The Profession as a Change Agent
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The Summit on the Future of the TESOL Profession that took place in Athens earlier this year was both timely and significant. It was timely because several key areas of the TESOL profession have witnessed rapid changes and development; it was significant that TESOL International Association, as a peak professional body with international standing, has explicitly signalled that 'business as usual' won't do any more, and that we, TESOL professionals should appraise our thinking and practices to make our profession fit for the future. The scale and scope of this appraisal are considerable. For instance, the posts by TESOLers to the online Summit discussion forum raised a large number of concerns which included (in no particular order): native speaker-ness, changing employment/work opportunities in different world locations, career/professional development, interculturality, multilingualism, notions of language competence, use of technology, ethical responsibilities, and assessment. Many of these concerns were picked up at the Summit by the speakers and participants under the four inter-related themes: English in Multilingualism, Futurology, Re-imagining English Competence, and the Profession as a Change Agent. My conversations with colleagues from different parts of the world at the Summit left me with little doubt that as a profession we cannot afford to stand still while changes and developments in the linguistic and educational landscape proceed apace.

In one sense the idea of change is not new to any teacher. Additional/second language teachers meet and work with new students regularly; every new academic year or every new course brings fresh faces. As teachers we make adjustments, however large or small, in the teaching content and classroom activities to help promote student learning. Every time we move to a new post, whether in the same or different institution, we adapt our professional practice to fit in with the curriculum, ethos and work organisation in the new environment. So 'change' in itself is a part of our routine professional experience. But I think we are talking about 'change' in a more profound sense here. In this instance, 'change' is a portmanteau term that means a combination of expanding our knowledge base, adapting and adjusting our teaching practices in a principled way, and advocating innovations and reforms. In my contribution to the theme of the Profession as a Change Agent, I focus on the idea of 'enquiry' as a prime motor for change, and I speak as a TESOL teacher and researcher.

Enquiry is important because a significant part of our professional practice is knowledge-based, and our professional knowledge base has been expanding and changing quite substantially in many areas. We need to constantly update our knowledge base as it impacts on professional practice and teacher education directly. A first step to update our knowledge base is to find out what we already know and what else we need to know. Enquiry in this sense is both a disposition and an activity to reflect on our existing, possibly taken-for-granted repertoire, and to explore new and novel knowledge that is relevant to our profession. So what counts as our professional knowledge base? For me there are three inter-related domains: TESOL content, ways of teaching, and professional norms and values. I will elaborate on each of these three domains.

TESOL Content

All teachers work with a body of subject knowledge. In the case of TESOL teachers the subject knowledge is related to the English language (and language in general). There are two aspects to this subject knowledge. The first is concerned with the teacher's own knowledge (and skills) of English including vocabulary, grammar and pragmatic use in spoken and written forms. This is an important issue for all TESOL teachers, whether they are first-language or additional-language speakers of English. For a time there was an implicit assumption that first-language English speakers' would automatically have the requisite knowledge and skills for teaching, and the question of English language proficiency would only be applicable to additional-language speakers. We now know that it would be unwise to make that assumption; individual first-language speakers' English language knowledge and skills, just as that of additional-language speakers, can vary for a number of reasons (such as their speech community backgrounds and educational experience). It is important to reflect on our own English language knowledge and skills in relation to the type and level of teaching we are engaged with, and to enquire what further English language knowledge and skills we may need to teach effectively. Teaching English for Academic Purposes (EAP) to a class of first-year university students of Economics in Sydney will, for instance, require the teacher to know about, *inter alia*, (at least some) Economics content and language use in that discipline; teaching English in an Early Years immersion programme in South Korea will require very different language knowledge and skills sets.

The second aspect is related to teachers' knowledge of the 'states' of English in the world. I am referring to the different World Englishes (e.g. standard British English, Singaporean English), different and constantly developing uses of English in specific fields of activity (e.g. computing, gaming, sports), and the uses of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF, e.g. the use of English as the shared language of professional communication by engineers from, say, Germany, India and Mexico). The TESOL profession is increasingly aware that for a large number of learners and users of English in the world, the language norms and practices associated with English are to various degrees localised and/or specific to particular activities (e.g. the use of English in legal practice in Hong Kong). Teachers of English would need to know and understand how English is used in specific contexts to order to develop appropriate teaching materials and activities, and to adopt locally tuned language sensibilities in terms of appropriate use. Insistence on applying the norms and practices

associated with standard varieties of English from the Anglophone countries such as Australia, UK and USA may be irrelevant, or worse, inappropriate to the learners and users. English teachers, no matter where they are teaching in the world, would need to regularly enquire the diverse 'states' of English as part of their professional repertoire and update themselves accordingly. Thus, a teacher of English working with a group of diplomats in Buenos Aires may need to devise differentiated teaching content and assessment for those destined for New York and Brussels.

Ways of Teaching

There are a number of well-established teaching approaches in our field. These include the Direct Method, Grammar-Translation, Audio-lingual Method and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). In recent years CLT has been promoted strongly in teacher training programmes and teaching materials. We also know that individual teachers often combine elements of different approaches in their classroom work. This reflects the fact that teachers have to make pragmatic decisions to accommodate both policy-cum-curriculum expectations, and real-life *in situ* conditions and requirements. For instance, a teacher working with large classes of 50+ beginner-level students might incorporate elements of the Direct Method into a CLT-oriented activities. Furthermore, it is well recognised that teachers' thinking and professional conduct are influenced by their own experience of education. Teaching is at once a complex intellectual, academic and practical activity, and informed decision-making is a key ingredient in effective teaching. If by effective teaching we mean 'effective from the point of view of student learning', then we need to enquire about the appropriateness of our own pragmatism and past experience to form the basis of informed decision-making. If we are concerned with the effectiveness of our teaching, the best way to find out is by getting student feedback, to find out if our perceptions of our students' needs correspond to what they want. This means making enquiries through a variety of means, e.g. using classroom dialogue to find out about students' understanding of teaching content, analysing students' strengths and weaknesses in assignments and assessment tasks, and gathering student feedback through end of term/course evaluation. Beyond the direct interface with students, teacher enquiry may also look into the pedagogic principles such as teaching English monolingually through English only, or teaching English through a combination of English and students' other languages.

Professional Norms and Values

I hope it is quite clear from the above discussion that norms and values are infused into every aspect of teachers' professional practice. However, because they are often naturalized and routinized in our everyday practice, we need to take every available opportunity to hold them up as objects of our critical reflection. For example, the reference to first-language like pronunciation for benchmarking student performance is often accepted without question. Is first-language like pronunciation appropriate and necessary for all English learners, irrespective of their purpose of learning and intended use? One of the principles of CLT is to teach language holistically, and for that reason it is held that grammar should be taught inductively. But should the teaching of grammar be always embedded in meaningful use, or is there a place for teaching grammar rules in advance of actual use? These are the kind of

enquiries that we as teachers should engage with to ensure that our teaching serves the needs and wants of our students well.

Concluding Remarks

In this discussion I have discussed the idea of change in two senses – changing our own thinking and changing our practice in response to the changing 'states' of English in the world. Change is regarded as a continuous and unceasing process, an intrinsic part of our professionalism. Enquiry plays a key part in this process. Teachers, and their students, however, do not work in an educational vacuum. Their classroom activities reflect and enact curricular specifications, intellectual and professional beliefs and values, and education policies. For the kinds of change discussed in this discussion to take place, we would need the diverse groups of stakeholders and organisations to participate and engage in the enquiries needed. TESOL International Association, as an international professional organisation, is well-placed to support and promote this development.

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