

Part II

Calling for Change



Chapter 2

Individual Identity, Cultural Globalization, and Teaching English as an International Language

The Case For an Epistemic Break

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Introduction

This chapter is based on two inter-related propositions. First, the on-going process of cultural globalization with its incessant and increased flow of peoples, goods, and ideas across the world is creating a novel “web of interlocution” that is effectively challenging the traditional notions of identity formation of an individual or of a nation. Second, the teaching of English as an international language (EIL) cannot remain insulated and isolated from globalization’s impact on the formation of individual identities of English language learners, teachers, and teacher educators around the world.

In this chapter, I present critical perspectives on some of the broad issues concerning the above propositions (for specific principles of teaching, see McKay, this volume). In the first part of the chapter, I briefly outline two familiar narratives of identity formation—modernism and postmodernism—and argue that a third—globalism—is fast emerging as a crucial factor in the construction of identity. I try to highlight how globalism presents challenges as well as opportunities for individuals to exercise their agency in order to construct their identities. In the second part, I assert that, in order to successfully meet the challenges of globalism, the teaching of EIL requires no less than an epistemic break from its dependency on Western-oriented or, more specifically, Center-based (aka Inner Circle-based) knowledge systems. I conclude the chapter by pointing out some of the impediments facing any genuine epistemic break in EIL.

Narratives of Identity Formation

Etymologically speaking, the term identity means *sameness*. It entails membership in one or more categories such as nation, ethnicity, race, religion, class, profession, or gender. Being a white American

Christian woman, for instance, connects one with aspects of whiteness, Americanness, Christianness, and womanhood—whichever way they are defined. Although sameness is a salient feature of identity, it is *difference* that most often stands out in marking one's identity. Each of us can justifiably say "I am who I am because I am not you" or, in the words of Amin Maalouf (2000, p. 10), "my identity is what prevents me from being identical to anybody else."

We can best understand the concept of identity by understanding the concept of Self. An individual's sense of Self is broadly defined by the relationship between the individual and the community, and how the individual navigates the complex terrain of Self and society. Although there is no single, overriding concept of identity, there are two sociological narratives that have well-articulated positions on it—modernism and postmodernism (for a detailed discussion on self and identity, see Ferguson, 2009).

Identity and Modernism

To put it in a nutshell, during the days of modernity (a period ranging from mid-17th to mid-20th century), the individual was largely expected to constitute his/her identity in tune with pre-existent and relatively unchanging societal norms. More than anything else, the individual's identity was tied almost inextricably to affiliation to family and community. Everybody had a neatly designated, hierarchically-coded place under the sun. And, they were expected to remain there. While some maneuvering was indeed possible, individuals encountered an essentialized and totalized concept of identity within which they had to find personal meaning. With socially accepted boundaries of an objectified external world imposed on them, individuals had very little meaningful choice outside of clearly delineated characteristics of birth and ethnic origin. In other words, the "modern" Self was more externally imposed than self-constructed.

Identity and Postmodernism

Unlike modernism, the currently prevailing narrative of postmodernism (a period ranging from the mid-20th century onwards) treats individual identity as something that is actively constructed on an on-going basis. It sees identity as fragmented, not unified; multiple, not singular; expansive, not bounded. It bestows a modicum of agency on the individual in determining a sense of Self. In this view, identity formation is conditioned not merely by inherited traditions such as culture, or by external exigencies such as history, or by ideological constructs such as power, but also on the individual's ability and willingness to exercise agency.

The catchword for postmodern identity is *fragmentation*. It captures the epitome of postmodern life. The fragment, according to sociologist Harvie Ferguson,

is not like a splinter of wood or a shard of glass; a piece broken off from an intact and uniform whole. The fragment is a detached portion that takes on a life of its own and may even gain the appearance of self-sufficiency as something *unlike* its parent body.

(2009, p. 154, emphasis as in original)

The fragmented identity takes on a life of its own through a process of becoming—a process that is continuous, non-linear, and unstable. It is less preoccupied with the formation of a durable identity. Instead, it embraces the idea that identity is fluid and amorphous, one that is constantly and endlessly invented and reinvented. It is because of this dynamic and incomplete nature of identity formation that Ferguson characterizes it as “the continuous creation of the fragment; a *bricolage* of the disjointed” (Ferguson, 2009, p. 184, emphasis as in original).

Identity and Globalism

As my brief account of the two narratives suggests, postmodernism has a much greater explanatory power than modernism in helping us understand and analyze the problematic nature of the concept of Self. However, it is my contention that we need even a broader perspective in order to fully understand the construction of self-identity in this globalized and globalizing world. I believe yet another narrative, globalism, is fast emerging as a crucial factor in identity formation. This is necessitated by fast-evolving global, national, social, and individual realities of the 21st century. A brief discussion follows; for details, see Kumaravadivelu (2008).

Globally, our world is marked by a near-collapsing of space, time, and borders, resulting in a run away flow of peoples, goods, and ideas across the world. This phenomenon is aided and accelerated by information revolution, or Internatization. Cultural images from far off lands are flashed across small screens in our living rooms in real time, enabling closer cultural contact than ever before. People now have a greater chance of knowing about others’ cultural way of life—the good, the bad, and the ugly.

The impact of globalization on the national psyche is telling. While people around the world see unparalleled opportunities for cultural growth, they also see unparalleled threats to their national and cultural identity. Islamic terrorism can in part be seen as one, extreme, response to the threat to local identity. In fact, globalization has only accentuated tribalization. As a result, people are simultaneously coming together and

pulling apart. Giddens (2000) was right when he asserted that globalization is indeed the reason for the revival of local cultural identities in different parts of the world.

With the revival of local cultural identities, social life has come under severe stress. Ethnic, religious, or linguistic affiliations and affinities within a nation get played up. Each community strives to protect and preserve its own identity. Whenever there is a real or perceived threat to this identity, social unrest erupts. This undeniable social reality has a huge effect on the formation of individual identity so much so that Richard Jenkins (2004, p. 4) claims that “all human identities are by definition *social* identities” (emphasis as in original).

In spite of the pulls and pressures from global, national, and social realities, the individual still retains a considerable degree of agency in determining a sense of Self. After all, self-identity is “a matter of choosing, producing, expressing, and forming identities adequate to reflect the self that chooses and forms them” (Ferguson, 2009, p. 65). In choosing and forming identities in this complex world, individuals require critical knowledge that can help them tell the difference between information and disinformation, between ideas and ideologies, between the trivial and the consequential. The Internatization of information systems makes such critical knowledge available to those individuals who seek it. Using the easily accessible knowledge-base and engaging in critical self-reflection, individuals now have the opportunity to evaluate their and others’ cultural value systems and develop a global cultural consciousness that has the potential to enrich their lives.

Identity and The Teaching of EIL

So, what has all the above to do with language learners and language teachers? Simply put, learners and teachers are individuals too. They too are engaged in the task of forming and reforming their identities in this globalized world. Because of the intricate connection between language and culture, language classes offer a unique opportunity for them to try to wrestle with, and articulate their anxieties about, the complexities of identity formation. EIL learners and teachers, in particular, have an added burden thrust upon them because of the globality and coloniality of the language they are dealing with. The interconnectedness between cultural globalization, identity formation, and English language education has started getting the attention it truly deserves from EIL educators (for recent book-length works, see Higgins, 2009; Kubota & Lin, 2009; Kumaravadivelu, 2008; Lin, 2008).

Recent explorations in EIL learning, teaching and teacher education have brought to the surface certain creative tensions that characterize the

formation of individual identities, compelling us to rethink some of the taken-for-granted theoretical and pedagogical assumptions about EIL. For instance, the role of integrative motivation for EIL learning has come under serious scrutiny in the context of contemporary realities of self and identity. Finding the notion of integrative motivation antithetical to identity formation, Coetzee-Van Rooy (2006) declares it untenable for EIL learners. Following her, Ushioda and Dörnyei (2009, pp. 2–3) convincingly ask: “Does it make sense to talk about integrative attitudes when ownership of English does not necessarily rest with a specific community of speakers, whether native speakers of British, or American English varieties or speakers of World English varieties?”

In a similar vein, language teachers have started critically analyzing and questioning their own readiness to deal with learner/teacher identities in their cross-cultural classrooms. In one such study, Connelly (2008) investigates how she, with her dominant constructed subject position as an Australian white woman, can address all the subjectivities that she encounters in her class full of students from various indigenous communities. She concludes:

Mindful of the knowledge created through this narrative analysis, an educational implication is to ask what now must be done, and how can this knowledge about performance tensions inside subjectivities generate different pedagogical understandings and possibilities for the education of Australian indigenous students?

(p. 100)

Consequent to still unfolding learner/teacher demands and expectations in this globalized environment, language teacher educators are faced with the task of helping student-teachers become aware of how they are positioned in various historical and institutional contexts, and also become aware of the possibilities and strategies for transgression and transformation. Several expatriate teachers teaching EIL around the world as well as teachers who hail from local cultural communities are slowly realizing that the kind of personal and professional identities they bring with them to the classroom are becoming increasingly inadequate (Clarke, 2008; Widin, 2010). They are faced with the challenge of moving beyond well-entrenched discourses found in the professional literature that they have heavily relied upon. How participants’ subjectivities shape classroom climate, and how might potential tensions be negotiated have become an important issue in EIL teacher education.

In light of the global and local developments both in the society at large and in our professional community, it is only legitimate to ask whether the teaching of EIL as a profession has been sensitive to these developments

and has come out with a sensible response that is commensurate with the challenges and opportunities. My reading of the prevailing situation leads me to answer the question with a resounding “no.” What I see is a profession that continues to get entangled in terminological knots and one that easily gets distracted by superficial solutions instead of confronting the underlying causes that call for a radical re-conceptualization. It seems to me that, in order for our profession to meet the challenges of globalism in a deeply meaningful way, what is required is no less than an epistemic break from its dependency on the current West-oriented, Center-based knowledge systems that carry an indelible colonial coloration.

Epistemic Break

Although the concept of epistemic break has been around for quite some time, it came to prominence during the 1970s when the French sociologist Michel Foucault presented his sociological interpretations beginning with two of his seminal works: *The Order of Things: An Archeology of the Human Sciences* (1970), and *The Archeology of Knowledge* (1972). Later, scholars in the field of postcolonial studies have employed the concept gainfully to interpret and shape postcolonial epistemologies (for a recent treatment, see Mignolo and Escobar, 2010).

To paraphrase Foucault’s thoughts in simple terms, an *episteme* is a set of relations that unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that give rise to formalized knowledge systems. Regardless of their inherent constraints and limitations, such knowledge systems are gradually imposed on disciplinary discourses. Practitioners of an academic discipline work within the epistemic discourse to understand, express, and predict patterns of meaning within their discipline. Foucault used the break from the knowledge systems governing the classical age and those of the modern age as illustrative examples of epistemic break. The break from the “modern” concept of self-identity to its “postmodern” concept may also be considered as another example.

An epistemic break, then, represents a thorough re-conceptualization and a thorough re-organization of knowledge systems. As mentioned earlier, Foucault argues that the great epistemological discontinuities that mark the characteristics of the classical age and the modern age constitute an epistemic break from the past. In other words, an epistemic break is deemed to have occurred if and when new epistemological orientations appear with a considerable degree of regularity. (for a detailed discussion on what constitutes an epistemic break, see Reed, 2008).

It is instructive to contrast Thomas Kuhn’s *paradigm shift* (Kuhn, 1962) and Foucault’s *epistemic break*. The Kuhnian concept is confined

to scientific worldviews and practices whereas the Foucauldian concept covers a wider range of discourses. More importantly, a paradigm is invariant; and, therefore, a paradigm shift represents a near total replacement of one paradigm with another. The new paradigm becomes an all-pervading knowledge system that informs scientific research activity almost universally. An epistemic break, on the other hand, may not enjoy such a universal understanding and application. An epistemic discourse, therefore, is normally employed descriptively and contextually by its users. That is why Foucault readily accepts the possibility of many epistemes within a particular discourse.

Epistemic Break and EIL

A good example of an enduring episteme in the field of teaching EIL, in spite of its conceptual and definitional ambiguities, is that of the *native speaker* and its benevolent twin, *native-speaker competence*. We may have only an unreal (or, to use a more familiar terminology, idealized) version of who a native speaker is or what constitutes native-speaker competence. But, that has not prevented us from letting the episteme take an all-encompassing hold on the knowledge systems governing almost all aspects of English language learning and teaching. The episteme symbolizes West-oriented, Center-based knowledge systems that EIL practitioners in the periphery countries almost totally depend on. It is analogous to a tap root from which all primary and secondary roots and rootlets sprout laterally. It spreads itself largely in terms of the importance given to matters such as native-speaker accent, native-speaker teachers, native-like target competence, teaching methods emanating from Western universities, textbooks published by Western publishing houses, research agenda set by Center-based scholars, professional journals edited and published from Center countries ... The list is long.

It is true that much has been written highlighting the firm grip this particular episteme has on our discipline. For over two decades, we have been hearing critical voices helping us become acutely aware of linguistic imperialism, discourses of colonialism, native speakerism, the political economy of English language teaching, reclamation of local knowledge ... The list here too is long. But, for all practical purposes, the native-speaker episteme has not loosened its grip over theoretical principles, classroom practices, the publication industry, or the job market. What is surely and sorely needed is a meaningful break from this epistemic dependency if we are serious about sanitizing our discipline from its corrosive effect and sensitizing the field to the demands of globalism and its impact on identity formation. How and where do we start?

Breaking the Dependency on Terminologies

To start with, we must recognize, and act on the recognition, that we have for long been unnecessarily and unwisely entangling ourselves in terminological knots that have mainly contributed to the preservation of the native-speaker episteme. The field of English language learning, teaching, and research seems to have developed a fascination for labels which appear on the scene with some clock-work regularity. And, they all come neatly abbreviated—ESL, EFL, EAL, WE, ELF, EIL. Predictably, there is no consensus in the field about any of these labels and what they stand for. On the contrary, there have been severe criticisms, particularly about the hidden political and ideological agenda behind them (Holliday, 2009; Pennycook, 2007). Besides, some of these labels and what they stand for have been described as unreliable, untenable, and unworkable (Maley, 2009). In fact, this fascination with terminologies is largely confined to scholars and researchers. Practicing teachers are “sublimely unaware” (Maley, 2009, p. 196) of the debate and even for those who are aware, it remains “something of a side issue” (Young & Walsh, 2010, p. 136).

To what extent our fascination with the name game has contributed to the central mission of improving English language learning and teaching is far from clear. Nevertheless, the editor of a recently published volume on EIL enthusiastically characterizes it as something that “marks a *paradigm shift* in TESOL, SLA and the applied linguistics of English ...” (Sharifian, 2009, p. 2, emphasis added). A doubtful claim indeed, considering that there are scholars who argue that EIL is no more than a myth (Pennycook, 2007), is no more than an alternative terminology (Holliday, 2009), and that it overlaps with other labels (Modiano, 2009). It is worthwhile to remember that a paradigm shift in the Kuhnian sense does not happen through pious proclamations, however well-intentioned.

What does not seem to have been adequately recognized is that name games can dupe us into distraction and lull us into a false sense of liberation. We can easily become prisoners of a label, with our thoughts and actions dictated by it. More than half a century ago, Wittgenstein warned us about such a terminological imprisonment. “A picture held us captive,” he said. “And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably” (1958, p. 132). Getting outside it, in the context of EIL, means not just changing the terms of the conversation but changing the terms of the conduct of knowledge production.

Breaking the Dependency on Western Knowledge Production

In order to break the current epistemic dependency on the production, application, and dissemination of EIL knowledge systems, we have to

critically examine the very ways in which we conduct applied linguistic inquiry. An epistemic break here warrants more than moving away from positivistic and towards ethnographic approaches to research. Rather, it requires a fundamental re-conceptualization of research itself. As the Australian indigenous scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) asserts in her classic book *Decolonizing Methodologies*, “research is not an innocent or distant academic exercise but an activity that has something at stake and that occurs in a set of political and social conditions” (p. 5). She correctly points out that “most of the ‘traditional’ disciplines are grounded in cultural world views which are either antagonistic to other belief systems or have no methodology for dealing with other knowledge systems” (p. 65).

The world view that characterizes most part of the studies in second language acquisition (SLA), for instance, has for long been premised upon notions such as interlanguage, fossilization, acculturation, communicative competence, intercultural competence—all of which are heavily tilted towards the episteme of the native speaker. Conditioned by a strong monolingual bias, theory construction in SLA has by and large stayed away from comprehensive, longitudinal, empirical studies grounded in multilingual and multicultural environment particularly on issues such as acquisitional pathways, classroom input and interaction, and, tellingly, the role and use of learners’ first language. Belatedly and haltingly, the field of SLA has started paying attention to the concept of multicompetence and the second language user (Cook, 2002).

Entrapped within such a biased mode of knowledge production and unable to break from their dependency on them, scholars in periphery countries have been doing mostly reactive, not proactive, research. That is, with all sincerity and seriousness, they acquaint themselves with the method and content of Western research and use them for their own investigative purposes, rarely questioning the premises governing it. For instance, studies by periphery-based researchers on pragmatic (in) competence, that is, how EIL learners fail to perform certain speech acts in a way that is acceptable to the native-speaking community, are indeed numerous (see, for instance, Rose & Kasper, 2001, and the references therein). Not surprisingly, even when questions are raised about the wisdom of relying on a native-speaker model of pragmatic competence, they usually come from Center-based scholars (for a recent example, see McKay, 2009).

What is partly needed to break the epistemic dependency on Center-based knowledge production is proactive research on the part of scholars from the periphery. Proactive research involves paying attention to the particularities of learning/teaching in periphery countries, identifying researchable questions, investigating them using appropriate research

methods, producing original knowledge and applying them in classroom contexts. Such a research agenda may shed useful light leading to a better understanding of second language development in a bi-/multilingual environment and eventually lead to an alternative model of SLA that is not constrained by Western-oriented epistemes. Breaking the dependency on Western knowledge production will open up avenues for breaking other lateral dependencies pertaining to teaching methods, the teaching of culture, and instructional materials—three of the pedagogic domains where the native-speaker episteme has a direct bearing on what shapes classroom climate and classroom discourse.

Breaking the Dependency on Center-based Methods

As I have stated elsewhere, since 1940s, our profession

has seen one method after another roll out of Western universities and through Western publishing houses to spread out all over the world. On each occasion, teachers in other countries and other cultures have been assured that this one is the correct one, and that their role is to adapt it to their learners, or their learners to it.

(Kumaravadivelu, 2006a, p. 20)

These Center-based methods (such as audiolingual, communicative) have been aptly characterized as products of “interested knowledge” (Pennycook, 1989) which is clearly linked to the native-speaker episteme. That is, these methods highlighted and promoted the native speaker’s language competence, learning styles, communication patterns, conversational maxims, cultural beliefs, and even accent as the norm. The native speaker is deemed to possess these norms autogenetically and L2 learners have been acculturated to accept them as markers of native-like competence they should aspire to achieve. These assumptions have since come under severe strain leading to calls for an alternative to the concept of method.

I have written extensively on method and postmethod (see Kumaravadivelu, 2006b, for a consolidated presentation). I shall not, therefore, go into details. Briefly, Center-produced methods are based on idealized concepts geared towards idealized contexts. Since language learning and teaching needs, wants, and situations are unpredictably numerous, no idealized method can visualize all the variables in advance in order to provide situation-specific suggestions that practicing teachers need to tackle the challenges they confront in the practice of their everyday teaching. As a predominantly top-down exercise, the conception and construction of methods have been largely guided by a one-size-fits-all-

cookie-cutter approach that assumes a common clientele with common goals. The construction of any meaningful alternative to the Center-produced concept of method, therefore, is premised upon breaking this epistemic dependency and striving to design context-specific, locally-generated instructional strategies that take into account the particular, the practical, and the possible.

Breaking the Dependency on Center-based Cultural Competence

Yet another aspect of epistemic dependency relates to the concept of cultural competence. For a long time, developing L2 linguistic competence has also meant developing L2 cultural competence. Cultural assimilation has been the desired destination, with integrative motivation as the preferred path to get there. This belief was based on the notion that languages and cultures are inextricably linked. This notion, though flawed, is still prevalent and popular in certain quarters. In the recently published book, *Globish: How the English language became the world's language*, Robert McCrum (2010) declares that the world has an “appetite for English language and culture” (p. 9), and that “English plus Microsoft equals a new cultural revolution” (p. 14). He triumphantly, and simplistically, links English not only with cultural identity but also with fundamental human values such as freedom. He proclaims:

(C)ulture is about identity. For as long as the peoples of the world wish to express themselves in terms of ideas like “freedom”, “individuality” and “originality”, and for as long as there are generations of the world's school children versed in Shakespeare, *The Simpsons*, the Declaration of Independence, and the Bible, Globish will remain the means by which an educated minority of the planet communicates.
(p. 285)

McCrum miserably fails to distinguish between the world's appetite for English language and its appetite for English culture. That the non-English speaking world learns and uses English language for communicational purposes and not for cultural identity formation has been apparent for quite some time. From India, we learn that Indians learn English to meet their educational and institutional needs and they keep it separate from their cultural beliefs and practices (Krishnaswamy & Burde, 1998). For Pakistanis, English reflects Islamic values, and embodies South Asian Islamic sensitivities (Mahboob, 2009). Turks have no difficulty whatsoever in privileging “their Turkish and Muslim identities over the Western way of existence presented during English-language courses” (Atay & Ece, 2009, p. 31). The volumes edited by Kubota and Lin, (2009) and Lin

(2008) confirm how, although the English language has been appropriated by the Center as an instrument for spreading Western cultural beliefs and practices, people across the world see it and use it as a communicational tool.

Awareness of identity formation dictated by emerging globalism has intensified the desire of EIL learners and teachers to preserve and protect their own linguistic and cultural identities. In response to such a development, there have been attempts to move from biculturalism to interculturalism (Byram, 1997; McKay, 2002), and from interculturalism to cultural realism (Kumaravadivelu, 2008). Biculturalism in the teaching of EIL requires the learners to acquire and use the pragmatic rules of the L2 community. Interculturalism, on the other hand, requires them to be merely aware of those rules. This is certainly a necessary, but not a sufficient, shift. Claiming that interculturalism is good for a multicultural society of the 20th century but not good enough for a global society of the 21st century, cultural realism seeks the development of global cultural consciousness that results not just in cultural literacy but also in cultural liberty (see the United Nations' *Human Development Report 2004* for more on cultural liberty). It requires a willingness and ability "to learn *from* other cultures, not just *about* them. Learning *about* other cultures may lead to cultural literacy; it is learning *from* other cultures that will lead to cultural liberty" (Kumaravadivelu, 2008, p. 237).

It is rather evident that in order for the teaching of EIL to be sensitive to the emerging processes of identity formation in this global society, breaking its dependency on the Center-based concept of cultural competence is a must. But, this cannot be achieved unless and until yet another dependency is broken.

Breaking the Dependency on Center-based Textbook Industry

Produced and promoted by Center-based publishing industry, textbooks used for learning and teaching EIL in large parts of the world represent the most visible Center dominance that has developed a subtle and stubborn character. Textbooks have a direct bearing on teaching methods because it is through them a particular method is propagated and preserved. Notice how the textbooks that are currently used promote Communicative Language Teaching. They also have direct bearing on the teaching of culture, because it is through them a particular cultural knowledge is imposed on teachers and students. Although it is widely known that Center-based textbooks embody Western cultural values, beliefs, and attitudes often presenting stereotypical pictures that valorize Western societies, they continue to be adopted and used in classrooms

across the world. They have a magical hold on both teachers and learners most of whom just can not do without them.

Center-based textbooks seem to be impervious to the challenges posed by heightened cultural consciousness and identity formation that globalism has created—a testimony to the dominating agency exercised by the Western publishing industry. However, sensing a possible threat to its hegemony, and recognizing the need to appear to be sensitive to the on-going processes of globalism, the publishing industry has started producing global textbooks with a local flavor. A chief strategy they seem to follow is to produce core texts with a variety of add-ons to meet the demand for a local fit. Creative strategies and innovative marketing techniques cleverly mask the fact that global textbooks remain centrally-controlled and continue to cater to the preservation of the native-speaker episteme.

The importance of breaking the epistemic dependency on Center-based textbooks can hardly be overstated. Clearly, textbooks should reflect the lived experiences teachers and students bring to the classroom because, after all, their experiences are shaped by a broader social, cultural, economic, and political environment in which they grow up. It is not impertinent to suggest that textbooks should be written and produced by local practitioners. Nor is it an impractical suggestion. Because global textbooks are methodologically—and culturally—loaded, many teachers find it necessary to design context-sensitive supplementary materials any way. What they may need is systematic training so that they can do the job professionally satisfactorily. A core course on materials production for pre-service teachers, and hands-on workshops for in-service teachers can easily facilitate the development of the knowledge, skill, and disposition necessary for them to produce instructional materials. The information revolution that has spawned online newspapers, blogs, tweets, YouTube, Facebook, and other forms of social networking are valuable sources that can be exploited for designing instructional materials. It is true that the prevailing practice in several countries compels teachers to use Center-produced, Ministry-approved textbooks. This surely makes it difficult for teachers to switch to teacher-generated textbooks. But, if we are deterred by difficulties, we can never make the changes that we deem desirable. A beginning can be made if teachers design, and use in their classes, more and more systematically produced “supplementary” materials which, eventually, can pave the way for teacher-generated textbook production and, eventually, for breaking the epistemic dependency on Center-produced textbooks. If the World Wide Web can accommodate user-generated content, there is no reason why the profession of teaching EIL can not get accustomed to teacher-generated textbooks.

Impediments for Progress

The magnitude of the epistemic dependency that enslaves the teaching of EIL is enormous. Above, I discussed five of its manifestations. None of them is a totally new revelation. But all of them continue to sway the direction the profession takes. All the critical voices that are raised against them from time to time have not in any significant way shaken their firm grip. The reasons are not far to seek: the epistemic dependency stands solidly on the twin rocks of the process of marginalization and the practice of self-marginalization (Kumaravadivelu, 2006a). The former pertains to the ways in which the coloniality of the English language is exploited to maintain the authority of the center over the periphery. The latter refers to the ways in which the periphery surrenders its voice and vision to the center.

The results of meticulously researched case studies offer the latest authentication of how marginalization and self-marginalization play out. Jacqueline Widin (2010) investigated what she calls “illegitimate practices” that plague global English language education. Focusing on Australia-sponsored International English Language Education Projects (IELEPs) aimed at assisting English language learning and teaching in Japan and Laos, she explored the role of Australian universities and their liaison with host-country Ministry of Education officials and local non-native scholars. What she found was “increasing commodification and corporatisation of English” (p. 1) made possible by marginalization and self-marginalization.

The process of marginalization is tellingly revealed by a key stakeholder from the Australian Government Agency sponsoring the projects. Referring to his agency’s work in Japan, the official frankly admits (Widin, 2010):

The purpose of this particular project is not to deliver great, you know, English language teaching methodology into this country’s teaching system. Actually by doing that we put many Australians out of a job...I mean...in fifteen years time if great English is being taught here then we’re, you know, Australians out of business. ...

So I couldn’t care less whether this country wants it, or needs it, or likes it, at the end of the day it’s not the judgment of teachers, it is decision we’ve made against the background of what would enhance Australia’s interest.

(p. 2)

Widin goes on to demonstrate how the projects “exerted symbolic violence” (p. 191) by imposing Communicative Language Teaching on exam-oriented educational systems that require competence only in

reading and writing skills, by prescribing teaching materials with trivial and biased cultural content, by ignoring the importance of learners' first language, and above all, by marginalizing the commendable expertise and experience that host-country teachers bring to the projects.

Widin also makes it clear that marginalization is sustained only because the host-country officials and teachers "are buying into what was offered by the dominant stakeholders, dismissing their own expertise and indigenous knowledge, engaging in the practice of self-marginalisation" (p. 60). They self-marginalize themselves in spite of the fact that they are highly skilled professionals holding prominent positions in their country. Pointing out how they hold native speakers' linguistic and cultural capital in high esteem, and referring specifically to a Lao scholar, Widin says:

He revealed significant positionings of participants in the field and even with the absence of foreigners, the field would still be dominated by those players who have more valuable capital: "I don't know why, may be it is this country's style ... we don't work completely 100%, just only 80 or 90 per cent if we work with our Lao colleagues. If we work with the expatriate staff we work well. I don't know why it happens like this." He made a further point that his country's participants would not take the project seriously if it was run by Lao teacher trainers.

(p. 105)

Widin convincingly shows that "the notion of 'native speaker' legitimacy in knowledge and work practices is deeply embedded in ELT projects" (p. 119).

If EIL as a profession is serious about breaking its native-speaker epistemic dependency, both marginalization and self-marginalization have to be tackled in an effective way. In fact, of the two, tackling self-marginalization may turn out to be more challenging because it requires a concerted effort that has to do with "changing the consciousness of the oppressed, not the situation that oppresses them" (Freire, 1972, p. 47).

In Closing

In this chapter, I have portrayed the notion of the native speaker as an overarching episteme that envelopes Center-based knowledge systems. EIL professionals in periphery countries heavily depend on for carrying out their scholarly tasks and pedagogic duties. Comparing the native-speaker episteme with a tap root, I have described five interlinked epistemes as primary and secondary roots that get their sustenance from it. I have maintained that the five epistemic dependencies come into conflict with

EIL teachers' and learners' desire to preserve and protect their linguistic and cultural identity in this era of globalization. I have argued that nothing less than an epistemic break is required in order to help EIL professionals meet the challenges of teaching English which is marked by globality as well as coloniality. Finally, I have pointed out external (marginalization) and internal (self-marginalization) challenges that might impede any progress towards breaking the epistemic dependency.

If the teaching of EIL as a profession is serious about helping its professionals generate sustainable knowledge systems that are sensitive to local historical, political, cultural, and educational exigencies, then, it must get away from an epistemic operation that continues to institutionalize the coloniality of English language education. The case for epistemic break goes way beyond the pressing problems of principles and practices of teaching EIL, though admittedly they are crucial. Merely tinkering with the existing knowledge systems will only reinforce them rather than reinvent them. What a real epistemic break will eventually ensure are new ways of constructing knowledge systems and new ways of applying them in classroom contexts. What is needed, in the words of postcolonial critic Walter Mignolo (2010, p. 306), is “a delinking that leads to de-colonial epistemic shift and brings to the foreground other epistemologies, other principles of knowledge and understanding ...”

Exploring the Ideas

- 1 As a practicing (or, prospective) language teacher, what specific professional development strategies will you follow in order to prepare yourself (a) to recognize multiple identities that your learners may bring with them that are different from yours, and (b) to deal with any potential classroom tensions that may arise out of those differences?
- 2 If you wish to move away from the dependency on the current West-oriented, Center-based knowledge systems that are closely linked to (a) teaching methods, (b) the teaching of culture, and (c) textbooks, what do you think you can do as an individual?
- 3 Given the imposition of institutionally-designed syllabi, and Ministry-approved textbooks, what opportunities and limitations do you anticipate if you wish to design and use instructional materials that you think would be more appropriate for your learners?

Applying the Ideas

- 1 The Internet provides many possibilities for producing teaching materials. Select a class you are familiar with and describe one activity

- that makes use of resources on the Internet to further students' English proficiency and address issues of individual identity. Be certain to describe how the activity furthers their language learning.
- 2 One useful strategy you might want to follow to produce teaching materials that are contextually-relevant and culturally-sensitive is to form a small group of interested colleagues in your institution, design materials, use them in your classes, get feedback from teachers and learners, revise them, and circulate them digitally for wider use. Undertake a small pilot study that does this.
 - 3 Most probably, your learners are young adults who are well-versed in using the Internet and various forms of social networks. Describe how you might involve them in selecting raw materials for you to use in designing instructional materials that appeal to them.

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