

Chapter 30

Closing Thoughts



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Abstract The concluding chapter discusses the common threads that link the six parts of the book together to form a cohesive whole. It also offers a number of insights drawn from the chapters. Finally, it provides future directions for teachers, researchers, policymakers, and ELT practitioners.

Keywords Local contexts · Glocal perspectives · Insights · English language education · Future directions

This edited volume, *Local Research and Glocal Perspectives in English Language Teaching: Teaching in Changing Times*, was undertaken at a time when the entire education system worldwide, including the field of English language teaching, was faced with the challenge of finding alternative ways and means of providing education. We were aware that while our contexts were different, there was a need to explore, collaborate, and learn together to identify challenges as well as opportunities in English language education for the benefit of students, teachers, and researchers. We aimed to offer our readers glocal perspectives on the constraints and possibilities facing professionals in English language teaching today. The chapters in this volume focus attention on practitioners' experiences, challenges, and opportunities related to ELT curriculum and materials, pedagogies, educational technology, assessment, and teacher development. Collectively, the chapters showcase ideas, concepts, and research insights into English language teaching and learning from a variety of contexts across the globe, with contributions by researchers located in diverse

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countries of the Global South and the Global North—Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Iran, Hong Kong, Nepal, South Korea, Japan, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States of America. Thus, the aim was to contribute to the ongoing dialogues between scholars, teachers, and teacher educators from both global and local contexts. The book presents studies that have examined well-researched as well as relatively less-explored areas in the field of English language education.

Interlinks Between the Chapters

The common thread running across all six parts in the present volume involves the exploration of current theories, concepts, principles, and practices in English language education in both local and global contexts. In Part I, the four chapters offer socio-cultural perspectives on English language education, particularly on the discourses of development in English language teaching in the Bangladesh context, the affordances that translanguaging provides vis-a-vis English-medium instruction, EFL/ESL learners' creative expressions in production in multilingual contexts, and the importance of incorporating local pedagogical traditions and scholarship in English language teacher education in the South Asian contexts. The six chapters in Part II deal with the prospects as well as challenges related to the development and implementation of curriculum and materials for ELT at kindergarten/primary, secondary and tertiary levels in different contexts. Part III explores the role and use of technology in English language teaching and learning in normal times as well as during and after the pandemic. The five chapters in Part IV are linked under the umbrella of current perspectives on ELT practices during the pandemic as well as post-pandemic times. The chapters in Part V shed light on a range of topics pertaining to second language assessment. Finally, the theme of teacher education is highlighted in the final section, Part VI.

The parts of the book represent different components of a language education curriculum including materials, teaching practices, assessment, and teacher education. The components work in a complementary relationship and not in isolation. Thus there are themes and subthemes in the book that run across the different parts. Although work for the book was mostly undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic, the findings and discussions have implications for post-pandemic times. An approach we adopted was to include the voices of global ELT experts as well as local scholars in each part to facilitate the development of glocal perspectives on various issues discussed throughout the book.

Insights Gained

This volume has provided some insights into English language teaching and learning for both the pandemic and post-pandemic periods. One important insight relates to the value of integrating technological innovations. With the sudden outbreak of COVID-19 in early 2020 most educational institutions across the globe moved their traditional face-to-face classes online. Technological tools are indispensable in conducting online classes and examinations. It is expected that in a post-pandemic world, blended learning will become an integral part of English language education. A number of empirical studies in this edited volume exploring the use of digital tools and technology-enhanced language learning demonstrate their potential in promoting autonomous learning and collaboration through enhanced student engagement both inside and beyond the classroom. There is also a case for creating and using multi-modal materials involving visual, auditory, and textual modes in addition to traditional paper-based materials. There is research evidence indicating the way new technologies help reconfigure various modes before they can be used in teaching and learning (e.g. Crescenzi, Jewitt & Price, 2014; Jewitt, 2013; Kress, 2003). Together, the studies highlight the need for rejigging education policy incorporating technology in curriculum and materials, pedagogy, assessment, and teacher education in a post-pandemic world.

Another insight is the importance of being open and flexible in our approach to language education today. Scholars have emphasized the need for continual change and reform initiatives to keep pace with changing times (Hyland & Wong, 2013; Tarrayo, Paz & Gepila, 2021). A number of chapters highlight the need for the adaptation of curriculum, materials, and teacher education programmes to respond to unexpected changes in our environment including climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic. The curriculum of the future must include more than just proficiency in the four skills as the goal of language education. Our students must be trained to think critically and solve problems to become future leaders in the fight against future crises including climate change. With globalization, innovative ideas and concepts are becoming increasingly available and policymakers, materials writers, and educators are making attempts to incorporate new ideas. For example, the University Grants Commission of Bangladesh has instructed all higher education institutions to revise curricula to incorporate outcome-based education (Shahidullah, 2020).

A few chapters make a case for further assessment reform and suggest changes in policies and practices. Learning-oriented assessment (LOA) has become “the new trend in contemporary assessment reform, which is changing from test-based to learning-oriented” (Zeng, Huang, Yu & Chen, 2018, p. 221). A change of mindset is needed and assessment needs to be seen as a positive part of the learning process, and therefore LOA, which provides self-directed learning opportunities and engages learners in meaningful learning may be tried on a trial and error basis. The pandemic situation has added impetus to consider a paradigm shift in education. The chapters reveal the challenges involved in continual change as well as the possibilities that change initiatives may bring to different contexts. Institutions that are unable or

averse to change are in real danger of becoming irrelevant and will find it difficult to stay afloat in the highly competitive higher education sector today.

A further insight is the accentuated need for collaboration, conversation, interaction, and networking amongst teachers, researchers, and teacher educators both at the local and global levels. Increased collaboration amongst educators in the form of professional learning communities might lead to an increase in teachers' confidence and capacity for professional growth (Clark, 2001), self-efficacy (Puchner & Taylor, 2006), teaching effectiveness, and expertise (Graham, 2007; Hattie, 2015), and on student achievement (Dumay, Boonen & Van Damme, 2013; Lara-Alecio et al., 2012). Some chapters stress the importance of collaboration amongst teachers, teacher educators, materials writers, and experts. The problems faced in various local contexts call for transnational collaboration. A transnational and cross-border collaboration involving specialists and practitioners may prove a win-win situation for all parties concerned providing scaffolding in the process of developing local expertise while allowing experts to sharpen their insights into the day-to-day workings of theories, principles, and methods at the grassroots level. The findings of research carried out in one context might offer potential solutions to hurdles encountered by colleagues in other contexts, and hence dissemination of research findings is imperative for the ELT community. Strong networking might act as a catalyst for a transfer of solutions from one context to others. This will also help to accelerate the sustainable development drive amongst ELT partners.

One final insight drawn from the studies derives from the benefits of a synthesis of the local and the global as well as local-global partnerships in developing curriculum, materials, and effective teacher education programmes. Translanguaging pedagogy, which has gained much momentum in recent times, marks a paradigm shift in English education, hitherto largely driven by monolingual (English-only) ideologies, necessitating a reconsideration of the place and role of the learners' mother tongue as well as other languages in their repertoire in English language teaching and learning. There is research evidence in support of the positive effects of pedagogical translanguaging on the students' development of language awareness and valuing of home and school languages (Arteagoitia & Howard, 2015; Cenoz & Gorter, 2020; Lyster, Quiroga & Ballinger, 2013). A similar positive impact of translanguaging pedagogy in content classes in the Bangladesh context has been reported in Chap. 3. The need to explore the socio-cultural realities of specific contexts is argued to be critical in achieving the desired objectives of English language education. This would involve taking into consideration the significance of in-country local perceptions in terms of needs, cultures, multilingual scenarios, contextual constraints, and locally preferred pedagogical traditions. The local exigencies including the needs and aspirations of the learners have to be prioritized over externally-imposed models and priorities in order to achieve sustainable development.

Future Directions

The insights discussed above point to the need for initiatives for policy reform to ensure equal access to technology in post-pandemic times, affirm the mutually complementing roles of English and local languages and cultures in ELT practices and teacher education, introduce multimodal materials, align ELT with sustainable development goals, and facilitate a shift to LOA. Clear policy guidelines may clarify and support the role of local languages in teaching and learning English and allow educators and communities to take advantage of the benefits of translanguaging. Additionally, as we gradually recover from the COVID-19 pandemic phase, it is becoming increasingly clear that technology is going to play a pivotal role in post-pandemic education. Educational administrators will need to find ways to make sure that learners regardless of socio-economic background, geographic location, gender, and ethnicity have equal access to available resources. With the growing importance given to education for the sustainable development of developing countries, there is a need for major overhaul of the curriculum. ELT researchers, educational administrators, and educators need to find appropriate pathways to align English language education with the SDGs.

Experts in materials development need to train materials writers to be able to design appropriate materials for blended education. Given the potential benefits of multimodal materials, there is a need for resource allocation to develop such materials and incorporate them in teaching and assessment. In the field of assessment, developing assessment literacy of teachers covering the whole gamut of assessment-related activities starting from test design to stakeholder involvement and incorporating the feasible aspects of learning-oriented assessment should be considered a fundamental goal of assessment reform in current times.

The issues that emerge from the discussion and specific recommendations we have made above call for further research. To begin with, researchers may focus their attention on the teachers' and learners' ability to integrate technological tools in specific contexts. Studies should also be designed to assess the feasibility of change proposals before they are initiated. Research is also required to find teachers' and students' readiness to incorporate multimodal materials and learning-oriented assessment. Further research that can sensitively examine the value of local language and culture amidst the everyday pedagogical, social, economic, and structural contexts of English education in the Global South will do a service toward greater sustainability of ELT. Collaborative action research involving practitioners from Global South and North may be helpful in finding ways in which materials, tests, and teacher education may be overhauled to meet the challenges of our times. Building wider collaboration, networking, and engaging in bi-/multidirectional interactive dialogues amongst teachers and educators across borders will be a fruitful way forward to address issues that we face in specific contexts.

In this book, we have attempted to present the current ELT landscape, but we are aware that no single volume can offer a complete picture of this evolving field in these changing times. However, we are hopeful that the insights this book offers will

be of interest to the varied stakeholders of English language education, particularly in the Global South.

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