

Original Paper

Meeting the Other in Literature and ELT through the Critical Analysis of a Short Story

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Abstract

This paper reflects about the role of English, Literature and teachers' beliefs in English language teaching (ELT), addressing notions of native speakerism and Otherness in the critical analysis of James Kirkup's (1994) short story "The Teacher of American Business English". The methodology is qualitative and based on Content/Discourse Analysis linking the themes addressed in the story to the literature review that includes the role of English, the contact of languages and cultures, the development of beliefs and identities, and the socio-historical context of such occurrences. The critical analysis shows evidence of prejudiced practices and discourses about the varieties and differences of cultures and languages by the main character in the short story. The study concludes that the views found in the story may be representative of many hegemonic, prejudice views of cultures and languages found in pedagogical practices around the world and as such contributes to the critical reflection on the role of English, Literature and teacher's beliefs as well as the power of critical analysis based on Literature to aid intercultural encounters/meeting the Other.

Keywords

English language, Literature, teachers' beliefs, Otherness, critical analysis

1. Introduction

English is not only the most spoken language in the world (Jenkins, 2014) but also the most frequent language of online information (Finardi, Prebianca, & Momm, 2013) and education through MOOCs - Massive Online Open Courses - (Finardi & Tyler, 2015), academic production (Finardi & França, 2016), publications, literature, media and technology, to cite but a few (Zacchi, 2018). Its expansion and consequent hegemony resulted in both positive and negative effects around the world. Among its positive effects we can cite its function of medium of cultural exchange and erasure of borders (Bueno

& Morais, 2013; Figueiredo, 2018), and among its negative effects we can cite its displacement of other languages (e.g., Finardi & Csillagh, 2016; Finardi, 2017) and knowledges (Figueiredo & Martinez, 2019; Finardi, 2019b).

The global spread of English influenced English language teaching (ELT) and teachers' beliefs (Deilami & Pourghasemian, 2016; Finardi, 2018; Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017; Kim, 2011; Merino, 1997; Silva, 2009; Tosuncuoğlu, 2017) and practices (Finardi, 2010). So as to localize and illustrate the reflection about the role of teachers' beliefs on ELT and of Literature as a tool to meet the Other, the present study aims to analyze teachers' beliefs and notions of English and Otherness in a short story.

The different roles/views of English in ELT have been extensively addressed in the literature (for example Jordão, 2014) with a plethora of terms such as English as a foreign language (EFL), English as a second language (ESL), English as a native language (ENL), World Englishes (WE), English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and English as an international Language (EIL). In Switzerland, for example, its role among national and foreign languages has been addressed (Finardi & Csillagh, 2016), in Turkey its role as a language of instruction (English Medium Instruction – EMI) in higher education has been discussed (Taquini, Finardi, & Amorim, 2017). An entire book has been produced to discuss the role of English in the Global South (Finardi, 2019b). In Brazil, another book has been dedicated to discussing the role of English in that country (Finardi, 2016b), besides book chapters that address its role in language policies (Finardi, 2016a) and as a multilingual franca in face of other minority languages such as Pomeranian (Finardi, 2018). Also in Brazil, articles addressing the role of English in relation to different aspects of ELT such as the role of cultures in ELT (Finardi & Ferrari, 2008), the role of English as an international language (Finardi, 2014) and identity in ELT education (Archanjo, Barahona, & Finardi, 2019) have been found.

Otherness is approached from the perspective of a dialogical (thus relational) process (Tavares & Rosa, 2019; Linares, 2016) related to culture and language in ELT and that can be defined as the encounter of the Self with the Other. It can be seen as a process that results in identity formation whereby one only exists in relation to the Other (Tavares & Rosa, 2019; Zanella, 2005). In relation to cultural identity, it relates to the supply of one's own cultural values (Riisen, 2011) that can result in a dichotomy whereby the Self is placed in a superior position over the Other.

In the globalized, multilingual and multicultural world we live in, cultures and languages are in constant contact and mutual influence, affecting language teachers' beliefs once these are shaped by the view of culture (Gilakhani & Sabouri, 2017). Beliefs can be understood as subjective knowledge that comes from experience that in turn shapes teachers' behaviors and thoughts, thus impacting on students' learning outcomes (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017; Deilami & Pourghasemian, 2016; Kim, 2011). Teachers' beliefs are also related to their self-beliefs, such as the way non-native English speakers teachers (NNESTs) and native English speakers teachers (NESTs) perceive themselves (for example, Archanjo; Barahona, & Finardi, 2019). Since the concept of NESTs vs. NNESTs is associated with the notion of Other, and considering the current political-socio-economic scenario of intolerance in Brazil (e.g.,

Finardi, 2019a), this study aims to reflect about the potential of Literature and critical analysis to help us meet the Other without prejudice.

Given the status/hegemony of English and native speakers (NSE) in the world today (e.g., Finardi, Santos, & Guimarães, 2016), on the one hand, and the influence of teachers' beliefs on teachers' practice, on the Other (Finardi, 2010), we propose to carry out a critical analysis the role of the English language, teachers' beliefs and Otherness in the short story *The Teacher of American Business English* written by James Kirkup.

2. Method

This paper aims to provide a critical analysis of the short story *The Teacher of American Business English*, written by the British author James Kirkup and published in 1994, on three themes: *the English language*, *teacher's beliefs* and *Otherness*. The methodology is qualitative and based on Content/Discourse Analysis considering the potential of Literature in addressing diverse subject matters. The analysis will be carried out by linking the themes addressed in the story to the literature review that includes the role of English, the contact of languages and cultures, the development of beliefs and identities, and the socio-historical context of such occurrences.

Literature has been used as a tool for discussing issues related to the social reality of the world we live in. Novels, short stories and poems addressing all sorts of subjects are used to transport readers to different worlds and realities, making it possible for them to develop different perspectives on the themes and issues presented, thus fostering critical readership.

Literature is not the salvation of the world, though if it is used wisely, it can expand the minds of its readers to act more critically in society. It is essential to process of humanization, exercise of reflection, the perception of world's complexities, and the stimulation of emotions (Candido, 2004).

Considering the aforementioned potential of Literature, the short story *The Teacher of American Business English* was chosen to foreground the discussion of three themes that impact on society, locally and globally, namely: *the English language*, *Teachers' beliefs* and the concept of *Otherness*. *The Teacher of American Business English* is narrated by the perspective of an American professor, who is also the main character, Richards, who teaches the course of *American Business English* in a minor University in Japan. Throughout the story, Richards's narrative portrays his prejudicial view towards Japanese culture represented by his students. The protagonist is depicted as naturally offensive to Japanese's English, specially to his students', and culture (including specific customs), and apparently, he believes that he is a good teacher simply because he is a NSE. Richards segregates himself and the Japanese due to linguistic and cultural differences while presenting his culture and language as superior to the Japanese, therefore, creating an imbalanced power relation, and unfair and discriminating identities to the Japanese based on stereotypes and stigmas. As such, the story seems to provide the ideal arena for the discussion of *the English language*, *Teachers' Beliefs* and *Otherness*.

3. Literary Review

3.1 *The English Language*

English is the most spoken language in the world, with about two billion English speakers, most of whom are non-native speakers (Jenkins, 2014). Many scholars (Jenkins, 2014; Figueiredo, 2018; Bhowmik, 2015; Buenos & Morais, 2013; Zacchi, 2018) argue that the spread of English around the globe is closely related to globalization, and as such, is not exempt of social, political and economic interests (Zacchi, 2018; Figueiredo, 2018; Spichtinger, 2003).

According to Kurtay's (2001) review of Phillipson's theory of Linguistic Imperialism, the spread of English can be considered a way to promote subjugation through language. Though there are also positive effects of this spread, Spichtinger (2003) and Zacchi (2018) claim that the negative effects reinforce Linguistic Imperialism. Bueno and Morais (2013) claim that English functions as a vehicle for cultural exchange, in what it could be seen as a positive effect of its spread through globalization. Still according to the aforementioned authors, information and communication technologies (ICT) that came with globalization reduced space/time/borders, decentralizing the elitist nature of English language teaching (Bueno & Morais, 2013).

The perspective that the spread of English is both a cause and consequence of Linguistic Imperialism is related to the idea that native speakers do not "own" the language and that people who speak it as an international language (EIL), a foreign language (EFL), as a second language (ESL) or as a lingua franca (ELF) such as proposed by Jenkins (2015), have as much right to it as native speakers.

Finardi (2014) calls attention to the fact that notions such as EFL and ESL along with the notion of "native speaker" are not neutral, they carry the view of the standard language and they are linked to the idea that English has an owner. In the same line, Bhowmik (2014) affirms that standards of the language are shaped by its "owner", though "the responsibility of maintaining the standard rests upon all these who speak/use the language" (Bhowmik, 2014, p. 144).

Jordão (2014) discusses some of the terminologies associated with English, such as *English as an Additional Language* (EAL), *English as an International Language* (EIL) and *English as a Lingua Franca* (ELF), along with some implications. According to her, EAL is the preferred terminology once it refers to an extra language not excluding other languages and their importance, in a peaceful coexistence. According to Finardi (2014) and Spichtinger (2003), EIL is a language for mutual (international) understanding while ELF as described by Jenkins (2015) is the use of English for intercultural communication among speakers of other native languages.

Jordão (2014) sees the term ELF as an umbrella term that includes all the other terms (Global Englishes, World Englishes, EIL) that share the concern of the communicative function of the language. However, it is important to distinguish between World Englishes (WE) and ELF. The latter is not considered a form, but a function of language whereas the former includes a "nation-based perspective" (Jenkins, Cogo, & Dewey, 2011). Even so, ELF and WE share more similarities than differences (Figueiredo, 2018) in what concerns their communicative functions in opposition to the standards dictated by native

speakers.

Furthermore, the term ELF “reflects the growing trend for English users [...] to use English more frequently as a contact language among themselves [non-native speakers] rather than with native English speakers (EFL situation)” (Jenkins, 2014, p. 5). While EIL is “the language used by both native speakers (NS) of English and non-native speakers (NNS) of English in national, and transnational contexts as a tool for communication and without reference to the culture or country of its native speakers” (Finardi, 2014, p. 410) reinforcing its use to communicate globally with speakers of different countries, as well as with one’s own (Kurtay, 2019). Jordão (2014), for example, sees EIL as a sub-function of ELF.

Thus, it is important to recognize that, while the notions of English as a native language (ENL), EFL and ESL do not encompass “new Englishes” (Finardi, 2014), the notion of WE embodies these varieties with their sociolinguistic contexts (Kachru, 1992). ELF is seen as a “multilingual practice” (Jenkins, 2015) related to flows of communication (Mignolo, 2003). Thus, in the contemporary globalized world it is possible to conclude that, it can no longer be said that English is defined by a few and selected varieties. Instead, there are distinct varieties, referred by Pennycook (2007) as global Englishes, which are appropriated by local subjects and adapted to specific contexts. Therefore, when we think of English as the language of globalization, we also have to take into account a contextualized teaching, in connection with language that is appropriated by teachers and students locally (Zacchi, 2018, p. 13).

3.2 Teachers’ Beliefs

The global spread of English with its varieties have impacted ELT. Bhowmik (2014) affirms that such impacts are found in testing, teacher training, curriculum design and materials development due to the preference for native English while disregarding Englishes’ varieties. Another topic that has proven to be an important influencer in ELT is teachers’ beliefs (Deilami & Pourghasemian, 2016; Finardi, 2018; Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017; Kim, 2011; Merino, 1997; Silva, 2009; Tosuncuoğlu, 2017). Beliefs are essential for ELT because they “help persons make sense of the world, impacting how new information is understood, and whether it is accepted or rejected. Beliefs depict memories and adjust our understanding of occurrences” (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017, p. 78).

Although the term *knowledge* may be associated with *beliefs*, Pajares (1993) distinguish them in a classroom context. While the former is based on objective facts, the latter is based on evaluation and judgments. However, professional knowledge can be considered a belief causing this knowledge to become a “personalized belief system that limits the teachers’ understanding, judgement, and behavior” (Kagan, 1992, p. 79).

In general, teachers’ belief form a type of subjective knowledge based on their experiences (as language learners and from teaching), values, worldviews, information, theories (about language acquisition or education), consciously or unconsciously held as truths guiding their thoughts and behaviors, thus impacting on classroom practices (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017; Deilami & Pourghasemian, 2016).

Teachers' beliefs relate to the way teachers perceive themselves as teachers, especially in the case of non-native English speaker teachers (NNESTs) and native English speaker teachers (NESTs). Researches evidence that NNESTs feel inadequate and anxious about their non-nativeness while NESTs do not share the same concern (Silva, 2009) with the role of "conductors", "coaches" and "guides" (Kim, 2011, p. 140).

One of the causes of the anxiety and lack of confidence of NNESTs is the negative attitudes (e.g.: disappointment) of students towards NNESTs (Silva, 2009; Bhowmik, 2014). Moreover, NNESTs are discriminated in the job market facing difficulties to find employment even though they are the majority of English teachers in the world (Tosuncuoğlu, 2017). NNESTs feel the need to prove themselves incessantly as they see NESTs as being superior to them (Silva, 2009) in a "native speaker-fallacy" whereby people (including teachers) believe that the ideal language teacher is the native speaker (Kurtay, 2019). Also, this is linked to "native-speakerism ideology", "characterized by the belief that "native-speaker teachers represent a 'Western culture' from which spring the ideals both of the English language and of English language teaching methodology" (Holliday, 2006, p. 385) causing them (NESTs) to be confident. Research shows that NESTs are in general more confident than NNESTs who suffer from low self-esteem (Silva, 2009).

The confidence of NESTs may be related to the status of "owners" of the language, though as previously stated and according to Finardi (2014) and Bhowmik (2014), the language belongs to the ones who speak and use it rather than to the ones who were born in place where it is spoken as a native language. In addition, Finardi (2018) claims that the way English is taught depends on teachers' beliefs about the language.

Silva (2009) and Bhowmik (2014) question the belief that native speakers are good teachers. They claim that it is not necessary to speak the target language as a native speaker in order to be a proper teacher, though pedagogical preparation and practice are required. Indeed, researchers (Merino, 1997; Silva; 2009; Tosuncuoğlu, 2017) highlight that both NNESTs and NESTs can be equally qualified.

3.3 Otherness

The concept of *Otherness* has been studied in distinct areas, such as psychology, philosophy, sociology, geography, history and anthropology and it relates to one's views and perspectives of another human being resulting in a dichotomy of the *Self* and the *Other*, the *us* and *them*. It could be dichotomies of gender, social classes, race, sexual orientation, language, culture, etc. Staszak defines Otherness objectively as the "characteristic of the Other" (2008, p. 1), that is *attributed* to the Other. Johnston (2009, p. 45) explains that "Otherness – alterity – refers to those who have been excluded from positions of power, marginalised, and denied voice".

Otherness results from the dialogue or encounter with the Other and one's own culture and identity. The Other is the one who is considered different, belonging to the *Out-group*, the one who is being characterized (an image is created) by the Self, that belongs to the *In-group*, the "dominant" group (Staszak, 2008). The characterization of the Other by the Self is called *Othering*, whereby the Other

and his/ her group (the Out-group) are “objectified, differentiated, simplified, exotified, or created in position to the Self” (Linares, 2016, p. 131) and the In-group and Out-group are created through the transformation of the Other’s peculiarities into Otherness (Staszak, 2008).

Tavares and Rosa (2019) explain that the image (characterization) that the Self creates of the Other is a dialogical process because it is constructed through social relation, and, according to Linares (2016), these images are usually negative, prejudicial, discriminating and stereotyping. They not only characterize the Others negatively, but also exclude them because of their differences. The Other is also considered “less” than the Self. Following this logic, the Other has to be assisted in order to enter into the Self’s norm (Gusmão, 1999), because the Self feels coherent only in relation to the lack of identity of the Other. Therefore, the Self will impose to the Other simplistic and stigmatizing identities and values, to establish a power relation of the Self over Other (Staszak, 2008). In addition, the Self only exists in association to the Other, because when one speaks (and build meanings), for example, one is addressing an Other (Tavares & Rosa, 2019; Zanella, 2005). As such, the idea of Otherness is linked to the philosophical idea of “*intersubjectivity*”:

He [Hegel] claimed that for the subject to become an intentional and self-conscious agent, he or she needs to be constructed by the recognition of the Other. That is to say, the essential characteristic of the individual’s awareness involves the connection between the Self and the Other as a necessary condition of the Self as being (Linares, 2016, pp. 131-132).

Tavares and Rosa (2019) discuss identity from the perspective of psychology. The authors use the *dialogical self* approach, in which human beings and their psychological processes (human psyche) are naturally relational and communicational, insomuch as the meaning making (important part of human existence) and knowledge are supported by discourse between the Self and the Other through a relational action. The development of personal identity is relational because it only exists in a dialogue with the Other. Furthermore, the psychological processes, such as “memory, attention, language and thoughts” (Zanella, 2005, p. 101), are fundamental to the process of subjectivity, and, consequently, intersubjectivity.

Another form of identity is the *cultural identity*, defined by Rösen (2011, p. 5) as “the very specific and fundamental relationship of a people to their own selves and self-awareness [and the] term “cultural identity” is defined as an answer to the question of who somebody is”. Rösen (2011) explains that when one is forming one’s identity, one is supplying from the positive values inserted in one’s culture to create a positive image of oneself. These values might influence negatively the image of the Others that are distinct (and seem as opposed) to them.

Furthermore, Tavares and Rosa (2019, p. 3) affirm that communication with Others and with the Self (in an innovative dialogue) can only be significant (in the forms of thinking and feeling) if they share a common language and culture from different perspectives so the negotiation will be progressive, therefore, differences are necessary for a significative and successful communication.

The process of encountering and dialoguing with cultures and languages is interweaved by *hybridity*.

According to Tarc and Tarc (2010), hybridity is common in human existence, mainly in the actual days where technologies have become more present rendering cultural and language encounters easier. Thus, hybridization might happen “either virtually (with digital communication and the increase of social networks) or physically (as recent mass migration and refugeeism) - that may lead to the hybridization of cultures” (Mendes & Finardi, 2018, p. 49). Hybridity is “a state of undoing a self to integrate a foreign and externally imposed other with which one is set upon to manage and come to terms. Reconciling ourselves to the difference within, instituted by the other’s existence” (Gunew, 2004, p. 126; Klein, 1984, p. 331; *apud* Tarc & Tarc, 2010, p. 308).

Therefore, hybridity differs from Otherness that is related dichotomies and separation of the Other and the Self. According to Mendes and Finardi (2018), while hybridity could be seen by some as the blending of cultures that threatens national identities and regional traditions, it is seen by others as a positive occurrence in which the “subordinates” (e.g., the Others) could empower themselves by subverting the hegemonic culture power (e.g., the culture of Self’s) in a process that would “differ from western hegemony by looking through the eyes of peripheral cultures” (Mendes & Finardi, 2018, p. 49).

Otherness is not only about issues of culture and identity, but also about space, thus it is geographical. This is because of the emphasis on environmental traits, differences of societies and their negotiation of identities that were stigmatized and discriminated. Staszak explains that the concept of geographical Otherness developed when explorers were amazed by the singularities of the civilizations that they were discovering, placing Western society as superior to the Others. Therefore, *Exoticism* (a taste for the exotic) and *Ethnocentrism* (one’s values as superior to Others) are forms of geographical Otherness. Exoticism is “seen as what comes from the outside—the strange, the outlandish, the unexpected” (Kapferer & Theodossopoulos, 2016, p. 1). According to Kapferer and Theodossopoulos (2016) who tackle the issue from the perspective of anthropological studies, the etymology of exotic carries a perspective of exteriority bringing negative connotations, such as Barbarism considered “savage slot”, meaning that the ones that do not belong to Greek civilization and live in the margins of society.

Exoticism places the culture of the Other in the “abnormal”, the “unknown” that has to be discovered (usually by the Westerners, who are not “savages”) in the ancient perspective, while, in the actual days, according to Staszak (2008), the Otherness of Exoticism happens through merchandise, not through the brutality of first encounter of explorers with the unknown. In line with this idea, Kapferer and Theodossopoulos (2016) claim that this merchandise of culture re-elaborates stereotypes of racist nature.

Ethnocentrism is another form of exercising power over the Others, but opposed to Exoticism once it “devalues” the culture of the Other. Rösen (2011) states that it causes negative impacts on intercultural communication and cultural interaction since the logic of Ethnocentrism is used by all the participants in the communication and interaction. Staszak (2008, p. 1) defines Ethnocentrism as: “the propensity of a group (in-group) to consider its members and values as superior to the members and values of other

groups (out-groups)”, in which, according to Sinkovics and Holzmüller (1994) and the sociological construct, the In-group would be the “center of everything” and the Others will be guided by the center, following the logic of Ethnocentrism.

This is related to “the spatial equivalent” explained by Rüsen (2004, pp. 67-68): “One’s own people live in the centre of the world, and Otherness is situated and placed at the margins. The longer the distance from the centre, the more negative is the image of otherness. At the margins of one’s own world live the monsters”, therefore the Out-groups are seen as less-humans or non-humans (Staszak, 2008).

Sinkovics and Holzmüller (1994) present the Ethnocentrism as a psychological construct, in which one is too fixed in one’s own group that reject the Out-groups, considering the In-group and its culture and values correct and good, and consequently, considering the Out-group and its culture and values, which is distinct the one’s In-group, as incorrect and evil (Rüsen, 2004).

Rüsen (2011) proposes the development of the awareness about influence of Ethnocentrism in identity formation in order to humanize understanding of one’s and Other’s culture and past. Staszak (2008) proposes to critically deconstruct the perspectives that support oppression, such as the discourses of Otherness, including Exoticism and Ethnocentrism

When it comes to the concept of Otherness in general, Linares (2016) claims that it is reaffirmed and reinforced all around the world leading to prejudicial practices and discourses, therefore, a better approach would be to promote “Oneness” to break Otherness, that would be to “cultivate mutual recognition, appreciation, respect, collaboration, and cultural exchanges among people” (Linares, 2016, p. 140).

4. Analysis and Discussion

4.1 The Role of English

This study aims to analyze the role of English in the short story *The Teacher of American Business English*. The title itself provides us with a clue that the English that is going to be taught in the short story is a native-like, the American English. In addition, although the author James Kirkup is a *British* writer, the short story is told through the perspective of an *American* teacher, in that it may give us another clue or hidden criticism to the American native-speaker view of ELT, once American English spread due to the US rise as an *economic* super power in the 20th century (Bernardo, 2017).

The short story begins with the ELT teacher, Richards, telling the readers that he cannot make mistakes (e.g., having an affair with students), otherwise he would lose his job at the University. He affirms: “There are scores of foreigners just waiting to step into my place here”. The choices of the words “foreigners” instead of “other teachers”, and “my place” instead of “for this job” denounce that he was either favored or was indeed the best option for the job, probably because he is a NSE, the “owner” of the language and thus, the ideal teacher.

This situation is explained by “the native-speaker fallacy” and by the “native-speakerism ideology” of

ELT that reinforces the idea that a language is better taught by a native-speaker of it rather than by a NNS, who also is part of the ideal “western culture” for language teaching and teaches the “authentic” language (Spichtinger, 2003; Kurtay, 2019; Archanjo, Barahona, & Finardi, 2019). NESTs are often preferred over NNESTs “because of the held belief that ‘native speakers’ are better teachers as they might have superior knowledge of the language and related language teaching methodologies” (Archanjo, Barahona, & Finardi, 2019, p. 63) regardless of their real pedagogical competence.

Throughout the story, we see Richards’s opinion about the English spoken by his students and the taxi drivers, all Japanese and NNSs of English. He mentions that his students have “*broken English*” and states that they are “*hopeless at English of any kind, but especially American Business English*”, and later he complains about the taxi drivers: “*every one of them asking the same standard questions. American Business English is bad enough. Heaven help me if I ever have to try to earn an honest penny teaching an English Conversation for Taxi Drivers class*”.

Richards’s harsh critiques on these Japanese speakers of English and the standard questions, grammatically incorrect (e.g., “*How long Japan?*”, “*You American guy?*”), shows that he is taking the native English norm and model as reference. These “negatives attitudes” (Jenkins, 2014, p. 2) lead us to believe that the teacher puts English in the EFL category in which the foreign speakers would have to try to speak the native-like English (Jord ã, 2014, p. 18). In addition, the category of EFL also responds to the context in which most interactions occur between NNSs and NSs (Jord ã, 2014). In the short story, one of the purposes of the students and the taxi drivers to learn English was to interact with NSs of English. For example, we see the taxi driver interacting with a native client (Richards), “specific purposes” resulting from imperialist purposes (Bernardo, 2017, p. 190), but we see no interaction between the students, who were all NNSs of English. Moreover, Finardi (2014) claims that the notions of ENL and EFL, that imply an “owner” to the language, do not recognize the varieties of English and its many users/speakers. It is present in Richards’s narrative: “*What they produce has no relation at all to any kind of comprehensible English: it’s a kind of stumbling, giggling gabble that slowly fills me with the deepest depression*”.

The categories/notions of EFL and ENL speakers disregard code-switching and code-mixing of the multilingual world (Jenkins, 2014), such as presented in Richards intolerance when he justifies the fact that he reproduced his English within Japanese characteristics: “*Even native speakers sometimes drop into the peculiar grammar of Japanese English. After hearing it in classes all day long, it’s no wonder*”.

Kurtay (2019) affirms that the expression of intolerance towards code-mixing and code-switching and the favoritism to the “dominant” language over other languages is called “linguicism” or “linguistic discrimination”. In addition, Kurtay (2019), Bueno and Morais (2013) claim that linguistic imperialism is a consequence of the dominance of a cultural and economic power that makes people learn English so as to have better job opportunities and better living conditions. This belief is also portrayed in the short-story:

So the plain boys sweat it out four years at business school, trying to master American Business English, though as they'll never be employed by Americans, and as the companies they'll be working for will always be minor ones with no need for American Business English, I sometimes wonder why they waste their time drafting from letters and staff circulars in this funny kind of stilted, unnatural English.

The first line displays the students' effort as a result of the belief previously discussed. However, in the following lines, the fallacy, tenet or chronic that English is language of success (Spichtinger, 2003; Kurtay, 2019; Pennycook & Jordão, 2014) is denounced once these students NNSs of English will not have the same advantages/opportunities that NSs have.

4.2 Native Teachers' Beliefs

The first topic that will be analyzed in terms of teachers' beliefs is self-belief, that is, the way Richards perceives himself. When discussing teachers' self-beliefs, Silva (2009) and Tosuncuoğlu (2017) address the advantages/strengths and disadvantages/weaknesses of NESTs and NNEST, and they concluded that NESTs feel more confident than NNESTs, who usually have low self-esteem and suffer anxieties. The main reasons are nativeness and employment opportunities, but personality also explains it, such as Gilakjani and Sabouri (2017) suggest being one of the sources of teachers' beliefs.

In the short story we are able to see that Richards is a confident man, very secure of himself as the following lines hint: *"I'm getting on, pushing fifty. But I'm still in fairly good shape. I've got all my hair and teeth, and I never admit to being more than thirty-nine"*, which in turn is related to cultural aspects: *"Fortunately, the Japanese have difficulty in telling a foreigner's age"*. Richards feels in advantage for not being Japanese, his self-belief and personality may reflect on himself as a teacher.

Another evidence of Richards's confidence as teacher is his judgmental "ability" of recognizing students' English skills: *"Always at the start of each academic year, as soon as I meet a new class for the first time, I can 'place' everyone. By the position they have taken in the rows of desks, I know exactly what their ability in speaking English is"*.

The previous excerpt suggests that he is very secure on his judgment and lacks modesty, which is in accordance with NESTs confidence. Moreover, this excerpt follows the idea that only a native could really know the English of NNSE, since the native may believe that he/she "owns" the language (Spichtinger, 2003) judging the NS that use it.

Personal judgments are also considered beliefs (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017; Deilami & Pourghasemian, 2016). According to Gilakjani and Soubouri (2017, p. 79) "beliefs are judgments and evaluations that we make about ourselves, others, and the world around us. They are personal ideas based on observation or rational thinking" (Khader, 2012). Throughout the story, Richards shows his personal ideas about his students and their English several times, as a rigorous observer when describing the characteristics that he attributed to them:

"It's nearly always this type of earnest and zealous student who speaks good English".

"They are the good-looking ones who couldn't put an English sentence together to save their pampered"

lives".

Furthermore, Kim (2011), Gilakjani and Soubouri (2017) explain that these personal ideas/beliefs are built through experiences, both as language learners and from teaching, influencing how the teacher interpret what happens in the classroom. Richards's interpretation based on his experience is evident in his statements about his age ("*pushing fifty*"), about the start of each academic period ("*Always at the start of each academic year*") and about his certainty on students' English abilities according to the row where they seat and their appearances.

Deilami and Pourghasemian (2016) explain that if teachers are able to profile students' level and skills of English, such as Richards's ability to "place" his Japanese students, they will try to modify their behavior and instructional choice according to students' "profile". However, we can notice that Richards is not adjusting himself accordingly. On the contrary, he is avoiding the matter:

"When it becomes too much for me, I make them write a short essay, and nip out for a smoke and a shot of bourbon in the john".

Researches show that NESTs believe that students should be agents that are responsible for their learning process, engaging actively in activities with readiness for learning, thus struggling with their own mistakes would be a natural and necessary occurrence in order to learn (Kim, 2011). NNESTs may understand students' difficulties of learning another language better than NESTs and as such, they render better learning strategies (Tosuncuoğlu, 2017), different from the selfish motivations displayed by Richards to assign essays and writing activities (so that he could smoke or drink).

He does not take responsibility for students learning, but frames them for their own lack of willingness and readiness for learning, neither he is willing to change or get deeply involved: "*If they don't want to work, that's no skin off my nose*". Richards is partially disregarding the NESTs self-beliefs as assistants to students so they can "stand on their own by helping learners struggle with learning while encouraging students to enjoy the learning process" (Kim, 2011, p. 141).

Students improvement on their language learning could be done through teachers "affirmative beliefs" or "positive thinking" towards their student's capacities (Deilami & Pourghasemian, 2016, p. 27, pp. 29-30). Richards goes in the opposite direction when he believes that some of his students' English are "*hopeless*" or "*broken*", it shows that he does not have the "affirmative beliefs" and "positive thinking". In his view, the "encouragement" (for students to stop making mistakes) is: "*I always used to hold up his [Tomohiro Matsubara's] immaculate essays as an example to the rest of the students, who were incredibly sloppy writers*".

Richards's attitude can in fact discourage his students causing them to be unconfident. In the short story, the male students realize that Richards is good to the girls while he treats them, boys, differently, because as a homosexual he thinks that if he treats well a boy, it could be misunderstood and he could lose his job. The boys struggle, they are demotivated and they are not learning successfully. The difficulties on learning English and their lack of confidence is present in Matsubara's (one of the students) statements in the letter that he wrote in the name of all the boy students:

“Sorry to say, sir, we the boy students of your American Business English class can’t understand you. [...] Please excuse my poor English”.

NNSs appreciate having a NESTs, however, intelligibility appears to be a problem for them, they believe it is complicated to understand NSs’ pronunciation (Silva, 2009). The first two lines of the previous excerpt give us this hint. And the latter statement reveals that Matsubara’s English and his “mistakes” or variations embarrass him (and probably the other boys feel the same). Kim (2011) explains that the NESTs believe that the major barrier to learn English is students’ lack of confidence.

Kim (2011) and Silva (2009) stress that the importance of doing research on teachers’ beliefs is because it explains a lot of the interaction and good relationship between teachers and students. In the short story, we can see that although the boy students claim to like the teacher, they are not able to learn and they do not seem to interact well. This situation is illustrated in the fragment of Matsubara’s letter (written in name of all the boy students):

*“Dear Prof. Richards,
[...] you are not kind to us boys. You never give smile when you speak to us. You do not say nice things so often to us. [...] Please be kind to the boys in your class, Prof. Richards. We hope you give us better grades and do not fail us in the final exam. We like you teaching very much”.*

Thereafter, Richards responded scheduling a meeting at his apartment as he used to do with the girl students, and probably for the same reason: solve the matter in order to assure his job. However, the boys (except for Matsubara) decided not to go because of the lack of confidence in their English: *“They not want come. They too shy, not speak any good English. Me too-- shy. I ashamed my poor English ability, so sorry. sir”.*

The “attempt” of establishing a positive learning environment and good relationships seemed to have failed. Kim (2011, pp. 140-141) claims its importance in her research: students “need to be assured that it is safe to do things differently and thus one of the primary functions identified by the teachers was to build a trusting relationship with students and create safe learning environments”.

The aforementioned author still explains that the tensions between NNSs and NESTs have different teaching and learning cultures, as it seems to happen in the short story, and they should be reflected over in order to be challenged and reconstructed. In addition, Gilakjani and Sabouri (2017, p. 80) claim that such beliefs “are shaped during accepting culture”.

In the end of the short story, Richards does not seem willing to change, he affirms almost naturally when Matsubara left his apartment after their unplanned sexual encounter: *“So I sat down at the kitchen table to prepare the outlines for tomorrow’s classes-- my three classes in American Business English”.*

Teachers’ beliefs are resilient to change without reflection once they are culturally bounded (Deilami & Pourghasemian, 2016) but they need to be changed in order to change reality (Tosuncuoğlu, 2017). Moreover, they are important matter because they affect teachers’ behaviors, students learning process and class activities more than teaching methodologies that teachers follow (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2017; Deilami & Pourghasemian, 2016).

4.3 Otherness

In *The teacher of American Business English*, the notion of Otherness is reproduced through the narrator's and main character's discourse, Richards. It is constructed in his social relations with the Japanese (his students and the taxi driver, for example). In this process, Richards represents the *Self* and the Japanese represent the *Others*. While it happens, the *Self*, which is part of the dominant group (In-group, usually represented by the West), put the *Others*, which are part of the dominated group (Out-group), in an inferior position by discriminating them (Staszak, 2008; Linares, 2016; Kapferer & Theodossopoulos, 2016) reproducing Otherness.

When geographers and explorers started to get interested in the elsewhere, amazed by the differences of societies and civilization aiming to explain the heterogeneities, they were in fact portraying Western civilization as superior to Others (Staszak, 2008) through Otherness. In the short story, when Richards (like the geographers and explorers) describes the peculiarities of Japanese customs and culture, he is showing the strangeness of the Other and the normality of the Self (himself). For example, when he affirms "*They all have to get a graduation diploma. That's the trouble. Without that diploma, no one in Japan can get even a clerk's job in a store or in bank*", he is asserting that it is a strange custom for his culture, perceiving it as "abnormal, foreign" in relation to his opposite Western customs that would be "normal, familiar" (Linares, 2016).

Highlighting the differences and putting them in a dichotomy through an "asymmetrical evaluation", in which one's values is superior and more rational than Others' values is also part of identity-formation, it defines "the otherness of the others by deviations or even contradictions to these [positive] values [of the self]" (Rüssen, 2004). For example, when Richards talks about the lack of graffiti in Japanese's restroom:

I look in vain for graffiti on the doors of the john, the sort of stuff that covers every inch of space in American colleges, with vivid drawings, addresses, phone numbers, pleas for someone to cut a hole in the partition between the cubicles, offers of dates, fevered erotic fantasies, slogans for Gay Lib... But in Japan, there is none of that: the johns are depressingly spotless, and there are no glory holes.

Richards's choice of words is important part of the process of Othering the Japanese, not only because Otherness is a discursive practice (Staszak, 2008; Linares, 2016) but also because, according to Zanella (2005), words work as expression of one to another, this is how one defines himself/herself in relation to the other. Therefore, while Richards uses the opposite characteristics "vivid drawings" (for US customs) and "depressingly spotless" (for Japanese customs) he is defining Westerners as positive and Japanese as negative in a simple practice, such as graffiti. He continues the definition and discourse when he claims that he is "not all that attracted to most Japanese boys" because they are "a bit too girlish and insipid" for his taste, or when he affirms that his students' English is a "*broken English*".

Richards segregates the In-group and Out-group because his group is only coherent when the Out-group is not, also when it lacks identity, therefore, stereotypes and stigmatized identities are given to the Out-group (Staszak, 2008). The generalization of Japanese physical appearance in the following

excerpts exemplifies it: *“They all look pretty much the same- tall, extremely skinny, sallow, with tightly permed hair and wearing those sloppy, floppy pants and sweaters that pass for the latest fashion here”*. According to Palfreyman (2005), researches show that stereotypes and marginalized identities are practices of Otherness that not only an “ordinary” native speakers exercise, but also NEST. They practice these forms of Otherness and English Linguistic Imperialism towards students and NNESTs colleagues, such as the case of Richards, who is teacher besides being an “ordinary” native speaker. The linguistic prejudice and imperialism exercised by Richards was discussed in previous sessions of this paper, however, it is necessary to convey that it is a form of Otherness, as we can observe in the following lines: some of the students *“can just about manage to read an English text in a toneless, expressionless voice, but without understanding most of what they’re reading. [...] What they produce has no relation at all to any kind of comprehensible English”*.

This statement is an example of both stereotype of Japanese’s English (“expressionless voice” as characteristic of Japanese speaking English) and English Linguistic Imperialism. Another examples (discussed in previous session) are: Richards’s disbelief in students’ ability to learn English, the standard phrases of taxi drivers, the statement that the English teacher job is his (because he is native) and not the foreigners (because they are not natives), and so on.

The same idea that ENL is the ideal one and Japanese English is broken is linked to Otherness as a form of *Ethnocentrism*, which is “the property of a group (in-group) to consider its members and values as superior to members and values of other groups (out-groups)” (Staszak, 2008, p. 1). The perspective that In-group is the center of everything pleading and enjoying its socially and historically constructed superiority over the Out-group (Kapferer & Theodossopoulos, 2016). Therefore, all Englishes should take the ENL as the center. In the short story it is represented by the role of ENL, US and Richards:

They practice reading English aloud on their own every day. They listen religiously to the Voice of America radio programs. They have little tape recorders, on which they record every word I say. They do their exercises and write their model American Business English letters faithfully every week.

This excerpt evidences Otherness as form of Ethnocentrism through the students learning: English is the language of business (and learning), so they have to practice it every day; the teacher is an ENL speaker, the “model” to be followed, so they record “every word” he says; and their learning practices are guided by US culture, such as the radio program, *Voice of America*. In this perspective, American standard is the center of their learning.

It can be argued that these are clearer forms of Otherness in the story, in which Richards establishes a power relation over the Japanese (the Self over the Other, the In-group over the Out-group), causing unfair segregation and imposition of the Self’s values over the Others. However, this situation might eventually change because, according to Staszak (2008), it is hard to maintain the peculiarities and stereotypes that discriminate the Self and the Other when they cohabit.

4.4 Final Remarks

The short story analyzed here was used to carry out a critical analysis of three themes: *The English*

language, Teachers' beliefs and *Otherness*. Overall results of the analysis suggest that Literature is an efficient tool for criticism and emancipation, and according to Belgamasco and Prado (2014), it makes possible to expand knowledge and broaden horizons to better understand society's problems and to think possible solutions to solve them.

It is important to note that although English spread is related to British colonialism and US economic power (Zacchi, 2018; Figueiredo, 2018; Spichtinger, 2003), the appropriation of this language does not have to be a form of colonization. Indeed, it arguably brings advantages, such as culture exchanges and access to information (Bueno & Morais, 2013), and can be used to oppose colonial purposes. In line with this perspective, we suggest that the preferred notion of English would be that of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) (Jordão uses it to encompass EIL, WE and GE) which takes into consideration communication with people of diverse countries, rather than English as Native Language (ENL), Second Language (ESL) or Foreign Language (EFL), linked to the standard English (American and British) thus excluding other varieties that emerge in diverse countries (Finardi, 2014).

Although, a speaker would hardly fit into only one category (e.g., EFL, ENL, ESL speaker) (Jenkins, 2014), the protagonist of the short story analyzed here prefers the standard/native language as model that is linked ENL, thus being prejudicial, disregarding his students' English (and Japanese's in general). The prejudice portrayed by the protagonist arguably results in his students' lack of confidence in relation to learning and speaking English. Based on this analysis we argue that the notion of ELF would be preferred once it empowers non-native speakers the language to appropriate or "take ownership" of the language (e.g., Finardi, 2014; Rajagopalan, 2004) to reinvent it to the point that it would have to be eventually re-learned by native speakers (Jordão, 2014).

Furthermore, teachers' beliefs are another factor that influence ELT. In the short story, Richards is a mature man using his experience to judge his students and he views his own language and country (US) as superior to Others' (the Japanese). The ENL notion in a decontextualized way that is arguably distant from students' realities (Siqueira, 2018), and can be related to the argument that NNESTs have better teaching skills than NESTs, since they understand their students' process of learning a new language (Silva, 2009; Tosuncuoğlu, 2017), while Richards (who is a monolingual NESTs) does not show empathy towards his students. Conversely, if Richards saw English as a lingua franca he would probably teach the language with communication purposes (Jenkins, 2014) showing more sensitivity towards his students' struggles to learn an additional language. Richards, as a NEST that "owns" the language, does not have to prove himself as a good teacher (he just has to avoid scandals as depicted in the story) (Finardi, 2014; Bhowmik, 2014; Kurtay, 2019).

We argue that a good teaching practice would be to adapt to the diverse varieties of the language (Bernardo, 2017), to exercise a critical view of the language, presenting social-historical repercussion of the language and its global spread in classroom (Figueiredo, 2018), and to encourage students' effort attempting to understand their needs (Silva, 2009). Therefore, the qualities a good teacher must have are not necessarily those that a native speaker of the target language has (Silva, 2009; Tosuncuoğlu,

2017).

The images that one creates of the Other, attributing negative characteristics based on stereotypes and stigmas, are important factors on identity creation and cultural identity, serving as a reinforcement of prejudice. Through the critical analysis of the short story it is possible to suggest that Ethnocentrism, English Linguistic Imperialism and cultural prejudice were the most explicit types of Otherness practiced by Richards towards the Japanese culture embodied in his students. The Other, being different from the Self, is seen as a “stranger” that has to be fit into one’s (Self’s) norms (Gusmão, 1999), as Richards do with his students, putting his standard language and his Western customs in the center as a model to be followed, while constantly criticizing the “strangeness” of Japanese English and customs. Given differences of culture, gender, sexual orientation and social class in the world today, the notion of Otherness becomes ever more relevant to consider and some ways of addressing it are described in what follows. One way is to re-educate the Self in order to live with others with respect and sustainability (hybridity) (Tarc & Tarc, 2010) promoting “Oneness” (mutual respect, appreciation, cultural exchanges, etc. among people) (Linares, 2016), to develop awareness of Otherness and Others (mainly Ethnocentrism) (Riisen, 2011). Another way is to critically deconstruct discourses of Otherness that support oppression (Staszak, 2008), thus promoting a critical cultural awareness to help people live with Others, appreciating and understanding culturally diverse societies (Linares, 2016) across all kinds of cultural divisions (Huber & Reynolds, 2014).

Linares (2016) claims that the classroom is a good place to start dealing with these issues, since it is a “culturally sensitive place to learn”, mainly a language classroom, that is an ideal place to approach the subject of Otherness, culture multiplicity, different social identities, and other aspects related to the notion of Otherness in a critical manner.

The notions of *the English language*, *Teachers’ beliefs* and *Otherness* analyzed here are related and intertwined inasmuch as they build power relationships between individuals, languages and cultures which in turn, impact on people and are part of ELT scenarios. As such, we conclude with the suggestion that these aspects are taken into consideration by teachers of English (and other languages for that matter) in all teaching/learning contexts for a more peaceful and respectful coexistence among cultures and languages.

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