Transforming Our Professional Identities and Classroom Practices: Innovations That Have Changed ELT

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My beginnings

Hans	Hallo, Sabine. Wie geht's?
Sabine	Gut, danke. Wohin gehst Du?
Hans	Zur Mensa. Es gibt Mitagsessen.
Sabine	Was denn? Schon wieder Bratwurst?
Hans	Nein, Schweinebraten mit Kartoffelpuree.
Sabine	Lecker! Ich komme mit!

Audiolingualism

The AL dialog
The AL drill

T: Ich esse gerne Bratwurst.
S: Ich esse gerne Bratwurst.
T: Wienerschnitzel...
S: Ich esse gerne Wienerschnitzel.
T: Hans...
S: Hans ißt gerne Wienerschnitzel.
T: Hans und Sabine...

Fast forward 50 years...

A plethora of options

BUT ... WAIT!
How did we get from there to here?
Innovations in practice

Innovation--What is it?

Innovations that have changed ELT

1. Digital platforms (e.g., Edmodo, Blackboard, Moodle)
2. Online corpora
3. Online teacher networks
4. Mobile learning
5. Communicating with others online
6. Online authentic materials
7. Interactive whiteboards
8. "Unplugged" teaching
9. Student-centered teaching
10. Critical thinking

Classroom innovations

Pondering my answers
Time out!

My personal “top ten”

The “what” & the “why”

A “shift in the focus of language education research and practice from language and linguistics to language learners and language learning”

Brinton (2012, p. 30)
Primary value placed on the socio-affective domain of teaching
Involvement of learners in the design of curricular goals
Learner needs and interests taken into account in curriculum design
Learners assume responsibility for their own learning

**Student-centered learning**

WHY

Brinton (in press)

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**Authenticity**

**WHAT**

Nunan (2014, p. 461)

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Increases learner motivation due to the real-world nature of the tasks and materials
Prepares learners for the real world of communication
Provides exposure to unregulated native-speaker language use
Contains discourse features and practices not otherwise encountered in text-driven courses

**Authenticity**

WHY

Nunan (2014)

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**AUTHENTIC MATERIALS**
...spoken and written material that has been produced for purposes of communication, not for purposes of language teaching

**AUTHENTIC TASKS**
...the greater the link between the pedagogical and the experiential worlds, the greater the task authenticity.

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**A vestige of the past?**

Brinton & Neuman (1982)
Alternative assessment

WHAT

, assessment practices that engage learners in demonstrating their skills in communicative and authentic tasks that use explicit criteria tied to learning aims to record and interpret student performance.

Katz (2014, p. 321)

Alternative assessment

WHY

Criteria for successful completion of the assessment measure set up in advance

Provides students with latitude in crafting their responses; there is no pre-determined “correct” response

Assessment is criterion-referenced or performance-based (based on classroom instructional activities or real life situations)

Involves learners themselves in the assessment process (e.g., via self assessments)

Murray & Christison (2011)

Reflective teaching

WHAT

Critical reflection refers to an activity or process in which experience is recalled, considered, and evaluated, usually in relation to a broader purpose. It is a response to a past experience and involves conscious recall and examination of the experience as a basis for evaluation and decision making and as a source for planning and action.

Richards, as cited in Farrell (1998, p. 15)
Reflective teaching

**WHY**
- Encourages teachers to critically examine how they teach
- Allows them to identify and articulate their belief systems
- Exposes gaps between theory and practice
- Allows teachers to make informed changes in their teaching practices

Classroom research

**WHAT**
- Farrell (1998): “...research on second language learning and teaching, all or part of whose data are derived from the observation or measurement of the classroom performance of teachers and students.”

Classroom research

**WHAT**

Classroom research

**WHY**
- Sheds light on the role of input in language acquisition
- Underscores the importance of student-student interaction and negotiation of meaning
- Analyzes the effect of feedback on students’ language production
- Confirms the importance of form-focused instruction

English for specific purposes

**WHAT**
- Lightbown (2017): English for specific purposes
- ESP constitutes one of two branches of SFL teaching... [wherein] the focus is narrowed to the language and discourse features that are most needed for the learners’ occupational or vocational needs.
English for specific purposes

Orr (2002); Paltridge & Starfield (2013)

 Constitutes a response to highly-specialized academic or workplace settings.

 Presents a tailor-made "language package" to specific communities of learners.

 Prioritizes the language, skills, and genres underlying the activities that learners need to carry out.

 Congruent with the goals of EIL, enabling L2-L2 communication within and across professions.

WHY

Integrating language and content

Davison & Williams (2001, p. 57)

...a heuristic label for a group of curriculum approaches which share a concern for facilitating language learning broadly defined, through varied but systematic linking of subject matter and language in the context of learning activities.

WHAT

Professional Communication Skills for Leaders

Core Curriculum


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Integrating language and content

**WHY**

- Provides high face validity with students due to the authentic source materials and tasks
- Integrates focus on form and skill-based instruction with content mastery
- Provides a meaningful context for the language learning to occur via exposure to high-level academic content
- Encompasses work on academic skills that can transfer to other academic disciplines

**Brinton & Snow (2017)**

Needs assessment

**WHAT**

Needs assessment involves gathering information through a variety of means such as in-class observation of students, interviewing or surveying students and other stakeholders, diagnostic and placement tests, document analysis, and target situation analysis...

**Graves (2016, p. 16)**

**WHY**

- Gauges not only the learners’ needs and lacks (what they cannot do) but also their wants (what they hope to learn)
- Guides the determination of syllabus content and priorities
- Takes into consideration learners’ needs in a target situation
- Analyzes the linguistic skills and knowledge required for learners to perform competently in the target situation

**Needs assessment**

**World Englishes**

**WHAT**

World Englishes are regionally distinct varieties of English that have arisen in areas of Asia, Africa, and Oceania, where there is a long (often colonial) history of English being widely used in education, commerce, and government… (this) has given rise to local varieties of English with their own standards.

**Celce-Murcia (2014, pp. 63-64)**
**World Englishes**

**WHY**

- Exposes all involved to the rich varieties of English being used in today’s world.
- Gives due recognition to the process of linguistic change and innovation.
- Establishes locally sensitive norms for English language standards.
- Recognizes that L2-L3 interactions are no longer the norm and that World English pedagogies must give voice to L2-L2 interactions.

**Digital Technology**

**WHAT**

- Digital technologies are electronic tools, systems, devices and resources that generate, store or process data. These include social media, online games and applications, multimedia, productivity applications, cloud computing, interoperable systems and mobile devices.

**WHY**

- Reflective practice mandates that we make “tacit beliefs and practical knowledge explicit” (Crandall, 2000) and that we recall, consider, and evaluate our experiences (Ferrell, 1998).
- Over the course of our professional lives, as we amass classroom experiences, we are exposed to research results, methodological innovations, and changes in our teaching contexts that significantly impact how we conduct our practice.
- We may also conduct classroom research that enables us to “investigate the teaching and learning processes in our classrooms” (Rahilly, 2014).
- In this manner, we strive to learn more about our practices with the ultimate goal of becoming more effective teachers.

**Digital Technology**

**WHAT**

- Blake (2013)

**WHY**

- Blake (2013); Motteram (2013)

**Transforming our professional identities?**

**WHAT**

- Provides vast resources of authentic input in the target language.
- Creates opportunities for interaction, fosters the negotiation of meaning, and assists learners in their search for knowledge.
- Facilitates the transition from a teacher-centered classroom to a student-directed learning environment.
- Meets the aspirations of students seeking creativity, agency, and collaborative learning.

**WHY**

- Meets the aspirations of students seeking creativity, agency, and collaborative learning.
- Facilitates the transition from a teacher-centered classroom to a student-directed learning environment.
- Creates opportunities for interaction, fosters the negotiation of meaning, and assists learners in their search for knowledge.
- Provides vast resources of authentic input in the target language.

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Emerging trends

A brave new world?

- The “what”
  - Keep up to date to inform yourself about research and innovations in teaching practice.
  - Be open to change.

- The “why”
  - Question the underlying principles of new innovations.
  - Ascertain whether the innovation is congruent with your beliefs and your identity as a teacher.

“When you’re finished changing, you’re finished.”

Benjamin Franklin

Thank you!

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References


References, continued


References, continued


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Reflective practice mandates that we in the English language teaching (ELT) profession make “tacit beliefs and practical knowledge explicit” (Crandall, 2000) and that we recall, consider, and evaluate our experiences (Ferrell, 1998). Over the course of our professional lives, as we amass classroom experiences, we are exposed to research results, methodological innovations, and changes in our teaching contexts that significantly impact how we conduct our practice. We may also conduct classroom research that enables us to “investigate the teaching and learning processes in our classrooms” (Bailey, 2014). In this manner, we strive to learn more about our practices with the ultimate goal of becoming more effective teachers.

In her talk, Donna Brinton reflects on her ELT career, and considers the ten innovations that have had the most impact on her own teaching. She concludes with a discussion of predicted trends in the future of ELT, contemplating the types of innovations that may arise as a response to these trends.

