

Linguistic and Cultural Imperialism in English Language Education in Thailand

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Abstract

English has gained a position in the world as a global language. However, some scholars have argued that the hegemonic spread of English is a consequence of linguistic and cultural imperialism of mainstream native English speaking nations. In this paper, we draw on pedagogical practices of linguistic and cultural imperialism that promote dominant discourse and consequently cause learners to uphold the *status quo* of native speakers. In order to liberate English education in Thailand, we maintain that critical pedagogy, which relates classroom practice with social, political and economic realities, is supposed to help learners to build on their critical consciousness of English in the global context and its social, political and economic implications. We also suggest English language education in Thailand go beyond native and non-native dichotomy and recognize the role English plays in the world and consider the ways English is appropriated to suit local interests.

Keywords: Linguistic imperialism, native-speakerism, English as a global language, language and power, critical applied linguistics, critical pedagogy

Introduction

It is appropriate to say that English is unquestionably the most effective widespread language for international communication. It is a survival tool that many people learn and use to achieve success and mobility in modern, pluralistic societies. The language has been used as a neutral means of communication by its speakers to interact both internationally and locally

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within their own communities, serving a wide range of communicative purposes (Crystal, 1997; Graddol, 2006; Kirkpatrick, 2007a; McKay, 2002). The fact that English has become a truly international language, according to Crystal (1997), was primarily the result of two factors: firstly, the expansion of the British Empire in the colonial era; and secondly, the rise of the United States as the world's superpower in the twentieth century.

However, some scholars such as Pennycook (1994, 2000) and Phillipson (1992, 2008) consider the hegemonic spread of English as the process of *linguistic imperialism* empowered by the two mainstream countries: the United States and Britain. In this process, English language teaching (ELT) industry around the world is operated in such a way that perpetuates economic and political domination by the mainstream native-speaking countries. Said another way, the approach to English language education is based on the ideology that prioritizes national capitalism. In fact, the English language, in its long journey to achieving a genuinely global recognition and reaching the position of prestige, "was aided and abetted by colonialist and imperialist projects that trampled upon the political, cultural and linguistic heritage of millions of people across the globe" (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 539).

Linguistic Imperialism in Action

The very ideas that are embedded in the tenet of linguistic imperialism, as theorized by Phillipson (1992), include the belief that an ideal English class has to be approached through the concept of linguistic monocentrism with a native speaking teacher being an ideal class practitioner. Modiano (2001) argues that such an idea helps stabilize the spread and the dominance of particular native-speaker varieties and advance native speakers professionally. Native speakers, as a consequence, position themselves as the managers or engineers of the language who have the absolute power to shape the direction of English usage and teaching in countries that live under the mainstreams' sphere of influence. On practical ground, as Modiano (2001) claims, when an English teacher explains to students that a certain English variety (e.g., American English and British English) is superior to others, it is likely that "such practices interject into the ELT activity systems of exclusion..." (p. 339) and may, consequently, lead students to form the idea of resistance to speakers of

other varieties of English (Matsuda, 2003). This discriminatory or capitalistic practice presents English as the property of particular native-speaking communities. Additionally, students, who learn English where the emphasis is placed on culture-specific educational practice, will “become coerced into conforming to a nation-state centred view” (Modiano, 2001, p. 340). More specifically, English language and English language teaching industries promote and maintain a symbolic power as is shown in a multidimensional phenomenon comprising four inter-related dimensions—scholastic, linguistic, cultural, and economic (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). These four imperialist assumptions, which politically influence English language teaching (ELT) practices in the post-modern world (Canagarajah, 1999a, 1999b; Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Pennycook, 2004; Phillipson, 1992), serve as the ideological frameworks by which native-speaking discourses are valued and reproduced while non-native speaking discourses are devalued and marginalized. However, since this paper aims to present colonial characters of linguistic and cultural imperialism and draw on pedagogical practices that orient towards this ideology, the only two dimensions (linguistic and cultural dimensions of method as constructs of marginality) will be selected for the critical discussion with an emphasis on the linkage between colonialism and ELT practices in Thailand.

A Case in Thailand

In Thailand, the phenomenon of linguistic and cultural imperialism in ELT is prevalent. It can be realized that the global hegemony of English in Thailand is undeniable (Buripakdi, 2008). Simply put, current language teaching pedagogies implemented across Thailand, one way or another, adhere to the colonial linguistic ideology or what Kumaravadivelu (2003) calls “colonial concept of method” (p. 541). To support the above claim, the empirical evidence illustrating how deeply colonialism is anchored in the people’s mind and how positive roles for colonialism are reproduced and practiced (Buripakdi, 2008) needs to be brought to light. Below are the colonialistic assumptions empirically documented by several studies in the Thai educational contexts that show how linguistic and cultural discourses associated with the non-mainstream are consciously and unconsciously subordinated or marginalized.

Linguistic Dimension

Methitham (2009) has revealed striking findings of imperialist assumptions guiding ELT practices of Thai English professionals in several Thai tertiary contexts. Omnifarious results showing discourses of imperialism or signs of *de facto* colonialism which emerged from the teachers' beliefs regarding the role of English and ELT in their own lives, professions and societies were discussed. It was found that Thai teachers in his study tended to possess a certain level of professional insecurity which concerns authenticity of teaching. That is, Western scholars were thought to be the active originators of the language or theories while Thai professionals were represented as passive followers of ELT assumptions and theories developed in the West. They felt that they were not competent enough to provide authentic learning experiences to students. Particularly, they did not perceive their first language (or more specifically, their first language accent) and culture as a resource for making meaning or indexing identities but as a hindrance to the process of target language acquisition (Widdowson, 1994). Adding to this, a research study on accent priority, conducted by Jindapitak (2010), has provided similar outcome to Methitham's; that is, Thai students were found to be very obsessed with imitating ways native speakers use the language. It was also found that the participants judged speakers with native-like accents as having higher status and more prestige than those with non-native accents. In a similar fashion, Buripakdi's (2008) study on discourse of Thai English, as perceived by Thai professional writers, also proved that English is closely tied to the elite-class social groups and the glorious English culture, civilization, etc. In her research, mainstream Englishes were often described as "beautiful", "expressive", "international", "appropriate", "subtle", "universal", "perfect", and "professional", while, non-mainstream ones were in the reverse. These findings come as no surprise since the mastery of American-like or British-like English proficiency has captivated hearts of many English users, regardless of their educational and proficiency levels. Another prominent example of the ideology of imperialism in language classroom can be viewed through the use and selection of authentic materials and commercial textbooks (especially cultural contents contained in materials). Boriboon (2004) found that there are mismatches between Thai learners' lived experiences and the discourse presented in

various conventionally western-complied textbooks and task materials. He further explain that many cultural meanings, artifacts or even visual signs, presented in classroom materials, which are exclusively based on Western customary discourse, barely relate to learners' social backgrounds and their daily-life encounters. More specifically, learning contents concerning language, culture, race and the ethnicity of certain native speakers of English, as used in many commercial textbooks, are always illustrated as being superior to that of local or non-native speakers. This trend of belief was detailed in Methitham's (2009) study, showing that many Thai ELT professionals tended to prioritize "the idea of using commercial textbooks, but kind of *[sic]* disagree with the ideas of producing in-house materials" (p. 170). This pedagogical practice, known as the method of marginality construct, is likely to prioritize "everything associated with the colonial Self and marginalizes everything associated with the subaltern Other. 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" (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 541).

Cultural Dimension

In the study investigating the views of Thai tertiary English teachers of perceived unfairness of allowing only native-speaking teachers to teach listening and speaking courses, Suwanarak (2010) found that the majority of her participants held positive views towards the notion of a native speaker being the ideal English teacher. As English was a native speaker's first language, these teachers believed that native speakers were the most competent in their own language and cultures. This made native speakers rightly qualified as teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL) in the Thai context. By the same token, the teacher participants in Methitham's (2009) study voiced their stances on cultural learning in EFL classroom that "...Thai students will learn English better if they know Western native-speakers' culture" (p. 176). In particular, they perceived British and American cultures as the most worthwhile bits of information for students studying in EFL classroom. Given the result of his study, Methitham noted that even though some cultural elements of Western cultures may serve as survival tools and are considered as safeguards for intercultural communication (especially in native-non-native encounters),

the extensive promotion of only Western cultures in ELT may not be the suitable approach for the larger contexts of English in the present day. He clarified his point:

If there is only a one-way transfer of culture from the West, instead of two-way transfer in which local and Western cultures are supposed to influence or shape one another, the students may perceive their local culture (and other world cultures) as inferior to Western culture and not worth holding or practicing. They may ignore and discredit their own cultural heritage. They may give up exploring its advantages and possibilities further because they perceive that the local culture is far from bringing them the prospect of a better life. (Methitham, 2009, p. 180)

In this connection, McKay (2002) postulated that the rationales of the teaching of culture in an English as an international language (EIL) classroom should be based on the following assumptions: (1) As English has been used as an international lingua franca, it is logical enough that it is no longer closely connected to the culture of native-speaking countries; (2) the function of English should be to enable international speakers to convey their identities and cultures. In a narrower sense, Modiano (2001) even asserted that “the USA and the UK do not hold monopolies on what are perceived to be ‘international’ cultural phenomena marketed in English” (p. 343). Pedagogically speaking, a more critical approach to culture teaching cannot be taken for granted that the culture of any one particular nation especially a native-speaking one, should provide the principle component of cultural contents used in classroom. ELT and learning practices in Thailand in this era that adhere to globalization, in the end, should be supportive of cultural diversity. That is to say, English language teaching (especially in culture-related courses) should serve as a starting point for the understanding of international values (Matsuda, 2002). In particular, since lingua franca is principally intended to bring people together (Modiano, 1999), students have to be exposed to various cultures different from their own through learning English. This way, students can use English

to explore several parts of the world and gain a wider knowledge of international cultural discourses useful for their future inter-linguacultural encounters (Seidlhofer, 2009). With attention to international understanding, Matsuda (2002) raised her concern that limited exposure to varieties of English or cultural knowledge may cause students to form the idea of resistance and confusion when being confronted with unfamiliar cultures or speakers of English from other lingua-cultural backgrounds.

In order to prevent students from growing disrespectful to their own and other non-mainstream cultures, McKay (2002) highlights three principles informing how cultural contents can be approached in a global English classroom:

First, the materials should be used in such a way that students are encouraged to reflect on their own culture in relation to others, thus helping to establish a sphere of interculturality. Second, the diversity that exists within all cultures should be emphasized. And finally, cultural content should be critically examined so that students consider what assumptions are present in the text and in what other ways the topic could be discussed" (p. 100)

Thus far, the illustrations of the linguistic and cultural dimensions of method as constructs of marginality prevalent in the Thai contexts allow us to perceive that a devitalizing monolingual/monocultural bias has ideologically manifested itself in disapproval or marginalization of non-mainstream values (Canagarajah, 1999b). By contrast, this dichotomizing linguistic/cultural perspective forcefully exalts the power and prestige of the mainstream. Given the preceding concrete existence of imperialist assumptions in ELT, the interpretation of learning goal and the *de facto* classroom practices engineered by imperialist projects reflect how English is kept under control by native speakers (Widdowson, 1994) rather than the study of English as a truly international language. The learning condition that clings to the colonial concept of method, consequently, blocks learners from developing their own voices or social identities through experience of using English (Boriboon, 2004) because it does not take into account learners' rich repertoire and knowledge about

social, historical and cultural issues rooted in local contexts (Kramsh & Sullivan, 1996; McKay, 2002). Moreover, when learners acknowledge that local wisdoms or materials are inferior to those of native speakers, they are likely to devalue their own status of being non-native speakers and also denigrate local linguistic norms and knowledge (Canagarajah, 1999a, 1999b; Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Pennycook, 1994; Phillipson, 1992).

Since the native-speaker construct and the notion of authenticity in language teaching and learning has never been the subject of controversy, the imperialist structure of exploitation of the native speaking West seems to be entrenched firmly in English language education in periphery (Thomas, 1999). In Modiano's (2001) point of view, such positioning supports the belief that the promotion of English sabotages linguistic and cultural diversity. As he puts it: "English virtually Anglo-Americanizes or *Britishizes* [italic added] the non-native speaker" (Modiano, 2001, p. 340). Thus, in the context of ELT in Thailand, it is not surprising why many English teachers become convinced by the claim that learning native-speaker culture/customs and appreciating native speakers' ways of life will help enrich learners' linguistic and paralinguistic repertoires as well as provide them ability to use the language more effectively, naturally and appropriately in an authentic context. This ideological construct echoes Buripakdi's (2008) criticism on the politics of English in Thailand as she noted that although Thailand has never been colonized physically, she is colonized linguistically.

Undeniably, when the pedagogical practice is geared towards linguistic and cultural hegemony of native-speaker standards, it is not an exaggeration to claim that the learning of English is automatically translated into the learning of America or Britain (Shin, 2004). The mastery of English now "stands both as a means for the elite ... to access the world system, and as a barrier to keep all but native speakers out of the highest levels of power" (Hadley, 2004, p. 44). In short, it is crystal clear that native speakers play an inevitable role in ELT in Thailand (Methitham, 2009; Todd, 2006). Thousands of both private and state schools and universities hire native speakers to teach English with the belief that native speakers can provide authentic language usage and native-based cultural information to English learners. Many of these institutes often announce in their advertising that only native English teachers are

preferred. The vast majority of advertisements seeking for an English teacher often include statements like the following:

Applicants must be from the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and/or Europe Only. Non-native speakers of English (Indian, Filipinos, etc.) please do not apply. (cited in Methitham, 2009, p. 148)

Native English speakers from the U.S., the U.K., New Zealand, Canada, and Australia only (Please note that all other nationalities will not be considered). (cited in Methitham, 2009, p. 148)

Moreover, the icon of native speaker is sometimes used as a source of pride. As Bambose (2001) highlights it: "... a so-called "Global English School" in Thailand boasts on its Internet home page that "All of our English teachers are native speakers, teaching natural English as it is spoken in real conversation"” (p. 360).

It should be noted that most employment advertisements or statements placing hierarchy on native speakers in all kinds of press in Thailand implicitly convey the message of native English teachers as being better qualified than local non-native ones on the grounds of academic competence and professional performance (Methitham, 2009; Todd, 2006). This birthright identity, as Thomas (1999) argues, yields the fallacy that anyone who speaks an English variety deviant from a native speaker's cannot teach or is not even complied with the basic requirements as English teacher. Furthermore, this double standard discursively undermines the linguistic proficiency or pedagogical competence of local non-native teachers (Thomas, 1999).

English as a Global Language

The promotion of English as the language of the immortalization of economic and political power of certain mainstream nations seems to neglect the fact of English linguistic internationalization in both global and local contexts. The process of making English the sole property of native speakers

seems to be invalid in terms of its spread and functional uses. This colonial promotion is, as many EIL scholars argue, irrelevant to how English is realistically used in the world context including Thailand. This is because English is not primarily used to communicate only with native speakers but also with non-native speakers who, in fact, account for the majority of English users in the world (Graddol, 2006; Jenkins, 2003; Todd, 2006). If statistics bears some points, in China alone, there are more English language learners than the populations of native-speaking countries (e.g., the United States, Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Ireland) combined (Kirkpatrick, 2007b). Simply put, the number of non-native speakers of English significantly surpassed that of native speakers. What is the significance of this fact? It is not an exaggeration to say that the assumption that Thai English speakers learn English in order to interact with native speakers of English and master native-speaker cultural literacy does not always hold true anymore. According to Matsuda (2002), teachers, teaching English as a global language, should inform students that “their future interlocutors may be non-native speakers just like themselves” (p. 439) and should also shape their understanding that the world that can be accessed with English is not limited to only native English speaking counties. Hence, if Thai English users are likely to use English mainly in Thailand to interact more with Thais and other non-native speakers than with native speakers, “then the way those people speak English becomes more important than the way native speakers speak English” (Kirkpatrick, 2007a, p. 23).

If we treat English as a tool for global communication, it is reasonable enough to consider it as a truly international language not a language of power used for colonizing others in scholastic, linguistic, cultural and economic domains (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Concerning the spread of English as a global language, English should, therefore, be viewed in the democratic sense of linguistic dehegemonization and pluralization not McDonaldization and Britishization, the terms counted as a prototype of the capitalism paradigm (Ritzer, 1993). Adding to this, Kachru (1992) points out that English should be dissociated with the colonial past and should be regarded as a decentralized language catering functional communicative purposes for whoever uses it. To elaborate, when English is used across lingua-cultural boundaries to serve different communities for various purposes, it can no longer be authorized

by native speakers or be labeled as the language of certain native-speaking nations (Cook, 1999; Holliday, 2006; Jenkins, 2003; Kachru, 1992; McKay, 2003; Modiano, 1999; Seidlhofer, 2009; Widdowson, 1994).

Widdowson (1994) articulates that by learning English, it does not necessarily mean that we have to internalize native-speaker view of the world or abandon our own identities. To learn a language, by contrast, “is immediately to have right in it. You may add to it, modify it, play with it, create in it, ignore bits of it, as you will” (Crystal, 2001, p. 21). This is because the concept of mastery in English as a global language is shifted from native-like competence to macro-acquisition frameworks (Brutt-Griffler, 2002). This paradigm shift considers the mastery of English not as the imitation and approximation of the conventional norms of native speakers but as the adaptation of the language for serving communicative purposes and projecting one’s own identity. Adopting an international approach to viewing the concept of mastery in English, Widdowson (1994) portrays: “You are proficient in a language to the extent that you possess it, make it your own, bend it to your will, assert yourself through it rather than simply submit to the dictates of its form” (p. 384).

A Need for Critical Pedagogy in Language Classroom

Influenced by Freire’s pedagogy of the oppressed which refers to “the process of reading words through the reading of the world” (Shin, 2004, p. 71), Pennycook (1990) regards critical pedagogy as the pedagogy of post-colonialism which promotes nonconformity of the dominant discourse in ELT. Why do we have to critique a body of knowledge lying under the concept of linguistic or cultural imposition determined by the dominant discourses of society? It is believed by post-colonial critical applied linguists that the school today or more appropriately in the neocolonial present, “shapes the consciousness and behavior of the students by distributing the cultural practices of the dominant groups as the norm. Students who acquired this linguistic and cultural capital would grow to justify and serve the interests of the dominant groups” (Canagarajah, 1999b, p. 28). Canagarajah (*ibid.*) considers this subtle socio-political force in schooling systems as a cyclical process. He notes that “the dominant social arrangement passes on its values to the school; the school passes on those values to students; the students uphold the status quo” (p. 23) imposed

on them. This is the reason why we need a resistance model that is based on post-colonial perspectives assuming that knowledge is socially constructed and is not considered as having one universally true view of entity or fact in which one-size-fits-all information, rules or competent evidence invented by the West are to be simply and unquestionably made present to students to internalize (Canagarajah, 1999b).

In light of this, by resisting imperialism, Pennycook (1990) emphasizes that acquisition of English knowledge does not necessarily have to be considered as the “acquisition of a fixed body of cultural knowledge *of some dominant groups* [italic added]... but as a means for learners to decode and demythologize their own cultural traditions and the inequitable structure of their society” (p. 309). Providing similar ground to Pennycook, Methitham (2009) acknowledges that broad social issues concerning linguistic or cultural power, inequality and discrimination are worth addressing in the teaching of English for speakers of other languages (TESOL). These socio-political issues, as believed by Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999), help create the sense of self-efficacy in challenging the dominant discourse in language education or the schooling system that promotes, legitimizes and generates an unequal distribution of power and resources (Phillipson, 1992).

According to Thomas (1999), “if TESOL is to be a pedagogy of possibility” (p. 12) and liberation, we should assume that second language users around the globe “are not merely passive consumers of culture and knowledge but active creators” (Pennycook, 2000, p. 84) in the sense that they can use the language to project their ethnic and cultural identity. Following the manner of linguistic liberalization (Kachru, 1992), we cannot use native-speaker ideology as the norm for forming hypothesis about the use, learning and teaching of English in several non-native contexts. This is because, as Kramsh and Sullivan (1996) postulate, “authentic native-speaker discourse in London or New York might not be quite appropriate for speakers of English in other parts of the world; what is authentic in one context might need to be made appropriate to another” (p. 199). It should also be noted that even though appropriate communicative language in periphery may follow similar pedagogic nomenclature as in a native-speaking country, classroom practice must be different. That is to say, teachers should approach ELT in ways that they creatively adapt

it to local needs, realities and conditions (Kramsh & Sullivan, 1996). Supporting this pedagogic guideline, Widdowson (1994) illustrates that “innovation indicates that the language has been learned, not just as a set of fixed conventions to conform to, but as an adaptable resource for making meaning” (p. 384). Despite the difficulty of resisting linguistic and cultural imperialism or divorcing native -speaker culture from ELT, and making learners swallow the newer paradigm of ELT that global English brings, Modiano (2001) suggests:

The teaching and learning of a geographically, politically, and culturally ‘neutral’ form of English, which is perceived as a language of wider communication and not possession of native speakers, is one of the few options we have at hand if we want to continue to promote English language learning while at the same time attempting to somehow ‘neutralize’ the impact which the spread of English has on the cultural integrity of the learner. (p. 344)

Further, many scholars (e.g., Graddol, 2000, 2006; Modiano, 2001; Widdowson, 1994) emphasize that we should regard English as a utilitarian tool for communication, on the one hand and as a tool for preserving users’ discursive cultural characteristics and their ethnic identities, on the other. Said another way, it is not appropriate to regard the learning and teaching of English as an “avenue into cultural indoctrination” (Modiano, 2001, p. 340) nor as an avenue into disseminating colonization. Thus, in order to release ELT from the authoritative discourse, or in Kramsh and Sullivan’s (1996) words, “from Anglo-Saxon commercial practice” (p. 200), critical pedagogy in language classroom is inevitable (Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Shin, 2004; Pennycook, 1994, 2000). By this pedagogical means, dominant social order, that creates inequality, hegemony, discrimination and oppression, can be reevaluated and revolutionalized.

Having set the scene of global language capitalism, Phillipson (1992) argues that ELT is focused on linguistics, psychology and education in a narrow sense. Consequently, little attention has been paid to “the international relations, development studies, theories of culture or intercultural contact, or the politics of language or education” (p. 348). He also claims that ELT cannot

be dissociated from political concerns. Moreover, Pennycook (1994, 2000) articulates that not only do we have to realize the role of English in the world but we also have to be conscious of the world in English. He elaborates that “language plays a central role in how we understand ourselves and the world, and thus all questions of language control and standardization have major implications for social relations and the distribution of power” (Pennycook, 2000, p. 84). Thus, speakers of English as international language (EIL) should come to realize the extent to which English is concerned with the political, academic, communal and economic living of a country (Pennycook, 2000).

What have been said above are pedagogical frameworks derived from theoretical, empirical and experiential insights of several post-colonial applied linguists. But what has remained untouched is what to do with critical praxis or how to put these theoretical assumptions into practical reality. Synthesizing Freire’s liberating education which aims at revolutionizing oppressive characteristics of the society and subverting such reproduction, Brutt-Griffler and Samimy (1999) developed nine values of the Freirean Pedagogy serving as a conceptual guideline to be implemented in classroom teaching and planning. Language classroom is meant to be...

1. Participatory, meaning that the teaching and learning process is both interactive and cooperative;
2. Situated, so that materials are located in students’ language, events, and culture;
3. Critical, in that the design of the class promotes both self-reflection and social reflection;
4. Democratic, with discourse produced by the students and teacher in cooperation;
5. Dialogic, meaning that the class consists of dialogue centered on concerns posed by teacher and students;
6. Desocializing, or constructed to dissuade students from passivity in the classroom;
7. Multicultural, in that it affirms the complexity of the multiple cultures in society;
8. Research oriented, combining teaching and learning with classroom and community research by the teacher and the students into the sociolinguistic and social pedagogical context;

9. Activist, aiming to lead to practical results when possible.
(Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999, p. 420)

Employing the above basic principles of critical pedagogy in language teaching and planning, classroom is believed to be an ideal place where students' consciousness about the political roles of English in the world can be raised. As critical pedagogy, discussed above, encourages language learners to always question the dominant norm or model that is inappropriate in the sense that it is subject to unfair standards, they should no longer see themselves as linguistic imitators or followers who always need to look up to native speakers of English for enlightening, thinking that they are well-resourced with readily available instructional answers to solve all the recurrent pedagogical problems of classroom practice (Kumaravadivelu, 2003). Setting linguistic standards without critical consciousness of global English, as claimed by Canagarajah (1999b) and Matsuda (2002, 2003), may cause learners to supremely depend on forms of Western literacy that sometimes have limited values and seem inappropriate for local context (e.g. the priority of certain culture over another in ELT or the pedagogy forcing learners to uphold the status quo of the dominant groups).

Closing Remarks

In an attempt to create a learning condition that enables language learners to deal with both native and non-native speakers of English in the global world market, approaches to ELT should be based on macro-acquisition frameworks (Brutt-Griffler, 2002) that take into account linguistic and cultural diversity of contexts in which English is used. McKay (2002) suggests that classroom materials especially the ones containing cultural contents should be sensitive and respective of local scholastic wisdoms. Therefore, the prevalent use of Western-based cultural information should be questioned for its relevance to learners' lived experience. This is reflected in Boriboon's (2004) study where Thai English learners want to talk about "plaa raa" (local Thai fermented fish) rather than "hamburger" when it comes to cultural learning.

More interesting, in order to forge the quality of ELT in Thailand and catch up with the internationalization of English, we need the appropriate pedagogy that prepares “learners to be both global and local speakers of English and to feel at home in both international and national cultures” (Kramsh & Sullivan, 1996, p. 211). The expression of “thinking globally, acting locally”, as given by Kramch and Sullivan, can be referred to as the concept of recognizing the role English plays in the global world and then considering the ways English is used or appropriated to suit local needs. McKay (2002) illustrates this point:

The concept of thinking globally but acting locally is highly relevant to the teaching of EIL. The evidence clearly suggests that the use of EIL will continue to grow, an international language that belongs, not just to native speakers, but to all of its users. Given this shift in ownership, the time has come for decisions regarding teaching goals and approaches to be given to local educators so that they can take their rightful place as valid users of English, for, in the end, they are in the best position to understand what their students need to know, and to encourage them to learn and use English fully to participate in our growing global community. (p. 129)

In addition to McKay’s approach to teaching English as an international language, it is important to acknowledge that the newer paradigm of ELT should go beyond the native and non-native speaker dichotomy. To do so, a critical pedagogy should be employed as an ideal approach to raising learners’ critical consciousness about English in the global context and its social, cultural and political implications (Shin, 2004). However, it should be noted that a critical pedagogy will never be successful without pedagogic cooperation between teachers and learners. With reference to Methitham’s (2009) proposal in promoting a critical approach to language learning and teaching, teachers and learners should come together to help each other elevate not just linguistic skills, but also broad social literacy or real-world issues outside of classroom. By incorporating such social concerns as colonialism or imperialism into applied

linguistics (Kachru, 1992), teachers work with their learners sharing opinions about certain social or schooling issues that happen to be disenfranchised by the dominant or colonial discourse. By exchanging viewpoints, learners are encouraged to reflect on their thoughts and are expected to practice critical thinking and provide critical reasons for their justifications (Methitham, 2009). Ideally, classroom, according to Freire (1970) is defined as a place where students can be empowered as legitimate speakers or users of English through problem posing and awareness-raising activities. Following Freire's pedagogy of the oppressed, the end goal of adopting a critical pedagogy in classroom practice is, thus, to help learners achieve critical consciousness. With critical consciousness, we can shift from seeing ourselves as linguistic followers and considering Thailand as a norm-dependent country to liberating ourselves as legitimate speakers of English and considering our nation as a norm-developer where local educational values can be kept alive (Kramsh & Sullivan, 1996).

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