"Did we learn English or what?": *A study abroad student in the UK carrying and crossing boundaries in out-of-class communication*

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Abstract

Language educators in many parts of the world are torn between preparing language learners to pass language proficiency tests and trying to let their classrooms reflect the messiness of out-of-class communication. Because testing is "an activity which perhaps more than any other dictates what is taught" (Hall, 2014, p. 379), helping students to pass language proficiency tests seems to be a current top priority. Since globalisation "has destabilised the codes, norms, and conventions that FL [foreign language] educators relied upon to help learners be successful users of the language once they had left their classrooms" (Kramsch, 2014, p.296), the gap between what is taught in classrooms or measured in examination halls and what is used in real life situations has become much bigger. Testimonies from Study abroad students feed into this discussion. This article addresses the gap between being a language learner and a language user and the implications of this on learners' perceptions of their language abilities, as illustrated by the story of Mahmoud, a study abroad student in the UK. It also features learner's voice, exploring Mahmoud's views of his previous formal language education and concludes with pedagogical implications for language educators.

Keywords: out-of-class communication; language testing; learners' voice; Study abroad; formal language education

1. Introduction

Globalisation "has destabilised the codes, norms, and conventions that FL [foreign language] educators relied upon to help learners be successful users of the language once they had left their classrooms," says Kramsch (2014, p. 296). This is because the superdiversity that characterises many parts of the world today (Vertovec, 2006) has opened the door for endless possibilities and encounters. That is to say, it has grown difficult to prepare language learners for the diverse situations and the circumstances thereof, and therefore, the gap between what is taught in classrooms or measured in examination halls and what is used in real life situations has become much bigger. Still, language teaching and testing practices do not seem to cope with these changing demands.

One of the main factors that perpetuates the divide between how language is viewed in the classroom and how it is used outside the classroom springs from what Osberg (2008) calls the "logic of determinism" defined as "a fundamentally 'object-based' logic which understands causality and process in terms of a series of individual stages or states that are all logically derivable from each other" (p. 144). Kramsch (2011) comments on this by explaining that the underlying logic of textbooks aims to guide learners through stages in their language acquisition and therefore syllabi and tests obey the logic of determinism in the name of fairness in order to "predict performance and rewards" (p.18). Bearing the logic of determinism in mind, language is viewed as a fixed system and teaching is seen as a practice that aims at "conforming to uniformity" (Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008). In other words, learners are seen as individuals climbing the same ladder at their own paces.

Out of class communication, on the other hand, goes far beyond the logic of determinism and falls under what Osberg (2008) calls "the logic of emergence" in which processes are not determined. This goes in line with attempts at viewing language as a complex, adaptive system (Larsen-Freeman, 1997; Larsen-Freeman & Cameron, 2008; Ellis, 2011; Larsen-Freeman, 2012). With this view in mind, language users take various, unexpected routes of communication and therefore language teaching cannot and should not claim to mirror life outside the classroom. This underlying difference between how language is presented inside the classroom and how it is actually used outside the classroom results in creating a gap between being a language learner and being a language user. This gap cannot be easily bridged as long as language teaching and testing practice continue to embrace the logic of determinism which misleadingly makes language learners assume that what they learn inside the classroom is what they will need to use outside the classroom.

Here the first section discusses common practices featured in the English language teaching and testing industry and addresses the problematic implications of such practices on how learners cross classroom boundaries to be thrown into unpredictable instances, leading learners to lose their voice and willingness to communicate. The second section presents some contemporary attempts at offering a more pedagogically honest language education. The third section moves to address the methodological aspects of this empirical study. After that, Mahmoud's story will be narrated, discussing his views of his previous formal English language education and how it impacted on his sociolinguistic trajectories in the UK. The paper, then, outlines major pedagogical implications for language educators before it concludes with a theoretical and conceptual discussion about the need to embrace conscious learning in the language classroom in order to allow learners to develop their own voice inside and outside the language classroom.

2. Language in the classroom and examination halls

An important discussion about the relationship between the "language classroom" and "real life" comes from Pennycook (2000) in which he argues that "classrooms are socio-political spaces that exist in a complex relationship to the real world" (p.90). While this view is valid with reference to local contexts surrounding classrooms, it is not necessarily relevant when it comes to the relationship between the foreign language classroom and wider socio-political contexts in other countries where the foreign language is used as the "native language." This is a very common situation for study abroad students who spend years learning a foreign language prior to arriving in a country where they can finally test their "investment" in language learning (Norton Peirce, 1995 p.18). In this case, what is required is a closer look at the language ideologies produced and reproduced through language textbooks and language proficiency tests and how they impact on learners' expectations of out-of-class communication. Since the current study examines the narratives of a study abroad student in the UK, the discussion will focus on the teaching and testing of English.

It is important to notice that the "monolithic" views of languages, which believe that language can be pinned down to a single "valued," "correct," or "standard" variety, predominate in linguistics, applied linguistics, and in everyday discourse (Hall, 2012). Moreover, mainstream enterprise attests to the power of "Standard English," leading to the reproduction of monolithic language ideologies, through mechanisms of institutional hegemony (Holborow, 2015), thereby contributing to perpetuating the commodification of "Standard English" as the variety that should be taught, and tested. Reinforcing and promoting this conceptualisation

justifies the ontological existence of English language testing services (e.g., IELTS, TOEFL, TOEIC, etc. and their associate assessment standards), ELT textbooks, and international corporate organisations for ELT. Together, this ideological machinery equates a particular way of "Englishing" (Hall, 2014; Pennycook, 2007) with the language itself and eventually builds the industry of English language education on a premise which is not expansive enough to represent the dynamic, ever-changing linguistic landscapes beyond the spaces of language classrooms and examination halls.

Monolithic conceptualisations of English are dangerous because they misleadingly make learners assume that what they learn inside the classroom is what they will use and be exposed to outside the classroom. While studying English as a second or foreign language, learners use textbooks with glossy designs whose content is deterritorialised and is often designed with sets of guidelines with regard to inclusivity, that is, a non-sexist approach to how men and women are represented, and inappropriacy, that is, topics that may offend potential consumers (Gray, 2002). As a result of what Gray (2002) calls "the global coursebooks," language learners in many parts of the world study a narrow range of "bland" topics which are mainly aspirational, apolitical, and carefree. This discourse was described by Kramsch (2015) as "tourism discourse," featuring "playful, fleeting encounters without any desire to negotiate, let alone resolve, differences in meaning" (p. 409). Commenting on this, Gray (2012, p. 108) quotes one of his participants explaining that some themes in his ELT textbook represent a "dishonest portrayal of life in the UK' since they 'create false dreams and aspirations in the minds of language learners."

Using the "global courebooks" can be significantly misleading because language education inside the classroom is based on making learners interact with "imagined communities" (Kanno & Norton, 2003) that usually present willing and cooperative interlocutors whose interactions do not usually require efforts of negotiation and resistance. If real encounters in the outside world are fundamentally different, this can easily make learners lose voice in real life interactions. An example of this comes from Pellegrino Aveni (2007) who tells the story of an energetic young woman, Leila, who on arrival in a study abroad context, lost her voice figuratively and allowed others to speak for her. 'The person she believed herself to be in her everyday life was not the person she could present to others in her new language and new culture', observes Pellegrino Aveni (2007, p.99). Although this example comes from second language identities literature to comment on the divide between learners' "ideal selves" and "real selves," it can be argued that the effects of learners' previous formal language education and hitherto conceptualisations of the second/foreign language are part and parcel of learner's imagined world and desired identity. In other words,

the monolithic, rather simplistic representations of what English is and how it is used in everyday interactions, as featured in ELT textbooks, can play a major role in silencing and intimidating language learners who want to go beyond the imagined community to face the real heterogeneous, and messy real world in study abroad contexts. Studies on migrant education have similarly indicated the divide between what language learners are taught and what they encounter in the real world (Simpson, 2015; Roberts, Baynham, Cooke, & Simpson, 2007).

As discussed above, not only do ELT textbooks contribute to perpetuating what Hall (2012) and Pennycook (2007) call the "monolithic myth," but language proficiency tests are key players in this task as well. Testing is "an activity which perhaps more than any other dictates what is taught" (Hall, 2014, p. 379). What assigns more power to English language testing regimes is their powerful gatekeeping role. When language learners are told that they have to obtain a particular score in order to be offered a place at university and a visa to another country, these individuals would ultimately believe that once the required score is attained, all doors are open. Nonetheless, language proficiency tests measure one type of "Englishing" as the implicit objective (Hall, 2014) and Englishing should not be equated with the entire, amorphous sociolinguistic system called 'English'.

Furthermore, using language tests as powerful gatekeepers poses several questions as to who has the right to decide on which language test to take and what the cut-score is. Who decides on which abilities to assess and how to do so? Who sets the "correct" answer and against whose standards are these answers evaluated? In response to these questions, Bachman and Purpura (2008) explain that:

> Ultimately, the issue of who decides is, in our view, one that involves societal, cultural, and community values that are beyond the control of the language test developer. Nevertheless, these values need to be carefully considered as we design, develop, and use language assessments. (2008, p. 466)

Language tests have gradually and discursively developed an authority for assessment and started to impose their own standards and ideologies on the societal values that are not to be thought of as static, stable, and never changing. With the rise of globalisation, the fabrics of societies are in continual changes. These changes are not met by changes in language tests. Language tests are still designed according to group A (monolingual speakers) standards even though it has become apparent that learners of English will never belong to this group (Cook, 2009). Societies do not have a pure fabric of either group A, group B (speakers using an L2 within a larger L2 community) or group C (speakers of L2 for international communication) (Cook, 2009) and it seems evident that decisions related to language tests need to change. This change cannot occur

overnight because existing language tests have shaped societal perceptions of what "correct English" is, leading to a chicken-and-egg situation. It is also worth mentioning that maintaining the status quo serves the political, economic and national interests of the dominant group. Commenting on this Heller and Duchêne (2010) maintain that:

> If you have [learned the language of the nation], you still need to constantly prove yourself against the measures developed by the dominant group, who use the agencies of the state (schools, bureaucracies, language academies, the media) to describe what counts as linguistic competence and the means to identify it. (2010, p.5)

This system, they assert, constitutes and perpetuates "mechanisms of social selection" legitimised by dominant hegemonic discourses in language testing.

Nonetheless, the alternative approach, which accepts the ontological existence of multiple Englishes, has been present in the literature of applied linguistics for a decade or so. Still, it has not been granted sufficient legitimacy in language teaching and testing practices despite numerous calls for changing such practices. Some of those came from Pennycook (2007, p. 112) who asserts that language teachers need to reassess how they teach English in light of the plurilithic nature of English. In addition, Jenkins (2006) indicates that testing regimes in the ELT industry need to change to capture the new realities brought by globalisation and phenomena such as English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). In light of this approach, "English resembles a galaxy of millions of discrete objects . . . bound together by the gravitational pull of effective communication" (Hall, 2014, p. 379). Despite the beauty of this metaphor, it is necessary to be reminded that the "gravitational pull of effective communication" is usually defined according to predefined norms, centres, and expectations. In other words, the boundaries between what is effective communication and what is not are blurred, amorphous, relational, and will always depend on a set of contextual factors.

3. Calls for a more pedagogically honest way of crossing boundaries

In the previous section I argued that the way English is introduced to language learners through ELT textbooks and language tests places language learners in a bubble of a shiny, desired, and homogenous imagined community. Once the bubble goes out of the classroom, it explodes as it touches the harsh realities of life outside the classroom. Addressing this concern, some researchers introduced different paradigms for teaching foreign languages. These include focusing on the ability to "operate between languages" (MLA report 2007, p. 35), learning a variety of linguistic repertoires (Cenoz & Gorter, 2011), or developing "disposable linguistic

resources" activated according to momentary needs (Kramsch, 2015, p. 408). Since this repertoire-focused pedagogy might involve the risk of producing 'truncated repertoires' (Blommaert, 2010, p.23), Canagarajah renounces this agenda by asking:

> How many varieties of English should one master in order to deal with the diverse people one meets in one's interactions, not to mention the genres of texts, video, or music in diverse Englishes? Beyond English, one has to also know the diverse languages that could be mixed in all these interactions. Such an agenda for learning and knowing languages is unsustainable. (2014, p. 771)

Canagarajah's (2014) alternative approach, or what he calls a "new paradigm for teaching English as an international language," encompasses three components: language awareness (how grammars work in languages), rhetorical sensitivity (awareness of communication genres), and negotiation strategies (practices for intelligibility). I will revisit this approach in the discussion presented in the last section of this article.

Another attempt comes from Santipolo (2015) who introduces the notion of Bespoke Language Teaching (BLT) which is based on two principles borrowed from computer science: utility and usability. BLT is based on identifying learners' needs and meeting them i.e. sociolinguistic usability. It aims at teaching what is useful before what is not useful; teaching what is more widespread e.g., "gonna" instead of "going to"; and attending to learners motivation, by reminding them that English varieties exist for certain purposes, for instance.

In a similar quest, Holmes and Riddiford (2011) propose "conscious learning" as a way of developing sociopragmatic skills in the context of negotiating workplace requests. They define sociopragmatic competence as the "ability to accurately interpret and appropriately express social meaning in interaction" (p. 377). They investigate negotiating requests because refusals can be unexpected and because there is a mismatch between how native speakers and non-native speakers perceive refusals. The conscious learning approach is based on the premise that instead of teaching a range of appropriate utterances to be used in different social contexts, teaching should "empower the students to undertake the analysis of relevant social dimensions for themselves" (Baynham, Cooke, & Simpson, 2011, p. 382). However, their approach was restricted to analysing speech acts related to requests in the workplace context in New Zealand.

Thus far, it has become evident that despite numerous attempts at bridging the gap between learning and using the language, this problem continues to exist. Evidently, individuals who move across time and space are more vulnerable to the consequences of shifting between being learners of English in their countries and users of English in another country, as will be demonstrated in the subsequent sections.

4. Methodology: Design and participants

The data presented in this article comes from an empirical investigation of the sociolinguistic trajectories of Study Abroad students in the UK (Badwan, 2015). The participant featured here, Mohamoud from UAE, is one of eight participants who were all recruited during the Welcome Week at a university in northern UK. Mahmoud is 18 years old and was admitted to a Foundation Year leading to a Bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering. I met Mahmoud and the rest of the participants, aged 18-28 years, on campus and explained the purpose of the study and what being a participant entails. The participants came from 5 different countries in the Middle East and they are all Arabic speakers who learned English as a foreign language. All participants were repeatedly interviewed over a period of eight months (from October 2013 to June 2014). The participants were first interviewed in pairs within one month of their arrival in the UK. After that, they were individually interviewed in four rounds, with each round lasting for an average of half an hour, making a total of 44 interviews and around 27 hours of recorded data. The reason for conducting the study longitudinally was to trace the participants' sociolinguistic trajectories in the UK and how their views of their English, previous education and themselves changed, if at all, during this time. The study sprang from a willingness to attend to language learners' voice to conceptually, theoretically and methodologically investigate the impact of mobility on how foreign language learners conceptualise language and the implications of this on their views of themselves and of their previous investment in learning a foreign language, English.

4.1. "I got IELTS 5.5 and reached my goal": Mahmoud's language learning history

Before coming to study in the UK, Mahmoud lived in United Arab Emirates and learned English from grade 1 at a State model school for UAE citizens only. However, he complained that his primary school education did not help him learn English and therefore he moved to a private high school:

> M: From grade one to grade nine, I did not speak any English except for yes and no. Then I joined a private High school. They have intensive courses (15 hours/w). I started learning grammar and spelling to prepare for IELTS exams.
> K: Um . . . What happened in your early years of schooling? Why didn't you learn any English from grade one to nine?
> M: I attended a model school which is only for UAE citizens. I am from a city which has a high Emirati population unlike Dubai or Abu Dhabi. We don't use English at all and all what I learned from Grade one to nine was in Arabic even English was taught in Arabic.

The decision to attend a private high school reflects Mahmoud's and his family's desire to access better English language education since private education is usually associated with better English education (Ramanathan, 2005). However, there was another reason for this decision:

> *In my family I am the only speaker of English. Some family members did not complete their university degrees because of English and IELTS. My concern was to get 5.5 in IELTS. I got IELTS 5.5, and reached my goal. I studied hard in high school and my family wanted us to learn English because it is required for careers in the future.*

Mahmoud was under familial pressure to learn English in order to be admitted to university. The education he received in his private high school was tailored to enable students to pass IELTS with a minimum of 5.5. He explained that the intensive English classes were to teach him grammar and IELTS skills and because of the powerful gate-keeping role of IELTS Mahmoud associated having an IELTS 5.5 with success. That score allowed him to be admitted to a Foundation Year course leading to a Bachelor's degree in engineering in a UK Higher Education institution.

It is worth noting that in his high school Mahmoud was taught by a British native speaker. Still, the focus of instruction was not on communication but on passing exams:

> *My grade 12 teacher was British. He did not speak British English. He spoke normal English. He was used to teaching foreign students. He used to write synonyms for us and trained us to get IELTS 5.5.*

Mahmoud's conceptualisation of "normal" English goes in line with the understanding of English as a language with one Standard, normal variety. Yet, Mahmoud drew a distinction between British English and normal English which could suggest that he perceived local varieties of English as British English, whereas the Standard variety he was taught was regarded as the normal accent he expected people to use. Mahmoud's emphasis on the fact that he was taught by a British teacher who also did not introduce other varieties of English to him suggests that focusing on Standard English is a crucial ideological underpinning of language education in his country and this can be extended to many different parts of the world as well.

At the same time, Mahmoud' notion of "normal" English reflected his frustration and confusion:

> *I have a problem: here my tutors always ask us to speak in academic words so what I was learning in my school? Is that normal English or what? I have a question: did we learn English or not? Here they say, no, English must be used with different words unlike the normal words. This frustrates me.*

Mahmoud continues to use 'normal English', 'normal words' to refer to the Standard English he was taught before arriving in the UK. This suggests that when Mahmoud was taught English he was not made aware of the different repertoires and accents of English. His words underlie an assumption that he used to believe that English is one monolithic variety that would enable him to function in all contexts. Consequently, he was frustrated when he was told that the English he wrote was not academic. Academic English for him is a new repertoire to which he was not exposed before. He expressed his frustration by using many rhetorical questions and at the end he admitted that he was indeed frustrated. Gradually, his IELTS 5.5 was no longer a big achievement to accomplish.

4.2. "I still have a very long way to go": Mahmoud's confrontations with English in out-of-class communication

Mahmoud expected that coming to the UK was an opportunity to learn English "from scratch." Later, he realised that the English input he received in the UK was rather limited and that he needed to make use of that limited input to improve his English and to get his degree. He referred to his English as a "building" whose bases were established in UAE and whose decorations are added in the UK:

> I expected that when I come to the UK, I will learn English. But this is not true, I am here to complete my university education. This is the first point. Second, I learned that I cannot learn English from scratch here because I already have a building and I need to improve it and decorate it. I have the bases and I need to complete this building. This is what I learned from the UK. When I go back to UAE, I want to go home with a complete building. I imagined that I will learn English from scratch and will speak perfect English. I didn't imagine that I will have problems with the British people. They do not understand me. I thought I would learn everything here.

There are social and psychological reasons behind Mahmoud's exposure to limited input in the UK. While his geographical mobility entails boundary crossing, his struggles with English had meant that he was also carrying boundaries at the same time. Mahmoud explained that speaking English with English native speakers in his country was different from speaking to them in the UK:

> In UAE, I am in my country and when I speak English with them [British people], it shows that I have learned this language to talk to them. They appreciate that. But here they do not appreciate the fact that I spent years trying to learn English. They take this for granted.

Mahmoud's relationship with English changed in the UK. Whereas it was a source of pride for him in UAE, allowing him to talk to interlocutors who appreciated his

efforts to speak English, his English in the UK was a cause of concern. He noticed that he had to deal with higher expectations and different demands and thus he complained that his interlocutors were not always willing to accommodate their language. He further asserted that linguistic awareness makes people communicate more effectively and he explained how this awareness enabled him to interact with other non-Arabic speaking interlocutors in his country:

> *You see when someone comes to our country and he speaks little Arabic, I try to speak in broken Arabic so they can understand me. They should consider us as guests in the UK and speak with an easier accent. If they speak with a strong accent no one will benefit from that because there will be no mutual understanding.*

Mahmoud's word shed light on how language learners can become more sensitive to language-related issues and more aware of what affects interaction and intercultural communication. This awareness, however, did not help them communicate these concerns to his interlocutors:

> *Look, when I see that I have to speak to a British speaker I know beforehand that the communication will not be easy and I am now convinced that they have to pay some effort in order to understand me.*

Later, he realised that he could not stay silent, waiting for the other party to understand his linguistic struggles. He decided to use a new technique at the beginning of every interaction. He reported saying the following sentence all the time 'I don't speak English very well but I'll do my best. Please do your best'. When asked about how effective this technique was, he mentioned that even though it made many people use simpler and slower English, he was not happy to say that his English was 'bad'. Mahmoud felt ashamed that he had to foreground his linguistic disadvantage to make others understand his struggles.

In his last interview, I asked Mahmoud to comment on his expectations of his language ability and whether he was prepared for life in the UK. To this, he replied saying:

> *I have to say that I did not expect this and it made me feel that the English I learned in UAE is the English taught in kindergarten here. I feel deceived. I thought the English I was taught is the English that I can use everywhere but it turned out to be nothing and that I still have a very long way to go.*

Mahmoud's study abroad experience opened his eyes to new conceptualisations and ontologies of language. His previous education which focused on passing language proficiency tests made him conceptualise English in a monolithic and simplistic way. Being a language user in the UK, however, helped him

realise that the linguistic system called "English" cannot be pinned down to one variety, what he used to call "normal English." Such a discovery made him feel that his previous language education *deceived* him and did not prepare him for using language beyond classrooms and examination halls.

5. Pedagogical implications for language educators

The process of engaging study abroad students with reflecting on their previous English language education in light of their new sociolinguistic demands in the UK has put forward various implications for language educators and has also raised more challenging tasks facing English language education, especially in EFL contexts. The following points summarise some of the key issues that have emerged from the current discussion:

- Participants' monolithic conceptualisations of English were challenged by encountering different varieties and repertoires of English in the UK context.
- Participants' familiarity with formal spoken registers and oral performance meant that they were uncomfortable dealing with other informal or written registers.
- In an increasingly unpredictable world, the gap between learning English inside classrooms and using English outside classrooms is getting bigger. Therefore, more is required to prepare language learners/users for the "messy" life beyond classroom-space and cyberspace.
- The understandably exaggerated role that the IELTS has as a powerful gatekeeping tool has proven to be troublesome, especially for study abroad students who assumed that English education is all about IELTS.
- Language learners have the right to be "sensitised" to variation in speech and contextually realistic practice materials. They also have the right to be exposed to different dialects (Gomes de Matos, 2002, p.314).

5.1. English language education as preparation for the unpredictable

Mahmoud's previous conceptualisations of English sprung from the perception that English is one coherent system, a view reinforced in the ELT provision and testing practices in many parts of the world. Besides these problematic views, the changes brought by globalisation add to the complexity of foreign language teaching. In an increasingly globalised world, language educators are faced with increasingly diversified needs. Added to that, Kramsch (2015) posits that communication in a global age is not restricted to transmitting facts as it also entails developing a voice, and making oneself heard (Harvey, 2014; Ushioda, 2011). How-

ever, it seems apparent that the focus of Mahmoud's previous language education was on transmitting facts (through learning formal registers and IELTS skills), or what Byram (2008b) calls "propositional knowledge," rather than nurturing participation through cultivating the "procedural knowledge" of the "how" (Byram, 2008b) and developing "socio-pragmatic competence" (Brown, Benson, Barkhuizen, & Bodycott, 2013; Holmes & Riddiford, 2011). Mahmoud's trajectory featured moments of losing one's voice (Pellegrino Aveni, 2005) because of unfamiliarity with other English repertoires which rendered him unable to communicate in less comfortable situations (e.g., informal chats, small talks, social events). Subsequently, it can be argued that Mahmoud's previous language education did not help him develop his own voice when speaking English as a second language.

Foreign language classrooms, through scripted conversations and roleplays, depict a rather simplistic representation of human social interaction. That is to say, learners are taught that when interlocutor (A) asks a question (X), interlocutor (B) will respond by saying (X) or (Y). Interlocutor (B), who is usually part of learners' 'imagined communities' (following Kanno and Norton, 2003), is almost always introduced as a participant who is willing to respond and interact. Therefore, language learners are not prepared to deal with the other multiple possibilities of interlocutor (B): someone who is not willing to respond, someone who may discriminate against the language learner, or someone who may give a negative response, etc. In social spaces beyond classrooms and test rooms, interlocutor (B) can be anyone and therefore predicting his/her responses is an unattainable task. As a result, instead of foregrounding a "tourism discourse" (Kramsch, 2015), language learners need to be socio-culturally and socio-linguistically aware to realise that what goes inside the language classroom is usually a simplistic archetype of the speech acts which might occur outside the classroom. We have seen how Mahmoud eventually had to foreground his poor English skills to make his interlocutors use slower and simpler English. The dialogues that Mahmoud role played with his fellow classmates inside the language classroom were far from the reality of using English in the UK.

Section 3 above presented some attempts to bridge the gap between what is taught inside the foreign language classroom and what is used or encountered in the outside world. With reference to Canagarajah's (2014) 'new paradigm for teaching English as an international language', it can be argued that his proposal for nurturing procedural knowledge sounds too ambitious as it requires intensive teacher training practices and might make teachers feel that focusing on how different grammars work distracts them from focusing on their primary task. Therefore, instead of focusing on how grammars in different languages work, the focus needs to be directed towards two main issues:

1. Cultivating "conscious learning" (Holmes & Riddiford, 2011) through raising ideological, sociolinguistic, and socio-pragmatic awareness and,
2. Embracing plurilithic conceptualisations of English in order to offer flexibility in the outcomes of language teaching (Hall, 2013), as well as a more realistic representation of the dynamic linguistic scenes beyond classroom spaces and English proficiency examination halls.

Promoting conscious learning and more realistic representations of how language works in discursive practices is a way of producing a more pedagogically honest way of preparing language learners instead of "leaving them with the false hope that they will succeed in the communicative challenges out there if they master the forms and texts we drill into them" (Canagarajah, 2014, p. 784).

Mahmoud's more mature reflections made him realise that the English he was taught is a kind of "Englishing" (following Pennycook, 2007). Therefore, he was able to name different kinds of English repertoires and registers such as: IELTS English, general English, academic English, and normal English, etc. and his experience of moving across time and space was a major factor that opened his eyes to see beyond the Standard English repertoire he was taught before. Although it can be argued that this awareness is beneficial, it left him bewildered and voice-deprived. A detailed account of the implications of his devalued language ability on his identity and self-perception falls outside the scope of this article.

What is required in an age of increasing globalisation, uncertainty, and unpredictability, is empowering language learners through undertaking rigorous conscious learning that trains them how to be conscious of and sensitive to the socio-pragmatic conditions of their interactions, and how different occasions call for different English repertoires. This knowledge should not only be preserved in scholarly publications because language learners have the right to understand how the language they have learnt interacts with the situations, interlocutors, and discourses they will encounter in order to give them the opportunity to decide on what sociolinguistic support they need, depending on where they want to go next. By doing this, English language education can go beyond the current reductionist approaches to social interactions (which prevail in ELT textbooks), and achieve its moral responsibility of preparing language learners to be active, conscious agents amid the unpredictable encounters in the hybrid, heteroglossic reality of life outside the classroom. Only when learners are aware of the sociolinguistic realities outside the classroom can they develop a voice of their own that enables them to negotiate meaning and positioning in discursive practices.

Although Kramsch (2015) indicates that the task of language education becomes complicated when different conceptualisations of English are embraced, she insists that language educators are responsible for making their

classrooms representative of real life and this denotes resisting powerful ideologies of monolithic English and the machineries that (re)produce them. In a similar vein, Canagarajah (2014, p. 768) maintains that "changes in pedagogy don't always mean that teaching practice is made difficult. Teaching can actually become more creative, interesting, and fulfilling, if we only had the patience and tolerance for change." This article is a call for a change towards conscious learning that embraces the complexity and emergence of language in social interactions, allowing learners to develop their own voice inside and outside the classroom.

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