (ELT) practices exported from the centre to the periphery (Pennycook, 1994).

English linguistic imperialism finds its colonial expression through teaching resources, normative philosophies, and teaching methodologies exported from contexts of peace and mobility (where they are often designed) into different world contexts. For instance, Pennycook (1994) considers many current ELT practices as the outcome of a monolingualist approach to language learning, developed from Western teaching traditions. According to him, the direct method or audio-oral approaches have been embedded in the communicative language teaching (CLT) methodology and in the task-based teaching approaches: these methodologies manifest a tendency to nullify the source language of the learners, in line with imperialist traditions. In addition, the author demonstrates that even locally produced ELT materials often promote neoliberal Western perceptions and discourses, rather than being specific to the cultural contexts in which they are adopted.

However, as Pennycook (1994:146) notes: 'The English language classroom [is] a site of cultural politics, a place where different versions of how the world is and should be are struggled over.' As well as the classroom being a site for contestation, cultural politics and even the practice of conflict transformation (Levine and Phipps, 2011), Giroux (1992) has argued that in classroom contexts, teachers are also cultural workers; thus the work they do may serve to enable a decolonising approach to language pedagogy.

English language education, therefore, can, in some contexts, also open up possibilities to create counter-discourses that oppose dominant narratives, because of its specific role as an international language or as a lingua franca. For post-colonial or oppressed communities, for instance, English language pedagogy has the potential to nurture independent voices of individuals to 'talk back' or to 'write back', (re)appropriating, adapting and using the language in the way that seems most appropriate to

the context in which people live (hooks, 1994; Pennycook, 1994, Canagarajah, 2003). This is what Canagarajah (2003) calls 'linguistic resistance' – a scrambling and opposing of the linguistic hierarchies that are enacted in everyday life and in the classrooms of the periphery, encompassing both the politics of English and language pedagogies. Canagarajah (2003:104) argues for the appropriation of localised and contextualised ELT practices, avoiding educational transfer from the centre to the periphery which results in forms of knowledge-dependency that 'has tended to undermine the alternative styles of thinking, learning and interacting preferred by local communities'. He suggests creative processes of pedagogical negotiation (ibid:117) through which pedagogies are not unproblematically *received*, but are *appropriated* according to the needs of the local communities (ibid:122): this process itself embodies linguistic resistance.

In contexts of conflict, occupation and siege, access to the intercultural and linguistic capital which English represents, even in often hotly contested heterogeneous symbolisms (Brutt-Griffler, 2002; Canagarajah, 2003; Pennycook, 2007; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000), is essential to allow communication and spread information. Inspired by Canagarajah's idea of 'linguistic resistance', our research explored and creatively developed localized ELT practices and intercultural pedagogies, shifting from the acquisition of 'tourist-like competences' to a more complex system of relational and transformational meaning making (Kramsch, 2006; Levine and Phipps, 2011). Intercultural language education, in our view, has the potential to nurture individual wellbeing and the whole process of becoming, shifting from a language-user approach in favour of an ontological 'intercultural being' (Phipps and Gonzalez, 2004), one which embodies values of respect, humility, tolerance and compassion.

In summary, the TEFL teacher training course was inspired by:

1. Considerations about English linguistic imperialism.
2. The concept of 'linguistic resistance', which encompasses the appropriation of the English language and of language pedagogies to create counter-narratives and locally sensitive teaching materials.
3. A shift from 'tourist-like competences' to a more holistic approach which views language learners as 'intercultural beings'.

Intercultural language education in the context of forced immobility

This section considers intercultural language education in a context where mobility is not an option. The United Nations Relief and Work Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) – the main provider of formal education to Palestinian refugees both in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and in the neighbouring host countries – highlights as part of its mandate the importance of education to develop individuals' wellbeing and to contribute to ameliorating the society in which they live. UNRWA commits to a form of education that:

... develops the full potential of Palestine Refugees to enable them to be confident, innovative, questioning, thoughtful, tolerant and open minded, upholding human values and religious tolerance, proud of their Palestine identity and contributing positively to the development of their society and the global community. (UNRWA, 2010:1)⁵

Intercultural language education – and, specific to our context, English language education – offers the possibility for individuals to explore values of openness, tolerance, critical thinking, affiliation and cosmopolitan education. It offers the space for teachers and students to nurture these values, to undertake their cultural work and to aim towards wellbeing. These principles also underpin the capabilities approach, according to which individuals' wellbeing is intertwined with the development of society and the freedoms to transform what people are able to be and do into actual beings and doings that they value (Sen, 1999; Nussbaum, 1997; Imperiale, 2017).

However, the context of siege imposes severe socio-economic, material and political constraints to Palestinians' opportunities to live the life they value and – important to our work in intercultural education – imposes on them a state of 'forced immobility' (Stock, 2016). The siege, in place since 2007, and the last military operation ('Protective Edge') in the summer of 2014 have had a seriously deleterious effect on living conditions, in addition to the trauma and post-traumatic disorders experienced by the population in Gaza (Winter, 2015; Fassetta, et al., forthcoming; UNRWA, 2015). The blockade has created a situation in which nearly two million people are stuck in extremely challenging living conditions, dramatically limited in their ability to move in and out of the Gaza Strip.

Our research considers intercultural language education and the values and goals that it encompasses as fundamental in a situation of forced

immobility when face-to-face intercultural encounters are severely curtailed. The virtual impossibility to travel freely in and out of the Gaza Strip imposes a situation of what we term 'enforced monoculturalism', to emphasise the coercive factors imposed by the siege on contacts with individuals from different cultures and backgrounds, which as a consequence results in what Sara Roy (1987, 1999) has described as the 'de-development of Palestine' and a situation of imposed monolingualism (Gramling, 2017). In a context such as this, online foreign language education and critical intercultural pedagogy, as developed by Phipps and Levine (2011), can represent an opportunity to bypass the isolation that the siege imposes. As findings of the TEFL course demonstrate, in this context of duress, intercultural language education – and education more broadly – can become a practice of *hope and resistance*.

Methodology

The case study involved an interrupted cycle of critical participatory action research (Kemmis, et al., 2014). For three months in 2015, 13 undergraduate students enrolled in the 'English language and literature' course in the English Department of the Islamic University of Gaza, all of them prospective English teachers. They were recruited to attend an uncredited, optional online training course on the 'The use of the Palestinian Arts of Resistance in English Language Teaching'. The training course aimed to enhance students' professional development in the field of language teaching, while researching and developing localized ELT practices. During the course, the researcher and the prospective English teachers (hereafter participants) explored, devised and co-constructed critical and creative methodologies for language education in contexts where language is used under duress. For example, participants developed ELT materials using Palestinian context-related cartoons, poems in English and in Palestinian Arabic, traditional songs translated into English, videos, clips and role plays (Imperiale, 2017).

The course was conducted via Skype, email and using the WizIQ software in order to bypass the impossibility to move in and out of the Gaza Strip. Poor Internet connection (on all sides), numerous power cuts, audio and video distortion were constant challenges imposed by the online environment, but they were bypassed thanks to determination, a shared desire to establish human connections (Fassetta, et al., forthcoming) and creativity. The workshops were video and audio recorded whenever possible.

⁵UNRWA was established in 1949 in order to support Palestine refugees' welfare.

Within the critical participatory action research, different data collection methods were used in addition to the workshops themselves, the teaching materials developed during the course and to the course assignment (e.g. follow-up interviews, focus groups, document analysis, research journals, participants' reflective journals). These data collection activities were all undertaken in English and presented here verbatim. In this chapter we rely primarily on the follow-up interviews, the workshops evaluation forms that participants filled in after the teacher training course and the participants' written assignments. Data were analysed thematically, through the lenses of critical intercultural pedagogy and the capabilities approach. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured in line with the ethical procedures of the University of Glasgow and of the Islamic University of Gaza.

Findings: values and goals of English language education in an online TEFL course

The analysis of the interview transcripts, the workshops evaluation forms and participants' written assignments highlight how the participants view the English language as instrumental in allowing their 'besieged' voices to be heard by audiences whom they believe have the power to influence the dramatic situation experienced by the population of the Gaza Strip. The teaching of English as an instrumental means to be heard is essential in order to keep hope alive and, as such, represents an act of hope in and of itself. Teaching and learning English, moreover, is a pedagogical act which allows hope to be translated into practices of peaceful resistance, and thus also a 'political' act in the Freirean understanding of the term. In the next sections we discuss the intersecting values and goals emerging from the analysis of the data, which reveals how the participants view English language teaching as having two fundamental and intersecting values and goals: to nurture critical hope and to foster peaceful resistance. We also discuss the holistic view of language teaching put forward by the participants as a way to develop individuals' full humanity despite the inhuman condition imposed on them by the context.

a. Language education to nurture critical hope

According to Freire (1994), 'critical hope' is the constant development of individuals' critical awareness, and drives the struggle to improve the human existence. As such, it is 'an ontological need' anchored in practice: hope by itself does not have the power to ameliorate society, and on the other hand, the struggle to make the world a better place cannot consist of calculated acts or scientific

approaches that do not consider hope as a driving force (ibid:2). Hope is, therefore, at the same time an ontological need and an embodied experience, involving the entire body, feelings, desires, cognitions emotions and intuitions. It is at the intersection of the cognitive and the affective domain.

Hope also acts as 'leading the incessant pursuit of humanity' (Freire, 1970:91), and it is in this search for completeness of the human condition, in this hope-driven quest, that the 'political' value of a transformative education and educability of beings is found. As Freire notes:

As project, as design for a different, less-ugly 'world', the dream is as necessary to political subjects, transformers of the world and not adapters to it, as it is fundamental for an artisan, who projects in his or her brain what she or he is going to execute even before the execution thereof. (Freire, 1994:78)

The role of education in fostering this 'critical hope' as a way to resist the status quo and strive for change and transformation also comes through the words of a participant, when she highlights that:

After several wars on Gaza, students were about to lose their hopes or smile considering their life in Gaza was just a miserable one with no right to live as other ladies [...] as a teacher I have this responsibility on my shoulders to reinforce our right in existence as human beings on our own land. (A. reflective journal)

The participant, a future teacher committed to an education that engages with societal transformation, stresses the identity of Palestinians as 'human beings' who live in a land they cannot, however, freely *inhabit* or move across. In a situation of denial of basic rights to safety, dignity and self-determination, the responsibility of a teacher is, according to this participant, to nurture students' hope and smiles, and to provide her students with the vocabulary to articulate this capacity to aspire before the international community.

Similarly, in the extract below, taken from one of the written assignments that participants wrote during the workshop series, L summarises the values and goals of English language education in the context of the siege of the Gaza Strip:

English is a golden opportunity for students to speak and discuss the Palestinian dreams and talents to the entire world to spread the truth of Palestinian people who love life and deserve to live better than these miserable conditions. (L. written assignment)

Thus, L argues for equipping students with a foreign vocabulary that enable them to express their dreams and hopes, as well as denouncing the situation of despair in which they live. Through language education, individuals can articulate their aspiration for wellbeing and manifest their identities as ‘full humans’, as individuals who ‘love life and deserve to live better’, who have a capacity to dream and to aspire in the face of despair, and to manifest their dreams and aspirations through the denunciation of their conditions. Within the context of these needs and aspirations, English is seen as a channel to reach the widest possible audience.

By claiming that the students should be aware of the difficult conditions in which they live, L implicitly discusses a process of ‘conscientizacao’ (Freire, 1970), of building critical consciousness, as she articulates her belief that her students should be involved in a process of active transformation by producing counter-narratives in English. This involves both critical awareness and a focus on the process of being and becoming.

Freire (1970) claims that the requisites for the awakening of critical awareness are ‘favourable historical conditions’, and that hope needs practice in order to become historically concrete (Freire, 1994). Historical conditions are not naturally occurring, but are rather the result of the individual’s interaction with and intervention on one’s own and others’ contexts. This leads to the second value and goal that participants identified for English language pedagogy in the Gaza Strip, namely peaceful resistance.

b. Language education to foster peaceful resistance

In a context of siege, forced immobility and post-conflict devastation, nurturing a capacity to express and describe harsh living conditions as well as dreams and hopes could be considered as a coping mechanism to relieve distress and, as such, may be framed as resilience. Chandler (2012:17) defines resilience as ‘the capacity to positively or successfully adapt to external problems or threats’. Ryan (2015) points out that resilience is usually conceived as self-sufficiency in international relations and development discourses; however, in the context of Palestine, resilience and resistance are strictly intertwined. Drawing on Scott’s *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (1990), Ryan posits that resistance consists of everyday practices which are not merely coping mechanisms aimed at survival, but rather instances of ‘spontaneity, anonymity and lack of formal organization,’ which ‘then become the enabling modes of protest rather than a reflection of the slender political tactics of the popular classes’ (Scott, 1990:151 cited in Ryan, 2015:310). As such,

these forms of resistance are politicised and become culturally identifiable and recognizable.

In the Palestinian context, this sort of everyday peaceful practice of resistance is locally expressed in the concept of *sumud*, roughly translated as the ‘perplexity, sadness, resilience and weary endurance’ that is specific to the Palestinian habitus after decades of occupation, a ten-year siege and generations of displaced people and separated families (Shehadeh, 2015:76). Presenting examples of Palestinian women practicing *sumud*, Ryan (2015) defines it as ‘resilient resistance’, which primarily consists of rejoicing in Palestinian culture, traditions and in life in general, *despite* the harsh living conditions, and not *within* those conditions. Shehadeh (2015) and other scholars find a nexus between *sumud* and linguistic habits:

I wondered how many more terms and behaviours I have unwittingly adopted and to what extent I have made the language of occupation and defeat my own. I’ve become accustomed to so much. (p.85)

Similarly, our participants find in language one of the possible manifestations of *sumud*, and ascribe to this the critical hope that comes with the value and goal of learning English as *the* international language:

The language itself can be stronger than military trend. Students should feel that they learn English to defend their land and rights and to spread the truth of Palestinian reality, not just to have exams and succeed at specific level. (L. written assignment)

Peaceful resistance linked to critical hope, which, as can be seen in the above extract, is embedded in linguistic resistance (Canagarajah, 2003), involves the attempt to overcome isolation and to re-write and disseminate counter-narratives, as these extracts illustrate. It also involves rejecting the oppression and enclosure that occupation imposes, as S unequivocally argues in her evaluation form:

We need to learn how to resist by using the Western language in order to convey our message and our voice to the whole world. (S. evaluation form)

English language education in the Gaza Strip, as these extracts demonstrate, is one of the practices of hope and peaceful resistance to the siege imposed by the multi-purpose isolation of nearly two million people living in the Gaza Strip. It offers the possibility to nurture relationships by breaking the isolation, letting the wider world know about the challenges the siege imposes and looking for solidarity across borders. As is discussed in the next section, language education, therefore, has a holistic value.

c. 'Language is not a set of boxes'

The role of education as holistic in fostering individuals' dreams and ambitions and in giving them the tools to 'talk back' (hooks, 1994; Pennycook, 1994) is a perspective that appears to be embedded in how education is perceived in the Gaza Strip. Rather than simply focusing on 'academic' and 'operational' competences (Barnett, 2010), language education is also seen as having a transformative power, one that has wider social and individual repercussions. Barnett (2010) criticises educational practices that are increasingly instrumentally driven. Rather, he argues for 'life-wide learning'; that is a learning that is the result of several concurrent influences, as opposed to the single, vertical dimension of life-long learning. As Barnett notes:

In comprehending students' life-wide learning [...] we need to supplement the domains of knowledge and skills with a sense of a student's being and, indeed, their continuing becoming. (Barnett, 2010:5)

This holistic view resonates with the transformative power of educational praxis which the participants in the Gaza Strip talk about, and encompasses both changes in the material-socio-economic circumstances, and the individuals' process of becoming. This is reflected in the course's evaluation form by N, in which she focuses on her responsibility of being a 'good model' for her students, of showing them the way to be active and committed political agents, noting that:

I believe that me as a teacher should be a good model to teach students how to defend their cause, rights and dreams. (N. evaluation form)

N's commitment and understanding of her role as a language teacher goes beyond the context of the classroom. During a presentation that she prepared with one of her peers as part of a classroom activity during the teacher training course (see Figure 1), she emphasised that language teaching needs to be engaged with daily life, and that language cannot be perceived 'as a set of boxes'.

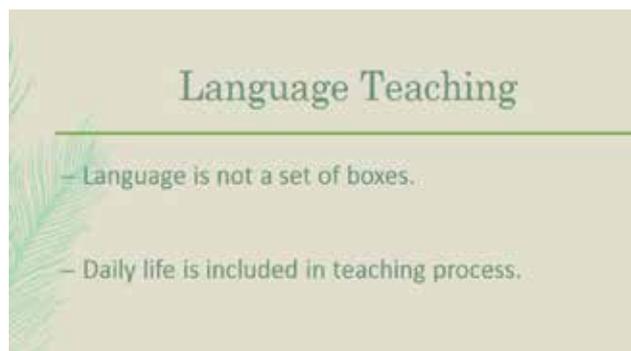


Figure1: N's PowerPoint slide

As she explained during the presentation, language cannot be taught as a series of gap-filling exercises, as a sequence of role plays, or through listening and reading comprehensions only. Rather, she put forward a view of language education as being part of the everyday life, which, under duress and distress as in the Gaza Strip, needs imperatively both to denounce the harsh living conditions, and also to express dreams and hopes which are constitutive of individuals' ontologies, i.e. their being and becoming in the world.

The performative curricula of the West have insisted on measures, scales, ladders, levels for language assessment and language pedagogy, focusing on what Barnett (1994) has called academic and operational competences. Within this dominant discourse – alongside, of course, that of aims and outcomes – all metaphors assume a linearity and a way of working with language within straight-sided containers. Conversely, N's statement about language not being a set of boxes offers a challenge to our metaphorical conceptualisation of language education: language pedagogy is a place where, despite the repeated aggressions, interruptions of schooling, malnutrition, long power cuts and homework done by candlelight – despite all the consequences of the devastation and of the years of occupation and siege – individuals can manifest their process of becoming, and can become political agents, practicing hope and *sumud*. In this conceptualization we find that imagination and aspiration are realised in the language itself, in the words that have been uttered, in *naming the world*. By developing his/her own language and voicing critical discourses, 'the oppressed finds a way to 'remake the world'' (Freire, 1994:31).

Conclusions and recommendations

Palestinians reject the 'closing down' nature of the occupation, especially in education because education is always about opening up the future. (Hammond, 2012:82)

In this chapter we discussed the values and goals of English in contexts of occupation, pain and pressure as in the Gaza Strip, Palestine. Findings show that in Gaza, English language education has a vital role: despite the forced immobility and the consequent enforced monoculturalism and monolingualism that the siege imposes, participants aspire to open up spaces for intercultural curiosity to be explored and fulfilled. The online space opens a fast-developing means to use English language for intercultural exchanges and establishing relationships with the international community when immobility prevents face-to-face encounters. In our study, participants manifested their commitment to a kind of education

which is the practice of critical hope, as in Freire's (1994) understanding of the term, and the practice of peaceful resistance. This sort of education goes beyond the context of the classroom, encompassing the sense of students' beings and becoming, as in Barnett's (2010) conception of 'life-wide learning'.

Inspired by our findings, we suggest that in contexts of pain and pressure, as may exist for new refugee populations or post-conflict societies, an appropriate language pedagogy nurtures learners' wellbeing by teaching them a language in which hopes, dreams, injustice, experiences of pain and pressure are articulated and expressed to the wider international community. We hope that through building academic partnerships promoting knowledge and skill transfer, language teachers may perceive of language not simply as a set of boxes, but as an ecology of enduring relationships and circles of solidarity and hope.

Our hope – and recommendation – is that the readers of this chapter and English language teachers internationally continue their cultural work, negotiating ELT pedagogies with their learners and problematizing market-driven approaches to language education. It is our hope that (English) language teachers draw on their creativity, including multilingual and multimodal pedagogies, and dare to transgress task-based and communicative language teaching. It is our hope that (English) language teachers may be involved in a process of radical listening, especially when learners value the opportunity for – and express the need to – 'talk back'. Finally, it is our hope that formal institutions will support the difficult work of (English) language teachers by opening up possibilities for localized curricula to suit the needs of the learners' populations and, in the words of one of our participants, by considering language as 'a golden opportunity for students to speak and discuss the[ir] dreams and talents to the entire world.' (L. written assignment)

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4

Forgiveness as pedagogy in the English language classroom

Barbara Birch and Ilham Nasser

Introduction

In certain areas of North Africa inhabited by the Awlad Ali tribes, there is a special ritual for cases of murder. The offender agrees to surrender and lie on the ground beside a sheep. A member of the victim's family approaches the offender and has the choice of killing him or the sheep. Obviously, the victim's family representative will choose the sheep. However, the fact that the victim has had the opportunity to take revenge (but decided to kill the sheep) restores the respect, dignity, and the honor of the victim's family. Thus, they will not be socially stigmatized as weak or unable to revenge their victim. (Abu-Nimer, 2003:108)

The ritual described in the above quote takes place in the context of a community process, or dialogue, in which participants give voice to wrongs that have been perpetrated, pay attention to each other, and acknowledge difficult emotions like blame, responsibility and guilt. The offender signals contrition by assuming a vulnerable stance, risking at least potentially a revenge commensurate with his offense. The victim's representative could kill him instead of the sheep, but rather than seeking vengeance, the victim's family chooses to be magnanimous and show mercy. Through the ritual, the victim's relatives have their power and their status in the community restored to them. A certain amount of equity is re-established in what was a broken relationship, although the relationship may not be healed.

The ritual described above also encapsulates a number of themes that are 'accessory' to forgiveness: dialogue (voice, attention and acknowledgement), blame, responsibility, guilt, contrition, revenge, magnanimity, mercy, vulnerability, respect, power, honor and equity. The ritual itself is a local resource for forgiveness, but the themes, or 'accessories', are both local and universal. Furthermore, the ritual symbolizes two important points: that forgiveness is always latently present as a choice, even when people don't recognize it, and that forgiveness is an act of strength and not weakness, and therefore a worthy goal. Lastly, the ritual shows us that learning about ways various

cultures narrate their cultural stories and negotiate their practices around forgiveness helps us as educators to navigate the multicultural realities we face in the classroom and to offer direction and solutions when incidents necessitating forgiveness occur in our classrooms. In this chapter, the authors assert that local forgiveness schemas (stories, rituals, accessories, etc.) can provide rich resources for teachers around the world who wish to help their students envision a better, more just and more peaceful future, especially in deeply divided societies.

This chapter is a convergence of the two authors' separate work and it may be helpful for readers to understand how this convergence took place. Barbara Birch has been researching and writing about promoting peace in the English language classroom since her first (somewhat naïve) paper in 1994 published in the TESOL Journal. Her most comprehensive work, *The English Language Teacher in Global Civil Society*, came out in 2009. This book introduced six pedagogies of transition to be used in English classrooms in order to transition from a current (dystopic) situation to a preferred future (see Figure 1). The pedagogy of transition focused on in this paper is that of forgiveness.

Prosocial Communication	the ability to use language in a dialogue that benefits classmates and their relationship
Conflict Transformation	a dialogue in which conflict partners restore justice in their relationship
Tolerance	a dialogue in which classmates improve their attitude towards others
Remembrance	a dialogue in which classmates begin to resolve their difficult emotions
Reconciliation	a dialogue in which reconciliation partners acknowledge past injustices and let them go
Forgiveness	a dialogue in which reconciliation partners begin to envision a just future together

Figure 1: The Pedagogies of Transition (Birch, 2009)

Birch (2009) described two general approaches to implementing each of the pedagogies of transition in English classrooms: elicitation and prescription. In elicitation, local values, norms and behaviours are identified and codified through methods of discovery such as ethnography or problem-posing (Lederach, 1995). In elicitation, learners are the experts on indigenous methods of dialogue that can be used to transition from conflict to a post-conflict situation. In prescription, additive methods from outsider experts are brought in as resources for learning and practice (e.g. peer conflict resolution methods, third party mediation techniques). A local pedagogy of transition is designed by combining elicitation and prescription, if appropriate, with normal 'prescribed' curriculum planning (needs assessment, skills identification, etc.) following the elicitation process.

For her part, Ilham Nasser started her research on forgiveness in 2011 in response to some personal stories she heard about people in her community who were able to forgive in some instances and not in others. She became interested in finding out how people rationalize their decision to forgive or not to forgive, and what factors made the difference. She began to collect data from teachers because of her overarching interest in the effects of schooling on society. Nasser examined Arabic teachers' attitudes towards forgiveness within the context of Arabic language and culture. She and her colleagues envisioned a curriculum to introduce empathic, communicative and problem-solving skills as tools to help students negotiate conflicts stemming from the ethnic, cultural and religious groups in a class. In particular, they thought that a forgiveness curriculum might help fight bullying and children targeted because of who they are and what they represent. This is of particular importance in the current atmosphere of popular nationalism and xenophobia in so many countries around the world.

Nasser and Birch met at the Dialogue under Occupation International Conference held May 2012 at the Lebanese American University in Beirut, Lebanon. At the conference, Birch heard Nasser present the results of her surveys on teacher attitudes towards forgiveness, and she immediately saw Nasser's work as an invaluable example of the elicitive approach to creating one of the pedagogies of transition, forgiveness. The collaboration in this paper, therefore, first presents Nasser's work as a local pedagogy of forgiveness that can serve as a model or example for other teachers who are able and willing to explore local social, cultural and linguistic resources to increase their understanding of forgiveness on a local level.

By publishing these important local resources, and using English as a language of wider communication,

we argue that global pedagogies of transition can emerge, which others can implement. Teachers can explore the use of English in addition to local languages to create safe learning spaces where different options and alternatives can be explored. For instance, in a study by Schlam-Salman and Bekerman (2011:65), the authors described the experience of Jewish Israeli and Palestinian students in the English classroom where language was used as a space for dialogue and empowerment. The authors concluded that:

... students found some liberatory/emancipatory expressions in English. Through the English discourse utilized in the classroom, students were exposed to ideas, concepts and ideologies beyond what is culturally embedded in Arabic and Hebrew and beyond what they hear in the school and home environments.

In their study, students in a way were liberated from the 'binary identifications perpetuated by the school and the wider context' (Schlam-Salman and Bekerman, 2011:65). In the second part of this paper, we show how, based on this idea, local and global pedagogies of transition in the English language classroom can emerge. Our position is that if we teachers who are involved in the teaching of English limit our pedagogical goals to correct pronunciation, grammar and vocabulary, if we restrict our attention to sanitised speech functions, facile interactions and simplistic intercultural communication, we fail to imagine realistic alternatives to the status quo. We waste our strategic positions and power to educate for a peaceful and more sustainable world. The paper is meant to stimulate teachers to find their own ways to elicit local resources for positive change, and also to consider how the English language classroom can be used as a site for global pedagogies of transition promoting locally appropriate practices of forgiveness. This, it is argued, can result in the English language classroom being used as a site for promoting dialogue and forgiveness, thus contributing to sustainable peacebuilding and a socially just world.

Forgiveness as local pedagogy

Many of the students we teach – whether adults or youth – are familiar with the concept of forgiveness in their native languages but they do not expect it to be a skill or a quality that they may acquire in learning English. As a concept, many learners identify or believe in forgiveness but when translated to attitudes and actions, most people find difficulties. This is why forgiveness as a pedagogy could play an important role in the English classroom and in wider society. It is also why Nasser and Birch collaborated on the present paper: to bring forgiveness

knowledge and practice to classrooms and the world.

Forgiveness education accompanied by other child-centered pedagogies, when introduced to children as early as kindergarten, can be a powerful conflict and violence prevention tool and a preventive measure against bullying. Such a curriculum, if maintained throughout grade levels, may save children from suffering and victimization in schools and the community. As part of an overall peace education agenda, forgiveness education can be an effective tool to promote peace and break the cycle of violence and learned systems of hatred in societies with intractable social, political and religious divisions.

A common definition of forgiveness is that it involves a decision to let go of feelings like blame, anger, resentment and revenge toward someone (or some people) who has committed an offense (or offenses) that is harmful, damaging and the like. The range of offenses goes from the trivial to the genocidal, such as in cases where nations and ethnic groups decide to forgive and reconcile. One famous example of the latter was the Truth and Reconciliation process in South Africa at the end of the Apartheid era. The process was a judicial dialogue in which victims voiced what had happened to them, and received attention and acknowledgement. Perpetrators of violence also acknowledged what happened, and requested amnesty from prosecution.

Forgiveness is not the same as forgetting, condoning or excusing the offence. As seen in the description above of the Awlad Ali tribe, different cultures and religions attach values, factors and conditions (e.g. accessories) to the idea of forgiveness. Abu-Nimer (2001) asserts that forgiveness is a component of reconciliation along with acknowledgement, confession, repentance and restitution, and that forgiveness may vary depending on the social, cultural and religious contexts in which it takes place. It is important to understand the religious and cultural accessories that accompany forgiveness because of how important they are to peace and reconciliation processes, whether they are on the individual or community level.

Indeed, forgiveness and reconciliations succeed or fail based on how 'satisfied' the participants are with the dialogue that takes place within the process, and that satisfaction depends on how the expectations of the participants are met. For example, a referendum on the peace process with the FARC rebels in Colombia was rejected by voters because many ordinary Colombians felt that the rebels were not punished sufficiently for their offenses. (Despite the referendum results, the Colombian government later ratified the treaty.) Despite what we know, or what we

think we know, about forgiveness, there remain many more questions to be answered, especially in places with intransigent historical divisions among people. Nasser's studies of the attitudes that teachers in five Arab communities have towards forgiveness is a good starting point towards the creation of teaching tools for the classroom.

Eliciting local concepts and ideas about forgiveness

Based on a study that included 590 teachers in the Middle East region, Nasser and Abu-Nimer (2016) suggested that forgiveness is a powerful behaviour to model and teach in order to change destructive cycles of conflict and violence in deeply divided societies. Therefore, in addition to identifying the values, factors and conditions that accompany forgiveness, different resources for forgiveness and reconciliation must be recognized, such as key cultural, religious and social players in the community, political officials, and respected and trusted elders. Nasser and Abu-Nimer suggest that besides elders, politicians and heroes, teachers may be an important resource in building a culture of peace because they 'hold the key to unlock fixed destructive patterns of conflict management held by children who have inherited these from their parents or other socialization agents.' (Nasser and Abu-Nimer, 2012:2)

In order to study and understand forgiveness in socio-political and religious contexts, Nasser and Abu-Nimer (2012) surveyed Arab teachers to find out more about their attitudes and perceptions and, therefore, the cultural accessories that go along with forgiveness in that setting. They used 12 scenarios adapted for the Arab context from original scenarios designed by Tangney, et al. (1999). They identified a number of factors that were important in the decisions teachers make regarding their ability and willingness to forgive. Some of the factors mentioned repeatedly were intentionality vs. unintentionality, closeness of the relationship (it is much harder to forgive when the victim is a close family member), severity of the offence, extent of remorse, and personal dignity and respect.

Nasser and Abu-Nimer found that forgiveness has different meanings for individuals, and recommended that a clarification of ideas on what is forgiveness in the school context would be a good first conversation to have. For instance, they report that Arabic has three different words describing forgiveness: Alafoo, Almousamaha, Alghofran (وَفْعَالًا, نَارْفَعَالًا, حَمَامَةً), and it was a challenge for teachers participating in a training workshop on forgiveness to choose the word that best describes forgiveness in that particular context. This dialogue about the meaning of the word and its English equivalent was

necessary to set a collective direction at the start of the discovery process. Very often, in Arabic forgiveness is mistaken for tolerance, which is a very different concept and sometimes a less preferred term in contexts such as Palestine where huge financial investments in tolerance training meant, in some cases, accepting the status quo of occupation. A person can forgive someone without tolerance because forgiveness is the ability to let go of vengeful thoughts; a person can also tolerate others without forgiving them.

Creating a forgiveness curriculum

Nasser and Abu-Nimer (2012:13) believe that, because of their general willingness to forgive when faced with difficult situations, teachers 'can be a resource when introducing a new specialized curriculum on forgiveness for children in schools and communities.' They point to the importance of identifying teachers' perceptions of forgiveness as a necessary first step in institutionalizing education for forgiveness in schools. It is important to be aware of the conditions that motivate people to forgive and those which prevent them from forgiving. Texts, materials and activities must be appropriate and culturally sensitive. In the context of Arab teachers and schools, intentionality and offering public apology are significant factors in accepting forgiveness in most conflict situations. Furthermore, in the study of five Arab communities, and during multiple workshops on the topic, the concept of 'justice' was always brought up as an important component that should not be ignored when discussing forgiveness education and introducing it in the classroom. Finally, the curriculum should increase awareness and sensitivity of teachers to the cognitive, emotional and cultural factors involved in forgiveness attitudes and behaviors among students.

In interviews with the teachers, Nasser, Abu-Nimer and Mohammed (2014) found that they are eager to have models and lessons that address the topic of teaching for forgiveness in their local communities. The researchers decided to use their survey results to develop a curriculum, aided by 15 teachers from the communities involved. These teachers were drawn from various content and grade levels (K-12), and they participated in the writing, reviewing and piloting of a curriculum to teach for forgiveness. The curriculum planners first identified the skills students would need in order to make the choice to forgive. The most necessary skills were 1) empathic skills such as reading and expressing emotions or respecting others, 2) communicative skills such as listening and dialogue, and 3) problem-solving skills such as analyzing conflicts and brainstorming different ways to resolve conflicts. Next, the curriculum planners collected forgiveness stories as

the basis for a literacy-based curriculum addressing the specific contexts and lives of the Arab teachers and students.

Nasser and her team used the concepts and attitudes they elicited, the skills they identified and the stories they collected to create a manual for teachers in the Middle East designed to provide tools and strategies to teach about and address the topic of forgiveness as a necessary method for reconciliation and peaceful resolution of conflicts. Their curriculum includes seven modules that focus on topics chosen based on both ideas gathered from experts in curriculum and conflict resolution, and the local teachers who met in Amman, Jordan for a three-day meeting. The modules were:

1. Identifying and managing emotions
2. Apologizing and accepting apologies
3. Forgiving and reconciling
4. Analyzing a conflict before choosing a response
5. Taking responsibility for own actions
6. Understanding other's motivations and interest
7. Exploring methods to resolve conflicts

The manual targets students who are between the ages of 12 and 17 and relies heavily on real-life stories of forgiveness that were collected in Jordan, Egypt and Palestine. Each module has three to four lessons and each lesson includes the following components:

- a. An ice breaker activity for team building and group work
- b. A story to jump-start a conversation about the topic and focus of module
- c. Discussion questions about the story
- d. A small group activity such as discussion, brain-storming, illustration and writing prompts
- e. A list of resources and sayings from holy books in Christianity, Judaism and Islam in addition to popular Arabic sayings and poetry pieces

The first and last sections of the manual address strategies and skills for teachers to use when teaching for forgiveness. The first section introduces principles of active learning techniques while the last module addresses conflict resolution methods and techniques.

Implementing a forgiveness curriculum in Arab schools

A group of school teachers and guidance counsellors in Palestine, including some English teachers, implemented the forgiveness curriculum during ten sessions held during their free periods or after school.⁶ The implementation included children in grades 6–10 in public schools in the southern part of Palestine, where Bedouin (Nomadic Arabs) reside. These communities tend to be more conservative and traditional in ways they deal with forgiveness and reconciliation as they mainly use elderly or special mediators in the community to resolve conflicts and settle disputes. At the end of the implementation, an outside researcher from the community randomly interviewed five or six students in each grade. The initial results revealed that students had gained an understanding and comprehension (knowledge) of what forgiveness means but the students interviewed were not able to articulate actions that illustrate the concept (practice). Further analysis of pre- and post- surveys of the students and their attitudes towards forgiving others is underway. It is not yet clear whether there will be significant differences but the fact that students increased their understanding of basic concepts of forgiveness is clearly something that needs to be further explored.

There are reasons to be hopeful, especially when it comes to implementing a local ‘custom-designed’ pedagogy. Nasser and Abu-Nimer (2012:3) suggest that ‘studying and mapping forgiveness and reconciliation processes in different social cultural contexts [in Birch’s terms, *eliciting*] would be more effective for peace-builders and educators than attempting to generate a standard process for both [in Birch’s terms, *prescribing*].’ It seems likely that a curriculum of forgiveness firmly rooted in the discovery of local accessories and resources will be more successful than a pedagogy imported from another social or cultural background and heritage (although a prescriptive process can be a resource as well).

Nasser and Abu-Nimer’s pioneering use of forgiveness studies with Arab teachers and the resulting curriculum they devised is a local example of teachers actively involving themselves in the education of the next generation and taking personal responsibility for their agency as role models and teachers. Teachers like these assume a new educational goal for their students: global citizenship, built on human rights and peaceful resolution of conflicts. Furthermore, their forgiveness curriculum, available as it is online, could provide a model or a

resource for global pedagogies of forgiveness elsewhere, and also be made specific for the teaching of English as a language of wider communication.

Forgiveness as a global (English language) pedagogy

The work by Nasser and Abu-Nimer for developing a local pedagogy of transition forgiveness is similar to the approach developed in Birch (2009) – in which forgiveness can be promoted in the teaching of English as a global language. As argued by Birch (2009), forgiveness can be one-sided and unconditional, but many will agree that, at a minimum, forgiveness and reconciliation processes, both large and small, usually involve some kind of dialogue in which participants speak about the offense, pay attention to others while they are speaking, and acknowledge what they have heard. It is important for all sides to voice their concerns, hear and be heard, and both acknowledge and be acknowledged. While dialogue may occur in any language, in a large number of recent global conflicts, English plays a significant role in providing a medium for global dialogue. Moreover, in more local conflicts, such as those in the Middle East, English can be used – as argued above – to create a shared emancipatory space in which new ideas, concepts and ideologies can be voiced, allowing forgiveness and transition to be discussed and imagined (cf. Schlam-Salman and Bekerman, 2011).

A key component for every pedagogy of transition is dialogue, which is connection among people through three iterative components: voice, attention and acknowledgement. These components, summarized in Figure 2, can be defined as follows:

- Voice is offering, articulating, and becoming vulnerable. It legitimizes itself and asks for attention and acknowledgement.
- Attention is listening, accepting, understanding, and giving legitimacy and acknowledgement to voice and to what is voiced.
- Acknowledgement is recognition of what another sees as a truth.

⁶This curriculum was published by Salam Institute for Peace and Justice in Washington, DC. More information can be found at <http://salaminstitute.org/portal/forgiveness-in-the-middle-east/>.

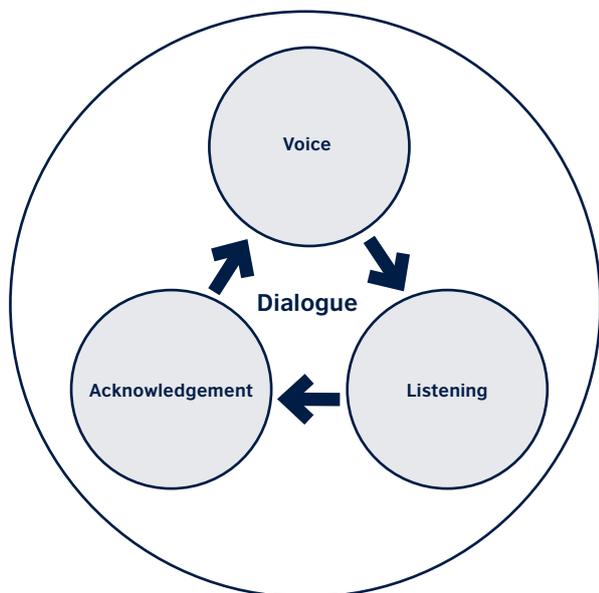


Figure 2: Pedagogies of transition to a preferred future (Birch, 2009)

While dialogue is key to any pedagogy of transition, it is particularly important in English language classrooms, which aim to provide a transformative space, promoting forgiveness and peace.

Eliciting concepts and ideas for a global forgiveness pedagogy

The role of teachers who are interested in teaching forgiveness in any context is to facilitate a process of discovery as a way to elicit concepts, themes and language for a pedagogy of transition. Discovery takes place through dialogue: e.g. discussion, role plays and narrative analysis. Narratives can include rituals (such as the one described by Abu-Nimer above), analogies, fables, metaphors, stories and even jokes that contain traditional wisdom and experience. Sometimes there are contrasting narratives that show contradictions or paradoxes. The goal of the discovery is for participants to identify the components of dialogue (i.e. voice, attention and acknowledgement) as well as other accessories and resources surrounding the dialogue of, in this case, forgiveness, so that the (English language) pedagogy can be made up of these components. What is specific to teaching forgiveness in the English language classroom is the particular importance of uncovering and verbalizing knowledge using linguistic resources for dialogue from both the local language and English. For the English teacher, two crucial aspects to consider are that learners should be encouraged to articulate what they know using English and that they should be allowed and encouraged to borrow concepts from their other languages. This allows them to create 'products' (normative and formative processes) that are then both local resources that can be used to transform

conflicts as well as global resources that enrich English as a world language.

Using scenarios and surveys in their discovery method, Nasser and Abu-Nimer elicited knowledge of forgiveness in Arab communities, and then used this information to develop a locally appropriate curriculum for students. These scenarios (adapted in Appendix A) can be very useful in the early stages of discovery in many contexts because they are neutral enough so that participants can discuss them, articulate what they believe and know, and discover the themes and accessories for forgiveness. English language teachers could undergo their own process of discovery with students by adapting the scenarios to their own context and discussing them with students, eliciting the major local values, attitudes, and behaviors associated with forgiveness. In addition to the scenarios, this initial process can be based on surveys, discussions, narrative analysis, stories of forgiveness in the school and community settings and so on.

It is, however, wise to be cautious when adapting this curriculum to other contexts and for the English language classroom. No one recommends jumping right into discussions about the intractable conflicts that divide people in a society, but rather to approach difficult topics slowly, also incrementally developing students' language to engage in these discussions. Even though teachers may want to grapple from the beginning with hard topics like the distinction between forgiveness and justice or whether forgiveness means giving up on justice, it is best to stay hypothetical or theoretical at first, and grounded in local communities, while remaining sensitive to the fact that people accept forgiveness in different measures and timeframes. Sometimes it is useful to begin the discussion with forgiveness and reconciliation processes in other parts of the world, in other historical timeframes, or even in written texts or movies. Teachers may expand their understandings of forgiveness by reading outsider texts about forgiveness (see Appendix B). The product of this discovery process is at the very least a set of common themes, accessories and resources, as well as the English and local language vocabulary necessary to talk about forgiveness.

Creating a forgiveness curriculum for the English language classroom

Like Nasser and Abu-Nimer, after having undergone a process of discovery, teachers can begin creating a 'product:' their own forgiveness curriculum for the English language classroom, based on a pedagogy of transition and the 'systems' approach to course design described in Graves (2000): defining the context for learning, articulating beliefs,

conceptualizing content, formulating goals/objectives, assessing needs, organizing the sequence, developing/adapting materials and designing an assessment plan. The following questions can be used as a starting point for curriculum planning for English language teaching that involves a pedagogy of forgiveness:

- What social, political, religious, cultural, school factors/resources are relevant to forgiveness and to a pedagogy of forgiveness?
- What do people believe about forgiveness (themes)?
- What content (history, religion, sociology) do people need to learn?
- What are the goals/objectives for this course on forgiveness?
- For whom is the course intended and what do they need in order to learn?
- What is a logical sequence of learning? What steps need to be incorporated?
- How can the knowledge learned about forgiveness be transferred to students?
- What kind of facilitation skills will teachers need?
- What materials must be developed or adapted?
- How can learning be assessed throughout and at the end of the curriculum?

English language teachers as agents of change

Implementing a pedagogy of forgiveness, or any pedagogy of transition, makes teachers agents of change. There is no neutrality, and this might be particularly the case for English language teachers. Figure 3 summarizes a number of assumptions that underlie the idea that English teachers can be agents of positive change towards a preferred future if they implement pedagogies of transition.

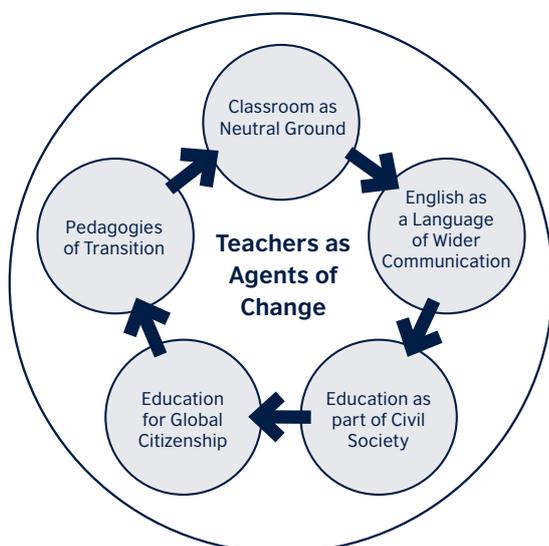


Figure 3: Teachers as agents of change (Birch, 2009)

Martusewicz, in her book *Seeking Passage: Post-structuralism, Pedagogy, Ethics*, put a related idea about teachers being agents of change in the following way:

I am committed to the notion that as educators we must be engaged with others in questions about the kinds of communities we want to live in, the kinds of knowledge and experiences that are most worthwhile, and the kinds of people we want our students to become, even while we may never completely agree upon the answers to those questions. (Martusewicz, 2001:6)

The need for teachers to act as agents of change is particularly relevant for English language teachers, who, like it or not, ‘stand at the very heart of the most crucial educational, cultural, and political issues of our time’ (Gee, 1994:190). Similarly, Pennycook (1994:326) suggests ‘a role for the English language classroom in the world that makes it not the poor cousin to other classes that it so often seems to be, but rather a key site in global cultural production.’ He recommends, however, that teachers resist the types of English instruction that assume values like militarism, consumerism and materialism, advocating instead that:

Counter discourses formulated through English and the articulation of insurgent knowledges and cultural practices in English offer alternative possibilities to the colonizers and post-colonizers, challenging and changing the cultures and discourse that dominate the world. In some sense, then, the English language classroom, along with other sites of cultural production and political opposition, could become a key site for the renewal of both local and global forms of culture and knowledge. (Pennycook, 1994:326)

We argue, as Pennycook does, that the use of English as a language of wider communication (instead of or in addition to local languages) can create a safe classroom space, a neutral ground, where new options and alternatives can be explored. English language teachers are at the center of important socio-cultural networks within civil society, and have a special role to play in current events. They have an important agency to educate for change. These teachers can use their unique positions and agencies to inform the goals around which their pedagogy rotates. Rather than teaching communicative competence or other abstract notions, teachers can envision a new goal for pedagogy: global citizenship. The goal for education for global citizenship aims at fostering dialogue (through English) within pedagogies of transition to a preferred future where forgiveness, sustainable peacebuilding and social justice are achievable.

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Appendix A: Scenarios

For Adults

Imagine that your colleague at work was fired because of something he did not commit; in fact, it was you who did it but you did not confess.

Imagine that one of your neighbors invited you to his son's wedding and you attended and gave them a very expensive gift (money); then after a while you invited him to your son's wedding but he did not show up.

Imagine that your friend brought his son to visit you and while his son was running around inside the house, he broke a precious work of art you have inherited from your great-grandparents.

Imagine that your friend borrowed your car and while he was driving it he ran a red light and hit another car, causing damage to your car (but no one was hurt).

Imagine that you and some friends gossiped about a dear friend of yours and later this friend found out about it.

Imagine that your cousin borrowed a sum of money to pay his electric bill (as he claimed), then the next day you discovered that he spent the money instead on a very expensive stereo.

Imagine that one of your neighbors put a fence around his house; later you found out that the fence is actually inside your property line.

Imagine that you were in a social gathering and someone from your religious background insulted your religion.

Imagine that you were in a social gathering and someone not from your religious background insulted your religion.

For Children or Teenagers

Imagine that you told your brother or sister a secret that you wanted him/her not to tell anyone; then you discovered that he/she had disclosed this secret to some people.

Imagine that while you were having a big argument with your parents, you yelled 'I hate you!' at them.

Imagine that your friend borrowed your bicycle and while he was riding it he ran into another bike, causing some damage to the bike (but no one was hurt).

Imagine that you and some friends gossiped about a dear friend of yours and later this friend found out about it.

Imagine that your cousin borrowed some money to pay for his school uniform (as he claimed), but then the next day you found out that he had spent the money instead on a very expensive stereo.

Imagine that a young man from your town had a relationship with ('dated') one of your sisters and then he broke up with her.

Imagine that you were in a social gathering and someone from your religious background insulted your religion.

Imagine that you were in a social gathering and someone from another religious background insulted your religion.

Appendix B: Partial list of resources on forgiveness

Biggar, N (2008) 'Forgiving Enemies in Ireland', in *The Journal of Religious Ethics* 36/4, 559-579.

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Boulding, E (1990) *Building a Global Civic Culture: Education for an Interdependent World*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

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Heim, L, Schaal, S and Moghaddam, F (2015) 'Construction, Application, and Validation of a Reconciliation Questionnaire in a Sample of Rwandans', in *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology* 21/3: 465-478.

Lederach, JP (1995) *Preparing for Peace: Conflict Transformation across Cultures*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press.

Lederach, JP (2004) *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*. Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press.

Lederach, JP (2005) *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

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Neto, F, Pinto, M and Mullet, E (2007) 'Intergroup Forgiveness: East Timorese and Angolan Perspectives', in the *Journal of Peace Research* 44/6: 711-728.

David, R and Choi Yuk-ping, S (2006) 'Forgiveness and Transitional Justice in the Czech Republic', in the *Journal of Conflict Resolution*. 50/3 :339-367.

Staub, E and Pearlman, L (2003) 'Healing, Forgiveness, and Reconciliation in Rwanda: Project Summary and Outcome', in Staub, E (ed) *The Psychology of Good and Evil: Why Children, Adults, and Groups Help and Harm Others*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 451-4.

5

Environmental fragility and English language education

Roslyn Appleby

Introduction

We as leaders of countries will begin to witness what we call climate refugees moving – you think migration is a challenge in Europe today because of extremism? Wait until you see what happens when there's an absence of water, an absence of food, or one tribe fighting against another for mere survival.
(John Kerry, US Secretary of State, August 2015)

John Kerry's statement was made at a conference on global leadership in the Arctic and focused, in part, on the dire effects of climate change in that region. In this part of his address, Kerry refers to the challenges posed by recent refugee movements from the Middle East into Europe, ostensibly as a consequence of 'extremism', and suggests that climate change and environmental degradation will lead to even greater instability, violent conflict and movements of people across the globe in the near future. In this chapter, I explore some of these complex links between environmental degradation and migration, and consider the implications for English language education to promote environmental awareness and intercultural understanding, and to work towards stability and sustainability in a fragile world.

From the Middle East and China to Sydney, Australia

In November 2016 a leading global education provider issued an urgent call to recruit English language teachers for its Adult Migrant English Program located in South Western Sydney. Two colleges in that region were experiencing a rapid growth in student numbers, as refugees from the conflicts in Iraq and Syria were arriving in their new home as part of Australia's promised one-off intake of 12,000 additional refugees from those two countries. The promise to accept an increased number of refugees had been made by a Conservative national government in September 2015, at the same time as it announced increased Australian air strikes across Iraq and Syria in response to escalating civil and military unrest and in the wake of violent incursions by rebel and terrorist groups including Daesh (Islamic State) (Henderson

and Borrello, 2015). These links between the rise of terrorism, Australian military operations and the unprecedented flood of refugees into Europe from the Middle East were foregrounded by Australian news media. In contrast, the underlying problems of environmental degradation and climate change as contributing factors in civil conflict and mass migration received relatively little attention. The problem of forced migration, particularly in the post-9/11 era, thus continues to be seen through a narrow security-specific lens, while considered discussion about climate-induced displacement has been conspicuously absent (Dumaine and Mintzer, 2015; Held, 2015).

A similarly complex combination of factors has also featured in a far larger voluntary movement of people to Australia from China over recent years. On the one hand, in 2015 over 136,000 Chinese students were enrolled in Australian educational institutions: Chinese students now comprise over 27 per cent of all fee-paying international students, the highest of any nationality (Colbeck, 2016). While many such students will eventually return to China, many enrol in degree programs that will enhance their prospects of migration to Australia. At the same time, Australia has become one of the destinations of choice (along with the USA, UK and Canada) for wealthy Chinese who, in the wake of rapid industrialisation and environmental degradation, cite pollution and food safety concerns as main reasons for emigration (Hurun Report, 2014). Australian media reports about Chinese student numbers tend to focus on the economic value of our international education sector, while news reports about wealthy Chinese property investors reflect concerns about the impact on Australian property prices. Yet again, in these reports the more complex underlying environmental factors that affect people movements are overlooked.

While migrants from Syria and China appear in English language classes in Australia, many more instances of environmental migration are occurring in all regions of the world. It seems that environmental migrants, whether wealthy or poor, voluntary or involuntary, within or across national borders, may come from any strata of society.

In this chapter, I want to first explore some of these complex links between global instability, environmental degradation and patterns of migration, and consider the implications for English language education. More specifically, I want to consider the ways in which English language educators might take up the challenges of living in precarious times, to focus attention on environmental crises, and thereby play an important role in building a safe and sustainable environment for present and future generations.

Environmental degradation and humanitarian crises

Since the end of WWII, environmental degradation on a global scale has accelerated in the wake of an exponential rise in global population, massive resource-intensive growth in the developed world, and intense industrialisation in Eastern Europe, China and other parts of Asia (Held, 2016). In the 21st century environmental pressures are set to intensify as the global population continues to expand, urbanisation intensifies and consumption in developing countries increases rapidly, with consequential demands for energy, water and biological resources. Ensuing environmental problems, including pollution, the destruction of natural resources, the loss of biodiversity, and climate change pose great risks for human security, safety and stability. As a consequence of climate change, violent storms, floods and droughts are becoming more frequent, water access is becoming a battleground and rising sea levels may displace millions of people from their homes. Changes in agricultural practices, including the replacement of sustainable farming with monoculture cash crops and intensive animal agriculture, have further contributed to greenhouse gas emissions and land degradation. The combined impact of climate change, ecosystem degradation and the exhaustion of natural resources means that many regions of the world are becoming inhospitable for human life (Stibbe and Luna, 2009).

Over recent decades, evidence has emerged of the contribution made by climate change and environmental degradation to state fragility, conflict and migration (see, for example, Ferris, 2015; Kärlin and Schrepfer, 2012; Kolmannskog, 2009; Walker, Glasser and Kambli, 2012; Werrell and Femia 2015; Werz and Hoffman, 2015). Temperature rises related to climate change and increased aridity across the Middle East, Africa and Asia, for example, have led to desertification and depletion of water and food resources and, in concert with significant increases in the likelihood of war, have prompted massive population displacements. Those fleeing such disasters are known as ‘environmental refugees’, a

term coined in 1985 and highlighted in a report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which stated that ‘the gravest effects of climate change may be those on human migration as millions will be displaced’ (IPCC, 1990:20).

In Syria, one of the hardest hit nations, extreme drought in 2007–12, intensified by human-induced climate change and the mismanagement of natural resources by the government, contributed to ‘the most severe set of crop failures and livestock devastation in its modern history’ (Werrell, Femia and Sternberg, 2015:32). The depletion of water supplies and consequent loss of livelihoods led to a mass exodus of around two million farmers and herders to urban areas, in turn fomenting political unrest and eventual civil war. Accordingly, control of the region’s dwindling water supplies in these arid regions has been a major strategic priority for multiple government-backed and rebel groups fighting in Syria and Iraq (Vidal, 2014). In China, too, droughts and desertification have become major problems that threaten economic and political stability. Growing deserts produce dust storms that engulf industrial regions and degrade air quality in the cities, where pollution has become a major cause of domestic protests (Luedi, 2016). Creeping desertification also swallows thousands of kilometres of productive land every year and threatens the subsistence of about a third of China’s population, prompting a state-sponsored ‘ecological migration’ program to relocate millions of people from barren areas (Nieuwenhuis, 2016) and contributing, in turn, to social and political unrest (Luedi, 2016).

Although at the time of John Kerry’s speech military conflicts and rebel insurgencies across the Middle East and North Africa were readily recognised as the cause of unprecedented mass migrations from those regions into Europe, there is little doubt that environmental crises have also contributed to civil unrest and population movements from degraded regions across the globe (Hunziker, 2016; Lieberman, 2015). In recent years, climate refugees and migrants seeking more stable environmental conditions have arrived in Australian waters and Australian educational institutions, but all areas of the globe, and all populations, are affected in one way or another. Climate change and environmental degradation can no longer be seen as solely scientific phenomena requiring technical solutions, but need to be recognised as a social and political issue affecting all aspects of human development.

Environmental issues and English language teaching in texts and tasks

Given the fragile and shifting conflicts that affect global populations, and in light of the combined

effects of military conflict and environmental degradation, all those involved in English language education need to consider how we might contribute to building a safer and more sustainable world and how English language students – wherever they may be – might be encouraged to analyse, understand and act on environmental problems. I have written elsewhere (Appleby, 2010; Nelson and Appleby, 2015) about the ways in which military conflict and refugee movements play out in English language education – in the field of conflict, in countries where refugees settle, and in countries that participate, however tangentially, in conflict or peace movements – and the need for teachers to engage critically and creatively with English and/in conflict as an integral part of contemporary global socio-politics. In the remainder of this chapter I shift my focus towards the related issue of the ways in which English language education can serve to promote intercultural understanding and awareness around environmental issues in a time of global environmental crisis.

While environmental topics have long been included in English language curricula, the extent and significance of environmental crises in the 21st century represent a more pressing concern for all English language educators. The limitations of a single chapter do not allow for a comprehensive review of literature on environmental education in English language teaching. Within this chapter, then, I will focus initially on the way environmental topics are typically presented in English language textbooks: after all, as Forman (2014) points out, for many teachers and students of English across the globe, ‘the textbook is the curriculum’ and many of the textbooks used, both in the developed and developing world, are of Western origin. Along similar lines, Akcesme (2013:97) suggests that, given the widespread consumption of ELT coursebooks, they potentially have the ‘widest readership among academic publications’ and thus represent an ideal forum for ‘bringing into focus environmental issues and problems’. However, because of this wide readership, coursebooks can also spread harmful Western-centric discourses in relation to environmental issues, acting as ‘a Trojan horse for spreading the values’ such as consumerism, neoliberalism and progress ‘that led to environmental destruction in the first place’ (Stibbe, 2012:8).

Important early studies of linguistic features in environmental education texts noted that environmental problems are typically presented as ‘pre-packaged nominalizations’, such as ‘habitat loss’ and ‘deforestation’, and grammatical agents for these problems are either absent or ‘generic and indeterminate *people*’ (Schleppegrell, 1997:64). The overuse of abstract nouns and nominalisation,

together with the lack of explicit agents, can serve to hinder students’ understanding of complex environmental problems and diminish students’ ability to envisage practical solutions (Chenhansa and Schleppegrell, 1998). (For a more detailed analysis of English linguistic features that shape and limit apprehension of environmental issues, see Stibbe, 2012.)

Building on these linguistic insights, several analytical studies have specifically examined the way environmental issues are presented in English language teaching textbooks (for example, Jacobs and Goatly, 2000; Stibbe, 2004; Xiong, 2014). These studies have shown that explicitly environmental topics are included in many ELT textbooks, though they tend to comprise only a small percentage of the total content in each textbook. More significantly, these studies demonstrate that a form of *shallow environmentalism* characterises the treatment of environmental topics. Shallow environmentalism, according to Stibbe (2004:243), addresses environmental degradation as a set of physical symptoms (such as acid rain or rising sea levels) that can be resolved or ameliorated by technological intervention (such as more fuel-efficient cars), but refuses to address the underlying cultural, social, economic, political and psychological causes, such as consumerism and the addiction to economic growth. Stibbe (2004:243) contrasts this superficial approach with the *deep ecology* movement, which calls for ‘cultural and political change at the most fundamental levels of society’. As Stibbe explains, if a deep ecology perspective were to be incorporated in ELT, texts could draw on alternative nature-centred knowledge systems – such as those alive in many indigenous cultures – thereby opening a space for dialogue between competing representations of the environment. It is this emphasis on dialogue across competing perspectives that Stibbe sees as fundamental to raising awareness and understanding about environmental problems and as a means of introducing alternatives to taken-for-granted ways of viewing and behaving in the world.

While these analyses have been useful in shedding light on the harmful discourses that are spread through seemingly innocuous textbook topics, Stibbe (2012) warns that privileging discursive analysis of texts may not further the goal of facilitating readers/students towards a practical, material engagement with their own environments. Along these lines, some studies have investigated opportunities for environmentally focused task-based learning in English language education that involves both text-based and activity-based pursuits. In an effort to involve students in their own investigations, Haig (2003), for example, reports that his students in

Japan were provided with techniques based on critical language awareness for a collaborative activity in which they examined the way environmental topics were represented in global textbooks. Shifting the focus from global to local issues, Nkwetisama (2011), based in Cameroon, recommends generating English learning tasks that shift students' focus to specific local environmental problems by collecting and sharing media texts available to teachers and students and of relevance to both local and regional concerns. Taking a more explicitly experiential approach, Calvert (2015) describes an EAP class activity where learning English was woven into a series of field trips to organisations whose work supported marine protection and environmental sustainability within a local coastal community. And in an approach that focuses on active participation, Cutter-Mackenzie (2009) in Canada, and Tangen and Fielding-Barnsley (2007) in Australia, report on school garden and worm farm projects in which young ESL migrant and refugee students plant and harvest vegetables in conjunction with in-class lessons on nutrition. The rich range of activities associated with these projects provide ample opportunities for positive student interaction around shared endeavours in outdoor pursuits. These activities released students 'from the intensity of classroom seatwork where their lack of proficiency in the English language and learning is revealed', and helped them 'feel safe and secure about their learning' and language development (Tangen and Fielding-Barnsley, 2007:24). These projects also facilitated home-school connections and drew on the cultural backgrounds of the migrant students by including community members in the school activities and creating a new sense of place-based belonging for refugees dislodged from their birthplace.

A material and textual case study with an EAP class in Australia

My own pedagogical project to combine environmental inquiry and language development was undertaken in an elective EAP subject for international students at an Australian university. This subject sits within a program that takes Australian Studies as the content for language and literacy development. In this class, where the particular focus was on 'Natural Australia', all the students were Chinese, not an unusual occurrence in Australian universities where China is the dominant source of fee-paying international students. Many of these students enrol in tertiary education in Australia with the hope of qualifying for immigration on graduation. These students were undertaking degree courses in a range of disciplines across the university but were enrolled in my subject with the aim of improving their

academic English literacies. Although the approach I describe here is designed for EAP study in higher education, it could be easily adapted to other EFL and ESL contexts at any level, or integrated into any number of disciplinary study programs in schools or colleges.

Environmental education in China

In China over recent decades there has been a rising concern about environmental consequences of rapid industrialisation; however, as in many nations including Australia, at government levels there is continuing conflict between the aims of economic growth and environmental protection (Tian and Wang, 2016). Nevertheless, environmental education is 'high on the agenda' in China and features, to a limited extent and with government encouragement, in a range of EFL school textbooks (Xiong, 2014:233) and in college English programs (Li, 2013). Since my students had undertaken most of their formal education in China, I expected that learning about environmental issues in an English language and literacy class was nothing exceptional; indeed, I was more concerned that environmental topics in most language textbooks, including those developed and used in China, had become rather clichéd, and so the challenge for me was to counter the potential problems of ennui in the face of environmental education overload.

Local environmental engagements as prompts for pedagogy

My aim, then, was to develop an approach that avoided the problems of place-less-ness, abstraction, anthropocentrism, human-nature separation, and the one-way communication of facts and solutions that have been recognised as typical of the way environmental topics are presented in ELT textbooks (Stibbe, 2004; Xiong, 2014). I wanted to model for my students a real, material sense of my own human entanglement in the living ecosystem of the planet; the way that curiosity and a deep sense of place can serve as the basis for research inquiry; to model the feminist principle that the personal is political, and to demonstrate the value of attending to different voices, disciplinary perspectives and modes of expression that enrich and disrupt our understanding about our place in the world. Borrowing from Haraway's (2008) and Gruen's (2015) notion of the environment as an overlapping series of complex *entanglements* between species (human and non-human), objects and technologies in interdependent ecosystems, I would call this approach a form of 'entangled pedagogy'.

I chose a phenomenon that was of immediate interest to me in my daily life as an open water ocean swimmer: that is, my puzzlement over what we should

think and do about human–shark encounters. Sharks represented an issue of concern where my commitment to environmental protection was being tested. Before I describe how this became a focus for teaching and learning, a little background is needed.

In 2014–15 Australian media had been flooded with sensational accounts of shark attacks at Australian beaches, reaching alarm proportions when, at the beginning of the teaching semester, a live broadcast from a surfing competition captured a great white shark attacking a champion Australian surfer at a competition in South Africa. Businesses in Australian coastal locations where great white attacks were prevalent called for immediate action to control the sharks by any means, and the State Government organised a summit of experts to determine the best way to manage the increase in shark attacks. There was widespread discussion of proposals to extend the use of shark nets off popular beaches, consideration of various technological tracking and tagging devices, and some calls for revenge-style baiting and culling of sharks. But great white sharks are categorised as an endangered species in Australia: their numbers have declined steeply due to overfishing and entanglement in nets, so they are now protected under government biodiversity conservation legislation. With environmental protection in mind, pro-shark protesters organised ‘No Shark Cull’ rallies and argued against the use of shark nets because of their deadly effect on a great variety of sea animals.

As a regular ocean swimmer, I was puzzled by the ardour of the pro-shark protesters. Although I saw harmless sharks swimming below me every day, I was concerned that the removal of shark nets may expose humans (like me) to more dangerous shark species such as great whites. My own curiosity about this situation, about the different perspectives put forward, and the dangers various responses might pose for me – or for the sharks – drove my desire to find out more and to stretch my own environmental education. This was my puzzlement, and my point of resistance to my relatively unquestioning empathy with other animals in the natural world around me.

Textual analyses

In the classroom, I explained to my students my own interest in the phenomenon and brought to class a range of texts in which various perspectives on human–shark encounters were represented. These fell into three groups, representing three broad genres: first were the popular news media reports of the recent shark attack on the champion surfer; second were short research-based articles in *The Conversation* (a free online forum where academics respond to current events and debates) based on the

same event but from a very different perspective; the third were traditional research articles about human–shark interaction and published in academic journals. My aim in presenting these varied texts was to investigate, together with my students, the different perspectives represented and the various ways in which language was used to support those perspectives.

My students and I collaboratively analysed the shifts in language that occurred across these three groups. In the daily news media (Knox, 2015; Walker, 2015), sensationalised emotional language and personalised narrative structure produced androcentric accounts that foregrounded the inevitable harm to surfers and swimmers, and eventually to coastal tourist businesses, as a consequence of shark encounters. In these texts, sharks were represented as terrifying killers, humans were represented as innocent victims, and the only logical response to human–shark encounters was fear and revenge. These texts are typical of the way sharks are represented in popular mainstream media, and as such they are representative of a hegemonic discourse that shapes the way people commonly view sharks in Australia.

In contrast, the articles in *The Conversation* (Burgess, 2015; Gibbs, 2015), written from a scientific perspective, demonstrated a clear shift towards the linguistic features typical of academic style and a scientific register which, while lacking in emotional drama, was appropriate for a carefully considered, rational, conservation-based argument – based on hyperlinked research data – that sharks, as apex predators, were essential for healthy marine ecosystems. Indeed, the articles pointed out that many shark populations were under threat from human predation and that the sharks most often involved in fatal interactions were now protected species.

Moving further away from immediate local events, the traditional research articles we examined (for example, Muter, Gore, Gledhill, Lamont and Huvener, 2012) exemplified for my students the typical genre stages and lexico-grammatical features of a research report: here, sharks had become ‘chondrichthians’, individual white male surfers with names had been replaced by ‘the public’, and human narratives about specific shark encounters had been translated into ‘international policy discussions’. Qualitative and quantitative data had been collected, coded and crunched, results tabulated and trends identified, and more than 50 research sources were cited. The abstraction, as we could see, was completed in these research texts, but the very immediate, visceral entanglement of individual human and shark had disappeared. Before us was the shift from intimate, place-based encounters (including my own) to

abstract, scientific writing based on research evidence.

Beyond our concern with language, this process of inquiry – based on personal experience, moving through analysis of various texts, and engaging with the different disciplinary and cultural perspectives put forward in our classroom discussions – led my students and me to a better understanding of, and respect for, sharks in Australia. Our knowledge of the centrality of sharks in healthy marine ecosystems was greatly enhanced, along with an appreciation of the importance of protecting species we might otherwise have simply feared. The process of inquiry and discovery improved our understanding of a difficult environmental issue, moving us one step closer to living in harmony with the world around us.

Student inquiries into the environment

In the next step of discovery, my students were encouraged to identify their own personal encounters, puzzlements or points of resistance in their engagement with the natural world around them. What did they observe and wonder about in their surroundings? What doubts and questions did they have? How were these concerns represented in various texts? These were the points of departure for individual students in their own research inquiries. The most successful student projects were, in my opinion, those that deepened their understanding of the environment and the need for environmental protection by taking up the challenge to pursue an enigma, a problem or inquiry based on direct personal experience or observation. One Chinese student, for example, had been fishing with her family in Sydney waterways when they were approached and reprimanded by a ranger who explained that fishing in that particular location was prohibited because it was an aquatic reserve. Although fishing was a familiar pursuit for her family in China, as it is in many locations in Australia, this was a new experience that provoked her curiosity and prompted her inquiry into the rationale for marine and aquatic reserves in some parts of Australia. In her analysis of collected texts, she identified the distinction between fishing as leisure or sport, and fish as key players in conserving healthy aquatic ecosystems. Her final report, in which she synthesised findings from the texts she had collected, demonstrated a new outlook on aquatic conservation and her presentation to her peers was passionate in its argument for marine protection. In this example of language development, we discovered how research inquiry based on personal experiences could shift an otherwise anthropocentric positioning towards a greater understanding of one person's place in, and effects

on, the natural world, and 'how we must act as a consequence' (Haraway, 2008:260).

More broadly then, this small project drew on our personal experiences together with analyses of textual representations, and encouraged students towards a more explicit engagement with the natural world around them. The project modelled an environmentally focused, embodied, inquiry-based learning that leverages the power of genre analysis and serves as an example of entangled pedagogy. It prompted examination of the varied ways in which social, cultural, economic and political interests engage with and affect the natural environment, and provided opportunities to share learning and new ideas among peers, thereby fostering empathy and intercultural understanding around issues of environmental sustainability. In a world where environmental degradation can threaten livelihoods and promote intercultural conflict, we share a responsibility to focus our attention and our educational endeavours on our own possibilities for environmental protection.

Conclusions

In our role as English language educators, and regardless of whether we are involved with recent refugees, migrants or international students, it is important that we offer our students opportunities to address the pressing problems of our times and to work towards building a safer, more stable and environmentally sustainable world. The approach to English language teaching I've described above is nothing radically new, but I hope it provides some impetus and inspiration for others to follow in a quest for better understanding of, and attention to, our various natural environments and the ways in which these underpin social, economic and political stability. It shows how an inquiry-based approach, starting from the position of personal, place-embedded engagements, can provide a platform for intercultural exchange and a sharing of experiences as we explore beyond taken-for-granted meanings and practices. More broadly, such an approach can promote empathy for other species and open our minds to ways of living more harmoniously in a fragile, more-than-human world. This is an emphatically bottom-up approach, in a world where global problems such as climate change can appear abstract, complex and confusing, and where top-down government policies have been remarkably inadequate in tackling environmental degradation and consequent humanitarian crises. Our personal questions can, in this way, provide a pedagogical doorway into broader discussions about long-term change towards environmental sustainability and the importance of a healthy environment for safety, security and stability in an interdependent world.

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6

When ‘home is the mouth of a shark’: understanding migration through the use of multicultural poetry

Daniel Xerri

Introduction

Anders Lustgarten’s (2015) play *Lampedusa* opens with a grim monologue by Stefano, whose job is to fish for the bodies of migrants who drown on their way to Europe from North Africa:

The bodies of the drowned are more varied than you’d think. Some are warped, rotted, bloated to three times their natural size, twisted into fantastical and disgusting shapes like the curse in that story my grandmother used to tell me. Dead of winter, chills down yer spine.

Others are calm, no signs of struggle, as if they’re dozing in the sun on a lazy summer afternoon and a tap on the arm will bring them gently awake. Those are the hardest. Because they’re the most human.

They’re overwhelmingly young, the dead. Twenties. Thirty at most. Kids, a lot of them. You have to be to make the journey, I suppose. (3–4)

By means of his play, Lustgarten (2015) hopes to initiate a conversation about a phenomenon that is not just affecting the Mediterranean region but is global in scope.

Over the past few years, migration due to persecution, conflict and human rights violations has increased exponentially. In 2015, more than 65 million people were forcibly displaced by such factors (UNHCR, 2016b). This record-high figure meant that 24 persons in every minute of 2015 were displaced from their homes. Young people constituted a large proportion of those who were displaced. In fact, more than half of the 21.3 million refugees in 2015 were people aged under 18, and around 98,000 asylum applications were lodged by unaccompanied or separated children (UNHCR, 2016b). This global phenomenon led Ban Ki Moon to affirm that: “We are facing the biggest refugee and displacement crisis of our time. Above all, this is not just a crisis of numbers; it is also a crisis of solidarity” (UNHCR, 2016b:5). His reference to solidarity is important given that its absence is likely to worsen the situation for all those people who are forcibly

displaced from their homes, sometimes having to travel huge distances in search of security, safety, stability and better prospects in foreign countries.

Ensuring that a sense of solidarity prevails among the citizens of these countries entails the harnessing of education for the nurturing of empathy and understanding in young people. According to Lustgarten (2015), “At the heart of our self-delusion about migration is a wilful misunderstanding of why people come” (iii). The use of multicultural poetry in the English language classroom can serve to foster empathy in young people and correct misunderstandings. Multicultural poetry consists of poems from various cultural groups. Xerri (2012:65) describes such poetry as being “typically associated with ethnic minorities and other socio-economically marginalized and under-represented groups. Usually their literature is as sidelined in the curriculum as it is in society.” This chapter illustrates how critical engagement with multicultural poetry can help to develop young people’s attitudes and beliefs in relation to migration so that they are able to display empathy and understanding.

Empathy through multicultural poetry

At a time when the world is afflicted by a variety of crises that run the risk of undermining civilization, there seems to be the need to reach global empathy as quickly as possible (Rifkin, 2009). Empathy is often termed a fundamental human value that needs to be enshrined in young people’s education. According to Kwek (2011), empathy consists of:

... being understanding of what other people need, and how the world is put together from a social and emotional point of view. These are important dispositions that align closely with 21st century skills, and move students toward deeper levels of engagement and understanding. (26)

In the education of 21st century global citizens, empathy is considered to be a key interpersonal competence (National Research Council, 2012). In fact, Reimers and Chung (as cited in Beasley Doyle,

2016) describe empathy as the ability to consider the complexity of issues in an interconnected worldview; by being rooted in tolerance and respect for others, empathy helps young people to transcend fragmentation.

However, many are becoming aware that it is increasingly difficult for empathy to thrive in present-day society. In fact, in an address to graduates in 2006, Barack Obama claimed that rather than the fiscal deficit “we should talk more about our empathy deficit – the ability to put ourselves in someone else’s shoes; to see the world through those who are different from us.” In his opinion, the older one gets the harder it becomes to cultivate empathy, especially since “we live in a culture that discourages empathy” (Obama, 2006). Finding ways of reducing the empathy deficit is crucial if we want young people to be well equipped for the demands of living and working in the 21st century. According to Krznaric (2014), one of the six habits of empathic individuals is that of transporting themselves into other people’s minds with the help of cultural and aesthetic creations. Poetry seems to be well suited for this function.

As argued by Xerri and Xerri Agius (2015), poetry can act as a significant means of consolidating empathy. This is because “poems form noteworthy juxtapositions between the readers’ world and the world created within the literary work” (Chavis, 2013:165). According to Williams (2011:17), “Poetry offers students the opportunity to increase their self-awareness by helping them examine their experiences in terms of emotions and mental images as well as language.” Through the reading of poetry, students develop empathic understanding; they “begin to see themselves and others, and themselves through others in a safe environment” (Williams, 2011:20). The use of poetry in the classroom bolsters young people’s empathy and thus enables them to embrace diversity.

The use of multicultural poetry in the English language classroom provides students with vicarious experiences that enable them to develop an appreciation of diversity and the difficult circumstances in other people’s lives (Xerri, 2012, 2015). This is because if the poem’s “speaker is someone very different from ourselves, we have the unique opportunity to enter privileged space and grow in our understanding of another’s struggles and triumphs” (Chavis, 2013:165). According to McCall (2004:176), “Poems make abstract issues of cultural diversity and racial, economic and gender injustices real. Poetry definitely offers rich learning opportunities.” For this reason, contemporary multicultural poetry can engage students with the diversity that ensues through migration and enable

them to develop cross-cultural understanding (Thomas and León, 2012). The importance of such understanding seems crucial in the attempt to consolidate their empathy.

Understanding migration through poetry

The German word *verstehen* is defined as empathic understanding, which entails the capacity to put oneself in someone else’s shoes in order to see things from their perspective and understand them better. Empathic understanding is something evoked by a number of contemporary multicultural poets, some of whom have written poetry that can help students to meaningfully engage with the global migration crisis and to develop an awareness of how this is connected to an absence of peace and stability in the world.

For example, in ‘Conversations About Home (at the Deportation Centre)’, the Somali-British poet Warsan Shire (2011:24) says that “No one leaves home unless home is the mouth of a shark.” The poem was written after Shire spent some time with refugees from Somalia, Eritrea, Congo and Sudan at the abandoned Somali embassy in Rome. In a later adaptation of the poem, Shire (2013:xi) addresses the reader directly and explains, “you have to understand, / that no one puts their children in a boat / unless the water is safer than the land.” This simple notion is at times difficult for some young people to understand when thinking about migration. The use of multicultural poetry enables them to critically engage with the issue and, in the process, they are likely to develop empathic understanding.

Shire’s sentiments about displacement soon became famous and her poem was quoted in an editorial (2015) on the migration crisis by *The New York Times*, and recited by Benedict Cumberbatch in the introduction to the re-release of the *Crowded House* (2015) single, *Help Is Coming*. According to Okeowo (2015), Shire:

embodies the kind of shape-shifting, culture-juggling spirit lurking in most people who can't trace their ancestors to their country's founding fathers, or whose ancestors look nothing like those fathers. In that limbo, Shire conjures up a new language for belonging and displacement.

Shire’s words have the potential to appeal not only to those people affected by migration, but also to young people in general. In fact, in 2013–14 Shire acted as the Young Poet Laureate for London, and in 2016 her poetry contributed to Beyoncé’s visual album *Lemonade*. Given the appeal of her poetry, and in an attempt to instigate empathic understanding on the part of my students in Malta, I chose to use

Shire's poetry (and that of other contemporary multicultural poets) in my English language lessons.

Societal and educational context

Malta is a small nation made up of an archipelago of islands in the middle of the Mediterranean Sea. For many years, it has received asylum seekers from a number of war-torn sub-Saharan countries. The UNHCR (2016a) estimates that since 2002 around 19,000 people have crossed over to Malta by boat from North Africa. For a country with a population of only 423,000 people and an area of 316 square kilometres, this phenomenon has at times put a strain on its ability to come up with feasible solutions. Moreover, its social fabric has become far more multicultural, but this has not been to everyone's pleasure.

The students with whom I used multicultural poetry were aged 16 to 18 and studying English at a preparatory school for those planning to pursue undergraduate studies at university. Classes consisted of around 15 students who were largely first language speakers of Maltese. The students were mostly female and they were all of Maltese origin. However, the ethnic composition of the student population at the school was slowly becoming more diverse. My students were fairly used to reading poetry in English but this usually consisted of canonical poetry written by white Anglo-American poets from the 20th century and earlier. Their engagement with contemporary multicultural poetry was practically non-existent prior to the lessons outlined below.

Engaging with multicultural poetry

In my teaching I often seek to generate discussions about pressing societal, cultural and political issues, even though these might at times lead to the expression of passionate views on the part of my students. Since the start of my career, migration has been one of the most inflammatory topics to be discussed in the classroom. The exposure given to the issue in the media and in young people's homes and social circles has meant that students come to class with very strong views about migration, views that are not always of an altruistic nature. In certain cases, I have had students who were influenced by the bigoted and racist discourse outside the classroom. As shown by The Migration Observatory (2013), the way a country's discourse on migration is framed by the media tends to dehumanize migrants or depict them in terms of an illegal and massive problem. One way of countering such discourse is by focusing on migrants' own language, perhaps through poetry written by migrants. According to Ferguson (2014), "Poetry provides an accessible

exploration of the language of immigration through the eyes of people who have lived it." Dealing with certain entrenched attitudes and beliefs has at times been difficult for me, but I have found that the use of multicultural poetry in the English language classroom has been beneficial for my students.

Some of the poems I have used in my lessons include 'Home' by Warsan Shire, 'The Sea Migrations' by Caasha Lul Mohamud Yusuf, 'Emigrant' by Corsino Fortes, 'Illegal Immigrant' by Reza Mohammadi, 'The Boat that Brought Me Here' by Azita Ghahreman, and 'They'll Say, "She Must be From Another Country"' by Imtiaz Dharker. All of these poems have the potential to evoke students' empathy because they provide them with a perspective that they rarely get access to in the media or in discussions with friends and family. The poems encourage students to step into migrants' shoes or to see the issue through the eyes of those who are being discriminated against because they are perceived as different. Moreover, these poems help students to understand what migration is all about and why people choose to leave their homeland in order to seek a better life elsewhere. As Lustgarten (2015:iii) points out, "They don't come to soak the benefits system, because hardly any of them know it exists. They come out of desperation, because their country is on fire or their government is repressive or climate change is killing their crops." In addition, by engaging with such poems, students come to realise what role the Western world plays in the problem and how complacent or hostile attitudes in relation to migration will only lead to the persecution and death of more people. In fact, Chambers and Ianniciello (2016:48) argue that migration needs "to be understood as part of a wider, transnational history that is not separated out and rendered distant from our everyday life." Migration is not merely a socio-economic phenomenon, but it is intrinsically bound to globalization and the West's colonial history.

A lesson on migration

Shire's 'Home' was one of the first multicultural poems I used in a series of lessons on migration. I started by asking students to think about what home meant to them. Individually, students wrote down a personal definition of this construct and then they shared it with a partner. Some students referred to ideas like family, protection, identity, love and country. Then I asked them to reflect on some reasons for which they would decide to leave their home. Most students mentioned things like pursuing studies abroad and moving out of their parents' home.

By means of some images from Zammit Lupi's (2014) photographic art project *Islelanders*, I asked students

to consider other reasons why people might decide to leave their home. A few of them mentioned war or political instability in a country and these ideas led to a discussion of what happens when many people leave their homeland because of a crisis. Certain students expressed concerns about the effects of mass migration on the countries receiving migrants. They mentioned issues like overcrowding, loss of jobs, dilution of the national culture, and a higher incidence of crime and disease. It seemed evident that they perceived migration as largely negative and associated it with problems rather than benefits. Even though some students seemed to be aware that migrants usually leave their homeland to flee from war and other crises, others were under the impression that migration is mostly due to economic reasons.

I then showed students a video adaptation of Shire's 'Home' (<https://goo.gl/Dta2WW>) and asked them to list some of the reasons the poem's speaker mentions for leaving one's homeland. I played the video again so that they could confirm their answers in pairs. The majority of students quoted certain lines from the poem that they considered to be a powerful description of why people choose to escape from their countries. For example, students discussed the figurative language in the lines 'no one leaves home unless / home is the mouth of a shark', and 'no one leaves home unless home chases you'. In discussing the poem's language, I noticed that the students were deepening their understanding of the reasons for migration and the effects of the experience on those who are forced to undertake it.

Then I provided them with a printed copy of the poem, and in pairs students identified some of the negative attitudes and experiences that migrants are exposed to once they are pushed to journey to another country. In small groups, students discussed whether the migrants who come to Malta are subjected to these attitudes and experiences, and whether it was justified to treat them in this way. In their discussion, most students quoted lines and words from the poem to show that what Shire describes is very similar to what happens in their own country with respect to the reception of migrants. Some students were honest enough to admit that they tended to display such attitudes because of their misconceptions about migration.

In order to consolidate their understanding of the issues presented in Shire's poem, I asked students to watch the video again and compare the images and footage used in it to the language employed in the poem. Most students agreed that apart from the poet's recitation, the video did not capture the essence of the poem's language about migration. Hence, they worked in small groups in order to

storyboard part of the video. By means of this activity, students sought to visualise the circumstances that push people to flee their homes and the difficulties they experience once they migrate to another country.

The next stage of the lesson focused on the students' drafting of a poem inspired by Shire's 'Home'. The only constraints imposed on their creative efforts were the following: a) the poem had to begin with the line, 'no one leaves home unless home ...'; b) the poem had to be no longer than ten lines. Students planned the writing in class by considering what content to include, and what structure and figurative language to use. I provided them with feedback on each of these aspects of their poem, which they were then meant to complete at home. By writing their own poem about migration, students were prompted to voice their understanding of an event that despite affecting millions is always experienced on a personal level and can be highly traumatic if the individual is forcibly displaced from one's home.

By means of this lesson and others similar to it, I realised that multicultural poetry can lead to a development in students' attitudes and beliefs in relation to migration. By critically interrogating multicultural poems like 'Home', the uncharitable and narrow views of some students can be tempered by an increased awareness of what migration entails for those who are compelled to experience it and the complex reasons for which it occurs. A follow up to such lessons could be that of inviting students to make contact with migrants in their communities, compile oral histories and produce reflective journals, thus fortifying their comprehension of commonalities and transnational values (Ferguson, 2014).

Conclusion

As one of the most challenging phenomena facing many Western societies, migration is a contentious issue that at times leads to the manifestation of entrenched attitudes and beliefs on the part of a society's citizens. The discourse on migration that young people are sometimes exposed to might help to forge the way some of them feel and think about the issue. However, since poems can be used as a means of enhancing young people's sense of social justice (Ciardiello, 2010), when the poetry they read gives voice to migrants' experiences they are enabled to develop a richer and more humane view on migration. Once young people are provided with an opportunity to critically engage with multicultural poetry they are likely to re-evaluate any prejudiced attitudes and beliefs they might harbour. They come to see migration as driven by a need for security,

safety and stability, with tragic consequences for those who are forcibly displaced from their homes. In this sense, teachers of English can harness multicultural poetry in order to promote empathic understanding in their students. Multicultural poetry encourages students and teachers to use the classroom as a space where attitudes and beliefs in relation to migration are questioned and developed, and cultural fractures are healed.

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7

English language as an integration tool: the case of Syrian refugees to the UK

Juliet Thondhlana and Roda Madziva

Introduction

In the context of the refugee crisis in Europe, the UK has promised to resettle up to 20,000 refugees by 2020, a small but significant step, with the first group of 1,000 having been resettled by December 2015. While Syrian refugees come with a special five years' Humanitarian Protection status, which grants them direct access to education and the labour market, they face a range of challenges such as adapting to a new education system with different expectations for both children and parents, acculturating to their host community and finding employment. In all these aspects, language poses a critical challenge to the integration and resettlement processes. By integration here we mean the new requirements that migrants are expected to fulfil in order to fully participate in their new society. The significant role of language as a tool for fostering immigrants' integration into the host community is a topical issue within the European Union. As observed by Sole (2014:57), language is arguably '... a cornerstone of integration policy in the EU, and the knowledge of the 'host' language is seen as a barometer of migrants' integration in a particular society.' Consequently, governments and institutions are investing considerable resources in migrants' learning of the host language. In this chapter, we consider the linguistic challenges faced by Syrian refugees to the UK and explore the diverse initiatives for English language provision as employed by diverse institutions (e.g. school, faith groups and the civil society) that are supporting the integration of Syrian refugees. These include language immersion and bilingual approaches. In this way, we consider the varying roles of English and Arabic (the host and home languages) in supporting the learning of English and adjusting to life in the UK. Findings from interviews with a sample of Syrian refugees suggest that while children seemed to cope well with the immersion approaches to learning English, the adult Syrian participants found the use of both English and Arabic beneficial in understanding English structures and culture. Drawing on our findings we argue that integration is a complex process that can be enhanced by employing a multi-pronged, multi-agency approach to English language learning. The

use of such approaches where the various needs and purposes for English language learners are supported by a range of actors can benefit both refugee and host communities, contributing to better intercultural understanding and social cohesion.

In the sections that follow we explore the existing types of language provision that have been offered for migrants and then present the theoretical framework used to explore their effectiveness in the context of the forced migration of Syrian refugees in our study. We then briefly explain our sampling and methodology before presenting the themes that emerge from our data. Lastly, in the discussion and conclusion section, we highlight the significance of the study and make recommendations for language learning programmes for refugees in similar contexts.

Types of language provision for migrants

In the UK, English language provision for migrants and refugees in school settings is generally referred to as English as an Additional Language (EAL) and its main purpose is to facilitate children's access to the school curriculum. With older children (nearing 16) and adults this provision is called English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and may be focused on more general language learning outside of school rather than curriculum learning. If it is integrated with courses leading to vocational qualifications it is often referred to as embedded ESOL (Mallows, 2014).

Research on the language development and socio-economic integration of migrants has revealed two main language learning approaches that are commonly drawn on in EAL and ESOL programmes (Arnot, et al., 2014). The first approach is total immersion, which requires the exclusive use of the target language. The second approach is the partial immersion or bilingual approach, in which the mother tongue, the target and any other language are used to support the development of the target language. These models reflect diverse perceptions of effective language learning as determined by different needs, aspirations and available resources. One common factor is that successful language learning

programmes have been determined by the human element; that is, the dynamic involvement of key stakeholders such as the school, the community and parents (see, for example, Baquedano-López, Alexander and Hernandez, 2013).

While total immersion programmes were long considered to be more effective due to the high amount of input in the target language, recent research that draws on the theory of translanguaging show the benefits of bilingual approaches. The term translanguaging has been adopted by poststructuralist sociolinguists (e.g. Juffermans, 2011; Wei and García, 2014) to highlight the ability of bilinguals to appropriately use their entire language repertoire in communication. The argument is that in a globalised world, languages are mobile resources constructed within socio-cultural, political and historical contexts in which people interact. In this perspective language is not viewed as a structure or system of rules but an activity, ‘... a social process constantly reconstructed in sensitivity to environmental factors’ (Canagarajah, 2007:94).

Bilingual instructional practices that draw on translanguaging to support English learning in migrant contexts might include the use of bilingual class assistants who use strategies such as translation, peer support and codeswitching between the target and the home languages (see further García, Flores and Chu, 2011). Creese and Blackledge (2010:112) demonstrate how teachers enhanced students’ learning by encouraging them ‘... to make links between the social, cultural, community and linguistic domains of their lives.’ Research has documented the cognitive and pedagogic benefits of allowing learners to use all their linguistic resources to support the development of the target language (Garcia and Wei, 2014) as well as ‘... increasing the inclusion, participation and understandings of pupils in the learning processes; developing less formal relationships between participants; conveying ideas more easily; and accomplishing lessons’ (Arthur and Martin, 2006:197).

In our study, we explore the extent to which programmes for migrants follow an immersion approach or whether they promote instructional practices that draw on translanguaging to support English learning. Using the theoretical lens of linguistic capability, we explore the effectiveness of these programmes in the context of forced migration.

Theoretical framework

To explore the effectiveness of the various types of provision available to the participants in this study and interpret their linguistic behaviour, strategies

and motivations, we mobilise the theoretical construct of linguistic capability. The concept of capability has been found helpful as an interdisciplinary approach for dealing with barriers to the wellbeing of marginalized communities (Robeyns, 2006). Proposed and popularised by Sen (1999) and Nussbaum (2011), capabilities are defined as the opportunities available to individuals that enable them to accomplish particular functionings. An application of the capabilities approach includes a focus on the individual’s abilities to act or to exercise agency. Drawing on the existing capabilities literature, Tikly (2016) argues that language is a capability which is critical for the realisation of all other capabilities. In the context of the migration of refugees, language, and in particular the host or national language of the country migrated to, is a critical capability which enables them to access education, the labour market, goods and services in the host country – all factors which promote wellbeing.

We find Tikly’s (2016) model of linguistic capability (see Figure 1) useful for understanding language learning and use within the broader context of language rights and social justice. The language rights perspective suggests that the guaranteeing of legal access to basic goods and services form the basis for realising social justice and policy. This, Tikly (2016) argues, is an important but insufficient condition for realising social justice. A social justice approach requires addressing structural inequalities related to class, gender, race and ethnicity, for example, that facilitate or inhibit the interests and voices of some language groups over others in unequal societies. Tikly draws on the work of Fraser (2008), who argues that overcoming injustice means dismantling institutionalised obstacles that prevent some people from participating on a par with others as full partners in social interaction. Tikly (2016) posits three key principles for social justice relevant for this study: inclusivity, relevance and voice.

First is *inclusivity*, which relates to access to resources and opportunities required for learners to develop valued linguistic capabilities necessary for them to achieve desired outcomes. As Tikly (2016) argues, learners may not be able to access the same resources; as such, access is often shaped by injustices suffered in their varied pasts and consequent learning needs. For example, the participants in our study, due to the political and socio-economic situation in their country of origin that resulted in their forced migration, were unable to immediately access education because of lack of adequate linguistic capabilities in the host language. In this case inclusivity was made complex in that they needed to attend some sessions separately. The

second principle relates to *relevance* in the sense that the acquired linguistic capabilities need to be 'meaningful for all learners, valued by their communities and consistent with national development priorities in a changing global context' (ibid:415). For example, adult English language learners in our study felt that the language skills meaningful to them were those related to specific trades such as English for chefs. The third principle is the need for learners to have a *voice* in the determination of which linguistic capabilities are appropriate for them and/or even how they want to learn; for example, the young learners in our study expressed that after a period of bilingual learning they wanted to move on to total immersion to expedite their language learning.

These three principles underpin the three inter-related enabling environments of the school, the home/community and wider education system which define Tikly's linguistic capability model. As we will show in our analysis of data, these enabling environments play key roles in the provision of English language learning for the participants in our study by ensuring that they have access to the resources and opportunities they need, that they learn English in a way that is beneficial to them and that they are involved in decision making about such provision.

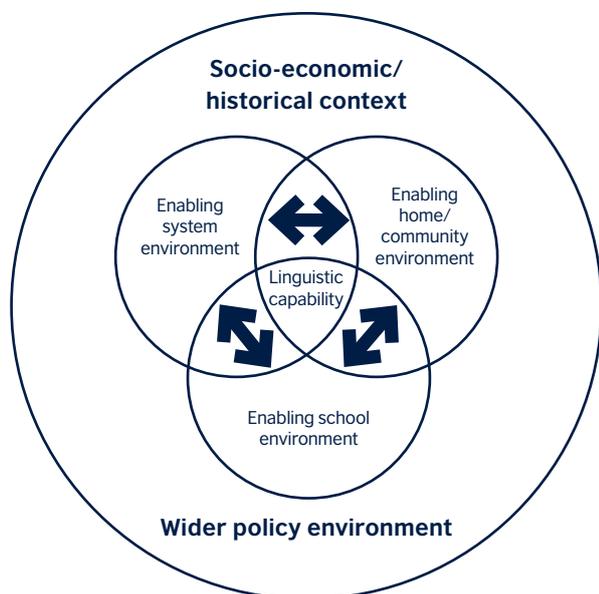


Figure 1. Creating an enabling environment for the development of multilingual capability (Tikly, 2016: 420).

Tikly's model helps us to understand the importance of enabling environments in the development of linguistic capability for disadvantaged people, such as Syrian refugees, within and outside the education environment. In addition, being situated within rights-based and global social justice approaches, the model enables us to take into account the role of

the mother tongue and other linguistic resources in our subjects' English learning. Further, with its focus on the wider policy environment, the model also suggests the need for all stakeholders (including children, teachers, parents, community) to develop a range of capabilities to provide appropriate pedagogy for both refugee children and their parents.

As has been noted in existing literature (e.g. Rutter, 2009), the Syrian refugees in our study came to the UK with the hope and expectation of quickly moving on with life in terms of finding work and improving their social and economic integration. However, having come without necessarily having the knowledge of the host community language meant that gaining access to economic means and social stability could be a long, drawn-out process. Specifically, with regards to employment, it has long been noted that the transferability of one's pre-immigration acquired training, skills and work experience is intricately tied to an individual's linguistic capability (cf. Madziva, McGrath and Thondhlana, 2014).

The study and methods

This chapter is based on ethnographic research conducted between May and November 2016 with Syrian refugees that were resettled in the East Midlands region, in December 2015. Data were collected from 57 research participants through interviews, observations, focus group discussions and school reports. The sample comprised eight Syrian families (16 adults and 15 children), five Syrian young people (who participated in a focus group) and 21 key informants including school teachers, council authorities, representatives from faith-based organisations and migrant support organisations. The selection of key informants was purposefully determined to ensure the inclusion of the different organisations involved in supporting Syrian refugees.

Information about the research and an invitation to participate were presented to Syrian refugees in face-to-face meetings at a local migrant support organisation, followed by signing of consent forms before interviews. Interviews with the Syrian families were conducted in their own homes, through an interpreter who is an academic from a Syrian background. These interviews have been translated into English. The broader research aims were to generate the views of the Syrian refugees about their integration into their new communities and the factors that supported them to integrate; solicit the views of the different agencies that were supporting them regarding the support mechanisms in place; and to draw out any lessons that could be of benefit to the wider refugee community.

The research was funded through the University of Nottingham's Sustainable Development priority area. The research aimed to understand how the Syrians (both adults and children) were settling in their new community, and explore the challenges they were facing as well as the opportunities available to them. All research encounters were audio recorded, transcribed and translated before analysis using thematic and discourse analysis techniques. Given the vulnerable nature of the population under study, key ethical procedures including ensuring confidentiality, anonymity, informed consent and avoiding harm were given high priority.

Syrian refugee families and English language learning: the context

In our study, the issue of English language as a tool for integration emerged as one of the key themes, and all of the participants were taking part in courses to improve their English language abilities. In this section, we provide a brief description of the language programmes being offered to the Syrian refugees who participated in our study. While the Syrian refugees were learning English from various places, they were involved in three types of co-ordinated programmes at the time of fieldwork. The first was a total immersion-type of English learning programme run by a local migrant support organisation and commissioned by the county council to help manage the Syrian integration project. This programme was only offered as an interim programme, given that most of the Syrian adults could not enrol in colleges to join ESOL programmes on arrival. By the time we rounded off our fieldwork, a few adults had enrolled in colleges, which also employ the total immersion approach. The second type of programme was a bilingual programme being provided by a local ethnic minority community in collaboration with the Syrian community. The Syrian community consists of and is run by Syrians who previously came to the UK using other migration routes such as student visas, work permits and as asylum seekers. The third programme was the school system, which was the primary means of English language learning for the children involved in the study. To this end, we engaged with four schools where Syrian children and young people were enrolled, in order to gain an understanding of the approaches the schools were taking to teaching English language to the newly arrived Syrian pupils. In the following, we first explore the integration challenges these children face at school and highlight the role of English in facilitating the process, then turn to the issues faced in the adult programmes.

The challenges of integrating Syrian children into the British school system and the role of English

As highlighted above, the Syrian refugees involved in our research had arrived in the UK in December 2015, towards the end of the school term. As such, children could not be enrolled in schools immediately, partly because of their traumatic situation, and partly because of the complex school admission procedures. Although children were eventually enrolled in early 2016, some children enrolled earlier than others, depending on individual children's learning needs and availability of places in schools and colleges in the particular local areas where Syrian families lived. Depending on their age and the circumstances they experienced in war-torn Syria or trans-migration countries, Syrian children had limited and/or disrupted education experiences before coming to the UK. This all needed to be taken into consideration in the allocation of school places and resources. Interview discussions with the caseworkers who supported Syrian children with school admissions reveal that schools in the East Midlands have shown different reactions when enrolling Syrian children, depending on their prior experience of working with refugee children. As one female caseworker related to us:

Schools with the experience of dealing with refugee children are pretty good, they understand that the children are going to struggle and that they need extra help ... whereas those schools without the experience were very negative. I've had schools ask me, 'How do we educate these children? What do we do with these children?' because most of them had not been in school for a while and all had no English at all ...

Older children confirmed how the lack of English language made it difficult for them, the other children in the class and the teachers. As one Syrian young person noted in a focus group:

It was difficult for us and other students ... even teachers, they treated us a little different from other students, because we could not speak English, so they struggled to talk to us or help us.

Teachers who participated in our research reiterated the challenges that Syrian children have faced, emphasising the role of English in developing relationships with other children as an initial valuable step in the learning and integration processes. However, the situation was noted to be worse in the context of children with complex needs, as in the example of deaf children, related to us by one female teacher of the deaf:

We're talking about profoundly deaf children who haven't got English language, Arabic language or sign language ... the first week they were here was so difficult for them, and for us, because they just had nothing. You could see that they were open to communication, but with no language at all it was impossible to make this happen ...

The above narratives highlight the critical role of English in the integration processes of the Syrian refugees in our study and the challenges of finding ways to facilitate their learning of English taking into account their diverse circumstances. Tikly's linguistic capability model helped us to explore the enabling environments that played key roles in the provision of English language learning for the participants by ensuring that they were able to access the resources and opportunities they needed for effective learning. In the following sections we consider these enabling environments.

The school as an enabling environment: teachers' preparations and approaches to dealing with the Syrian students

In this section, we discuss the approaches taken by teachers in the four schools we researched to deal with the Syrian students, reflecting on issues of training and resources. A good starting point is to acknowledge that, in the UK, schools have long recognised the presence of children whose first language is not English, with schools making efforts to ensure that class teachers are well equipped to support such children (Arnot, et al., 2014). To this end, we learnt from one school that teacher training is being provided in order to effectively help children in their 'translanguaging' (Becker, 1995) process. This confirms that translanguaging is a concept that is being employed in teacher professional development initiatives and that, as a result, a growing number of teachers may seek to make use of it. As indicated in one Syrian child's progress report (Report 1):

Staff have been given a number of different training sessions (at both campuses) to support them in how to adapt their teaching to make it suitable for EAL students ...

We noted that in schools where EAL training was not provided, teachers sounded less confident in their own teaching approaches. As one male teacher told us:

I haven't had any (EAL) training as such. But I definitely think it would be of benefit to be trained in it, just to learn new strategies of how to encourage more independence, how to encourage independent reading and spelling.

The above excerpt points to the need for teachers to be well trained in the different initiatives that can help them to tailor language provision to the needs of specific groups. In line with Tikly's model, those involved in the education of refugee children need to develop relevant capabilities to enable them to provide appropriate pedagogy for the children. While the literature (e.g. Arnot, et al., 2014) shows that EAL training has previously been provided to equip teachers with the necessary skills, more needs to be done particularly in relation to provision of funding for such training and encouraging all schools to provide this much-needed training for their teachers.

The use of the mother tongue

One of the learning opportunities mentioned in our study, and which has received considerable attention in second language pedagogy literature, is the use of the mother tongue to support English language learning (García and Wei, 2014). In our study, we noted that while this might not be a universal requirement, some teachers have been incorporating the use of the mother tongue in their teaching. For example, in one school we learnt that teachers were taking advantage of bilingual students and using them as a resource for supporting the newcomers. As one Syrian female student related to us:

... so the teacher assigned a student to help me during classes, she speaks Arabic and English very well. So if there's anything that I need, she tells first in Arabic and then English, so I can understand.

Also, depending on the availability of resources, some schools have been able to employ bilingual supply teachers to help complement their efforts. While there is evidence that where this has been offered Syrian children have found it helpful, we noted that once the children reached a stage where they felt settled, they preferred to learn English for themselves rather than depending on bilingual teachers. This was clearly articulated in our focus group by one male student as follows:

Student 1: At first we had someone who helped us, he spoke Arabic, he would help us separately and we would also go back and learn together with other children.

Interviewer: So would you like some more?

Student 1: No, I want to learn by myself. If I speak English all the time I will learn more words and can speak better English ...

Overall, we noted that where resources were available, teachers initially employed partial immersion (English and Arabic) to help children adapt to their new learning environment, with total immersion (exclusive use of English language) being

used once children had settled into the new system. In such contexts, student learning and attainment seems to be better. This is evidenced by the progress reports we reviewed from one school where this approach was being employed, as expressed in Report 2 below:

Y is making excellent progress. His vocabulary is developing every day. He is able to make himself understood about most things and his natural exuberance means he is very sociable and thereby hearing a great deal of new language, which he is soaking up. He is able to work out the pronunciation of more complex words using quite sophisticated blending and segmenting skills.

However, in more complex situations such as that of deaf children, the immersion and bilingual approaches we have highlighted above as effective were not an option, at least initially, as teachers mentioned that they had to start from scratch given the uniqueness of the children's learning needs. As noted by the teacher of the deaf child we cited earlier:

These children had no language at all, and had not been in school at 11 and 13. We had to start from scratch as the children had very little Arabic, which they have been learning at home, and no English at all ... The focus in the first place is on British sign language, to give them a capacity to be able to communicate. And then the second focus would be on the more literacy side of things. The mother is very useful in this respect ...

The link between contextual complexities and the need for the creation of specific enabling environments noted by Tikly (2016) is made even more apparent in the case of the deaf children in our sample. In keeping with the inclusivity principle of social justice, deaf refugee children needed to be accorded access to appropriate resources and opportunities for acquiring the valued linguistic capabilities necessary for them to achieve desired educational outcomes. As noted in the narratives above, these children who came without any Arabic sign language needed to learn British sign language before they could even begin to develop literacy skills. To create an enabling environment in this case, schools needed to engage appropriately skilled manpower and provide resources required to deal with the specific needs of deaf children. As the teacher explains:

In terms of resources, everything has been from scratch. We're using a scheme called Racing to Language, which has got a lot of visual material. So, we use pictures and videos, with support from one of our trained workers ... In this case teachers had

to adopt diverse appropriate strategies for meeting specific needs, which in turn had a huge impact on workload.

Home and community as enabling environments: parent–school partnership and the role of the community

In our study we noted that, while the parents–school partnership is generally important for children's learning, Syrian refugee parents, at least initially, were not in a position to effectively interact with the school or support their children with homework critically because of their lack of English language proficiency. The teachers we interviewed were acutely aware of this problem and the challenges it posed for them. Thus, initially, schools had to put some measures in place including supporting Syrian refugee children to do their homework in school or asking them to work at home, but on activities that did not need parental support.

However, in the case of the deaf children, the parents–school partnership was noted to be central to children's learning, implying that the responsible parent needed to quickly learn both the English language and British sign language in order to be able to participate in and support their children's education. A good example was that mentioned above of one mother with two deaf children. She was acknowledged by her children's school as a key resource in her children's education. This mother, who, in addition to attending English lessons at the various places (discussed below), was also getting support from a sign language teacher as well as from a friend who was fluent in both Arabic and English. In this case, the various approaches to learning English were seen as complementing each other in helping the mother to effectively support her children. As noted by the mother's friend:

She (the mother) is learning English from different places ... She has an English teacher who comes to teach her British sign language at home ... I help her to learn English (using both English and Arabic), which she needs to understand things in both languages.

In this case, the general system which provides funding for the development of special needs support, school, community and home environments is seen as working symbiotically to support children's learning.

Syrian adults and the challenges of learning the English language

As noted above, besides the school system for children, there were at least two types of co-ordinated programmes that Syrian adults were

involved in: one interim programme which employed immersion approaches and another which offered a bilingual (English and Arabic) programme. In this section, we explore the data which provide evidence for how these programmes typify an enabling community environment, addressing the stated needs of the participants.

In an interview with a member of the Syrian community leadership, he highlighted the different programmes that Syrian adults took part in, in ways that evidence how the refugees were getting support from different places. This is summarised by one member of the Syrian Society in the excerpt below:

There is an ethnic minority organisation which provides Saturday English lessons and these are delivered in both Arabic and English ... The Syrians are also taking English lessons at a refugee support organisation, and these are delivered in English only. Some have now been enrolled in colleges where lessons are done in English ... There are local churches that also sponsor Syrian refugees to take IELTS, this is undertaken at colleges in English only.

However, there were suggestions that these programmes were not adequately addressing the needs of the participants in varied ways. As one Syrian refugee father (family 4) puts it:

We take lesson at the [Migrant support organisation] and sometimes it's hard to understand because the teacher only uses English ... we also learn English at [ethnic minority organisation] every Saturday... it's better here because you can understand because the teacher also uses Arabic, but it's only one day per week, so the time we spend learning is too short ... Also, I am 52 and learning a different language is hard ...

The excerpt above demonstrates that because of this participant's limited capabilities, the development of a new language alongside an existing one was seen as the ideal. This resonates with Creese and Blackledge's (2010) study, which suggests that bilingual approaches may help make links for learners between the social, cultural and historical experiences of their lives (see also Tikly, 2016). In our study, it was revealed that some Syrian adults had very little education and for those who had been to school for longer, the teaching approaches used in Syria are very different from those employed in the UK. We found one interview with a Syrian teacher at the ethnic minority organisation (or 'Saturday school') quite useful in understanding why bilingual approaches seemed appropriate, especially for adults:

English is not well taught in Syria, and this could be one reason why the refugees are struggling to

grasp the language when the teaching approach involves English only. The older men, most of whom can't even read or write and because of this, what they need is English for specific purposes. So, I use a bilingual approach where I have to explain certain things in Arabic, and within this Arabic explanation I bring in English words as a starting point to learn vocabulary, and teaching them words in the context in which they are used ...

In line with the views expressed in the above excerpt, Syrian adult refugees, especially older men, frequently told us that, because of their ages and low levels of comprehension, what they thought they needed was English for Specific Purposes to help them access employment or set up small businesses, given that most of them came with hands-on skills. As one Syrian father (family 2) noted:

In Syria I was the head of a department for assembling washing machines and ovens ... I should be able to find work in my field, if I concentrate on learning the words or language that relates to my job and then find a job to apply this language. I can overcome the language issue as I focus on the language that I need as I work, and working would also improve my language.

As previously noted, it is important that learners are given a voice in decision making about what linguistic capabilities are appropriate for them to effectively function in their new environment. As noted before, the adult interviewees in our study appeared to be reasonably clear about what English language skills they needed to begin to work in their various trades and they seemed to also have an idea about how they wanted to learn. For example, specific needs English was preferred to get them to begin to work more quickly and they wanted Arabic to be used alongside English in their English language learning. While efforts were being made to use a bilingual approach in their teaching, the teaching of English for Specific Purposes needed to be considered by English language providers (Paltridge and Starfield, 2012).

Discussion and conclusion

Through the lens of linguistic capability, our exploration of data has revealed complex socio-political-cultural and economic dynamics involved in providing appropriate language services to Syrian refugee participants. Overall, our findings suggest that, among other factors, a combination of a traumatic journey, political goodwill, positive media representation and a sympathetic host government and public has worked to shape the linguistic processes and outcomes of our participants.

We have shown how schools have responded to the complexities presented by the unique circumstances of the Syrian crisis, making complex adaptations to their school environment and using both total and partial immersion strategies, albeit with limited appropriate resources to accommodate the diverse language needs of their new arrivals.

The findings have also revealed the complexities of adults' language needs which are entwined with socio-economic-cultural and political considerations. In this regard, we have seen the power of multi-agency and enabling environments in attempts to develop their linguistic capability using diverse teaching approaches and strategies. However, the unstructured way in which agencies worked and a general lack of financial and human resources may have hampered more effective complementarity and success.

A number of recommendations which could be of interest to stakeholders both relating to current and future Syrian refugees and other refugee groups are possible to formulate from this study. Overall, our findings show that a combination of immersion opportunities and bilingual teaching as well as a readiness to deal with special needs, such as those of deaf children, is critical to supporting refugee integration in host communities.

Within the school context, teachers in migrant- and refugee-receiving schools need to be given access to teacher professional development initiatives where they can receive appropriate training in translanguaging and bilingual pedagogies. While schools are aware of and appreciate the existence of such initiatives, financial constraints, especially due to the current government austerity policy and the related budget cuts, may hamper access to training. Availability of funding is also a determining factor in the case of the use of bilingual teaching assistants. While the practice has been popularised in the UK school system in the past, it is reported to be on the decline due to financial constraints. Our findings show that it needs to once again be brought to the fore in educational policy discussions. Our findings, however, also show that there are less costly complementary initiatives that can be extended and formalised, such as the use of bilingual peers. In this regard, schools need to be aware of the role of bilingual peers in supporting migrant and refugee children with whom they share a language, and use them as resources.

Our findings have highlighted the particular challenges of refugee deaf children and those who work with them, and the difficulties of providing appropriate language support. While the call for further special needs units has been recognised, not

all schools have such units and the ones that do tend to be under-resourced. The critical need for well-resourced units has been highlighted for our participating schools by the challenges they face in dealing with Syrian deaf children. In this case, language support also needs to be extended to parents of deaf children to help equip them to support their children educationally at home. One way to achieve this is to strengthen the link between the school and home so as to help parents to integrate faster into the school community, which would also encourage their language learning.

The adult participants in our study showed a willingness to take advantage of available initiatives to quickly learn English in order to accelerate their integration. As such, authorities need to look into ways of promoting Syrian refugees' participation in voluntary work as a way of facilitating their language learning. In addition, as they noted, adults with hands-on skills may gain quicker access into employment and small businesses through the provision of courses such as English for Specific Purposes.

Finally, there is need for more structured and co-ordinated multi-agency language provision as a step towards developing a framework for supporting refugees and asylum seekers, and as a means of supporting integration and social cohesion among refugee and host communities.

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8

Using plurilingual approaches to promote resilience among Syrian primary school students: the STEPS programme in Lebanon

Lucy Costa

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the role of English and French language learning through the Strengthening Teacher Education in a Plurilingual Society (STEPS) training programme as a means for developing and reinforcing young Syrian refugee children's resilience in a time of crisis in Lebanon. STEPS was funded by the British Council in partnership with the Lebanese Ministry of Education and it was rolled out across Lebanon between August 2015 and March 2016. This programme was designed to provide Syrian refugee students with the language tools they need to help them recover from their experiences of conflict and from traumas caused by displacement. The approach of the programme was based on the belief that the use of plurilingual approaches in education can help develop the voice and communication skills of vulnerable people, therefore also developing social cohesion and access to education and employment in host communities – all of which are important elements for guaranteeing stability, security and peace in countries afflicted by crisis (see also Capstick and Delaney, 2016). Various aspects which characterise the context where the programme took place will be outlined in this chapter. The findings of the needs analysis and how these informed the planning of the training programme will also be illustrated together with a description of the programme which will include the perceptions, opinions and evaluations of the stakeholders involved.

Background: Integrating Syrian students into Lebanese schools

Since the beginning of the Syrian conflict in 2011, around 4.8 million Syrian refugees have fled to the neighbouring countries of Turkey, Jordan, Egypt, Iraq and Lebanon. Lebanon, a country of roughly 4 million citizens, is currently hosting around 1.1 million Syrian refugees, which makes it the highest refugee-per-capita country in the world (Global Education Monitoring, 2016). This heavy influx from Syria has had a strong impact on the Lebanese public school sector, resulting in state schools being overcrowded

and under-resourced. In Lebanon the private education sector is often preferred over the public one which, even prior to the Syrian crisis, was already facing many challenges both in the delivery of education due to limited resources and also the perception of poor quality of teaching. As a result, the public sector caters for only 30% of Lebanese students and it serves communities and areas with the lowest socioeconomic status (Ministry of Education and Higher Education, 2014:12).

Lebanon, as a plurilingual society, has a trilingual public educational system where school subjects are mainly taught in Arabic and English or Arabic and French. Therefore, a 'plurilingual competence' which is the capacity to 'acquire and use different competences in different languages, at different levels of proficiency and for different functions' (Cavalli et al. 2009: 8) is key to being part of Lebanese society and to having access to education and employment. Because Arabic is also the official language of Syria, it may be assumed that Syrian migrants would easily integrate into Lebanese society. However, Arabic may not always be the home language of many Syrian children, particularly those from the Kurdish region, and there are many varieties of Arabic spoken in Syria, some of which differ significantly from Lebanese Arabic. Moreover, Syrian children do not often have competence in either English or French, the second languages in Lebanon. Therefore, there is the possibility that all of the languages used in Lebanon may be unfamiliar to Syrian refugees: Arabic and/or Lebanese/Arabic as well as English and French. Syrian refugees may thus have to learn more than one new language in order to integrate into daily life and school in Lebanon, and teachers therefore need to support them in developing their competence in these areas. As a result, an assessment carried out by UNICEF and Save the Children in 2012 suggested that Syrian refugee students be placed in lower grades than those they attended in Syria (if indeed they attended school there) due to a lack or poor knowledge of the Lebanese schooling languages (UNHCR, 2015 a).

In response to this critical situation, in which government schools had already been struggling to support Lebanese learners, the Government of Lebanon developed and put into force a three-year strategic plan called Reaching All Children with Education 2014-2017 (RACE). RACE aimed to provide vulnerable 3-18 year old children affected by the Syrian crisis with equitable access to quality and inclusive education in the public school system. It sought to achieve these objectives by introducing a second shift in public schools to accommodate a higher number of students; by improving the quality of teaching and learning in schools; and by developing the accountability and monitoring of schools (Ministry of Education and Higher Education, 2014:2).

The British Council Lebanon contributed to RACE by collaborating with the Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education and developed and delivered the teacher training STEPS programme. STEPS built on Lebanon's co-funded EU Accessing Education project (October 2013-January 2016) and was based on the British Council's two-year plan 'Language for Resilience (2015-17). Its aim was to facilitate the integration of approximately 10,000 primary school Syrian children aged between six and eight into the second shift in the public school system in six different regions across Lebanon: Baaklin, Beirut, Jounieh, Nabatieh, Saida and Tripoli. STEPS also involved about 500 English and/or French primary school teachers and 31 guidance counsellors (17 for English and 14 for French) who are school and teacher performance assessors from the Department of Guidance and Counselling at the Lebanese Ministry of Education, as well as school directors from across Lebanon.

Findings of the needs analysis conducted for STEPS

In order to find out more about the challenges that English and French teachers were experiencing, and to consider the potential solutions to meet these needs, a needs analysis was undertaken that involved approximately 500 English and French primary school teachers.

The findings of the needs analysis showed the difficulties and tensions faced by both the Syrian students and their educators. Before undertaking the study, it was clear that the great influx of Syrian refugees to Lebanon was causing socio-historical and cultural tensions between the refugees and the host communities in different areas of the country especially in the unprivileged zones, and that this was putting additional strain on the public sector (Ministry of Education and Higher Education, 2014:4). The needs analysis provided further insight into

these challenges, and demonstrated some teachers' overwhelming belief that local Lebanese students were at a disadvantage in education due to the large influx of Syrian students. As one teacher noted:

The importance of education for Lebanese students is neglected in favour of Syrians (in Costa and Gallas, 2015a).

The analysis indicated that a large number of Lebanese teachers were having difficulties managing the social, historical, educational, cultural and linguistic difference between themselves and the Syrian refugee students in their classes and this was impeding the smooth running of lessons. For example, one teacher reported that 'Syrian students suffer from cultural diversity, they are less able to communicate with the teachers', while another mentioned that 'it is difficult to understand their different and unusual accents' (in Costa and Gallas, 2015a). The needs analysis gave further insight into the fact that the Syrian refugees came from different areas – both urban and rural, settled and nomadic – and had a range of sociolinguistic profiles, speaking a range of languages/dialects (e.g. Bedawi, Levantine or Sharmi Arabic, Dom, Kurdish). These differences were reported to be creating friction and misunderstandings, not only between the teachers and the students but also among the students themselves. As one teacher reported:

The students in my class fight a lot, they make jokes about each other because of their dialects (in Costa and Gallas, 2015a).

Teachers also reported that linguistic differences, and the Syrian refugees' lack of competence in the languages spoken in Lebanon, were contributing to the development of aggressive and violent behaviour as well as physical and emotional bullying especially during games or other peer interactions. As one teacher stated, communication difficulties led to 'class management problems' and disciplinary issues as 'it is difficult to maintain order and silence in the classroom' (in Costa and Gallas, 2015a).

The issue of students being mostly unfamiliar with Lebanese Arabic, French and English was also clearly highlighted in the needs analysis. For most Lebanese students, English and French are second languages, and these are central in society and education. The Syrian refugee students, however, were learning them as foreign languages, and, for the most part, had very limited proficiency in and exposure to them. Furthermore, the teachers stated that they did not have experience of working with absolute beginners. As one teacher put it:

'Lebanese students are already in touch with the French and English languages through television

from an early age and therefore students are already receptive to the phonics of these two languages.’ (in Costa and Gallas, 2015a).

According to another teacher the situation is critical as:

‘Syrian refugee students have no English or French language skills at all and teachers lack teaching skills needed to address the problem of refugee students.’ (Costa and Gallas, 2015a).

Moreover, some teachers reported that some of the Syrian students seemed to be more accustomed to more traditional teacher roles and teaching practices linked to physical discipline, and therefore had difficulty adjusting to the teaching practices used by Lebanese teachers.

These primary school teachers also reported that it was difficult to use the official English/French textbooks with the Syrian refugee students due to the students’ inexperience with reading and writing. Thus the needs analysis suggested that it was important to first engage the students in more listening and speaking activities, which would also work to develop their confidence, before moving on to reading and writing activities.

This situation was further exacerbated by the fact that, not having attended school or kindergarten in their own country, some Syrian students had not yet acquired the school life skills essential for functioning in formal educational environments. We found that most of the Syrian children integrating into primary school had never attended preschool due in part to the fact that formal education is not compulsory before the age of six (WENR, 2016) and also because of the current political context in a time of crisis which limited access to education at all levels. These findings suggested that these students needed to recoup the educational experience they had missed and develop the knowledge and skills normally acquired in kindergarten and the lower levels of primary school. For example, some of their motor skills were underdeveloped and they had difficulties in holding pens or scissors. However, we also found that this often led to teachers rushing to the wrong conclusion. For example, one teacher commented that:

Syrian students know nothing and they have no skills, they are very different from the Lebanese ones (in Costa and Gallas, 2015).

One further negative result of these preconceptions was that these Syrian refugee students’ current education also did not draw on the more practical life skills that they had developed, such as helping their families, selling goods, or working in the fields.

It emerged that the elements discussed above were hindering Syrian refugee students’ learning process, progress, motivation and interest towards the school subjects and were also creating tensions between them and the Lebanese teachers and school directors. It also highlighted the difficulties faced by some teachers when dealing with children with specific educational needs (cf. Thondhlana and Madziva, this volume). The teachers provided examples of students in their classes who ‘suffered from instability and lack of security’ (in Costa and Gallas, 2015a) and refused to speak or react to their requests, attributing the behaviour to a psychological trauma caused by the Syrian conflict. Such findings were in line with other research showing that a large number of children from Syria suffer from a high level of psychological distress after witnessing and experiencing violence and loss of friends and family (UNICEF, 2014; cf. Harvey and Delaney, this volume).

The needs analysis also provided insight into how educational challenges were further aggravated by the precarious nature of the Syrian refugee students’ current living situation (e.g. informal tented settlements, apartments, streets, shelters etc.). It was reported that a significant number of the Syrian students did not appear to be aware of the value of owning school materials and ‘had no or limited support at home’ from their families’ as one teacher commented (in Costa and Gallas, 2015a). Even though some of the students’ parents were involved in the education of their children, teachers stated that many parents were illiterate and therefore only able to provide limited academic support at home, or that they did not seem to show interest in creating educational opportunities for their families.

STEPS Training Programme

In the light of the findings from the needs analysis, the STEPS training programme focused on providing training for teachers so that they could better respond to the needs of Syrian primary school students in Lebanon. The aim of the training was to help teachers motivate students’ learning; to allow them to promote diversity, inclusion and resilience in and outside their classrooms; and to provide teachers with resources to support students in learning English or French as a foreign language.

The programme was divided into three phases. In the first phase, a workshop was conducted for the English/French guidance counsellors by the British Council senior trainers (the author of this chapter and Celine Gallas). During these workshops the counsellors were provided with training that enabled them to deliver the STEPS training programme to English and French teachers in a workshop in the

second phase of the programme. These workshops for the teachers were divided into two parts. In the first part, the training focused on promoting pluralistic approaches in the classroom, and in the second part, it dealt with strategies that teachers could use to support the learning of foreign languages (either English or French). The third phase of the programme consisted of a three-month period during which teachers undertook STEPS activities with students in their classrooms which were monitored and observed by the guidance counsellors and British Council senior trainers.

STEPS training Part 1: developing positive attitudes towards cultural and linguistic diversity

The objective of the first part of the training programme was to develop positive attitudes towards cultural and linguistic diversity between teachers, who could then promote these attitudes among their students, and to provide teachers with skills in creating motivation for language learning in their classrooms. The main approach for achieving this was by adopting a 'pluralistic approach' to teaching and learning, which involves embracing a plurality of cultures, languages and linguistic varieties in teaching (Candelier et al., 2012:6). The activities in this first phase of the programme, which were preparatory for supporting foreign language learning in the second, were based on the 'Awakening to language' pluralistic approach (Candelier et al., 2012:7). This approach aims to awaken students' awareness of cultural and linguistic diversity, including the diversity of their own languages and also it embraces languages which the school generally does not intend to teach (Candelier, 2003a; 2003b).

Rooted in this approach, the aim of the activities undertaken in the first workshop was to support teachers in raising students' awareness of the existence of different cultures around the world, including their different foods, clothes, language scripts, etc. Activities and resources were developed to show diversity as a valuable resource and not as an obstacle or cause of shame or mockery. They emphasised the value of equality, diversity and inclusion. While the participants were provided with ideas and resources to use in their own classrooms, at the same time the workshop activities challenged their own stereotypes and negative perceptions of Syrian refugee students.

In order to pave the way for more effective language learning, the teachers were made familiar with activities that they could use with students that would increase their awareness of the many languages around the world.. These were aimed at

helping students to develop strategies for observation, reasoning and cognitive capacities, as well as realising that every language has its own particular features (sounds, pronunciation, expressions, etc.). This knowledge should help students to notice and learn the similarities and differences between their own languages and the languages they were learning, and also to exploit similarities in order to empower their learning. In so doing students are encouraged to reflect on their own languages and language varieties. By valuing all students' linguistic resources, the programme aimed to contribute to the development of their resilience at a personal, family and community level. This approach was based on the belief that plurilingualism can boost social cohesion, enable intercultural understanding and provide social and education opportunities in Lebanon.

STEPS training Part 2: developing teaching and learning strategies

Having laid the ground work for successful language learning, the objective of the second part of the STEPS programme was to provide teachers with further strategies to teach mixed ability classes English or French as a foreign language. As a high number of the Syrian students had received little to no formal education, many of them did not have very developed reading and writing skills. Many were not familiar with the English or French alphabets, which greatly differ from Arabic script; nor were they familiar with reading left to right, as Arabic reads from right to left. The training therefore focused on using foreign language teaching strategies to develop learners' speaking and listening skills as an initial step on the path to developing literacy. A secondary aim was to provide teachers with strategies to further develop students' gross and fine motor skills, which would also facilitate the approach to writing.

In order to support the teachers involved in the training programme, they were first asked to reflect on what could be expected from six to eight year old students in terms of foreign language learning at a beginner level (A1 on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, 2017). We then worked with them to develop activities for beginner language learners that they could use directly in their classrooms. We also reviewed some of the key practices of student-centred communicative language teaching, focusing on engaging students in activities that were more active (e.g. drawing) or personalized (e.g. introducing the idea of asking 'How about you?'). The teachers were also engaged in discussions about the advantages and disadvantages of using various teaching practices (e.g. group and pair work) in specific

situations, both in terms of enhancing student learning and classroom dynamics.

During the second phase of the training, after being exposed to the language expected from a primary school student at an A1 level, the teachers practised lesson planning by selecting appropriate materials and language taught in the official textbook and creating activities based on them which would enhance their students' speaking and listening skills. These seemed to be the most difficult activities for teachers as they required not only a good knowledge of the language expected and the ability to plan English and French lessons as foreign languages, but also access to further resources beyond the textbook. However, access to such resources was very limited: the internet is generally inaccessible in public schools and electricity is not guaranteed in classrooms. As a result, the teachers were provided with materials and resources specially created for the STEPS programme. They were then able to work with these materials in their own classrooms during the third phase of the programme.

Implementation and impact: the third phase of STEPS

Teachers were overwhelmingly receptive to the ideas and approaches promoted in the STEPS programme and demonstrated a willingness to implement them in their classroom. In response to the part of the programme which focused on the promotion of pluralism, one teacher commented:

I understand we have to show the students and teach them the diversity of cultures, languages and traditions for them to see that they are not strangers but there are many different people around the world who have differences so they will accept each other and learn more (in Costa and Gallas, 2015c).

During the third phase of the programme, in which teachers were monitored and observed, we noted that, in response to the introduction of cultural themes into the classroom as well as the personalization of the activities, students tended to be more active and involved in their lessons. They started expressing their opinions about some of the topics or revealing personal information about some aspects of their own culture (what they eat, do and like) through speaking and drawing activities. These learning opportunities were perceived as enabling them to develop and strengthen their own identity, self-esteem, self-confidence and resilience, therefore also enhancing their motivation for learning foreign languages.

Some teachers were initially resistant and sceptical about implementing a pluralistic approach. However,

they soon started to notice the positive effects of implementing some of the activities promoted in the STEPS programme. For example, teachers noticed that students were interested in the activities about unfamiliar languages. Teachers reported that the activities had the positive impact of enabling the students to discriminate between familiar and unfamiliar sounds and to make comparisons between what some people say in their language and what they themselves say in their own languages (in Costa and Gallas, 2016b). As one teacher stated:

I need to awaken the language first so my students can learn strategies. I also need to concentrate on the self-confidence of each student so that they will be able to react in our society. This is very important! (Costa and Gallas, 2015c)

The STEPS programme was also deemed relatively successful in terms of developing teachers' awareness of what they might expect students to be able to do. One participant in the programme said that it helped them to 'experience the feeling of being a student who is learning a foreign language and in the future I will sympathize with my students more and more.' (in Costa and Gallas, 2015c).

While the programme might be seen as being successful in terms of challenging attitudes and perceptions and enhancing teachers' pedagogical knowledge, it remained a challenge for teachers to implement the activities promoted in the training in their classrooms. Continued, classroom-based support over the three-month period was therefore crucial. Teachers, for example, had difficulty planning activities which allowed more communicative interaction between students. However, when supported in implementing such activities, they gradually appreciated the results, which included higher student participation, more attention to teachers' instructions and a more positive atmosphere in the classroom (Costa and Gallas, 2015b). The teachers were particularly receptive to guidance on setting up speaking and listening activities and using resources (e.g. pictures and flashcards) to contextualise the topics of lessons and enhance learning. Many of the teachers perceived that the resources introduced through the programme – e.g. the pictures, posters, visual aids, audio and the related activities – were the most useful aspects of the training, as these were all relevant to the real life of students and directly applicable in the classroom. As an example, one teacher commented:

Pictures are very useful and posters too. The students can play games with the pictures and see what we speak about. Students can speak more (in Costa and Gallas, 2015c).

Teachers were also observed to be experimenting with further techniques promoted in the programme regarding classroom management. In spite of some initial resistance from those who were comfortable with a more traditional approach to teaching, their growing enthusiasm and confidence was impressive. After observing a lesson, one guidance counsellor commented:

It was very challenging for the teacher to plan pair work for the students but she tried. The class was over excited and there were some behavioural issues but the students' participation was high (in Costa and Gallas, 2015b).

The transition from a teacher-centred approach to a more student-centred one was difficult but it was generally well received. However, we recognised in the training sessions that teachers seemed to experience most difficulty in adapting the textbook materials to the actual levels of their students, and in incorporating more speaking and listening related activities with them. During the observations, attempts at adaptation were evident in some cases and less in others. Adapting textbook materials required additional lesson planning, and many teachers reported that it was difficult to find this time. Other reasons for the reticence to adapt textbook materials included little teaching experience, low self-confidence or fear of change. It was for this reason that extra support was provided in this area.

Overall, the STEPS programme was perceived positively by the participants and seen as beneficial to both teachers and students. As one teacher reported:

Since I am practising at school what I have learnt in this training I can see how much easier it is for students to understand English and it is easier for me to deliver my lessons (in Costa and Gallas, 2015c).

Another teacher reflected positively on her professional development through participation in programme in the following way:

The training and the observations helped me in three different ways. First, I learnt how to interact with students by using visual aids to use techniques to simplify the lesson; second, I learnt to respect and take into consideration their backgrounds and their language and third to allow my students to express themselves freely (in Costa and Gallas, 2015c).

Overall, the observations revealed that lessons were more student-centred and personalised, and therefore the students were integrated more and showed enhanced interest in their lessons. Another

sign of the success of the programme was that teachers involved in the STEPS programme were sharing their resources with other teachers in their schools.

Conclusion

On the whole, according to the post-teacher training questionnaire, STEPS had a positive impact on the teachers and students involved. The negative attitude towards Syrian refugee students held by those teachers prior to the training programme decreased and both teachers and students started to become more aware of the benefits of diversity at a cultural, personal and educational level. One might therefore conclude that understanding the value and appreciation of other cultures together with the value and appreciation of each student's own culture, helped the students develop their pluricultural competence and skills (cf. Candelier et al., 2012). In addition to this, the foreign language teaching strategies introduced were beginning to appear in classes and this resulted in greater inclusion of students in more communicative lessons and their resilience started to be visible through their active participation in activities. Although the teachers faced challenges in making these shifts, changes in practice could be observed and teachers were increasingly convinced of the value of integrating such activities. Looking towards the future, the process of change and inclusion will be long and challenging but the hope is that Syrian refugee students will eventually have all the tools needed to have access to a better future in more stable, secure and peaceful environments.

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9

The emotional health of English language teachers working in tough environments

Karin Harvey and Marie Delaney

Introduction

A decade working in mental health/support needs/autism and challenging behaviour was never as challenging as this weeks teaching in occupied East Jerusalem!!!! My master's thesis is definitely chosen – psychological effects of occupation on children and their education. (British Council Teacher, 03 August 2016, East Jerusalem)

The pernicious nature of the ongoing armed conflict between Palestinians and Israelis has had a negative impact on the lives and development of children in East Jerusalem – the part of occupied Jerusalem dominantly populated by Arabic-speaking Palestinians. It has produced an instability which permeates every aspect of people's lives. Children in East Jerusalem are regularly subject to violations of rights, including killing, maiming, torture, the threat of arbitrary arrest and detention, home demolitions, discrimination, harassment and restrictions of their movement (Save the Children, 2012; UN, 2016). They consistently witness violent protest and are subject to rhetoric pertaining to injustice and the necessity of resistance. Older siblings express anger and younger siblings watch as stones are thrown at the Israeli authorities and see first hand the subsequent retaliation of those authorities with tear gas, percussion grenades or bullets.

Within this context, local and foreign teachers working at the British Council teaching centre in East Jerusalem experienced confrontational incidents daily, as the quote at the beginning of this chapter well demonstrates. This chapter documents some of the experiences witnessed by one of the authors of this paper – Karin Harvey – at the British Council Teaching Centre in East Jerusalem, and the steps that were taken to improve both the teaching and learning, and the teachers' resilience working in this difficult context. During a summer school in 2016, Karin witnessed how, at the end of a teaching day, even experienced teachers, as well as those who had worked in other areas of Palestine, were stressed and left doubting their own competence, having encountered a variety of situations outside of their comfort zone. She felt that she had to do something to support the mental wellbeing of English language

teachers working with students exhibiting behavioural issues in the context of conflict zones, and this led her to the work of Marie Delaney, and ultimately to their collaboration on this chapter.

The first part of this chapter presents the context of teaching in East Jerusalem and Karin's description of the difficulties that she and other teachers working there encountered. In the second part of the chapter, the authors present ideas from the field of educational psychotherapy which were used to help teachers working in this context to gain insight into the learner behaviour they were witnessing, the reasons it might be happening and how it might be addressed. Bray (1997:79) argues that 'a child's current behaviour often reflects an essentially sane response to an untenable set of life circumstances.' Following this, in her work with teachers in this context, Marie suggested that there is a link between the frequently witnessed aggression in East Jerusalem and the patterns of interaction in children's everyday lives and students' behaviour in class. In the final section of this chapter, the authors consider together the teaching strategies and skills needed by English language teachers working in this and similar contexts. They propose ways in which teachers can manage their own emotional wellbeing, maximise opportunities offered by the English language classroom to support students living in difficult contexts and develop their own teaching practice.

The teaching context: Karin's story

The British Council established an office in Jerusalem in 1942 and has had a presence in Palestine ever since, through wars and intifadas. There are offices in East Jerusalem, Gaza and The West Bank, with relatively new teaching centres in Ramallah and East Jerusalem. The teaching centres offer summer schools for young students aged seven to 11 and teens aged 12 to 16. These students' first language is usually Arabic and their motivation for learning English is mainly extrinsic, coming from parents who want to provide them with opportunities to interact globally.

In summer of 2016, I (Karin) was based in Ramallah teaching summer school classes; the children were mischievous, as children at that age are, but manageable. I was therefore surprised when the teaching centre manager in East Jerusalem called me for support with behavioural issues with students. What I have since come to understand is that while both of these teaching centres are located in Palestine, there are essential differences in the governance of the areas and also in the behaviour of the students. Ramallah is in 'Area A', which is controlled by the Palestinian Authority and is a relatively peaceful 'bubble'. However, East Jerusalem is controlled by the Israeli government and policed by Israeli military. The fact that East Jerusalem is often a flashpoint, with Palestinians habitually encountering provocation there, meant that classroom interactions were more likely to be marked by hostility.

When I visited the teaching centre to better understand the challenges that teachers were facing there, these are some of the behaviours I observed. In lessons with young learners, I witnessed a seven-year-old discussing very matter-of-factly how nice it would be to be dead. I watched a student paint a black blob until it bled through the paper and still he carried on with this task while children next to him painted a mixture of butterflies, guns and explosions. I coaxed a student out from beneath a table where they had been screaming uncontrollably, and held a door shut while a child of six repeatedly tried to kick it open. I grabbed hold of young students who were trying to climb up bookcases or climb out of windows. I treated a teacher who had been bitten by a seven-year-old. Even with two teaching assistants present in the classroom, teachers were being seriously challenged by students' behaviour. So many of the children seemed unfamiliar or unwilling to participate in 'normal' classroom routines. When we spoke to parents, they turned to us for advice about how to instil discipline in their children.

Challenges were different, but still present, in the classes I observed with the older, teen-aged students. Here the students were more likely to be aggressive, or wanting to be seen as tough. They tried to wrest control of the classroom from teachers. I observed students who displayed little respect for the teacher, sitting with feet on desks and refusing to participate. The students seemed constantly vigilant to threat, boundaries were tested, the need to run with the pack was strong and they disregarded instructions, choosing to control or challenge. Teachers were at the receiving end of the misplaced hostility that these students were feeling against their occupiers. If teachers tried to reach out to students, they often rejected help and seemed unable to respond to kindness.

Teachers, unable to conduct normal lessons, had begun to work in pairs for moral support. After classes, I watched a teacher break down in tears, visibly disturbed by the fraught atmosphere and reluctant to enter the fray again. Teachers were ending each day stressed, frustrated, exhausted, visibly distressed and feeling anxious and often hopeless about the next encounter.

After witnessing these behaviours at the East Jerusalem teaching centre, I realised that I needed to understand better what was going on with these students and find a solution to support the wellbeing of teachers. I found, however, that there is a paucity of material which prepares English language teachers for handling students with extreme emotional and behavioural issues, although there is a dawning realisation that this needs to be addressed, particularly given the growing number of challenging contexts in which English is taught. There is also a lack of awareness about the mental and emotional effects of working in such contexts on teachers. The work of Marie Delaney is at least one exception to this, and my reading and contacts eventually led me to her.

Marie Delaney is an educational psychotherapist and ELT trainer working on the effects of loss and trauma on learning and behaviour, for students and teachers, and the transfer of these ideas to the ELT classroom. While her work had previously focused on supporting mainstream teachers of traumatised children in UK schools, we were both interested in how her ideas could be developed to help teachers to understand and work with students in East Jerusalem. After some initial correspondence, we were able to set up a workshop with Marie in Amman, Jordan, to which the whole East Jerusalem teaching centre staff was invited. We identified three main priorities for the training:

- To find ways of understanding what was happening in the interactions between students and teachers.
- To support teachers emotionally and practically, and to rebuild their confidence.
- To develop strategies and activities for the ELT classroom, which would help students to modify their behaviour, learn different social and emotional skills, manage their anxiety and learn to trust their teachers.

In the following, we present the framework developed together with Marie Delaney for helping the teaching staff in East Jerusalem better understand the effects of the occupation on students, which then drove our creation of resources, both for teachers' wellbeing and for classroom activities.

Understanding students' behaviour – Marie's insights from educational psychotherapy on the effects of the Occupation

In the workshops with Marie, we together sought ways of understanding students' behaviour. Using her knowledge of educational psychotherapy, she guided us with questions and insights, so that we could come to better understand some of the problems and anxieties that students were facing and why they were responding in the ways they were. The insights she shared include understanding the effects of trauma on the brain and learning, understanding the effects of living with violence and loss, and understanding the effect of the teaching centre environment on students.

Understanding the effects of trauma on the brain and learning

Marie's insights led us to see that the behaviour of students in East Jerusalem indicated that they were exhibiting some of the classic symptoms of trauma and stress, e.g. emotional numbness, avoidance, short attention spans and a pre-occupation with death or violence. Many of these children were coming to English classes with their minds filled with anxieties, fears and worries. The pressure of the threat of conflict is unlikely to abate since the occupation is ongoing and there is no plan for a two-state solution in the foreseeable future.

Marie's insights from educational psychotherapy led us to understand that when people experience trauma, they often have high levels of stress hormones in their bodies. The main stress hormone is cortisol. Cortisol is also a key player associated with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Dimitry (2012) found that the prevalence of PTSD in adolescents in Israel is estimated to be five to eight per cent and 23 to 70 per cent in adolescents in Palestine. To compare, the National Institute of Health estimated that 20 per cent of American veterans returning from Iraq suffered from PTSD (NIH MedlinePlus Magazine, 2009).

High levels of cortisol can have a negative impact on the growth and development of the brain, resulting in difficulties in learning. They can affect a person's ability to think, to retrieve information and manage behaviour (see further Chetty, et al., 2014, described in Bergland, 2014). In children, this can cause parts of their brain to develop abnormally: connections may not be made between neurons in the part of the child's brain responsible for empathy, logic, and cause and effect and reasoning. For children who have experienced trauma, the brain has had to behave as if it is under constant fear of attack. This causes the oldest part of the brain, the part which

was needed to survive in prehistoric times, to be over-used. This is the part of the brain which operates on a 'flight, flight or freeze' response. This means that when a person thinks they are being attacked, they immediately have three choices of behaviour: to run away (flight), to attack the other person (fight), or to stay very still and hope to go unnoticed (freeze). Research by Shore (2001) shows that the brain develops in a 'use-dependent' manner; it develops according to how we use it. This means that many of the children in our classes may have been conditioned to act as if they are in a constant state of fear and anxiety – even when they are in a safe environment. Their brains were responding to any perceived threat by going into a flight, fright or freeze mode. Our reflections led us to consider that this could be why feelings of frustration, not knowing something or getting something wrong triggered volatile over-reactions in some students.

Marie also reminded us that, in order to learn, children need to feel safe. Students need to be able to cope with the frustration of not knowing something and take the risk of getting it wrong. They need to get used to the fact that sometimes they will feel vulnerable in a learning situation. When children have lived in, or still live in, dangerous environments they often shy away from taking the risk of learning. They have not had the opportunity to experience situations in which they can feel safe, try things out, take risks, make mistakes and not have this lead to serious consequences or make them feel powerless. In fact, often the opposite had been true: they had learned that taking risks could lead them into danger. Armed with this information, teachers were able to recognise that many students were on 'high alert' and focused all their attention on where the next threat might come from. They did not feel safe so they could not focus on learning. Their mind was 'full up' of other concerns and anxieties. Thinking was potentially dangerous, as it may divert their attention from the next potential danger, or make them vulnerable to weakness. Added to this is the general anxiety often experienced by language learners due to factors such as language learning difficulties, differences in learners' and target language cultures, differences in social status of the speakers and interlocutors, and the fear of losing self-identity (see further Hashemi, 2011; MacIntyre, 2017). Thus, we recognised a need to emphasise the safe space of the English learning classroom.

Understanding the effects of living with violence and loss

The workshop with Marie also helped us to understand some of the aggressive behaviours we were experiencing with students. Teachers initially thought that children who have experienced violence

would not want to perpetuate more violence themselves. Insights from educational psychotherapy, however, show that children who have experienced violence often experience a complex mix of conflicting emotions. They may have feelings of anger towards both the aggressor for hurting others, and the victim for seeming to allow the violence to happen to them (see further Perkins and Graham-Bermann, 2012). Being aware of this helped us to understand why students in our classrooms did not always respond to kindness and help from adults. We thought it may also explain why at times they seem to want to be like the aggressor, criticising and insulting weakness in others, causing them sometimes to bully other children. Above all, it seems that these children do not want to seem vulnerable and risk getting hurt emotionally or physically, so they assert their authority over others wherever possible.

Moreover, many of the children had experienced loss in their lives, some of them even many losses, including bereavements, family separations, upheaval and constant moving of the family home. The psychotherapy literature suggests that children who have suffered loss can become very controlling, not wanting to admit that they need anyone to help them (see further Cincotta, 2011; Geddes, 2006). They can act very angrily towards those trying to help them or they might act as if they do not need or want help. They may, for example, find change at school very hard to cope with, as they associate it with people going away and sudden, unexplained loss. They may expect bad things to happen, and therefore shy away from taking risks in learning, refusing to try to learn new things. Children who have suffered loss in this way may also find it difficult to enjoy success and positive experiences at school, as they are worried that they might be taken away from them suddenly. This can lead them to engage in what is known in the psychotherapy literature as ‘self-handicapping’, i.e. sabotaging activities which they actually enjoy.

Understanding the effect of the teaching centre environment on students

One perspective that Marie’s work helped us to understand was the effect that being in the relatively non-threatening environment of the British Council teaching centre was potentially having on students. Most of the students at the British Council teaching centre were taking classes there for the first time. They were primarily used to authoritarian teaching and punitive approaches in schools. Moreover, they lived in a community which was controlled by military law, with clear sanctions, curfews and everyday ongoing clashes with authority. We had not previously considered that coming into a relatively

peaceful environment, where teachers had a gentle, collaborative approach, was potentially confusing and unsettling to these students. Working with Marie helped us to see that students’ destructive practices may be driven by their attempts to define the rules and boundaries in a safe context not ruled by punishment. They needed to adjust to the new culture of education.

In our workshops with Marie, we reflected on our classroom experiences and considered how the environment might be impacting on students’ behaviour. We considered the idea that some students might actually feel safe in the environment of the teaching centre and that their acting out behaviour was showing us how they really felt about life, hoping that the caring adults in the centre would understand and know what to do to dissipate the feelings of desperation and frustration they were feeling in their everyday encounters. For example, a student who continually put down his own work and the attempts of the teacher to teach him might be showing the teacher that he had experienced humiliation and insult on a daily basis and unconsciously wanted the teacher to know how this felt.

Understanding unconscious defence mechanisms and empowering teachers to work with them

One of the most useful theories that we read about in Marie’s workshops was that of unconscious defence mechanisms, based on the work of Anna Freud (1973). Psychological defence mechanisms are defences which protect us when we feel under threat or overly anxious. With children who have lived through trauma, they often occur around learning tasks, which can provoke anxiety and helpless feelings in the child (Delaney, 2009; 2010). However, as we discovered, an understanding of these defence mechanisms can help teachers to cope in this teaching context. The defence mechanisms we mostly saw in operation in the classes in East Jerusalem were:

- Projection
- Transference
- Ominipotence

Understanding these defence mechanisms gave teachers the power to act, to change their own behaviour and to start to find ways to better support students. It also helped teachers to better take care of their own wellbeing.

Projection

When a person has unbearable, painful feelings, they may unconsciously externalise them, ‘pushing them

out' and trying to attribute them to others. A person cannot bear to think about these feelings and therefore looks for another person to have them and take them away. On reflection, many of the teachers noticed that some of the terrible feelings they were having were indications of how the children were feeling. Teachers felt hopeless, threatened, incompetent, intimidated, humiliated and hurt. They came to realise that this was probably also how the students were feeling when they arrived in class. The teachers detected a discernible chain: the students had perhaps unwittingly projected their feelings on to the teachers, who then projected them back on to the students – a downward spiral of negativity. Bion (1962) calls this the 'nameless dread' – when a child tries to get rid of an overwhelming, powerful, unmanageable feeling by projecting it on to an adult who also cannot handle it and gives it back to the child. Recognising and naming the feelings teachers were feeling as projections from students was the first vital step to building self-belief and giving teachers the courage to act.

We realised that we needed strategies to stop the downward spiral. In order to do this, Bion suggests that feelings need to be contained, named and, perhaps at an appropriate time, 'reflected back' in a 'digested', acceptable form. By 'digesting' the feelings, he means that they need to be thought about and then put into words, thus making them less terrifying and more manageable. For example, if there was a negative atmosphere in the classroom, instead of reacting negatively to the students and propelling this negativity, teachers might instead change the activity. So, a teacher might say to their class: 'I think a lot of people are feeling stuck now, let's try a different activity.' The teacher names in a non-threatening way the negativity that she is experiencing as being 'stuck'. This allows the students to have an experience of an adult who can cope with difficult feelings and can attempt to name them. By reflecting on the feeling she is having, the teacher is 'digesting' it, and by naming it she is reflecting it back in an acceptable form which shows the students that she is trying to understand what is going on. In many cases, it is enough for the teacher to recognise and name the feeling being projected for herself and to use this information to manage her reaction to the situation.

Displacement

Displacement describes what happens when an emotion we are feeling about a particular relationship or person in our life cannot be safely expressed toward that person, and is thus displaced on to another 'safe' person. It came as a great relief for teachers when they realised that when they were on the receiving end of students' inexplicable,

overwhelming emotion, these emotions might not be aimed at them but displaced from another situation.

In the case of our students, their anger was often probably directed at the Israelis, but this anger could not always be expressed. For the young males in our classes, their anger could stem from the common expectation in Palestinian society for young males to be protectors. But these youths are powerless in, for example, the face of a soldier at a checkpoint with a gun. Helplessness leads to frustration, so their malevolence and disobedience is displaced on a 'safe' authority figure, i.e. in this case the teachers. We had noticed, for example, that some students seemed suspicious of any personal questions (common to the communicative ELT classroom). Upon reflection, we thought that this might be because outside the classroom students were used to requests for information from authority figures that were potentially dangerous. This might explain why, for example, when a teenage student was asked to describe his home in a lesson, he first questioned why he should do this, then became aggressive towards the teacher and refused to partake in the activity. This in turn led to other students also refusing to complete the exercise. A simple exercise became a protest against authority. Within the context of the teaching centre, this protest was relatively safe and harmless, unlike similar protests which may occur outside the classroom in the context of occupation.

Teachers felt a great sense of relief when made aware that students' feelings were not necessarily directed at them personally. They were helped by learning to use the phrase 'It's not meant for me' (Hanko, 1999). Realising that a lot of the very difficult feelings students were expressing in their classrooms were not meant for them allowed teachers to keep better control of their own actions and words in response to their students.

Transference

Transference, like displacement, is also the redirection of feelings from one person to another, but in this case it is not because of potential harm or risk. Transference may be at work, for example, when feelings and attitudes from a relationship in a child's past or present are 'transferred' and are played out, or re-experienced, in a later relationship with a teacher. Transference can be triggered by all kinds of things, such as a look, a tone of voice, a way of dressing, a role, even a way of walking. Teachers can unwittingly be drawn into re-enacting a relationship from the child's past.

While this was important to recognise in the patterns enacted around a child, it was also important to discover that transference can also be triggered in a

teacher when a child triggers a memory in the teacher of something from their own past. Most of the teachers in the centre were Palestinian and had similar experiences and feelings to the students they were teaching. They realised that their own experiences with authority sometimes played a part in their reaction to their students.

Understanding this allowed teachers to change their behaviour and allowed us to find new solutions to better support students and provide guidelines without reacting punitively. For example, there was a student who would not remain seated during class. If the teacher shouted at the student to sit down, this only seemed to make things worse, as the behaviour of the teacher began to mirror that of an aggressor. However, if the teacher allowed the student to continue to disrupt the class, this encouraged the others to also move about. So, we developed the practice of taking such students out of class for one-to-one teaching as soon as an issue developed. Classroom assistants were made available to work with them in another room until they calmed down enough to return to class. We told such students that we wanted them to have some individual time to learn at their best. The other students then usually settled back to working on whatever task they had. Responding in this way gave students a different experience of relating to authority figures, and gave teachers an opportunity to avoid getting caught up in the pattern of aggression and negativity. This 'breaking of patterns' was a key element in managing the class more effectively.

Omnipotence

The defence mechanism of omnipotence happens when we try to show that we are all powerful, can control everything and do not need help. Paradoxically, it stems from feeling powerless, fearful and unsafe or having other people control your life. As Taransaud (2011) argues, the omnipotent self often hides a wounded, vulnerable self. This sense of powerlessness was something that teens in particular seemed to experience, hence the overwhelming need to control the classroom. The idea of omnipotence suggests that learning and not knowing things in class reminded students of their vulnerability, so they could not allow the teacher to have the power of knowing more, and would thus not allow the teacher to teach them. The further danger with omnipotence in a child is that the adult is often drawn into proving they are more powerful, leading to a pointless battle of wills. However, through reflection, teachers came to realise that behind students' feigned omnipotence lay vulnerable, wounded children who needed nurturing and kindness.

An example of omnipotence can be seen in a class of 14 teenage boys. When the teacher tried to explain something, they would come up to the board, refusing to sit, and argue against anything she said. At one point, one of the boys snatched the pen out of her hand, taking on the role of teacher. The others were compliant with this leader. The teacher felt threatened and discouraged, and the lesson descended into chaos.

When we looked at this interaction through the lens of omnipotence, we reasoned that by accepting the role of the teacher as a knower, the students perhaps unconsciously felt that they gave the teacher a power which emphasised their powerlessness. We recognised that these students needed to take back some control and have a defence against their own vulnerability. One method which we found worked for this was to give the boys tasks so they had input into the running of the class. We built options into class work to allow them more autonomy; for instance, they prepared talks on subjects of their choice and they took over some of the classroom tasks, such as taking the register. They could take back some of the power by having choices and autonomy. The teachers did not get caught up in trying to prove they could be more powerful than the boys – as is often the case when faced with a child who is trying to be omnipotent.

Promoting teacher wellbeing in the context of conflict

When we came to better understand some of the reasons underlying students' classroom behaviour, we came to see that it was vital for the British Council, Palestine to work with teachers so that they could protect their own wellbeing and better support these students. Faced with an ongoing conflict and occupation and a barrage of overwhelming emotions and complex interactions in response to this, the only thing in their control was their own reactions. Together, we developed ideas that we could all work on to protect teachers' wellbeing. While none of these ideas were particularly novel, we realised that the maelstrom of feelings in the classroom was making it difficult for us to remember to practise them. Deciding consciously to focus on staff wellbeing therefore became a priority. In the following, we present a summary of these ideas (see also Gkonou and Mercer, 2017).

Be your own coach

Teachers had high expectations of themselves, but in these circumstances many felt out of their depth. They were getting caught up in negative self-talk before and after their classes, which was undermining their confidence to teach and reinforcing a cycle of negativity. It was therefore

important to re-focus on the skill of positive self-talk. Being their own coach entailed speaking to themselves as they would to a friend and engaging in self-compassion. As an example, after a chaotic class, the teachers needed to remember to say things like: 'A lot of this behaviour is not meant for me. These children are acting out because of problems they face outside of the classroom, and it does not mean I am a bad teacher.'

Choose to focus on the highlights

At the end of each day, teachers often remember things which go wrong in their classes. Teaching in the context of conflict and occupation means that there can be an overwhelming list of things that went 'wrong' at the end of the day, and these are often the things that teachers focused on. While some reflection is necessary, focusing only on the negative is counter-productive when teachers need to find the strength to enter the classroom with positive energy the next day. Also, it is positive energy that students need. So, while not denying the negatives, we promoted the strategy of writing down six highlights at the end of each day in order to encourage teachers to shift their perspectives and to notice more the positive things that were happening as a result of their teaching. We agreed that a highlight does not have to be a big thing; it could be a small success. By recognising what was working, teachers could focus on doing more of these things rather than feeling overwhelmed by the problems. Examples of such highlights could be:

- X stayed in her seat for the first 30 minutes of the class; that's an improvement.
- The majority of the class engaged with the role play.
- There was no aggression between boys today.
- X engaged with other students.
- X was calm and smiling for most of the lesson.
- Wow, x wrote ten words today.

Focus on those things you can control

At times, the teachers felt that the lessons and the students were beyond their control. They were projecting what has been coined as an external locus of control (Rotter, 1966). Research has found that those with an external locus of control tend not to believe that they can change their situation through their own efforts and frequently feel hopeless or powerless in the face of difficult situations. In the context of the classroom, this can lead to teachers' loss of motivation. In order to promote teacher motivation, we encouraged teachers to remember that they could not control everything and everyone in the classroom, particularly when faced with strong projections of hopelessness from the students.

However, they were encouraged to make a list of things which were within their control and things which at that moment were not within their control. They could then focus their efforts on things in their control. This seemingly simple exercise was very powerful in terms of supporting positive attitudes and motivation in a context where so many things seemed out of the teacher's control.

As an example, the only thing completely in the teacher's control is their reactions to the students' behaviour. However, consciously not allowing themselves to be emotionally manipulated by events unfolding in the classroom is in their control. So, if a child is screaming under a table, the teacher might just sit and wait for them to calm down and block the rising tide of anxiety by realising that nothing the teacher did warranted this student's extreme reaction. A child who behaves this way is probably usually yelled at for screaming or picked up and cuddled; however, both of these responses are ways of teaching the child that an 'outside' entity will act in some way to mitigate their mood. When given the space to calm themselves down, the child can learn that they are responsible for calming themselves down. As teachers, we need to reinforce this autonomy so that such children can learn to manage extreme emotion. By doing so, we consciously change the students' expectation of adult responses to their actions. When the child has calmed down, the teacher can then seek to talk to them and find out what triggered this behaviour.

Create thinking spaces

In working together, we found that teachers needed to think together as a team at the end of the day and to use the ideas from educational psychotherapy presented above to reflect on the behaviour, feelings and patterns that they were experiencing in the classroom. Sometimes simply naming what was happening worked as a tonic for teachers who were beginning to doubt themselves. Teachers are sometimes afraid to admit they can't cope for fear of being judged to be incompetent (Sutherland, 1997). It was important to provide a space for colleagues to talk, to feel heard and not alone, and to listen uncritically – or to think together about potential solutions. It was important to be clear what teachers expected from each other in these situations; often it was simply to be listened to and not to be offered 'advice'.

Particular considerations for students in the English language classroom

While the focus of our workshops and our work with Marie was on strategies for supporting teacher wellbeing, we also considered how the English language classroom could create safe spaces for

students to work through some of the effects of trauma and conflict. Language gives a voice so that stories can be heard and understood, and language teachers often use creative activities such as play, games and stories, which can be made useful for students to work through some of their pain and trauma. Such activities can allow both meaningful engagement in language and provide a safe space for working through emotions; for example, when stories are told in the indirect third person. When a teacher understands the therapeutic value of various tasks, the English language classroom can offer powerful opportunities to support students living through trauma.

Language classrooms provide opportunities for students to engage in activities where they practise the skills of empathy, teamwork and collaboration, skills that need to be deliberately and carefully fostered. These are all key social and emotional skills that many of these students may not have developed, but which can also be helpful in the development of resilience (see also Capstick and Delaney, 2016). Such classroom activities can include listening and speaking activities where students get to know each other and communicate with each other appropriately; for example, 'Guess about your partner', 'Find five things in common with your partner' and 'Backs to the board', where students describe a word for other students in their group. Most English language teachers will be familiar with these activities, as they are common practice in many classrooms (cf. Delaney, 2009; Rinvuluceri, 1985; and Helbling's *Resourceful Teacher* series). Such activities are relatively non-threatening and non-intrusive; however, for some students, simple communicative activities may seem threatening at first.

Moreover, using games and providing opportunities for students to play in the English language classroom can provide positive opportunities for students to gain skills that they need and work through some emotions. Children in contexts of conflict have often had to grow up fast and have not necessarily had ample opportunities to play. It is through play that children develop the ability to take turns, to share adult attention, to manage feelings of frustration and to learn about rules. Language games and drama activities can give students an opportunity to develop these social and emotional skills in a fun but productive way. Teachers, however, need to consider that students may not be able to play well in the beginning and games may be disrupted. Following rules and playing fair are skills that have to be developed. At the beginning, teachers should try to view any disruption as a learning opportunity and involve the class by asking: 'What

rules do we now need to remember to keep this activity safe and fun for everyone?'

While creative activities and games can provide great opportunities for students to express themselves and develop skills, students may also at times need to be engaged in logical, left-brain tasks. This may be particularly the case if the atmosphere in the classroom has turned negative, and the teacher has the feeling that some students may have switched to the fight/flight/freeze mode. Simple matching, sequencing and gap-filling exercises may be useful for engaging students in activities to calm down and focus on something else.

Conclusion

English language teachers are not usually taught to work with students living in conflict zones. Insights from educational psychotherapy helped teachers working in East Jerusalem to develop skills to understand and work with children living under the occupation, and these insights might be useful for teachers working in other contexts for teaching English along the fracture lines or who are teaching students affected by trauma, displacement and conflict – something which is, unfortunately, increasingly common. For example, teachers in the UK increasingly have refugee students in their mainstream classes and the British Council is working in countries such as Greece, Jordan, Kurdistan and Lebanon in refugee camps and with refugee teachers. In many countries teachers have students in their classes who have lived in abusive, traumatic environments at home and who will be showing similar protective behaviours in class. The insights gained from our work in Palestine may be helpful to teachers in all of these contexts.

Some of the main ways in which teachers in this context were able to expand their skills and understanding include:

- Re-framing students' behaviour and asking what underlying needs it might be showing you.
- Being aware of the effect of the environment on behaviour patterns and beliefs about adults and authority.
- Thinking consciously about what underlying defence mechanisms might be in operation, both for teachers and students, and naming them and working with them.
- Recognising what emotions might be coming from you, and what could be coming from the students.
- Practising breaking the expected pattern of (negative) response.
- Maintaining positive expectations of students.

- Choosing and developing tasks which address the students' underlying needs, e.g. making good use of stories, art and drama but also logical, left-brain activities for calming down.
- Managing your own wellbeing and developing conscious strategies to maintain a positive state of mind.
- Learning as much as you can about other people who can help. Arrange to meet with them regularly, rather than only reactively when there is a crisis.

Once we developed these strategies, in our work with Marie Delaney and beyond, teachers said they felt less overwhelmed. They let go of the emotive and unrealistic expectations that they may have been holding of themselves and their students and started to look at students more objectively, while acknowledging their own feelings of anxiety and frustration and allowing them to subside. Being able to reflect and learn together with a better understanding of the psychological forces at play gave teachers opportunities to change their negative attitudes to more positive ones. Teachers tried to break their expected pattern of response to students' behaviour, using language and tone differently, and planning to take the lead from students' moods. Together, they learned to protect their wellbeing and to reflect on the positive aspects of the class no matter what had gone on that day. They also began to consider more consciously the type of tasks which could be successfully used in the English language classroom to develop students' social, emotional and behavioural skills. Knowledge and a better understanding of what was happening in the British Council classrooms in East Jerusalem made things that little bit easier.

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Theme 2: The role of English in creating and maintaining relationships and stability locally and globally

10

English as the international language of campaigning

Sean Sutherland

Introduction

The nature of English as an international language means that it can be used by individuals and communities during times of difficulty in order to promote worldwide awareness of their causes. In those countries that Kachru (1989:16) has called ‘outer circle’ and ‘expanding circle’ countries; that is, outside ‘the traditional cultural and linguistic bases of English’ such as the USA, UK, Australia and so on, participants in protests, demonstrations and other mass participation campaign events may use English or English-and-other-language bilingual and multilingual signs as part of their repertoire of tactics. In this chapter I argue that such signs serve a dual purpose: first, for the referring purpose (Thornbury, 2005) of giving information about their campaigns, and second, for the purpose of interacting (Thornbury, 2005) with global audiences via the news media to attempt to create a ‘community of practice’ (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 1992) of like-minded individuals that, locally and abroad, share the campaigners’ goals. Using examples drawn from the Egyptian anti-government uprising of 2011, I argue that the campaigners used their English-language signs to present themselves as humorous, technologically-inclined modernists in a bid to appeal to international audiences who were watching and reading about the events via the media. By using tools from discourse analytic research and critical discourse analytic research, particularly van Dijk’s (2003:352) argument that ‘social power abuse, dominance and inequality... [is] resisted by text and talk in the social and political context’, it is argued here that the use of English can contribute to empathy, intercultural understanding and peace around the world. Government-level institutions, language teachers and English users may focus on English as an economic tool, neglecting its powerful international function as a potential linguistic resource to promote unity among people from different linguacultures.

Much of the scholarship on the role of English as an international language has focused on the detrimental effects the increasing worldwide use of the language might have on different language users

across the globe: the linguistic marginalisation of speakers of some languages; the disappearance of languages displaced by dominant languages, primarily English; hiring prejudices against non-users or poor speakers of English; the shift in language teaching around the world to focus exclusively on English; and the increasing monolingualism of English native speakers who might not feel the need to learn other languages. Phillipson’s (1992) seminal *Linguistic Imperialism* and Pennycook’s (1994) influential *The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language* both make convincing cases for a re-evaluation of the triumphalist attitude some display with regards to the pre-eminence of English as the world’s most frequent international language of choice. Phillipson criticises those who argue that English is inherently better than other languages, that English is so well established as to be irresistible as an international language, and that English is functionally the most useful language with which to interact with the world at large. Pennycook argues that the dominance of English enables the media-facilitated flow of information from socially and economically powerful ‘centre’ countries to weaker ‘periphery’ countries, imposing centre values on the periphery and consequently wearing away distinctive cultural and national identities.

Less has been written about the beneficial nature of English as a global means of international and intercultural communication, and some of those writings are not as critically reflective as they could be. Some claims in favour of English are too proud; Hook (2002:35–36) argues that English is the world’s most useful language, asking readers to ‘Imagine what life is like for those knowing only Lithuanian, Czech, Pushtu or Turkish!’ Readers of his English-language work cannot, of course, imagine being a monolingual speaker of Lithuanian, but they can empathise and surmise that monolingual speakers of any language might not feel as limited as Hook suggests. Honey (1997:5), who defines standard English as ‘specially important and valuable’ compared to others varieties of English, focuses the argument not on the superiority of English, but specifically on the superiority of one limited type of

English. Pennycook (2002:108) calls arguments of this type ‘colonial celebration’, which he defines as ‘a traditional view that sees the spread of English as inherently good for the world’. More balanced discussions of the benefits of English could still be criticised for celebratory descriptions of the spread of the language. Crystal’s (1997) description of the spread of English explains its role in various spheres: politics, technology, media and entertainment, travel, education and international safety standards. Even without direct positive evaluation of this state of affairs, it is difficult not to see such descriptions as laudatory. A user of English might naturally feel pride, as Crystal notes, in the success of one’s language, but might also worry about its detrimental effects.

Individual users of the language may show concern about or even resent the power of English, but empirical evidence suggests that even non-native speakers of English (NNEs), those who might have the most to lose by accepting English as a means of communication, continue to see value in its use. Descriptive statistics explaining the use of English around the world, both in terms of the number of speakers and in terms of the number of English-language interactions that occur, suggest that English is a valuable linguistic resource. Although English users may not assign any affective value to the language, the fact that it is used so often by so many indicates that it has a communicative value for them at least.

Dewey (2007) explains that the number of NNEs is greater than the number of native English speakers (NES), Kuo (2006:214) says English is in fact ‘used more’ by NNEs, while Seidlhofer (2005:339) argues that ‘the vast majority of verbal exchanges in English do not involve any native speakers of the language at all’. (See Graddol (2006) for an explanation of the method used to make such measurements.) There is legitimate criticism of the term ‘native speaker’, as explained by Rampton (1990) and Leung (2005), but I use the term here because, as Medgyes (1999) indicates, it is convenient in that there are many people whom we can unproblematically describe as native speakers, although the term is not always entirely accurate, in that some speakers with specific linguistic histories may be highly fluent although identifiably non-native. Furthermore, as Gil (2010) explains, it may be that some estimates regarding the use of English internationally may not clearly describe the numbers if they conflate the number of people who study the language with the number of people who are proficient in it.

However, if we accept the claims that NNEs outnumber NESs both as individual users of English and in terms of the frequency of the number of English-medium interactions that each group

produces, we are left to conclude that the benefits of the language are seen to outweigh the detriments by the majority of its users. The social situation of English as an international language is thus one in which it is both justifiably criticised for its dominance in multiple international institutions and simultaneously valued by its users as the most practical language for international communication. NNEs may find that English is both ‘a problem and a solution’ (Sergeant 2012:9) regarding their communicative needs.

English for campaigning

One communicative need that NNEs have found to be well served by English is in campaigns in which participants use monolingual English and English-and-other-language bilingual campaign signs to advertise their goals to a wider audience. Campaigners may use English as a shared language to draw media attention, and thus international audience attention, to their own situations to promote the idea that the whole world is ‘one’s neighbourhood or village’ (Meyrowitz, 2001:96). Pennycook (1994:3), after describing English-language signs used in situations as varied as Chinese political campaigns, Estonian independence campaigns and Iraqi anti-American campaigns, asks ‘what is the power and the effect of the English-speaking world and its media that placards are often most effective in English?’

Although the terms ‘campaign’ and ‘campaigner’ may bring to mind those who are active in championing a particular political party, I use the term more broadly to refer to those who are working together in an organised and active way for any goal, whether the primary purpose is to support or reject that goal. Related terms like ‘supporter’, ‘dissenter’, ‘striker’, ‘protestor’ and ‘demonstrator’ are either semantically limited in common use to denote members of only one side of any disagreement (‘supporter’ vs. ‘dissenter’), too limited in terms of the area of activity (‘striker’ as related most specifically to labour movements) or too often may have negative connotations (‘protestor’ and ‘demonstrator’), which can be used to demonise (Kress, 1990) the participants. In this research I aim to provide a theoretical description of the use of English by such participants, without making too overt evaluations of their behaviour, so ‘campaigner’, ‘campaign’ and ‘campaign events’ are the most neutral words in terms of both their neutral connotations and their wide applicability. As the number of campaigners who use English for international communication is only likely to grow, it seems particularly useful to describe the ways that they use English.

Kachru (1989) points out that anti-Western governments are aware of the advantages of using English in their intra-national and international communications, and that even anti-English-language campaigners use English to oppose the use of English in their home countries. It is thus evident that campaigners, be they NESs or NNEs of various proficiency levels from the level of the individual to national-level actors, are aware of the value of using English in their campaign communications. To come to an understanding about why they do so, and thus to provide more answers to Pennycook's question about the power and the effect of English, it is productive to look at some examples from which conclusions can be drawn. The examples below, all of which come from media reports, have not been selected based on a quantitative analysis, but rather are intended to show some of the variant uses of English that campaigners employ to achieve their goals.

English campaign signs in Egypt in 2011

In 2011, Egyptian campaigners protested against the government of then-president Hosni Mubarak in what was variously described by the international media as a 'revolution', 'uprising' or 'protest'. Eltanaway and Wiest (2011) attribute the campaign to the participants' anger at the social, political and economic conditions in Egypt at the time. Tahrir ('Liberation') Square, a large public space that was the focal point of anti-Mubarak campaigning at the time, saw over one million people gather, according to contemporary estimates from the Al-Jazeera news agency.

The campaigners in Tahrir Square used the English phrase 'game over' with some regularity as part of their movement. International audiences could thus see a multilingual sign reading 'Mubarak: GAME OVER' ('Mubarak' here was in Arabic) being held during a campaign event in downtown Cairo. (Examples of campaign signs are produced as faithfully as possible, but with the acknowledgement that written mode representations here may sometimes be poor substitutes for the original versions.) Other reports say the same phrase was written on the ground in Tahrir Square. 'GAME OVER', a jocular expression to see during what was a dangerous situation, was likely eye-catching to international audiences not only because it was in English, but because of its appearance in fields of discourse outside its normal one in electronic gaming.

The semantic content of 'game over' is clear, in that it signals the campaigners' desire to see the end of Mubarak. However, the presentation of this idea by using the 'game' metaphor makes this particularly

effective at communicating with international audiences. Metaphor, as is known, involves reference to one thing by mention of another. There is no literal sense in which Mubarak's actions and those of his government can be referred to as games. However, as Richardson (2006:67) argues, complex political situations can be rendered 'understandable' through metaphor, and metaphors involving games and sports are common for describing conflict. Richardson puts 'understandable' in scare quotes in his original, signalling that while the metaphor may not lead to complete understanding, it is certainly more understandable, at least in the brief form, than a full explanation of the complexities that would be involved in providing a literal explanation. The sign is in English, and the metaphor 'game' reduces a complex situation involving accusations of fraud, corruption and state-initiated violence, to a manageable level of information for international audiences.

It may be tempting to see the words 'GAME OVER' as 'text'; that is, as having only the semantic meaning presented within those words, but should be treated as 'discourse', defined by Georgakopoulou and Goutsos' (1997:4) as 'a more embracing term that calls attention to the situated uses of text: it comprises both text and context.' The meaning of texts are only fully interpretable if we consider the context in which those texts were produced, so that, for example, a child's spoken text 'I'm hungry' is understood by a parent to mean 'Give me food' if we interpret it as discourse. Below I consider the implications of considering the signs as discourse in order to understand their functions.

The Egyptian campaigners were participants in a dangerous situation, one which may not be easily understood by international watchers, so referring to that situation as a 'game' might seem dismissive of the seriousness of the events. However, using lexical chunks such as 'GAME OVER', and other examples to be seen below, helps to discursively align the campaigners with their international audiences. These campaigners, who might seem to be distant, culturally dissimilar people to much of the world, become immediately relatable as video gamers based on the use of a term from a common hobby. Gaming and computing terminology, 'high score', 'level up', 'hack' and so on, is accessible to many English language users, whether NESs, highly proficient NNEs, or NNEs with minimal language ability. Campbell (2013) points out that most video games played by Egyptians and other Arabic-speaking populaces are played in English. For some campaigners words like 'game over' may thus be among the only English words in their linguistic repertoire, while other more proficient or fluent users

may use such language as they know it is comprehensible to their compatriots and to NNESS and NESs around the world.

It is notable that other signage seen during the Egyptian campaigns made similar reference to computing and technology, creating a discourse that positioned the campaigners as similar to their international audiences, marking all of them as people who share similar modern interests. Another sign, 'Mubarak is OFFLINE' features the subject complement 'OFFLINE', which has the meaning of 'not connected to the internet', and so should be seen as negative in the sense that, while 'online' is modern, connected and fully-functional, 'OFFLINE' is outdated, isolated and irrelevant. The campaigners who use this terminology could use similar wording, perhaps 'broken', 'a failure' and so on, but 'OFFLINE' has the double benefit of being communicative in that it is in English, and also a term that indexes (Ochs, 1992) the campaigners as technologically savvy people who share modern interests with media audiences abroad.

Linguistic indexicality is the property of language that allows linguistic features to clearly, if not always directly, show a relation to a social or cultural variable characteristic of the users of that feature. Slang may index youth culture, swearing may index masculinity, specific lexis may index the user's professional role, and so on. Reyes (2005) has argued that indexicality allows language users to create alliances with those whom their language indices. In her study, she suggested that Asian Americans used some linguistic features associated with African Americans to index a shared identity as people who had suffered discrimination, and thus to present themselves as allies to African Americans.

Similarly, I argue that the Egyptian campaigners' signs index them as potential allies of international audiences based on their shared techno-culture. 'Delete Mubark' (with an arrow pointing from 'Mubark' {sic} to a stylised rubbish bin), another sign used during the 2011 campaigns, is self-explanatory, but it is salient to note that 'Delete' is more clearly field-specific to computing and technology than roughly synonymous imperatives such as 'remove' or 'erase'. If the purpose were simply to show the campaigners' negative evaluation of Mubarak, 'erase' would be sufficient. The selection of 'Delete', especially when seen as indicative of a general trend to word choice from the semantic field of computing and technology, clearly indexes the campaigners as technologically fluent, while the picture of the rubbish bin, the icon that commonly appears on computer monitors to show where deleted files are stored, adds some humour.

Martin (2007:170) argues that the use of English in outer and expanding circle countries often has associations of modernity and international appeal, among other things. English restaurant names, English phrases in advertising that is predominantly in a different language, and fragments of English in international pop music all rely on this link between English and international modernity. A clear example of this in the Egyptian campaign signs is the use of the Twitter hashtag in signs such as 'Mubarak #FAIL'. 'FAIL' itself has cachet as an internet meme, used to provide a quick negative, but humorous, evaluation of any situation, with the usual interpretation being something like 'the person being evaluated has failed to achieve whatever goal he/she set out to achieve'. A Google search for 'fail' shows it being used in areas as diverse as fashion, sports and film. (One example shows a gameshow contestant on a television programme incorrectly claiming that an elephant is bigger than the moon, with the word 'fail' prominently added above the screenshot.) The use of 'fail', with its expected humorous evaluation, as related to Mubarak, is somewhat unexpected for its jocularity, as with 'GAME OVER' above.

In addition, the hashtag ('#') in 'Mubarak #FAIL' is another clear indication that the campaigners are discursively indexing themselves as technologically literate people of the type that their audiences abroad are likely familiar with. (The hashtag symbol is, of course, not English, but its appearance as part of an otherwise English text suggests that it can be interpreted as part of the sign's discourse function.) The hashtag is used on social media sites to indicate that a post is relevant to a specific topic, so the hashtag does have a referential linking function on this sign in that it directs readers to the 'FAIL' topic on relevant social media platforms. However, if we consider the hashtag in light of the other signs that have been discussed thus far, we should also accept that the hashtag has the additional function of indexing the sign user's status as a social media user, whether or not there is any expectation that readers actually follow the 'FAIL' topic or not.

These campaign signs and others ('Mubarak-ectomy', a humorous and sophisticated bit of wordplay that relies on readers' knowledge of 'ectomy' meaning 'surgical removal') do not just use English as a sign of modernity, as described by Martin (2007). The words themselves ('GAME OVER', 'OFFLINE', 'Delete', '#FAIL') *index* modernity in such a consistent way that the Egyptian campaigners cannot have been coincidentally choosing such words independent of each other. The deliberate English word choice of such terms that clearly reference modern life are a form of dual indexicality (Reyes, 2005), simultaneously presenting the campaigners as

English proficient, a valuable communicative strategy for interacting with world audiences, and technologically proficient, a signal to those same audiences that the campaigners are, despite any surface-level differences, perhaps not so different.

Interestingly, pro-government campaigners seem to have corroborated the idea that English use was a sign of international alliance building by anti-government campaigners. Bassiouney (2012:113) shows evidence that the use of English by campaigners in Tahrir Square was used to attack their legitimacy by some other Egyptians, the argument being that the use of English was not characteristic of 'real Egyptians'. If there is a public discourse in Egypt that suggests that English is somehow not characteristic of Egyptians, then those Egyptians who do use English in their campaign signs may have had additional reasons to see their English as being indicative of internationalism. (This is not to suggest that use of English is in fact characteristic of Egyptians or not; only that if some popular discourse suggests that English is somehow not Egyptian, then there may be Egyptians who are drawn to using English as a sign that they see themselves as world citizens in addition to being Egyptian ones.)

Campaigners may want to build alliances, but without media attention the reach of their signs, English or otherwise, will be limited. It is obvious to say that campaigners must draw attention to their goals if their campaigns are to have an effect, and that English magnifies this at the transnational level. Campaigns, especially newly emerging ones, must aim to reach a certain critical mass of awareness in order to spread to members of the public within their own borders and abroad if they are to succeed. To reach this critical mass, it is necessary to attract the attention of the media, both local and international.

Use of English signs to increase newsworthiness

Galtung and Ruge (1973) argue that there are 12 elements of newsworthiness, of which two are particularly important to this research. First, an event is more newsworthy if it is unambiguous. Newspaper readers and television viewers cannot be expected to always delve particularly deeply into the innumerable topics that are presented in the media. This is not a slight on news consumers, but rather an acknowledgement of the limited time and attention span that we have available. The English signs that campaigners use help remove ambiguity, partly by presenting cause-related information in a language news consumers understand, and partly by reducing complex situations to the more easily accessible metaphorical descriptions of games.

Second, an event is more newsworthy if it features reference to people, whether they are figures of public note or not. Events do not, as Bignell (2002) argues, naturally exist as news. Media space is limited, so media producers are selective in terms of what they choose to frame as newsworthy. Having a person or people to focus on helps producers see and present an event as having news value. As Cottle (2011:294) explains, media coverage gave Egyptian campaigners 'a human face', making them relatable to distant audiences. A campaigner who holds an English sign can function as a discourse metaphor for the entire event, meaning that a particular person with that specific sign can be positioned as representing the multitude of campaigners, which reduces the ambiguity or at least the apparent ambiguity that may be present.

Importantly, any particular campaigner does not have to be fluent in English in order to be newsworthy and to aid with the reduction of ambiguity. Unlike in spontaneous spoken mode news interviews, in which it is clear that an interviewee must be at least somewhat English fluent in order to be seen as newsworthy and in order to participate meaningfully, campaigners carrying signs can take more time to plan their written mode messages, or can simply carry signs written by others. Campaigners can show their support, present themselves as newsworthy to international audiences, and thus attempt to build alliances among themselves and with international audiences, without actually knowing English as individuals.

Della Porta (2012) explains that one of the main functions of campaigns ('protests' in her words) is to create communities, an echo of Reyes' argument about alliance building through language use. Theorists have defined communities with a linguistic focus in various ways. Lave and Wenger's (1991) concept of 'community of practice', defined by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992:464) as 'an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavour', better encapsulates the idea that the participants in a campaign are using English to support their community-building process. Seals (2011) argues that an immigration policy campaign event held in the United States can be seen as an attempt by participants to build or maintain a community of practice. In the same manner, we can see the Egyptian campaigns described earlier, and similar campaigns, as manifestations of communities of practice at the local level and as attempts to extend the community to watchers abroad. The concept of 'joint enterprise', one of the characteristics of a community of practice, is most obviously present in the campaigners themselves, but the use of English

signage can be seen as a direct effort to extend the joint enterprise of the campaign to others outside of the campaigners' locale.

Conclusion

Widdowson (1994:386) has argued that we can no longer see English as 'owned', in his words, by native speakers of English. He rejects prejudices that see the use of English by native speakers as the only valid uses of the language. As Wee (2002:282) explains: 'English is either owned by all who use the language, or what amounts to essentially the same thing, its ownership is not restricted to any particular group of speakers'. Campaigners using English in their signage are claiming ownership of English and using it for their own purposes, despite any potential negative effects that growth of English may have had on them or their communities. The use of English on campaign signs allows members of periphery countries (Phillipson, 1992) to communicate with members of centre countries. Although the communication is mediated by journalists, the visibility of the signs and the shared language allows for some direct communication.

Hakam (2009:36), describing the value of critical discourse analysis, explains that 'the mass media play a pivotal role in the establishment and perpetuation of power relationships, as it is through the discursive practices of the media that the dominant ideology is disseminated and reinforced'. Wodak and Matouschek (1993) argue that the goals of critical discourse analysis should be to examine natural language situations of social relevance, particularly those that involve the media and other institutions. Following this guidance, we can see that it is thus useful to examine the practices of NNES campaigners who carry English signs to see how such people, often from periphery countries, are able to use English to challenge dominant ideologies, whether those of the leadership of their own countries or regions, or of centre countries. The use of English in this manner gives voice to those who might not otherwise be heard internationally, creates and maintains relationships with those abroad in an attempt to build a community of practice of like-minded individuals, and thus contributes to empathy, intercultural understanding and peace worldwide.

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11

Language that works: creating a multilingual learning culture in social enterprise

Marilyn Garson

Introduction

This chapter considers the language practices of three social enterprise workplaces in Cambodia, Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the Gaza Strip, Palestine. While directing these social enterprises over an 18-year period, I found that language and literacy learning set the tone for an all-encompassing professional learning environment, in a workplace which enabled staff to succeed in their own language(s). English added its greatest value as one language among many.

There is no single definition for the elastic set of modalities known as social enterprises. In general, they are organizations that apply commercial strategies to a social objective, and can be structured anywhere on a spectrum between private sector businesses and conventional public sector charities or NGO activities (see Figure 1). Social enterprises typically combine a mix of social values and goals with commercial business practices to come up with various ownership models, income and capitalization strategies, and unique management and service systems to maximize social value (Dawans, et al., n.d.). While there is no single linkage of these enterprises to peacebuilding or stability, that linkage is achieved through the creation of sustainable employment. The enterprises discussed in this chapter all hug the business-like center of the public-private spectrum, and they all regard their social mission as being of equal importance to financial viability.

I became a social entrepreneur in order to create jobs where the risks and profits would not justify business investment; jobs that would endure beyond the life of donor-funded income generation. Durable employment helps to stabilize the prospects of marginalised households. Therefore, as creators of sustainable jobs, these social enterprises became part of national peacebuilding or stabilizing processes.

In this chapter, I focus on some contextual and workplace language issues which affected the staff in three very differently disadvantaged communities: Cambodians with disabilities and former child combatants with little or no formal education, Afghan women who were not permitted to leave their homes to work, and Gazan university graduates employed behind a blockade. Because I was the sole expatriate on site for all or most of each enterprise's establishment, the reference to 'staff' should always be assumed to refer to my national colleagues, for whom English was not a first language.

The novelty of social enterprise to each aid-dependent economy implied a steep learning curve for all involved. In order to cultivate an air of curiosity and experiment, each workplace needed to create a learning culture, a set of norms to embed ongoing learning. English was an element of that learning, because each enterprise survived by selling goods or services to English speakers, and exporting to English-speaking markets.

Language was an early consideration in establishing each operation. At the outset, language use tended to reflect pre-existing fracture lines and hierarchical structures within each target community. However, language habits were more amenable to change than other sources of social division. Staff saw the benefits of language learning early in each business's development. As they learned to use language in new and different ways, they also demonstrated their ability to make changes and see results. As linguistically stratified workplaces became more



Figure 1: Social Enterprise Typology (Dawans et al., n.d.)

⁷Donors' actual contribution to peacebuilding or stability in Afghanistan and the Gaza Strip can be questioned. Here, it will suffice to observe that employment quality varied within the prevailing ambivalent socio-economic conditions of each location.

inclusive, language practice began to model and catalyze the learning cultures which would enable each workplace to succeed more broadly.

Technology also influenced the spread of English during these years (1998–2015). Once an asset of the privileged elite, English became the pre-eminent language of electronic information. Following the three case studies I present below, in which I reflect on the language practices of three social enterprise workplaces I was involved in establishing from 1998 to 2015, I conclude the chapter by reviewing the progression of the role of technology in each context.

1998–2001, Cambodia

In this Cambodian case study, I show how a focus on language and literacy learning became the leading edge of creating an all-encompassing workplace learning culture. By legitimating informal learning in the workplace, we overcame Cambodia's post-war cultural deterrence of curiosity. This lesson indelibly shaped all my subsequent work in social enterprise.

Rehab Craft Cambodia was operated by and for Cambodians with disabilities, primarily landmine amputees. It employed 80 staff to manufacture and sell high-quality silk and leather goods, and it was supplied by an additional 60 rural family businesses. Staff and suppliers were child survivors of the Khmer Rouge genocide, which killed, starved or worked to death up to two million Cambodians between 1975 and 1979. The subsequent civil war dragged on until 1997. There had been no accounting for the genocide which had occurred. My colleagues were members of a profoundly shocked, grieving, atomized and viscerally mistrustful generation.

Most male staff and home-workers had been child combatants. As adults, disability condemned them to the margins of society, where jobs were critical to survival. In my first year with Rehab Craft, the men who lost their jobs died shortly after, violently or of untreated illness. Lacking any facilitated reconciliation, Cambodia's stability and progress hinged partly on the ability of former soldiers and civilian survivors to succeed together, without mediation, in workplaces like ours.

Rehab Craft Cambodia was founded by Colin McLennan, in the final years of his long and dedicated work with people with disabilities. I was recruited to advise and direct the organization as he retired. However, he was closing the doors when I arrived. Rehab Craft's generous cost structures made its goods too expensive to sell beyond the expiry of its donor funding agreements. I proposed to salvage a durable business with the management team.

None of us had done anything like that before, but the organization's skills and social value justified the risk.

Workplace communications were divisive, whether in Khmer, English or in translation. The Khmer Rouge had undermined the use of language to form and express ideas. My colleagues knew plenty of words for 'blame', but children did not learn words for judgement and responsibility during the Khmer Rouge years. Society gave them no model to learn these concepts, for if no one is held responsible for two million deaths, then no one need take responsibility for anything. Equally problematic, it was shameful for a Cambodian to assert or guess wrongly in front of others. With curiosity stigmatized, many of my colleagues retreated from the risks of learning.

The scarcity of English reinforced power dynamics in Cambodia's linguistically stratified workplaces. Very few of our staff needed English, but English speakers derived great influence as my predecessor's gatekeepers and translators. Non-English-speaking staff could not speak directly (or privately) with their non-Khmer-speaking employer. Complaints rarely reached him. Translation quality varied widely. Some translators were ashamed to admit their weak comprehension, and others hoarded the power of withheld information.

I spoke rudimentary Khmer when I arrived. In my first staff meeting, I asked whether staff preferred to speak to me at speed through a translator; or patiently, directly, with frequent resort to dictionaries. Every monolingual Cambodian staff member leapt at the opportunity to communicate in Khmer, even offering their time as my Khmer tutors to enable our unmediated conversation. Unwittingly, we also stumbled upon the cure for the culturally deterred unwillingness to be seen learning. As they taught me their language, we fell into the habit of learning together and creating a learning environment.

I brought my Khmer spelling homework to junior Cambodian staff whose marginal Khmer literacy matched my own. Together, we stumbled from Khmer letter recognition to sounding out words. We marvelled at the disparity between the semi-aspirated sounds and the spelled endings of words, and groaned at Khmer's long strings of silent letters. We both learned to read Khmer, but their spoken fluency elevated them into the added, unaccustomed role of teacher. Quietly they began to study in pairs or groups of their own.

Literate Cambodian managers edited the spelling of my Khmer training notes, and acquired the ideas without the risk of being publicly wrong. Khmer

dictionaries soon covered a spare table, their use no longer furtive. We dug out a management vocabulary as we needed it. Sales projections evolved from “maybe” through “likely”, and into “probably”. After someone forecasted “probably good”, we unearthed Khmer synonyms for “optimism.”

Rehab Craft’s organic practice of Khmer literacy remained contagious only as long as it remained informal. Staff shrugged off every offer of structured study. They preferred to shape their own practice, opting in rather than being seen to opt out of structured learning. Among those who lacked both formal literacy and numeracy, numeracy was in far greater demand. They found numbers more immediately useful than letters. Numbers improved their comprehension of work instructions, and numerate people could count their own change in the market. Ten numbers felt less daunting than the fiendishly complex Khmer alphabet. Of those who mastered the alphabet, reading only rarely led to writing, which triggered their deep-set aversion to creating any written record of their actions. Because it was the sole qualification for management, Khmer writing came to indicate ambition. Only those seeking work in sales or marketing studied English.

This depoliticized, self-led practice encouraged voluntary, informal learning, without penalizing anyone who did not choose to study. The majority of Rehab Craft staff sought stability rather than advancement. Our practice let them succeed in their work, without mediation, in Khmer. We held rigorously to that core workplace value.

After three years, the workforce was largely numerate. Many had improved their Khmer literacy as well. With their prospects enhanced by reliable work, most had married and strengthened their stake in Cambodia’s peaceful future.

2005–2010, Afghanistan and Pakistan

In Afghanistan and Pakistan, the outcomes of our social enterprise were murkier. Language issues vexed the international intervention, whose ideology clashed with Afghan ways of doing business. Afghan women experienced our social enterprise as part of a wider, destabilizing change.

A decade had passed between the broad-based interventions that I witnessed in Cambodia and Afghanistan. Neoliberal policies and practices channeled developing states evermore rigidly toward global markets. Privatization, deregulation, free capitalist trade and the reduction of public services became routine, obviating open-ended consultations.

It lies beyond the scope of this chapter to query neoliberal donors’ intentions, or their impact on peacebuilding or stability (but see, for example, Duffield, 2001 or Harvey, 2005 for academic analyses; Klein, 2008 or Loewenstein, 2015 for explorations of opportunistic reform in beset states as ‘disaster capitalism’). Here, one need only note that English, increasingly the language of implementation of donor projects, acquired the neoliberal baggage.

Across Afghanistan’s many languages, English became a hot-button proxy for contested social and economic change. Afghanistan is a decentralized polyglot, speaking over 40 languages with no lingua franca (Simons and Fennig, 2017). Afghans were routinely multilingual, although English was not widespread. Foreigners’ brief consulting contracts neither required nor rewarded local language fluency, and even long-term foreigners rarely learned more than one Afghan language. English was the preserve of an urban development elite, comprised of citified twenty-somethings whose influence sidelined elder constituencies. Foreign consultants promulgated economic policy with none of the customary, patient deliberation.

In daily practice, the use of English could deepen international misunderstandings. While advising Afghanistan’s largest association of business owners, I saw how poorly the English of Western, capitalist business conveyed Afghan business sensibilities. Westerners assume that business is capitalist; that ‘business’ describes the private ownership of production for profit, waged labour, competitive sales and the accumulation of capital. Westerners have dispensed with that explanatory coda in conversation – but Afghan business is not capitalist. Clusters of a dozen or more adjacent shops did not ‘compete’ to sell their identical merchandise to Afghans. Afghans unerringly entered the shop whose window bore a family name from their own tribe. They did not compare prices. Their trade and credit were functions of trust and enforceable social capital, not competition.

Western analysts, viewing Afghanistan as a security problem, discounted the many thousands of livelihoods secured by Afghan warlords. In a country whose central government exercised only nominal control, warlords’ vertical networks of obligation offered a vital, intermediate layer of socio-economic protection (for more on economic markets in Afghanistan, see the analyses conducted by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit in 2004 and 2005). English ‘value chains’ represented neither the logic nor the socio-political value of Afghan networks.

⁶This curriculum was published by Salam Institute for Peace and Justice in Washington, DC. More information can be found at <http://salaminstitute.org/portal/forgiveness-in-the-middle-east/>.

Capitalist business was predicated upon effective government regulation, to standardize and uphold contractual relations between strangers. Predictable legal regimes secured Western, individual consumerism – which Afghans were presumed to want. However, individualism was antithetical in Afghanistan. There, it was a truism that no Afghan acted alone. Afghans' norms and networks protected them from predation far more effectively than government regulation. Consumerism could not replace the webs that identified and connected Afghans.

Countless business terms were translated, without conveying the disparate social or political institutions which informed the terminology. When explanations were offered, neither language described the other business culture neutrally. Westerners looked askance at 'tribal' or 'warlord' thinking. Many Afghans disdained Western transactional, atomized, unprotected consumerism (although some younger urbanites were keen). In the absence of meaningful discussion, neoliberal reforms confronted Afghans' deeply held values, and widened the fracture lines between reformers and the society they were presuming to reform.

While launching an enterprise, I witnessed this clash at household level. Women weighed the benefit of market-led employment against the indifference of global markets. Language was required to explain the things we could not change.

Up to 1,500 women earned income by embroidering at home for Zardozi Enterprise – Markets for Afghan Artisans (see <http://zardozi.org>). Zardozi was established from the Danish-funded DACAAR Sewing Centre, one of Afghanistan's oldest income generation projects. The Sewing Centre had irreplaceable, inter-generational value as a women's professional network. This, as with the social value of Rehab Craft, justified the financial risk of re-creating the network as a social enterprise. These women, in the conservative eastern provinces of Afghanistan and the Afghan refugee camps around Peshawar, Pakistan, were not permitted to leave their homes to work. They were unlikely to have visited provincial centers, nor Kabul, let alone the boutiques and trade shows of New York, where Zardozi's export programme grew.

Zardozi's donor withdrew after 23 years of charitable operations. Abruptly, Zardozi became an unfunded social enterprise. Its continuity would allow women to earn skilled, socially approved income at home. Embroidery earned discretionary female income; conceptually – but of course imperfectly – separate from household funds. In Afghanistan as elsewhere, donors had begun to attach a lengthening list of

conditions to receiving other forms of household assistance, making women's income evermore vital.

An exceptionally complex operation, Zardozi's continuity was hardly assured. It spanned a tenuous, disputed border to employ women in two degenerating environments. Staff used three currencies and spoke many dialects of Dari, Pashtu and Urdu. Zardozi's deeper complexity stemmed from the embroiderers' employment expectations, which were the product of a generation of funded, charitable operations. Globalization was disrupting workplace expectations around the world, but homebound Afghan women could not convene to discuss changing labour norms. They experienced change at hundreds of remote courtyard gates, as the language of traditional loyalties encountered the transactional, English-speaking marketplace demands.

Zardozi's inclusion in the global marketplace occurred at a particularly unstable moment, as the 2008 spike in world food prices was being eclipsed by a systemic financial crisis. Embroiderers were doubly exposed to this transnational economic shock: food prices rose as the Pakistani rupee plummeted, losing 23 per cent of its value in eight months (BBC, 2008). The women's work bought markedly less food (for more on the impacts of the global food price spike, see ODI, 2008). Hundreds of women demanded that Zardozi respond like a familiar, vertical network of obligations. Warlords and NGOs alike would protect them from such external shocks: why didn't Zardozi?

They were correct to perceive their loss of insulation, and uninsulated change would not be a single episode. Shocks were part of the structure, even a signature, of global markets. An unfunded social enterprise might endure, but it could not cushion their losses. The women's disappointment in the diminished terms of their employment mirrored the ambivalence of many Afghans to the Western economic offering.

We needed a language to explain what we could not fix. Transparency would enable the women to factor our new, exigent kind of network into their dwindling set of household income strategies – but what language withstands so many courtyard iterations?

Workplaces or industries commonly anglicize the vocabulary of qualitatively new technologies, such as computers. In Afghanistan, it would have been absurd to conduct neoliberal English courses in hundreds of courtyards, particularly when the English vernacular so poorly meshed with local customs. Instead, we made the enterprise's headquarters into an interoperable polyglot,

reflecting the countryside around us. We workshopped each concept through four languages, including the English of our customers. We added symbols and hardy semiotics, and trusted our multilingual field teams to disseminate the facts in the dialects of each courtyard.

It would be self-aggrandizing to associate English with peacebuilding or stability in Afghanistan. English was the language of our export markets, but for my Afghan colleagues it was also a freighted language of hard choices. By placing it appropriately within a basket of local languages, we enabled women to cope (if not to feel successful) in their own idiom.

2011–2015, Gaza Strip, Palestine

For Gazans eager to connect with the global marketplace, the business of social enterprise was a first choice, not a last resort. Gazans' thriving embrace of English allowed my team to devise a truly multilingual social enterprise workplace.

Gaza is neither post-conflict nor stable. Uniquely bonded by their experience of surviving repeated wars (2008–09, 2012, 2014) behind a blockade, Gazans require no foreign trust-building intervention. They need political resolution, for which economic development is no substitute. Indeed, there are thoroughgoing, cogent challenges to the donors' role in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (for a detailed case study of neoliberalism's conditioning of the peace and aid offering in Gaza, see Haddad, 2016). In Gaza, a social enterprise could only improve the economic prospects of some households. It also promoted the benefits of engaging with hopeful Gazan youth, even while unending conflict traps two million Gazans in a space as long as a marathon.

Gaza is highly educated, 96.5 per cent literate. Its university graduates confront the world's highest unemployment rate: over 60 per cent for youth, and rising with education (World Bank, 2015). English is a widespread and greatly valued asset. A language of opportunity and empowerment, English is inextricable from technologies like the ubiquitous smartphones that connect young Gazans to a world they cannot visit (*cf.* Sabbagh, et al., 2012). IT offered a unique opportunity to export high-value services through the blockade. IT companies were merit-driven employers of women, and Gazan women did not shy away from studying science and technology. But IT companies were not adding jobs in 2011–13 (for a fuller explanation of the importance of IT in Gaza, see Garson, 2013 or World Bank, 2013). My team designed the Gaza Gateway (www.ggateway.tech) to bridge the gap between university graduation and employability for some of Gaza's 1,000 annual computer science graduates. The Gaza

Gateway concept was developed in collaboration with, and its pilot was housed by, the office of the Gaza Operations Director of the United Nations Refugee and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). We chose outsourcing to create entry-level work for inexperienced, recent university graduates.

To recruit its first project team, the Gaza Gateway management adhered to the prevailing practice of testing and interviewing in English for computer-related work. There being no Arabic programming language, most Gazan computer science degrees were taught partly in English. The client project materials of the Gaza Gateway would also be English, bolstering the importance of English proficiency.

The enterprise's first intake of bilingual high achievers promptly replicated the poor hiring outcomes of the employers around us. To be sure, the project suffered from issues unrelated to recruitment, but we compounded those problems by recruiting the wrong people. We had been lured by Gaza's low-hanging fruit, its apparent surfeit of ready-made English skills.

Seeking any foothold in their super-saturated labour market, most Gazan families invested heavily in their children's employable skills. However, more than other skills, English served as a proxy for socio-economic advantage within the labour market competition. Wealthier families could afford extra English lessons. Their children did not have to work after school, and so enjoyed more study time, under less pressure. Many parents drilled their children relentlessly for exams (a milestone so significant that special noise by-laws enforced the quiet), but privileged parents were more likely to have the time and ability to drill their children in English, or to speak some English around the house.

Our English interviews replicated those families' existing advantages. Although other graduates might have been keener, our weighting of language curtailed their prospects. If they performed less well in the English language, they were less able to demonstrate all of the personal skills that we were assessing during English-language interviews.

From among hundreds of roundly competent applicants, the Gaza Gateway's management team unwittingly hired the graduates who already possessed the widest range of choices. No wonder our retention was poor. We chose the candidates whose vocabulary made them appear to be every employer's shortcut to English-speaking markets. With such fortunate choices, these high achievers had only limited interest in our work: entry-level work at entry-level wages did not suffice to retain them.

We had created an English career path rather than a bilingual one.

To understand the difference between the two, I turned to one of my favourite language models. Digital Divide Data (www.digitaldividedata.com), a Cambodian social enterprise, began by employing disadvantaged youth to digitize English materials. Rather than learning the language, these young Cambodians learned 26 symbols. In a Khmer-speaking workplace, they digitized on the strength of English letter recognition. We extrapolated from that to define a multilingual Gazan workplace as one where graduates learned primarily in Arabic, while they applied their learning to English projects. Instead of being an insurmountable obstacle to recruitment; English became one essential, improvable skill within an employable skills set.

We advertised for graduates who could learn in Arabic, while successfully using English work materials. That profile implied Arabic-language interviews, including a number of spoken and written English assessments of technical comprehension. Our talent pool expanded exponentially. Candidates promoted themselves more effectively – and interviewers judged them more astutely – in their first language. We found eager, motivated job seekers behind the front row of English advantage; with solid academic achievements including sufficient English. Within a recruitment process that elicited more of these all-rounders' strengths, English became one earned, competitive advantage. We interviewed for character and baseline skills, hired the person (rather than the person's English vocabulary) and invested steadily in their skills and language acquisition.

This formula placed complex demands on the Team Leaders of each project group, who were also recent graduates. They interfaced between languages. At their best, they facilitated the hourly learning which extended their teams' linguistic comfort zones. Multilingualism also downgraded my own frontline role. An English bubble followed me as stronger English speakers jockeyed for advantage. I handed over many of my frontline tasks to senior managers, and dedicated more of my time to coaching and supporting professional development at all levels of the enterprise.

Every one of these adjustments proved to be salutary. Multilingualism more genuinely fulfilled our mission by making employment accessible to more people. It proved less wasteful than training bilingual graduates who were not retained. Management flourished at higher levels of challenge. In particular, multilingual work opened a tier of exciting

opportunities for the outstanding graduates who became Team Leaders.

The skills gap between graduation and employability was a common phenomenon. Our experience suggested that English practices widened the gap. When graduates were employed and enabled in their own language, multilingualism helped to close the gap. It treated English as one more technical competency, to ripen with practice into an applied skill.

1998–2015, the impact of internet English

My work in social enterprise coincided with the formative penetration and affordability of the internet. English devolved rapidly around me, from an elite to a widespread language in youthful, densely connected societies like Cambodia or Gaza. English information and market linkages began as a subtext, and emerged as a driver of enterprise employment creation during this time period.

In 1990s Cambodia, the internet was an asset, although not yet a daily requirement in offices like ours. I sent quarterly donor reports by fax, and needed no connection at home. However, my colleagues' linguistic isolation affected them to a degree that is difficult to recapture now. Lacking education in history, literacy or widely available books, my colleagues could not contextualize their own shocking life experiences. Most did not know of any precedent for genocide. They knew Germany and Japan as wealthy donor states, but not as examples of post-war recovery. Cut off from history, they believed that Cambodia was uniquely, terribly fated. I searched the internet for pictures, and we laboriously translated articles about national recoveries.

The internet was a valuable, scarce resource costing to up to \$8 US per hour when I arrived. We used it sparingly. Change loomed: as I left Cambodia in August 2001, the cost of internet dial-up access had halved, and advertisements for wireless internet routers had begun to signal the spread and lowering price of access (for detail on the costs and dramatic spread of access in Cambodia, see Minges, et al., 2002).

I spent the next two years launching and directing Worldstock.com, a division of the American retailer Overstock.com. Worldstock.com connected global artisan groups like Rehab Craft to the employment potential of mainstream e-commerce. English was part of the price of admission to this and later electronic marketplaces. For those wanting a share of the growth, the employment of an English- and technology-proficient staff member became a *sine qua non* of export readiness.

By the middle of the decade, the primacy of internet information was firmly fixed, and the volume of communications and reporting had mushroomed. None of my Afghan offices could have functioned without the internet. Afghans who condemned, and those who aspired to, Westernized life both associated it with the internet.

Even as we increased our reliance on electronic news, the linguistic narratives of the war began to diverge in subtly polarizing ways. At the first news of a bomb, we all searched and listened in our own languages. My English news led with, and emphasized, foreign casualties. Dari news seemed to us more likely to use cultural codes to attribute the bombs to Pashtun Taliban, or the suicide bombs to Pakistanis. We thought the Pashtu reports more often cited foreign contractors' unrestrained gunfire as a cause of bystander casualties. The internet filter bubble had begun to use language as a proxy for our politics, and to stoke mutual suspicion and fear (on the targeting of news and electronic information, see Pariser, 2011). We tried to triangulate, but triangulation presumed that a truth would be found at the midpoint between narratives.

Young Gaza belonged proudly to the Web 2.0 generation, creating and consuming unmediated content, collaborating with strangers on projects, spelling in the abbreviations of text messages, and failing to distinguish between fact, conjecture and disinformation (much as I failed in the media of other cultures and languages). Arabic connected them regionally, and English globally.

Internet English had terrific importance for my colleagues in blockaded Gaza. It enabled their ongoing remote learning, their membership in communities of affinity or practice, and their blogs (on Palestinian use of the internet, see Aouragh, 2012). Many, perhaps a majority, of my colleagues maintained longstanding English Facebook friendships with Israelis. Unsurprisingly, they and their peers also added an English social media dimension to the Palestine–Israel conflict by telling direct, experiential stories (on the emerging role of, largely English, social media in the Israel-Palestine conflict, see Kunstman and Stein, 2015).

Within the 18-year span of the experiences described in this chapter, technology helped to firmly fix English in its role as a language of new workplace and social ideas. English introduced information, which was disseminated and debated in local languages.

Conclusion

My experiences working in social enterprise in these three contexts gradually shaped my own language practice. They taught me to analyze from the overarching perspective of 'languages', rather than 'English'. English added its greatest value as one language among many, and as one dimension of workplace solutions that enabled people to succeed in their own language(s).

Language became part of my own analysis of each new context: how did language or literacy marginalize some groups or contribute to conflict? How were local and introduced languages freighted with broader questions of power, advantage, trust, access or ideology? Who was elevated, and who was diminished, by patterns of communication?

Language proved to be a constructive and actionable aspect of situation analysis, because language usage was habituated, but not fixed. Language habits could rapidly, affordably, change. Once I saw how a workplace used language to stratify, I looked for ways to re-pattern the divisive usage. In the process, as with the organic learning of Rehab Craft, language operations could empower individual learners and seed a vital workplace learning culture.

However, even at higher levels of educational achievement, I came to understand the need for an interpreter or bridge between an English market and the workplace. An intermediary let staff succeed at their current levels of language achievement, while they kept learning. As with English interviews in Gaza, apparent shortcuts quickly made English into a stumbling block rather than a building block of multilingual operations.

A single working principle emerged for the leadership of these social enterprises: each workplace required its management team to devise a genuinely multilingual configuration. Teams enacted this principle differently in each stressed locality, but the experience was consistent. When English was placed appropriately within the basket of working languages, it assisted each social enterprise to fulfil both aspects of its blended mission, as a local employer and a job-creating actor in foreign markets. Multilingualism encouraged the stable employment, which was the enterprises' chief contribution to stability and peacebuilding.

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12

The role of English in the safety, stability, and resilience of Bangladeshi economic migrants working in the Middle East

Mike Solly, Qumrul Hasan Chowdhury, Elizabeth J. Erling and Philip Seargeant

Introduction

Migration in its various forms is becoming a key driver of opportunity in the 21st century but is also, for many, an experience which can lead to exploitation and vulnerability. A recent area of focus for both humanitarian and educational intervention has understandably been directed towards migration from war zones, particularly from the Middle East. However, vast numbers continue to migrate to the Middle East, in search of work and income to send to families back at home. Bangladesh has long provided many of these migrants. In fact, since 1970 the country has sent around ten million unskilled workers and labourers to markets predominantly in the Middle East, as well as East Asia. Many are semi-literate in their national language (Bangla) and most have either very rudimentary or no real knowledge of languages that would be required in the host countries (e.g. Arabic and English) (Rao and Hossain, 2011).

Drawing on a study conducted in 2013 of returned migrants from one particular village in rural Bangladesh, this chapter examines the language needs of this varied group of temporary workers to the Middle East. It considers language not only as a necessary skill for work, but also as a tool for negotiating and dealing with the threats, sometimes very serious, faced by the participants in the study. The study shows how the lack of linguistic competence in relevant languages increased people's vulnerability, and how the acquisition of such languages, and particularly English, was partially able to promote the protective factors needed to build resilience in the contexts in which the workers found themselves. Although the numbers in the study are small, and the context very particular, the chapter examines why the linguistic needs outlined here, along with the recommendations based upon it, are potentially relevant and applicable to huge numbers of migrant workers who would gain from further communication and language skills to increase their intercultural

competence and, in doing so, decrease their vulnerability to alienation, abuse and trauma.

The notion of resilience for forced and economic migrants

Resilience in this context is understood as how individuals demonstrate 'competence to significant risk exposure' (Smith, 2006:53). This signals a shift away from a concentration on the 'problems and deficits' of individuals, to understanding how people exercise strengths and agency in order to face adverse situations (Wong and Song, 2008:132). The notion of 'resilience' as a means of harnessing protective factors to strengthen an individual in times of hardship and adversity, and of decreasing their vulnerability to the potential outcomes of hardship and adversity, has been part of the discourse in humanitarian interventions for some years. As a result of displaced populations from war and other crises (particularly those related to Syria), organisations such as the British Council are now looking at how the notion of 'resilience' can be applied to the successful acquisition of necessary languages needed by Syrians who have become refugees in neighbouring countries. A recent British Council report recommends language programme interventions for migrants in this context (Capstick and Delaney, 2016), with a specific focus on the particular situation of long-term refugees from the Syria crises. We contend that although the context discussed in this chapter is very different, and that economic migrants crucially have a large element of choice in most (but not all) cases of migration, there are still commonalities around the isolation and potential trauma that can be experienced in the process. The successful provision of appropriate language skills either before or during the period of migration may alleviate the pressures that the migrants may suffer, and so build individual and group resilience, and it is within this context that we approach the issue.

The context and the study

Temporary economic migration from Bangladesh takes place from all over the country, and there are some villages and communities where almost every household has members who are either working overseas or have recently returned. For our study we concentrated on one such village, Kharrah, where data were collected primarily from returnees but also from the current migrant workers who are or were based predominantly in the Middle East. The research was conducted in three stages: the pilot phase, the main study and a follow-up visit. Two Bangladeshi researchers conducted the fieldwork, and a UK-based researcher visited the site and met some of the participants in the pilot stage. The Bangladeshi researchers had support of a local community member in order to recruit participants, mostly through a snowball sampling method. In total, 27 returnee and current migrant workers were interviewed, either in small groups or individually, where they were asked a range of questions about their migration experience. These questions were of a general nature that aimed to elicit language-relevant responses in a flexible way rather than to be explicit that the primary interest was in the role of languages in their experience. The interview data were treated as accounts of truths, facts and beliefs, co-constructed between interviewer and interviewee (Talmy, 2010), and were used to build autobiographical narratives of the participants, and through this to build a picture both individually and historically of the role of language in the migration experience (Pavlenko, 2007).

Ethical sensitivity was exercised throughout the project, particularly in line with local educational and socio-cultural realities and expectations (see Hultgren, et al., 2016). All participants are referred to using pseudonyms.

Findings and discussion

The project's findings indicate the presence of anxiety, stress, fear and feelings of vulnerability among most of the migrant workers, relating to a range of economic migration issues across the Middle East. Our analysis also shows that the discourses of anxiety and fear involved with economic migration are also widely prevalent and become a topic of discussion among the returnee and current migrant workers, creating a collective discourse of vulnerability and unease about the process among the community. While many of these fears exist at a local interpersonal level (i.e. they are the specific experiences of individuals and particular events), they are clearly in part the result of broader global economic issues relating to migration whereby the national, cultural and linguistic capital of the

Bangladeshi migrants come into contact with structural power differentials in the context of the Middle East environments to which they travel. This chapter briefly presents the accounts of fear and vulnerability as our participants report them, but also takes particular interest in the role of languages, including English, as a useful tool for dealing with those fears, especially in helping the participants to protect themselves and to build resilience in vulnerable and conflict situations. To this end, we present several areas and aspects of risks and vulnerabilities of the migration experience as reported by the participants, covering a range of issues from preparation for the migration experience to events while working and living in the Middle East.

Pre-departure fear and anxiety

Problematic issues often occur at the pre-departure phase, as the would-be migrants anticipate a tough and ruthless work experience amidst new social, cultural, linguistic and legal milieus in the Middle Eastern countries in which they are to work. Inadequate preparation and the generally low and incompatible educational, professional and linguistic ability for working abroad of most of them intensify their fear and feelings of vulnerability, as can be seen in this extract:

I hoped that I would be able to earn good amount of money. I was worried about language. I was also worried about the agencies, whether they would be able to legitimately take me to the country of my work. (Sobhan)

Many of the migrants have heard anecdotal stories within their village community of workers being cheated by their agents or of being lied to (Afsar, 2009). It is often the case that the pre-departure promises concerning the jobs they will do and the working conditions and salaries they will receive fail to materialise. This further augments pre-departure fears, and most of the migrant workers find that they are emotionally, culturally and linguistically 'at sea' upon departure. This statement by Rahat reflects these sentiments:

I was tremendously afraid before going to Singapore. In the airport, I cried like anything. Even you don't cry like this when your near one dies. [...] people in my locality said that construction work, particularly the concrete steel work under the scorching sun is very difficult. Since I was very young, they said I would die. (Rahat)

Many migrant workers take loans, sometimes at high interest rates, resulting in them spending perhaps the first year or two of their overseas lives having to repay the 'middle men' who arrange their trip. They also often sell land in order to invest in what can be a

high-stakes opportunity for their families' and their economic development (see also Erling, et al., in preparation). Some are travelling on falsified documents, with passports exaggerating or minimising their age, or with visas that may not have been legitimately obtained. All of these pre-departure activities can thus enhance their sense of anxiety.

Vulnerability in travelling to the destination

The research found that the anxiety of the migrant workers often intensified with the journey itself. Travelling to the host country is, for the majority, their first visit to another country, possibly even another region, and almost certainly their first experience of international air travel. Migrants will rarely have received any detailed orientation to help them with this often-difficult journey (even the type of bathroom encountered on a plane is likely to be totally different to any they have encountered before). This disorientation was often reported as adding to a sense of anxiety and stress. The general lack of communication and care by recruiting agents and employers can result in unexpectedly long transits with long waits, often alone, in the host country airport. Moreover, an inability to be able to communicate to authorities in a shared language in these situations can exacerbate the general anxiety. Here, for example, is what one participant in our study reports of his experience travelling to Dubai:

I had been told that I would go in a direct flight to Dubai. But that did not happen. I found that there was seven hours' transit in Malaysia. That was problematic. I had problem with eating foods. I asked a woman in the Malaysian airport in English, 'Where can I eat some food? I have some dirham with me'. The woman replied, 'You can't eat anything with dirham. You have to change the dirham into dollars.' I asked her where I could exchange dirham into dollars. She directed me to the place where I could exchange money. I went to that place and asked the person sitting in the counter, 'I want to change dirham into dollars'. I bought some dollars and after a long time, I could eat some food. Then the plane flew to Pakistan. There was three hours' transit in Pakistan. Finally, the plane flew to Dubai. My agent told me that it would be a direct flight and would take six hours to reach to Dubai. But that did not happen. I felt very bad. (Badol)

In this situation, Badal's ability to communicate in English with a woman at the airport helped him to exchange currency in order to buy food, and thus somewhat alleviate his physical vulnerability. International airports, however, appear to be an area where most of the migrant workers find themselves

less confident, ill-prepared and highly anxious, as they are at the very start of their migration journey. This is also likely to be the first time their own language is not able to help them, and they are linguistically deprived of all contact unless they have some knowledge of other languages. International airports are a domain of lingua franca English and, thus, as in Badol's case, having even basic communication skills in English can be linguistically empowering in allowing them to operate with some degree of informed control and thus lessen anxiety and contribute to protective factors, which in turn can build resilience.

Workplace-related conflict

After arrival at their destination, many of the participants reported workplace-related conflict, strife and misunderstanding, which caused anxiety, frustration and suffering. Often such anxiety was caused by issues such as the discrepancy between the promised and actual job, delayed and/or lower salaries than had been specified, hardship and long hours, mistreatment and, most disturbingly, physical abuse. A general understanding among participants was that a lack of communication skills can be a substantial source of misery and that having the necessary skills in an appropriate language, even at a fairly basic level, can prevent some of the most disturbing causes of stress, and help extricate oneself from vulnerable positions. Afia, a female participant who worked as domestic worker in six Middle Eastern countries, reports:

In Bahrain, I was beaten. For example, they asked for tea. I gave tea leaves. I did not make the tea. She put her hand on my neck and moved me to tell, 'Boil the tea leaves. Make tea'. They told me things in Arabic, I did not know Arabic. There was no other Bangladeshi to help me out. That's how I worked. Sometimes, the children said to me something, but I didn't understand. Then the children knocked me. But you can never have a gloomy face. (Afia)

The data shows that while there were participants who surrendered and suffered when conflict arose, there were others who were able to take at least some control over the situation. The research found that intercultural competence and linguistic ability, primarily in Arabic, but also in English, were useful tools which allowed the migrant workers to translate situations of distress into more favourable situations. This extract from Gofur, reporting on an alarming incident in Saudi Arabia, demonstrates how his knowledge of written English alleviated not only his discomfort and vulnerability, but also those of his fellow workers:

When I used to work at a hotel, the hotel used to break at 3pm. But we all had to wait till 5pm because there was no bus before 5pm. This problem wasn't before. Then whenever our work finished, bus used to be provided. Now since there was no bus, we had to unnecessarily sit down at the basement at this extra time. There were Filipinos and Koreans with us. Then many of the Koreans left the job. The Filipinos used to live in that hotel. So, mostly we the Bangladeshis had the problem. So, I told the authority several times, but the authority did not take our problem seriously. In such condition, I made a draft of a letter in English where I stated the issue. I sent the letter directly to the Saudi authority. Then they said, 'Come, who wrote this?' I replied that I wrote this. Then they called the transport section in front of me and told 'today from now onwards bus will go at due time so that they can go when they need to go'. Then he put his sign in that letter of mine. And on that day, at lunch, we saw 'transport provided again'. All the people then were very happy on me. (Gofur)

In the above statement, conflict arose regarding the lack of provision of a bus service, which required the Bangladeshi workers to wait long after the end of the working day, and this was not resolved even after Gofur verbally reported it several times to the authorities. Gofur's proficiency in English, particularly his ability to write a letter in English, was useful in this case in order to raise the issue at a higher level. Whether this success is due to the symbolic value of English in general, or the written and formal mode of communication, remains an open question, but the linguistic knowledge which Gofur displayed enabled him to make his and his fellow workers' case against the clearly discriminatory action of withdrawing the earlier bus. Having the necessary language skills (written English on this occasion) was able to alleviate the vulnerability of the migrant labour force in this particular case. The case also demonstrates the power differentials between the Saudis, the non-Bangladeshi migrant workers and the Bangladeshi workers. The Saudi authorities paid no attention to the Bangladeshi complaints until a letter was written in English. The Filipinos and the Koreans, meanwhile, had the option of either staying at the same hotel or leaving the job. In the end, it was the Bangladeshis who were left in the most vulnerable situation following the change of bus schedule.

Social anxieties

A significant part of the migrant workers' experiences involved stress and insecurity in their social lives while in the Middle East. This partly comes from the pressing need to send money back home, which requires them to live in austerity in order to save money. Moreover, the fact that workers

need to live without their families and thus cannot receive help or support from them seems, unsurprisingly, to intensify this anxiety. However, the data also showed that this anxiety is, to a considerable extent, triggered by the need to comply with the norms of the societies and cultures in which they are living, and to be able to communicate in the complex multilingual and multicultural economic migration environment of the Middle East. Many of the participants reported that, as migrant workers, they felt deprived of any social or educational capital they may have gained in Bangladesh (through education, experience, or other locally valued actions), and only the ability to communicate in a shared language or understand intercultural differences between other people they interacted with could alleviate the sense of vulnerability this gave rise to. Without these skills the migrant workers seemed to feel powerless to alleviate their suffering. This is how Bilkis, who was employed as a domestic worker in Saudi Arabia, rather sadly conceptualises the need to work as a migrant worker:

You have to close your hands, make your eyes blind, deaf your ear and make your heart cruel. Then you can work in foreign countries. (Bilkis)

Vulnerability in law and order situations

The participants' narratives also revealed tensions and anxieties concerning the severity of law and order requirements of the countries they worked in. In particular, there was a general underlying anxiety about the need to abide by the strict laws (backed by severe punishments) in some Arab countries. There was a reference, for example, to the threatened forced amputation of limbs for theft when one of the participants was (falsely) accused of a crime and was understandably fearful of this strict sanction. Sometimes, anxiety also arose due to concerns about breaching the legal conditions of visas and work permits. This included for example, fleeing from the malik (employer) or the company where the migrant worker was legally bound to work and often to live, or overstaying the legal visa period. Many of the participants had, at some point, been involved in an encounter with law enforcement, and again their vulnerability to the distress encountered in the face of such a stark power differential between state authority and foreign worker was greatly increased when there was no shared language. All the participants reported that communication skills, predominantly in Arabic, but also in English, were very important to help navigate such situations. Here, for example, is an account of a potentially dangerous situation from Sobhan during his stay in Kuwait:

When I first went there, I used to live beside a Sudanese. He was my first malik. One day he lost

some money and he complained to the local police that the Bangladeshis stole his money. I then just went to Kuwait. I even didn't know the dinar. Police came and arrested me and the other Bangladeshis on accusation of stealing. The Sudanese malik came and he, other Bangladeshis and the police were speaking in Arabic. However, gradually the police released all other Bangladeshis one after another except me. That is the most terrible experience of my life. This can happen in a foreign country when you don't know the language. They were asking me questions in Arabic, but I did not understand anything. It had been only two days that I went to that country. They were saying that I stole 140 dinars. The police also caught my cousin. They did not release my cousin. My cousin was saying to me that the police would cut my wrist on accusation of theft. I said why would they cut my wrist? Where could I keep the money? I am a newcomer. I don't know banks; I don't know roads. I would have given you the money if I stole because you are my brother. The Sudanese person and his father came to me several times and they were asking me why I stole the money. My cousin was saying to them that I was a newcomer. How could I steal the money? Then another senior police officer came. He appeared to know some English. He asked me, '150 dinar, you thief?' I replied, 'no sir, never, I am taking money never, never did.' I also said I didn't know anything about the money. I said very clearly, 'don't know this money, this currency from Kuwait.' By this time, other police officers came. The police officer was very convinced. However, to be sure, they got my fingerprints. Finally, they released me from the accusation of theft. That was a very memorable experience in my life. I could rescue myself because of knowing English. (Sobhan)

In this case, Sobhan's initial failure to communicate in Arabic contributed to the suspicion heaped on of being involved in stealing and this thus increased his vulnerability and fear of being punished. His ability to communicate in basic English, however, worked as a useful linguistic compensation to protect him from the severe prosecution risks that he may have faced.

Conclusion and recommendations

Although the experiences of the participants in this study are varied, with some feeling a net benefit from the migration and others feeling a net loss, all of them expressed a sense of having experienced alienation and isolation at times due to a feeling of vulnerability. Some of the reported cases were highly disturbing and potentially likely to result in traumatic states. Given these findings, there are a number of interventions that could help build protective factors needed to alleviate this vulnerability. Having pre-departure training about their rights with agents and

as guest workers, as well as in understanding contracts, would greatly help to reduce their vulnerability. In addition to this, however, is the need for courses in intercultural understanding, not only about the very different norms that exist in Middle Eastern societies, but also those of the cultures of the people they will share their working and home lives with, especially those from the Philippines, or other South Asian societies.

All of the participants stressed the importance of a knowledge of appropriate languages to help deal with the situations in which they found themselves, and a number told stories of how a knowledge of another language (particularly Arabic and English) was key in helping to improve their situation, or even, in some cases, to remove them from potentially harmful situations. The acquisition of appropriate languages thus increases protective factors and helps build resilience in contexts such as these.

There is a role here for both pre-departure courses (ideally provided by the companies arranging the migrant's overseas appointments as a condition of appointment) and also for the provision of in-country language and culture courses. We can see from the examples above that the kind of language needed (ideally, in these cases, in both Arabic and English) is, crucially, around key areas such as:

- Work-related vocabulary and phrases
- Language of complaint and negotiation
- Language related to health and wellbeing
- Language of social interaction
- Written language for corresponding

The study also found that the levels of education and literacy of the migrant workers, even in their home language, were generally very low, with most of them having stopped formal education at primary level. Any materials would, therefore, need to reflect a range of literacy skills. One possible way of addressing this, and providing materials that could be easily available in multiple languages, is by providing materials through the medium of the mobile phone, which seem to be ubiquitous among the migrants we spoke to. This could be done in a similar way to the Mediated Authentic Video that was produced in the English in Action project in Bangladesh using video and audio materials preloaded onto SD cards and then inserted into mobile phones (see <http://eiabd.com/>). These materials could demonstrate the language needed for particular situations to the migrant workers. In the case of English in Action, this was for use with English teachers, but the methodology is easily transferrable to the linguistic needs of migrant workers.

The report on Language for Resilience for the British Council mentioned in the introduction, and which focuses on the language needs of Syrian refugees in countries that neighbour Syria (Capstick and Delaney, 2016), includes themes that are common to the many migrants who are forced to escape low levels of employment in their home countries in order to alleviate their own and their family's poverty. These include the role that appropriate languages can play in being able to access training and employment (as well as educational) opportunities while in the host countries, and also the importance of being able to learn together with people from other cultures to help foster intercultural understanding and create safe spaces in classrooms to be able to meet others and tell stories. The provision of both pre-departure and in-country language courses, delivered both face-to-face and digitally could be a key resource in diminishing the vulnerability that all migrants can feel, and help build their resilience as individuals and as migrant communities.

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13

Seeking economic stability through shifting language priorities in Lao PDR

Jacqueline Widin

Introduction

Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR), formerly known as Laos, offers an interesting and relevant case study in the spread of language and power and how shifts in language priorities reflect a country's efforts to achieve economic stability. Lao PDR has a complicated language history: it is a multilingual country where Lao is the national and official language, minority languages have never been given official status, and the languages of more powerful neighbours and colonisers have been promoted through shifts and struggles in the country's language policy. Each struggle around language occurs in relation to power plays, either within Lao PDR or an international arena. This chapter explores the way that the English language, as one of the 'intrusions', has been given various roles and positions in Lao PDR, and how this has occurred 'under the pressure of, and as an agent for, social change' (Minamoto, 2000:3). The Lao PDR case contributes to understandings about the way shifts in language priorities, either imposed because of colonisation or due to other political pressures, are fundamentally linked to economic factors, factors which are designed to lead to the general development of Lao PDR.

This chapter begins by considering current language policies in Lao PDR and how they developed, tracing their history from the end of the 19th century into the new millennium. From the late 1800s, Laos witnessed the end of French colonial rule and thus the decline of the role of French in the country. This was followed by the rise of the Soviet Union and its influence in the country, with Russian becoming the main foreign language. Following the dismantling of the USSR in the 1990s and the rapid demise of the influence of Russian language globally, the Lao government regularised its relationship with the English language despite its complex relations with Western powers during the previous decades. European, US and Australian aid programs replaced the meagre economic support formerly provided by the USSR. In the early 1990s in Lao PDR, English was perceived as the way forward in both economic and social terms and, as a result, the provision of ELT

grew at an exponential rate. The Lao PDR government took various measures to support the learning of English within the education system and beyond. Moreover, English language training for both teachers and government officials was a significant component of foreign aid programs during this period, so many former teachers of Russian (and some of French) were re-trained as English teachers. In order to better understand the spread of English and how it was positioned in government policy during this period, the second part of this chapter draws on data from an earlier study (Widin, 2010), and highlights how English, as an imported language, is desired and perceived as contributing to greater economic stability both at the individual and the national level.

The context of Lao PDR

Situated in the heart of mainland Southeast Asia, Lao PDR is a one-party socialist republic. The country shares a similar ruptured history with many other countries in Southeast Asia, which have experienced different periods of invasion and colonial rule and different language regimes, all with uneven uptake and impact across the nation. In recent decades Lao PDR has suffered from foreign assaults and occupation, civil war, and the loss of many skilled and educated people as refugees from the 1970s onward (Evans, 2002). In general, Lao PDR's context is framed by inequitable access to resources for economic, industrial and technological development (Vannasouk and Khemmarath, 1997).

Until recently one of the ten poorest countries in the world, in the last decade the economy of Lao PDR has been significantly boosted by aid-funded investments into hydropower plants and other natural resource infrastructure projects (World Bank, 2014). This, however, has not resulted in wide-scale development as there is no indigenous industry; 83 per cent of the population is still dependent on agricultural production (World Bank, 2014). The country remains in the group of Least Developed Countries (LDC), a United Nations classification based on average income levels, health outcomes, literacy and economic development, and a third of the

population currently lives below the international poverty line (UNDP, 2012). Thus, despite the country's membership in the World Trade Organization and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), greater economic development remains a persistent challenge.

A brief linguistic history of Lao PDR

Lao PDR is a linguistically and culturally heterogeneous country, though the Lao people (who make up 50–60 per cent of the population) are linguistically, culturally and politically dominant. There are more than 49 ethnic groups in the country and the three main languages that these groups speak (Lao, Khmu and Hmong) derive from different language families and are thus radically different. The various ethnolinguistic groups have little in common, linguistically and culturally, with the dominant Lao group (Rehbein, 2008:98).

Despite this, the dominant language of the government, Lao, which is related to the Tai languages, is the country's official language and often serves as the lingua franca between the various ethnic groups. However, although the government has made efforts to develop Lao linguistic and cultural nationalism through a project termed 'Lao-isation' (Cincotta-Segi, 2014), Lao does not function as a marker of national identity uniting the country (Kounnavongsa, 2013). While minority languages and foreign languages such as English are recognised in policy guidelines with regards to languages of education, their roles are not clearly articulated at a national level (Kounnavongsa, 2013).

This history of Lao PDR has been marked by various language policies in which various foreign languages became dominantly used in education and government. During the French colonial period (1893–1954), the French language became the official language relegated to these roles, where the Lao language was relegated to a local, unofficial status. Primary education was delivered in Lao and only those with French proficiency were able to proceed to secondary and further education (Vannasouk and Khemmarath, 1997; Chounlamany and Kounphilaphanh, 2011). The French language delineated the population: those with access to learning French (for example, in the large cities) were able to progress on to further education and work opportunities. Those without French language proficiency (the majority of the population who lived in rural areas) were disenfranchised from the education system and therefore from possibilities for pursuing economic advancement.

At the end of the French regime, the French language still held a place of prominence in the urban areas

(Chounlamany and Kounphilaphanh, 2011) and secondary school subjects were all delivered in French. During the period up to 1975, when the Lao Patriotic Front (LPF) won control of the country, French and English struggled for ascendancy as the 'most important foreign language' (Sithirajvongsa, 2004:105). The LPF were committed to providing education to all, with no discrimination on the basis of gender or ethnicity. In 1962 there was a move towards educational reform, with an aim to promote nationalism, and the Lao language was given a pivotal role in developing a sense of nationhood. The LPF championed Lao-medium instruction and this period witnessed the first time in Lao history that all levels of education were delivered in Lao (Chounlamany and Kounphilaphanh, 2011:29).

English language teaching was introduced in Lao PDR and across the Southeast Asia region through US AID development programmes in the early 1960s (Minamoto, 2000), the rationale being that English language education skewed alignment away from the USSR and encouraged growth of internal stability. English was considered as a 'weapon' in the fight against communism (Rosser, 2006). In addition to English, these programmes promoted American-style democracy and new market economies. English was the channel, through mediums such as the Voice of America and English books, to send technical and professional knowledge to countries in the region (Minamoto, 2000). The role of English as a lingua franca in Southeast Asia in the mid-1960s was ostensibly promoted for '... communication between "important countries" and a key which opens doors to scientific and technical knowledge indispensable to the economic and political development of vast areas of the world' (USAID, 1967:3, cited in Minamoto, 2000:45).

Despite these efforts from the US, the LPF won control of the country in 1975 and the Lao PDR was formed. The Soviet Union became the major donor for economic and social development. As a result, Russian was introduced as the second foreign language in education and was particularly prominent during 1975–85. Hundreds of students studied in various countries in the Soviet Union and teachers were trained to teach Russian in Lao secondary schools. English and French were still present in the education system but to a much lesser degree (Elliott, 2014). However, the 1986 New Economic Mechanism (NEM) policy, which signalled a change towards a market-based economic system, also signified a shift in the language policy and planning arena. Following the implementation of the NEM, Russian lost its influence and French was again informally 'given the status of the first foreign language'; English was given the status of 'the most

important foreign language' (Sithirajvongsa, 2004:105). By allocating a specific role for the main contenders of second language status, the Lao government attempted to diplomatically satisfy proponents of each language (Sithirajvongsa, 2004).

The fall of the Soviet Union in 1990 took away one of Lao PDR's chief benefactors. It also consolidated the move away from Russian and French to English as the main foreign language of Lao PDR. There was increased activity in the country from international aid agencies, with donors mainly from the OECD nations. At the same time, the national government moved to open up the country to foreign investment and free market enterprises, and an increasing number of international investors became interested in the country. Furthermore, Lao PDR turned to the regional organisation ASEAN – the official language of which is English – for development support.

Following this, the government began the long process of restructuring the education system at all levels. English replaced Russian and French as the main foreign language to be taught in schools and the tertiary system, and was positioned as the official second language of the country. The role of English, however, has not been clearly articulated in the nation's language policy (Kounnavongsa, 2013). During this time, there was an increasing demand for English language teachers in all areas of society; for example, a government decree in the mid-1990s set out a plan for English language training for all government officials in all provinces of the country. The demand for English language tuition, both in mainstream and private courses, at the national university increased at an exponential rate; the English department's lecturers – also those involved in the project described below – were called on to teach special English courses delivered in every ministry office (Sithirajvongsa, 2004).

Despite this restructuring, the provision of educational quality and foreign language learning experienced significant challenges in Lao PDR, in part because of the regular shifts in language priorities, but also because of the paucity of funding and resources available to the educational sector. The history of the provision of school education and the development of the tertiary sector have been challenged in each phase of the country's development, by disorder and interference from colonial administrations and from the country's alignment with the USSR. The present-day situation still presents obstacles to adequate education provision; alongside their general poor assessment of the state of the Lao education sector, several researchers have noted with concern the lack of government attention to the needs of minority linguistic groups and support of multilingual

education, including English language education (Chounlamany and Kounphilaphanh, 2011; Keophouthong and Ngouay, 2011; Elliott, 2014). Research identifies gaps in the provision of school education and the subsequent challenges that students face in higher education and English language learning (Sithirajvongsa, 2004; Souriyavongsa, et al., 2013). Major donors from OECD countries report that the Lao education sector suffers from financial constraints, both from within the Lao education portfolio and external sources (Basic Education Quality and Access in Lao PDR (BEQUAL), 2014), with the lack of funding adversely affecting the provision of quality education. While the Lao government recognises high-quality education is a priority for the achievement of Lao's national development goals, this will remain a challenge without sustained financial and political commitment (World Bank, 2014).

Case Study: The Lao PDR English Language Teaching project (1995–98)

An example of the type of development support provided in the mid-1990s is the Lao PDR Australian English language project (LEALP), an Australian aid-funded project. In a larger research study conducted in 2001 and reported on in full elsewhere (Widin, 2010), I explored power relations and the distribution of resources within LEALP in an attempt to uncover the way Australian university-led off-shore English language teaching projects were designed and implemented. Data from the study published in 2010 is drawn on here to give voice to the different views about the increasing role of English in Lao PDR during the period under discussion and the opportunities gained or lost through English language learning. In this way, this study contributes to understandings of the way that language planning is connected to economic and social change.

All participants in the study were involved in the LEALP project, and excerpts are cited here to address specific questions about English and its role in economic development and stability in Lao PDR during that time. The interviews were conducted in English, and cited here verbatim. The participants were teachers of English or worked in the English education section of the Ministry of Education.

The goals of the LEALP centred around the notion of 'capacity building' in the area of ELT provision. This 'building up' of the sector was presumed to lead to improved social and economic growth. The project's goals were concerned with teaching skills and the overall level of English proficiency of both English teachers and government ministry officials. The key tasks of the project were to: (i) deliver tertiary certificated English language teacher training, (ii)

deliver provincial teacher training workshops (non-certificated) and (iii) produce English language secondary school textbooks.

The goals of the LEALP were also to improve the regional provision of English. In the mid-1990s, English was introduced as a compulsory subject into the secondary school curriculum and at the time of the project there was a dearth of teachers with high-level English skills. Underlying the goals for targeting teachers' professional development was concern for the ministry staff and tertiary and school students' learning of English. Consequently, the way the project participants perceived of English with regard to the economic and social development of the country is of great significance.

Findings

In the interviews undertaken for this study, participants drew on issues of historical relevance – for example, how English was introduced or imposed on their nation – and gave a trajectory of the roles of foreign languages in Lao PDR. Many of the English teachers had studied a range of languages, such as French, Russian and English. However, central to their responses was that the shift in the government's language priorities to promoting more widespread teaching of English and higher levels of English proficiency was necessary for the economic stability of the country.

English as a language for dreams and possibilities

The overall goal as expressed in the proposal for the LEALP is an excellent example of how successfully the notion of English was glorified as a language of development at the time (and indeed continues to be); it was posited as key to the economic success of the country and was clearly embedded in the minds of those concerned with winning bids for aid projects. The project proposal confidently outlined how the programs it proposed to implement would 'assist the country to build a critical mass of English language capabilities, leading to enhanced social and economic development' (Reeve, 2007:152–3).

The Lao project participants agreed that English language education was high among the national priorities for their country. English was seen as important for the 'national interest' of the country. For example, one participant, Tui, talked about how English would improve her country's status within the region and identified the (hoped for) linguistic capital that English would bring:

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

door to deal with everything as surely now we are going to become a member of an important regional organisation. (Tui)

There was a consensus among the Lao LEALP participants that English ability was an escape route out of an economically desperate situation, and while participants differentiated between the motivations and desires of the ordinary person and that of the national interest, there was still the sense that the nation would be able to better itself by individuals improving their English proficiency.

The demand and desire for English accelerated during this time as Lao PDR adopted a more market-oriented economy. English was viewed as a necessary skill to enable a more active involvement in trade and international affairs. Participants in LEALP identified English as the dominant language for communicating within the government arena, in particular in communication with foreign aid donor organisations who predominantly use English for written and spoken communication. For example, Ton was a lecturer in the English language department of the national university and was involved with projects funded by major donors. He noted that:

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

The foreign aid sector dominated the economy during the 1990s. The government's gross domestic product was largely funded (70 per cent) by aid monies. The reliance on using English in international trade and development generated the hope that the development of English skills would lead to accumulation of wealth (economic capital). The above participants show how discourses of English language education as 'empowerment' and 'capacity building' became internalised in the hearts and minds of individuals and institutions.

Views such as those expressed above give voice to the colonial discourses of English as the panacea for all economic and social problems (Pennycook, 2000). Along with a plethora of aid projects, most of which required English learning as part of the operation of the project or had English learning a major goal of the project (Achren, 2007), English language education gained a valorised status. However, the question generated by this view, and others that follow in the chapter, is whether English brings this desired status or not. One wonders how, in a very poor country where access to basic education in indigenous languages is severely limited

(Keophouthong and Ngouay, 2011; Elliott, 2014), an English language project would impact on the economic development of the country.

English and economic stability

Most participants from the LAELP testified to the positive linguistic capital that the English language holds and vividly described how individuals can convert their linguistic capital to economic capital. For example, Thanh commented on his position as an English teacher. He was in high demand and could not meet the numerous requests for English lessons:

According to my point of view I can say that the majority of students in the capital city and the provinces want to study English. You know why they want to study English? ... if you can speak English, if you can write English, you can find a job now, an important one. (Thanh)

While for some of the participants the prospect of lucrative employment was an unfulfilled promise, English skills proved beneficial to others in gaining aid-funded postgraduate and research degree scholarships in Australia. Such qualifications provided possibilities for well-paying employment in the private sector or securing high-level public sector positions.

As the global demand for English grew and the possession of English skills allowed individuals to accumulate high amounts of linguistic capital, international aid projects prioritised the teaching of English over the provision of other vital services and training (Falvey, 2014). Taking into account the unquantifiable benefits of English language teaching and teacher training, it is important to recognize how the role of large aid-funded projects masks the inequitable distribution of global resources (Bruthiaux, 2002). Critical language education studies (e.g. Phillipson, 1992, 2009; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000) concur with the work of Bruthiaux (2002), who argued that English skills have little influence on the lives of the very poor, thus recommending poor countries to worry less about the impact of linguistic imperialism and more about the diversion of resources away from vernacular language education to English language teaching. English language education is still viewed as a way out of poverty for very poor countries despite a lack of evidence for this or established movement of key indicators (cf. Falvey, 2014; Erling, 2017). Much-needed funding for education and health continues to be directed towards English language teaching.

English for access to the international community

The discourses of English as ‘capacity builder’ were drawn on by Thanh to describe how the professional sector of Lao PDR could participate in international

affairs; for example, ‘... for businessmen [sic], for engineers and for researchers to give lectures at conventions. They have to write in English for publication in major journals. So especially in business and science they need English ...’ Another participant talked about English as an international tool in light of the national government’s change in economic policy. She emphasised how a good knowledge of English would allow Lao specialists to participate in international conferences and negotiate economic deals with foreign investors. She was also concerned that Lao people would not ‘catch up with new technological developments’ if English skills were not developed.

The above views reflect the deep institutionalisation of the value and benefits of the English language (Lin, 2012), and the unequal power relations between the dominant foreign language and Lao. English is positioned as superior to Lao. It promises to elevate the life chances and the choices of its speakers. However, these discourses do not recognise that choices and chances are determined by a myriad of factors such as gender, class, ethnic identity, educational background, geographical location and social connections (cf. Erling, 2017). English may be low on the list as a determinant for an individual’s success.

Participants also saw English as providing access to international tertiary scholarships and to areas of work that they had previously been barred access to. Many international companies require English proficiency, and the prospect of working in the international sphere entailed a promise of economic stability, which provided a strong incentive for the learning of English.

English as a language for international communication

English took up a dominant role as a conduit for international relations in Lao PDR. Lao PDR’s opening of trade and travel borders in the mid-1990s and involvement in regional organisations increased the demand for English language education which addressed these specific purposes (Achren, 2007). The notion of English as a lingua franca (ELF), where English is the common language of communication, became prevalent in Lao language teaching discourse (Achren, 2007). The term attempts to reflect the realities of how English is utilised in government, professional and social contexts, as a medium of exchange primarily among speakers from non-English-speaking backgrounds. ELF situations are often depicted as a level playing field, where all speakers mutually engage in a shared enterprise, implying equal linguist rights (Seidlhofer, 2001, cited in O’Reagan, 2014). However, these exchanges may not always be benign when, for example, interactions

are governed by assumptions of ‘native speakerist’ orthodoxies (Seidlhofer, 2011) and regional variations are delegitimised.

Lao LEALP participants spoke of English as a lingua franca in this more non-threatening way, as a ‘bridging’ language, to speak with people from surrounding countries. As Vong, another LEALP participant, explained, it would not be possible to choose one of the languages of the surrounding countries, as this would place that particular country in a dominant position:

... we live in Asia and we need to communicate with other Asian people ... and the language that we can communicate with them is mainly English. (Vong)

Here, English is positioned as the natural, neutral choice for Lao people, ‘English does not belong to one group of people’ and, because Lao PDR is a small country with no political or economic power, then English is the right choice. However, depicting the role of English in this way does not acknowledge the linguistic complexities (proficiency, exposure and academic language experience to name a few) which delineate the power relations within international and regional exchanges.

Lao PDR and ASEAN

Lao PDR was granted access to ASEAN as an observer in 1994, and the entry into the formal regional organisation positioned English in a more dominant position and led to the view that:

English is radically changing the country. The Lao government and, it seems, also the people feel that the time has come when the people of this country need to understand and be able to use the English language so that they can benefit from what is offered to them by the international community. (Vannasouk and Khemmarath, 1997:46)

The Lao government’s participation in ASEAN heralded the shift from English as a foreign language context to the role of English as a vehicle of exchange or lingua franca between countries.

English is the official working language of ASEAN. It is seen as a way to achieve and project a common voice, and English does not belong to any member nation. In contrast to another regional organisation, the EU, which gives official status to the official languages of the 15 member nations (Okudaira, 1999), ASEAN only recognizes English. In Okudaira’s (1999) research into the origins of English as the working language of ASEAN, the early participants in ASEAN saw English as ‘politically neutral’, as an international language that does not belong to anyone.

As the LEALP drew to an end with Lao PDR’s official membership of ASEAN in 1997, the need to attend to the English language needs of Lao ministry officials and others involved with international relations was brought into focus. A study of the needs of the above group showed that a very small proportion had the English proficiency to function well in the ASEAN environment (Reeve, 2007). Of the 300 Lao officials recruited to work with ASEAN, only 30–50 senior staff members and 20 diplomats were sufficiently proficient in English to perform their specified ASEAN duties (MacLeod and Sithirajvongsa, 1997). The increased provision of ASEAN-focused English language courses, while constrained in content and context (Achren, 2007; Kirkpatrick, 2012), made a notable contribution to the education sector. The ballooning of English language courses offered by the Lao government-run English language resource centres and by the national university saw the input of much-needed funds from private and aid-based sources and allowed for the further development of language skills for individuals around the country.

The belief in English and its dominant position in the global context continued to influence Lao language policy and planning. The revised 2007 Education Law proclaimed for the first time that the study of English was to begin in grade three of primary school. This was restated in 2010 (Elliott, 2014). While the trend towards lowering the age for beginning English language education is attractive to some key stakeholders, there is little empirical evidence to support a commensurate improvement in English language proficiency as a result of this (Kaplan, Baldauf and Kamwangamalu, 2011).

At the tertiary level, English is seen as the agent for knowledge and progress. The vision statement of the English Department at the National University of Laos (Faculty of Letters, n.d., cited in Elliott, 2014) fully endorses the role the Lao government designates for English as the most important foreign language in the national development process ‘particularly in the educational sector, since it is an important vehicle for teachers and students to bring technological progress from different countries in order to develop the Lao economy’ (Elliott, 2014:305).

Positioning English as the key to economic development belies the uneven distribution of English learning resources and opportunities and the widely-held doubts about whether it will improve the material circumstances for the majority of the population. Recent research (Souriyavongsa, et al., 2013) documents the difficulties facing university teachers and students in achieving high English proficiency, yet, in spite of these obstacles, the unabated demand for English continues at the tertiary level and beyond.

Conclusion

While the relationship between a specific language and economic development is unclear (Arcand and Grin, 2013), there are indicators in the Lao case that demonstrate the economic benefits that English skills bring for individuals and the nation. At one level this may be only a perception of ensuring a stable economic future for the country. On another level, English skills have played a role in various individuals' economic stability, in combination with a range of factors such as access to education, employment and gender. For example, the case study in this chapter showed how the rapid spread of English during the 1990s provided opportunities for individuals to accumulate sufficient English proficiency, which in turn allowed them to take up advantageous postgraduate scholarships. This led to a deepening sense of economic stability and real-life possibilities.

English is clearly posited as integral to language planning and policy in Lao PDR (Kounnavongsa, 2013); the ongoing development focus on English language teaching and teacher training has enabled Lao government officials and other key Lao stakeholders to participate more fully in international arenas. While this is integral to participation in the global economy, it is critical for development donors, language educators and policy makers to take account of the distribution of resources across the linguistic landscape of a country such as Lao PDR to ensure both access to education in indigenous languages as well as to the 'most important foreign language' (Kirkpatrick, 2012). English skills play a significant role in the dreams and possibilities of economic stability for many individuals in Lao DPR and for the national development of the country (Souriyavongsa, et al., 2013). English has clearly assisted some to realise their dreams; however, for others, gaining access to first language and Lao-medium education, health care and other vital services are still major priorities.

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Promoting intercultural understanding through the British Council's work in North Korea (DPRK)

Ewan MacRae

Introduction

The British Council programme in North Korea, officially the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), has been in place for 17 years and is continuing on bi- or tri-annual agreements between the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), the British Council and the DPRK Commission of Education (CoE). Over this time the programme has developed from short-term postings and placements to a year-round resident team of four British Council staff in Pyongyang – three teacher trainers, each seconded to universities in Pyongyang, and one project manager. This longevity is testament to the commitment from all three partners to work together in a spirit of co-operation, mutual reciprocity and understanding. It is important that the programme continues to evolve over time and takes advantage of this longevity and experience to further its scope, reach and impact. However, the very nature of this relationship is far from stable: the unparalleled limitations on being able to forward plan, the lack of access to university assessment systems, and the continual state of flux on what the hosts perceive the role of the British Council to be in-country has resulted in impact being more aspirational rather than substantial. This chapter explores whether it is feasible to expect more of this programme, or whether institutional structures are such that expectations should be tempered accordingly, with any contributions to intercultural understanding and stability in the region occurring primarily in small, incremental steps.

The context in which this British Council programme operates – in what is essentially the most isolated state in the world – is one that requires many special considerations which have significantly shaped the goals of the British Council's work in-country and also the model of intercultural understanding promoted in its initiatives. This chapter explores these unique considerations and how they are imperative in promoting a nuanced and context-sensitive 'intercultural understanding' through English language teaching in the isolated state of the DPRK. First, however, the chapter overviews the work of the British Council in the DPRK generally before it

outlines some of the challenges and opportunities that British Council trainers face while living and working in this context.

The British Council presence in the DPRK

Since the British Council first opened talks with the DPRK's Commission of Education in 1998, it has developed its standing and tailored its delivery of projects in the country markedly. The first stage in the programme's aim was to build trust and mutual respect between the two partners and countries. While this is a core value across the British Council, it has perhaps been nowhere more important or challenging than in the DPRK. Although it would be rather amiss to present the subsequent 17 years in-country as plain-sailing, the British Council's continuity of presence is a symbol of the success, value and importance that now allows the organisation to have resident, full-time staff based in the capital, Pyongyang, year-round.

The core of the British Council's responsibilities in the country involves collaboration with Pyongyang's universities, with British Council trainers working in four main areas:

1. Student development
2. Teacher development
3. Intensive in-service courses
4. Monitoring Self-Access Centres (SACs) and developing teaching resources.

British Council trainers' activities in each of these areas – and the challenges and opportunities of this work – are explored in more detail below.

Student development

British Council trainers provide English language classes to undergraduate university students. Graduates from these courses go on to become diplomats, English teachers and lecturers, interpreters and translators for embassies, United Nations officers and employees at other NGOs in Pyongyang. They therefore are generally involved with teaching the future generation of English

learners/teachers and engaging with the outside world to represent their country. With this in mind, the remit for trainers is to provide lectures on language and culture with the goal of building greater understanding between the DPRK and the UK. These English classes constitute a significant proportion of students' taught study time. While classes usually consist of 20–30 students, the British Council trainer takes a much more interactive approach than students are used to, including activities which require discussion, debates, role plays, critical thinking and synthesising information.

Teacher development

Following sessions with undergraduate students in the morning, British Council trainers have sessions with university lecturers most afternoons. Teacher development sessions take place in ten tertiary institutions. The programme has stretched over many years, with the British Council providing training to some institutions for over 15 years. Recently, other universities have been integrated into the programme, furthering the engagement and reach of the project and widening the scope and impact even further. Some of the university lecturers who receive teacher development sessions were once undergraduates in the British Council student development classes described above, and are now working on their Master's or Doctorates in Education. Several of these teachers have also become co-trainers on the British Council intensive course each July. There is a great deal of sustainability in this programme thanks mainly to the longevity of the project.

Intensive in-service courses

Much of the work of the British Council in the DPRK is Pyongyang based, with the intensive in-service courses being the exception. Every year, approximately 120 middle school teachers from across the DPRK come to Pyongyang to participate in an intensive, two-week-long teacher training course. Each trainer is responsible for taking 30 middle school teachers through a British Council-designed in-service course, whether this is English for Teachers (EfT) or the Certificate in Secondary English Language Teaching (CiSELT). This course has also been held in cities outside of Pyongyang, such as Wonsan and Sariwon, although it has mainly been based in the capital with participants travelling, sometimes for the first time, to take part in the course. The course is a valuable opportunity for middle school teachers to develop skills in the communicative approach and to learn techniques for enhancing motivation, learner awareness and classroom management. Beyond this, the course offers an opportunity for teachers to have input from a native speaker of the language, a rare occurrence

for them. Often, teacher trainers deal with specific requests; for example, settling disputes about which multiple-choice answer in their textbooks is 'more correct' or why one answer is better than another. Importantly, the programme builds in a sustainability element through micro-teaching as an integrated part of the course and also ensures that the course is delivered in part by local university lecturers selected from the year-round weekly teacher development sessions. This mentoring and professional development aspect is a vital and successful part of the British Council's work in the DPRK.

Monitoring Self-Access Centres (SACs) and developing teaching resources

One of the most considerable British Council initiatives in the DPRK has been establishing seven Self-Access Centres (SACs) inside five universities and two middle schools. The SACs consist of a designated room or area within a larger room in each institution where students can read from a selection of graded English readers. Part of the role of the trainers is to promote and monitor the use of the SACs. However, while the SACs are highly regarded by each institution, a clear challenge for the British Council is that the materials are tightly controlled and vastly under-utilised. An impact study showed that graded readers are the most-used component of the SACs. This finding was also supported by logbooks showing fairly regular borrowing of the readers by students. However, the trainers' first-hand impressions were that these SACs are used as a reference library for teachers and some select students. While teachers may sign out books for use in class, ultimately the SAC was often locked with access limited to a handful of lecturers, or it was used as a makeshift exam room for students who had been absent during exams. The idea of autonomous learning, the underlying principle of a SAC, thus seems highly incompatible with the structures and systems in place at these institutions.

Another aspect of British Council trainers' roles is to work with university lecturers to develop textbooks and the curriculum. This is an area in which there is a great scope for impact. However, like the Self-Access Centres, this aspect of the British Council's work in the context of the DPRK is problematic. British Council trainers are not afforded access to the curriculum and have little knowledge of what is being studied outside of their classes. The official textbooks or teaching materials used in each institution are carefully vetted and authorised. Lecturers do not use supplementary material beyond some warm-up activities. Any materials used as core teaching materials, whether activities or quizzes, have to be certified as contributing to a socialist

education. Thus, to date, the impact the British Council has with regard to developing resources is negligible.

Working in the DPRK

Working as a British Council trainer in Pyongyang is challenging but can be hugely rewarding. Undergraduate students at the universities are for the most part diligent, receptive and hard-working. The majority of students are from Pyongyang, with the remainder from cities around the country, and are thus among the more privileged elite – usually from middle- to upper-ranking families, the children of army officers, teachers or diplomats. Their drive, determination and desire to be the best they can be are matched by a keen interest in language, culture and learning. Working with teachers from around the country is also rewarding and they generally appreciate the structure of British Council courses as well as the skills development approaches and pedagogies.

The context that British Council staff operate in is unique to the DPRK and being able to work within set parameters and adjust to a different work environment remains a challenge for all in-country staff. In terms of project management, awareness is needed of logistical and communication restraints. British Council staff are unable to make or receive telephone calls from Koreans. This restriction is programmed into the SIM cards that are given to Koreans and non-Koreans alike. The absence of the Internet for almost all Koreans means that email contact is not possible either. The communication is all face-to-face, but this too is tightly controlled. British Council staff are not allowed to drive or take public transport. Thus, visiting partner institutions independently is not only impractical but even forbidden. The Commission of Education provides cars with drivers for the trainers to move from the restricted international compound to the institution and back. Each trainer is allocated a co-ordinator, a designated English lecturer who is responsible for their actions. The co-ordinator has to ensure that all involved parties at the university adhere to set hours, times and targets. This also includes organising the drivers' time and movements so as to ensure the trainers are delivered to the various institutions at the specified times. This challenge is noteworthy, as drivers do not speak any English.

Within the classroom, British Council trainers have to refrain from mentioning any topic deemed sensitive or inappropriate with regard to language and culture. Certainly, any reference to South Korea is expressly forbidden whether by the trainer or in teaching materials. This restriction is something not necessarily exclusive to working in the DPRK, the

British Council being familiar with similar restrictions in its work in other contexts. The difference in the DPRK, however, lies in the ramifications of *not* adhering to their restrictions, whether intentionally or not. Any critique of human rights in-country or the political ideology or any critical reference to the DPRK's history or leaders will be immediately reported and will have serious consequences. Trainers have been denied visas and held up in China awaiting re-entry for weeks or even months for perceived slights, and there are no guarantees as to what may happen at any given time. In every class, a chairman is present, who is responsible for disseminating information from their faculty to classmates, and a monitor who reports on the activities of their classmates. Additionally, the trainer's movement in institutions is continually monitored and the co-ordinator chaperones the trainer everywhere, whether to and from class to the car or to the bathroom, without exception. There is therefore a limit to what can be achieved and, due to this high level of regulation and control, how well a programme can be implemented is an ongoing issue for all organisations working in the DPRK.

As for life beyond work at the British Council, staff are afforded relatively free movement in Pyongyang city on foot or by bicycle. However, the international compounds – where all foreign residents must live – are monitored by guards and throughout the city there are similar monitors active at regular intervals. Fraternising with North Koreans is simply not possible unless it is with colleagues, as part of an official, sanctioned work event, opportunities for which are becoming increasingly rare. While the context for life and work in the DPRK is endlessly interesting, in order to get by, British Council staff have to learn to accept a lack of information, momentum, impetus, agency, control and spontaneity, among other things. British Council staff are also required to have exceptional skills in intercultural understanding, one of the key skills communicated in British Council courses and one which takes on particular nuance and weight when considered in the context of the DPRK.

Promoting intercultural understanding in DPRK classrooms

The development of intercultural understanding facilitates 'relationships and interactions among people from various origins and cultures as well as within heterogeneous groups, all of whom must learn to live together in peace' (UNESCO, 2013:7). Skills in intercultural understanding are essential for diplomats or those working in international organisations, the desired professions of many of the undergraduate students in Pyongyang's university programmes. However, interactions with people from

outside of their own cultural group are largely absent inside the DPRK. Therefore, the British Council's presence inside universities is crucial for developing students' intercultural understanding. At the signing of the programme's last Letter of Understanding (LoU) in 2014, the then-British Ambassador to the DPRK stated:

We support this programme because it enables people-to-people contact, academic exchange and increased understanding between the UK and North Korea. (APA, 2015)

The former CEO of the British Council, Sir Martin Davidson, highlighted the importance of enhancing intercultural understanding through English language teaching:

When you have two countries who know so little about each other, you have to find ways to build connections. The language of culture is a great way to do that. I am very pleased to have been able to sign this agreement with North Korea. We believe it will help build greater trust and understanding between our two countries. (British Council, 2014)

A conceptual and operational framework for promoting intercultural communication produced by UNESCO (2013) can help to explore how the British Council achieves the above goals of trust building and intercultural understanding in the very distinct context of the DPRK. UNESCO's assertion, in brief, is that intercultural understanding is enhanced by learning to know, learning to do and learning to be. In the following, I explore what each of these processes mean in the context of the British Council's English language teaching initiatives in the DPRK, and how these processes can help promote a nuanced and context-sensitive 'intercultural understanding'.

Learning to know

'Learning to know' about cultural others provides the first step in gaining intercultural understanding. Not knowing about other cultures would put communicators from the DPRK at a disadvantage during future intercultural interactions or negotiations. In some ways, there is not an extensive need for 'learning to know' among students and teachers involved in British Council initiatives in the DPRK. For the most part, they are already highly aware of other cultures and the differences between other cultures and their own. Students are already aware of a number of authors writing in English, such as Oscar Wilde, William Shakespeare, Conan Doyle, Thomas More, Charles Dickens, Ernest Hemmingway, Charles Frazier and Mark Twain. Knowledge of inventions such as Stephenson's steam engine, the industrial revolution, history such as the Wars of the Roses, and thinkers such as Isaac Newton indicate a

familiarity with the history of the UK. In business studies lessons, many written references are made to advertisements used in the UK, the US and other countries. Western movies are also used as teaching aides, with *Gladiator*, *Twister*, *Hero* and *Cinderella Story* all used in class. Such content helps students learn about others and prepares them for communication with others outside of their national context.

Applying such existing or previous knowledge to new or unfamiliar areas is a key challenge, but one that is necessary for promoting critical thinking – one of the more tangible legacies of the British Council programme's 17-year run. One recent example is the wealth of material that the British Council promoted in marking the 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death. The vast pool of storylines, themes and stories that exist in his works provided many opportunities for analysis and recognising different perspectives through role plays and discussions. Since Shakespeare was part of an existing, previous knowledge base, his work was seen as safe and legitimate for discussion for both teachers and students. Building on this knowledge demands certain skills of the practitioner, namely introducing accessible, bite-sized chunks that stimulate discussion, reflection and analysis, without being overly challenging and forceful with perspectives.

Learning to do

'Learning to do' serves as the active step of interacting with cultural others; 'through such interactions people both apply knowledge already gained, and acquire more, learning from interactions with others in the past, and designing future interactions' (UNESCO, 2013:9). This is where the British Council's work is especially relevant. Contact between the British Council trainer and the university students can be viewed as 'interacting with a cultural other'. For many undergraduates, this will be a genuine first. Trainers need skills in intercultural communication in order to break down barriers quickly. Tact is needed to avoid topical areas that put students under pressure. Trust is essential to establish in class, as creating a safe environment for meaningful dialogue is the main goal. Establishing an environment in which trainers and students can learn from each other is an important first step, as there are many preconceptions and stereotypes on both sides that allow for great exploration and discovery.

Barriers can be broken down by engaging in comparisons and discussion. Activities can range from comparing cuisines (Koreans are not shy at all in promoting their own) to discussing pictures in textbooks provided by the British Council (men with facial hair – completely absent in the DPRK) to dating

customs (pictures of public displays of affection in textbooks are met with some mirth). Such activities provide a vast pool of conversation starters, which create a classroom environment in which all participants are encouraged to learn and interact with each other on topics that are often new and unfamiliar. While tact and understanding of different cultural contexts is commonplace in the British Council's work across the globe, it has special significance in the DPRK. British Council staff working in the DPRK are monitored and managed at great length and this understandably affects learner participation and engagement levels. It is only by consistently demonstrating an unspoken but advanced level of awareness of the context that universities, lecturers and students operate within that progress is made in terms of creating a safe space where ideas are exchanged and dialogue becomes more meaningful. A key consideration for the programme going forward has to be ensuring staff have the required empathy and nuanced understanding of opaque environments.

While a large number of North Koreans taking part in British Council programmes have had little contact with anyone outside their local context, this is not the case for all of them. Some students who grew up in the Pyongyang area may be returnees from abroad as the children of diplomats and are therefore familiar with a number of cultural products from countries sharing diplomatic relations. They may also have had some experience with people from outside the country while abroad. While any attempt to focus on these experiences explicitly would be ill advised, the presence of 'returnees' in-class helps foster a global dimension that is often otherwise shouldered by the British Council trainer alone. Another possibility is that undergraduates may have attended middle/high schools in a school in the capital which hosts English teachers from Canada. However, these students represent a privileged minority. Furthermore, students who grew up in more remote cities such as Hamhung, Chongjin, Nampho or Wonsan respond differently when they are confronted with British Council trainers, their first experience with native speakers of English.

Questionnaires distributed as part of the programme showed that undergraduates from outside the capital were far less confident about conversing with 'native English speakers' than students from the capital. However, an impact survey also shows that participation in British Council programmes increases these students' confidence in such interactions and also their awareness of British culture and lifestyles. The British Council's presence in these universities allows for students to experience a cultural other, often for the first time.

Thus, while the aspiration to cultivate intercultural understanding through British Council initiatives is optimistic, the limited evidence that the organisation is able to collect suggests that the programme facilitates some level of cultural exchange.

Learning to be

'Learning to be' relies upon the reflective step of thinking about one's self as having a place in the global world. This is the area in which British Council work has extraordinary potential, but the extent to which this potential can be achieved under the current conditions of working in the DPRK is sorely limited. Resources such as classroom activities and videos available from the British Council's *Learning English* website are largely unsuitable, as many of them require access to the Internet. Several worksheets feature tasks where students have to search online to find out answers or use other resources that they cannot access. Most teachers spend a large amount of time assessing, rejecting, creating or modifying resources so they do not feature topics which will be deemed inappropriate by our host. 'Safe' topics extend to issues in developing countries in other regions such as fair trade, charities such as WaterAid, and others that appear rather far from home.

In the face of the limited range of topics that can be addressed in courses, there is a continuing and compelling need for undergraduates to develop their understanding of themselves as global and interconnected reflective students. In turn, developing critical thinking and higher-order thinking skills remains a challenge that trainers have to grapple with. The *Teaching for Success* framework developed by the British Council has key approaches for promoting critical thinking by using comparative examples at a local, national and global level. However, in the DPRK students and teachers are reluctant to follow this model, as it requires the giving of opinions while others listen and do not interrupt. The general pattern of teaching involves rote learning and repetition. Evaluating information and discussing issues from a variety of perspectives is more important than simply inputting facts and information about the UK, a practice that is preferred in this context. Reflexivity is hence not a required skill in the DPRK, but for the British Council this remains a long-term goal. The promotion of critical thinking requires skilled practitioners, adept at breaking down barriers and making connections, and a syllabus with built-in, appropriate resources with defined outcomes. However, any promotion of 21st century skills in the DPRK is largely tokenistic. While lecturers in Pyongyang's institutions may be interested or even intrigued during British Council sessions, their teaching must adhere to a rigid

syllabus that focuses on strengthening socialist principles, mostly through rote learning.

Conclusion

Going forward, it is important that the British Council delivers on a 21st century learning approach. The 2017–19 project has benefitted from gradual increases in the number of institutions, the sustainability and mentoring of previous years, and the overall continuity that has resulted in greater levels of trust and access between partners, as well as mutual understanding and reciprocation. Ultimately, more and more graduates are engaging in dialogue with people from outside their national context and this is having an impact in itself, at least on the British Council staff working in these programmes and also for the participants, who report more confidence in speaking English and entering discussions with people from other cultures and language backgrounds.

The context of working in the DPRK also creates significant challenges for promoting intercultural understanding. The cultural other is monitored closely and chaperoned and students are briefed before class on what or what not to say. The traditional method of teaching is teacher-centred, focusing on memorisation and rote learning, with little room for deviation. Creativity, reflexivity, critical thinking, analysis and evaluation are not required or valued skills. Few students have the competence or the confidence to enter into a meaningful dialogue with a cultural other.

Despite these constraints, students are receptive in classes with British Council teachers, and the university lecturers in the programme value the professional development opportunities afforded to them through their weekly sessions. The overarching goal for the British Council is to ensure the continuity of the programme and the development of intercultural understanding year on year so that a growing number of Koreans in the DPRK have experience of interacting at a meaningful and impactful level in intercultural exchanges. The challenge for the British Council is to ensure that the delivery of its programmes is underpinned by the promotion of intercultural understanding and higher-order thinking skills without disrupting the relationship of trust and understanding that has been developing between the UK and DPRK through these initiatives.

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15

English as a language of community problem solving and conflict resolution: the case of English Clubs in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

Joseph Kaleba Walingene and John Tombola Barabara

Introduction

This chapter discusses English as a language of community problem solving and conflict resolution as used in English Clubs in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). It describes the teaching environment that Congolese English teachers and learners encounter in a conflict zone. It also illustrates the importance of creating opportunities for students to practise their English skills outside of school, given the challenges of the formal education system. The chapter proposes that English Clubs can bring youth together as a means of promoting empathy, resilience, stability, mutual understanding and peace. Having both been actively engaged in English Club activities in the DRC for a number of years and having observed the types of activities and dialogues that go on in these meetings, we – the authors of this chapter – perceive English Clubs as a positive force, helping to develop a sense of community and empower youth to become active agents of change.

The DRC national and linguistic context

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC, formerly Zaire) is an ethnically and linguistically diverse country located in Central Africa, with over 66 million people, 200 ethnic groups and several hundred local languages and dialects spoken. This linguistic diversity is bridged both by widespread use of French and the national intermediary languages Kikongo, Tshiluba, Swahili and Lingala. Lingala is one of the languages used as a lingua franca across the country, but for some is it also associated with the Mobutu regime (1965-1996), who made it the official language of the army and tried to enforce its use country-wide. English is taught as a foreign language in schools and is increasingly used in international functions. In this context, English is often regarded as ‘the super international language’ operating in the specific domains of global business, regional and international communication (Whitehead, 2011).

Many regions of the country have been plagued by recurrent conflict since the Congolese Civil War in 1996. Often, the Congolese attribute these conflicts to Rwandan perpetrators because Rwandan Hutu militia forces who had fled the Rwandan Civil War and genocide fled to the eastern part of the DRC and used refugee camps there as a base for incursions against Rwanda. The Rwandan migrants allied with the Zairian Armed Forces to launch a campaign against Congolese ethnic Tutsis (Banyamulenge) in eastern Zaire. These and other complicating factors led to a series of civil wars, which have ultimately involved nine African nations and multiple groups of United Nations peacekeepers, resulted in the deaths of 5.4 million people and devastated much of the country. Bad feelings remain between the Congolese and Rwandans and these are passed on to younger generations. This can be seen in a prominent Congolese saying: ‘The cow that devastates a Congolese’s field comes from Rwanda’.

For many Congolese, it can be difficult if not impossible to imagine sharing an experience, food or beer with a Rwandan. However, part of the country’s stability and healing depends upon making connections and communicating with the neighbouring country. This chapter suggests ways that English Clubs can help Congolese and Rwandans work together, linking lessons and bringing youth together as a way to promote empathy, resilience, stability, mutual understanding and peace between the two countries.

The DRC’s teaching and learning environment

Given that recurrent conflict has plagued many regions of the country since 1996, the educational context in the DRC is faced with many challenges: slow economic development, high dropout rates, low literacy rates and teacher shortages, to name but a few. A great problem that primary and secondary schools face is one of abysmal school infrastructure (cf. Brandt, 2017). A 2005 World Bank survey reports that:

Over one-third of public primary schools in the areas under government control and one-fifth of the classrooms in the areas formerly under rebel control report that their infrastructure is in bad condition (...). Bad as reported by schools would probably mean unusable for safe teaching – including no roof, or partially damaged roofs, as well as damaged walls. In practice, many of these schools cannot be used when it rains or when it is too hot and children are sent home during those days ... The infrastructure quality of secondary schools is very poor, which will create enormous demands for rehabilitation ... (World Bank, 2005:84–85)

The same World Bank report articulates additional problems. The majority of students at the primary level and a significant proportion at the secondary levels do not have a single textbook, while schools lack basic instructional materials. The majority of secondary schools also lack laboratories and libraries (see also Brandt, 2017).

An additional problem is teacher governance: a lack of government administrative knowledge on teacher deployment and educational expansion are major issues (De Herdt and Titeca, 2016; and De Herdt, et al., 2012). Moreover, the low salary that teachers receive results in a lack of motivated, qualified teachers (cf. Brandt, 2014). Parents try to counteract this problem by paying a supplement, but these supplements tend to contribute instead to nepotism and corruption. As a result, many teachers leave the profession for higher paid jobs in trade or business. Both primary and secondary teachers do not receive regular training, with the institutional framework for providing such training being non-existent. Further, teachers lack access to pedagogical resources, which would enable them to upgrade their knowledge and teaching methods (World Bank, 2005:96).

Similarly and unsurprisingly, many students lack the motivation to stay in school, preferring instead to earn money in the mining industry. High dropout rates in schools are a particular threat to the country's development and a serious challenge for the teaching and learning context of the DRC. The most frequently cited reasons for these high rates are economic problems, insecurity and high failure rates, making students repeat classes. Unfortunately, the country does not offer further educational opportunities for those students who drop out of schools. Thus, there are many challenges in reaching the UNICEF slogan of 'Tous les enfants à l'école' ('Getting all children to school') inspired by the UNESCO Education for All initiative, formulated in Dakar in 2000 (UNESCO, 2005).

The medium of instruction in schools in the DRC, French, also poses challenges to the teaching and learning environment, particularly in rural areas. According to official policy, local languages are supposed to be the languages of instruction for the first three years of primary school, after which there is a switch to French (although research for this and other comparable regions suggest that French is used from the start of schooling, particularly in linguistic diverse communities (cf. McIlwraith, 2013)). During this time, French is taught for eight hours per week and continues to be taught throughout primary school for five hours per week. However, this teaching does not generally provide students with the means to access the curriculum in French – particularly with regard to active communication skills. The 2005 study undertaken by the World Bank notes:

On standardized achievement tests in French, the average score of 4th grade Congolese children is below that of 2nd grade students in France, reflecting the difficulties in mastering a foreign language as the language of instruction in an educational context that is almost entirely deprived of reading and instructional materials. Handicapped by inadequate language skills, their performance in other subject areas, such as mathematics is also impeded ... (World Bank, 2005:96)

This low performance given the context of schooling in the DRC, coupled with the fact that French would have been used as a medium of instruction for only two years at that point and most students do not speak French at home. The majority of Congolese students have had no access to reading or printed materials of any kind (except for those in the target schools, but even in these schools each book was shared between two and 16 students) (World Bank, 2005:80). While low school attendance and performance is not surprising in this context, the results of the World Bank research clearly show the extent of the challenge in improving overall quality and learning outcomes, since mastery of the language of instruction is critical for all other areas.

In this plurilingual context, English is taught as a third or fourth language, as most children speak a local language at home, learn at least one of the national lingua franca, and then French. English is introduced in secondary school (either in the first or the second form with one or two hours per week) or from the third to the sixth form, where it is taught five or six hours per week (depending on the school). However, students studying technical subjects such as fishing and sailing, agriculture and social sciences have English for only two hours per week.

There are tremendous challenges to teaching English successfully in schools, in addition to those mentioned above with regard to education in general. One of these is the textbook, *English for Africa* (Mills, 1984), which is the only one recognized in the national curriculum for use in secondary schools. This book, however, is not necessarily appropriate for all of students' fields of study. It abounds in general English which does not respond to the needs of students studying technical domains such as business, agronomy, catering and tourism. It also does not address core skills relevant to language learning as described in materials for a British Council training program: 'critical thinking and problem solving, citizenship, collaboration and communication, digital literacy, creativity and imagination, student leadership and personal development'(British Council, 2015).

A second challenge in this environment is the quality of teachers, many of whom have low levels of English themselves. There are few opportunities for in-service teacher training and language improvement. All teachers, including English language teachers, have extremely limited opportunities to develop professionally. Also, both teachers and students do not have much exposure to English beyond school, as it is not strongly present in the local linguistic landscape. Consequently, it is often the case that students are not capable of using English as a medium of communication when they finish school. However, there are often strong motivations to learn English among the Congolese people, as it is seen as a language that provides access to further education, employment opportunities and wider communication. It is for these reasons that it was deemed important to design environments outside the context of formal schooling where Congolese people can improve their English while also helping to rebuild their communities. Through these environments, and in particular 'English Clubs', English has the potential to evolve into a language of community problem solving and conflict resolution in the DRC, particularly in the region of the country that we are working in, which neighbours the Rwandan border where English can be used as a lingua franca, and where there are many attempts to develop the economy.

The role of education and language learning in promoting stability and peace

It is our position that English and language learning has the potential to play a role in the development and restructuring of the DRC, as well as in contributing to the healing process. As Children in Crisis, an NGO working in the country to improve teacher education, asserts: 'Education can help to heal'. They further note that:

If the country is to avoid conflict and poverty being transferred from one generation to the next we need to give the DRC's children the means to read, write and pursue better futures. (Children in Crisis, 2016)

We agree that there is potential for language learning, along with other educational and social initiatives, to contribute to this process of healing in the DRC. As put forward in a proposal for the idea of 'peace linguistics for language teachers':

1. Life can be improved communicatively when language use is thought of – and implemented – as a peacebuilding force.
2. Life can be communicatively improved when language users are educated to learn to use languages peacefully for the good of persons, groups, humankind. (Gomes de Matos, 2014:418)

Gomes de Matos (2014) distinguished four guidelines based on the above two beliefs. Those four guidelines are:

- Language should have peacebuilding, peace supporting and peace sustaining functions in human life.
- Languages should be taught/learned/used for human-improving, dignifying purposes.
- Language users/learners should learn how to interact and be interacted with in constructive, character-elevating ways.
- Language teachers should be educated to know how to help their students communicate in peaceful ways, with a focus on communicative peace as a deeper dimension of everyday communicative competence.

In line with the work of Gomes De Matos, the European Centre for Modern Languages describes in a workshop report that education 'plays an essential role in ensuring a pacific climate of inter-individual and inter-community relations' (The European Centre, 1998). The report encourages the field of language teaching to assume responsibility for its part in promoting peace and intercultural relationships, since 'communication constitutes both one of its essential objectives and its preferred means' (ibid). Reading this passage, we can see that the teaching and learning of languages, among which English is one of the most widely learned, can contribute to the building of peace, given that students of English (like those in the DRC) come from different tribes, different ethnicities and different linguistic backgrounds, but are united by the goal of English language learning. The use of an intermediary language, in this case English, may contribute to better relations and create the conditions for living in

peace. While peace and intercultural communication can be promoted through a wide variety of initiatives as well as the teaching of any subject or language, English language education initiatives may be particularly well placed to support this (see also Birch and Nasser, this volume; Imperiale et al., this volume). The learning of a language can allow us to see issues from another perspective, put ourselves in someone else's shoes and challenge some of the embedded prejudices that may go unchallenged in our communities. This may be particularly important in the context of the DRC where people come from a wide range of ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. Moreover, given the global spread of English, engaging with the language can allow us to consider our views in relation to the wider world and outside our local context. English can allow access to information from outside our communities and also allow us to contribute to global discussions in English. With this in mind, Whitehead (2010: 338) argues that there is potential for English to be used in the DRC in conjunction with indigenous languages to overcome the hegemony of the ex-colonial language (French) and the historically imposed indigenous lingua-franca (Lingala).

Generally, English is already playing an important role in the post-war conflict environment of the DRC. Development issues and ethnic conflict have meant that there are a range of peacekeeping forces and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) operating in the DRC such as the International Rescue Committee, Save the Children, War Child, World Vision and Women for Women, many of which use English as a medium of communication. In many cases, local, community and national problems are expressed in local and national languages. NGOs and international organizations, on the other hand, make use of English to reconcile people, to mobilize the army groups, to assist victims/survivors of rape or sexual violence, and so on. Given the recent but growing prominence of English in the work of helping Congolese people address these grave concerns, and given the many local and regional conflicts in the DRC – in addition to the struggles within the education system that have been impacting the English teaching-learning process – Congolese English language teaching professionals have had to start thinking of environments outside of school that could enable students to access, develop and practice English. Through English Clubs, Congolese teachers aim to provide the youth with greater opportunities to improve their English and become active agents of change in the peace and reconciliation process in their communities.

Today, many secondary school students in the region where we work are motivated to join English Clubs as

a variety of activities attracts them. One example is the competition organised regularly by the teacher association called Congolese Language Supporters Society (CLASS, in short), where we are respectively Regional Representative and Provincial Secretary. We elaborate more on the role of English Clubs – and our experiences of them – in what follows.

The role of English Clubs in reconciliation and peacemaking in the DRC

An English Club is a group of people, club members, who meet regularly to practice speaking, listening, reading and writing in English in a casual setting. It is a series of regularly scheduled meetings where club members practice and use English to help the community solve problems (Malu and Smedley, 2015a).

English Clubs, which began to develop in response to growing demands by the Congolese for proficiency in English, started spreading around the country. Though English Clubs are not funded and are run entirely by volunteers, many of them are linked to USAID-funded teacher resource centers around the country and have been set up following the ideas of Dr Bryce Smedley. Based on his experience of teaching English in the DRC, Smedley sought to develop places where anyone interested in learning English—doctors, nurses, activists, grandparents, single women, former child soldiers and victims of conflict—could come together to practice their speaking skills while discussing issues important to their communities (Smedley, 2016). In such an environment, participants could discuss issues that would help them become better informed about democracy and good governance while also participating in a safe, fair and inclusive environment where civil debate and the pursuit of solutions to communities problems is encouraged.

In their book entitled *The English Club Handbook: A Manual for English Club Members/Leaders*, Malu and Smedley (2015a; 2015b) suggest many games and activities that can be used in English Clubs to promote critical thinking, effective communication and collaboration (see also Malu and Smedley, n.d.). Congolese English language learners are now using those different games and activities in English Clubs across the country. In these meetings they also use English to discuss issues such as democracy, elections, corruption, interpersonal conflicts, and community problems such as rape, violence, crime and theft. During such activities, the members share knowledge and awareness of real problems affecting their community and discuss ways to solve them. In so doing, such clubs seek to fill two gaps not provided through formal schooling: the use of English language as a means of communication and the

discussion of social issues not tackled at school. The use of English to discuss these issues furthermore helps club members to meet on what they perceive as a more neutral territory, in which each member is a learner of a language that neither has a colonial history in the country nor is it associated with any particular side of the local contact.

In order to gain more insight into these English Clubs, we attended and took part in different English Club meetings and activities in Bukavu and Goma, two cities situated near the Rwandan border which have been visibly affected by recurrent conflict, and we interviewed English Club members and leaders. The interviews explored with participants their perception of the role of English as a language of community problem solving and conflict resolution in the region. We spoke with 35 participants; among them 24 were male (68.57 per cent) and 11 female (31.42 per cent). Thirty of the participants were English Club members (85.71 per cent) and five were English Club leaders (14.28 per cent). The majority of the members are students aged between 14 and 26. The ethnic background of the participants was not explored, and further research could provide much needed insight into the potential of English as an intermediary language between people from different linguistic and ethnic backgrounds. The lower percentage of female participants is also notable, and may result from their difficulty of participating in English Club activities due to cultural practices in which girls tend to be overloaded by household work while boys have more free time for activities. It might also stem from the fact that this region of the country witnessed significant violence towards women during phases of conflict, and is still struggling to ensure safety and security. Despite the gender imbalance, English Clubs attempt to offer equal participation and leadership opportunities for male and female members (see further Malu and Smedley, n.d.). The interviews explored participants' perceptions of English Clubs and their value for them personally and their communities.

For the observations, we attended various English Club meetings in Bukavu and Goma, as well as English Language Teachers Association meetings and activities in the DRC and Rwanda. These observations and interviews shed light on how people in English Clubs in these areas are using English, and how their discussions are allowing them critical insight into community issues. In the following, we provide some examples of issues discussed in English Clubs.

Examples of English Club activities

Some examples of the work of these clubs can be found in reports on meetings which took place in

Bukavu. The first example is from a meeting held in 2016. The meeting opened with introductory remarks before all members introduced themselves and shared short news items. After an 'activating game' involving proverbs and expressions, club members debated a motion entitled 'The national dialogue held in Kinshasa was a key to make DRC stronger than it was'. This debate was in reference to a dialogue between government and opposition representatives which negotiated a procedure for upcoming presidential elections, ensuring a smooth and peaceful transition of power. In discussing this issue, members of the club were divided into two groups according to their points of view; some supported the motion and others strongly opposed it. Mr Safari, for example, supported the motion saying that dialogue is always compulsory whenever there is a misunderstanding among human beings. He went on to say that the table of dialogue is more powerful than the battlefield, since pens succeeded in settling the conflict that guns failed to settle after killing a number of people, including the innocent. Conversely, Miss Denise argued that dialogue was held simply to blind the Congolese to the fact that the initiators used it as a means to change the Constitution in order to remain in power. As the other side disagreed fiercely, the discussion continued and got tense, which resulted in the English Club leader inviting the members to vote. The use of elections in English Club meetings also serves the role of familiarizing members with the ideas and practices of participatory government (see Smedley, 2016). The majority of the members voted against the motion that the national dialogue would increase stability and transparency in the country, and it was defeated. Then the audience burst into laughter at the irony of this transparent and fair voting system used in English Clubs being used to reject the idea that the election procedure being proposed for the country would be transparent and fair.

The second meeting also took place in 2016. The topic was 'Refugees are terrorists and should be put in prison.' Just as in the preceding discussion, this topic was supported by some members who generally voiced that refugees should not live with the native population of a country because, after they are fed, they turn into invaders. In contrast, others strongly objected to this position, saying that people are not refugees inherently but they become so due to circumstances independent of human control. The disagreement persisted among both sides who illustrated their position with the example of Interahamwe, the former Hutu paramilitary organisation from Rwanda who were primarily responsible for carrying out the Rwandan Genocide but have since been driven out of Rwanda, often into refugee camps in the DRC. With regard to this issue,

again the discussion could not stop until the English Club leader reminded the members that the rationale for using English in such meetings is to think critically and come up with solutions to the problems affecting the community. This appeal finally led to a common agreement that refugees deserve good treatment given that anyone could become a refugee at any time.

Another topic discussed at a meeting in 2015 was 'Our country (DRC) needs a truth and reconciliation commission'. The meeting opened with the argument that people should tell the truth, especially when they are leading others. In cases of conflict, people should reconcile to promote national healing and unity. While some members of the club supported this position, the other side adamantly rejected the efficacy of an official reconciliation process. This was based on their own experiences of The Truth and Reconciliation Commission in the DRC. They perceived official reconciliation attempts as empty, 'dead letters'. Reconciliation was perceived as a refuge for those who feel defeated and have no more means to address the conflict.

Debates and discussions such as those featured above provide people with an outlet to relate their experiences and voice their opinions. They provide communities with opportunities to explore means to promote not only empathy and forgiveness, but also participation and resistance. In addition to the debates undertaken in formal meetings, there are English Club competitions where club members move from place to place to meet one another. Although these movements are still restricted to the DRC, it is currently being explored whether they can be expanded to go outside the country to meet neighbours in Rwanda. In this way, these clubs are beginning to promote and have great potential to foster communications between the two countries and support the healing and peace process.

Perceptions of the impact of English Clubs

In the interviews we undertook with English Club members, all of the participants felt that the English language is helping in community problem solving and conflict resolution. Reasons for liking English Club included that they 'feel more comfortable in the English Club than in the classroom', which shows that the relaxed atmospheres of the club are allowing people to express themselves. People also enjoyed the practical aspects of the club, with one participant noting: 'We ascertain the community problems, we discuss them and seek ways to fix them using possible alternatives. For that we develop critical thinking.'

When asked about the role of the club in promoting peace, one respondent replied:

Yes, the English language makes us feel closer to one another; even when there is any problem among us, we are encouraged to reconcile following the moral lessons learned from the skits we play in the English Club.

An example of such a skit that we observed was being played by the English Club members on Saturday, 17 January 2015: 'Love and Health'. Here below is its description:

Love and Health: a skit

Narrator: Susan and Patrick love each other very much. They are engaged to be married. Today Susan is visiting Patrick. He is very sick with malaria.

Patrick: Susan, my dear, I am so sorry to tell you that I have malaria and I need some medicine. I don't know if it is possible for you to get me pills at the hospital.

Susan: Of course, I will go to the hospital and get some for you.

Narrator: Susan leaves early the next morning for the hospital. When she arrives there is a long line. She waits all day for the pharmacist to serve her. It is dusk when she begins to walk home. Suddenly, a group of bandits blocks her path.

Bandit #1: Stop. Give us everything you have or we will kill you.

Susan: No, I won't. I have medicine for my fiancé. If I don't give this to him, he will become very sick.

Bandit #2: Really? OK. Here's what we'll do. If you have sex with us, we will let you return to your fiancé with the medicine. If you don't then we will kill you.

Narrator: Susan cries and begs but the bandits do not change their minds. Finally, Susan agrees to have sex with each of them. When Bandit #1 is finished, he tells her to go to Bandit #2. Susan goes to Bandit #2.

Bandit #2: Go! I don't want to have sex with you. Run to your fiancé and don't stop for anyone.

Narrator: Susan runs away quickly. When she reaches Patrick she is sweating a lot and she is out of breath. She is very, very upset. When Patrick asks what

happened, she tells him about the bandits.

Patrick: How could you have sex with bandits? You ruined our plans for a beautiful life. Leave. I never want to see you again.

Narrator: Susan begs Patrick to understand the dilemma she faced but Patrick does not listen to her. Finally, she leaves his house, but before she goes, she gives Patrick the medicine.

Each English Club member played a role from the above skit, while the English Club leader was the narrator. After the skit was performed, all the members engaged in a vivid discussion. The fact that Susan was rejected by Patrick despite her willingness to rescue him, but mercifully decided to leave the medicine, served as a moral lesson that the stakeholders were committed to implementing in their communities in order to help reconcile the community members.

English Clubs as a means of promoting Congolese–Rwandan relationships

English Clubs in the DRC are also working towards other activities related to English language teaching that encourage communication between the Congolese and Rwandans and help them cross boundaries and promote understanding. For example, viewing Rwandans as more successful in learning English, some Congolese teachers were compelled to collaborate with their fellow Rwandan teachers of English in order to improve their language skills and teaching. From this collaboration, both Congolese and Rwandans have started realizing not only how important it is for ELT professionals to share and support each other, but how essential it is to reconcile and start living together peacefully. At a recent conference, ‘Empower the Teacher, Empower the Classroom’, two teachers who are members of the English Clubs discussed ‘Promoting English Learning in the Context of Congo through Critical Thinking and Peacemaking’. In their presentation, they suggested that Congolese and Rwandans can collaborate by linking lessons and bringing youth together as a way to promote a better understanding of and assist in conflict resolution. One of the ways of doing this would be by expanding the in-country English Club competition to those in Rwanda, as mentioned above.

Through English, and through these collaborations, we have succeeded in helping some of our fellow Congolese change their attitudes toward our neighbouring Rwandans. We initially experienced serious resistance when the first team of teachers was invited to Kigali, Rwanda for the ‘Introduction to

Core Skills for Leaders’ workshop. Almost all the head teachers who had been invited were reluctant to go. They expressed their worries, saying that their family and friends were advising them not to go to Rwanda for fear that they would be ill-treated. After we told them about our own experiences, some head teachers eventually agreed and went to Kigali for the workshop. When they returned to the DRC, they had changed their views of Rwandans. They were impressed by the high regard they were shown by the English teachers in Rwanda. The kindness and hospitality shown by the Rwandans left a strong impression on them.

The precarious nature of English Clubs

While English Clubs are deemed as beneficial both at the individual and community level, their existence is precarious. People attend and run these meetings on a voluntary basis, and English Clubs receive no external funding. The only structure that is encouraging Congolese–Rwandan teacher partnerships is the Teacher Association (CLASS) through the British Council’s Connecting Classrooms programme (British Council, 2015). No income is generated through the clubs nor is there any recognition for regular participation and attendance. Difficult living conditions mean that it is not easy for interested members to stay engaged. The few club members who persist are motivated by the motto promoted by Dr Bryce Smedley when training the English Clubs Leaders: ‘Volunteering is not a choice, it is a responsibility’. However, more could still be done in terms of providing opportunities for English language learning and community and school development, connecting classrooms in the DRC with communities outside, and strengthening teacher education in general and English language learning in particular in the DRC. Since 2015, 15 head teachers and 30 English teachers have been trained by the British Council Rwanda. Further attention and funding should be directed towards such programmes in order to maintain their sustainability and effectiveness, and to develop their potential to support the further development and healing of the DRC.

Conclusion

Our experiences of English Clubs in the DRC have convinced us that English Clubs provide opportunities for Congolese people to develop critical thinking, to heal and to practice their English for purposes that they find immediate value in. Moreover, because of a common desire to improve English language skills and teaching, we have found that, through teacher development programmes, Congolese and Rwandans can work together linking lessons and bringing youth together as a means of

promoting empathy, resilience, stability, mutual understanding and peace between the two neighbouring countries. While further research is required to explore these issues in more depth, our experiences affirm the position put forward by Whitehead (2011), that in the context of the DRC and in the absence of any historical baggage, English can create a counter-hegemonic discourse. More could be done, as well, to ensure that participants of both genders and from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds can be supported in gaining access to such clubs. Given our positive experience of English Clubs in the DRC and their effects on individuals and communities, we hope that we can find ways to further develop them and make them sustainable in order to supplement the national school system and promote dialogue and participation in the DRC as the country continues to heal and develop.

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16

Experiences of British Council projects for peacekeeping and stability

Peter Hare, Andy Keedwell and Vesna Tasevska-Dudeska

Introduction

This chapter aims to analyse support provided by the British Council for the English language skills development of personnel involved in conflict resolution and peacekeeping, including military and security forces and civilian government department staff. It outlines how locally sustainable programmes have been developed in order to provide English language training for the military and other security forces. It then examines four representative security and peacekeeping English projects in Macedonia, Mongolia, Ethiopia and Afghanistan. The chapter suggests that changing global demands, UK development strategies and differing local contexts mean that there is no one ideal model for project delivery. Project evidence suggests, however, that these projects can be transformative, not only in terms of improving the relevant language skills of personnel, but also in terms of boosting their confidence and changing their attitudes to learning and collaboration. Moreover, these projects have developed models for teacher education and stakeholder development that have been perceived as successful by participants, in part because they aim to promote autonomy and critical reflection. However, it has also been found that the sustainability of these projects is more likely if they are embedded in the local context. The chapter therefore concludes with suggestions for achieving project sustainability, which can support the long-term goals of supporting peace.

The need for English for peacekeeping

United Nations peacekeeping programmes aim to help countries to make the transition from conflict to peace (United Nations Peacekeeping, n.d.). The multinational character of these programmes is key, with security forces in one location drawn from a range of countries from around the world. There is therefore a significant need for personnel serving outside their own countries to be ‘interoperable’, i.e. able to work together and communicate effectively in a shared language. Of the six working languages of the United Nations, evidence from military administration and other personnel suggests that English is most commonly used as a *lingua franca* by

these forces. In some contexts (Afghanistan, for example, or the Democratic Republic of Congo), there is a parallel need for interoperability for national security personnel to interact with colleagues from outside the country who also rely on English as a medium of communication. In response to such needs, the British Council developed a project structure to provide support for the English language skills of international and national security personnel in such contexts.

Evolving models: three phases of the British Council’s Peacekeeping English Project (PEP)

The British Council’s Peacekeeping English Project (PEP) was established in 1996 to provide capacity-building English language training to the military, security and justice and home affairs sectors in selected countries, and is still in operation 21 years later. This project has flexibly adapted to the United Kingdom (UK) government’s changes in policy regarding overseas assistance to English language training, changes sometimes dictated by financial policies in the UK, as well as the government policies and requirements of the over 50 nations who have hosted a project, or related programme. Since its inception, PEP has evolved in a number of ways, both in terms of how the projects are implemented and how the role of English is situated within the projects. Hare and Fletcher (2012) posited two key phases, extended to three in Table 1 below:

First phase (from 1996)	Second phase (from 2001)	Third phase (from 2009) Countries in bold had activities in 2017
EAST/CENTRAL EUROPE Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia*, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia	ASIA Afghanistan, China, Iraq, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Vietnam	ASIA Afghanistan, Indonesia, China, Mongolia, Thailand, Vietnam
FORMER SOVIET UNION Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan	AFRICA Angola, Botswana, DR Congo, Ethiopia, Libya, Mozambique, Djibouti, Rwanda, Burundi	AFRICA Ethiopia, DR Congo, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Burundi, Sudan, South Sudan, Namibia, Djibouti, Somaliland, Guinea, Angola
	AMERICAS Colombia, Cuba, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras	

Table 1 (adapted from Hare and Fletcher, 2012): the three phases of PEP

Capacity-building projects have not been located in countries shown in italics.

*JHA Macedonia from 2003

The first phase corresponds to the expansion of the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (as well as the NATO-related Partnership for Peace), following the dismantlement of the Soviet Union and the transformation of Central and Eastern European countries that had been members of the Warsaw Pact. During this phase, projects were funded by either the United Kingdom's Foreign and Commonwealth Office or Ministry of Defence and were managed centrally by the British Council, which recruited project managers and teacher trainers based in-country to carry out the projects and make them locally appropriate. By the turn of the century, PEPs were running in 24 countries, including the newly established states of the Former Yugoslavia.

In 2001, PEP moved into a second phase with the establishment of the UK government's Conflict Prevention Pool. During this phase, the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) became a third agency involved in PEP. This phase entailed an emphasis on peacekeeping rather than

EU and NATO accession, and it was guided by the UK government's focus on 'joined-up government'. The purpose of the Conflict Prevention Pool was to 'promote international security and stability, promote human rights and reduce poverty' thereby reducing conflict (DFID, FCO, MOD, 2003). Language training in English was not viewed as technical training, but as an activity that promotes an understanding and engagement with alternative values and concepts leading to cultural change. Following this guidance, PEP developed an overarching aim, which was to ensure an increased contribution to international peace support, security and humanitarian and disaster relief operations through improved interoperability by establishing a locally sustainable system of English language training for the military and other security forces. Many of the original projects continued (projects in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan were exceptions due to deteriorating bilateral relations with the UK) and, in the years that followed, the project expanded to include countries in East Asia, Africa and Central America (a phase known within the British Council as 'Going Global'). By 2009, a total of 35 countries had PEP projects with a further eight having related English language teaching activities.

The financial crisis of the late 2000s terminated most of the projects in 2009. In many cases (notably in the Former Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact countries), PEP projects had reached a mature stage so that a handover was a logical step that did not in itself threaten their sustainability; however, in others, such as Vietnam and Colombia, not all project aims had been achieved by project exit. Despite the recognition of the value of PEPs, by 2010 the number of countries in which projects were running was reduced to Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Ethiopia. These were managed on an individual in-country basis, rather than under the umbrella of a UK-based Global PEP Manager as had previously been the case. Although there were predictions that PEP would gradually fade out, a third phase of the project continued into the second decade of the century, albeit with some flexibility regarding the principle of capacity building. The capacity-building element has been retained in two countries featured in this paper, Afghanistan and Ethiopia, and in Indonesia, which began in 2010. In addition, the British Council has delivered work to security forces in a number of other locations, often through its Teaching Centres, with varying degrees of capacity building as programme components. Examples of these are Sudan, Thailand and Vietnam. The programmes in Djibouti and Somaliland are satellite operations of the larger project in Ethiopia, and work in Namibia and Angola has also been in conjunction with this project. As of mid-2017, there

are a total of nine PEP programmes, with the UK's Conflict Stability and Security Fund overseen by the National Security Council, replacing the Conflict Prevention Pool in April 2015 as the funding agency of the capacity-building projects.

The context of flexibility: four case studies

Woods (2006) stresses that one aspect promoting success for projects delivering language support for security forces is a measure of flexibility in project planning and implementation. The policy changes and project evolution described above have demanded such flexibility. This has also meant that there has been significant variation between individual projects, exemplified in four case studies of which the writers of this paper have first-hand experience: Macedonia, Mongolia, Ethiopia and Afghanistan. Each project reflects key PEP principles and objectives of enabling end users to function effectively in English when interacting with native speakers, or much more commonly, speakers of other languages using English as a lingua franca. Each has worked in close co-operation with national stakeholders, focused on English for immediate practical needs (influencing classroom methodology and choices of course content and coursebooks) and placed an emphasis on professional development to develop cadres of effective, trained teachers able to use a communicative and facilitative methodology. While individual projects have many similarities, each was developed for a specific context. The case studies show the evolution of PEP, with projects established during the three project phases. They also differ in priorities and delivery content, emphasising the need for flexibility in project implementation.

The Peacekeeping English Project in Macedonia (2000–08) was established through the first phase of British Council support for conflict resolution, reflecting Macedonia's desire to become more closely associated with the West and to join NATO and the EU. While support was provided for the English language development of military forces, the project had its own particular priorities, with one important strand being the PEP Justice and Home Affairs (JHA) initiative, dating from 2003. This strand focused on the specific needs of participants for international communication, including taking part through the medium of English in high-level meetings and joint transnational crime prevention operations with European counterparts. To meet these needs, the Integrated Training for Peace Support and Security Management initiative brought together professionals dealing with security from 15 countries to practise the language together through professional topics and included role play and simulations.

The Peacekeeping English Project in Mongolia (2005–09) represents the second phase of British Council support. Based at the General Staff of the Mongolian Armed Forces, the project targeted Mongolian military personnel who would be serving on missions outside the country following Mongolian commitment to peacekeeping from the mid-2000s. The project included syllabus development with a particular focus on meeting specialist military English language needs, extensive teacher training and the formulation of a Mongolia Armed Forces language policy. The project exit took place in 2009, but, since 2014, British Council China has renewed support for the project to build capacity through regular professional development initiatives.

The Peacekeeping English Project in Ethiopia (2008 to present) represents the second and third phase models. Regarded as one of the more stable countries in its region, Ethiopia has become a key provider of military and police peacekeeping forces – the first in terms of personnel deployed on UN missions in the world, as well as the African Union mission to Somalia. It works in co-operation with the Ethiopian Ministry of National Defence and the Ethiopian Federal Police Commission, and aims to support the English language development of personnel prior to engagement chiefly on United Nations missions in Sudan, South Sudan and Somalia. One objective has been the professional development of up to 70 teachers contracted to the Ministry and Police Commission, and building on achievements to support teams of mentors, testers, managers and material and syllabus developers.

The English for Security and Defence Project in Afghanistan (with the present model dating from 2012, following initiatives over the last decade) also represents two phases of project evolution. The project, funded by the United Kingdom Defence Section, works in co-operation with the Afghanistan Foreign Language Institute, the Afghanistan National Officers Academy and mentors from the United Kingdom and Turkey. It originally established a number of learning centres at National Directorate of Security and Ministry of Defence bases, which have now been successfully handed over to stakeholders. Since December 2013, priorities have been placed on support for the Afghanistan National Army Officers Academy in Kabul. Further project strands have been the establishment of a learning centre at Kabul Military High School and support for preparation courses for military officers selected to study at United Kingdom institutions such as Sandhurst.

Materials and resources: the need for flexibility

In the cases of projects which aim to support the language development of security personnel, the target language situation (TLS, i.e. the real-life situation in which the target language is used) is usually a combat or high-security zone, and is therefore far more inaccessible to trainers and materials developers than in other fields of English for Specific or Occupational Purposes. This presents challenges, as needs analysis procedures such as work shadowing are not feasible. The TLS will therefore always be something of an unknown quantity, which means that it can be difficult to identify exactly what specific language is used in active peacekeeping operations and for which purposes it is used. As Crossey (2005) points out:

... despite the importance of linguistic interoperability, little NATO-wide research has been carried out into actual language used on missions and current shortfalls [in the language capacity of prospective peacekeepers].

Effective needs analysis may also be limited because it is unlikely that learners will have had direct first-hand experience of operations and it may not be possible to access personnel engaged in or returning from operations, often for security reasons. In some contexts (such as Mongolia), teachers themselves are serving staff liaison officers with experience of the TLS and in Ethiopia some teachers have been deployed as interpreters: both provide an invaluable resource.

Research by Georgieva (n.d.) presents the specific language that experienced peacekeepers felt they needed, including basic military abbreviations, technical, tactical and logistic terminology, and operations planning and control. These needs will vary significantly from one context to another. Teachers engaged in planning a syllabus in Ethiopia identified a wide range of functions that peacekeepers required but concluded that 'general English' is also needed. Crossey (2005) corroborates anecdotal evidence received across projects that learners often experience difficulties in understanding forms of less standard English (including regional variations from the UK) used by peacekeeping colleagues from other countries.

These considerations emphasise a need for a flexible approach to teaching. In Afghanistan, for example, the decision was taken to focus on general English especially at lower levels. In Mongolia and Ethiopia, specialised coursebooks were used (the Macmillan publication *Campaign*). In Ethiopia, teachers were encouraged to design their own tasks, to accommodate local contexts and culture.

Common to all four case studies has been an appreciation that, for a range of reasons including the demands of students' busy professional lives, learning cannot be limited to the classroom. Each of the projects has developed a system of self-access or learning centres (SACs) with a wide range of resources and based in key locations accessible to learners – in the case of Ethiopia, military bases at each centre have a SAC. SACs have been equipped with software, books and in some cases localised materials designed or selected by teachers. In Mongolia and Ethiopia, the development of assessment systems (with task-based procedures for measuring progress in listening, speaking, reading and writing skills according to descriptors outlined in the NATO STANAG proficiency scale) has also been important.

In each case, the professional development of teachers has been highlighted. In particular, in Ethiopia and Afghanistan, teachers' only experience of professional development before joining the project had been their pre-service training. A survey in Ethiopia showed that 93 per cent of experienced teachers in Ethiopia felt this initial training had been inadequate. Across projects, observers identified that at entry point, while there were examples of good practice including the development of rapport, teaching was frequently characterised by a narrow emphasis on the coursebook, reverence for grammar and teacher-centred approaches in which the teacher had little sense of the need for decision-making. Professional development has included regular observations and extensive training, sponsorship for study in the Cambridge CELTA, further post-CELTA support in materials development and test design, and an eventual stage of skills-sharing, with teachers mentoring or training others. In each case, though, project input designers benefited from a measure of autonomy, which enabled specific professional development needs to be met.

Impact of PEPs

The effective interoperability of serving security and military personnel who have undertaken English language training through the project is the fundamental yardstick for all stakeholders to measure project effectiveness. Again, the opacity of the TLS may make it difficult for project personnel to directly assess this impact and to rely on the assessments of personnel who are seldom specialists in the field of English language teaching. Comparison between situations on the ground before and after language support is implemented can indicate the extent of impact: Whitehead (2011), for example, presenting a case study of the British Council project in the DRC, describes feedback from the UK Ministry

of Defence that, prior to project inception, lives had been lost due to communication breakdown.

Another measurement of impact is the number of military officers who have undertaken English language training prior to active service, shown in Table 2 below:

Mongolia (prior to peacekeeping missions abroad) 2005–17	Ethiopia (prior to peacekeeping missions abroad) 2008–July 2017	Afghanistan (prior to service in-country)
738 military personnel trained 2005–09, and 1,866 2009–17 (58 per cent officers, 42 per cent NCOs, approximately 230 per year)	EMOND personnel: 5,689 course places (3,793 individuals), with approximately 2,500 taking the project's Pre-Departure test who have not been trained EFPC: 1,375 course places (964 individuals)	1,050 military personnel trained per year since 2013, with numbers for 2017–18 increasing to 1,600 rising to 1,800 in 2018–19

Table 2: Numbers of military officers undertaking language training

In cases where English language training supports the achievement of a country's deployment to multinational peace support missions, the effectiveness of programmes can be assessed based on the proportion of security personnel receiving language training who have subsequently been deployed, and how many have been returned due to a need for further English language development. Partners report that in Ethiopia, 87 per cent, and in Mongolia, 90 per cent of those trained have been deployed at least once. Whereas there were a number of cases of repatriation of Ethiopian peacekeepers due to their low levels of English before project inception, since September 2010 there have been none.

For UK stakeholders (the principal funders of the project), the project has represented value for money. It has been calculated that the Ethiopian project has cost the UK taxpayer approximately £1.00 to deploy one serving officer for one day, with a slightly higher figure for Afghanistan. In Ethiopia, partners provide 52 per cent of UK financial contributions to the project. Acknowledging project achievements, the UK Ministry of Defence has noted that:

... the British Council-run Peacekeeping English Projects supported by the UK's Conflict Prevention Pool have delivered strong indigenous English language training capability across the world. English, as one of the two peacekeeping languages

of the world, is vital to effective multinational peace support operations. PEPs have been a central pillar in supporting potential troop- and police-contributing countries deploying on multinational peace support operations. PEPs across the world have been praised for their delivery, effectiveness and effort ... The sustainability of PEPs has been a unique quality of PEPs, and one which provides value for money. (Peacekeeping English Newsletter, 2009)

However, the impact of projects has not simply been restricted to developing interoperability but has also contributed to the development of teachers' capacity in each context. In each case described in this paper, assessment and observation showed significant higher levels of effective classroom performance among teachers in PEP projects as a result of professional development. Teachers have been able to identify their own progress. For example, presenting at the 2011 IATEFL conference, two PEP Ethiopian teachers described their transition for teachers as being from 'power-holder' to 'planner' (Hare, Gebrehiwot, Keedwell and Kidane, 2011), highlighting an expanded repertoire, increased focus on learners, an ability to see the 'big picture' in terms of skills, syllabus and testing, and a general sense of empowerment. Professional development for teachers in Mongolia, Ethiopia and Afghanistan has addressed two particularly challenging areas. Firstly, initiatives have aimed to reduce an unthinking adherence to coursebooks and develop teachers' ability to teach 'beyond the coursebook'. Secondly, they have developed awareness of learner autonomy and supported teachers in implementing this awareness in the effective exploitation of self-access centres set up through the project, to many teachers a very new and initially daunting prospect.

In a number of cases in Macedonia, Mongolia and Afghanistan, teachers have progressed to become project managers themselves, while in Ethiopia some have responsibilities as centre co-ordinators. One of the authors of this paper had direct experience of developing as a teacher, trainer and manager through the Macedonia project and describes her experience in this way:

I was privileged to spend four wonderful years within the family of PEP JHA projects throughout Europe. Each year only added value to my professional growth. Starting initially as an English teacher, soon I took the role of a teacher-trainer internationally, which on the other hand led to employment of my organisational and managerial skills for international training events. Acting as a programme manager for the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe/Border Police project had great benefits both for my personal and

professional development. Moreover, the advisory role for the Ministry of Information Rapid Deployment Unit project fully completed the diversity of roles that I had undertaken within the four-year project. A person only once gets a chance of a lifetime – I was lucky enough to get it and grab it.

A further impact has been to introduce learners, often older than the norm, with limited English language skills and little or no previous experience of formal language learning other than a traditional school environment, to a more proactive, learner-centred and communicative approach to developing language skills. Across projects, learner feedback has been very positive. In Ethiopia, small-scale research compared attitudes of learners at entry point and at later stages, and identified changing expectations and preferences, with an increasing appreciation of interaction, a more realistic perspective on the place of grammar and developing learner autonomy (Table 3). Anecdotal evidence also exists to show that learners have appreciated the range of testing tools put in place, in particular in Mongolia and Ethiopia, and the experience of being tested in a fair and objective way, sometimes for the first time.

This exposure to a new approach to teaching and learning, the importance of autonomous learning and a more standardised form of language testing that has become an integral part of selection for deployment on peace support operations has impacted on the graduates of the courses when they are on missions. The very fact that Ethiopia's role on UN and African Union missions has significantly grown during the lifetime of the project, with the country moving from 12th to first position in terms of personnel deployed (including deploying more women than any other country), implies that the project is having a positive impact on the quality of the various competencies required in the more senior roles, such as contingent commanders, military observers, liaison and staff officers. Since 2015 the project has also worked with the Ethiopian Ministry of National Defence, and to a lesser extent the Federal Police, to train a select few to be accepted to Cranfield University's MSc in Security Studies delivered in Ethiopia. Many have subsequently moved into more senior positions, a development which emphasises the qualitative progress of PEP. However, it should be borne in mind that PEP works alongside other peacekeeping training at the country's international Peace Support Training Centre set up in 2013, so it would be a step too far for PEP to claim exclusive credit for the growing international profile of Ethiopia's peacekeeping.

	Level 1: entry point	Level 2: more experienced students	Level 3: most experienced students
I prefer to work on my own	84.6	64.2	22.2
I enjoy working in pairs	53.8	92.8	85
I enjoy working in groups	57.1	92.8	79
I want to focus on grammar	73.3	44.4	22.2
I read English outside the classroom	1.69	2.1	2.7

Table 3: Changing perspectives (Ethiopia 2011, percentage, n=108)

Lastly, there has been significant impact on stakeholders themselves. Partnering organisations have been supported in developing effective systems for teaching, testing and performance management through frequent dialogue in an atmosphere of mutual respect. In Ethiopia, for example, key administrators participated in management development training to discuss issues such as teacher recruitment, training, quality assurance and teacher retention. Evidence of the positive impact on people involved with PEPs comes from projects in addition to the four case studies in this article. A one-year trainer training course that was run three times between 2004 and 2008 for participants from the European and former Soviet Union countries listed in the first phase of PEP above led to several participants taking on wider and more responsible roles. This included teacher training on PEPs in other countries, with trainers working in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Mozambique and China. Others have taken on senior management roles in their country's programmes after PEP was handed over, and inevitably in later years a significant number have moved on in their careers, including working in the British Council, but have frequently quoted PEP as a key moment in their career development. In Ethiopia two civilians who have worked on the project since its early years have taken on senior roles in the international Peace Support Training Centre that go beyond the language training programme. The concept of sustainability, discussed below in the context of the projects, should therefore be extended to individuals' careers beyond PEP.

Long-term sustainability: lessons learnt

Woods (2006) has identified that one important difference between the PEP approach to the delivery of English for military personnel and that of the American Defense Language Institute (DLI) has been the focus of the former on sustainability. Hare and Fletcher (2012:204–08) also highlight in their comparison of the two programmes that PEP includes a focus on in-service teacher development and is more contextualised and learner-centred. Each project described in this paper aimed to be sustainable to the extent that programme delivery would continue after British Council support ended so that each country could continue to support their military personnel to contribute to conflict resolution. It would seem fair to say that this sustainability has been secured to a variable degree across projects. In the following, we present a number of important lessons learnt applicable to any project that aims to develop the language skills of key target groups in a sustainable way. While the factors described below do not encompass all prerequisites for sustainability, they draw on our positive and negative project experiences.

a) The need for flexibility

Above, we showed that while each of the British Council projects described was directed by similar broad objectives, there has been scope in each project for a measure of variation in the selection of target groups, materials, modes of delivery and employment practices as regards teachers. Each context had similarities and differences to others, but project success was often the result of this flexible approach.

b) A focus on human resources

Our experience in delivering PEP suggests firstly that while things are useful, it is people who are at the heart of securing sustainability (Keedwell, 2014), a principle which has informed approaches described above. This understanding led to an emphasis on the professional development initiatives in each project. However, it is essential that professional development is extended to all stakeholders, including administrative staff, and not just to classroom practitioners. While administrative staff were not involved in the PEP in Macedonia, for example, this was not the case in the more durable Mongolia initiative. Our experience also reveals the need to shape this professional development to lead to effective skills sharing – mentor development, for example. In Ethiopia and Afghanistan, these courses of action have been actively pursued.

c) Institutionalisation

In an ideal world, a focus on human resources would be sufficient to guarantee sustainability. However,

this was not the case for the JHA project in Macedonia, which proved to be the least sustainable of the four projects described. Even before project exit, handover processes had proved problematic and the project continued for only a short period post-exit, faced by challenges including changes of personnel, bureaucratic constraints, complex political pressures and what many felt to be a general lack of interest. Ten years after project closure, the disappointment of project participants is still palpable – as one of the authors of this paper involved in the process puts it: ‘Good opportunities present only once in a lifetime and in this case the opportunity was missed’.

The Macedonian experience contrasts with that of a project in neighbouring Albania, which has continued to the present. One major difference between these projects was that in Macedonia the project remained under full British Council ownership (with teachers contracted directly to the British Council), whereas in Albania efforts had been made to implant the project in an appropriate institution, a military academy for officers, from project inception. A similar challenge in transferring teachers from British Council to MOD contracts occurred in Georgia, with a significant number understandably taking up other, more lucrative employment, including with the British Council. In Mongolia, where institutionalisation had also taken place, project benefits continued during the period following British Council exit. Visits to relevant centres in 2013 and 2014 indicated that systems, including administration of courses and test utilisation, were in place, effective delivery of specialist English had continued effectively and the needs of peacekeepers were being met.

These contrasting experiences have implications for the continuing projects in Ethiopia and Afghanistan, both actively working towards their ultimate futures. Foregrounding the role of stakeholders has also been one objective of the project in Ethiopia, where teachers are contracted by the relevant ministry. The project has been developed in close collaboration with partners, and British Council ownership of the project is gradually but consistently being reduced. This has not quite been the case in Afghanistan although co-operation with the National Army Officers’ Academy has provided foundations for the process.

Conclusions

It is a lamentable but undeniable fact that there will be a continued need for international conflict resolution around the world for the foreseeable future and consequently for language learning by military and security personnel. This is a need which organisations such as the British Council aim to

continue to meet. It is hoped that the case studies described in this paper suggest that, in a complex and turbulent world, support of the language skills of those who maintain security has the potential to contribute to the process of achieving stability and intercultural communication, not only through supporting the development of language skills but also by supporting autonomous learning, group work, critical reflection and the development of contextually appropriate professional development models, thus ultimately leading to a more peaceful future.

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17

The role of English in UN peacekeeping missions: a Case Study of Bangladeshi peacekeepers in Sierra Leone

Arifa Rahman

Introduction

Bangladesh, a developing country in South Asia, smaller than Great Britain but with a population of over 160 million, has been a top troop-contributing nation to United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions since 1988. Being a substantial contributor to the UN peacekeeping mission is seen as a matter of national pride, a constitutional and foreign policy priority and a balancing act between civil-political-military relations (see Zaman and Biswas, 2014; Haque, 2012). To date, Bangladesh has deployed more than 144,000 uniformed peacekeepers on 56 UN peacekeeping missions. Currently around 7,000 Bangladesh peacekeepers are engaged in 11 conflict zones around the world. The main purpose of the peacekeepers is to help rebuild the host nation while ensuring there is no relapse into conflict. This includes protection of civilians from the atrocities of various armed groups and establishing a rule of law by creating a safe and secure environment in which rehabilitation and rebuilding operations can take place.

The presence of Bangladeshi peacekeepers in global conflict has been reported as successful in project reports and media accounts, particularly with regard to their contribution to peacekeeping efforts in Sierra Leone during the conflict there from 1999–2005. For example, the BBC commended the Bangladesh UN Force as ‘the cream of UN peacekeepers’ adding that ‘Bangladeshi soldiers are in demand because they have proved themselves to be highly disciplined ... There are far fewer complaints against them than soldiers from many other countries’ (*BBC News, South Asia*, January 18, 2006). While Bangladeshi peacekeepers have been the focus of much media attention, there has been little to no research so far investigating the tasks that these peacekeepers are engaged in and the role of language, specifically English, in achieving these tasks.

English is a required subject in the national curriculum in Bangladesh. While there have been suggestions within the field of ELT that English language teaching should encompass the promotion

of peace and intercultural understanding (e.g. Birch, 2009; Edge, 2006), one might question whether this has filtered into ELT practices in the normal government and government-supported schools in Bangladesh, where the majority of Bangladeshi peacekeepers are likely to have had their English language education. With only average proficiency in English and little training in intercultural communication, these peacekeepers undertake tasks that support the rebuilding of nations and the promotion of dialogue and stability in countries recovering from war.

The centrality of communication has been recognised as a key tool for conflict resolution, and English – one of the two official languages of all UN peacekeeping missions (alongside French) – is increasingly used in this role. English is also used with the local populations in these contexts, and while it may be an official language of the countries affected by conflict (e.g. Liberia, Sierra Leone, South Sudan), this does not mean that the language is widespread among the populations, who may speak other languages or creolised versions of English. Thus, the use of English does not necessarily ensure against the occurrence of miscommunication. Other qualities, such as empathy, patience and respect seem to be necessary to promote effective communication and understanding in such contexts.

This chapter presents a case study of the relatively unexplored role of language, particularly the use of the English language, in the peacekeeping process in fragile and conflict-affected regions, using the example of Bangladeshi peacekeepers in Sierra Leone. The chapter first explores previous findings from research on peacekeeping and peacebuilding and an argument is made for recognising the centrality of language as a potent tool for handling conflict. It then describes the context in which English is taught in Bangladesh and used in the contexts of both the conflict-affected region and the peacekeeping-providing nation. Next, the case study is presented and the findings analysed in terms of the effectiveness of English in this particular conflict

situation, with a focus on the extent to which the English language skills and attitudes of the peacekeepers were essential in carrying out the mandate they were entrusted with. The final section extends the discussion into a rationale for English language educators to broaden language teaching practices into areas that promote intercultural awareness and social justice.

Peacekeeping and peacebuilding

Research discourses on conflict management have advanced the concept of peace along two dimensions: 'negative' and 'positive' peace, based on the classical negative-positive dichotomy pioneered by Galtung (1964). This has resulted in two parallel, theoretical and practical-political tracks of conflict resolution – one, focusing on war termination and 'peacemaking', and the other addressing the root causes of conflict through 'peacebuilding', aimed at preventing negative causes of strife from surfacing, which includes confronting political oppression, social injustice and structural imbalances (see Roberts, 2008). While admirable in its aim, positive peace – the unstated goal of most peacebuilding missions – is so demanding that it cannot realistically be achieved for several generations even under the best of circumstances.

In order to address this lacuna, peace researchers have stressed a need for the conceptualization of peace which is stronger and more demanding than the mere absence of violence, but one which is more attainable, in the mid-term, than positive peace. Among the terminologies proposed is 'cosmopolitan peacekeeping', advocated by Woodhouse and Ramsbotham (2005), which encompasses a capacity to protect civilians from violent conflict (the negative peace dimension) as well as the capacity to address the human security agenda (the positive peace feature), adopted by the UN in recent years.

This realistic attempt at facilitating peace in fragile situations favours non-adversarial methods of conflict resolution as a rational approach for handling disputes and improving human security systems. In view of this, communication (oral/written/virtual) has increasingly become one of the most potent tools for handling conflict and, as such, language is being recognized as playing a vital role in the process.

Case study: Bangladesh and the UNAMSIL mission

Among the numerous UN peace missions deployed from Bangladesh, one specific mission, United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) has been selected for exploration. UNAMSIL started in October 1999 and closed in December 2005. The UN Integrated Office for Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL) was

created in January 2006 to cement UNAMSIL's gains with its goal of strengthening human rights, realizing the Millennium Development Goals, improving transparency and holding free and fair elections. This case is significant, not only because the West African state of Sierra Leone uses English as its official language but because the Bangladeshi peacekeepers deployed there comprised the largest contingent among the entire UN mission forces and had to operate in extremely volatile conditions (including rebel attacks and hostage crises), which resulted in a number of troop-contributing countries, among them India and Jordan, pulling out. The UN sought urgent assistance from Bangladesh for reinforcement and the latter sent in a brigade-sized contingent comprising 2,500 troops made up of around ten per cent officers and the rest soldiers.

Sierra Leone had been ravaged by a series of civil wars for 11 years from March 1991 to January 2002. Erupting from a repressive predatory state setting, divisive power politics, factionalism, a large excluded youth population, the availability of small arms after the end of the Cold War, and intrusions from regional neighbours, Sierra Leone was engulfed in sieges and counter-sieges, coups and counter-coups, rebel insurgencies, terrorism and pillaging. Widespread atrocities were committed through collective punishments, extermination, murder, rape, abduction and conscripting of children into the armed forces. Furthermore, the lucrative alluvial diamond deposits were a perilous attraction for power seekers, insurgents and illicit businesses. In 2002, the war came to an end with help from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the UK Government and the UN. But long years of widespread human suffering and persecution had left a heavy toll on the country. Some 70,000 people were dead, 2.6 million displaced and much of the country's infrastructure was destroyed (Caldor and Vincent, 2006).

With the aim of supervising a shaky ceasefire in highly unstable conditions and supporting a transition to democratic governance, the UN Security Council initially authorised 6,000 peacekeeping troops to Sierra Leone in October 1999. Further troops were approved in phases until March 2000, pushing the total to 17,500, making UNAMSIL the largest peacekeeping mission in the world. Peacekeepers from Bangladesh were deployed from the very beginning and continued their operations until UNAMSIL closed in December 2005.

Like all UN peace missions, UNAMSIL was made up of multinational contingents each dispatched to a region or sector with specific mandates. This meant that, in addition to interacting with the local community, the contingents from Bangladesh worked

alongside other international teams (e.g. from Canada, China, India, Ireland, Kenya, Nepal, Nigeria, Pakistan and Ukraine). Thus, English in various varieties and shades of proficiency played its role as a lingua franca for the Bangladeshi troops while communicating with these multinational contingents and more importantly in their mandated tasks with the local population. How well they might have fared in this language process is explored in the next section.

The status of English in Bangladesh

A brief background of English language education in Bangladesh is warranted here in order to provide insight into the likely communication skills that the Bangladeshi contingents have in the language. A former British colony and geo-politically part of the Indian subcontinent, English has had a familiar presence in the South Asian region for more than 200 years. Besides the widely used national language Bangla (sometimes referred to as Bengali), English is considered a second or foreign language in the country. Following independence in 1971, nationalist policies had marginalized the use of English but, as in several Asian countries today, English is increasingly being perceived as linguistic capital (Rahman, 2011). It is also being currently fostered in expanded domains due mainly to a rising neoliberal trend in a globalised world (Hamid and Rahman, 2017).

The Bangladeshi national curriculum requires 12 years of mandatory English learning in school but studies have shown (e.g. Hamid and Baldauf, 2008) that, despite educational interventions and reforms, including introducing a further year of English learning at the undergraduate level, students' English language competence in general remains low. Bangladeshi soldiers in UNAMSIL are likely to have gone through this school system and on the whole their language proficiency remains quite inadequate. However, with the Bangladesh armed forces' general emphasis on the English language in both professional and social life, English has a robust presence in this community, especially among the officers. The official language for officers is English, while soldiers, who typically have ten years of schooling, tend to achieve only a reasonable level of 'working English', mostly through their training and professional experience.

In accordance with the UN General Assembly resolution stipulating 'the necessity and responsibility of every nation to train their armed forces before any deployment', Bangladeshi troops undergo pre-deployment English language and other relevant training at the Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation Training (BIPSOT) administered by the Armed Forces (www.bipsot.net). Today BIPSOT

trains national and international peacekeepers for all types of UN Peace Support Operations and is held in high esteem among the international armed forces community in South, South East Asia and Africa for its quality training, administration and infrastructure.

The intensive English language course at BIPSOT runs for 35 hours per week for five weeks. It focuses on attaining skills in 'working English' by using a combination of 'simplified English' and 'body language'. It emphasises strategies to enable meaningful interactions with people from other languages and cultures. Hence, correct grammar and syntax are given less priority, resulting in a pidgin-like flavour to the English that is developed. The underlying rationale for this approach is that in critical and emergency situations 'good' English is not necessary – what is essential is to understand and be understood clearly and quickly so that swift action can be taken. This type of language use may be referred to as 'the semantic approach', attributed to Cohen (2001:27), as it is dependent on representative meaning tied to spontaneous use of interactive language within an immediate setting.

In addition, cross-cultural understanding, tolerance and respect towards differences are strongly emphasized in the English lessons. This is based on the principle that attitude, language and behaviour cannot be separated. The teaching methodology in the programme is interactive and role play in a variety of settings simulates tasks that peacekeepers are expected to perform on duty. So 'simplified' English accompanied with body gestures and respect and empathy are practised in practically based, spoken language activities.

The status of English in Sierra Leone

Exploring the status of English in Sierra Leone provides further insight into the linguistic demands of the interactions that Bangladeshi peacekeepers were engaged in. The country is highly multilingual, with at least 19 indigenous languages spoken by various ethnic groups (Lewis, et al., 2014). Although English, as the official language, is spoken in schools, government administration and the media, Krio is spoken as a lingua franca in virtually all parts of the country. Krio, an English-based creole language, is the first language of 10.5 per cent of the population but is spoken by 90 per cent of Sierra Leoneans (Caldor and Vincent, *ibid*).

The case study methodology

In the following I present an overview of the findings from a study I undertook in 2016–17 of the types of activities the Bangladeshi peacekeepers were mandated to do in the UNAMSIL mission, focusing on how their English language skills were put into

practice. Data was collected from primary and secondary sources. The methodology used to collect primary data was open-ended interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). Individual interviews were carried out in one of three ways: face-to face, through email or by phone. The respondents were five mission officers who had worked as military experts in charge of mandated tasks. The FGDs were carried out with a group of seven soldiers who had worked on ground operations. Data collected from secondary sources included newspaper reports, television documentaries and news features, the UN Peacekeepers Newsletters and Fact Sheets, UNDP publications and published reports from BIPSOT.

Findings regarding English language use in UNAMSIL

Although both sets of actors in this case study were from contexts which had official roles for the English language, ground reality pointed to a situation where both groups were using English as an additional language, which was likely an ‘outer circle’ variety (Kachru, 1982) that had evolved in response to different political, linguistic and educational histories. It was practically a meeting of two English-based pidgins or creoles. In general, the Bangladeshi military observers and officers were negotiating or giving/receiving directives in ‘standard’ English with sector headquarters and staff officers and then transmitting these directives in Bangla to the contingent troops on the ground. However, the contingent members who needed to interact with the local population of Sierra Leone reported that the use of ‘standard’ English was not generally effective or appropriate. As a result, they tended to try to adopt the locally used English-based creole, or, failing that, to use expressive body language to communicate. In the focus group discussions undertaken for this research, the Bangladeshi troops gave the following example of language use in their light-hearted interactions with the local people in informal encounters:

How the body? Body fine/good

How doing? Doing goo [good]

You goo fre [good friend]

Very goo, cho cho [chop chop pronounced cho cho meaning ‘food’]

Cho cho give? [food - give?]

Bangla goo fre [Bangla, good friend]

The above excerpt demonstrates a greeting and phatic communication, in which both speakers are accommodating each other in order to establish a relationship. Such exchanges may exist in simplified

forms in any language. However, the participants in this study reported that when carrying out mandated tasks, they regularly used salient English lexis (nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs) without connecting grammatical or syntactic features (the type of ‘grammarless’ language promoted in their training). The contingent troops felt that this simplified interaction was generally successful and they were happy to use it, as they themselves were not always very proficient in formal English language use. Such exchanges, however, have little opportunity to reach a deeper discourse level. But then it may be argued that the contingent peacekeepers’ mandate did not actually demand much deep discursive interaction and hence this approach sufficed to fulfil their needs. In the absence of complex language skills, the attitudes of empathy were important to encourage some kind of bonding and personal relationship.

The peacekeepers reported that initially they had much difficulty understanding the local population, as the variety they used was very different from the English they were familiar with. However, the contingent troops soon adjusted their speaking, listening and gestures to accommodate their interlocutors’ style of communication, demonstrating themselves to be convergent speakers. They seemed to be conforming to Giles’ Communication Accommodation Theory, developed in the 1970s, which suggests that speakers adjust their speech to accommodate the addressee, either through ‘convergence’ (moving speech closer to the addressee and thus reducing social distance) or through ‘divergence’ (moving one’s speech style further apart to distance oneself from the interlocutor (cf. Giles, 2016). Significantly, the peacekeepers’ awareness of cultural differences and respect for diversity and sense of empathy – developed in part through the pre-deployment training courses – turned them into convergent speakers, which in turn helped them to surmount any confusion arising from language use.

The praxis of English by Bangladeshi peacekeepers

The tasks the peacekeepers were mandated to undertake were determined by directives from sector headquarters, liaised with the government, and were based on context, situation and demand. While performing duties, the peacekeepers were guided basically by three core principles – consent, impartiality and non-use of force – as laid out in the United Nations Civil Affairs Handbook (2008). Nevertheless, they had to operate in highly hazardous situations that often went beyond written directives.

Based on the data, I present a synopsis of the types of activities the peacekeepers were involved in,

based on the narratives given during their interviews and group discussions, and show how a combination of their language skills and attitudes were put into practice in conflict and other inter-related situations. These are clustered under three of the dozen or more UN mission task types laid out in the peacekeeping mandate.

1. Supporting the local administration in gaining control of remote areas:

In late 1999, UNAMSIL was in a critical state, with the anti-government rebels from the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) closing in on the capital Freetown. While Bangladesh was the lone contingent guarding Freetown International Airport due to some troop-contributing countries pulling out, several critical encounters took place. One is described here by an eye witness at the scene, himself a very young officer at the time.

A Bangladeshi patrol helicopter had just landed in a deserted university campus. As their Russian pilot switched off the engine, they were surrounded by armed rebel soldiers with heavy weapons aimed at the helicopter. Knowing that any attempt to start the engine would prompt a volley of firing, the Bangladeshi commandant opened the door and stood in his bullet-proof vest. The commandant was a persuasive speaker with skills in English and Arabic. Amidst belligerent shouts of 'Go back, go back!' from the rebel leader, he called out in a gentle and appealing voice, speaking in slow and clear English. 'We are from Bangladesh. You may not know our country. But we have come from 10,000 miles away to help you. We are your guests. We beg you to give us two minutes to speak to you. Only two minutes.' After what seemed an age, interspersed with shouting and threatening gestures, the commandant patiently repeated his request for a little talk until the rebels finally agreed. 'Ok, two minutes only!' Swiftly, the troops alighted and handed out cigarettes and bottles of drinking water as the commandant and the rebel leader spoke. Others shook hands and greeted each other with smiles, handshakes and locally appropriate English. The issue of compromise between government and rebels was broached. Interestingly, they spoke not for two but for ten minutes and after negotiating another date for a second meeting, the helicopter, with the peacekeepers, was allowed to take off.

2. Disarmament, demobilization, reintegration (DDR)

During October 2000, when the rebels were surrendering, an RUF commander with an 80-member team from neighbouring Guinea sent a missive to the Bangladeshi peacekeepers that they were ready for reconciliation. As the peacekeepers organised the meeting, the government side

comprising Civil Defence Forces claimed it was a deception and the rebels should not be trusted. Nevertheless, the Bangladesh peacekeepers pushed forward. After negotiations, the rebel troops arrived, fully armed, to Koidu, a strategically important and diamond-rich alluvial town in the east, 270 miles away from the capital. They were taken by the peacekeepers to the stadium where they were treated well, given food and were rested. However, when it came to surrendering arms, the rebels refused, sensing that the pro-government Civil Defence Forces who had encircled the stadium would pounce on them. So, the scenario was that the surrendering rebels were grouped inside the stadium, encircled by the Bangladeshi peacekeepers, while outside the stadium was a second ring comprised of pro-government armed civil defence forces trying to take control of things by bypassing the peacekeepers. A desperate situation indeed!

Negotiations started. It so happened that the rebels were all French-speaking and only one spoke English. The Bangladesh sector commander addressed this lone person in English, treating him as the spokesperson for the whole group. The spokesperson insisted they had come for a settlement but would not surrender arms. The Bangladeshi commander applied all his negotiation skills using English and a positive, encouraging and compassionate attitude. English words used were few but their meanings were clear. Language was not a barrier to communication; it was the attitude of the communicator that mattered.

Night fell. With no electricity, the darkness was ominous. A wrong word or move would trigger shooting from either the rebels or the pro-government forces. The Bangladeshi commandant repeated in full sentences, in short phrases and in simplified, clear English. 'OK, do not surrender arms. Just put your weapons down. On the ground, beside you. Put arms on ground. I am UN sector commander. I am your guarantor. UN will protect you. UN will stay with you.' It took the whole night of slow, painful, incessant talk. By morning, the rebels surrendered their arms. The crisis was diffused. Subsequently, Bangladesh contingents played a major role in taking full control of a number of rebel-held territories.

3. Quick Impact Projects

Quick Impact Projects are undertakings aimed at 'peacebuilding' like setting up medical centres in villages with no health care or an elementary school for deprived children; building/repairing churches, mosques, markets; digging to set up deep wells in water-scarce areas; or introducing easy but effective methods of basic farming not traditionally practiced by the community. Most of the Bangladeshi troops

were from rural backgrounds with a reasonable amount of farming knowledge. They introduced a varied range of vegetable and fruit growing that required light farm work and simple tools.

In these sorts of activities, language use was not confrontational but functional and effective. As an example, another encounter in Koidu may be recounted here. The diamond-rich alluvial town was deserted and reduced to skeletal structures due to extensive digging by rebels, illicit businesses and local people, all scouring for the precious stones. While digging for re-building purposes in this town, the Bangladeshi peacekeepers faced stiff opposition. With each spadeful of earth thrown up, the locals aggressively threatened the troops, fearing they might find and take diamonds from the soil. Here too the peacekeepers behaved discreetly. They pacified the people in simplified, clear English explaining they were not interested in diamonds and the locals were welcome to take them. They explained they were digging to build structures that would benefit the community. This slowly eased tensions and the peacekeepers were allowed to get on with their task.

Discussion

In terms of communicative needs, Bangladeshi peacekeepers used meaningful language to reach their aims, irrespective of language accuracy. Their interactions in a range of situations, often fraught with danger, were on the whole quite effective. They had developed a strategy that not only used a simplified, clear form of English that converged towards the language of the rebels and the local community, but, more importantly, their friendly attitude and understanding of and respect for differences provided them with a scaffold that supported their interactions and encounters. Their pre-deployment lesson in the non-separation of attitude, language and behaviour had taken root and was demonstrated at every level.

In terms of peacekeeping and peacebuilding, the literature suggests that peacekeepers should concentrate on immediate tasks of peacekeeping, as peacebuilding is a complex long-time phenomenon and therefore should be the primary task of national governments and their populations (Hazen, 2007). Findings show that Bangladeshi troops were often engaged in situations surrounding conflict where they worked as peacekeepers. However, they also demonstrated a capacity to address the human security agenda – the positive peace feature (Galtung, *ibid*) – through their ‘quick impact projects’. In this way, they were also involved in basic forms of peacebuilding.

Finally, the insight that can be drawn from the study is that the use of language alone is not the only

factor for success in managing conflict situations. The Bangladeshi peacekeepers formula that ‘attitude, language and behaviour cannot be separated’ created the basis for a non-judgmental, respectful and empathetic way of communication that contributed to success. Such effective ways of communication stand greater chances in facilitating interpersonal and intercultural understanding, and enable actors to probe and evaluate information, explore situations, and get to root causes before embarking on plans and action.

Evidence of the success of Bangladeshi peacekeepers’ performance in Sierra Leone can be found in UN Peacekeeping Publications (2005), UNAMSIL Factsheet 5 (2005) and numerous newspaper reports, e.g. *Daily Star* (February 4, 2006), which all comment on the robust response of the peacekeepers to the needs and demands of Sierra Leone emerging from conflict, for improving the security situation, and for their voluntary acts of charity or reconstruction beyond the call of duty. That Bangladeshis won the hearts of the local population is reflected in the fact that, in 2002, the government of Sierra Leone made Bangla one of its official languages after the Bangladeshi peacekeepers built a 54km road during the civil war (*Indian Express*, February 21, 2017; *Dhaka Tribune*, February 17, 2017). Although the Bangla language has no socio-functional role in the country, this act is an expression of appreciation of the peacekeepers’ positive contribution. Moreover, during an official visit to Bangladesh in 2003, former Sierra Leone President Ahmad Kabbah said: ‘People of Sierra Leone not only welcome Bangladeshi troops, but they are reluctant to let them leave as well’ (*Daily Star*, 23 October, 2003). The UN Field Support Department Under Secretary General Atul Khare spoke of ‘... the outstanding contribution’ of Bangladesh to peacekeeping, adding that ‘... the professionalism and forthcoming attitude of Bangladeshi peacekeepers is really praiseworthy’ (*Dhaka Tribune*, March 3, 2017). Significantly, post-UNAMSIL years have seen Bangladeshi NGOs operating in Sierra Leone in areas of microfinance and agricultural development and also the private sector, making major investments in garments, textile and agro products, including a rubber processing plant, the first of its kind in West Africa (*Daily Star*, October 23, 2003; *Awoko*, June 11, 2017). By being involved in international peacekeeping, Bangladesh is working to establish itself as a significant world power, and also perhaps changing impressions of it being a developing country (and a recipient of aid) to one that is also providing worthwhile services in preventing and dissipating conflict, by using language and mediating skills.

Implications for ELT

The discussion of the potential of English in managing conflict situations can be extended to the geo-political realities that are increasingly being recognised by theorists and practitioners in English language education. There is a rising lobby in the ELT profession for promoting intercultural understanding and empathy, resilience and reconciliation in language education (e.g. Birch, 2009). This case study shows how these skills were needed by peacekeepers, and – eventually – in the rebuilding of communities where they undertook their work. This is evident in the actions of the Bangladeshi peacekeepers in various situations cited earlier, in terms of diffusing tension and managing conflict situations, particularly in disarming, demobilizing and reintegrating anti-government rebels. These skills of intercultural understanding, empathy and resilience were also applied positively in rehabilitation and rebuilding operations, such as while building the 54km road during the civil war and digging to build sanitation structures in Koidu in the face of stiff resistance from the local population.

In advocacy literature in English language education, Edge (2006) has strongly encouraged initiatives for 're-locating TESOL' by emphasizing two specific issues – the importance of *context* and a *respect for difference*. Context may be seen simply, with regard to time, place and participants, or as a more complex phenomenon constructed by people through traditions, beliefs and practices. Closely related to *context* is the sense of *difference* people perceive when they come in contact with other less-known contexts based on a variety of factors (cultural, physical, linguistic, economic, social, religious, even philosophical). And hence there arises the imperative to nurture attitudes that encourage a respect for *difference*. This case study has revealed how a realisation of these two factors – an understanding and acceptance of the Sierra Leonean culture linked to empathy, resilience and a respect for a different people – played a vital role in developing positive attitudes, sympathetic language and compassionate behaviour among the peacekeepers.

Edge's initiative regarding these two issues in language education has promoted a perspective amidst English language educators to extend the borders of communication to an environment where due respect is given to *difference*. Expressed in pedagogic terms, there is therefore a strong need for curricula, materials, methods and tests to focus not only on accuracy, fluency and appropriateness, but also on flexibility (Edge, *ibid*:xix). Such skills, if present in communities, may even be effective in the prevention of conflict.

In terms of pedagogy, Friedrich (2007) identifies three areas of concentration for linguistic peace education and social justice in the EFL/ESL classroom. They are linguistic and cross-cultural awareness, humanizing vocabulary and peace linguistic education of teachers. These ideas could be usefully embraced in general ELT curricula – not only in specific peacekeeping training courses. She outlines suggestions for teacher preparation and gives three general goals of the approach – empowerment, offsetting imperialism and focusing on peace instead of conflict. She advocates a new linguistic peace model of communicative competence. Friedrich thus proposes an additional competency – of peace and social wellbeing promotion – to the four traditional communicative competences – viz. grammatical, sociolinguistic, strategic and discorsal – that had been proposed almost four decades ago by Canale and Swain (1980).

Friedrich (*ibid*) also offers an alternative pacific (peace) vocabulary and approach – how to reinforce positive agreement-fostering terms rather than common negative disagreement-fostering language terms. The role of teachers and institutions are critical to this, as they need to realize their potential and power to nurture negative or positive emotions and attitudes in the learners. Teachers need to operate as change agents – they can use pedagogy in promoting harmony between students by fostering respect, justice and inclusiveness. On the other hand, they can also use curricula and pedagogy to perpetuate divisiveness and conflict. With an alarming rise in social injustices and human rights violations globally, the choice for the ELT profession is clear. The current ELT classroom requires teachers to be positive agents of change where teacher agency needs to operate as a peacebuilder across diverse national communities and nations.

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List of contributors

Nazmi Al-Masri is an Associate Professor of TEFL & Curriculum Development at the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG) in Palestine. His main research interests are training teachers, using technology in teaching foreign language and language and intercultural communication. He is a Co-Investigator in several research and teacher development projects with Glasgow University, Manchester University, UK and Tampere University, Finland. He also worked with both the British Council and UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees) on delivering in-service teacher training courses. He was a member of the Palestinian National Team for the development of the first English language curriculum and textbooks currently used in all Palestinian schools, English for Palestine Series published by Macmillan Publishers.

Roslyn Appleby is a Senior Lecturer in Adult Learning and Applied Linguistics at the University of Technology Sydney. Roslyn has published extensively in the field of language, gender and identity, and is the author of *ELT, Gender and International Development* (2010, Multilingual Matters), *Men and Masculinities in Global English Language Teaching* (2014, Palgrave Macmillan), and *Sexing the Animal in a Post-Humanist World* (forthcoming, Routledge).

John Tombola Barabara is graduate in English Language Teaching from the Institut Supérieur Pédagogique de Bukavu where he has been a teaching assistant since 2014. He is South Kivu Provincial Secretary of the Congolese Language Support Society (CLASS) and active member of the Bukavu English club. He is also pursuing an International Master's in Educational Quality at the University of Bamberg.

Barbara Birch has been a Professor of Linguistics at California State University-Fresno since 1989. Since completing her Ph.D. in Linguistics at the University of Wisconsin-Madison she has specialized in applied linguistics and teacher training in phonics and reading for English learners, English grammar instruction, and peace education. Her textbooks include *English L2 Reading: Getting to the Bottom* (2006, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates), *The English Language Teacher and Global Civil Society* (2009, Routledge), and *English Grammar Pedagogy: A Global Perspective* (2013, Routledge). Additionally, she has taught English in Spain, Ecuador, and Pakistan.

Qumrul Hasan Chowdhury is Assistant Professor of English in the Institute of Modern Languages at the University of Dhaka and PhD candidate in the School of Education, Communication and Society at King's

College London. His research interests are language and development, and sociology of language education. He has published chapters in the book *Routledge Handbook of Language and Identity* (2016), and articles in the journals *World Englishes* and *Journal of English as a lingua franca*.

Lucy Costa is a teacher, teacher-trainer and supervisor at the British Council in Milan, Italy. She has worked in the EFL field for 20 years in Europe, Asia and in Lebanon. She was Senior Trainer on the British Council STEPS programme working for the integration of young refugee children in the national school system.

Marie Delaney is Director of the Learning Harbour, Cork, Ireland (www.thelearningharbour.ie), a teacher-trainer, educational psychotherapist and author of *Teaching the Unteachable* (2009), *What can I do with the kid who...?* (2010), *Into the Classroom: Special Educational Needs* (2016) and *Attachment for Teachers* (2017). She has extensive experience of working with students affected by trauma and who display challenging behaviour, having worked in non-formal, mainstream and special school settings. Her interests include applying therapeutic thinking approaches to understanding the effects of trauma on learning and behaviour in school, supporting staff wellbeing and language learning as a vehicle for inclusion.

Giovanna Fassetta is a Lecturer in Intercultural Literacies and Languages in Education at the University of Glasgow. She has a Master's degree in Education (Applied Linguistics) and a PhD in Sociology. She is a qualified teacher with over 20 years' experience, and worked first as a primary teacher in Italy and Eritrea, and then as a specialist of Italian as a foreign language in British primary and secondary schools. She is currently PI on the GCRF project 'The impact of language: a cross-border collaboration for the design, development and promotion of an Online Palestinian Arabic Course', funded by the AHRC.

Marilyn Garson is a writer and social entrepreneur with eighteen years of experience in conflict-affected communities, with organizations like Mercy Corps, UNRWA, UNDP and GFA; and as the independent co-founder of locally owned social enterprises.

Peter Hare manages the Peacekeeping English Project at the British Council in Ethiopia, as well as the satellite programmes in Djibouti and Somaliland. He has extensive experience of managing such projects, specifically in Georgia and Mongolia, and has also worked with cross project activities in Africa,

East and Central Europe, China, Central Asia and the South Caucasus.

Karin Harvey is the Training and Development Co-ordinator for the British Council in the Occupied Palestinian Territory with over 15 years of experience working with learners of English in various contexts around the world. He has also managed a British Council Language for Resilience programme in western Ethiopia for refugees from South Sudan, Sudan and the Great Lakes.

Maria Grazia Imperiale (School of Education, University of Glasgow) is a doctoral candidate on the AHRC 'Researching Multilingually at the Borders of Language, the Body, Law and the State' project. She works under the UNESCO Programme for Refugee Integration through Languages and the Arts at the University of Glasgow. She has worked as a research assistant on a Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) project on 'Idioms of distress, resilience and wellbeing', and is now a Research Associate on a GCRF research project on 'The impact of language' between the University of Glasgow and the Islamic University of Gaza. She is interested in language education in contexts of crisis and protracted emergencies, in art-based teaching methods, and in the capabilities approach.

Andy Keedwell has been working as a teacher, teacher educator, project manager and consultant for the last thirty years in the South Caucasus, South and Central Asia, Eastern Europe and East Africa. He was involved with British Council Peacekeeping English Project teacher development initiatives in Azerbaijan, Albania and Macedonia, Ethiopia and Afghanistan. His interests include supporting teachers to teach others and English for the world of work.

Ewan MacRae is a former teacher trainer with the British Council in North Korea where he worked from 2014-2017 in Pyongyang University of Foreign Studies and Kim Chaek University of Technology. He holds an MA in Development Education and Global Learning from the Institute of Education, University College London and is currently pursuing a PhD in Education at Queen's University Belfast.

Roda Madziva is an Assistant Professor in Sociology in the School of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Nottingham. Her research interests are in the area of global migration and diasporic studies with a focus on the political, economic and social environments of sending, transit and receiving countries and the specific challenges and vulnerabilities that are engendered by particular migratory journeys. She has conducted research on forced migration and family separation, highly skilled

migrants, refugee integration and access to services, bringing together work on education and employability and more recently, the links between migration, human-trafficking and contemporary slavery.

Amy Jo Minett is an Assistant Professor of English and TESOL at Salem State University in Salem, Massachusetts. She has been involved in a range of English-in-peacebuilding initiatives, most recently in Afghanistan and Iraq, though she has also worked extensively in Hungary, Romania, and on various ELT projects throughout Central, Eastern, and South Eastern Europe. Her research explores the role of English and ELT—how they are discursively constructed, and how they are lived and experienced—in transition, conflict, and post-conflict contexts.

Ilham Nasser is a senior researcher and teacher trainer consultant, previously an Associate Professor at GMU. She is based in Washington, DC.

Alison Phipps is Professor of Languages and Intercultural Studies, and holds the UNESCO Chair in Refugee Integration through Languages and the Arts. Co-Convener of Glasgow Refugee, Asylum and Migration Network (GRAMNET). Principal Investigator for the £2 million AHRC Large Grant 'Researching multilingually: At the borders of language, the body, law and the state'. In 2012 she received an OBE for Services to Education and Intercultural and Interreligious Relations in the Queen's Birthday Honours. She is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh.

Arifa Rahman is Professor of English and Teacher Education from the Institute of Modern Languages, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh. With extensive experience in teaching, research, materials design and assessment, she has published research articles and chapters in several international journals and books. As an educational consultant, she has worked with international partners on English Language projects. Her interest in language teacher development has involved her in facilitating teaching and learning among communities of English teachers at the grassroots level in Bangladesh. Her current research interest is social responsibility of language educators and inequity in language education policy and implementation.

Philip Seargeant is Senior Lecturer in Applied Linguistics at the Open University. He is author of *The Idea of English in Japan* (2009), *Exploring World Englishes* (2012), and *From Language to Creative Writing* (with Bill Greenwell, 2013), and editor of *English in Japan in the Era of Globalization* (2011), *English in the World* (with Joan Swann, 2012), *English*

and *Development* (with Elizabeth J. Erling, 2013), *The Language of Social Media* (with Caroline Tagg, 2014) and *Creativity in language* (with Zsófia Demjén, 2016).

Mike Solly, Senior Adviser in English for Education Systems at the British Council, has worked in English language teaching for many years in a variety of roles both in the UK and overseas. He was formerly Senior Lecturer in Education at the Open University, where he was central to the highly acclaimed English in Action project in Bangladesh. His research interests are informed by his work on these projects, having published in the areas of attitudes to English language in development contexts and the use of video in teacher education projects.

Sean Sutherland is a Senior Lecturer in English and linguistics at the University of Westminster (London, UK). He has worked in Canada, South Korea and Japan. He holds a PhD on Japanese English teachers' perceptions of teacher identity from King's College, University of London. His current research examines people's use of spoken and written language to challenge media discourse. He recently published the textbook *A Beginner's Guide to Discourse Analysis* for Palgrave.

Vesna Tasevska-Dudeska is a translator, interpreter, English teacher and previous teacher trainer in the British Council's Peacekeeping English project in Macedonia. She also co-managed the British Council's Integrated Training for Peace Support and Security Management project. She has taught English for Specific Purposes for 13 years and is currently pursuing a PhD in ESP at Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje.

Juliet Thondhlana is Lecturer in Education and Applied Linguistics in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Nottingham. Her research interests are in the areas of language, migration, education and employability. She has studied migrants' social and economic integration including exploring the role of language in facilitating their integration and resettlement processes in the UK education sector and labour market.

Joseph Kaleba Walingene earned his Master's in English Didactics from the Institut Supérieur Pédagogique de Bukavu (ISP) and is now a doctoral candidate at the Université Pédagogique Nationale in the DRC. He was Chair of the Department of English and African Culture at the ISP, where he is currently a lecturer. He is interested in working with youth in English Clubs, and he has been coordinating English Club activities for three years.

Jacqueline Widin is a Senior Lecturer teaching in the Language and Literacy programs in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Technology, Sydney. She has coordinated the initial adult teacher training (Grad Dip TESOL) and the Professional Practice program. Jacquie has worked in Laos, Japan and Vietnam and has research interests in the internationalisation of education, in particular university-run, off-shore English language teaching projects. She is the author of *Illegitimate Practices: Global English Language Education* (2010).

Daniel Xerri is a Lecturer in TESOL at the University of Malta, the Joint Coordinator of the IATEFL Research SIG, and the Chairperson of the ELT Council within the Ministry for Education and Employment in Malta. He holds postgraduate degrees in English and Applied Linguistics, as well as a PhD in Education from the University of York. He is the author of many publications on different areas of education and TESOL, including articles published in *ELT Journal*, *English in Education*, and *International Journal of Research and Method in Education*. Further details about his talks and publications can be found at: www.danielxerri.com

English Across the Fracture Lines: the contribution and relevance of English to security, stability and peace

This volume takes stock of contexts around the globe in which English is being used and taught as a means of alleviating conflict and promoting security, stability and peace. It provides new insights into the various communicative needs in such situations, and shows the impact and potential of programmes promoting English as a means of reconciliation, resilience, environmental sustainability and intercultural understanding. It offers a space for reflection on how English language teaching can nurture learners' wellbeing by equipping them with a language in which not only injustice and pain are articulated and expressed to the wider international community, but also forgiveness and empathy. In addition, it provides recommendations for how all of us involved in the English language teaching (ELT) profession can facilitate making connections and promote participation in global dialogues through English, keeping hope alive in challenging times.

About the Editor

Elizabeth J. Erling has been engaged with international ELT for over twenty years, working in the contexts of Austria, Bangladesh, Germany, India, Korea and the UK. Previously Senior Lecturer in English Language Teaching and International Teacher Education at the Open University, UK, she is now Professor of ELT Methodology at the University of Graz, Austria. Her research explores the value attributed to English as a language of economic development, social mobility and intercultural understanding, and she is particularly interested in how these values shape language education policy and contribute to the growth of English-medium instruction. She has undertaken several research projects with the British Council and is also co-editor of the book *English and Development: Pedagogy, Policy and Globalization* (Multilingual Matters, 2013).

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