



## Resisting the Coloniality of English: A Research Review of Strategies

The colonial legacy of English instruction has become especially relevant within the field of TESOL. While it is promising that increasing attention is being paid to the issue of colonialism and its historical and contemporary impact on the teaching of English, educators might be left without a clear sense of how to traverse the precarious path of English teaching given the realities of the colonial context. The purpose of this article is to present a brief overview of the different proposed strategies for addressing the enduring influence of colonialism in English language teaching. Specifically, it provides a research review of the various methods and pedagogical applications for addressing colonialism in English instruction. This article is intended as a resource to aid practitioners in working reflectively with the continuing effects of colonial English while moving toward decolonial options for English language teaching.

*The theme of my set tonight will be colonialism—which is why I will be speaking only in English.* (Hari Kondabolu)

### Introduction

In 1888, Commissioner of Indian Affairs J. D. C. Atkins declared that English instruction would provide a method to educate Indians out of their barbarous ways. “The first step to be taken toward civilization,” Atkins exclaimed, “toward teaching the Indians the mischief and folly of continuing in their barbarous practices, is to teach them the English language” (p. 679). His sentiment captures the complex, intertwined relationship between colonialism, English language teaching,<sup>1</sup> and what Omi and Winant (1994) term *the process of racialization*. It also hints at the prevalence of colonial English imposition as a historical technique for establishing global conquest (Canagarajah, 1999; Hsu, 2015; Kumaravadivelu, 1999, 2003; Motha,

2006, 2014; Pennycook, 1998; Phillipson, 1992). Indeed, without prior knowledge of Commissioner Atkins, one may be left to guess whether the quote was in reference to South Asian Indians or American Indians in the US (he was making specific reference to the latter), as the context of colonial English applied to the racial and linguistic othering of both groups.

The extensive colonial histories of English instruction have become a critical concern among those involved in various aspects of English language teaching, and they are especially relevant within the field of TESOL (Canagarajah, 1999; Kumaravadivelu, 2016; Lin & Luke, 2006; Motha, 2014; Vamanathan, 2006). As Pennycook (1998) noted, “Some of the central ideologies of current English Language Teaching have their origins in the cultural constructions of colonialism,” pointedly identifying how “[t]he colonial construction of Self and Other, of the ‘TE’ and ‘SOL’ of TESOL remain in many domains of ELT” (p. 22). Thus, the realities of colonial conquest are fundamentally entrenched within the field through persisting structures of colonial othering. While it is promising that increasing attention and literature are addressing the issue of colonialism and its historical and contemporary impact on the teaching of English, educators might be left without a clear sense of how to traverse the precarious path of English teaching given the omnipresent context of colonialism and its many current manifestations. The purpose of this article is to present a brief overview of the different proposed strategies for educators to address the enduring influence of colonialism in English teaching. Specifically, this article provides a research review of the various recommendations for reconciling the complex relationship between colonialism and English instruction. It examines the landscape of options generated in the literature and delineates the different proposed suggestions for attending to the realities of colonialism and for moving toward liberatory English practices. Thus, this article is intended as a resource to aid practitioners in working reflectively with the continuing effects of colonial English while intentionally building openings for decolonial options (Kumaravadivelu, 2016; Mignolo, 2011; Veronelli, 2016).

### **Context**

Contemporary English language teaching stems from long histories of global empire and capitalist conquest. The US colonial occupation of the Philippines, for example, fostered the development in 1905 of the World Book Company, an American publishing house established in Manila to provide English-language colonial texts for the new American schools in the islands. Through various business expansions in the 20th century, World Book Company transformed

into the current-day, “center-based”—or based in the ideologies and epistemologies of the imperial West (Kumaravadivelu, 2012)—powerhouse of Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, a TESOL global partner (Hsu, 2015). Yet this relationship, that is, the intimate ties between English language teaching and colonialism, has only recently received critical attention within the fields of language studies and English teaching.

In observing attitudinal differences between so-called native speakers of English and their perceptions of nonnative speakers of Englishes—particularly those nonnative speakers from postcolonial regions of the world—within TESL literature, Kachru (1976) identified an operational process of “linguistic and cultural colonialism” (p. 228), which delegitimized third-world Englishes. Subalterns and postcolonial subjects such as Kachru had been well aware of the interwoven functions of English language teaching and colonial rule from direct experience and highlighted the ways in which such systems of power were ongoing, even after the end of colonial administration and even with the mastery of English. Indeed, the developing theoretical critiques in the fields of postcolonial studies and subaltern studies—especially Spivak’s (1988) provocative question, “Can the subaltern speak?”—during the 1970s and 1980s served as important contexts for the linguistic examination of the colonial condition of English language teaching.

Following Kachru’s explicit reference to colonial relations of power in English language teaching, researchers in the following decades explored histories of English imposition as elements of colonial and imperial conquest and demonstrated their continued effects. Discourses of colonialism in English language teaching, Pennycook (1998) argued, “are not just to do with Hong Kong, or with other former colonies, but have emanated from these colonial contexts to inhabit large domains of Western thought and culture” (p. 2). In investigating these domains, scholars in language studies and TESOL have detailed the establishment of a global narrative of English language supremacy and hegemony (Edge, 2003, 2006; Flores, 2013a; Macedo, 2000, 2017 [this issue]; Motha, 2014), the intersecting elements of colonialism, English, and race (Curtis & Romney, 2006; Flores & Rosa, 2015; Kubota & Lin, 2009; Lin & Luke, 2006), and the relationship between the colonial histories of English and the current phenomena of globalization and neoliberalism (Flores, 2013b; Hsu, 2015; Kubota, 2011; Phillipson, 2008; Piller & Cho, 2013). Within the realm of English language teaching in the US, scholars and activists have illustrated the colonial connections between colonial English and hegemonic English-only policies that have dominated public discourse and policy making (Bartolomé & Leistyna, 2006; Macedo, 2000, 2017

[this issue]). This article examines the relevant literature to illuminate the implications offered in the research and to explore the strategies for resisting linguistic imperialism (Canagarajah, 1999) and the decolonial alternatives in English language teaching.

### **Methods and Theoretical Framework**

To synthesize the implications offered in the research on colonialism and English language teaching, I engaged in a five-stage review process. The initial stage entailed collecting and analyzing literature relevant to the topic broadly defined. From within this collection, I culled the literature that provided recommendations for liberatory approaches in conceptualizing and teaching English. Next, I conducted an in-depth qualitative analytical review of these materials, focusing on the suggested strategies for moving beyond colonial techniques and structures of English instruction. These strategies were then mapped to identify cohesive categories across the literature. Once key themes emerged, I summarized the findings and employed the critical theoretical lens of coloniality to analyze the trends.

Drawing from the notion that colonial structures persist beyond the period of official colonial rule, I employed the theoretical framework of coloniality (Escobar, 2007; Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Mignolo, 2000; Quijano, 2000) to analyze the recommendations and interpret the significance of the proposed strategies. Maldonado-Torres (2007) defines coloniality as the “long-standing patterns of power that emerged as a result of colonialism, but that define culture, labor, inter-subjective relations, and knowledge production well beyond the strict limits of colonial administration” (p. 243). Coloniality is a product of “the discovery and conquest of the Americas” (p. 243) and comprises two axes of power: a hierarchical concept of race and the capitalist labor economy (Quijano, 2000). This framework is useful in that it demonstrates the close relationship among colonialism, race, and capitalism, thereby illustrating the significance of considering these three elements in regards to English language teaching. As Kachru (1976) observed, colonial dynamics of English existed alongside race both in periphery and center territories, as per the examples of India and “internal colonialism,” “especially with reference to the attitude toward Black English and such other varieties of English” in the US (p. 229). Thus, in addition to using the framework of coloniality as an analytical tool, I also applied it in my methods by expanding the scope of the literature for consideration to include critical scholarship on race, globalization, neoliberalism, and English language teaching rooted in analyses of structural power.

## **Suggested Strategies for Liberatory Practices in English Language Teaching**

In reviewing the research on English language teaching and the enduring forces of global colonialism, I found that the proposed suggestions for reconciling histories of empire with English instruction and building liberatory practices were broad and varied. They spanned multiple levels of change. Recommended approaches varied from the need for philosophical reconsiderations and epistemological challenges to the hegemonic narrative of English superiority at the macro system level to incorporating reflective dialogic activities in the classroom at the micro level. Within these various strategies, three broad, fluid areas of change emerged: philosophical, ideological, and theoretical reconceptualizations; methods and curriculum; and professional development. It is beyond the scope of this article to detail the specific recommendations for educators outlined in each of the reviewed materials. Rather, in this section, I present the trends in each category and highlight specific examples from the research to illustrate their application. The categories discussed below are meant as conceptual frames by which to outline a general sense of the different approaches; they are by no means static nor are they all-encompassing representations of the research. Readers would benefit from keeping the fluidity of the categories and corresponding strategies in mind to better understand the nuanced and interconnected dynamics of power they address and to better envision how they might creatively apply these suggestions to the particular needs of their local communities.

### ***Philosophical, Ideological, and Theoretical Reconceptualizations: Decolonizing Our Minds***

Scholars consistently point to the need for fundamental changes in the global discourse of English, one that denaturalizes the privileged, superior status it has been imbued with (Canagarajah, 1999; Flores & Rosa, 2015; Kumaravadivelu, 2016; Lin & Luke, 2006; Motta, 2006; Pennycook, 1998; Phillipson, 1992). Though much of the research on English language instruction advances a positivist framework and presumes English to be a neutral language (Crystal, 1997), critical researchers argue that English is far from objective. Rather, it is imbued with complex dynamics of power. It is entangled with particular theoretical assumptions that drive our understanding of the nature of the English language and best practices for its instruction. In regards to the specific field of TESOL, at the basis of which it has historically been taught is a default assumption of the relationship of English to the rest of the world (Edge, 2003, 2006).

Thus, to begin imagining more liberatory English language-teaching strategies, critical researchers argue that we must reevaluate the foundational philosophical conditions by which we have come to understand the English language and English language teaching. Such a shift in understanding requires more than a focus on pedagogical technique (Lin & Martin, 2005; Shin, 2006). “Any serious attempt by the TESOL profession to meet the challenges of globalization and empire,” notes Kumaravadivelu (2006), “has to begin with the philosophical underpinnings of its missions and goals” (p. 17). Instead, it entails a reconceptualization of language and power at its very base (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Motha, 2014; Sellami, 2006; Veronelli, 2015). As an example of this fundamental retheorizing, Motha (2014) calls for what she terms a “provincialized English,” one that “recognizes that the effects of empire and racialization are woven throughout the English language, the processes of teaching English, and the project of learning English” (p. 129).

To provincialize English would mean that inherent in the learning of English would be an intense awareness of the effects of English’s colonial and racial history on current-day language, economic, political, and social practices. In recognition that consciousness is only the first step, provincializing English would furthermore examine and critique the mechanisms that sustain the invisibility of race and empire in English language teaching and would explore possibilities for transformation and agency. (Motha, 2014, p. 129)

Motha’s proposal provides a conceptual dynamic that situates at the forefront a direct interrogation of race and the hegemonic capitalist economy of continued imperial conquest. It centers a critical analysis of the two axes of power that sustain coloniality. The deep theoretical consideration of race Motha suggests is aligned with that of other scholars who call for an explicit examination of the racial ideologies and theoretical assumptions embedded in English language teaching (Curtis & Romney, 2006; Flores, 2013ab; Flores & Rosa, 2015; Kubota & Lin, 2009) and institutionalized through various imperial projects and economies. They argue that because race plays a paramount role in constructing the logics of language meaning and use, it should serve as an important focus of theoretical investigation, especially when trying to create more equitable means of English language teaching. “The notion of race and racialization as discourses,” note Kubota and Lin (2009), “would encourage second language professionals to examine in what ways racialization, white norms, racism, and other racial

meanings are reproduced in local and global educational practices or how they are challenged by antiracist pedagogies” (p. 14). When analyzed alongside histories of colonial English imposition and continued forms of hegemonic economies, these reconceptualizations of English and race would help illuminate the very system that concealed their co-constituting function, or as Motha (2014) describes, the “mechanisms that sustain the invisibility of race and empire” and that could aid in exploring “possibilities for transformation and agency” (p. 129).

In fact, many of the theoretical reconceptualizations of English examined in the literature urged for analyses of the mutual formation of race, conquest, language, and identity (Kubota & Lin, 2009). One realm of this research highlights the function of race in constructing linguistic hierarchies and advocates for the deconstruction of the racial supremacy that bolsters English language supremacy. Flores and Rosa (2015), for example, suggest the development of a critical heteroglossic perspective to resist what they identify as raciolinguistic ideologies that maintain white supremacy and privilege the positioning and construction of the white listener, or what they refer to as the “white listening subject.” In retheorizing the dominant position of the white listening subject, new possibilities and subjectivities emerge for how we can conceive of English learners. Raciolinguistics as an emerging field that examines the multidirectional manner in which language becomes racialized and how race is expressed linguistically (Alim, 2016) demonstrates the utility of theory, for some scholars, in reinterpreting the relationship between race and language beyond the default assumptions of neutrality.

Reconceptualizing the relationship of race, colonial conquest, and English language teaching also enables a retheorizing of the manner in which we conceive of identity formation, producing opportunities to think critically about long-held categories of difference. TESOL scholars have called attention to the ways in which linguistic difference has been shaped by colonial legacies of English and related systems of racial hierarchy (Brumfit, 2006; Brutt-Griffler, 2002; Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Canagarajah, 1999; Flores, 2013b; Motha, 2006, 2014). The hierarchical value judgment placed on difference then produced a linguistic colonial construct of the knowing Self and the inferior, ignorant other articulated through restrictive binary labels and subject identities (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999). “These are constructions that can be arguably mapped onto the name TESOL itself,” Shin (2006) explains: “TE (for Self) and SOL (for Other)” (p. 147).

As part of a broad and fundamental reconceptualization of language and power, there is an expressed urgency to call into question the validity of dualistic and deterministic language identities such as

NES/NNES and ESOL/non-ESOL (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Kumaravadivelu, 2016; Lin & Luke, 2006; Motha, 2014; Shin, 2006). Challenging existing ideologies of language learning identities can expose the fictive narrative of these dichotomies. Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999), for example, detail the use of critical pedagogy to construct “a subjectivity that includes both NS [native speaker] and NNSs [nonnative speaker] and that works toward the goal of eliminating the colonial construct of nativeness in ELT” (p. 418). By incorporating critical written dialogic and professional autobiography in their seminar of 19 “nonnative English-speaking teachers,” or NNESTs, students became aware of and interrogated the dichotomous NS/NNS construct. Moreover, these pedagogical interventions provided the students with a “process of constructing an identity for themselves as TESOL professionals” (p. 425) that might transcend the NS/NNS binary. Brutt-Griffler & Samimy noted that through the construction of new language learning and teaching identities, some students felt compelled to ensure that textbooks and methods be situated in local contexts and to “challenge the appropriateness of imported materials according to their settings and their students’ needs” (p. 427). Thus, the retheorization of language identities is more than abstraction. Instead, scholars contend that it is a necessary initial process that allows for the creation of more nuanced, human, and humane understandings of English language learners and English language teachers.

One example of the concrete possibilities that philosophical, ideological, and theoretical reconceptualizations produce is expressed through the concept of the decolonial option. Since the normative, colonial ideologies of English language teaching have othered nonwhite learners as inferior, the knowledge traditions from these communities have also been historically marginalized. Within the theoretical tradition of coloniality, Mignolo (2007) calls for a grammar of decoloniality that emphasizes thinking from the positions of marginality and privileging this intellectual space as not merely valid and coherent, but liberatory. This epistemic turn is understood as the decolonial option.

As Kumaravadivelu (2016) asserts, “Merely tinkering with the existing hegemonic system will not work; only a fundamental epistemological rupture will” (p. 80). “In order to begin to effect this rupture,” he further explains, “the subaltern community has to unfreeze and activate its latent agentive capacity, and strive to derive a set of concerted, coordinated, and collective actions based not on the logic of coloniality but on a grammar of decoloniality” (pp. 80-81). The philosophical reconceptualizations achieved through the grammar of decoloniality, then, produces actionable techniques specific to the context of the margins or what is known in Nahuatl as *nepantla*, the



“in-between” spaces (Anzaldúa, 1987). An example of such a combined space of ideological and pedagogical liberation is demonstrated through what Puerto Rican scholar educator Fiol-Matta (1996) describes as “Rican-figuring,” a play on the English word *reconfigure* that centers the knowledge space of Puerto Rican existence (p. 71). “As a Latina,” Fiol-Matta explains, “I am conscious of my location in an ‘in-between space’ created by colonialism: in-between languages, in-between topographies, in-between racial discourses” (p. 71). Thus, for Fiol-Matta, Rican-figuring includes creating new linguistic and geographic connections and racial understandings from within the valid knowledge space of the in-between.

What I call Rican-figuring the classroom includes reconfiguring the intellectual and emotional spaces that surround the student, placing the “formal” education in a context that does not deny the reality of the “outside” world. ... Rican-figuring the classroom includes leaving the “island,” constructing the geography of the “classroom” differently, making a classroom of the world and the body. This is why I devise projects that include moving out of the classroom space. One such project is the trip to nowhere. We get on the subway and ride for 45 minutes, during which we observe and think and write and connect and try out figurative language and juxtapositions.” (pp. 71-72)

Thus, through such Rican-figuring, a liberatory space of decolonial English possibilities emerges in the everyday world. Though it is situated in the local context, and therefore, meaningful to the life experiences of students and teachers alike, it is a broad liberatory space that transcends the confines of colonial geographies and English constructs. “Rican-figuring means knowing that the borderlands are places that are inhabited and full of knowledge and meaning,” Fiol-Matta explains, “places where one can work and learn, the space in-between that defies easy definitions of territoriality” (p. 72).

Following the need for epistemic recovery as theorized through the grammar of decoloniality, scholars have advised an ideological recuperation of indigenous, alternative, and local knowledges to produce more empowering English learning conditions (Fiol-Matta, 1996; Kumaravadivelu, 2016; Shin, 2006; Veronelli, 2015, 2016). Referencing Pennycook, Shin (2006) notes:

By legitimating indigenous knowledges and ELT practices of SOL teachers, we may reconstruct them as legitimate knowledge producers in TESOL so that we can interrupt a “one-way flow of pre-

scriptive knowledge” from the Western academic institutions to English classrooms in less developed countries. (p. 162)

Decolonizing English language teaching, therefore, necessitates a foundational strategy of transformational theorizing to shift our ideological paradigms and the positions from which we imagine solutions. In the words of Phillipson (2008), it requires us to “decolonize our minds” (p. 39) in order to collectively identify hegemonic impositions of English (Macedo, 2000, 2017 [this issue]) and to respond justly. Such foundational reconceptualizations are central to designing pedagogies that present decolonial options, of which the prioritizing of “critical intercultural dialogues and local-to-local connections” is “imperative” (Veronelli, 2016, p. 406).

### ***Methods and Curriculum***

Other strategies discussed with frequency in the literature pertained to critical interventions in the realm of English language-teaching methods, curriculum, and professional development. These proposals were often deeply engaged in philosophical and theoretical reconsiderations of English and global conquest, such as examined in the previous section, and demonstrated a reflective consciousness of the purposes and consequences of English language instruction. For instance, in contemplating the effects of US military interventions in Iraq on the field of TESOL, Edge (2006) comments:

It is impossible to be engaged in the teaching of English to speakers of other languages at the beginning of the 21st century without at one and the same time being engaged in helping one’s students achieve their aspirations *and* in supporting the linguistic, cultural, commercial and increasingly military dominance of the USA and its allies. (p. xiii)

Edge’s observation reveals the complexity of the power dynamics within English language teaching: Just as it can be a mechanism of empowerment, so can it be the instruction of oppressive relations of power.

The act of teaching English exists within an educational domain that serves the real, and varied, needs of students while also reproducing ideologies that have marginalized many of the very students it caters to. This may seem to suggest that English language teaching is a futile act, and yet the agency English can yield in our neoliberal global economy (Sonntag, 2003) can prove vital for many learners. Fiol-Matta (1996) further illuminates the nuanced possibilities of English

as she reflects on her students' increasing acceptance of the validity of her English knowledge as a Puerto Rican educator. "Do they know that for me English is a tool, not a trade-off, and that I will not ask them to barter their selves in order to gain proficiency in a language?" she wonders (p. 72). Fiol-Matta demonstrates that scholars critical of the hegemonic forces of English can seek to find better strategies to tip the scales, so to speak, and achieve a more just method of teaching English to enhance its agentive, if not decolonial, possibilities.

Beginning with reenvisioning the concept of method, scholars have proposed alternatives to the normative approaches (such as audiolingual and communicative language teaching) to pedagogy that have become standard in English language-teaching practice. They have noted, and taken issue with, the colonial lineage of modern education in general (Canagarajah, 1999) and of English language-teaching methods—with their development from colonial territories as learning labs (Pennycook, 1998)—in particular. Kumaravadivelu (2003) observes, "In the neocolonial present, as in the colonial past, methods are used to establish the native Self as superior and the non-native Other as inferior" (p. 541). Reconstructing method, therefore, can serve as a crucial strategy of subversive contestation. As a decolonial option, Kumaravadivelu (1994) suggests a "postmethod," which seeks to present an alternative to the dominant model of West-based methods.

"Postmethod pedagogy," Kumaravadivelu (2003) explains, "consists of the parameters of particularity, practicality and possibility" (p. 544). This combination emphasizes the local context of instruction, the integration of theory and practice, and the objective of empowering learners to "critically reflect on the social and historical conditions contributing to create the cultural forms and interested knowledge they encounter in their lives" (p. 544). Flores and Rosa (2015) provide an example of a postmethod that takes as its objective a direct intervention in the racial hierarchy enforced by "appropriate-based" language models, and, therefore, a regard for the contributions of local or othered knowledges and languages. Their critical heteroglossic perspective calls for a reconsideration of the model of "language appropriateness" so that English-learning students are not presumed to be suspects of language misconstruction.

Rather, they argue for shifting attention from the English learner to what they identify as the white listening subject. "We suggest shifting the focus to scrutiny of the white listening subject may open up possibilities for reconceptualizing language education in ways that move beyond appropriateness-based approaches" (p. 167). Elsewhere, Flores (2013a) references Garcia's (2009) work on translanguaging to

highlight a specific instance in which a student draws from her local and lived experience and combines Spanish and English to form the word *grander* instead of *bigger* (p. 282). This scenario serves as a possible example for what a postmethod employment of the critical heteroglossic approach might look like in the classroom. Instead of dismissing students' use of language (such as the term *grander*) as an inappropriate expression of English (in this case, the use of *grander* for the concept *bigger*), Flores and Rosa's perspective might encourage educators to consider the historical and local context that produced students' translanguaging expressions of English as appropriate words for the students' context. This approach might foster a new way of listening in the classroom that seeks to make sense of dynamic language processes instead of producing punitive linguistic and racial constructs. The recentering of the local, and therefore, of the students and local teachers, as legitimate spaces of knowledge challenges the hegemonic positioning of the West as the focal point of instructional power. Moreover, in this way, the local can become a space of language production and instruction for its own purpose, as articulated by the needs of the community, and not merely in service of the West. Producing alternative methods from the local context is a pedagogical strategy that has been reiterated by other scholars (Canagarajah, 2005; Flores & Rosa, 2015; Motha, 2014; Pennycook, 2010; Shin, 2006; Veronelli, 2015), highlighting the related significance of the particular context to pedagogical design and assessment (Matsuda, 2006).

In addition to localized methods, other critical pedagogical strategies that emerged in the literature included the use of intentional classroom dialogues, or dialogics, for the purposes of reconstructing identities and challenging language-learner and teacher labels such as NNS (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999). These dialogues might also be performed through a direct agentive practice of using English to "write back" and interrogate the conditions that shape the learners' English instruction and learning experience (Edge, 2003; Pennycook 2001; Wallace, 2002). Reagan (2004) argues for explicit conversations in which teachers present critical understandings of the multiple forms of English to promote a critical language awareness "as a powerful way to promote social justice and the formation of a just, humane society" (p. 55). "English doesn't exist but *Englishes* do," Reagan remarks, "and understanding this distinction is the key to developing a more critical, and cogent view of 'language'" (p. 56). Dialogical strategies also included purposeful uses of silence, such as through deep and decentered listening pedagogies (Flores, 2013a; Shin, 2006; Tolman, 2006) to exercise instructional positionalities from different

epistemological standpoints and integrate philosophical reconsiderations into classroom practice.

Many of the proposed methods strategies were complemented by curriculum suggestions that extended the pedagogies as textual lessons. Several scholars discussed recommendations for establishing curricular texts that reflected the diverse array of Englishes and the contexts in which they were spoken (Brumfit, 2006; Matsuda, 2006; Sellami, 2006). This would foster an awareness of World Englishes and enable a move away from a textbook industry that has been structured to privilege the centers of global power. “Just as the technologically and economically developed nations of the West (or center) hold an unfair monopoly over less developed (or periphery) communities in industrial products,” Canagarajah (2002) explains, “similar relations characterize the marketing of language teaching methods” (p. 135). Kumaravadivelu (2006) argues for reconfiguring the center-periphery model of instructional material production and consumption so that textbooks reflect localized contexts and learning needs. The textbook industry should be decentered “so that the periphery ELT community which is knowledgeable about local needs, wants and situations can legitimately enjoy a meaningful sense of authorial ownership and professional contribution” (p. 20).

Curriculum could also directly address the complex colonial history and relations of hegemonic power that are intertwined with English language teaching and learning (Brumfit, 2006). “Including an awareness of the contested role of English (within the teaching of general knowledge about language),” Brumfit urges, “is less well-served by current trends, but it is an essential part of using the language to make sense of our role in a changing world” (p. 42). Instead of attempting to assume a position of benign neutrality, some scholars argue that a responsive curriculum should state clearly its sociopolitical stance (Fabricio & Santos, 2006) and explicitly engage in conversations around power and identity. Pennycook (1999) proposes a curriculum and “pedagogy of engagement” (p. 340), “an approach to TESOL that sees such issues as gender, race, class, sexuality, and postcolonialism as so fundamental to identity and language that they need to form the basis of curricular organization and pedagogy” (p. 340).

A pedagogy of engagement may also integrate the context and the specific knowledges of local sites by incorporating the lived experiences of the students and the immediate family into the curriculum and classroom space. Shin (2006) provides such an example. To “challenge the colonial construction of the Other’s history as a void to be filled by the Self,” which dominates the framework of TESOL, Shin

incorporated critical pedagogical practices to integrate the historical context of educational activism in Korea into a Korean EFL class. This local experience and history, then, proved meaningful to the context of English learning and identity building beyond the colonial constructs of TESOL.

Making classroom space for students' home and/or primary languages has also been reported as a critical means of adapting the curriculum to challenge the hegemonic narrative (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Motha, 2014; Shannon, 1995; Valdés, 1996; Wong & Motha, 2007) and of integrating local knowledges as valid sources of learning. In the post 9/11 American context, Wong and Motha (2007) argue that the promotion of multilingualism across school sites, not just in English language-learning classrooms, is a crucial strategy in contesting the hegemonic linguistic dictates of US empire.

We in schools need to encourage immigrant parents to speak their home languages, and most importantly we need to educate our monolingual English-speaking colleagues about the importance of supporting home languages and cultures and ways to promote multilingualism. As educators it is of utmost importance that we work to address the savage inequalities in public schools, particularly promoting two-way bilingual programs and providing all students with the opportunity to engage in international exchange programs and interracial interreligious camps, conferences, and cross-cultural experiences. (p. 74)

Multilingualism, then, moves beyond simply a means of linguistic communication. It becomes a method and broad curriculum for taking seriously the local context and the many languages and knowledge systems exchanged in a community. Strategies around curricular restructuring, then, can entail a strong element of recovery. They might also incorporate the sensibilities and possibilities of hybridity as interventions to the dominant curricular discourses (Luke, 2005; Lin & Martin, 2005).

### ***Professional Development***

The arena of teacher training and professional development possesses a special potential for transforming English language teaching and for creating spaces of decolonial possibilities in the classroom. When informed by the deep philosophical and theoretical reconsiderations explored earlier, teacher training can be a powerfully generative and fertile ground for producing new forms of English language teaching and relations. Crucial to this endeavor, however, is that edu-

cators must develop an awareness of the historical realities of English as tied to colonial conquest, and their related positionality within this construct. “Whether they know it or not and whether they like it or not,” Kumaravadivelu (2006) points out, “most TESOL professionals end up serving the profit motives of global corporations and the political motives of imperial powers” (p. 23).

Researchers have commonly and consistently argued for the urgency of educators and administrators alike to develop a rigorous understanding of power and privilege as practiced through English language instruction, especially in regards to race and empire. Motha (2006) notes,

All too often, the shaping of ESOL is taught and considered quite apart from its historical context of colonialism and its contemporary context of globalization as these relate to white supremacy, English domination, and the valorization of Western culture and forms of knowledge. (pp. 94-95)

Purposeful and skillful examinations of the ideological assumptions embedded in English language teaching, therefore, should be a central part of a transformative teacher-training and professional-development curriculum. Motha (2014) argues,

In recognition of the fact that identities shaped within the construct of ESOL are inherently racialized, the preparatory and in-service experience of all school administrators and teachers of all disciplines should be grounded in an explicit consciousness of the implications of their practice within a broader colonial and racialized enterprise in order that they be equipped to make choices accordingly. (p. 141)

If educators are to take the recommendations for the localization of methods and curriculum seriously, then they will need to acknowledge their role in decision making for such curriculum and pedagogical matters. To best prepare them for this responsibility, teacher-preparation and professional-development programs must include rigorous examinations of the ideological foundations of TESOL and alternative perspectives. As Kumaravadivelu (2006) asserts, “Only fundamental restructuring, not superficial appropriation, can help us begin to combat the consequences of the liaison” (p. 23). Teacher training that seeks merely to adjust or reform the dominant ideology and structures of English teaching cannot transform the practice.

With a nuanced theoretical consideration of the colonial legacy

and continued hegemonic power of English instruction, educators can then be better prepared to imagine and implement techniques in the classroom that can foster ruptures to the dominant structure. Proposed integrations in teacher training include a strong focus on issues of language and cultural diversity, World Englishes, and language identities (Matsuda, 2006; Motha, 2006, Shannon, 1995). Ramanathan (2006) discusses specific examples from her own teacher-training courses that highlight the importance of theoretical reconsiderations around conceptualizing languages as part of teacher development.

Students in Ramanathan's courses are encouraged to consider the "discursive images around 'other languages': how pedagogic practices associated with them have been historically devalued" and to understand "how 'ethical' choices/decisions teachers make in the classroom vis-à-vis their students and with their curricular materials need to emerge from a historicized awareness [of] their present positioning" (p. 144). Such shifting of perspectives on other languages can enable teachers to develop a deeper understanding of their students and their dynamic lived-language experiences. It can be crucial in challenging the idea of English language learners as linguistically deficient (Flores & Rosa, 2015).

A call has also been growing for teachers to develop reflective teaching practices (Edge, 2006) that make room for educators as both engaged language instructors and language listeners (Flores & Rosa, 2015; Shin, 2006). Such reflective teacher competencies can productively go against the grain of the normative epistemology that constructs English language teaching as only a practice of language (Tolman, 2006). Reflective practices can make room for teachers to contemplate and incorporate alternative and indigenous approaches to communication, such as Buddhist traditions that hold important the act of listening (Shin, 2006), which can serve as pathways for the mutual liberation of students and educators. "De-centered listening is also a moral act that aspires us to liberate the other as it is liberating the self," Tolman (2006) explains. "It opens a domain of new experience, enabling reciprocity and recognition. It is actualized locally within the teaching and the practice of English language literacy" (pp. 190-191). Teacher training and professional development, therefore, can make space for alternative understandings of language that include expansive linguistic practices, such as reflection and listening.

### **Conclusion**

The literature presents a wide and diverse array of strategies for educators to develop informed and just approaches to English language teaching in the context of coloniality and the contemporary



structures of globalization and neoliberalism. Though the techniques explored in the research may present disparate methods, they often coalesced on one important point: the idea that there is no one right approach. In the conclusion of her study on indigenous epistemology and the decolonization of TESOL, Shin (2006) reflects:

Classroom practitioners seeking a “cook book” of post-colonial pedagogy will no doubt be dissatisfied with this paper, but that is, actually, how it should be. For a post-colonial pedagogy is not about following recipes or teaching by numbers: it is about questioning commonsense assumptions, privileging the situatedness of the local knowledge (and pedagogy), and understanding that one size does not fit all. (p. 162)

If we are to consider the idea of a grammar of decoloniality, then we can understand that there are many sentences, or methods, that can be constructed with this grammar. Therefore, there are many possible articulations of the decolonial option. Decoloniality, as Veronelli (2016) explains, “involves a horizontal global projection of decolonial options in and toward which critical intercultural dialogues and local-to-local connections are imperative” (pp. 405-406). It is this idea of decolonial options, in the plural, that is consistently echoed in the literature (Brumfit, 2006; Edge, 2006; Kumaravadivelu, 2006; Lin & Martin, 2005; Luke, 2005; Motha, 2014; Pennycook, 1999; Shin, 2006). Relatedly, Veronelli’s reference to “local-to-local connections” captures the importance of a second consistent theme in the research, the emphasis of localization, which also necessitates diverse methods and curricular designs to meet the needs of particular community contexts. The importance of thinking from these different local communities at once, instead of from the privileged, unquestioned locale of the West as “center,” emerges as an important theoretical and spatial site to begin conceptualizing new creative possibilities.

To conclude, I would like to call attention to the epigraph that opens this article. The “set” that Kondabolu refers to in the quote is a comedy set. Hari Kondabolu is an American comedian of South Asian heritage who frequently explores issues of power and politics in his work. He often incorporates an analysis of colonialism, and the place of English in enacting colonial dynamics of power, into his shows. That he points out that colonialism is the reason he is speaking only in English highlights both a historical reality and a subversive utility, what Pennycook (2000) identifies as postcolonial performativity, in his use of the language to express his critique. Moreover, that he uses this fact—his speaking only in English—as the punch line to his

joke provides a creative and humane example of how educators can proceed with the work of decolonizing English language teaching. He reminds us that decolonial options also include spaces for playfulness and humor as powerful, creative sources of liberation. His quote is a reminder that in pursuing just models of English instruction, there remains always the possibility of joy.

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### **Note**

<sup>1</sup>I employ the term *English language teaching* instead of *English Language Teaching (ELT)*, as more commonly used in the field of TESOL, to refer to the practice more broadly and to include moments of English language instruction beyond the time and scope of TESOL and professionalization of English language teaching.

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