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The Role of English Language Teaching (ELT) Professionals in the Internationalization of Higher Education: Current Challenges and Strategies to Resist Complicities with Colonialism

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Abstract

English language teaching (ELT) professionals are integral to internationalization and globalization processes universities around the world are pursuing. In doing so, ELT professionals have become complicit with issues that relate to colonialism and imperialism. These issues continue to have a detrimental effect on our societies, keeping the world from becoming a more socially just world. This contribution highlights and discusses some of the complicities of the field of applied linguistics and the ELT profession. It discusses challenges and presents strategies to resist such complicities.

Keywords: colonialism, decolonization, English language teaching (ELT), globalization, internationalization

Resumen

Los profesionales en la enseñanza del idioma inglés (EII) son esenciales para los procesos de internacionalización y globalización que las universidades de todo el mundo están llevando a cabo. Al hacerlo, los profesionales de EII se han vuelto cómplices de problemas relacionados con el colonialismo y el imperialismo. Estos problemas continúan teniendo un efecto perjudicial en nuestras sociedades, impidiendo que el mundo se convierta en un lugar más socialmente justo. Esta contribución destaca y discute algunas de las complicidades del campo de la lingüística aplicada y la profesión de EII. Aborda desafíos y presenta estrategias para resistir dichas complicidades.

Palabras claves: colonialismo, descolonización, enseñanza del idioma inglés (EII), globalización, internacionalización

Resumo

Profissionais do ensino de língua inglesa (ELT) desempenham papel fundamental nos processos de internacionalização e globalização buscados por universidades de todo o mundo. Deste modo, esses profissionais de ELT tornaram-se cúmplices de questões relacionadas ao colonialismo e ao imperialismo. Essas questões continuam a ter um efeito prejudicial em nossas sociedades, impedindo que o mundo se torne um lugar mais justo socialmente . Este artigo discute algumas das cumplicidades no campo da linguística aplicada e na profissão ELT, bem como explora desafios e apresenta estratégias para resistir às cumplicidades com o império.

Palavras-chave: colonialismo, decolonização, império, ensino de língua inglesa (ELT), globalização, internacionalização

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Introduction

As someone who learned English as a foreign language (EFL) in Chile and earned the credentials to teach it over thirty years ago, followed by successful completion of my graduate education in the US, I can both painfully and confidently say that the English language teaching (ELT) profession offers one of the clearest examples of the perpetuation of colonialism, as others have noted (Meighan, 2020; Meighan, 2023a, 2023b), "a particular realization of the imperial imagination" (Smith, 2012, p. 24), at institutions of higher education (IHEs). English, the object of teaching and learning, has been a "crucial part of the colonial enterprise, and […] English has been a major language in which colonialism has been written (Pennycook, 1998, p. 9). In US higher education, as Marginson (2022) stated, English represents the main vehicle for promoting White Supremacy and is perceived as the tool that opens the door to access the benefits of the professional way of life that many desire. Whether this is true for all who develop command of the English language, that is another question.

In this contribution, shaped by my lived experiences, different from what Castañeda-Londoño (2021) did as she discussed her perspective on ELT preparation, I will be using the pronoun *we* to challenge the individualistic and neoliberal use of the pronoun *I* that is pervasive in the Global North scholarship and epistemology, as well as in the practices of scholars in the Global South who have yet to question their complicities with colonialism as they try to gain access into the club created by Global North scholars. Just like Pennycook and Makoni (2020) noted when describing their understanding of the Global North and the Global South, I use these two terms to describe and/or refer to "people, places, and ideas" that have been *included and/or legitimized* (i.e., those from Global North) or l*eft out, excluded, and disenfranchised* (i.e., those from Global South) in the grand narrative of modernity, which signals what counts in knowledge making (i.e., privileging the Eurocentric ways of knowing from the Global North).

By using the pronoun *we*, I intend to signal who I am in terms of my positionality (race, ethnicity, gender, class, and so forth), and engage in an act of linguistic disobedience to challenge the oppressive logic of coloniality that asks us to voice our thoughts as individuals first and foremost (Domínguez, 2021). Since my first semester of graduate studies in the US, I was forced to give up the use of *we* in my works by one of my professors (to comply with the expected styles of the academy). Now, when recalling it after more than three decades, such demand continues to feel as a personal violation, because, having grown up in Chile, I learned the value of working together for the betterment of society or for el buen vivir, as described by Salazar (2015) – a decolonial stance. Such imposition was hard to accept, and no alternatives were allowed in the new context I found myself as an international student if I wanted to succeed. In using *we*, I exercise my right to use a language in a way that fits my needs, intended to enlist others to be part of the collective action to challenge and change the dominant paradigms. Thus, I call on this group, the ELT collective, to join forces in dismantling the oppressive forces under which we have been operating for so long. This task is not easy. It is complex and, at times, contradictory, but such challenges should not deter us. They should only compel us to find more creative and socially just solutions.

The ELT field, and education in its broadest sense, is by no means apolitical. ELT professionals hold diverse ideologies, which, at times, can be located on opposites of a continuum. My position is informed by ontoepistemologies that aim at contributing to the realization of the democratic ideal in an anti-neoliberal sense. I work to enact a social justice agenda for diversity, equity, inclusion, and access (DEIA) as part of my professional pursuits – one that considers the voices of those who have been historically disenfranchised. I advocate for what individuals can do, recognizing the complexities and contradictions involved. I am motivated by my own positionality and the intersection of my multiple identities: a first-generation bisexual cisgender female who grew up in low socio-economic conditions and believed in the value of education to transform the lives of individuals and societies. Growing up in the hills of Valparaiso, Chile, I became both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated to learn English to overcome my own social condition and to help those around me. Having done so, as an ELT professional, living and working in the geographical Global North, I also recognize my privileges. With a critical mindset resulting from my education, professional development, and lived experiences both in the Global North and in the Global South, my intellectual position is influenced by scholars in critical pedagogy (e.g., Freire, Giroux, Kincheloe) and critical applied linguistics (e.g., Canagarajah, Pennycook, Kubota). I have a strong sense for social responsibility even though such realization is loaded with much cognitive and emotional dissonance as I find myself dealing with the challenge of what it means to live, to a considerable extent, in contradiction. I find myself trying to dismantle the forces and impositions of the colonizer with the colonizer's own tools on colonized lands. I accept that I have been colonized,

but I also challenge the fact that it is a permanent state of being. I do not believe it is. I believe that such struggle can result in a positive transformation of the self and of our contexts.

Like me, I believe that many ELT professionals also find themselves living in contradiction while working to enhance the field of applied linguistics with the goal of achieving a more socially just society. The contradictions are multiple when taking a decolonial stance. They emerge in response to efforts intended to navigate the realities of highly complex contexts that interact in multiple ways (i.e., personal, professional, local, and global) and are informed by coloniality. For instance, the ELT profession has been at the center of internationalization efforts in the US and around the world. As we know, successful international students in English dominant countries or in universities where English is the medium of instruction (EMI) are expected to master English for academic purposes, as well as develop cultural competency (Kubota, 2009a) to earn their academic credentials from top ranking institutions.

The goal of ensuring effective English language mastery is, by definition, the main duty and responsibility of ELT professionals. Hence, ELT professionals have become essential players, as social agents, in the successful internationalization efforts at IHEs in the English-speaking world or in EMI contexts. For this reason, we, ELT educators, have a social and moral responsibility for ensuring that we prepare ELT professionals who can contribute to overcome the colonial complicities that we have, unintentionally, helped perpetuate through centuries within our instructional/institutional contexts in higher education. By *colonial complicities*, as a way of some key examples, I am referring to our (a) contributions to furthering the expansion of colonialism, prioritizing the teaching of English around the world at the expense of other languages (local/heritage/indigenous languages or even World languages, such as Spanish); (b) focus on teaching the standard variety of English in the ESL/EFL (English as Second/Foreign Language) classroom; (c) inability to consistently challenge the idealization of the English native speaker who speaks the privileged variety of English (see Kubota, 2009b); (d) inconsistent attention to, or incorporation of, other World Englishes in the English language class; and (e) prioritization of Western epistemologies in academia that ignore or devalue other ways of knowing or producing knowledge that may follow Indigenous methodologies that value community-based and relational knowledge making (Meighan, 2020).

We, tenured ELT professionals and leaders situated in public higher education in the US, are in a position of privilege. We can challenge the predominant status quo by understanding ourselves in relation to the current challenges in our field, by critically examining our own pedagogy to guide others, and by addressing questions such as those raised by Castañeda-Londoño (2021) regarding ELT knowledge. Those of us in ELT education need to ensure that the ELT professionals that we educate also learn how to engage in difficult conversations around the historical complicities of ELT profession and the field of applied linguistics at large. I do, however, acknowledge that not all ELT professionals (in the US and around the globe) may have job protection, as not everyone is part of the tenure system that offers job protection and academic freedom. My primary concern here is with those ELT professionals, such as myself, who do enjoy these privileges and protections. We have both a duty and a responsibility to shape our field for the betterment of our local and global communities.

Current Challenges of the ELT Profession

The challenges of the ELT profession are many. In this section, I will focus on two primary areas that deserve attention: (a) our complicity with maintaining a narrow approach to the work that happens in the field of applied linguistics as it currently stands; and (b) our complicit roles with colonialism and linguistic hegemony of the language we chose to learn and teach. The context I seek to address is public higher education where academic freedom is valued and protections under tenure exist.

ELT Professionals' Complicity with a Narrow View of Applied Linguistics

The field of applied linguistics has been criticized for its limited scope (Shuy, 2015) and division (Cook, 2015) as well as for the illusion held by many who believe in its objectivity (Motha, 2020). As Flores (2016) noted, that illusion can lead some people to think that there can be "race-neutrality" and, therefore, "Whiteness becomes protected by being framed as neutral" (p. 128). At times, the field of applied linguistics has been criticized for being reticent to cross disciplinary

boundaries (May, 2019). Also, it has been criticized for yielding evidence of being racist at various levels: (1) individual (Kubota, 2019); (2) institutional (Kubota, 2019); and epistemological (Diniz De Figueiredo & Martinez, 2021; Kubota, 2019). Such reality has prompted many scholars of color, or of minoritized backgrounds, to "become complicit with the white Euro-American hegemonic knowledge" as it has become evident in the citation practices observed in our field (Kubota, 2019). Mendoza (2020) commented on the clear hegemony of scholarly activity as well as disciplinary elitism to achieve prestige when one wishes to affiliate with the practices of the Global North. Even professional organizations, such as the American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL) and TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) International, which I identify as my primary professional associations, have been at the forefront of the criticism on the part of its members and its leadership (see Bhattacharya et al., 2020).

Many of us, ELT professionals, knowingly or not, have contributed to perpetuating the narrowness of applied linguistics, as we may have joined it from an uncritical stance. Some of us in international academia have chosen to stay in it for a variety of reasons. Many individuals want to learn English to be prepared and participate in global enterprises in the era of globalization (Kubota, 2009a); therefore, when possible, some pursue opportunities to study English in English speaking countries. In fact, many of us have not only witnessed, but also experienced the transformational power of mastering the English language and of living in an English-speaking society. Those of us, situated in the US, and who have reached this personal, academic, and/or professional goal, are oftentimes seen as evidence of having achieved the so-called American dream. After all, as Di Pietro (2022) noted, there "is a strong consensus among academics and policymakers that spending some time abroad during university studies is highly beneficial to students" (p. 4). The benefits are multiple in the modern and capitalist paradigm. Those who study abroad benefit from it as well as those who host them. To some extent, some of us who at some point in our personal/professional journey were part of a majority (my own example coming from Chile to the US) realize that, when in countries like the US, we become part of a minority group and we experience the process of becoming minoritized. This awareness process takes time, but eventually, it happens. In that process, some of us realize that we were successfully indoctrinated into the rhetoric of modernity and globalization with a tendency for valuing Whiteness, which fuels the authority of Western universities in the US and UK. That is, as Marginson (2022) noted, "non-White students invest in international higher education to secure what they can of a 'White future'" (p. 510). The journey becomes not only physical, but also cognitive.

For some of us, it is later in our careers, when we become fully cognizant that, both unintentionally and unknowingly, as part of the process of academic mobility, we have benefited from international experiences at the expense of the original stewards of the lands we occupy in the Global North. As an English professor, I live and work in the lands of the Arapahoe, Cheyenne and Ute Nations and peoples who were the first nations of these lands and who became displaced because of colonialism and imperial expansionism. In fact, in recent years, particularly, but not exclusively, in the US, those of us situated on university campuses have observed and participated in the increased recognition on the part of institutions of higher education (IHEs) that their founding and establishment occurred on the ancestral lands of many native peoples. ELT professionals, at our universities in the Global North and in our professional organizations (such as the American Association for Applied Linguistics), acknowledge that many societies have been displaced because of colonial practices, and/or other historical events (e.g., President Lincoln's 1862 Morrill Land Grant Act). In contemporary times, these complex issues (e.g., the displacement of native peoples) have been increasingly exacerbated by the influence of neoliberal practices associated with globalization practices (Miao & Yang, 2023). In many instances, these colonial practices are directly connected to internationalization efforts on the part of IHEs, as they "have intensively promoted globalization and internationalization" (Im, 2020, p. 81).

Fortunately, the terms *internationalization* and *globalization* have been problematized, as they may not have a single and unique definition or understanding. Brooks and Waters (2022) problematized these terms and acknowledged their deconstructions, indicating that the term *internationalization* can be understood from a narrow perspective (just geographical) to one that is informed by multiple and diverse perspectives (when it emanates from diverse sources).

The greatest and most robust push for internationalization has been what has come to be known as *comprehensive internationalization* (CE) (see ACE, n.d.). ACE has significantly promoted student mobility to also encompass the internationalization of the curriculum and the shaping of most, if not all, of the educational practices of an institution to

ensure that graduates are prepared to face and meet the demands of a global society (Hudzik, 2015; Banks et al., 2016; Leask, 2015). This work, however, has been advanced to address multiple pressing institutional needs associated with less public/state funding for public higher education and the need to compete in the global scene, which demands graduates to be prepared to function successfully in an increasingly global market economy. Kubota (2009a) had already noted the paradox some of us have directly witnessed in IHEs. She basically argued that internationalization practices that are motivated and supported by a market-driven economy, which in turn is influenced by neoliberal and neocolonial practices, underscore the dominant/hegemonic role of English.

While, as Jones (2018) noted, there may be "compelling drivers for university leaders to adopt an integrated rather than a unidimensional approach to internationalization" (p. xvii), I would argue that we, ELT professionals, have both a moral (as individuals) and an ethical (as members of a profession and field) responsibility to ensure that such work is undertaken from a socially just perspective in today's world. We need to work towards internationalization and globalization in a way that is socially just (not just for a privileged few). A socially just perspective is inclusive. Inclusive work entails working towards internationalization efforts that are not exclusively geared towards those who can afford these learning opportunities as Brooks and Waters (2022) reminded us. A socially just perspective is also plural and multidirectional, and can be supported by critical pedagogy, as articulated by Giroux (2020). Internationalization that is truly global should not just prioritize international student mobility from East to West and remain heavily circumscribed to this westward direction which has been the predominant one in the history of international student mobility (ISM). A socially just perspective to internationalization should offer students the opportunity to move in every possible direction (e.g., West to East, North to South, and any combination of the previous). Internationalization should also be promoted with the advocacy for learning other languages, not just English, and it should honor Indigenous languages and communities (Meighan, 2023b). ELT professionals who, in many cases, are multilingual individuals can assist in this process by challenging the dominance of English that has resulted in the displacement of other languages that were, at some point in history, recognized as scientific languages. As ELT professionals, we do have some level of agency. We can choose to welcome multilingual perspectives in our language classrooms. We can advocate for multilingualism. A socially just perspective will enact a multilingual ELT (see Raza et al., 2023, for examples on how this can be done). Translingual pedagogies that are decolonial offer an opportunity for teachers to validate all languages and knowledge systems (Meighan, 2023b). White English, described as Global English, has enjoyed both linguistic and cultural hegemony while other manifestations or English variations are not welcome in what is considered acceptable scientific discourse (Marginson, 2022). Learning English should not be at the cost of learning other languages. Learning other languages can contribute to work towards developing a global mindset on the part of individuals who seek to develop global competencies.

At the turn of the century, Pakir (1999) anticipated that "the dominant themes of the first century of the next millennium [were] almost certainly going to be internationalization, global interdependence, and interconnectivity" (p. 103). Such a prediction has unfolded as predicted. Further, just as Kubota (2009a) noted, "globalization is associated with Americanization" (p. 614). Therefore, one can also argue that learning English has come to be understood almost as a synonym with the internationalization of higher education—a direction that has become exacerbated by "the universal trends of commodification and marketization of university education" (Choi, 2010, p. 234). With the internationalization efforts of university campuses, namely in the West, we have witnessed "the visible increase in students from overseas" (Ching-Ching, 2020, p. 1), which has only been challenged and slowed down by the COVID-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, even in the best of times, comprehensive internationalization has not lived up to its fullest potential in truly addressing matters of diversity, equity, and inclusion for social justice. As Doiz et al. (2011) reiterated in citing Martin (2010):

> HEIs in English-speaking countries are for the most part monolingual, and multilingual and multicultural students are expected to adopt the language and literacy practices of a certain kind. Hence, the varieties of English spoken by these students are taken as problematic and multilingual students are all too often frequently required to go through a "remedial ESL identity" and to abandon their native languages. (p. 346)

We know that such is the case because, as others have noted: "these principles are universal in theory but complex in practice" (ACE, 2022, p. 5). Rather, internationalization in US higher education has represented a missed opportunity to truly diversify our campuses and therefore accomplish the goal that many aspire to reach along the way: that our graduates

have an opportunity (through study abroad experiences or in bound mobility) to develop a global mindset to participate in a world that is more interconnected than ever with a socially just perspective. For many of our domestic students, a study abroad experience is not feasible. Thus, bringing international students to our campuses where they can be fully integrated in our community can serve to provide richer educational experiences for all. In the end, those of us close to the operation see that any positive results from any internationalization are likely by-product outcomes. Internationalization for diversity purposes is not always the driving force at the center of institutional endeavors to achieve the goal of graduating students to function in a global world on the part of institutions that desire to identify themselves as global universities.

ELT Professionals' Complicit Roles with Colonialism: Linguistic Hegemony

Graddol (2006) predicted that English would be a tool to structure inequality. ELT's complicities with colonialism are claims that have been at the center of discussions among applied linguists for quite some time now (Meighan, 2023a; Meighan, 2023b). What is taught in the preparation of ELT professionals is primarily conceived from a Global North perspective (Castañeda-Londoño, 2021). Most recently, Mackey et al. (2022) reminded us that calls "for mobilizing linguistics research toward social justice are not new" (p. 1). We can easily agree with their statement, as others have raised issues with English dominance. Searle (1983), for instance, stated the following:

> Let us be clear that the English language has been a monumental force and institution of oppression and rabid exploitation throughout 400 years of imperialist history. It attacked the black person with its racist images and imperialist message, it battered the worker who toiled as its words expressed the parameters of his misery and the subjection of entire peoples in all the continents of the world. It was made to scorn the languages it sought to replace, and told the colonised peoples that mimicry of its primacy among languages was a necessary badge of their social mobility as well as their continued humiliation and subjection. Thus, when we talk of 'mastery' of the Standard language, we must be conscious of the terrible irony of the word, that the English language itself was the language of the master, the carrier of his arrogance and brutality. (p. 68)

Overcoming our ELT/Applied Linguistics With Searle's words under consideration, one cannot but wonder why many of us have, to a significant extent, failed at both productively challenging and changing the hegemonic role of English in higher education. When English is privileged, it is often at the expense of celebrating and incorporating the multilingual assets of English learners. Even in contexts with academic privilege, some ELT professionals may still find it difficult to challenge the status quo of the English language. Are we failing to identify the root causes behind the continued perpetuation of the complicities? Under what conditions can these challenges be overcome? How can we once and for all begin the kind of work that is needed to no longer be part of the problem? Can we carve a solid path towards a solution? These questions need to be addressed in our ELT preparation courses to avoid perpetuating the status quo. It is in the English classroom, through the leadership of the ELT professional, where education for the good of all should begin. Searle (1983) saw it too. He noted that our task as teachers is "to contribute to that transformation of our common language" (p. 68). This work however is a political act, and one can only begin to engage in this transformative act upon its acceptance. The time has come to ask ourselves: "Where have we come from and where are we going"? (Knight & de Wit, 2018, p. 20).

English has been at the center of linguistic imperialism and hegemony discussions, exponentially exacerbated by the imbalance of geopolitical and economic forces that shape our existence. Though this discussion started a while back, progress to reach a better place in conversation about internationalization, globalization, and global education have been slow. Consider the case of England and Japan, for example, as highlighted by Block and Cameron (2002). Both countries have adopted simplistic and simplified versions of bilingualism and of internationalization by focusing on the West and underscoring the notion of language for improving economic conditions, ignoring their own culturally and linguistically-rich contexts. This simplistic idea (at least partially) is not consistent with what initially motivated many of us to learn other languages, such as English. Some of us were attracted to it because it was something different. Many of us embraced bilingualism as a strong asset only to discover upon traveling and living in places like the US, however, that such a view is not a commonly held belief. Being English/Spanish bilingual in the US is not always met with enthusiasm. In fact, many of

us have discovered a mixed rhetoric about bilingualism/biculturalism. Such a difference affects individuals differently, and it is dependent on who is working to become bilingual (English/Spanish). For an immigrant child, for instance, born to Spanish speaking parents in a context where resources are scarce, being a Spanish speaker and a learner of English is not always a welcome mix. Yet for a US born child who grows up in a family of generations of college graduates, learning Spanish (or any other language) is an asset – a sign of prestige. This paradox becomes a shocking reality for many teachers, and others, who witness it. Further, when it comes to our own international students in our ELT courses, we quickly learn that much of the motivation to join our programs stems from their desire to be immersed in the so-called American culture, oftentimes, narrowly understood as White America.

Complicity

As ELT professionals, we have a significant challenge to address. We have allowed our profession and field of study (applied linguistics) to become part of the problem of colonization and coloniality. Many of us know (e.g., Motha, 2014; 2020) what got us here: both *colonialism* and the desire for the expansion of both the empire (with lowercase *e* to denote territorial expansion), and the *Empire* (with uppercase *E* to refer to more complex relationships of power in present times, influenced more by economic rather than governmental initiatives or mandates) (Motha, 2014). Many of us also know that coloniality is an essential element of modernity, and, therefore, our goal should be to bring modernity to an end (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018) and stop having to engage in decoloniality, "born in responses to the promises of modernity and the realities of coloniality" (p. 4). As ELT professionals, we can develop empathy for anyone who has come to terms with these complicities. Therefore, what is next? How can we emerge from these challenges with pride? Below, yet recognizing the complexities involved as articulated by many scholars in the literature regarding global higher education (Marginson, 2022) as well as decolonization (Motha, 2014), I offer suggestions for engaging in decolonizing practices in ELT to positively impact internationalization practices for achieving a global and socially just society. I do so at the risk of coming across as a professional who is reproducing the logic used to describe colonial practices: universality (Shahjahan et al., 2022). In this paper, I only offer a potential path for starting to engage with what Shahjahan et al. (2022) called *disciplinary reflexivity.* That is*,* the inquiry-type of work that prompts us to ask ourselves whose knowledge and practices count in our own disciplines. These suggestions are intended to guide all of us in how to begin this journey in which the current practices in ELT are examined critically and challenged.

Learn about Colonization and Decolonization

Learning about the harms of colonization (see Mignolo & Walsh, 2018; Quijano & Ennis, 2000 for in depth descriptions of these terms and accounts), and what decolonization (as an alternative) offers can be a good starting point. Throughout this learning process, it is important that we keep in mind that decolonization is an epistemic framework that needs to be fully understood before work can be undertaken towards implementation. Maitra and Guo (2019) cite Smith (2019) to argue that there are four purposes entailed in decolonization when understood as an epistemic framework:

> First, it would help to engage with the concepts of imperialism and colonialism to unravel the coloniality of knowledge production and dissemination. Second, it would facilitate the process of challenging the hegemony of western knowledge systems and take intercultural and postcolonial approaches to argue for plural systems of knowledge. Third, decolonization would need planning and designing lifelong learning curricula and pedagogy from non-western diverse perspectives. Finally, decolonization as a framework emphasizes the need 'to decolonize our minds as lifelong learners, practitioners, and policymakers in order to challenge the passivity, colonization, and marginalization of learners both in classrooms and workplaces. (Smith, 2019 in Maitra & Guo, 2019, p. 15)

The decolonization of our curricular and pedagogical practices is not a minor undertaking, and it is receiving greater attention (Shahjahan et al., 2022). Our own professional conferences have welcomed an increasing number of presentations that address the decolonization of our own field. This work matters because it is in our classrooms where we validate (or not) colonial practices and marginalize (or not) our learners. It is in our classroom where we can choose to become colonizers

or where we work towards decolonizing our own selves and model what this entails to our learners. ELT professionals can/should engage in professional reflexivity. Together, we can discuss how to challenge the dominant discourses of colonization and imagine different alternatives that can serve everyone in teaching and learning well. Present times may offer a great opportunity to start doing so given the critical discussion unfolding among our peers and within some of our professional organizations.

Get Comfortable with the Uncomfortable

None of this decolonization work is easy, as it requires educational transformation, as discussed by Salinas Gaona and Méndez Reyes (2021). Following the teachings of Krishnamurti, as described by Mukherjee and Agrawal (2021), we must be comfortable with learning, unlearning, and relearning. We need to be willing to free ourselves from our past experiences and prepare to reframe our pedagogical praxis and approaches to ELT. We need to understand that this process of personal/professional resetting will lead to moments of tension with our own identities. This tension, according to Yazan et al. (2023), is productive. Just like I did in describing my own experience at the beginning of this article, Yazan et al. (2023) relate their own. Through collaborative autoethnography, they describe their own negotiations between who they are and their professional identities as TESOL practitioners in the US. In this process, we need to also understand how we got to where we are. We need to learn about the historical evolution of our field and be ready to challenge the hegemony of Western European knowledge that still prevails in the Global North and the Global South, making space for other sources of knowledge. We need to be clear on what contributes to the marginalization of learners, teachers, and anyone who is expected to conform to Western thinking. In this regard, indigenous education may offer much for consideration as it encourages self-determination and invites diversity of methods and contents. After all, indigenous education is relational, community and values-based (Johnson & Nelson-Barber, 2018).

Begin the Process of Decolonizing Oneself

Reflecting upon our identities and positionalities, acknowledging our conscious and unconscious biases and privileges, is also a starting point. Understanding our own global position matters, as the speed at which we may or may not easily influence the decolonization of the ELT profession will be mediated by the local context. For instance, I may be able to have an immediate impact on pre-service and in-service teachers in the courses I teach, and students may demonstrate tacit and procedural knowledge, embracing an ecological approach to the multiple ways of knowing and knowledge production, as described by Castañeda-Londoño (2021). Yet how much influence future teachers can have on their own classrooms will be shaped by contextual factors that may include restrictive policies and/or educational mandates. Nevertheless, they may still serve as agents of change that can incorporate alternative views in their teaching that can show to students that the global landscape may be quite rich in other ways of viewing the world, as in the case of indigenous ways of knowing.

The process of decolonizing oneself continues with taking an active advocacy role in decolonizing the ELT profession. In doing so, we need to address fundamental questions such as: how do we go about educating future ELT professionals in decolonial ways? What are some of the challenges we, ELT professionals, may face, as opportunities may be limited by local contexts to a significant extent? When limitations are in place, are there ways in which barriers to decolonizing the ELT curriculum can be overcome? By participating in our professional networks and finding allies in professional organizations that align with our values, progress can be made. For a recent, yet long-overdue change, see the resolution approved by the members of the American Association for Applied Linguistics (AAAL, 2023) on the Language of Submission at the Annual Conference. We need to be able to engage pre- and in-service teachers in a process of reflection to critically analyze our own position in this world.

When it comes to ELT preparation, Castañeda-Londoño (2021), for example, privileges the question of "how" versus "what" when it comes to teacher's knowledge. How do teachers enact their praxis? Presumably, the how is informed by the what. While I agree with this examination, and do not disregard it as a potential starting point, in ELT pre-service

and in-service training, starting with the *what* that teachers know may still be a reasonable and appropriate course of action. At least, in my own praxis, I work to develop reflective practitioners, so even before exposing teachers in training to the selected content prepared for them, I ask them to reflect on their own experiences to become aware of where they stand. Then, we (altogether) embark on a journey of what merits pursuit. For example, in the graduate 'Literacy course for multilingual learners' that I teach, I will, first and foremost, ask in-service or pre-service teachers to reflect on their journeys in learning to read and/or write in their dominant or multiple languages they have experienced. Then, after building a safe space for critical discussions, disruption gradually begins to decolonize our thinking and praxis.

An approach that I piloted with my graduate students in my own special topics course in the MA in English was to introduce my students to the current conversations on decolonization. I started by introducing them to the concept of positionality as defined by one of the leading contemporary Latin American philosophers, Linda Alcoff (1988). According to Thompson (2012), Alcoff "argued for a positional definition of woman, one that sees important aspects of women's identity as markers of relational positions rather than essential qualities. These identities exist in a shifting context that is a network of elements involving other people, economic conditions, and cultural and political institutions and ideologies" (p. 1675). I then led the first example with my own account of my positionality, which included the description of the intersection of my identities (race/ethnicity, linguistic/cultural background, exceptionality, sexual preference, age, etc.). I discussed how I could be potentially biased with strategies to overcome unconscious bias in my life and work. This modeling on my part helped build trust and understanding of where I was coming from, and why I was interested in teaching this elective course. This was a great starting point for launching the course, which involved a nice mix of international (from the Middle East and Central America) and local students (from across the US, including students of indigenous ancestry). The description of their respective positionality gave testimony to many aspects that relate to diversity they contributed to enrich the course experience. These differences became evident as everyone shared their own positionality in the trusting and respectful environment that we established and nurtured from the beginning. As the semester unfolded and the students embarked into their individual and/or collective projects for decolonizing TESOL/applied linguistics and composition studies, they acknowledged their positionalities as teacher and/or researchers, and addressed how their experiences may have shaped their work.

Identify and Account for Personal Biases

Still concerning positionality, as we explore our identities, we become quickly acquainted with our own biases, and how they may influence our actions and perspectives. This is the first step in potentially developing ways to combat our own unconscious biases. I too involved my students in this practice. Very quickly, as they delved into the literature for the course, they started noticing the practices of other researchers who would describe their positionalities and acknowledged their biases. By the end of the semester, as they presented their plans for decolonizing ELT and beyond, they also explicitly acknowledged their potential biases. They had learned how their identities and overall positionality shaped their views, and they sought to interrogate them as a first step to overcome their complicities with a colonial ELT.

Transcend the Existing Epistemologies in Academia

With the goal of transcending the existing/prevailing epistemologies in the modern colonial world that we inhabit, if not done already, we need to free ourselves. We need to remember that the "real aim of colonialism was to control the people's wealth: what they produced, how they produced it, and how it was distributed; to control, in other words, the entire realm of the language of real life" (wa Thiong'o, 1986, p. 16). This outcome is what we observe in today's neoliberal practices that lead to the social inequities and inequalities we observe in this world.

Embrace a Translingual Praxis in ELT from a Decolonial Alternative

The debate on the topics of translingual pedagogies and translingualism in the language classroom has increased recently within applied linguistics. Canagarajah (2013) described a translingual pedagogy as the kind of praxis that celebrates the richness of language. This pedagogy has grown in acceptance and consideration as a potential response to the call for decolonizing practices in applied linguistics and TESOL. As he noted: "communication can start from heterogenous language norms [and it] is not an esoteric concept" (Canagarajah, 2022, p. 13). He brought to our attention how communities in the Global South effectively engage in communication exchanges when levels of proficiency are not high (according to the hegemonic standards). His accounts illustrate how individuals can communicate without being subjected to strict norms. Translingualism is simply a natural occurrence, and those accounts ought to help ELT professionals to feel comfortable with multilingualism being used in English language classrooms as students communicate and negotiate meaning. Some have welcome work in this area with great enthusiasm (Li, 2018). Others, however, have looked at it with skepticism as it could lead to still a colonial challenge (see Meighan, 2023a). But many of us, in the ELT community, believe that "[f]ostering translingual and transcultural competence is an integral part of the academic and social/cultural dimensions of internationalization" (Kubota, 2009, p. 615). Applied linguists have also turned their attention to translanguaging as "a descriptive label for a specific language practice" which has in time become "an effective pedagogical practice in a variety of educational contexts where the school language or the language-of-instruction is different from the language of the learners" (Li, 2018, p. 15). Translanguaging, ultimately, has been defined as "an emerging concept that refers to the process where speakers draw on their full linguistic and semiotic resources to make meaning" (Li, 2018, cited in Tai and Dai, 2023, p. 2) to allow and encourage "the mobilization of various multilingual and multimodal resources for transcending socially constructed language systems and structures to facilitate meaning-making processes" (Tai & Dai, 2023, p. 2).

Enact Decolonizing Methodologies in our Research

Patel (2016) denounced contemporary educational research as a site of coloniality. She noted that "educational research is often complicit in a system that normalizes the achievement and wealth of some while pathologizing and marginalizing others" (p. 26). This argument is easy to understand, as many of us, while rising above our social condition, have experienced it in our own professional advancement. Yet, having secured professional success, and from a position of privilege, we can advance the decolonial project and decolonization of the self through both embracing and enacting other research epistemologies that, in turn, entail different concepts of science and knowledge making. We can contribute to decolonizing educational research through our scholarly praxis in international academia. We can do so by exploring how diverse communities, such as indigenous communities in the Global South, have done it. Smith (2012), for example, motivated by her own indigenous upbringing and writing from the standpoint of someone who acknowledges being colonized, offered a detailed and powerful account of both why and what to consider in decolonizing methodologies. She reminds us of the worst offenses that have been perpetrated on indigenous peoples, such as those from New Zealand, in the name of science and scientific research. Her account, as she introduces her work, cannot be ignored. It constitutes a painful reminder to all of us that we are complicit in the colonial project. Again, as noted in my own acknowledgements, while we may not be able to undo past wrong doings, we do have options in how we move forward, in how we engage in ELT and the methodologies that we choose to enact in the field of applied linguistics. Given that our work is fully turned to globalization and internationalization, we too can shape and go after a decolonial alternative when it comes to internationalization. As we inhabit the *Otherwise in International Academia*, we can choose to embrace other ways of knowledge production. In other words, how we do what we do in ELT matters.

Engage in Transdisciplinarity and Interdisciplinarity in Decolonial Ways

As ELT educators, we need to consider what it means to engage in and be part of decolonial transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to the education of ELT professionals, particularly, in higher education, and in the context of

campus internationalization effort. If approached from a decolonial perspective, forging interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary alliances on our university campuses can contribute to move away from hegemonic English practices that perpetuate colonialism and the dominance of the Empire/colonialism. A decolonial approach is one that is both embodied and situated. It acknowledges, respects, celebrates, and considers multiple ways of knowledge production. It is one that is consistent with multiple ways of existing in our ecosystem. A decolonial approach to a transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary ELT that positively contributes to the internationalization and globalization of higher education has a greater probability of achieving global cognitive (validating the knowledge from those who have been historically oppressed), linguistic, and social justice (both intended to affirm the identities of minoritized individuals and groups in challenged contexts) (see Santos, 2007, 2014, 2018; Baker-Bell, 2020 for in-depth discussions of these terms).

Final Remarks

Up to this date, in my own ELT preparation classrooms, many students who enroll in TESOL programs are motivated by their own romantic views (e.g., a desire to travel, see the world, and make friends across cultures) or instrumental motivation (e.g., a desire for a better life). Regardless of the personal reasons for pursuing the ELT profession, throughout my teaching, I have observed that there are some issues of concern that have prevailed in time: many pre-service and/or in-service language teachers often lack awareness of the critical role they play in ELT and in the perpetuation of colonization, despite societal challenges observed and denounced by social movements (e.g., such as Black Lives Matter in the US). Others (e.g., international students who are speakers of languages other than English) join our programs displaying an initial sense of inferiority as they have bought into the myth of the *native speaker* – a term (a construct) that fully captures the domination of Western hegemony prevalent in the epistemologies of the North, which entails a notion of deficit prevalent in the (neo) racist ideology that informs it (Dewaele et al., 2023). I have directly witnessed how our international students who are speakers of languages other than English, at first, instantiate an apologetic narrative for not being "native speakers of English." This fact is puzzling and painful because they are indicative of an inferiority complex that is disempowering. Therefore, as language educators, we must prioritize the challenging of this type of thinking to help these learners move from a space and rhetoric of deficit to one of asset so that they can inhabit any spaces feeling proud for their bilingual/multilingual and cultural assets. Consequently, what is clear to me as an ELT educator who values multilingualism/multiculturalism is the following: our ELT preparation classrooms offer a tremendous opportunity to challenge and resist these premises. As noted by Bonilla-Medina and Finardi (2022), this work is not easy as it typically unfolds in contexts where colonial institutional practices prevail.

In the end, the question we need to ask ourselves as ELT professionals is: what is at stake if we fail to act? From my perspective, everything is at stake. Working towards a decolonial ELT in connection to internationalization and globalization from a decolonial perspective offers an opportunity for ensuring a better tomorrow. The time has come to pave a positive future for the generations to come. Humanity needs all of us to achieve a sustainable future for all. There is no justification for perpetuating inequities and inequalities in this world through our areas of study and work. We, ELT professionals, share a tremendous educational and social responsibility, and many of us are in a privileged position to address the challenges by first coming to terms with them. We cannot afford to maintain the neutrality of discourse that has prevailed in our ELT profession and that has also reverberated across internationalization and globalization processes and practices at our IHEs. What we do and how we do it matters. Are we willing to do it? *That is the question*.

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