

Global English and EFL Learners: Implications for Critical Pedagogy

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This paper attempts to explore how English-language learners experience and make sense of the social, cultural, and political ramifications of the global dominance and spread of English. Through focus group interviews with 30 university and college students in Taiwan, the findings suggest that most participants were aware of the issues surrounding English in the world and in Taiwan. Yet, rather than taking into account the power relations and ideological struggles that underlie the English-language, most of the participants took for granted the power of English, and were eager to become a part of the privilege. A questioning stance was not a mentality shared by the majority of the participants. For the minority group, resistance mainly involved a concern for the preservation of the official language and the culture it reflects. Participants were less aware of the sociopolitical consequences of English and its learning. The results not only offer implications for critical pedagogy in ELT, but also point to the need for a reconstitution of critical pedagogy practices that is situated in each local context and a shift away from a western-centered paradigm to an Asian-centered lens from which to view English-language teaching and learning.

Key words: EFL learners' perspectives, critical pedagogy, resistance, reconstitution

INTRODUCTION

The prominence of English in all parts of the world has been well documented (Crystal, 2003; Graddol, 1997, 2006; Kamwangamalu, 2003, Seidlhofer, 2003), and the increasing status of English in the Asia-Pacific region is also beyond doubt (Bolton, 2008; Chang, 2006; Matsuura et al., 2004; Nunan, 2003; Patil, 2006). However, the global spread of English has not been without its consequences. English has contributed to linguistic curtailment if not linguistic genocide in many parts of the world (Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000). In addition, rather than being natural, neutral, and beneficial, the expansion of English worldwide is simultaneously intertwined in an intricate network of local economic and political relations as well as a complex web of international power dynamics (Pennycook, 1994).

Several scholars take a sociological perspective and emphasize the need to explore the implications of the spread of English on indigenous languages and their speakers (Brutt-Griffler, 2002; Canagarajah, 2005; Gorlach, 2002; McArthur, 1998). However, despite the abundance of theoretical discussions of the sociocultural politics of the spread of English, very few studies have explored the issue from the perspectives of the language learners. This paper takes the view that rather than constantly being the object of discussion, learners' views should also be taken into account when researchers seek to theorize about the learners and their learning. Thus, this qualitative study attempts to complement the abundance of theoretical discussions with language learners' perspectives.

The purpose of this paper is twofold. First, the paper explores how English-language learners experience and make sense of the social, cultural, and political implications of the global dominance and spread of English. Through the process, the paper also examines the pedagogical implications of the findings for English-language teaching (ELT) in the Asian context. This paper draws attention to critical pedagogy as a lens for ELT.

The study focuses on English-language learners in Taiwan, where English is learned as a foreign language. The case of Taiwan adds to the literature the

often-neglected voices of those more economically advanced nations. Research that concerns linguistic and cultural inequalities as a result of the hegemonic power of English often center on underdeveloped countries; the impact of English on better developed nations have often been ignored (Kubota, 1998). Although the findings presented in this paper are specific to Taiwan, the key themes also pertain to other English-as-a-foreign language (EFL) nations, particularly those in the Asia-Pacific region, as the increasing emphasis on English in Taiwan is only a part of the same movement that is simultaneously going on in many other countries in East Asia, namely, the movement towards greater emphasis on the importance of English as an international language (Widdowson, 1997).

Before proceeding further, in order to understand English-language learners in Taiwan in relation to the sociocultural politics of the global status of English, it is necessary to first gain a preliminary understanding of the language situation and the status and role of English in Taiwan.

Languages in Taiwan

Languages in Taiwan include the official language, local languages, and languages for wider communication (Tsao, 2001). Mandarin is the only official language, and also the medium of instruction in schools. Local languages include Hakka (i.e., the native language of the Hakka people), Tai-gi (i.e., the native language of the Taiwanese people), and the languages of the Austronesian people. These local languages have been taught in elementary schools since 2001 (Government Information Office, 2008a). English, a foreign language, is the major language of wider communication, although Japanese, Spanish, French, and German are also becoming increasingly popular. Taiwan fits Kachru's (1992) classification of a nation in the expanding circle of English.

The prominent status of English in Taiwan can be attributed to its association with technology, economic progress, and internationalization (Spolsky, 1998). In 1945, English was included as a compulsory subject in

the secondary school curriculum because it was deemed the most effective tool that can provide access to worldwide science and technological developments and information (Tsao, 2001). In the new millennium, English is still recognized by the Taiwanese government as an integral part of Taiwan's economic and technological development (Executive Yuan, 2003). English has been a required subject from third grade since 2005 (Government Information Office, 2008b).

LITERATURE REVIEW

This review of the literature discusses how the spread of English in East Asia can be attributed to both the linguistic imperialism of English and globalization.

Linguistic Imperialism of English

Conrad and Fishman (1977) claim that the predominance of English in the world is a result of efforts on the part of nonnative English-speaking countries more than efforts on the part of English-speaking countries. Fishman (1992) gives the example of the former Soviet Union, the Arab world, and China. These are countries that have been in opposition to the political, economic, or religious goals of the United States or Britain, yet they nevertheless initiate campaign after campaign aiming to promote in its citizenry a better command of English. It makes sense, then, that Rubal-Lopez (1996) differentiates between reasons for the spread of English in former colonies and non-colonies. Political and military influence played a more important role in the spread of English in former colonies, whereas economic and development concerns have had a greater impact on the spread of English in non-colonies, as evidenced by the cases of Japan, Korea, and Taiwan.

English has come to occupy its current status in the world as a result of

British colonialism to start with, followed by reasons including “‘revolutions’ in technology, transport, communication and commerce” (Phillipson, 1992, pp. 23-24). Specifically, it has been the position of the United States as a world superpower in the latter part of the twentieth century that has further secured the dominant status of English in the world.

More recently, however, globalization and the global economy have also contributed to how communication and commerce are increasingly determining what languages people choose to use. English, in particular, as Fishman (1998-1999) points out, is “*the language of globalization*” (p. 36, emphasis in the original). He even observes that “[t]he continued spread of English today is both a consequence of and a contributor to globalization” (p. 27).

The Effects of Globalization

The situation of the wide-spread influence of English in the world needs to be understood not only from the perspective of political dominance as in the colonial era, but from the economic impact of the world powers on the less powerful countries, a phenomenon that has been described as the global economy. Beaugrande (1999) cautions for an awareness of how the emphasis on global economy often serves to present the global spread of English as “an objective fact that will inevitably lead to an all-inclusive worldwide communication transcending national division or boundaries” (p. 116). However, what is often neglected is how such discourse, while “*explicitly describing* the global spread of English *implicitly supports* and *celebrates* it” (p. 116, emphasis in the original). Furthermore, this dominant discourse of globalization delineates the global spread of English as an inevitable and natural product of history. Such a discourse then serves to impede any questioning of what contributed to the intensified yet unequal relationship among nations. It further inhibits discussions of the consequences of the global spread of English that functions as beneficial to some countries and as a disservice to others, particularly those countries that do not have an “English” voice.

Nino-Murcia (2003) also cautions against oversimplifying the effects of globalization as similar to countries world wide. There are differing effects of globalization for groups of people in different locales and from different social classes. Not only do those from English-speaking countries have much to gain from the spread of English, there are also those in nonnative English-speaking countries that derive advantages from the global spread of English, namely, those of a certain socioeconomic class that have access to the resources necessary to achieve mastery of English and therefore to benefit from possessing this linguistic capital. These are also the people that make the greatest efforts to assist in the promotion of English. Nino-Murcia's point serves as an important reminder that the impact of globalization needs to be understood from the point of view of those who experience it rather than solely from a theoretical perspective.

METHODOLOGY

This paper reports on findings from a larger qualitative study which examined the discourses, practices, and identities of English-language learners in Taiwan and the implications for EFL education. Data for the larger study was collected by means of multiple methods, including focus group interviews, individual in-depth interviews, and participant observations. This paper highlights findings from the focus group interviews, which aimed to explore how English-language learners experience and make sense of the social, cultural, and political ramifications of the global dominance and spread of English.

Data Sources

Seven focus group interviews were conducted, each lasting between 60-90 minutes. There were 4 to 5 participants in each group. Focus group interviews "assum[e] that an individual's attitudes and beliefs do not form in

a vacuum: People often need to listen to others' opinions and understandings in order to form their own" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p. 115). They are effective in that they allow for breadth of information. The interviews followed a semi-structured format, enabling the researcher to follow-up and probe into participants' responses (Merriam, 1998). The following areas were addressed in the interviews: participants' learning of English in and out of school, their English-language practices, their understanding of EFL in Taiwan, their understanding of the government's discourse of EFL in Taiwan, and how they relate to English. The interviews were conducted in Mandarin, a language in which all the participants were fluent. All the interviews were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim, and then translated into English.

Participants

Thirty university and college students participated in the focus group interviews. The participants included 16 female and 14 male students in their freshman, sophomore, and junior years. They belonged to diverse backgrounds in terms of the kinds of colleges or universities they attended (e.g., comprehensive universities, teachers colleges, or universities of technology) and their fields of study, including both the humanities and the sciences. The participants were born in different parts of Taiwan, and also attended university and college in Taipei and in central and southern Taiwan.

All the participants had started to learn English in private institutions before they entered secondary schools, when English became a compulsory subject of study. At the tertiary level in Taiwan, students are also required to take at least one year of foreign language education, and most tertiary institutions offer and require students to take a general English course. The participants' self-report of their English proficiency ranged between lower-advanced to intermediate level. Through participant observations during the data collection, it was found that a couple of the participants could communicate in English with only little difficulty while most of them were more confident in their listening ability and less comfortable with speaking

English for extended periods. The observations confirmed the participants' self-report of their English proficiency.

Data Analysis

Content analysis was conducted following the methods of topical coding and analytical coding (Morse & Richards, 2002). First, the transcribed interviews were read several times, and data that seemed to point to the same issues were grouped and coded. These codes and categories were then further refined and revised through repeated readings of the transcripts. Finally the preliminary categories were reviewed for patterns and broader themes emerged.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings suggest that the participants were aware of the sociopolitical issues surrounding English as mentioned by various scholars. However, while most scholars take a critical lens towards the socio-political ramifications of English, most of the participants understood the hegemony of English as natural, and took for granted the status of English in Taiwan as neutral and beneficial. The following themes characterize most of the participants' experience and understanding of the global dominance and spread of English: the power and benefit of English, English as the superior Other, and English as development and representation. One group of participants, however, although similarly adamant of the power and benefit of English and the role of English as development and representation, demonstrated a cautious stance towards the superiority of English in Taiwan, particularly in relation to the official language and the culture it presents, implying a level of resistance towards the expanding hegemony of English.

Power and Benefit of English

Ha (2005) describes that in Vietnam, English has become the most effective gatekeeping tool in the domains of employment and education. Philipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1997) also observe that English, with its role in facilitating and obstructing access, has acquired “a social stratification function” (p. 35) in many parts of the world. Similarly, the study participants were also aware of the close connection between English and career advancement, salary, and educational opportunities. However, rather than viewing English in terms of gatekeeping and social stratification that limit their prospects, the participants understood English in a positive light as that which increases their opportunities.

The participants generally acknowledged English as that which can advance and improve their situation rather than that which obstructs them from privileges. In relation to career advancement, S14¹ recounted: “One of our teachers told us that in the field of industrial design, even if we are not so skilled at designing, one can make it to managerial levels with proper English-language ability.” In relation to salary, S30 claimed that “if you are good at English, it means that you will have higher pay.” S30 further shared his father’s words of wisdom: “My father told me that nothing is more important than English. You’ll be able to make a living as long as you have English.” In terms of education, S18, a student in her junior year, observed that “English is very important for graduate school entrance exams; it can determine whether you are accepted or not.” It is not surprising that the participants shared such sentiments, considering, as Kubota (2005) claims, that “the current discourse on the promotion of foreign language study is preoccupied by an emphasis on its benefit for maintaining economic competitiveness in the world” (p. xvii.). This is also exactly the Taiwan government’s rationalization for the emphasis on English.

Philipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1997) observe that in many places in

¹ For ease of identifying the participants for purposes of presenting their views, I gave each a number. For example, S14 stands for the student who was numbered 14.

Europe, there is an increasing tendency to use English as the medium of instruction in schools. Swales (1997) also points out that in Sweden, major academic journals have opted for English as the medium of presentation. Several other examples (Heller, 2003; Jung & Norton, 2002; Lam, 2002; Murray, 2006) also point to how English is becoming the “global academic gatekeeper” (Swales, 1997, p. 376). The participants were also aware of the role of English in the flow of information and knowledge and agreed unanimously that English is undeniably the most frequent medium through which academic information is presented. However, they do not view English as an academic gatekeeper. Rather, they discussed English as providing the most effective and efficient avenue through which to gain information. In the words of S11:

We use a lot of English-language textbooks and you see a lot of information in English on the internet....Another thing is, if you want to access information, it's better that you know English, because you can't find a lot of information in Taiwan, and if you want to read things from abroad, and you can't find the translation, you have to use English.

Another participant similarly added: “Actually, it doesn't matter what field of specialty, be it industrial design or other fields. The truth is, the most up-to-date information in the world is in English, and that's why English is important for us university students” (S14).

Philipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1997) explain that the spread of English has occurred concomitantly with the United State's growing influence in international economics and politics, and its mounting authority in organizations such as the United Nations and the World Bank. Their statement shows how the growing hegemony of English is a result of the dominance of the United States. The participants echoed this view, and shared the critical awareness that the power of English is a consequence of the superpowers of the west, especially the United States. One participant rationalized: “The United States is becoming ever more powerful. It's obvious that the US is very strong, to the extent that even our culture is

affected” (S10). Another participant remarked: “If China is the most powerful country in the world now, perhaps everyone will be learning Chinese. But since America is the most powerful country, English is the language spoken throughout the world” (S14). Here, the participants exhibited critical awareness that the value of English does not lie in its intrinsic values but is a result of the economic and political powers of its speakers in North America.

However, rather than express skepticism towards the dominance of North American countries and their languages, the participants shared a detached stance that understood the status of English to be a natural consequence of international circumstances. They did not see English as posing any threat; rather, were more eager to become a part of the power circle. As one participant described, “I just feel that English is very important; it’s an international trend” (S25). Other participants explained their preference for English over other foreign languages. S27 recounted: “I want to learn English more than other languages. I feel that proficiency in English is just as useful as proficiency in ten other languages.” In a similar vein, S11 shared that “because English is the number one language in the world, wherever you go, it is most convenient to communicate with others using English.” The participants demonstrated the strong conviction that English is valuable for them as users because it is a language of prominence in the world, and therefore, expressed a strong desire to align with the language.

English as the Superior Other

Ha (2005) observes that in many periphery countries, “English is purposefully used to exclude people from power and social positions, and to create discrimination among people in their societies” (p. 38). Unlike Ha (2005), participants perceived that it is only natural for people of a higher socioeconomic status in Taiwan to use English not only for communicating with speakers of other languages but also amongst themselves. S25 and S12’s comments are illuminating:

You might notice that people of a higher level today, they might not necessarily know Tai-gi, but they'll speak Mandarin, well, of course, because we use it everyday, but English is also very necessary for them. For example, for directors and CEO or people above this level, English is a very basic ability. (S25)

S12 added that English has ceased to be only for international communication, but has now also taken on intra-national purposes:

In the field of information management, or in any field at the level of management, you'll definitely use English. You're bound to come across foreigners whether on the phone or face to face. And it's not even always with foreigners. In Taiwan, the higher the level, in high level meetings, they almost always use English. So it's not necessarily with foreigners, but also with Taiwanese people too. (S12)

Another participant similarly shared how the use of English can accrue esteem:

One teacher told us that if you are able to use English terminology [at work] you'll have a better chance. Also, if you can use English when writing business letters or memos, people will generally respect you more. (S13)

As Pennycook (2000) observes, the spread of English has been concomitant with many economic, political, and cultural forces, including "the development of a very particular 'world order'" (p. 97). The participants have demonstrated that English not only implies a particular world order which differentiates between English-speaking and non-English-speaking countries, but for them, it has become a measurement of prominence. English has become, for these Taiwan participants, a language of power not only beyond but also within Taiwan.

Phillipson (2001) cautions that many languages in the world are being "threatened by...forces that strengthen English at the expense of other

languages” (p. 189). The participants acknowledged the increasing status of English over other languages. However, rather than feeling threatened, they understood English to be a high language. This can be exemplified through their discussion of bilingual Chinese-English street signs in Taiwan. One participant shared: “I think it was during when I was in high school [that the bilingual signs were put up], because I remember thinking, ‘Wow, they are more sophisticated now!’” (S27). Another group discussed bilingual signs in their own universities and colleges. The following is an excerpt of the discussion. (R: researcher/interviewer)

- S21: With the addition, it feels different.
S22: More status.
R: Really? Why?
S20: Oh my God!
R: English makes a difference?
S21: Of course, the addition of English improves the quality.
S23: And it makes you feel connected to the world.

The participants’ belief that English is superior to local languages is also evident from the following discussion.

- R: Are ethnic languages such as Hakka and Tai-gi more important for you or English?
All: English!
S16: One vote for English.
All: English, of course.
S16: I mean, who will talk to you in Tai-gi when you go abroad. And they won’t even have heard of what Hakka is!
S15: Hakka belongs to a minority group.
S16: Both Hakka and Tai-gi belong to minority groups.
S17: You only feel that a lot of people are using these languages because they are being promoted now, but actually, very few people use them.

S16: Right, very few people.

R: And for that reason you believe English is more important than your mother tongue languages?

S15: Because English is used in countries all over the world.

S17: I think it's a world trend....

S16: America is number one in every aspect, whether economically, socially, or politically, and it is also a rather democratic country.

What is particularly interesting is that S15, an ethnic Hakka, and S16, an ethnic Taiwanese, were both quick to point out how their native languages do not speak to a wide audience. They readily provided rationalizations for the superiority of English, and did not voice concern or resentment over its dominant status. Rather than seeing English serve exclusionary and discriminatory purposes, the participants understood English as that which upgrades, elevates, and advances.

The situation that the participants described resembles Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas's (1997) concern for Europe: that if the dominance of English expands to the extent that it becomes the revered high language while local languages are deemed low languages, then "competence in English may become essential for social functioning and upward social mobility" (p. 35). Consequently, those who speak English will automatically be considered superior (Ha, 2005). This situation seems already occurring in Taiwan.

English as Development and Representation

Phillipson (2001) posits that English has been aggressively "marketed as the language of 'international communication and understanding' [and] economic 'development'" (p. 190). Indeed, participants identified English as playing a crucial and positive role in a country's economic and technological development. Rather than understanding the ideological underpinning of such notions, participants seemed to have "bought" this marketed idea of English. In the words of S6:

With other countries, for example, Arabian countries, our only common language is English. This is a practical matter of communication, and English provides such practical function...You have to have a language with which to communicate globally for others to want to come, to want to do business with you. (S6)

For S26, English serves more than communication purposes: “English can elevate Taiwan’s standard and promote development. It would also advance the level of knowledge and technology. When English becomes an official language, the entire market of Taiwan would open up.”

Indeed, English is believed to be so important that participants supported the proposal to promote English to official status in Taiwan. S13 considered the frequency of usage:

It is a matter of functionality. We don’t really use any of the Austronesian languages in our daily lives, but we do actually make use of English very often, so I think it’s reasonable to make English an official language. (S13)

S3 thought it important to be connected to other countries in the world:

I think English is a language that other countries, people all over the world are using, so if this language becomes an official language, it will be really good for Taiwan....And also, we will be more motivated to learn the language, so it’s really beneficial. (S3)

These participants considered the issue from a functional perspective and did not express concern for the sociopolitical ramifications of further empowering the foreign language in their own country. It may also be possible that for these participants, English no longer functions as a foreign language. Further research will be necessary in order to fully comprehend how EFL learners understand English in relation to their native languages.

The participants’ awareness of how English is often used as a criterion to judge a country’s level of development has resulted in their heightened attention to the President’s English proficiency. They consistently had issues

with President Chen², whom they believed was always accompanied by an interpreter when interacting with foreign dignitaries. They were worried of the image this would project to the rest of the world. The following opinion was shared by many of the participants: “Whenever leaders from other countries come to visit, President Chen always needs an interpreter. When this image is transmitted around the world, everyone will be surprised that the president of Taiwan cannot speak English” (S29). Other participants also commented that the president imparts the first impression of the country, and it is therefore pertinent for the president to be proficient in English in order to represent the country in the most positive light.

The above findings demonstrate that the participants were cognizant of the sociopolitical issues surrounding the global power of English, but viewed the issues from the perspective of practicality and functionality rather than in relation to power relations and ideological struggles over whose language has the right to be heard.

Resistance

Although similarly adamant of the power and benefit of English and the role of English as development and representation, one group of participants was less ardent of the superiority of English. This group demonstrated caution towards the hegemonic status of English. The participants in this group also believed in the benefit of English for both the country and the individual, but they seemed more wary of its possible negative consequences. These participants emphasized that although people do need to make the most of English, it should never be confused for their own. S9 shared that learners should be very clear of the role that English plays as a foreign language: “I think English is, after all, only a tool. It should not become our major language.” Similarly, S6 emphasized that as important as English is, one’s own language and culture should be prioritized:

² President Chen was the incumbent president at the time of the interview. He has been succeeded by President Ma since the year 2008.

With English, we should apply it to our own purposes; it should not substitute our own language. I mean, Mandarin, our own language, is more important. Our own language should always take priority over English. However important English is, it is always a language to make use of, and should not be confused as our mother tongue. Otherwise, we will lose our own uniqueness. (S6)

However, when questioned why they still support the officializing of English, their answers were, in the words of S7, “because it will be the second official language, and Mandarin remains the first, so that’s all right.” For these participants, resistance to English does not lie in opposing the dominance of English in the world and in their lives, but rather, it means accommodating English and at the same time placing emphasis on one’s national language and culture.

It can also be argued that the participants’ resistance of English went only as far as to emphasize the official language, Mandarin, and the culture it reflects. They did not question the ramifications of the power and dominance of English on indigenous languages and speakers in their own country. Neither did they question the sociopolitical implications of promoting English, a foreign language, to official status when other native languages have not been considered. For these participants, granting official status to an important foreign language would not be problematic as long as its status comes second to the official language, Mandarin. In the game of power, languages are obviously hierarchical. English and Mandarin in Taiwan are involved in a tug of war which local languages have not been able to join, but rather, are marginalized further by the rising eminence of English.

To sum up, the findings reveal that the participants’ observations of the overriding position of English in the world echo what has been documented in the literature. Yet rather than viewing the situation through a critical lens, most participants understood their role as to accommodate the status of English. They implied the sentiment that theirs is not to question, but to ensure they are included in the English empire. Only one group of participants articulated concern over the increasing prominence of English in

Taiwan and expressed the obligation to maintain one's own cultural integrity and distinction.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CRITICAL PEDAGOGY

This paper has sought to explore how English-language learners experience and make sense of the social, cultural, and political implications of the global dominance and spread of English. Findings suggest that most participants were attentive to the issues surrounding English in the world and in Taiwan. Yet, rather than take into account the power relations and ideological struggles that underlie English, the participants took for granted the status of English without question. Resistance of the dominant status of the language is not a mentality shared by the majority of the participants. For the minority group, resistance involved the preservation of the official language and the culture it reflects. The participants were less aware of the sociopolitical consequences of the English-language and its learning. These findings imply the necessity of critical pedagogy in the EFL classrooms.

Critical pedagogy, as Kubota (2005) explains, “encourage[s] teachers and students to question all taken-for-granted notions in order to critically reflect on how unequal relations of power seen in the systems of domination and subordination are created and sustained” (pp. xix-xx). Therefore, an EFL curriculum that incorporates critical pedagogy would place emphasis on what language learners do not seem to be immediately cognizant of, i.e. the dominance of English, rather than an inevitable outcome of historical and economic development, is a consequence of a complex network of international power dynamics, and its current position is a the result of active promotion by those that benefit most from its spread. A critical pedagogy perspective foregrounds how languages and language practices are embedded and intertwined in a web of power relations that legitimize some at the expense of others. Being cognizant of how global languages of power can marginalize other languages and their speakers enables counternarratives that

center on vernacular languages and local epistemologies. Indeed, raising critical consciousness through ELT has often been considered a means through which English-language learners could resist hegemonic ideologies that underlie the English-language (Benesch, 1993; Kubota, 1998; Norton & Toohey, 2004, Reagan & Osborn, 2002; Shor, 1996; Wink, 2000). A critical pedagogy perspective in ELT necessitates these discussions not be marginalized to add-on status in the syllabus, but become a required feature in any program design. It also requires the involvement of learners' voices and viewpoints in the curricula. As Seargeant (2008) suggests, an explicit discussion of these ideologies "allows for a self-reflexive awareness of the epistemic matrix in which research and debate in this area is commonly conducted" (p. 140).

The findings also demonstrate that the participants emphasized their own language and culture over English only to the extent of the official language, Mandarin. It did not occur to the participants to question the ramifications of the power and dominance of English on indigenous languages and their speakers. These findings suggest that the dominance of English in Taiwan have impacted upon different local languages to different extent. Therefore, in Taiwan, as different from other EFL contexts, a critical pedagogy perspective in ELT needs to take into account of not only the power relations between English and local languages in general, but more importantly, between English and local languages of different hierarchy.

Thus, a useful concept is Ha's (2005) notion of reconstitution, which necessitates an "awareness of resistance and conscious selection to reach reconstitution under one's own control" (p. 42). A reconstitution of critical pedagogy practices in ELT that is situated in the Asian context allows for a critical pedagogy that takes into account the idiosyncrasies of each local context in relation to global concerns. It also enables a regional and local paradigmatic lens that shifts away from a western-centered paradigm to an Asian-centered lens from which to view English-language teaching and learning.

Consequently, there needs to be more research that documents and

theorizes critical pedagogy teaching practices in ELT in the Asian context, as Asia obviously faces different sets of issues from other contexts, e.g. where English was a colonial language or where English serves as a second language. Each country in Asia is also confronted with different problems. For example, in Taiwan, critical pedagogy needs to take into account the power relations between English and local languages of different hierarchy. In Japan, critical reconstitution involves the learning of English in a manner that can satisfy the simultaneous goals of connecting with the world and protecting the Japanese identity (Ha, 2005). In Korea, critical pedagogy should serve to reconceptualize the ownership of English and emphasize the glocalization of English (Shin, 2007). As Reagan (2005) reminds:

in the process of teaching and learning any language, we need to be aware of the context in which the language is being taught and learned, the economic power relationships present in that context that are related to the particular language, and the ideological power and status of the target language. (p. 9)

This is only possible when critical pedagogies are reconstituted to take into account the various local situations in relation to global concerns.

Indeed, ELT practitioners in Asia should not have to always refer to literature from other continents for discussions and examples on the practices and consequences of critical pedagogy. Phillipson (2001) also believes in the need to “redefine the content of English teaching in Asia so as to make a break with the cultural and linguistic norms of the Anglo-American world” (p. 196). He suggests to reconceptualize English in ways that can achieve the additive learning of the language and also reinforce the local language ecology. A reconstitution that involves an Asian-centered epistemology and situated critical pedagogy theories and practices would hopefully help to achieve this ideal. Descriptive and interpretative work on critical pedagogy practices in English-as-a-foreign language classrooms is a necessary first step.

CONCLUSION

This paper examined how English-language learners experience and make sense of the social, cultural, and political ramifications of the global dominance and spread of English. The paper also explored the implications of the findings for critical pedagogy in ELT in the Asian context. The findings reveal that the participants were mainly accommodating to the hegemony of English in the world and in Taiwan. Resistance to the dominant status of the language was not a mentality shared by the majority of the participants. For the minority group of participants, resistance involved the preservation of the official language and the culture it reflects. They did not demonstrate awareness of the sociopolitical consequences of the English-language on indigenous languages and their speakers.

These findings point to the necessity of critical pedagogy in ELT that places emphasis on what language learners do not seem to be immediately cognizant of. The paper also demonstrates the need for a reconstitution of critical pedagogy practices in ELT that is situated in each local context, and a shift away from a western-centered paradigm to an Asian-centered lens from which to view English-language teaching and learning. A reconstitution that involves an Asian-centered epistemology and situated critical pedagogy theories and practices would hopefully attain the goal of additive learning of English.

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