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**Abstract**

This reports a study of a set of experienced rural Chinese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) secondary school teachers enrolled in a professional-development training program offered at a major Canadian university. The program’s purpose was to help the participants develop a deeper understanding of how to adapt alternative approaches to EFL pedagogy to local conditions.

Teachers in foreign English language teaching and learning contexts face diverse challenges such as large class sizes, low student motivation and limited classroom resources. English instruction in China has been dominated by teacher-fronted and grammar-focused pedagogy (Zhang & Li, 2014). These conditions have resulted in significant challenges in terms of the development of English oral proficiency and in overall classroom management. Although some jurisdictions (such as the Shanghai School District) in China have recently experimented with assessment techniques that are alternatives to the traditional Gaokao college and university entrance examinations, these changes have yet to be felt in rural China.

Data for this study was collected during the course of the program and after the participants had returned to China in the form of assignment collection, surveys and semi-structured interviews. The findings outline the challenges (and successes) these teachers had in adapting what they had learnt and how their time in Canada had affected their self-identity as professionals.

The data demonstrates that successful teacher training in this context requires carefully listening to participants so as to provide the theoretical knowledge and exposure to practical classroom treatment options so that they can exercise, in the interests of decolonialization, the agency to assess, appropriate, and apply what they see fit for their unique contexts.

The findings also demonstrate that teacher trainers have much to learn from the participants in professional development training. As I note below, the follow up research in China showed that the participants made sophisticated choices in view of local contexts and that these local contexts were important to understand.

**Introduction**

Despite the passage of time and the growth of scholarly interest in critical applied linguistics (Pennycook, 2017) and critical second language pedagogies (Canagarajah, 2009; Kumaravadivelu, 2003), hegemonic forces in EFL contexts persist (Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2012). As Kumaravadivelu (2016) argues, this dominance is most apparent in the development and implementation of curriculum, materials, standardized tests and teacher-training all of which is largely determined by Western universities and associated Western publishing houses and then disseminated to the local EFL contexts for whole-sale consumption. In this way, the ESL /EFL industry is a prime example of the Centre/Periphery model most notably promoted by Gunnar Myrdal (1957).

The project reported here was with thirty-five experienced English middle and secondary school teachers from Yunnan, a rural and relatively poor part of China that is among the world’s most ethnically and linguistically diverse regions. Yunnan is a large province located in Southwest China that borders Guangxi, Guizhou, Sichuan, Tibet, Vietnam, Myanmar and Laos. It has a highly diverse climate, biology and geography. Most of its 46 million people live in mountainous areas that are quite rural, poor and remote. Twenty-five distinct ethnic and linguistic minorities (e.g., Yi, Bai, Dai, Zhuan, Hani, Miao) find their homes in Yunnan (half of the total numbers of minorities in China as a whole), making it the most multicultural and multilingual province in the country.

The project was conducted in cooperation with Chinese school officials and universities and engaged these teachers in cultural and educational exchanges, English language acquisition and the examination of fundamental concepts related to contemporary second language teaching methodologies. The emphasis in this project was on practical and concrete “hands-on” exercises and on the interrelationship between theory and practice.

This article first outlines the international context of the study. This is followed by a description of the project, an overview of its conceptual framework and a brief account of the research methodology that was employed. However, the bulk of this article is devoted to the study’s findings. I conclude with a discussion of the implications for theory and practice, focusing on the progressive possibilities of particular forms of post-secondary internationalization that work in the interests of international cooperation and decolonialization.

**International Context**

The expansion and growth of English as an international language (EIL) has increased the number of people around the world studying this language in different contexts and settings (Block, 2003). As Ellis, R. (2008) argues, teachers in foreign English language teaching and learning contexts face diverse challenges. Student motivation is often low and classes are usually large. This results in significant challenges in terms of classroom management. In addition, the wages for these types of teachers are commonly low and the available teaching resources limited. Instruction is commonly formal, teacher-centered and form-based. Students in these contexts have few opportunities to use English orally or practice spontaneous conversation. Without exception, the Yunnan teachers participating in the project faced all of these challenges. Moreover, as the participants stated, most students in rural China feel that they have little use for English.

In China, English instruction has been dominated by a grammar form-focused pedagogy and the memorization of structures provided by the language teacher (Zhang & Li, 2014). However, as Li and Edwards (2013) note, China has embarked on wholesale educational reform aimed at shifting English instruction from models of pedagogy based on teacher-centered transmission to those that are communicative, task-based and student-centered.

This is an integral part of changing Chinese national educational policy (as outlined in Gu, 2010). To implement the new curricular innovations and to improve the standards of teaching and learning English, the leading Chinese funder of international education, the China Scholarship Council (CSC), funds projects such as the one under study that sends teachers abroad for three months to participate in professional development projects in English speaking countries, including Australia, the UK, the USA, New Zealand, and Canada.

**The Project**

The Project was delivered at the Faculty of Education at a large research-based bilingual university in Eastern Canada with the assistance of the university’s Language Institute. Extensive consultation around the curricular aspects of the project was held with the CSC, the Embassy of China and the Beijing Languages and Culture University (BLCU). In view of the challenges and trends noted above, the CSC established two broad goals for this project: to help Yunnan English teachers improve their second language teaching practices and to improve their levels of English language proficiency.

The thirty-five English teachers who took part in the project worked in middle and secondary schools throughout Yunnan. Half belonged to various ethnic and linguistic minorities themselves. Although some worked in urban centers, the vast majority came from outlying rural areas within the province. While several were relatively novice teachers, the vast majority had between 3 and 10 years of teaching experience. Some were veterans of over 20 years in the classroom. Three quarters of the teachers were women and one quarter were men. None of the teachers came from middle- or upper-income brackets. Some were homeroom teachers or heads of their local school English teaching department. However, most were ordinary classroom teachers with no additional responsibilities. All had English as their teaching subject.

In consultation with CSC, the provincial educational authority selected schools from various localities to participate in this project. Local school principals and colleagues then nominated who would be asked to participate. Some nominated teachers chose not to travel to Canada. However, most were enthusiastic about participating in the project, especially in view of the fact that most had never travelled beyond their home province. The teachers first participated in a month-long orientation to North American culture and pedagogy at BLCU.

At the host Canadian university, the team of multicultural and multilingual professors and graduate students who delivered and designed the project were specialists in second language education. Most had extensive international teaching experience (several in China). Three professors and four graduate students formed the core of the teaching staff. Numerous undergraduate students were employed as one-on-one language facilitators. A manager organized the extra-curricular activities, tended to the logistics and provided orientation.

The syllabus was first drafted by myself, the lead professor, in consultation with the teaching team. The syllabus was then sent to CSC and Chinese Embassy for feedback. After several months of negotiations between these Chinese officials and the university, the syllabus was finalized and the logistics, accommodations and financial arrangements approved.

Upon arrival, the teachers were accommodated in university residences and given orientations to local stores, resources, the university and city. The three-month program started with extensive visits to local schools over the course of two weeks. This was followed by a two-week introduction to pedagogical technology in computer laboratories and a one-week set of special lectures on learning theory.

As a rule, most mornings started with a lecture on such topics as concrete approaches to lesson-planning, overall curriculum design, general linguistics, the creation and adaption of teaching materials, the role of grammar, bilingualism, decentralized curriculum decision-making; student-centered pedagogical approaches, anti-racist education, critical multiculturalism, alternate forms of educational leadership, critical curriculum theory, problematizing Canadian culture, multicultural citizenship, globalization and post-colonial discourse.

In the late mornings and afternoons, small group “hands on” workshops centered on concrete aspects of teaching practice, classroom activities and material development. The thirty-five teachers were divided into small breakout groups with the aim of providing more personalized opportunities for teaching strategies practice and English language conversation.

Throughout the project, the teachers were taken on field trips and socio-cultural outings to various local points of interest, such as the museums, local music and ethnic festivals, and local government, and given the opportunity to go on overnight trips to urban centers in the rest of the province. The most significant of the extra-curricular activities, however, was a visit to a local First Nation school, where they learned about First Nation educational philosophy and met students, teachers, administrators and elders in the community. It is noteworthy that the project endeavored to employ elements of indigenous models of education. That is, the project strived to create a learning environment that “honors the culture, language and world view” of students, as well as honoring “who they are and where they have come from” (Toulouse, 2017, p. 1).

Most importantly, the project was designed to provide critical content (in both lectures and workshops) via a decentralized delivery instruction model focused on the Yunnan teachers’ needs and realities. Changes in curricular content occurred when it became clear, for example, the teachers needed help in designing group work tasks. The overall emphasis was on helping the teachers adapt communicative approaches to local Yunnan conditions. Moreover, the project content explicitly problematized the political nature of English teaching, the notions of native speaker, standardized privileged Anglo-American “core” English, and binary stereotypes of Eastern and Western pedagogy.

**Theoretical Framework**

Some scholars (e.g. Phillipson, 1992) have argued that the teaching of English is inherently part of the Western (specifically Anglo-American) imperialistic enterprise. In opposition to this view, others (e.g. Crystal, 1998) have argued that English can be taught without such baggage. However, as outlined by Kachru (1992) and Schneider (2007), the international spread of the language has been complex and multi-varied. Pennycook (2006), in fact, argues that language itself is best thought of as a “flow” that is connected to culture in ways that are not fixed. This allows for the reclaiming of the “local” language in face of the “global” (Canagarajah, 2005).

Ellis, E. (2016) documents how alienation is a common feeling amongst Non-Native Teachers of English. Many teachers who seek professional development abroad feel that they essentially forfeit their positionality as experienced teachers and sources of linguistic knowledge or pedagogical expertise. Depending on how they experience this professional development, they commonly feel that they have (re)become students, receivers of knowledge and novices. In short, they come to feel powerless.

The best example of how decolonization manifested itself concretely in the project was in the various ways in which the project countered the myth of “native-speakerism”. Inherent in the notion that there really is a thing called a “native speaker” is the notion that there is one correct source of input for second language teaching. First coined by Leonard Bloomfield (1933), the notion became a fundamental aspect of Chomsky’s Transformational Linguistics (1965).

As Cook (1997) and Firth and Wagner (1997) later argued, the notion of the “native speaker” set up an impossible and monolingual ideal that represented most speakers of English as deficient. Even though some scholars, such as Reves and Medgyes (1994), have argued that “native” and “non-native” both have their place in second language teaching, Nuzhat Amin (2000) clearly documented that non-native teachers of English (such as herself) are usually viewed as inferior to those considered native. Phillipson (1992) went even further by attacking the very notion as a “fallacy" that has led to a hierarchy within the profession closely linked to the discourse that English is owned by those born and raised within the linguistic mainstream of Anglo-American circle (Norton, 1997; Widdowson, 1994).

To counter this prevailing discourse, the project drew upon multilingual faculty to represent the diversity of the Canadian linguistic landscape: the majority were speakers of French, Spanish, and Farsi who taught and worked in English. Likewise, to counter the potential of a unidirectional dissemination of knowledge from (Western) teacher to (Peripheral) learner (from the periphery), curriculum was intentional, constantly re-designed and flexible enough to adapt to the unique professional and linguistic needs and goals of the Chinese teachers. As was continually emphasized in the lecture content and workshop facilitation, the participants were encouraged to evaluate (the multiplicity of) dominant trends within current second language teaching theory and classroom practice so that they could determine for themselves the most useful approaches for their own teaching contexts. The project’s orientation towards language and second language teaching is, as Widdowson (1997) put it,

not a matter of the actual language being distributed but of the virtual language being spread and in the process being variously actualized. The distribution of the actual language implies adoption and conformity. The spread of virtual language implies adaptation and nonconformity. The two processes are quite different (p.135–146).

**Methodology**

The research team obtained ethics approval from the university’s review board before starting the data collection process. As per the protocol, informed consent was obtained (in translation) from the participants and the data kept in secure storage. In what follows, all proper names have been replaced by pseudonyms in the interests of protecting confidentiality.

All the thirty-five teachers agreed to participate in an initial on-line survey and to allow their course assignments to be consulted. Following Miles and Huberman (1994), the survey and course assignments were used as background information to inform the questions asked in the subsequent interviews.

Thirteen teachers volunteered to participate in these interviews: 9 males and 4 females. The age range was evenly distributed, with the youngest being 29 years of age and the oldest 40. Nine were from the Han majority and 4 were from the Bi, Lisu and Yi linguistic minorities. Seven were middle school teachers. Six taught in secondary schools. The interview data was collected through hour-long one-on-one interviews and one focus group arranged at times of their convenience. The interviews were audio-recorded and uploaded into a qualitative research software program.

A thematic approach was used for analysis, starting with a set of categories and codes derived from demographics and the experiences of the participants. Emergent themes were then extracted.

**Findings**

*Teaching English in English*.

Traditionally, in the fields of SLA and SLE, effective instruction entails teaching exclusively in the target language. Monolingual instruction has been endorsed as a means to increase target language exposure as well as enable students to “think” in the target language. For many of the visiting teachers, this was not practiced in their local EFL classrooms. Moreover, it was viewed as an unrealistic, and counterproductive, expectation. Instead, the Mandarin language was used in the classroom for classroom management, to give instructions, and particularly for English grammar, to give explanation. Salida, a junior secondary school teacher attributes the low use of English in the EFL classroom to the teachers themselves:

It is difficult for us to express ourselves. We have no chance to express ourselves in English. I think maybe as teachers we are not good examples because we also cannot communicate in English. For all of the English teachers to go abroad is just a dream, so many teachers they teach English maybe their whole life but they have never spoken to a foreigner and very few foreigners come to our county.

Axel, a teacher in senior secondary school took a more critical approach questioning the utility and feasibility of using English to teach English:

I asked Beijing (education project administrators) what would happen if I just use English to teach my students. They just answered me "Are you kidding. The students cannot understand anything”. Actually, what I really wanted to get was some suggestions on how we can increase our use of English in our teaching, but she just thought I was joking. I think I will change (my teaching) in other ways… maybe in grammar lesson, I have to speak Chinese to make my students understand. Except for that I will try to speak English.

Teachers’ own language proficiency and confidence to deliver an entire lesson in English, coupled with the ability of students to meaningfully understand their instruction were real concerns. This was compounded by the fact that for many teachers and students, English was a third language, second to Chinese, the official language, and their native dialects. As such, for many of the Yunnan teachers, conducting the lesson using as much English as possible required creative solutions, such as Axel’s idea for translated textbooks.

 For TESOL trainers, Salida and Axel’s views may provoke a range of reactions: Salida’s account may invoke sympathy followed by concern over the quality of instruction that EFL teachers with limited linguistic proficiency can provide. An obvious solution would be to provide enhanced language training, such as the language courses provided in the study abroad program. Likewise, trainers may disapprove of Axel’s use of translated texts and insistence that Mandarin is necessary for complex instruction. Language educators that are fluent in the target language (as native speakers, or near-native speakers) and used to teaching English in linguistic heterogeneous ESL classrooms, may have never experienced the necessity to, and the utility of, reverting to a common language. Axel’s transcript reflects the empowerment experienced when the visiting teachers remained the “expert” of their local context and the “expert” in deciding which pedagogies could best meet the needs of their students.

*Standardized English Tests as Opportunities for Mobility.*

According to all of the participants, the gap between rich and poor, and rural and urban, contributes to issues of student retention at the junior and senior secondary school levels. Schools located in major cities offer more favorable educational conditions with many parents, including the visiting EFL teachers themselves, sending their children to urban schools for greater opportunity. One advantage associated with urban schools is preparation for post-secondary education, an opportunity made available through enhanced training and strong performance on the college-entrance examination.

Standardized testing is a contentious issue with many educators that hold more “progressive” views critical of its the exclusionary nature. On the other hand, some of the Yunnan teachers at the senior secondary-school level voiced support for the use of standardized tests. Standardized tests were viewed as an opportunity to break the cycle of poverty. Diverging views between the instructors and visiting teachers on this issue is expressed in this exchange:

Researcher: Is there anything you would change about the educational system in China?

Nova: I think the entrance examination is good. Some students and some colleagues might think that we are pushing them too hard. That the student have to rush into bridge, and some students will pass and other will fail. Maybe they think it's terrible. Many students would describe this experience to be terrible or something like that, but I don't think so because every child, every student has the chance if they study hard. All of them can have a chance to change themselves.

Note that the participant responds to the question by defending the use of examinations rather than explaining what she would change about the educational system. Nova’s reply can be viewed as an exercise of agency where she creates the opportunity to explain the merits of statewide exams to the researcher. In doing so, she makes her understanding of counter-arguments clear, but despite critiques of standardized testing (such as that espoused by many in Western education), her view remains based on the benefits it may hold for students fighting to escape the poverty and marginalization of growing up in rural Yunnan.

Zane (from the Dai ethnic group) recalls his own experience writing the university entrance exam (Gao Kao):

In 2002 it wasn't easy for young people to go to university from minority nations because the entrance examination was very hard. Only 30 or 40% of senior secondary school students can get the chance to go to university in Yunnan at that time. Right now maybe 80 or 90% of senior secondary school students (in urban schools) can get more chance to study at different kinds of university. They can study in my province or they can go to another big city to study, but it depends on their performance test on their entrance examination.

But just as the entrance exam provides opportunities, it creates an environment of tension as teachers attempt balancing teaching for the test while maintaining student motivation and interest to study English. For some, these tensions produce unrealistic expectations on both teachers and students. Philomena explains: “We have spent so much time on English. And, finally we take part in the final examination. Also they get low marks, so they have wasted too much time. I think it's not worth it”. As Axel explains, unrewarded efforts can lead to hostile student-teacher relationships,

For me…. even these days sometimes I even want to go back to teaching in junior school because the task is really hard you never know how much pressure I have teaching.

Researcher: Because the students want to go to university? Where is that pressure coming from?

Axel: The pressure is just … actually my students like me very, very much; I do have a very good relationship with my students. They said I really like you, but I really hate learning English. Some of them even just hate me because they hate English.

The striking divergence in opinions on standardized tests is a reminder for educators to step away from over-generalized views of how certain communities (should) think, act, and feel. Then, it is imperative to recognize that complexity exists even within institutionally uniform educational systems-in this case, the multiple roles, functions, and outcomes of mandated English language learning and testing within Yunnan province. To avoid the trap of stereotyping, teacher trainers must first be aware of the range of possible views and positions that local teachers may hold, and secondly, trainers must be open to these views even if these views counter the educational values espoused within their own EFL teacher training philosophy. Tolerance to difference is fundamental to redressing inequality and oppression in ELT, and this tolerance might entail accepting that different ways of doing may be justified for some (Nova and Zane) and not for others (Philomena and Axel).

*Promoting Learner Autonomy.*

Autonomy and self-directed learning was noted as a prominent strength in the Canadian education system, and respondents were impressed with Canadian students’ ability to work autonomously in class. In response to the pressure of teaching English in an exam-driven educational system fuelled by competition, some respondents expressed the need for students to become more self-directed autonomous learners. While the most recent curricular reform in China does in fact endorse the development of student autonomy, the teachers were skeptical of achieving these objectives in the current teacher-led exam-based system especially when grappling with overcrowded classroom and low student motivation. For learners to become more autonomous, learning conditions would have to change:

Researcher: So if you were the leader of Hunan in education, Milagros, what would education look like in Yunnan? If you could change the rules, what would you decide?

Milagros: I want the students to study by themselves. The most important thing is to give them time to improve themselves. For example, the best school in my region does not ask the students to have the evening classes. They have free time, yeah… They can have more time to sleep, so they are full of energy in the day. Our students arrive to class at 7:20 a.m. in the morning and study until 10:00 p.m. at night. They're very tired, yeah.

However, Milagros was well aware that educational reform in China comes slow because of the federal system where change for one school could mean change for the entire country. Yet change can come about in other ways, including at the micro level, such as that by described by Jett:

Teachers are more relaxed here (in the project). We have learnt that it is not always a good idea to be serious. You need to be relaxed and funny from time to time to keep your classes interesting. If a teacher is strict all the time, students will be afraid to participate…when I go back to China, I will walk around my classroom more instead of just standing still in the front. I will interact with the students. I will be more relaxed and less strict. If I am relaxed, my students will be relaxed and they will learn better.

Jett’s comments reflect the openness, flexibility, and bilateral engagement that the teacher-training program hoped to establish.

As Jett and Milagros’s comments demonstrate, experience in Canadian culture and knowledge of the Canadian education system allowed teachers to reflect on their teaching practices and educational context in China. From the training course, teachers expressed greater awareness and interest in student-centered teaching, and the importance of creating an environment that is conducive to developing student respect and autonomy. At the time of their visit, the Chinese Ministry of Education was championing student-centered teaching and the development of student autonomy, but at the commencement of the project, many teachers were unsure of the benefits to these approaches and more specifically, how to integrate them into their classroom practices. At the completion of the project, all teachers expressed enthusiasm for more student-led pedagogy and felt equipped to implement activities and strategies that enhance student engagement.

*Follow up Research: Adapting what was Learnt in Canada.*

In November of this past year, research was conducted in China with 31 of the participants from the 2018 cohort. It was found that every one of the participants had attempted to modify their approaches to teaching to various degrees. In the vast majority of classes observed, it was clear that the model of passive student and teacher-centered instruction so common in rural China had, to a certain extent, been broken. Students enthusiastically participated in activities that the teachers had usually first been exposed to while in Canada, such as “running dictation”, critical thinking exercises and integrated oral/written project work.

However, these teachers met with different levels of success in relationship to how their innovations were viewed by administrators and the communities in which they worked. Several of the teachers said that they had abandoned their innovations because parental groups had argued that time spent on critical thinking exercises were taking away from memorizing facts for college entry exams.

Through lesson observation and focus group interviews it became apparent that the teachers who had continued to implement innovations in their language classrooms had the support of local parents, colleagues and administrators. In fact, several teachers had recently been awarded promotions and awards for teaching.

The innovations that were successful in this context were those that were tailored to local conditions. The kind of small group work that our team had recommended to the teachers while they were in Canada, for example, could not be simply adopted unmodified in typical rural Chinese classrooms of 60 or 70 students. Instead, the teachers adopted activities that they felt could be applicable and adapted them in diverse ways. They used realia that was meaningful for their rural students, designed group activities that made extensive use of Wechat, chalkboards and PowerPoint platforms, integrated games and activities that were closely built on previous deductively-based lessons. What was especially interesting in view of many of the findings outlined above in regards to standardized college entrance examinations, many of the teachers incorporated into their lessons vocabulary that explicitly referenced the content in college entrance exams.

Moreover, the vast majority of the teachers had a sophisticated approach to the L1. In a manner reminiscence of recommendations made by Cummins (2008; 1979), the teachers made use of the L1 as a resource. They provided quick translations of unfamiliar vocabulary and would cover grammar explicitly in the L1 when they deemed it necessary. As our team had recommended while in Canada, the teachers did not enforced “English only” rules. Nor did they attempt to teach the L2 exclusively through the L1, which, as Zhang and Li (2014) have noted, is common in rural China.

**Discussion and Implications**

The interview data demonstrates that the complexity of language learning in Yunnan deserves specific treatment that moves beyond easy generalizations of EFL experience in the periphery, Asia, or China for that matter. It requires actually listening to the teachers and then providing them with the theoretical knowledge, linguistic training, pedagogical approaches, educational resources, and agency to assess, appropriate, and apply what they see fit for their unique contexts. Based on the premise that the guest teachers are the “experts” for their learning environment, our project reflected the principles of equality, diversity, and autonomy by offering space to reject and contest established traditions in SLA and imbalanced relations in Western TESL training.

 The language teaching methodology training in this project focused on encouraging participatory learning with the goal of empowering teachers to be active in seeking and creating solutions that meets the needs of local students. This requires a shift from a “functionalist oriented-that is, from trainees being passive consumers of knowledge to being more transformative-orientated” (Kruger, 2012, p. 26). Ultimately, the objective was to empower teachers, as individuals, to be role models for their students.

To return to theory: English can never be neutral or value-free (Naysmith, 1987). The language classroom is a “transcultural contact zone” (Pennycook, 2006, p. 30) in which we engage with the multiple voices of language users, learners and teachers. As Kruger (2012) expresses it, “English language learning itself is “shaped by its various actors… as language and language learning is not a neutral activity but a site of political, cultural and social acts, teachers should be aware of the role of English education in (re)producing global inequalities” (p. 5). Moreover, Kumaravadivelu (2016) identifies teaching methods as the most crucial area “where hegemonic forces find it necessary and beneficial to exercise the greatest control because method functions as an operating principle shaping all other aspects of language education: curriculum, materials, testing, and training” (p. 73).

Language, and by extension, language teaching should not be seen as an a priori ontological system but as a social, political, and cultural act (Pennycook, 1999). Norton Pierce (1997) argues that we should not view any language as neutral, since “English, like all other language, is… a site of struggle over meaning, access, and power” (p. 405). Freire (1973) was of the view that teaching is a political act and that teachers need to raise students’ critical consciousness of their world.

Working within a largely uni-directional flow of linguistic resources, knowledge and capital, it is the goal of critical language educators to problematize and complicate the seemingly consensual cultural politics that perpetuate the imbalanced distribution of English language pedagogy. By recognizing the social, political, and cultural nature of language and language education, and the potentially oppressive nature of ELT training (where local pedagogies and languages are typically undervalued), this project attempts to create a study abroad professional development project for EFL teachers that is accountable to broader political and ethical visions.

Often, these inequalities manifest in the language classroom, a “transcultural contact zone” (Pennycook, 2006, p. 30) where learners confront the practices, values, and ideologies of the dominant native speaker/native culture. The language classroom, and for that matter, EFL teacher-training projects, are the opportune space to raise critical awareness of the political nature of English language education and endeavor to work towards critical pedagogy that redresses the imbalance of power within ELT, and reinstates English language teaching into the hands of local teachers and learners.

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