

LOCAL, GLOBAL, CRITICAL, ECLECTIC: OVERLAPPING PARADIGMS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

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Abstract for a proposed chapter, to appear in:

Resistance to the known in Foreign Language Education

This chapter will synthesise empirical data and post-modern theorisations in order to develop a conceptual model that offers a new understanding of how English Language Teaching (ELT) is practiced at the periphery of the English-using world.

The empirical strand of the chapter will draw on data from a case study in Greece (Kostoulas, in preparation) to explore the tensions between a local and a global pedagogical paradigm. The local paradigm, which derives its legitimacy from traditional pedagogy, is associated with structuralist views of language and transmissive pedagogical practices. Language is seen as comprising lexical items and grammatical rules, which are to be learnt and reproduced. Emphasis is placed on the accurate reproduction of content knowledge, and on the development of examination competence. The global paradigm, which is influenced by mainstream ELT literature, encompasses notions such as the 'communicative approach' and 'task-based learning'. Language is viewed in Hymesian terms (Hymes, 1979), and the development of communicative competence is given precedence over accuracy. Collaborative tasks, authentic texts, and monolingual communication in the target language are typical of this paradigm. Taken together, these two paradigms constitute the 'known' aspects of ELT, which are embedded into practice and not (normally) questioned.

The linguistic, pedagogical and political premises of the 'known' will be critically interrogated in the next section of the chapter, which will describe a third orientation towards ELT (the critical paradigm). The status of the Standard Language, as a sole norm provider, will be questioned in view of the global spread of English, and alternative linguistic models, such as English as a Lingua Franca, will be put forward (Jenkins, 2009; Prodromou, 2008; Seidlhofer, 2009). Established methods of teaching and learning will be juxtaposed to emerging proposals of counter-hegemonic pedagogy, which raise awareness of ideological issues and power relations in the classroom and beyond (Canagarajah, 1999; Kumaravadivelu, 2001). Lastly, the hegemonic effect of ELT practices will be problematised (Edge, 2006; Phillipson, 1992, 2009), and empowering pedagogical goals will be put forward (Fay, Lytra, & Ntavaliagkou, 2010; Kostoulas, 2011).

In the concluding remarks, readers will be cautioned that despite its emancipatory and egalitarian outlook, the critical paradigm has the potential to stifle innovation should it attain the status of orthodoxy. Consequently, the case will be made for an eclectic, practice-driven pedagogical outlook that dynamically synthesizes influences from all three paradigms while being sensitive to local exigencies and learner needs.

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Bionote

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