

GLOBALIZATION AND INTERNATIONALIZATION IN ELT: METHODOLOGY, TECHNOLOGY AND LANGUAGE POLICY AT A CROSSWORD IN BRAZIL

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Abstract

The paper reflects on the impact of globalization and internationalization in the English language teaching and learning (ELT) in Brazil departing from the assumption that access to information and technology is necessary to build social capital [1] and that this access requires some English knowledge and digital literacy [2]. The study reviews the roles of ELT methodologies, technologies and language policies in Brazil to suggest that both the resistance to and the uncritical use of English and technology may bring negative consequences to social development in Brazil. The study concludes that in the post method [3] and information era [4] we live in, technologies have a relevant and crucial role that should be critically considered in ELT methodologies. The study also suggests that the informed use of technologies and methodologies, allied with the teaching of English as an international language are essential to leverage the development and the internationalization of education in Brazil in a critical way in relation to the negative effects of globalization.

Keywords: Globalization; Internationalization; ELT Technology, Methodology, and Language Policy in Brazil.

1 INTRODUCTION

Globalization is characterized by the free flow of goods and services which, allied to technology and the rapid flow of information across borders, may result in an integrated global society. The emergence of the information [4] and knowledge economy [5] society contributed to the internationalization of higher education [6] defined as the process of integrating international, intercultural or global dimensions in the mission of universities [7] which are viewed as valuable assets for their intellectual capital [3].

Another effect of globalization relates to technological advances, especially with regard to new information and communication technologies (hereafter NICTs), which enabled a cheaper and faster flow of information. The possibilities of interaction brought about by the NICTs changed the way we express ourselves in this new global and local scenario. NICTs also changed the way we produce and access information and knowledge, as shown, for example, by the number of massive online open courses (MOOCs) offered with and without certification by world-class universities. Some of the most popular MOOCs worldwide are Coursera, Udacity and EDX and in Brazil Open (from UNESP) and Veduca (from USP).

These global and local tensions have been felt more recently in Brazil through the impact of social networks, specifically Facebook, used to trigger and spread public protests that started in June 2013 with the Free Pass Movement¹. We can say that the internet has given more access to information whereas social networks have given more voice in the information era and both brought more autonomy in the search not only for information but also for expression channels. The number of people who exercise this autonomy in the pursuit of knowledge through MOOCs and their voice in the pursuit of expression through Facebook is evidence of this new way of relating to and with the world after the advent of NICTs and specially the internet.

Autonomy in learning is considered a characteristic of postmodern education [8] and in view of the widespread use of Facebook in Brazil coupled with the fact that much of the information online is in English [2], we assume that Facebook should be used not only to organize protests in Brazil, but also to give voice and greater autonomy for Brazilian English as foreign language (EFL) learners to access contents online and interact with other native and non-native speakers of English to learn English. Yet,

¹ The Free Pass Movement is a social movement that advocates the adoption of zero tariffs for public transportation. The Brazilian movement was founded in a plenary session at the World Social Forum in 2005, in Porto Alegre, and gained prominence with the organization of protests in São Paulo and other Brazilian cities in 2013.

Facebook does not seem to have achieved this goal in Brazil as shown in [9] who analyzed the potential of Facebook for meaningful English practice. [9] concluded that the interaction through Facebook represents a great potential for English as a foreign language practice still underused. Despite this suggestion, other studies show that this social network is not seen as a pedagogical tool, as shown by [10] who analyzed the use of Facebook as a communication tool between English teachers and learners and by [11] who analyzed English teachers' and students' beliefs on the use of Facebook as a pedagogical tool. Both studies suggest that the resistance to the use of Facebook as a pedagogical tool for communication and practice in English is higher among teachers than among students and that both teachers and students tend to view Facebook as an entertainment tool with questionable pedagogic value.

These changes in society and in the forms we communicate and produce knowledge do not always reach schools and universities with the same speed they reach homes, though they probably reach higher education faster than schools due to the university intellectual capital appeal in the knowledge economy. The internationalization of higher education affects and is affected by globalization and the status and use of English as a foreign, international and academic language.

[12], for example, analyzed the internationalization process of two Brazilian universities with different backgrounds and motivations to go international: a public non-profit university (whose motivation for internationalization was assumed to be academically-driven since they charge no fees) and a private for profit university (whose motivation was assumed to be also financially-driven since they can charge fees). The analysis of the two institutions showed that the motivation to go international is inexistent in the private institution given the size of the internal market which requires no efforts to attract foreign students. The motivation to go international in the public institution analyzed exists and is academically-driven but faced with a number of challenges, among which the most pressing one is the linguistic barrier, namely, the lack of proficiency in English of Brazilians.

In another study [13] analyzed Brazilian internationalization policies enacted in the Science without Borders (SwB) and English without Borders (EwB) Programs. The Science Without Borders Program can be described as a program of academic mobility OUT and the reason for its low uptake of grants was mainly due to lack of English proficiency of Brazilian candidates. In order to fill in this gap identified in the internationalization of higher education process in Brazil, the government launched in 2012 the English without Borders Program whose goal was to correct a perceived historical deficiency in investments in teaching English as a foreign language in that country by offering classes online, face to face and Toefl tests for free for public university students. [13] concluded that a greater investment in English language teaching and learning, both in basic education and in higher education is needed to drive internationalization in Brazil. Yet, most internationalization actions such as the EwB program are aimed at higher education leaving the problem of basic education still unattended in Brazil.

[2] argue that in the current information society, both English as an international language and digital literacy are passports to information access and social inclusion as well as for social capital formation defined as the ability of individuals to generate benefits by means or their personal relationships or social practices [1]. In this sense, [14] suggest the use of internet tools for teaching English as a foreign language to develop both language skills and digital literacy by means of internet resources for a global citizenship.

Despite this scenario, there still seems to be resistance to the effects of globalization, as for example, in the case of the resistance to include NICTs in education as shown by [15] who analyzed a teacher training course for the use of NICTs in traditional classes. [15] concluded that the greatest obstacle for the use of NICTs in classrooms in Brazil is not related to the limited access to equipment, since universities and schools are in general, well equipped in that country, but rather they conclude that the obstacle is related to the broad access to NICTs, i.e., to the critical use of equipment and technologies to generate benefits for users and their environments through this use.

Regarding the role of technology in education, we can say that today, more than ever, technologies not only act as a pedagogical support, but change the very concept of teaching (and education). In a brief definition we can say that technologies are instruments created by men to shorten distances and facilitate actions [15]. The historical development of language teaching, particularly the teaching of English as a Foreign Language is inseparable from the trajectory of uses of technology for educational purposes as we shall see in what follows [17, 18].

The different language policies and technologies used with different English teaching methodologies in diachronic or synchronic ways served different purposes and objectives in Brazil. Yet, the analysis of

language policies, technologies and methodologies in this paper suggests that globalization and the advent of internet changed the way we teach, learn, view and use English in Brazil. It seems that technology is no longer a mere supporting tool for teaching and learning and that English is no longer a mere foreign language in this gradually more globalized and international scenario in Brazil.

The internet, and especially the advent of the Web 2.0, besides reaffirming the status of English as an international language, also transformed the paradigms of teaching that language with new possibilities of interaction with and in that language and with its users around the world, providing opportunities for greater autonomy and collaborative construction and situated knowledge, to name but two advantages of the potential of this tool [19].

However, there are still many questions about the critical use of technology in English teaching methodologies. Having outlined this panorama, this paper aims to present a brief historical overview of the main methodologies that followed and at times coexisted in the teaching of English as a foreign language in order to discuss in what form (s) some of these methodologies used or appropriated technologies (and in some cases still do or can do) to achieve their educational goals and also briefly reflect on the implications of these uses and appropriations for teaching English as an international language in Brazil.

2 ELT METHODOLOGIES, TECHNOLOGIES AND LANGUAGE POLICIES IN BRAZIL

The earliest methodology for language teaching we know of is the Grammar-Translation Method (hereafter GTM) [20]. According [21], since the GTM, English teaching has benefited from technology, where books (mostly literary) also had a key role, since its reading was used to explain the structure of the target language making correlations with the learner's native language [22]. Because of the gap left by GTM regarding communicability and as a result of the Reform Movement [23] the Direct Method (hereafter DM) emerged as a proposal for the development of oral skills [22]. In the DM, technologies were seen as visual support tools to help the acquisition of vocabulary.

The Reading Approach (hereafter RA) emerged in the late 30's to develop learners' reading skills through the exposure to texts. As the GTM, the RA benefited from technology in the form of books, only now they were more didactic and less literary than in the GTM [21]. The RA was followed by the Audio-Lingual Method (hereafter ALM) which focused on oral skills with particular emphasis on pronunciation since its main teaching strategy was the drills (exercises of repetition of a given structure by replacing one or more elements) [22, 24]. The ALM drew upon many technologies such as overhead projectors and/ or image projectors, videos and audio players used in classrooms in the 1940's for authentic teaching materials recorded (reproducing the speech of native speakers) and a kind of self-evaluation, since students could record their readings and repetition exercises to analyze their performance.

With the advent of the European Common Market in the 1970s, the need for a more communicative teaching of foreign languages emerged [25]. The Communicative Approach (hereafter CA) came with the need for a more communicative view of language and teaching focusing on students' communicative needs integrating the four skills (reading, listening, writing and speaking). According to [22] the following methodologies are embedded in the Communicative Approach: the Task Based Approach (hereinafter TBA); the Content and Language Integrated Learning (hereafter CLIL) and the Participatory Approach (hereafter PA).

The TBA and as the name suggests, is focused on tasks. [26] defines a task as a work plan that requires pragmatic use of the language in order to achieve a communicative result. Although there is no prescription for the use of technology in TBA, there are several possibilities to use and incorporate technologies in this methodology. A relevant and relatively current example is WebQuests [27] which propose tasks using the internet as the main search source. According to some authors [28, 29] WebQuests are compatible with the assumptions and principles of the TBA.

Regarding another methodology embedded in the CA, namely, CLIL, we can say that the aim of this methodology is twofold for it claims to teach contents and language simultaneously. Clil aims at teaching diverse contents, not the language itself, through the target language and therefore, the target language is only the medium used for instruction (thus the term English Medium Instruction also used to refer to this methodology). CLIL is rather an implicit methodology of language teaching, since it gives little or no explicit or intentional focus to the structures of the target language [23]. As in the TBA, CLIL does not suggest the use of specific technologies for teaching and learning the language,

but we suggest there are several possibilities such as podcasts, social networks and blogs, since one can approach any content in the target language through these technological resources. WebQuests also seem to be fit these methodologies as shown in [30] who analyzed 483 WebQuests in English addressing the most diverse contents such as mathematics, science, physics, chemistry and history, to name but a few.

The PA is a critical approach that focuses on civic education based on the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire. This methodology advocates meaningful and contextualized learning of language considering the concept of empowerment and giving voice to the subject. As it is, the PA goes beyond language goals to reach social transformation objectives and though technologies are not directly mentioned in this methodology, we suggest that technology use nowadays, especially via the internet, provides a very fertile ground for the practice of PA in the globalized world, especially regarding the development of a critical attitude about language and digital literacy [2, 14].

The CA, as well as the ALM, also used the computer as an important teaching resource. In the 1980's, personal computers and communicative teaching ideas became popular giving rise to the emergence of the Communicative Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) approach where technology is perceived as a "mediator", allowing user interactivity through contextualized activities going from being seen as a tool to being seen as a mediator in language teaching methodologies.

The emergence of the CD-ROM, multimedia computers and especially the internet brought about the "integrative CALL" phase which we continue to experience in English teaching and learning nowadays. These new technological artifacts allow the integration of the four skills in one activity, something that undoubtedly meets the assumptions of the CA. We can say that in the integrative CALL, technology, especially through the internet, gains a central role in English teaching methodologies. Ample access to the internet in the 1990's brought new forms of communication and opportunities for foreign language learners who now can interact with native and non-native speakers anywhere via emails and social networks. For the first time, technology allowed the demise of artificial language experiments, as emphasized by [18].

Though most teachers believe that the CA is still the best method for foreign language teaching, it is important to point out that the crisis of the concept of methods in the 1990's brought the era of post-method where many authors [for example, 3], deny the existence of a perfect method. The search for the best method gave way to the search for more appropriate methods proposing eclectic or hybrid approaches [for example, 32,33] which use techniques and procedures of various methods and technologies, combining face-to-face classes with virtual classroom environments.

The 21st century, together with the 2.0 internet heralds a new phase of interactions and language learning. Hypertexts changed the way we process information and also brought new perspectives to writing and reading. The 2.0 internet offers important pedagogic affordances for language teaching and learning such as social networks, wikis, blogs, smartphones and their applications which are still timidly used in education for several reasons, but mostly because of fear and lack of teacher training [21]. [18] claims that we are progressing towards the standardization of these technologies, though we still have a long way ahead to incorporate them in education in general and in ELT in particular. Perhaps the biggest challenge to do so lies in the need to review teaching practices and educational policies.

3 TEACHING ENGLISH IN BRAZIL AT A CROSSROADS WITH GLOBALIZATION AND INTERNATIONALIZATION

In what follows, we address critical issues regarding the teaching of English that affect and are affected not only by technologies and methodologies but also by globalization and internationalization of education. We intend to go a step beyond eclectic [31] and hybrid approaches [32,33] or the post-method movement [3] to propose that the key to using technologies and methodologies for teaching English pervades the critical view of the content and medium taught.

Changes brought by globalization with its consequent internationalization of higher education, along with the use of technologies, especially the internet, changed the status of and access to English in Brazil. According to Brazilian educational policies English has the status of any foreign language, and as such, it can be taught, or not, in schools, since each institution has the right to choose which foreign language to teach after 5th grade. Even those schools which opt to teach English adopt a Reading Approach. Yet, private language institutes which teach English with a communicative approach abound, showing that though educational policies see English as a foreign language (that

Brazilians should learn mostly to access information in the form of written texts), Brazilians see it as an international language not only to access but also to produce information (integrating the four skills).

The use of technology in and despite teaching methodologies, especially with the advent of the 2.0 internet changed the way English is taught, learned, used and seen in Brazil. Regardless of educational policies and or financial conditions to attend private language institutes, most Brazilians now access contents and information in English through the internet. Brazilian internationalization programs such as the English without Borders is evidence that at least in higher education, policies have changed to meet the requirements of a globalized and gradually more internationalized world. Yet, since CLIL, or other communicative approaches are not adopted in basic education where the Reading Approach to English teaching prevails, it is unlikely that the lack of proficiency in English is bound to be overcome by internationalization policies and or the possibilities of the 2.0 internet alone.

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