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# The Complexity of Providing Feedback when Teachers and Students Speak Different Varieties of English in Transnational Language Teaching Contexts

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**Abstract:** The paradigm of English as an international language has shifted the ways in which we think about the ownership and use of English, particularly because it is estimated that more than 80% of communication in English is between non-native speakers of English. When so many varieties of Englishes are acknowledged as legitimate varieties, the question of assessing what it means to be proficient in English becomes critical. Through qualitative analysis, this study documents the ways in which American English teachers approached teaching English online to students in Nairobi, Kenya, and revealed the complexities of teaching and providing feedback in such transnational contexts, where teachers and students spoke different varieties of English.

**Keywords:** English as an international language, feedback, transnational language teaching

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### A. *English as an International Language: A Paradigm Shift*

The idea that English belongs to a particular group of speakers from English speaking countries began to be questioned when researchers recognized the increasing number of users of English that reside outside these countries (Crystal, 1997; Graddol, 1999). Kachru's (1988) conceptual framework challenging the traditional "native" "non-native" dichotomy developed three concentric circles to identify the variety of Englishes spoken in the world. According to his categorization of English users around the world, the inner circle comprises countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, where English is considered a "mother-tongue" variety. The outer circle includes some former colonies such as Kenya and India and other countries where English has an official role such as Singapore. The expanding circle includes countries such as Japan, Turkey and China, where English is considered an important foreign language. Researchers have also recognized the limitations of the three concentric circles, where all three identifying characteristics may be represented in one country such as in the case of India, Norway, and Australia.

Crystal (1997) estimated that there are 400 million speakers of English as a first language, 600 million as a second language and another 600 million as a foreign language. Like Crystal (1997), who estimated that 80% of communication in English is actually between English users from outer and expanding circles, Graddol (1999) writes, "The international status of English is changing in profound ways: in the future it will be a language used mainly in multilingual contexts as a second language and for communication between non-native speakers" (p. 57). The dichotomy of what constitutes a "native" and "non-native" speaker has come under considerable scrutiny as people grapple with the question regarding the ownership of English - Does English belong to inner circle English speaking countries or to all users of English (Widdowson, 1994)? Smith (1983) termed this the *denationalization* of English, though McKay (2002) asserts that English has also become *renationalized* in the sense that speakers are using it to express their own unique identities and cultural values. As such, English is used both locally within the *local* context and *globally*, to express local identities on the international platform (Kirkpatrick, 2010).



### B. *Pedagogical Implications from the TEIL Framework*

Sandra Lee McKay's (2002) seminal work on Teaching English as an International Language has pushed the field of TESOL to reconsider current conceptual and pedagogical approaches to teaching English, particularly in such global contexts. For example, in response to some of the pushback on communicative language teaching (CLT) in some cultural contexts, McKay (2002) questions the use of methods developed for language instruction within inner circle countries for methods that are more attuned to the local cultures of learning. She asserts that the teaching and learning of EIL commands a different set of assumptions as they relate to the role of English and the goal of approximating the native speaker model (McKay, 2002:12). Jenkins (2000) stressed the importance of adjusting methods of teaching English to be more attuned with the changing patterns of English use, which is now more often between non-native speakers of the language. Therefore, the traditional syllabi that focus on having a native speaker model or have as their primary focus, interactions between native speakers and non-native speakers need to be reexamined.

Matsuda (2003) found in her study that teachers were not as positive about including World Englishes in their teaching, though she states that teachers are becoming more open to the idea. This is an important notion in teacher education because if we are truly going to be socio-culturally sensitive (Alsagoff, McKay, Hu & Renandya, 2012) to the needs of the local community, we need to also consider its goals and the specific model of English the students wish to approximate. It appears then, that for teachers attempting to situate their pedagogical practice within the EIL paradigm, they would need to be sensitive to the needs and goals of their students, and also be aware of the historical, political, and socio-cultural dimensions that have influenced the status of English in the country in which they seek to teach.

### C. *Challenges of Assessment in Teaching English in Transnational Contexts*

One of the oft-debated areas within the EIL framework is the question of which variety of English to use in assessment. For example, researchers in inner circle English speaking countries have recognized the value of providing corrective written feedback (WCF) (Bitchener, 2008; Ferris 1995), but have also recognized the complex layers of variables that influence how feedback is received by learners (Rasekh & Ravand, 2011). According to Van Beuningen (2010), WFC "has the ability to foster SLA and lead to accuracy development" (p. 21) by allowing learners to notice their own gaps and engage in what he calls, "metalinguistic

reflection." Though allowing learners to recognize their own gaps is important for language acquisition, what exactly these gaps are and how these gaps are identified becomes unclear when working in contexts where different varieties are spoken. In one camp, Davies, Hamp-Lyons, & Kemp (2003) takes on the Standard English variety and on the other, there are proponents of World Englishes (Lowenberg, 2012). Lowenberg (2012) believes that the diversification of English can no longer be ignored in attempting to assess English language proficiency. Hu (2012) also criticizes traditional forms of assessment that do not consider the changing uses of English in transnational contexts. Canagarajah (2006) describes the challenges of the notion of assessment from any particular variety of English and instead believes that assessment should focus on "strategies of negotiation, situated performance, communicative repertoire, and language awareness" (p. 230), though such ideas have not manifested into standard assessment practices in the field as yet.

As English language teaching is continuing to transcend boundaries of English varieties, it opens up many opportunities for engaging in global understanding and exchange. However, in terms of pedagogical practice, the questions about which English to use, what materials and methods to use for instruction and what assessment measures to utilize continue to be important areas to examine in such contexts.

## 2. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

This study examines the challenges pre-service teachers in TESOL experienced in providing feedback on student assignments in one transnational language teaching and learning context, where the teachers and students spoke different varieties of English. Specifically, this study attempts to respond to two research questions:

- 1) How do American English speaking teachers in this study identify gaps or "errors" in the written and spoken assignments submitted by their Kenyan English speaking students?
- 2) In what ways does the process of engaging in collaborative discussions around teaching English as an international language support their understanding of the complexities surrounding this work?

## 3. RESEARCH CONTEXT

This study took place in a collaborative partnership between pre-service teachers in a TESOL program, the researcher who is also a faculty member within the TESOL program, and Kito International, a non-profit organization in Nairobi, Kenya in the fall of 2012. The



mission of this organization is to provide professional development opportunities and skills for homeless youth to successfully transition into society as a means out of poverty. This organization responds to the needs of the urban youth in Nairobi, Kenya where many youth are considered “at risk” according to *The Strategy Paper on Urban Youth in Africa* developed in collaboration with UN-Habitat’s Safer Cities Program and Partnership for Africa’s Development.

#### Kenyan Youth

A total of 21 Kenyan students (ten males and 12 females) participated in this study. Their ages ranged from 18 to 25 years of age.

#### Linguistic backgrounds

All the Kenyan students in this study reported that they were bilingual in Kiswahili and the local Kenyan English variety. According to Muriungi (2013), English and Kiswahili are the two official languages spoken in Kenya. English serves sociolinguistic functions such as instrumental (e.g. national exam), interpersonal (e.g. common language of communication), regulative (e.g. law) and creative functions (e.g. literature) (Michieka, 2005, pp. 180-183). It is also associated with high status jobs, the government, “significant factor in academic achievement” and “social mobility” (Dhillon and Wanjiru, 2013, p. 14). Kiswahili is used for social interactions within towns, trade between towns and some local jobs. Their native languages differed and included the following languages: Kereva, Kikuyu, Luhya, Luo, Dholuo and Nubian. Budohoska (2011) asserts that these languages link them to their family values, ethnic identities, and their rural homeland.

#### English Language Goals

Many of the students were planning to pursue entrepreneurial goals within Kenya. Their goals ranged from improving their English language skills to pursuing higher education, enhancing their business skills (“market Eco Safi products to increase sales”), starting their own businesses (“start a choreography school focused on acrobatics, dancing, and youth”), and empowering members of their communities (“I want to empower at least 100 youth in 2 years.”). Additionally, some of them wished to work for multinational corporations and organizations such as the United Nations, World Vision, USAID (U.S. Agency for International Development), and Amref Health Africa (International African health organization headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya).

## 4. METHODOLOGY

An online language program with the intention of supporting the English language needs and entrepreneurial goals of the Kenyan students was developed in consultation with the students, staff, and the director of Kito International. During the spring of 2013, this project was piloted with four of Kito’s staff members. In the fall of 2013, Kito staff members were paired with TESOL graduate students and one alumnus from the United States into collaborative teaching teams. This project was a two-year initiative with the intention of training the staff members, working with them on training their youth, and then handing over the curriculum to them to use with their subsequent cohorts following a handover-takeover model.

The teaching team met weekly from one to three hours to brainstorm lesson plan ideas, pre-screen and upload lessons, review student submissions and provide feedback. These teaching team meetings also served as Dialogical Learning Spaces, which provided a space to mediate teacher learning by working through questions, concerns, issues, and challenges surrounding pedagogical practice within this context (See Molina, 2015). There were eight weekly lessons in total delivered over a 14-16 week period.

#### A. Delivery System

iPads were used as a mode of delivery. The course was housed on the Edmodo online platform for education, which has a corresponding app on the iPad to facilitate the creation and delivery of lessons and feedback on student assignments. Youtube was also used to share video lessons and for students to develop their own videos for responding to certain asynchronous assignments such as their sales pitch videos. Lastly, Skype was used to record synchronous assignments such as their mock job interviews. All of this data was housed on Google Drive.

#### B. Research Participants

##### Teaching Team

The teaching team consisted of six American English speaking graduate students, three in their second year and three in their first year of the program, and one alumnus of a Master’s in TESOL program. All teachers who volunteered to participate in this study were females. The ages of the teaching team members ranged from 24-32 years of age. The researcher, serving also in the role as the teacher educator served as a consultant to this project and supported their learning process through weekly meetings.



In this study, document analysis was used to review teacher feedback on student written and spoken assignments. The written feedback data provided by the teachers on the students' assignments were available through the Edmodo platform. Spoken assignments were recorded on YouTube and Skype recording software and were transcribed and housed on Google Drive. A total of 63 written assignments and 28 spoken assignments with feedback were collected for analysis.

**TABLE I.** DATA ANALYSIS SEGMENTS

Data Analysis Segments	Data analysis segments and assignments		
	Total	Assignments	No.
Written assignments + feedback	63	Self-Introductions	33
		Business Letter	11
		Sales Brochure of Eco-Safi Products	9
		Company Research	4
		Resume	6
Spoken Asynchronous + feedback	28	Self-Introductions	24
		Sales Pitch of Eco-Safi Products	4
Spoken Synchronous + feedback	3	Student 1	1
		Student 2	1
		Student 3	1

### C. Data Analysis Process

Document analysis was used to analyze teacher feedback on student written assignments and synchronous and asynchronous video data documenting teacher feedback to students on spoken assignments. Document analysis is a procedure for evaluating documents, in this case the errors highlighted and identified in these assignments, in order to deepen empirical understanding of a phenomenon under investigation (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Atkinson & Coffey (1997) refer to these documents as "social facts," which are created and shared in socially organized ways (p. 47) within this transnational teaching context. Data sets with the feedback and the context in which this feedback occurred were extrapolated for analysis and the following themes were generated (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006; Labuschagne, 2003). Feedback data fell into five categories: 1) comments on quality of work (e.g. "Good job!"), 2) request for clarification/extension of ideas, 3) comments on grammatical features (e.g. subject and article omission, pronoun usage, verb tense), 4) comments on mechanical features (e.g. punctuation, capitalization, spelling), and 5) comments on pragmatic or stylistic features (e.g. format, phrasing). In addition to the categories described above, the spoken data also included feedback on the phonological features of student oral language. For the purpose of this article, only the grammatical, mechanical, pragmatic, and phonological categories will be discussed because these were often perceived as "errors" by the teachers, which is a notion

that is problematized within the framework of English as an International Language. For example, Jenkins (2000) states, "There is really no justification for doggedly persisting in referring to an item as 'an error' if the vast majority of the world's L2 English speakers produce and understand it" (p.160). These "errors" often fall under the grammatical and mechanical categories such as dropping the third person plural "s" or omitting articles.

## 5. FINDINGS

As we deployed the business English program through extensive research on best practices on teaching online and through assessing and addressing the needs of the students enrolled in the program, it became clear that the graduate students who served as teachers were met with some level of cognitive dissonance as they began to confront the notion of providing feedback in this transnational context. For example, in writing the business letter, the Kenyan students dated their letters following the British English format where the date precedes the month, which is then followed by the year. One of the graduate student teachers provided feedback where she stated that they should reverse the date notation to month followed by the date and then the year to which the Kenyan student responded through the chat box in Edmodo, "This is how we write dates in Kenya." In another example, most of the graduate students indicated that their students misspelled the word "learned," which they spelled with a "t" as in "learnt." These examples were highlighted during the teaching team meetings to illustrate the paradigm shift within the framework of EIL.

In the following section, the categories that teachers in this study perceived to be "errors" from the feedback data on the written and spoken assignments are presented. These "errors" were reviewed during the weekly teaching team meetings from the framework of EIL, where the graduate student teachers began to think more deeply about their students' linguistic backgrounds and goals, while reflecting on their own English frame of reference.

### A. Feedback on Written Assignments

The following table presents the grammatical, mechanical and pragmatic features that teachers highlighted as student errors on their students' written assignments. Of the 63 feedback data segments collected, the majority was focused on grammatical and mechanical issues with some commentary on the pragmatic aspects of writing. Table 2 below presents the sub-categories of these features and examples of each.



**TABLE II.** ERROR CATEGORIES IN WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS

Categories	Categories of student "errors" highlighted in the data	
	Subcategories	Examples
Grammatical	Subject omission Spelling Subject-verb agreement Article omission Preposition omission/misuse Word order	() Am 22 years old tyre bags costs Developed () program CEO () Kito International forwardly looking
Mechanical	Capitalization Pluralization Sentence boundaries  Punctuation	kito international youths ...we assure you that you will not be disappointed hope to hear from you soon In addition () we make sandals.
Pragmatic	Stylistic elements of writing Phrasing Lexical	Date - 25.3.2013 try our products and see intensity

The following section includes a business letter assignment that exemplifies some of the gaps identified.

**Figure 1. Example: Business Letter by Student M. M.**

kito international P.O. Box 62693-00200 Nairobi, Kenya  Ecosafi is KITO's environmentally friendly social enterprise helping youths get off the street by employing them in the organization. We have the best products which are eco friendly including ecosandals which are made from used tyres and beads, beads from used calendars, gift bags from recycled materials since we are committed to reduce environmentally harmful waste. We are hoping to work together with your company soon and support us in buying our products.
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There were several features that the teacher addressed in this passage including capitalization, subject omission, sentence boundaries, spelling, and the stylistic elements of writing. In the teaching team meetings, we learned that these features have been addressed in the EIL literature as features that characterize English in Lingua Franca communications.

#### *Subject-omission and sentence boundaries*

There were many other instances where students dropped their subjects in their written work, which were coupled with and also contributed to sentence boundary issues. For example, one student wrote, "Am forwardly looking for your response and feedback towards this," and another wrote, "am 22 years old." In reviewing the literature during our teaching team meetings, we found that some of the Bantu languages might have been influencing the subject omission. In Mugari's (2013) study comparing Italian and ChiShona, a Bantu language spoken by 75% of Zimbabweans, he found that ChiShona is a language that allows subject omission. Given that

many of our students in this study spoke a local language that was from the family of Bantu languages, this might have influenced their dropping of the subjects. Although, many languages do not follow the same pattern of sentence boundaries as English, the question remained as to what extent sentence boundaries can be expanded to accommodate the nativized English varieties, though in this study, it was pointed out as an "error" where teachers followed the inner circle rules around sentence boundaries.

#### *Spelling*

Another area that presented a learning opportunity for the teachers initially was the immediate identification of certain spelling errors. In the above example, "tyres" is spelled with a "y." "Learnt," "colour," "recognised," and "organisation" were other words that teachers had indicated as spelling errors. In the teaching team meetings, discussions about the colonial history of Kenya supported the teachers in recognizing how their spelling conventions might be influenced by the British English variety. One graduate student had a close friend from London and though initially she indicated these as "errors," she began to think from both the American English and British English varieties and was able to support her peers in understanding and contrasting the spelling conventions between the two varieties.

#### *Pragmatics: The stylistic elements of writing*

There were many stylistic issues identified from including the structure (e.g. date, address, salutation, closing) to the tone (formality) of writing. For this particular example, the teacher wrote, "Include a salutation: Dear Sir/Madam, Dear Ms. Smith, etc." Some teachers initially asked the students to use their recipient's last name, but through the teaching team meetings, they were familiarized with the formality of letters and norms of writing (e.g. salutations using Dear Sir/Madam) often used in post-colonial countries such as Kenya and India and reflected these new understandings in their feedback.

#### *B. Feedback on Spoken Assignments*

There were 31 instances of feedback data analyzed from the asynchronous (rehearsed) and synchronous (unrehearsed) spoken assignments. These segments were categorized into grammatical, mechanical, and pragmatic categories, which also emerged in the feedback data on the written assignments. In addition, the analysis of spoken data included a phonological category, an important area of EIL research (Jenkins, 2000) pertinent to this study.

**TABLE III.** ERROR CATEGORIES IN SPOKEN ASSIGNMENTS

Categories	Categories of student "errors" highlighted in the spoken data	
	Subcategories	Examples
Grammatical	Subject omission Article omission	Right now () am pursuing () advanced diploma in project management.
	Subject-verb agreement Preposition omission	My names are M. A. I'm proud () being an African.
Mechanical	Pluralization Sentence boundaries	youths Hi my name is W.A. form Kito International and Kito international is an organization and through Kito international we have initiative which is called ecosafi products.
	Spelling	tyres
Pragmatic	Phrasing Lexical Fluency	good in writing exploit (uses or utilizes) pauses, stops, rising and falling intonation
	Consonant sound: devoicing omission Vowel length: long to short short to long	θ->t /yots/ "youths"; z->s /skɪls/ "skills" r-drop /wɜ:(k)/ "work"; /ma:kitɪŋ/ "marketing" d-drop /ɛkspan()/ "expand" i -> ɪ /mɛrɪd/ "married" ɪ -> i /ɪŋɡlɪʃ/ "English"

In the following section, an example illustrative of some of these features is provided.

**Figure 2. Example: Synchronous interview transcript via Skype with C.A.**

<p>My name is C.A. (um::) a:m twenty-two (..) years:: old age. (..) I live in (kabira) slum, (m:::), in my education I reached form four, (...) my: short terms I speak-I speak three languages. That is Kiswahili, some English and native language. I use the Swahili when I am at home with friends (.) and I usually use English for example when I am in meetings and where English is needed. I usually use-usually use-usually use my English there. (uh) I really don't feel good when am talking (..) when am speaking my native language because am used to-am used to Kiswahili and English so much so sometimes I usually get it hard to speak my native language. (.) Okay, English I learned at school. That is at primar(y) level and (uh::) s-high school level. (...) M::y short-term- (.) my short terms (.) is am in a organization that is called Kito (.) and I hope that (.) it is going to help me to f:: (.) improve my career of being- (.) of being a businessman. My long term is to become an icon of business and to improve the economic (..) of our country, (..) our (.) country Kenya. My hobbies is reading, (uh:) playing football and some doing some workings.</p> <p>Notes: (.) – one second pause per period (word) – inaudible words :- elongation of vowels</p>
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In this excerpt, there are similar issues highlighted around grammatical/mechanical features as were found in their written assignments; therefore, only the phonological and pragmatic features are addressed in the next sections.

### Consonants

In reviewing the audio transcript above, C.A. pronounces /d/ as /t/, particularly in the word final position as in /gʊt/ instead of /gʊd/. Similar devoicing occurred with /z/ to /s/ for the word, organization transcribed as /ɔ:gənəɪsɪʃən/ rather than British English RP or American English pronunciation of /ɔ:gənəɪzɪʃən/ with /z/. On the other hand, voicing of /k/ to /g/ was observed for Kito as in /gi:to/ but devoicing of /g/ to /k/ was observed in the word /ɛksəmpl/. /r/ was often dropped following British English RP as in work /wɜ:k/. There were other words where /r/ was indicated as being pronounced differently such as in the word /ɪnspəɪʃən/ "inspiration" where our students pronounced the /r/ as a trill or flap, which our teachers had difficulty differentiating.

### Vowels

There were instances when vowels were lengthened and other times when vowels were shortened as in school /skʌl/ and youths /jʊts/. Digraphs were also noted to be pronounced individually rather than as one long sound as pronounced in American English. For example, really is pronounced as /rɪli/ in American English and /rɪli/ in British English. Another digraph /aɪ/ such as "primary" pronounced similarly in British and American English as /praɪməri/ was pronounced as /ɛj/, where /j/ represents the "y" sound in "yes."

In the teaching team discussions about the consonant and vowels identified as "errors," we discussed the notion of accent from the framework of EIL and questioned the construct of the native speaker model, which challenged the ways in which they initially considered differences in sounds as "errors" based on the American English or British English variety.

### Word stress intonation

According to the teacher feedback, the students on many occasions did not appear to follow rising and falling intonations to mark sentence boundaries. However, in the team teaching meetings, the teachers came to realize that these seemingly problematic errors with sentence boundaries could be related to stress or prosodic features possibly operating differently in their own native language or Kenyan English variety, though we were not certain.

## 6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Given the diverse linguistic context in Kenya, it is likely that the English variety may have developed some characteristic features of its own (Budohoska, 2012, p. 46). In other words, the English variety spoken in Kenya has renationalized and evolved through the interactions within this multilingual community.



For example, Mwayngi (2004) compared the use of prepositions comparing prepositional usage in British English and Kenyan English through the International Corpus of English (ICE) and concludes that Kenyan English has gone through a form of syntactic simplification where closely related prepositions are “ironed out” and those with more general meanings are more commonly used, with less synonymous prepositions. This nativized English spoken in Kenya may include some language mixing, code switching and use of emerging vernaculars, which adds to the diversity of Kenyan English, but could also add to the complexity of teaching English to Kenyans. Some of the features identified as errors in the teacher feedback to their Kenyan students such as the omission of articles and prepositions and misuse of prepositions, appears to be the acceptable in the nativized variety of Kenyan English.

In addition to features unique to the nativized Kenyan English variety, there are also pragmatic, grammatical, and phonological features that are unique to Lingua Franca communications. For example, Firth (1996) and Meierkord (2000) note the unique pragmatic features applicable to English as a Lingua Franca communications. Seidlhofer (2004) studied the Vienna-Oxford-International-Corpus-of-English (VOICE) and describes some specific grammatical features that characterize some World English varieties that have developed and lastly, Jenkins (2000) describes the phonology of English as an International Language. Jenkins (2000) redefines the Lingua Franca Core (LFC) in EIL contexts with “greater individual freedom...by providing speakers with the scope both to express their own identities and to accommodate their receivers (p. 158). She lists areas in EIL contexts that can be considered errors such as consonants, phonetic requirements such as aspirations, consonant clusters, vowel sounds, and nuclear stress. She does discuss some provisions such as the use of /θ/ and /ð/ as permissible. Given that these are considered the norms in Lingua Franca Contexts and were often considered errors in this transnational context of English language teaching, it brings to the forefront again the question of “Which English or Englishes?” should be the framework for teaching and assessment.

There are additional institutional, economic, and political forces that play a role in English language teaching, which the teachers considered. For example, Dhillon & Wanjiru (2013), assert that in Kenya “...an examination-oriented educational system leads to instructional pressure and literacy focused learning of English leaving little space for creative and innovative communicative language learning opportunities” (p. 22). Within these circumstances, the teachers needed to negotiate how they could meet both the larger

institutional, economic, political goals as well as support the students’ individual goals.

Another complexity that the teachers struggled with was the diversity of student proficiency levels in their own native tongue, the Kenyan English variety and British English. This often made them wonder during the teaching team meetings if the features they identified were the norms for the Kenyan variety, transferred from their native language or evidence of their individual developing English language system.

In addition, the teachers themselves had a diversity of linguistic exposure to different English varieties, and depending on their experience, their feedback was influenced or nuanced in approach.

During the course of this study, there was a constant interplay between the teachers’ understanding of American English and their inquiry about British English and Kenyan English usage and norms.

In the teaching team meetings, the teachers employed multiple lenses in their attempts to provide feedback to the Kenyan students. However, it became clear that the lack of deep knowledge of Kenyan English, the local languages, and the British variety often made the teachers revert back to what they knew and their own variety of English, though tremendous efforts were made in their attempts to exhibit caution in their feedback by considering these complex layers embedded within this language teaching and learning context.

For teachers teaching within these international and transnational contexts, it might be important for them to develop the kind of “multidialectal competence” (Canagarajah, 2006, p. 233) or “meta-cultural competence” (Sharifian, 2009), which are, in essence, strategies used by English speakers in English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) contexts to negotiate meaning (Sharifian & Jamarani, 2013). Sharifian (2009) believes that it is important for English learners to develop “meta-cultural competence,” that is “a competence that enables interlocutors to communicate and negotiate their cultural conceptualizations during the process of intercultural communication” (p. 9).

For ESOL teachers working in international and transnational contexts, perhaps such “meta-cultural competence” is a necessary dispositional skill to nurture. This essentially shifts the focus of English language teaching from approximating a native English speaker model to one that empowers the English speaker in these diverse, international contexts. Kilickaya (2009) suggests that if the goal is to promote intercultural communication, the focus should be on developing awareness of the many varieties of English and the various communication strategies that can be used to enhance intelligibility. Ideally, being able to simultaneously engage in the teaching and learning process on both levels may be an important goal.





This study brought to light the various challenges that are inherent in teaching in transnational contexts where teachers and students speak different varieties of English. Though the teachers in this study became more cognizant of the conceptual understandings of teaching in this transnational context, the questions around permissibility and intelligibility remained to be a challenge.

Canagarajah's (2007) statement about the redefinition of language acquisition appears to apply to this teaching context where he states, "previously dominant constructs such as form, cognition, and the individual are not ignored; they get redefined as hybrid, fluid, and situated in a more socially embedded, ecologically sensitive, and interactionally open model" (p. 923).

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