

Original Paper

Rediscovering the Nuances of Teacher Reflection in the Era of
Cultural Imperialism: Some Insights on the Cultural Awareness
into Learning Solutions and Learner Strategies in the Second
Language Curriculum

Mangalaprathaban Muralidharan^{1*}

¹ PhD Research Scholar (Part-Time), Department of English and Foreign Languages, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, India

* Mangalaprathaban Muralidharan, PhD Research Scholar (Part-Time), Department of English and Foreign Languages, Bharathiar University, Coimbatore, India

Received: January 2, 2019

Accepted: February 10, 2019

Online Published: April 25, 2019

doi:10.22158/sll.v3n2p155

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/sll.v3n2p155>

Abstract

The idea of teacher reflection is always relevant in order to create cultural awareness on various types of learning solutions and learner strategies being recommended to the second language learners in the ESL curriculum studies. The pedagogic dimensions of cultural imperialism are yet to be actualized in the core tenets of second language curriculum development in the era of Electronic Colonialism. This research article aims at improvement of the existing set of learning teaching practices prevalent in the traditional canon with a scope for multicultural interface and inclusive curriculum whereby subaltern cultures and their curricula (or the curricula of the oppressed) will be taken up as part of mainstream academic discourse in the educational institutions across the third world and other international educational institutions.

Keywords

cultural inputs, teacher reflection, cultural awareness, learning solutions, innovative classroom digressions, primacy of social discourse, cultural reciprocation, homogeneous interface, innovative redesign of the ESL curriculum

The concept of teacher reflection is based on a strong belief that every teacher is known for reinvention of her/his pedagogic practices through systematic improvisation of existing compendium of learning solutions and strategies in accordance with the learner learning time. Most of our teacher resources can possibly aim at simplifying or even customizing the learning processes by localizing the examples or linguistic inputs without much of cultural alienation. This seems to be a great challenge confronted by the curriculum developers and teacher educators along with teachers. It is certainly a reason for the majority of the target group of learners to evade from the learning or practicing the target language especially in the regional medium classes of these schools or colleges.

The idea of teacher reflection is certainly significant even when teachers are asked to come up with lesson plans and specific task oriented teaching practices without any possible scope for any sort of innovative classroom digressions. It is easy for administrators to insist upon the mapping of what goes on with the curriculum implementation process. Nonetheless, the possibility of teacher intervention is not to be highly restricted with the list of highly structured linguistic inputs and task oriented procedures in place. The scope of culturally politicized or biased second language curriculum has not become a subject of intellectual discussion at all among the teacher educators or curriculum developers even today.

The conceptual design of the ESL curriculum has to be understood on the basis of its objectives, strategic nuances of outcomes and its impact on the social and cultural spheres of life in addition to the core of skill development of the target group of learners. The modus operandi of the ESL curriculum implementation dwells upon the teaching strategies of a learner-friendly teacher. It is one of the responsibilities of a teacher to customize the learning processes of various types of learners, who may otherwise seek to streamline their cognitive realms in adherence with the cultural inputs of the realized curriculum.

The mosaic of design and development in the second language curriculum cannot be conditioned just by the explicit ideological core of academics, institutional objectives and the guidelines of the National Curriculum Framework envisioned by the architects of educational policies of the union or state government. However, the primacy of a social discourse may remind us about the cultural reciprocation of every learner while learning to internalize the repertoire of the second language through incessant practice in communicative contexts using realia.

The cultural nuances of the curriculum ought to match with the local customs and traditions while empowering the learners to assimilate the target language through a series of innovative peer support. It is highly recommended to have interactive communication without any sort of cultural imposition. It is evident from several textbooks prescribed at the primary and upper primary grades especially in South Asia that most of the lessons seem to be based on the social contexts of native speakers rather than non-native speakers. It is high time that the governments of this region should come out with comprehensive guidelines or policies on text book writing by engaging a few experts in the realm of

curriculum studies and cultural studies, who understand the significance of how linguistic imperialism may lead to cultural invasion rather than multi-cultural interface.

Most of the second language teachers are concerned about the skill development and employability of the second language learners in the ESL Curriculum and its strategic implementation. They are oriented to recommend language practice sessions which could galvanize the process of thinking through the limits of cultural dynamism within a society of homogeneous interface. It is to be understood as a series of cultural and moral intricacies being systematically inculcated to the learners. Thus, this may sometimes result in the cultural colonization without any learner awareness of cultural invasion taking place through the second language learning. It is vital in this critical context of skill empowerment to initiate cultural awareness and strategic learning possibilities amongst the target language learners.

The process of free conceptual construction takes place only while there is a confluence of teaching procedures and teacher reflection happening as a natural orientation towards accomplishing common goals of curriculum with innovative and indigenous inputs of all the stakeholders, namely the learners, teachers, teacher educators, curriculum developers, and academic administrators of educational institutions. Nonetheless, the limitations of participative process of curriculum negotiation should be acknowledged as there are sometimes partial or rather wholesome means of culturally hegemonic ideology or ideologies subverting the process of academic integrity and curriculum planning in multiple ways. The learning mood of the learners and the teaching mood of teachers have to sink in simultaneously in order to make things work out with impeccable progress in learning or teaching the target language with the highest efficiency.

There must be a certain amount of creative freedom for an ESL teacher to compare the textual contexts with the accessible contexts of life in our society by making the experience of learning quite relevant and interesting too. Otherwise, learning the target language is always mired in the complete immersion of the learners in the native varieties of the second language with simple inputs of non-native varieties of English especially in the case of language learning processes advocated by various international schools and premier institutions of tertiary education in the Indian Subcontinent. The simulacra of cultural practices may prove to replicate a few techniques of direct approach or native ways of teaching the second language assuming more significance in various institutions across India.

The goals of learning and teaching may have to be dynamic and systematically standardized by creating a multilayered and multicultural scheme of using the target language in various cultures without sidelining the localized register and usage in addition to the universal framework of natural language use. This sort of ideal use of language curriculum may happen only when there is a democratic participation of multiple perspectives of liberal and traditional curriculum developers being involved to come up with the innovative redesign of curriculum at the tertiary level.

The idea of local autonomy for curriculum developers is yet to become a reality in India. It is admissible to recognize the sovereign hold of uniform syllabus across the regions as the colonial

imposition of authoritarian perspective, which controls the curriculum development with cultural nuances against the liberal ethos of academic culture in letter and spirit. The conceptual design of National Curriculum Framework does not in any way impose such limits but the interpretation of the same by a few non-curriculum experts or administrators failed miserably in understanding the need for local autonomy for the curriculum developers as the absolute right for cultural variation exists within this national curriculum framework.

The constructed models of teaching may not be the beaten track of a teacher who is capable of bringing in a few innovations through some sort of pair or group activity. Thus, the limits of certain creative freedom enjoyed by the teachers and students in the process of teaching-learning may not be jeopardized with this technological surveillance of these processes being mindlessly used as a part of teacher observation. There arises a question of recalling the nuances of teacher observation with the simplest objective of reinforcing the positive teacher behaviour and beneficial teaching practices through a sharing activity among the teachers in a workshop. It could even result in identifying learning strategies of various types of the second language learners in a specific speech community or a social group in a society. These strategies can be collated to be a compendium for the learners of that social group with a scope for further revision.

It is absolutely essential for these second language teachers to identify various learning contexts being used by the learners to learn English and segregate an array of strategic inputs across the spectrum of learners in consultation with the other fellow teachers and learner groups. It would be easy to think about providing culturally appropriate examples of expression or usage through citing local literary texts or authentic communicative speech acts including filmic events. Thus, the roadmap of learning becomes quite relevant and useful only when teachers help students to extend their learning contexts in a realistic fashion.

Most of the time, learning becomes synonymous with hyper real or remotely accessible reality of a scientific or technological context whereby one may not have time to relate all that one has learnt with the immediate particulars of one's environment. It might be the case with other disciplines as well. This research article signifies the need to come up with innovative areas of relevance in the learner's immediate surroundings which could possibly expedite or expatiate the learning outcome. The consummation of learner surroundings and learning outcomes ought to be interpreted only by segregating the normal impediments in learner strategies or learning solutions in the designed curriculum and the received curriculum of the Second Language Teaching in a culturally localized context.

There could be a compendium of learning solutions and learner strategies being prepared locally by curriculum developers and teacher educators in consultation with the ESL teachers through a comprehensible analysis of various nuances of the second language usage and practice of the target learning group(s) in various parts of a particular geographical or cultural boundary imagined by the

architects of these legal or national narratives. This article highlights how India as a geographical or a cultural boundary might include polemical boundaries of ennui identified in the discourse of language learning and teaching with various segments of a subaltern society. The conceptual domain of a narrative is immersed in the ideological paradigm of an imagined community and its immediate cultural matrix may not match with the language of the colonizer and the colonized subjects. Our social discourse on the second language usage has to be culturally revitalized without the inimical inputs of cultural invasion. For this goal of culturally relevant literary and language studies, our teachers and curriculum developers may have to revisit the contemporary writings in English available in our society. This research study suggests even translations of other regionally or culturally relevant literary texts to be included in the curriculum without being obsessed with Euro-centric notions of life and culture. Thus, our curriculum could possibly reflect our social and cultural ethos if given a chance to revisit the traditionally established canon of the ESL Curriculum.

It might be appreciable to adopt the critical interpretation of various literary texts of other cultures and at the same time, reflecting on our social relevance with the aid of our contemporary writings in English. Most of these contributions are not at all acknowledged or even taken seriously by the academics who are obsessed with the colonial literary texts and the western intellectual traditions by resisting the attempts of Indian critical studies on our subcultures in the area of subaltern studies and others such as Dalit Studies, Tribal Studies, Gender Studies and Film/Media Studies. The domain of comparative literature could still be used to understand the nuances and variations in culture besides the regimented literary canon being substituted to be the only resource for skill development.

It would be ideal to use professionally customized communicative syllabus or activities based/task oriented syllabus in our second language curriculum. The academic experts are sometimes inclined towards English for Academic Purposes instead of revisiting English for Specific Purposes. This academic discussion would possibly be the pathway for the evolving social and professional changes. The ELE experts have to consult the teachers and learners while framing up the need based curriculum. It is significant to seek the teacher inputs and learner needs through learner-teacher interactions and learner-learner interactions. The negotiated curriculum might take into account the learning solutions of a learner community so as to create a compendium of learning solutions for a target learner group in every region across the world.

The Second Language Curriculum ought to make way to organise and streamline all the learner solutions and specific learning strategies that the successful learners have found out, by allocating an hour every week for learner-learner interaction on sharing these successful learning strategies and solutions with the fellow learners and teachers. It could be useful for the curriculum developers to record these strategies and learning solutions for the subsequent batches of students from the same region. Some of the researchers have already pointed out the need for reflective learning too among these target language learners.

The relative significance of media studies must also be used to create cultural awareness on the sort of consumption of popular culture and sensationalist consumerism which could engage in complete commoditization of people for profit. The idea of transition may sink through these channels only when we see new forms of literary texts emerging out of these media created realities of life all over our society, wherein the western notions of absolute invasion over the subaltern cultures and their subversion of their traditions, habits, occupations and customs continue to challenge the concept of cultural pluralism.

The culturally colonized subjects are to be found in our academic circles as the alleged pathfinders of curriculum studies with traditionally enriched moribund policies of canonical literary and cultural discourse. It should not be neglected in too but the conceptual liberation of canonical studies ought to be contemplated by all the stake-holders in the curriculum development process. The evolution of a new tradition does not entail any absolute corrosion of all that has been an essential segment of our critical consciousness. The neo-liberalists are absolutely colonizers of this generation as they use their linguistic imperialism over our regionally inbuilt knowledge societies with their westernized mirage of identities to deconstruct the nonnative speaker's notions of life and culture.

There are two major types of linguistic imperialism found in our Indian (or in any non-western) society—one established out of the Colonization and its subsequent neo-liberal usurpation today and secondly, the internal colonization whereby the political and cultural elites impose their customs and cultures over the apartheid and other marginal sections of a society (in the postcolonial context) including the subalterns of all types living in various parts of India and other South Asia Countries. The curriculum studies should reflect on these changing dynamics of social intrusion and cultural invasion happening all across the Eastern societies of nonnative speakers. The conceptual framework of curriculum autonomy suggests the teacher's contribution in the classroom to connect with the cultural nuances of the second language learners who may need some sort of teacher guided learner interpretations or orientations at least on a few occasions.

The use of realia especially borrowed from the western context reinforces sometimes alien cultural values and leads to the cultural appropriation of the existing cultural norms or nuances prevalent in various regions of a nation. The curriculum developers have really distinguished some of these challenges but to a large extent, the national curriculum framework have identified some specific guidelines for curriculum design and teacher education in accordance with learner's cultural orientation and learner's exposure to the episteme.

The language learning process of a second language learner is mostly related to the teaching strategies employed by the teacher who localizes and actualizes the learning experience with socially relevant examples accessible in that cultural context. The actualization of the target language learning may be easy if a learner can contextualize the learning input with the help of the fellow learners or peers in the classroom apart from the teachers or learning counselors. It is evident that the most effective use of

language learning resources can strengthen the learning-teaching processes with the compendium of learning solutions and learner-learning contexts for every learning group or a classroom.

There are varying levels of learning potential, learning phase, learner-teacher interactions, and learner-learner interactions even among the classrooms existing in the same institution. This entire scenario is determined by the interest of the learners and teachers on that particular lesson and its socio-cultural relevance of the milieu. These ESL teaching materials need not be promoting cultural invasion through linguistic imperialism. However, the cultural imperialism of such kind is absolutely a reality in our contemporary academic discourse.

References

- Gardener, H. (1993 (Reprinted in 2006)). *Multiple Intelligences*. New York: Basic Books (A Member of the Perseus Books Group).
- Hedge, T. (2000). *Teaching and Learning in the Language Classroom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Keeps, H. D. J. (2017). *Telling ain't Training*. New Delhi: Viva Books.
- Kridel, C. A. (2010). *Encyclopedia of Curriculum Studies*. California: Sage Publications.
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412958806>
- Larsen-Freeman, D. (2000). *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Mercedo, P. F. (1970 (Reprinted by Bloomsbury Academic in 2014)). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Phillipson, R. (1992 (Republished in 2003)). *Linguistic Imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Renandya, J. C. (2002 (Reprinted in 2011)). *Methodology in Language Teaching*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Rod, E. (1997). *Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Rodgers, J. C. S. (2001). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Skehan, P. (1998). *A Cognitive Approach to Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Teachers Observing Teachers: A Professional Development Tool for Every School*. (2018, December 29). Retrieved December 29, 2018, from https://www.educationworld.com/a_admin/admin/admin297.shtml
- Tharu, S. J. (1998). *Subject to Change: Teaching Literature in the Nineties*. Calcutta: Orient Longman.