

Putting English In Its Place



Putting ELT Professionalism Forward

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With the TESOL Profession nearing a 50th Anniversary



THREE ISSUES—

1. Challenges to establishing ELT as a profession
2. Commodization of English.
3. Our responsibility to situate ELT appropriately and respectfully in a multilingual world.

IS ELT A PROFESSION?

- As long as most people believe that the main prerequisite for being an English teacher is being an English speaker I would argue “no.”



When a young, untrained native speaker is valued over an educated, experienced non-native English speaking teacher, our professional expertise is devalued.

The Native Speaker Fallacy Hurts Us All—ESL/EFL



- If being a native speaker is really all that's needed to be an English teacher, why do ESL teachers need professional preparation or professional pay?
- U.S. ESL K-12 teachers are often not recognized as highly qualified by states in ways other teachers are
- As “pull-out” ESL fades in K-12, the role of ESL teachers becomes ambiguous.
 - Viewed as skilled professionals or teacher's aides?

Current Trends in ELT...



and their Implications.

This should be a good time to be an English language teacher...



- Never have so many people wanted to learn English.
- Never have so many wanted a higher level of competence in English.
- Never has there been so much demand for English language teachers.
- Never has governmental support for EFL been so high...

Consequently we have--



- Bilingual schools in Mexico which are English Only
- German professors at German universities coming to the U.S. to learn how to deliver their science or technical courses in English (due to EC regulations)
- English villages in Korea for children whose families can't afford to send them to study English abroad
- African universities who can't keep competent English professors because they are hired away by multinational corporations.

This is not a time to be complacent.



- Everywhere we turn, the workplace and governments are asking, “Can you find us more qualified English teachers? Can you find us more qualified English teachers?”
- Academia responds, “it takes time to produce quality English teachers.”
- The workplace wonders, “How hard can it be to teach English? Why do we have to pay English teachers so much? Can’t we do this on the cheap?”
- Meanwhile the demand does not abate.



And we also have....

- 2 Explosion of **English as a Medium of Instruction** in NON English Dominant Countries--
 - Critical thinking “bundled with” English
 - Classroom practices of dubious merit
 - De-emphasis of first language instruction
- 3 Competition from private sector to produce teachers and even shorter teacher training programs
- 4 No globally recognized (or globally appropriate) guides to teacher competence

Commoditization Of ELT (*Signs!*)



- Wang Gang's novel "*English*" (2006/translated 2010)
- Parents in Non English Dominant countries see English as the key to their children's success
- Universities see English as a Medium of Instruction classes as a way to lure international students and increase their prestige
- Often, looking like a native speaker is more important than being able to teach English
- Plethora of new TEFL/TESOL Certificate courses w/ shorter and shorter durations



What is a reasoned, responsible, inclusive role for English in a multilingual world?

Whose English? What is its role with other languages?



- What should be the role of English in relation to national languages?
- What variety of English should be the instructional model?
- Will providing students/citizens with English guarantee them a job in the 21st Century Workplace?
- Are we only teaching English and not cultural values as well? Will even English through local cultural values prepare students for global communication?

With English instruction, does one size fit all?



- Need to be **INCLUSIVE**: value EIL, dismantle the NEST/NEST and standard/non-standard distinctions, reinterpret language norms as flexible and variable
- Need to **SITUATE LOCALLY**: curricula, teacher standards, and the acceptable variety and proficiency of English taught must be locally defined, but think **GLOBALLY**.
- Need **DISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION**: researchers and practitioners must listen to each other

The Role of English in the School Curriculum



- What is an realistic expectation of the resources need to make a significant percentage of students “*high functioning bilinguals?*”
- How early should English be introduced? Should it be mandatory? If it is mandatory, how many students will have a genuine need to use English in their adult lives?
- If English is being introduced in the primary grades, are there a sufficient number of qualified teachers?
- If English becomes a Medium of Instruction at some point, is an effective bridge provided from instruction in national languages?

Who is a qualified English teacher?



- There are a “zillion” credentials and certificates out there.
- Even for legitimate credentials, there are British, U.S. Australian, Singaporean, and EU credentials
- Government officials, school administrators and parents genuinely need to know WHO is a qualified English teacher.
- It is time for our profession to tell them.

EFL Certification(s) Need to..



- have rigor
- have clear requirements, standards, and curricula to include simple explanations of *what “certificated teachers can do”*
- use a principles-based approach so different countries and regions can create certification frameworks that meet their needs and circumstances
- acknowledge and incorporate existing standards
- privilege and encourage bi- and multilingual teachers
- not disenfranchise any practicing teacher
(*misapplication of CEFR*)



How can we make our expertise heard?

Reaching our Audiences



- We need an “elevator” speech to quickly and convincingly explain why we need an education and professional development to be able to teach English
- that disassociates us from the dominant hegemon
- We want audiences to see that we seek their best interests
- Minimally, we need to reach government officials, teachers & school administrators, and parents.

We need to do what we do best —educate-- ABOUT...



- The incredible investments required to produce high competency bilinguals in EFL settings.
- The success that learners can achieve with genuinely communicative, interactive instruction.
- The fact that critical thinking can occur in languages other than English.
- Not trusting untrained native speakers or “methods of the month” to provide learners with high proficiency English when we don’t trust high stakes medical operations to poorly trained doctors.

And we must take the bull by the horns. First we must..



...talk to and work with governments AND the workplace to respond demands for providing more high proficiency English users in ways that are reasonable and rational. We --

- (a) Have realistic proposals to end the qualified English teacher shortage.
- (b) Be able to “cleanly” answer the question, “Who is a good English teacher?”
- (c) Support EL learners for academic literacy and globally contextualized English use.



This means...

...we need to create a globally recognized framework of English teacher competency guidelines to be able to say who is a qualified teacher.

Such a framework has to respect and accommodate existing standards and credentials, and be a *guide* to establishing local standards for local needs, resources and English varieties.

What Is TESOL International Doing? (1)



Reaching out to—

- make affiliates equal partners to research ELT trends and tendencies across the globe
- English teacher associations with tools to help them strengthen & grow their associations
- other regional associations (IATEFL, Asia TEFL, ACTA) to work collaboratively in promoting reasoned approaches to English language policy

What Is TESOL International Doing? (2)



- Publishing a scheduled, on-going series of white papers to have the necessary research base to make credible policy pronouncements including our first completed white paper:

*A Principles-Base Approach to
ELT Policies and Practices*

Which creates a foundation for mindful, context-sensitive, guidelines oriented initiatives, including...

Other Policy Issues TESOL Looks to Address



- The benefits of multilingual education.
- Support of non-native global Englishes
- Appropriate age for introducing ELT in school.
- English as a Medium of Instruction in non English dominant countries
- Critical thinking and academic literacy
- Assessment of local English teachers using international standards
- Mother tongue education in English dominant nations

What Else Is TESOL International Doing? (3)

- TESOL International has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs of the US State Department to explore ways to—
 - Provide clearinghouses that can be one-stop resources for those seeking information on ELT programs, supports, and providers
 - Enhance opportunities for collaboration when those opportunities are within the goals and values of both entities

Teacher Standards for EFL Contexts



A framework of teacher qualifications that will—

- be context sensitive yes, but will also help stakeholders address with confidence the question, *“Who is a good English teacher?”*
- will use approaches from good models of the TESOL preK-12 standards (e.g., use of vignettes) and the NCATE/TESOL standards

Let's Make Ourselves Proud...



- establish English teaching as a profession before others convert it into an commodity
- advocate for reasoned, appropriate English policy in a multilingual world
- Provide high quality guidance and support to English teachers AND English learners

THANK YOU

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