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TESOL plus TELOS: Teaching English as a Language of Open Sources (TELOS)

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Abstract

The turn of the twenty-first century witnessed dramatic changes in the ways people act and the technologies they use. This era, also called globalization, has helped develop new curricula, materials and teaching techniques. In line with these, teaching English as an additional language has been re-perspectivised in various constructs; for example, World Englishes (WE), English as an International Language (EIL), and Translingualism (Kachru 1992; Matsuda 2012; Canagarajah 2013). While the printed course books and materials are still the core of teaching substance, the learner has the greatest freedom to choose English-medium materials via open access sources. These sources include YouTube videos; Facebook; DVDs; online newspapers, magazines, etc.; Twitter; and so on. Compared to the period before the digital Internet leap, the learner has a multitude of free and diverse English-medium materials for exposure. This paper proposes a new global perspective to describe this recent phenomenon and suggests labelling it as Teaching English to the Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Plus Teaching English as a Language of Open Sources (TELOS): TESOL Plus TELOS. TELOS has the capacity to provide TESOL, particularly in EFL contexts, with the long-awaited multimodal and multidimensional support. The pragmatic skills that can normally be only partly taught in traditional EFL classes can be more learnable and teachable by the affordances available from the aforementioned open sources. The circle of syntax-semantics-pragmatics can now be complete thanks to TELOS.

Keywords: Language teaching materials; open sources; TELOS; pragmatics

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1. Introduction

The turn of the twenty-first century witnessed dramatic changes in the ways people act and the technologies they use. At the beginning of 1990s, the World Wide Web went public, instigating a multitude of web services from Skype in 2003 and Facebook in 2004 to YouTube in 2005. This era, also called globalization, has helped develop new curricula, materials and teaching techniques. In tandem with these, teaching English as an additional language (EAL) has been re-perspectivised in various constructs; for example, World Englishes (WE), English as an International Language (EIL), and Translingualism (Kachru 1992; Matsuda 2012; Canagarajah 2013). Indeed, in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL); English as a Foreign Language (EFL) versus English as a Second Language (ESL) had been a popular dichotomy because the world was not so globalized and digitized then yet. As a result of a more mobile, globalized, and digitized world, approaches to and applications in education have been redesigned in an ongoing fashion. A shift from Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) to Mobile Assisted Language Use (MALU) was observed (Jarvis & Achilleos 2013).

As Pickering (2015: 14) enumerates below, new technological resources for language education were developed: "m-learning in teacher education, online teacher education, interface of technological and traditional resources, digital course design and delivery, technology for inclusive and special education, [and] technology enabled in-service teacher training (INSETT)". The conventional technology used in TESOL before the Internet Revolution, or the Second Machine Age (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014), comprised cassette players, language laboratories, video machines, and the like; on the contrary, the era after the Internet revolution saw digitized online and satellite facilities that offered open access sources to teach and learn English.

2. TESOL plus TELOS: teaching English as a language of open sources (TELOS)

While it is mostly the case that the printed course books and materials are still the core of teaching substance, the English-as-a-foreign-language teacher (EFLT) and the English-as-a-foreign-language learner (EFLL) have the greatest freedom to choose English-medium materials via open access sources. These sources include YouTube videos; Facebook; DVDs; online newspapers, magazines, etc.; Twitter; and so on. Compared to the period before the digital Internet leap that took place at the beginning of 1990s, the EFLTs have a multitude of free and diverse English-medium materials to be used in teaching EFL, and the EFLLs are able make use of them to learn English (the list of 2015 top 100 tools for learning is provided in the appendix). This means a great shift from the conventional to the digitized. This phenomenon enables us to propose a new global perspective to describe this recent development and to suggest labelling it as Teaching English to the Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Plus Teaching English as a Language of Open Sources (TELOS): TESOL Plus TELOS. TELOS has the capacity to provide TESOL, particularly in EFL contexts, with the long-awaited multimodal and multidimensional support. To do this, there are a lot of new online tools for language teaching (OTLT), categorised by Son (2011) as follows: learning/content management systems (e.g. Moodle), communication tools (e.g. Skype), live and virtual worlds used for delivering live meetings and virtual word communities (e.g. Livestream), social networking and bookmarking sites (e.g. MySpace), blogs and wikis (e.g. Blogger), presentation tools (e.g. 280 Slides), resource sharing tools (e.g. Google Docs), website creation sites (e.g. Google Sites), web exercise creation tools (e.g. Hot Potatoes), web search engines designed to search for information (e.g. Google), dictionaries and concordancers (e.g. Merriam Webster Online), and utilities that can be useful for language learning activities (e.g. CalculateMe). C4LPT Directory of Learning and Performance Tools and Services classifies the 2015 top 100 tools for learning list as instructional tools, content tools, social tools, and personal tools.

3. TESOL before and after TELOS

Kecskes (2000) maintains that, traditionally, EFLLs had little direct exposure to the target culture of English, they basically learned the structure of English with little target-like socio-cultural background, and that they were subjected to predominantly sentence-driven EFL teaching. Naturally, conventional audio and video technology were pervasively used for partial input of English to listen to and view. After TELOS, however, the digitized technologies gave a boost to the multimodality in teaching EFL by means of the tools listed in the appendix and others. The EFLT and,
particularly autonomous, technologically intelligent EFLLs have been equipped not only with a much richer syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic input of English, but also with other ways of establishing virtual platforms where they create online communities via English as the medium of communication. There is another aspect to TELOS that is worthy of note. The classical divide between Teacher the Proper and the Learner the Proper has become almost obsolete in terms of the use of digitized input and tools. Even some EFLLs, especially the Millennials (the people with birth years ranging from the early 1980s to around 2000), have come to surpass some ELFTs as regards the access and utilization of digitized input and tools.

Thanks to TELOS, the EFLLs have started to have more opportunities of more direct exposure to the target culture of English, of practices of the structure of English with rather more target-like socio-cultural background, and of sentence and utterance-driven, context-based EFL learning. The pragmatic skills that can normally be only partly taught in traditional EFL classes have turned out to be more learnable and teachable by the affordances available from the open sources. The integrative teaching and learning of syntax-semantics-pragmatics has now been more plausible thanks to TELOS even though TELOS by itself is not enough. The reason is that "L2 students seem to have more control over their pragmatic development than over their grammatical development. They frequently learn pragmatic units and develop pragmatic attitude by choice, which they usually cannot do when learning grammar" (Kecskes 2000: 620). It should be born in mind that "pragmatic competence does not develop in conjunction with grammatical competence" (O'Keeffe, Clancy & Adolphs 2011: 139), and that "exposure to L2 alone is insufficient for the acquisition of pragmatic competence" (p. 139). What is further needed is that the rich input available on the open sources for English should be effectively used by both EFLTs and EFLLs. Hence, individual variations among EFLLs may play a vital role in developing pragmatic competence in EFL. The following reflection of a 21-year-old female Turkish trainee teacher of EFL in Turkey best illustrates the role of personal factor and of open sources in the development of pragmatic competence in English (The text is unedited. Only bald-faced and underlined parts were added by the present author):

It's my third year in this department and I decided to improve my fluency level in English soon after i started to Uni. Because during activities that require fluency such as 'speaking activities' i felt incompetent and thought to myself ’ I am going to be a teacher and I can't even speak properly. Therefore I signed up to a site my friend suggested me which is a site for language exchange. I saw that so many people used that site all over the world. I filled the information part such as 'the language I know, the lang. I want to learn. whether I want penpals or not'. Though I didnt ask for language help. I just shared some info about me and started to receive messages. I only replied to messages from UK. …British people on that site receive many messages and asked for help in English many times by lots of people. Therefore I made it seem like I didn't help and I was already gonna be an English teacher. I did it also for the conversation to be natural and authentic. ( not like a lesson) In time I made many nice friends from UK with whom I skyped almost everyday. (As we had a lot in common such as favourite video games, tv series, books, composers etc.) I have been in touch with them since then. That way I both learnt about their cultures, past, daily life and in a way acquired the accent. At the beginning I got really fluent but my accent was more like an American accent. Yet in time I felt that the way I pronounce words has started to change. Now I see a huge difference between now and then. When my British friends want me to imitate the way Turkish people speak English, I just see that can't do it anymore. I dont know why. It feels right when I speak with this accent (which they say is British accent) but I am not sure. Now when I make new British friends on that site, when they hear my voice on Skype they get shocked and tell me I speak even more proper English than some British people do. I haven't paid anything to anybody. ( nor did they pay me :) ) well it all just happened naturally as we kept chatting everyday. Some of my British friends visited me and some are planning to. I also am planning to visit them after I graduate. It will be my first experience as I have never been abroad. Now it's my 3rd year and I still talk to them at least 3 times a week. The language exchange website is Interpals.net. Calls are made on Skype, Whatsapp and Facebook.

Even though she has never been abroad physically, he has travelled in the world and virtually experienced authentic communication in English using open source channels of Skype (ranking 9 in the list of 2015 top 100 tools for learning), WhatsApp (ranking 21), and Facebook (ranking 7). She used English with native and nonnative speakers of English without paying anything to anybody, which was unimaginable before TELOS. As a beneficiary of TELOS tools, she goes beyond the limits of EFL classroom and autonomously sets her learning objectives and puts them in place by discovering and using online open sources. Those who are not as efficient in online TELOS tools as her can even use domestic facilities like satellite TVs in English to get exposed to English on a daily basis.
4. Opportunities and challenges

On the one hand, this new digitized era may cause many problems in the dynamics of learning settings, and in the relationships between EFLTs and EFLLs; on the other hand, it may offer a lot to both groups. Now that a quite number of in-service EFL teachers graduated from universities in a pre-TELOS period when they were accustomed to conventional teaching practices and tools, helping them transform themselves into a high-tech, mobile, digitized sphere would not be so easy. It would be best to rethink of in-service and pre-service practices from the perspective of TELOS competence so that they will try ways of incorporating TELOS into their EFL syllabi. To help EFLTs avoid the risk of frustration and fatigue with the ever-changing technologies, it is recommended that EFLTs be techno-vaccinated and techno-immunized with the help of sophisticated vocational development schemes.

It appears that the opportunities that TELOS may offer are far more than the challenges that TELOS may bring about. Firstly, a real shift from a teacher-centeredness to learner-centeredness can be realized because most of the primary, secondary, and tertiary level EFLLs are already competent users of the digitized tools. If the EFL curricula and syllabi strategically integrates the core content with TELOS affordances at the ‘interface of technological and traditional resources’ (Pickering 2015: 14), it may even be possible that teaching versus learning dichotomy may fade away leaving the ground for EFLTs’ and EFLLs’ co-engineering of learning. Secondly, learning can be freed from the confines of highly structured schooling procedures, and a multi-dimensional, multi-modal learning atmosphere can be created, which is expected to activate more neural networks in the brain. Thirdly, the diverse TELOS tools have the potential to enable EFLLs to experience intercultural communication, to become more self-aware and empathetic, and to improve creativity. The last benefit from TELOS practices could be that interdisciplinary look in learning may flourish.

Appendix A. The list of 2015 top 100 tools for learning


References


