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**In which ways can English language learning and teaching be
decolonized?
ELT in a postmethod perspective**

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1 Introduction

Currently a vast majority of the world's population understands and speaks at least a little bit of English. English is a so-called lingua franca, if not *the* lingua franca: It is the language which is spoken nearly all over the world and is therefore used for communication between people who do not share a native language. Students all over the world are being taught the English language usually already early in their academic career to be able to speak English later in life. English is not only taught to be able to communicate with people from other countries but to be able to take part in the more and more globalized world. Bi- or multilingual speakers are expected to have advantages over those who are only able to speak their mother tongue, incapable of comprehending anyone who is not a fellow countryman speaking the same language as them. But not only the obvious fact of being able to communicate with foreign language speakers from all over the world – either when travelling or meeting people from other countries – is a great benefit of learning English, but also economically and academically speaking. English is also the language of technology and economics. It can even be seen as obligatory to know and understand when talking in technological contexts, due to the English-speaking origin of many technological advancements. In an increasingly digital world, it is essential to speak or at least understand the common language which is used. Otherwise there arises a danger of not understanding the modern technologies and communication channels and potentially even being excluded of the digital way of life, especially in times of a pandemic. Furthermore, learning English early in school is also an academic benefit which promises to help students in career terms later. Multilinguals are becoming the desired employees since English is often the prerequisite for employers of all kinds of jobs.

Given these points, the importance of English teaching and learning is easily understandable. This inevitably leads to the question, how English is being taught in the current foreign language pedagogy. In order to understand the development of English Language Teaching (ELT) and why there is a need of decolonizing it in the first place, it is necessary to take a closer look at the history of English as a world language. It is fundamental to understand how colonialism influenced the former and still ongoing perception of ELT with its method-based pedagogy and language speaker ideals to capture the historical – colonial – background and realize the urgency of decolonizing English language learning and teaching. These aspects are explained in chapter two. Additionally, it demonstrates in detail, why the concept of method is inadequate and explain its colonially marginalizing character in several dimensions. Subsequently, the third chapter will illustrate the current paradigm shift from this former perception towards a post-colonial perspective of ELT, which is mainly directed by Kumaravadivelu with his postmethod pedagogy. The latter is characterized by certain pedagogic parameters which will be depicted elaborately and are the basis for

Kumaravadivelu's pedagogic framework. This framework includes macrostrategies and microstrategies, which will be explained in more detail and finally suggest ways how to decolonize ELT in and outside the classroom. Nonetheless, as indicated, the relevance of this topic can only be expressed by starting from the beginning and explaining why ELT can be considered colonized. The fourth chapter will very briefly depict a multilingual approach towards decolonizing ELT being followed by the fifth chapter which, along the lines of the macrostrategic framework, provides some best-practice examples and activities of how to change the EFL classroom. This paper ends with a summarizing conclusion.

2 Current foreign language pedagogy

The question of how the English language is being taught in the current foreign language pedagogy is essential in order to enhance language learning and find pedagogically, culturally and socially more contemporary and especially more justifiable approaches. As the main question of this paper is, in which ways English language learning and teaching can be decolonized, it is simple to figure that the conventional way of learning and therefore also teaching English, as it is being practiced today, must in some way be colonial.

2.1 English as a world language through colonialism

First of all, before examining the colonial character of the present English teaching pedagogy, it must be stated that English as a language itself already inherits a colonial history. This chapter depicts, why English is considered a world language and how this developed through colonialism and how powerful the English language became.

As mentioned above English is a world language or in other words a global language because it is being spoken all over the world. Crystal defines the term *global language* as a language which develops a special role which is recognized in every country and hence achieves a genuinely global status (cf. Crystal 2003, 3). This special role might look different in the various countries and can result from several different matters. When a large amount of the country's population uses this language as a mother tongue it automatically plays a special role in most affairs. But only the use of the mother tongue cannot make a language a global language: It needs to be accepted by other countries in the world, so that it has a special role in the communities even without having many or no mother tongue speakers at all. Making a language the official language of a country is also a main way to give the language a special role in a particular country, since it is then used as a means of communication in various areas as government, law courts, education, and the country's media. When a language is the priority in a country's foreign-language teaching it also has a special role in this country even though it might not have an official status. All language

learners, young children or adolescents in school or adults who have never learned it in their early education will most likely acquire this language, because it is the most accessible (cf. *ibid*, 4-5). Additionally, the language speakers make a difference in making a language a global language. Here, not the quantity of people speaking the language but rather the power they possess determines the status of the language. When mother tongue users have a strong power base, are able to succeed on an international level and thereby lead others to learn and use the language they give it a special power within their own communities (cf. *ibid*, 7). Thus, language users, their language usage and their determination in spreading it can have a great impact on the status a language finally achieves.

These general factors decide whether a language can be considered a global language. In the case of English, it is quite obvious that all these factors apply, confirming its global status. But now the question arises how English became a global language and how this question is linked to colonialism. As it is commonly known, the English language developed and spread through colonialism but how this exactly happened will be explained, illustrating the main outlines of the language's history.

In the fifth century, the earliest form of English, Old English, emerged on the British Isles. In the successive centuries, the use of English was locally restricted to the British Isles but the language itself evolved from Old English to Middle English, to Early Modern English and eventually to Modern English. In the late sixteenth century British communities were formed outside the British Islands and English began to spread overseas. This was the first British colonization marking the beginning of the English language colonialism¹ (cf. McIntyre 2020, 26). The areas conquered and colonized by Britain made up the British Empire and were under British rule and control. The spread to America however was not as effortless which several failed attempts to found colonies there proved. Ultimately, in 1607 the British settlers established the first lasting settlement on the east coast of North America and named it Jamestown, after James I. The area around the settlement was called Virginia, after the *Virgin Queen* Elizabeth I. Another colony was formed in 1620 by Puritan settlers who fled from England due to religious persecution and crossed the Atlantic on *The Mayflower*. The famous English ship which brought the community to what they considered the "Promised Land" landed in today's Plymouth Massachusetts where they established *Plymouth Colony*. In total there were 13 colonies by 1732 all based on the east coast of America (cf. *ibid*, 26). All these early settlers, who formed a very heterogeneous group of people, had diverse social

¹ The term colonialism can be defined as the "control by one power over a dependent area of people. It occurs when one nation subjugates another, conquering its population and exploiting it often while forcing its own language and cultural values upon its people" (National Geographic, 2019).

and regional backgrounds and consequently different linguistic backgrounds. The latter naturally had a remarkable impact on the development of dialect distinctions within the English language, including different forms of pronunciation and accents depending on the settlers' origins. These patterns of different dialects remained in the population as it moved further across America, later being enlarged by more varieties from different regions of England. Besides the British which increasingly immigrated during the 17th century, settlers from other parts of the world, e.g., Spain, France and the Netherlands spread in all parts of the American territories, which again brought new linguistic varieties into English. In the 18th century the slave trade² resulted in many Africans entering the south of America (cf. Crystal 2003, 31-35).

Despite of the lack of major British settlements in the west African region, the English language still was employed as a means of communication among the indigenous population due to hundreds of local languages spoken between the indigene and the British traders. The common English language facilitated the trading and prevented misunderstandings between the trade partners. Whereas English also made it easier to trade and enslave Africans since they were not able to understand and could not defend themselves due to this lack of comprehension. The English language also reached east Africa, when the British settled there since the 1850s. Several countries became colonies, making English more and more powerful as the language of government, education and law. Although the countries gained independence from the British in the 20th century the English language still leaves its mark on most of them to this day: It still holds official status in some countries and is spoken as a second language by many Africans (cf. Jenkins 2003, 7). Along with all the countries and regions which have been mentioned so far, the British also colonized South Africa and parts of Sydney, Australia, establishing the first penal colony to reduce the numbers of prisoners in England (cf. Crystal 2003, 40). As well India and other parts of South Asia had been influenced by the English language British merchants and voyagers entered the territories and introduced the British educational system (cf. *ibid*, 47-49).

Bearing this whole development and historical background of the English language in mind, its colonial connotation is easily visible. English, with the British as its first speakers, has been spread and "expanded its territory" through the method of colonization. This included imposing the English language and with that, English values, laws and educational systems upon the particular

² The term 'slave trade' "refers to the transatlantic trading patterns which were established as early as the mid-17th century" (British Library, n.d.) where trading ships brought manufactured goods from Europe to the west coast of Africa and which were traded for captured people provided by African traders. From there the European traders' ships sailed to America – amongst others, as the Caribbean – to trade the slaves, who were destined to work on plantations, for sugar, rum, tobacco and other luxury items. By the 1790s an estimated number of 480,000 people were enslaved in the British colonies (cf. *ibid*, n.d.).

native inhabitants. In the established schools the English language and Western culture were taught to the locals in order to 'modernize' them (cf. Brown Political Review, 2017). Given this fact, the locals were obviously seen as inferior and less worthy. Their way of living, their knowledge and their language were overwritten by Western manners and values – all through the English language. One could say that English was the language of colonialism, at least the beginning of it, starting with the British. Therefore, there has always been an ever-present link between English and colonialism which after centuries still exists today – “most former British colonies now use English as their official language (e.g., Ghana and South Africa)” (ibid, 2017). In this perspective the English language can even be seen as a language of oppression, inheriting a certain violence. On the basis of its history, it can, since its beginnings, be considered responsible for the production of oppressive beliefs and intentions as well as for the reinforcement of these oppressive structures (cf. Interventions outside of the Institution, 2019).

To return to the phrase *English as a global language*: Taking the colonial history of the English language into account, the meaning, accuracy and the veracity of this phrase can be understood much better and the mentioned special role a language needs to play in the different countries in order to be defined as such is clearly detectable. Having a large impact on all of the countries which were colonized – then and still today – English became one of the most powerful languages to exist. According to Crystal, this power and its global status does not have anything to do with the structure, grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation or spelling of the English language. These linguistic aspects are not what makes English globally attractive, it rather is “the power of the people who speak it” (Youtube – Macmillan Education ELT, 2009). English as a language holds immense power in several different domains which it gained over the past centuries. Consequently, “power means different things at different times” (ibid, 2009). The first and historically primary power is the political and military power which made English international. Through the power of the British Empire and its colonialization the English language gained a considerable amount of influence. Secondly, in the 16th and 17th century the power of technology and science comes along: Since approximately two thirds of the inventors who contributed to the industrial revolution, making modern society what it is, spoke English. English was the medium of mediation for the inventors and scientists and therefore the language of science. Acknowledging the economic power, Crystal states, “money talks – always – and the language it was talking in the 19th century was English” (ibid, 2009). Britain together with America was controlling the money market, as Britain was the leading force in the trading and industrial sector and the US economy had the highest productivity and fastest growth worldwide. The US dollar represented America's economic supremacy and with that the English language (cf. Crystal 2003, 9-10). Finally, in the 20th century

cultural power come into play. As well as the power of sciences the cultural power of English was demonstrated by a vast majority of inventions like the telegraph, telephone, radio or internet which were mainly invented and introduced through the medium of English (cf. *ibid*, 9-10).

The educational power of English also expresses itself through the large number of scientific and academic publications in diverse fields of research written in the English language (cf. Northrup 2013, 148-149).

Because this language is so extremely powerful in so many different ways, it is crucial to invest time and thought into how it is being taught in schools to students – every single day and all over the world. The power and historical background of the language English must be conveyed in an appropriate manner and the way and the methods of teaching English therefore adapted accordingly. This might imply that the current way of teaching needs to be altered.

2.2 ELT through the concept of method

After illustrating the colonial history and the thereby developed power of the English language, the colonial character of the present ELT pedagogy will be examined more closely in this subchapter. To be more exact, it is the pedagogic area of classroom methodology which is often neglected and should receive more attention. The classroom methodology has been and still is problematized due to its concept of method (Kumaravadivelu 2003, 540). This is because, according to Kumaravadivelu, the concept of method clearly has a colonial character. The prototypical methods which are being referred to in this context all have the critical similarity that they are founded and conceptualized by theorists, for example the Grammar-Translation Method or the Audiolingual Method with their theoretical conceptions. The Audiolingual Method e.g., is based on the idea of habit formation which derives from the theory of Behaviorism, believing that learning relies on conditioning a learner with stimuli by positively reinforcing correct responses (cf. Grimm, Meyer & Volkman 2015, 42). This theory of learning has been established in the early 20th century by several theorists, among others the psychologist Skinner, and in the 1950s and 1960s the Audiolingual Method was developed from its principles (cf. *ibid*, 63). Hence every method has a particular set of theoretical principles and a particular set of classroom theories (Kumaravadivelu 2003, 540). To stay with the example of the Audiolingual Method that would be the particular methods of practicing in the classroom, such as repetition drills (single students or the entire class repeating the teacher's model in chorus), chain drills (students using minimal speech patterns which can be closely monitored by the teacher) and transformation drills (asking students to transform certain sentence patterns e.g., an active to a passive sentence) (cf. Grimm, Meyer & Volkman 2015, 64). Methods and their principles and classroom techniques have existed ever since language teaching and when colonialism emerged, the construct of method took on clearly

detectable colonial features. There have even been documentations that British colonialism 'educationally exploited' their colonized territories: They used the countries they have taken over, to design teaching methods which they thought were appropriate. The British used India for instance to check and examine teaching techniques and literary canons. It is self-explanatory that the teaching methods, techniques and literature was all selected and designed in a way which served the colonial agenda. Consequently, even today's language teaching methods which are being used in several parts of the world have their origin in colonial ideas and therefore are still conform with the colonial concept of method (cf. Kumaravadivelu 2003, 540-541).

2.3 Method as a construct of marginality

Now the question how exactly the concept of method is colonial, is inevitable. This is because "more than anything else, the concept of method is a construct of marginality" (ibid, 541)³. In this perspective, the construct of marginality only considers the ideas and conceptions valuable and worthy that are associated with the colonial Self. The so-called subaltern Other is marginalized. Hence, all the other ideas and conceptions which does not correspond to the colonial, native Self are cardinaly subordinate and inferior i.e., irrelevant. The methods therefore are used to establish the native Self as superior compared to everything and everyone that was not Native. The colonized people with their way of living, their values and their language were therefore marginalized – due to being non-native (cf. Kumaravadivelu 2003, 541).

When looking at method as a construct of marginality more closely, the marginality can be subdivided into four separate dimensions. For once there is a scholastic dimension, a linguistic dimension, a cultural dimension and finally an economic dimension.

2.3.1 Scholastic marginality

The scholastic dimension of marginality refers to the way Western scientists and scholars looked upon local knowledge(s) (cf. ibid, 541). Local knowledge is the knowledge that people in an existing community have developed over time and still continue to develop, which makes it dynamic and changing. Moreover, it is based on experience and adapted to the local culture and environment (cf. FAO, 2004). In fact, the way Western scientists and scholars treated local knowledge was characterized by contempt. Their own interests were the solely relevant ones and everything else, which was associated with for instance Indian or Chinese local knowledge and its production and dissemination was not only unacknowledged but consciously ignored and denigrated. The disdainful attitude can be expressed most accurately by one particular quote. It is by

³ The related word 'marginalization' is defined as the act of treating someone or something as if they were not important (cf. Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.), thus marginality can be, metaphorically speaking, understood as being pushed towards the margin of society by reason of minor importance.

Thomas B. Macaulay, the British historian and politician who composed *the Minute on Indian Education* in February 1835 (cf. Kumaravadivelu 2003, 541) in which he “offered definite reasons for why the East India Company and the British government should spend more money on the provision of English language, as well as the promotion of European learning [...] in India” (Scroll.in, 2017). The contempt and self-proclaimed supremacy are unambiguous:

A single shelf of good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia... It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say that all the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in the Sanskrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgement used at preparatory schools in England (Alvares, 1979/91, 4, quoted in: Kumaravadivelu 2003, 541)

Describing how Western colonists looked upon local knowledge in terms of native literature, this statement demonstrates a treatment similar to the British scholars’ when coming to India: They showed no interest in learning about the rich traditions of India’s multilingual practices in learning and teaching ‘second’ languages (cf. *ibid*, 541). The existing local knowledge about this was considered worthless and was entirely disregarded due to what Macaulay described as “the intrinsic superiority of the Western literature” (Bureau of Education, 1965) in his *Minute*. In order not to endanger this superiority of Western literature and literati it was a common colonial practice to educate the natives, e.g., the Indians, just enough English to sustain the colonial system but not enough to accomplish more beyond this or even revolt against it. Even after the resolution of the colonial territories the United States still pursued a similar approach: the immigrants from Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia are taught only the exact amount of English in the US refugee camps before they enter America, so they can find a job with minimum wage and do not impose a burden on the state, but at the same time cannot ‘climb the job ladder’ any further (cf. Kumaravadivelu 2003, 541).

2.3.2 Linguistic marginality

The second dimension of marginality of the concept of method is the linguistic dimension. After marginalizing local knowledge for academic purposes and declaring it useless, next, the local languages had to disappear. The colonial intention was to “make the knowledge and use of local language(s) irrelevant for learning and teaching English as an additional language” (*ibid*, 542). A way to do that was to follow the so-called *monolingual tenet* (cf. Phillipson 1992, n.p, quoted in: Kumaravadivelu 2003, 542). This basic principle indicates the total abdication of the respective native language when teaching English and therefore doing so exclusively through the medium of English. The elimination of every other language besides English and becoming linguistically thoroughly monolingual is what constitutes the marginality of method. Practicing language teaching in such a way prohibits great benefits on sides of the ESL and EFL learners and teachers, since their

language learning process and their language teaching could be facilitated by the use of their first language. Further analysis regarding this topic and how using multiple languages, i.e., the L1, can ease (second) language learning will take place in a later chapter. Otherwise there has not always been a monolingually restricted ELT pedagogy in Britain: Contradictorily, Britain long applied a binary approach concerning language teaching. On the one hand they applied a bilingual method to teach English to the British citizens e.g., through the grammar-translation method and among it translating literary texts bilingually, on the other hand, in the English colonies the mentioned monolingual English teaching took place. As a consequence, former bilingually taught students who wanted to become ELT teachers had to “continually re-discover and re-learn the monolingual approach to English as a second/foreign language teaching” (ibid, 542). Not only ELT, but second language acquisition in general was affected by the monolingual tenet, where bi- and multilingual approaches were not even taken into consideration. The monolingual bias in language teaching and especially in ELT is still existent today. For instance, the previously addressed Audiolingual Method, representing an example for a conventional concept of method, favors monolingual teaching because “the L1 should not interfere with habit formation in the L2” (Grimm, Meyer & Volkmann 2015, 64). According to this method, a language should be taught and learned only through itself and without the help of other native languages of the language teachers and learners.

2.3.3 Cultural marginality

Furthermore, there is the cultural dimension of method as a construct of marginality. It is closely related to the previously illustrated linguistic dimension since it concentrates on monoculturalism instead of monolingualism – both being closely interrelated. In the cultural dimension of language learning i.e., culture teaching, there has always been a special emphasis on the native speaker (of the target language) whose perspective should be comprehended by the language learner. He or she should “becom[e] sensitive to the state of mind of individuals and groups within the target language community” (Stern 1992, 217, quoted in: Kumaravadivelu 2003, 543) in order to be able to use the target language in suitable and useful ways. The appropriate use of the target language should fulfill one specific goal and that is to culturally empathize or even assimilate with the native speakers of English. It becomes apparent that the focus lies on establishing monoculturalism rather than multiculturalism, where the perspectives of different and multiple speakers of different languages coexist. This culture teaching suggests to blend in with the native speakers’ culture so that as a consequence, the individual voice and the cultural identity of the second or foreign language learner “stands hopelessly marginalized” (Kumaravadivelu 2003, 543).

Beside the cultural focus on the native speaker, which describes the cultural dimension of method as a construct of marginality, there is also a general linguistic focus on the native speaker. When it comes to pronunciation, emphasis and accent there is a certain language speaker ideal, implying that only the native speaker is truly a speaker of a particular language. Striving for the pronunciation, the emphasis and the accent of the native speaker is a widespread tendency which ignores all other varieties and shapes of English. The native speaker is the benchmark for every learner's language skills, for children in school or for adult language learners and thus the ultimate aim of a language learning process. This perception could derive from Kachru's famous *Three Circles of English* (see Figure 2.3.3 in appendix), where the native English speakers with English as a mother tongue are located in the Inner Circle which is the central one (cf. Kachru 1990, 4). The Inner Circle gives the impression that these English speakers from USA, UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand are prestigious compared to the speakers from the Outer Circle (e.g., from India) and the Expanding Circle (e.g., from China) due to their dominant central position in the model. The model could be one of the reasons why the native speaker is generally viewed as the ideal language speaker, contributing to the colonial idea of the native Self and the non-native Other.

To get back to the dimensions in which method is a construct of marginality, it can be said that the linguistic and cultural dimension both intend to benefit the native speaker of English (cf. Kumaravadivelu 2003, 543). The focus on monolingualism and monoculturalism, which can be referred to as the 'native speaker fallacy' maintains the dominance of the Center i.e., Britain. It does so by supporting the cultural and linguistic norms of the Center and thus fostering an ideological dependence (cf. Phillipson 1992, 199, quoted in: Kumaravadivelu 2003, 543).

2.3.4 Economic marginality

The last dimension is the economic dimension of the marginally constructed concept of method. The economy maintains the ELT industry and method as a construct of marginality is responsible for it. Kumaravadivelu uses a very fitting metaphor: He describes economy as the engine that drives the ELT industry and method as a construct of marginality as the fuel which keeps the ELT economic engine alive (cf. *ibid*, 543). The monolingual tenet and the native speaker tenet are of special significance because they guarantee native speakers of English permanent employment opportunities around the whole world. Generally, the economy of English-speaking countries, in particular of Britain, profits exceedingly by ELT. But, ironically, by maintaining its own monolingualism Britain puts its supremacy at risk. One noticed, that being bilingual and possibly a non-native speaker of English as a professional might not be a disadvantage, but rather even support ELT. The main question that should be considered, is, if British English teachers who only

speak English should be able to understand the needs and concerns of second-language users of English. Then other countries with bilingual professionals could become serious competitors and “Britain’s monolingual status may become an economic liability” (Graddol 1997, 57, quoted in: Kumaravadivelu 2003, 543) harming its supremacy in the global ELT industry. If Britain intends to stay competitive in this regard beyond its frontiers, it should primarily take measures which promote bilingualism within its frontiers (cf. *ibid*, 543).

Ultimately, after demonstrating various aspects of the multi-dimensional phenomenon *method as a construct of marginality*, it can be summarized that it “extends and expands the colonial agenda of economic exploitation and cultural domination” (*ibid*, 544) and sustains colonial conceptions e.g., native Self and non-native Other and treatment of local knowledge. It becomes clearer than ever, that it is time for a paradigm shift which abandons the rightly criticized concept of method and is directed at a new approach. There is an urgent need of a new concept which decolonizes these mentioned methodological aspects of ELT, rethinks existing relations and strikes a new path towards a progressive English language pedagogy.

3 Postmethod pedagogy

A remarkable attempt of creating this path and decolonizing ELT was made by Kumaravadivelu. The professor of Applied Linguistics (cf. *The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics*, 2012) can be considered the pioneer of a postcolonial perspective of ELT. He suggests the *concept of postmethod* as a postcolonial construct. It symbolizes the need of an alternative to method rather than an alternative method, since as just demonstrated the construct of method is outdated and flawed by colonial attitudes. Kumaravadivelu believes that,

we now seem to have reached a state of heightened awareness – an awareness that as long as we are caught up in the web of method, we will continue to get entangled in an unending search for an unavailable solution, an awareness that such a search drives us to continually recycle and repackage the same old ideas and an awareness that nothing short of breaking the cycle can salvage the situation (Kumaravadivelu 1994, 28).

3.1 Postmethod condition

Being aware of this generates a so-called *postmethod condition*, which is characterized by the redefinition of the relationship between the center and the periphery (cf. *ibid*, 29). In this context, the center means the theorizers who, by conceptualizing their philosophical reasoning and creating concepts and theories out of it, rule language pedagogy. Whereas the periphery means the actual practitioners of classroom teaching, i.e., the teachers who then apply the concepts, theories and methods, but remain powerless and being ruled by the center. Opposing the concept of method to the concept of postmethod: While method authorizes the theorists to invent and

establish universal theories based on knowledge and makes them the primary policymakers of pedagogy, postmethod enables the practitioners to create theories based on real-life practice which are adapted to specific location and classroom. The postmethod condition thus focuses on the practitioners as they are the ones teaching English day-to-day. Considering this, there arises a discrepancy between what is conceptualized by the theorizers and what is actually put into practice by the practitioners. This discrepancy explains itself by taking a closer look at the term method. As already indicated in the beginning of 2.2, every language teaching method is composed “of a single set of theoretical principles derived from feeder disciplines and a single set of classroom procedures directed at classroom teachers” (ibid, 29). Though it is important to note, that this describes the idealized version of a method originated by theorizers. Again, referring to the language-centered Audiolingual Method: The theorizers estimate that a preoccupation with form caused by only practicing pre-structured linguistic patterns leads to mastering a second language. The classroom procedures which are directed at the classroom teacher would, in this case, be to acquaint the students with one grammatical structure or vocabulary item at a time until it could be successfully manifest in the linguistic L2 system (cf. ibid, 29). That explains the theoretical side of the construct of method. The practical side looks rather different. Since the exclusively knowledge-based, theoretical methods do not rely on classroom experience and experimentation they cannot be transferred into the classroom in their genuine form in which they were invented. The methods do not correspond to the actual classroom reality and therefore seem artificial and unnatural when carried out in the classroom. In the actual classroom, the practitioners are confronted with the complexity of language, the complicatedness of learning, different learner types and many other dynamic, unstable and situational factors. Under such circumstances it is impossible to solely follow a particular method with its theoretical principles and classroom procedures. There is a need of a postmethod construct which respects the individual circumstances the practitioners find themselves in on a daily basis. This again makes clear, that merely an alternative method is not sufficient to do so – it takes an alternative *to* method, a postmethod method (cf. ibid, 29-30).

Further, there are two more features of the postmethod condition which are worth mentioning. These are the teacher autonomy and principled pragmatism. Teacher autonomy suggests that teachers do not only know how to teach, but are also able to behave and operate independently within the academic and administrative restraints which come from institutions, curricula, and textbooks. Autonomous teachers are as well able to reflect, monitor and evaluate their own teaching practice in order to alter it accordingly. As Kumaravadivelu sums up accurately, “promoting teacher autonomy means enabling and empowering teachers to theorize from their practice and practice what they have theorized” (ibid, 30), rather than being trapped in and

dependent on prefabricated, generalizing methods. The other feature which is characteristic of the postmethod condition, principled pragmatism, relies on the pragmatics of pedagogy. Hence, exclusively the act of teaching itself can give information about how theory and practice are related to each other and ideally, classroom learning is constructed and adjusted by the teachers on the basis of informed teaching and the critical evaluation of their own teaching practice. The development of a *sense of plausibility* enables for teachers to act upon principled pragmatism, which includes “their subjective understanding of the teaching they do” (Prabhu 1990, 172, quoted in: Kumaravadivelu 1994, 31). Aspects, as how causal and credible the teachers view their own teaching and how it induces the intended learning also relate to this subjective understanding, which can result from what they experienced themselves as foreign learners and in their life as teachers, their professional education and consultation through colleagues and peers. Since teacher’s sense of plausibility represents the postmethod era, not the conventional concept of method, the question is not about the quality of the method it implicates, if good or bad, but about its potential of “creat[ing] a sense of involvement for both the teacher and the student (Kumaravadivelu 1994, 31).

These three main features of the postmethod condition, the search for an alternative to method (rather than an alternative method), teacher autonomy and principled pragmatism, build the foundation for Kumaravadivelu’s pedagogic framework. This framework, which will be exemplified later in more detail with its macrostrategies, should serve teachers as a help to develop all the essential components, i.e., the necessary knowledge, skill, attitude and autonomy, in order to construct an individual, coherent and principled, pragmatism-oriented alternative to the construct of method. Hence, the framework focuses on providing teachers with strategic advice so that they can design their everyday teaching practice in a principled manner and make decisions autonomously (cf. *ibid*, 31). As such autonomous decision makers and strategic practitioners, teachers are then empowered to “transcend the limitations of the concept of method” (Kumaravadivelu 2003, 2) contribute to a new language learning in a postmethod era.

3.2 Pedagogic parameters

Before illustrating the actual framework, and to guarantee a better and more holistic understanding, it takes further description of what the postmethod pedagogy actually looks like. For a start, the word pedagogy is defined rather broadly: It involves classroom strategies, instructional materials, curricular objectives, evaluation measures as well as historiopolitical and sociocultural aspects which are connected to second language learning (cf. Kumaravadivelu 2003, 34). Correspondingly, postmethod pedagogy consists of the three pedagogic parameters particularity, practicality and possibility which make it a three-dimensional system.

3.2.1 Parameter of particularity

The parameter of particularity refers to the idea that any language pedagogy which claims relevance

must be sensitive to a particular group of teachers teaching a particular group of learners pursuing a particular set of goals within a particular institutional context embedded in a particular sociocultural milieu (Kumaravadivelu 2003, 34).

This sensitivity demonstrates the antagonistic perception to the concept of method, believing there is a universal set of theoretical principles and of classroom practices which suits all learners in all contexts and surroundings. Particularity as a postmethod characteristic is opposed to the conventional 'one-fits-all' mindset which ignores all kinds of differences and individualities. Regarding particularity through a pedagogical lens, it can be said that the parameter is dichotomous: it simultaneously is a goal and a process. Essentially, it is about continuously improving the means and the ends by working for and through particularity at once (cf. *ibid*, 35). That includes mindfully paying attention to the L2 learning and teaching contexts (local, educational, institutional and social) and as a first step for instance observing and monitoring teachers in their everyday teaching practice. Individually or collectively evaluating their results, recognizing current or emerging problems, looking for solutions and testing them provides the basis for "the development of context-sensitive pedagogic theory and practice" (*ibid*, 35).

3.2.2 Parameter of practicality

Defining the parameter of practicality is essential in order to fully understand the previous parameter of particularity. The two dimensions are closely connected due to the deep embedding of the particular in the practical, i.e., the particularity of the group of learners for instance can only be specified through the practice of language teaching not through theoretical considerations. The parameter of practicality refers to the relationship between theory and practice which has been introduced in 3.1. It requires a theory of practice where teachers with their suitable tools and their knowledge are the main generators, rather than theorizers who are not in any contact with the classroom practice (as originated in the colonial construct of marginality). Thus, the parameter postulates that "no theory of practice can be fully useful and usable unless it is generated through practice" (*ibid*, 35). Such a theory necessitates permanent reflection and action, seeing that the practicing teachers can only produce a theory of practice themselves when constantly monitoring their own actions, analyzing and evaluating problems and finding improved alternatives. Besides reflection and action on the part of the teachers, practicality also consists of their insights and intuition. Kumaravadivelu describes it as the other side of the practicality coin (cf. *ibid*, 35). A teacher's multitudinous different experiences with learning and teaching, over time induce a sense

and a certain awareness of what good teaching is. However, despite of the apparently intuitive character of this sense of good teaching which seems like something developed instinctively, the teacher's sense-making is not organized this way. In fact, it is driven by pedagogic factors within the classroom as well as sociopolitical forces outside the classroom. Therefore, teachers should consider pedagogy "as a means for understanding and transforming possibilities in and outside the classroom" (ibid, 36) – which is also a requirement for proper sense-making. At this point the parameter of practicality gradually converts into the parameter of possibility.

3.2.3 Parameter of possibility

The third parameter of the three-dimensional system of postmethod pedagogy is the possibility. It is deduced from critical Freirean⁴ pedagogists and suggests the empowerment of classroom participants so that they are able to analyze the social and historical conditions, which are responsible for the cultural forms and interested knowledge they experience, with criticism. Depending on their particular sociocultural and historical background, every student has his or her own lived experience whereupon they acquire the English language in their own way and use it individually according to their own needs, values and visions (cf. Kumaravadivelu 2003, 544). Hence, the parameter of possibility considers the individual identity of each language classroom participant. That is because language learning – to a much greater extent than other educational activities – offers the participants possibilities for exploring subjectivity and self-identity. Within the medium of language in general existing and *possible* constructions of social organization are described and can be argued and thus transformed. Specifically, when it comes to second language learning, where different cultures converge it becomes even more relevant to value language and its possibilities to express ourselves and exchange ideas (cf. Kumaravadivelu 2003, 36b).

Recapitulating these last subchapters, it becomes clear, that the three parameters are closely related and "interact with each other in a synergic relationship where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts" (ibid, 37). The characteristics of the individual parameters overlap as they define and shape each other which Figure 3.2 (see appendix) demonstrates rather suitably. How the parameters eventually mesh and influence each other always depends on the participants individually and the respective context.

⁴ Freirean pedagogists are supporters of the Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire who was a leading proponent of critical pedagogy. He understood critical pedagogy as one, where the teacher instead of teaching, learns while in dialogue with the students, whereas the students learn while teaching. Rather than only receiving, sorting and storing information the students, according to Freire have "a real opportunity to recognize reality and to act on that recognition" (Pedagogy4Change, n.d.).

3.3 Macrostrategic framework

The macrostrategic framework in postmethod language pedagogy can be seen as the direct answer to the main question of this paper ‘In which ways can English language teaching and learning be decolonized?’. However, in order to grasp the full extent of this development it is necessary to go back to the origin and the spread of the English language and how it and with it ELT, were originally colonized. Without this historical and methodological background knowledge there can hardly be any, much less a holistic understanding of the flawed conventional concept of method and the therefore urgent need of change. The shift towards a postmethod condition with new parameters builds the foundation for the macrostrategic framework, which has the potential to guide language teachers towards constructing their own theory of practice with their own techniques (cf. Kumaravadivelu 2003, 38). The pedagogic wheel (see Figure 3.3 in appendix) demonstrates the relationship between the parameters, which serves as the axle of the wheel, and the macrostrategies, representing the spokes. The parameters are the center, which is stabilized and strengthened by the macrostrategies (cf. *ibid*, 41). The framework finally provides explicit strategic instructions to practicing teachers of English, while at the same time leaving enough space for personal ideas and interpretations. Its intention is not to force fixed universal directives upon teachers, it rather forms, as the name implies, a frame that should be ‘filled’ individually according to the arising situations and needs. The macrostrategies are so to speak the frame for the more precise microstrategies that derive from them and make the macrostrategies useful in the classroom. The microstrategies make the rather broadly phrased macrostrategies more practical and easier to understand. When speaking of the different suggested microstrategies it is crucial to bear in mind the need of their appropriate modification “to meet the linguistic, conceptual, and communicative capacities of a given group of learners” (*ibid*, 3).

To mention two last aspects concerning the nature of the following macrostrategies: They can be described as theory-neutral and method-neutral (cf. *ibid*, 38). Neutrality towards theory means that the framework does not solely refer to one certain theory and is biased but that it is objective and neutral towards many different existent theories of language, language learning and language teaching. Being method-neutral refers to a similar characteristic of the framework and makes clear that it is not bound to one particular set of theoretical principles or classroom procedures of a method, as for instance to those of the Audiolingual Method. The framework thus is not restricted to one preferred theory or method but neutrally positioned among the variety of theories and methods (cf. *ibid*, 38). The succeeding pages enumerate the ten macrostrategies of the framework and shortly explains what they imply. It further names and briefly describes a few corresponding microstrategies, that supplement the macrostrategic framework.

1. **Maximize learning opportunities** – This first macrostrategy implies that teaching is a “process of creating and utilizing learning opportunities” (ibid, 39) and that while doing so teachers should simultaneously manage teaching acts and mediate learning acts.
Microstrategy: Connecting with the Local Community – doing a project and bringing together the students and community members, while developing several linguistic skills (cf. ibid, 65)
2. **Minimize perceptual mismatches** – The second macrostrategy is about noticing and trying to keep the discrepancy between intentions and interpretations of all the participants of the learning and teaching process as narrow as possible at all times (cf. ibid, 39).
Microstrategy: Learner Perception – getting the learners’ impression and viewpoint of a particular lesson to, as a teacher, be able to work with the feedback, detect misunderstandings and improve the teaching practice (cf. ibid, 92)
3. **Facilitate negotiated interaction** – This macrostrategy aims at learning and teaching language through meaningful classroom interaction among learners themselves and learners and teachers. It advocates a learner-initiated interaction. (cf. ibid, 39)
Microstrategy: Topic of the Week – letting the students prepare a short presentation about a topic of their choice and afterwards leading a class discussion with reactions, questions and opinions (cf. ibid, 125)
4. **Promote learner autonomy** – The fourth macrostrategy is about making the learners autonomous i.e., enabling the learners to learn independently by teaching them ways to “self-direct and self-monitor their own learning” (ibid, 39).
Microstrategy: Learning Preferences Across Generations – collecting characteristics and learning preferences of different age groups and discussing them (cf. ibid, 145-146)
5. **Foster language awareness** – Fostering language awareness as a macrostrategy suggests highlighting formal and functional features of the learners’ L2, so that these becomes clearer and the L2 easier to learn (cf. ibid, 39).
Microstrategy: Language Use and Levels of Formality – distinguishing different forms of address by noticing that “different cultural communities require different levels of formality” (ibid, 168)
6. **Activate intuitive heuristics** – This macrostrategy refers to the teacher’s responsibility to set up a “rich linguistic environment in the classroom so that learners can activate their intuitive heuristics and discover the linguistic system by themselves” (ibid, 176).

Microstrategy: Articles of Trouble – writing simple sentences with definite and indefinite articles on the board and asking the students to suggest rules when to use which (cf. *ibid*, 195-196)

7. **Contextualize linguistic input** – The seventh macrostrategy emphasizes how (extra)linguistic and (extra)situational contexts influence and form language use and usage⁵ (cf. *ibid*, 39).

Microstrategy: Travel matters – conducting a roleplay in an imaginary communicative scenario at the airport where they have to make decisions and argue according to their role in the scenario (cf. *ibid*, 216-217)

8. **Integrate language skills** – This macrostrategy is about including all language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) despite of their traditional separation (cf. *ibid*, 39).

Microstrategy: A Matter of Reality and Falsehood – Watching a short episode of a reality TV show, discussing what it is about and what of it is real, visiting the library and letting the students read about the show (newspaper/Internet), writing a short essay about what they think of the show (cf. *ibid*, 233-234)

9. **Ensure social relevance** – This macrostrategy refers to attentively taking the learning and teaching environment into consideration, which includes societal, political, economic and educational factors (cf. *ibid*, 39).

Microstrategy: Una Coca Cola por favor – talking about code mixing and jokes based on linguistic or cultural misunderstanding using the example of a Hispanic boy trying to buy a coke from an American vending machine and misinterpreting the demand ‘dime’ as the Spanish ‘tell me’ instead of putting ten cents into the machine, letting the students come up with own funny stories (cf. *ibid*, 258-259)

10. **Raise cultural consciousness** – The last macrostrategy of Kumaravadivelu’s framework highlights the importance of recognizing “learners as cultural informants” (*ibid*, 40)

Microstrategy: Thanksgiving – letting the learners discuss what the festival means for them and how it is celebrated in their home culture (cf. *ibid*, 277)

4 Decolonizing ELT through multilingualism

Apart from the guiding principles of the pedagogic framework which teachers can follow to attempt (some first steps towards) the decolonization of ELT, this chapter will briefly go into another ‘tool’ for decolonizing: the topic of multilingualism. As mentioned above the concept of

⁵ While language *use* means use in the sense of ‘employ’ and means the *state of being used*, language *usage* refers to the ‘practice’ or ‘convention’ and implies continuity (cf. Ask Any Difference, n.d.).

method is a construct of marginality, among others in the linguistic dimension that is shaped by the monolingual tenet. In order to overcome this concept and decolonize English language learning and teaching in the postmethod era, there should be a focus on the use of multiple languages in the ELT classroom. The employment of more languages than just English can be a resource in several respects. Not only does it work against the monolingual – and thus also monocultural – bias of English language teaching and learning, it also facilitated language learning in general. The recent understanding of multilingualism believes that “raising learners’ awareness of languages, their differences and similarities, [...] support[s] language learning” (Illman & Pietilä 2018, 238). Furthermore, the learners’ languages, i.e., when learning English their L1 / their mother tongue, potentially other languages and English as the foreign language, interact with each other and promote the language learning process by enhancing the speakers’ linguistic awareness and yet reorganizing their cognitive processes. The idea is to facilitate the learning of new languages by “making use of all the languages an individual has in his or her linguistic repertoire” (ibid, 238). How to realize this in the classroom will be suggested in the following chapter of best-teaching practices.

5 Best-practice examples and activities for the ELF classroom

Since some of the cited microstrategies are rather incoherent and incomprehensible, when not explaining in detail the complete activity or lesson, this chapter will suggest some more best-practice examples of how to change the EFL classroom. The activities are mostly based on the postmethod perception by Kumaravadivelu and especially inspired by his strategic framework. The first activity however refers to the recent chapter and includes multilingualism into ELT. It follows a strategy within the framework of translanguaging called ‘pedagogically based code-switching’ and is about systematically combining two or more languages in one learning activity (cf. ibid, 139). The activity involves to first search for a text on the internet (it could be a blog, an encyclopedia entry or any kind of article) about the holiday Christmas, which is written in the individual mother tongue of the students. This might be German, English, Turkish or any other languages. The next step after reading is to present the content of the text in English and talk about the different ways of celebrating Christmas in the different home countries of the students and exchanging experiences. There can also be formed groups if several students have the same L1. This activity not only includes more than one language – English – in the language learning process, but also raises cultural consciousness: There is not one “right” way to celebrate religious festivals as Christmas, some cultures do not even celebrate them. The learners become aware of the cultural diversity and learn to decentralize their own way of living. Additionally, the activity

follows another macrostrategy of the framework by integrating more than one language skills (reading, speaking) in one activity. Another best-practice example to contribute to a shift of ELT towards a decolonized postmethod pedagogy is to perform a larger project which addresses a local topic. For instance, if there are refugees and/or refugee children in the local community, students and teachers could organize regular meetings to cook, bake or do handicrafts together. The students will most likely speak English as a lingua franca if the refugees do not speak the national language which causes meaningful and socially relevant interaction in the context of English language learning. Cooking and baking international dishes also contributes to raising cultural consciousness and broadening the students' "culinary horizon". A further way to connect to the local community and thereby maximize learning opportunities is to raise awareness of socially or economically relevant topics for example climate change, pollution or voting. After reading about it, compiling the most important aspects and discussing it in the EFL classroom, the students are asked to create something for outside the classroom: They should create posters for the local community which will be hung up at the local supermarket, bakery or pharmacy for example. These posters can also be in the national language – again including multilingualism in order to produce a meaningful output closely related to real life – or in English and can also be hung up in the school itself for other students, who are learners of English as well. One strategy of the pedagogic framework is to support the learners' language awareness. Possible activities could be doing a roleplay in pairs where the students play one scenario in different roles and have to choose the registers with different levels of formality according to the roles. For instance, the scenario is 'talking about the upcoming summer party' and pairs could be 'school principal – parent' or 'student – student'. The teacher can suggest chunks as a help and provide the students with the necessary forms of address and vocabulary, e.g., 'Sir', 'Mr./Mrs. ...', 'Buddy/Bro' etc. Another activity fostering language awareness, which can be realized in advanced classes is to analyze presidential speeches and pay attention to the language use and how it can be employed to persuade and also manipulate people.

Considering these exemplary activities, it is important to bear in mind that each one has to be modified according to the learner group, their linguistic resources and the learning context as described with the parameter of particularity. Thus, best teaching practices comprise of teachers composing their individual theories of practice conforming to what they experience in their day-to-day teaching. They also involve, as illustrated in the activities, a strong reference to culture and society emphasizing their diversity and striving for a holistic perspective.

6 Conclusion

It can be summarized that the historical past of the English language and the existing method-based pedagogy generated a condition which is marked by an undeniable colonial coloration (cf. Kumaravadivelu 2003, 541). Due to this, there is an imperative need of a paradigm shift. However, as shown above, there are ways and suggested guidelines to conduct this shift and completely reconstruct English language teaching and learning in order to remove the colonial coloration and decolonize ELT and learning. The given guidelines, that together form the pedagogic framework, should help practicing teachers to theorize from their own practice and practice their own theory rather than being restricted to standardized 'one-fits-all' methods. The conventional concept of method furthermore contributes to the marginalization of local knowledge, local languages, i.e., languages other than English and ignores any kind of particularity, possibility and practicality, which are the fundamental components of a postmethod pedagogy. When recalling the importance and the power of the English language, it becomes crucial to invest time and thought into how it is being taught and learned in classrooms all over the world. Every teacher of English should be aware of his or her responsibility and influence in this process of decolonization and take their role as so-called "change agents" (cf. Kumaravadivelu 2003, 16) seriously.

To ultimately answer the proposed research question of this paper, in which ways English language learning and teaching can be decolonized, it can be stated that this can be done by maximizing learning opportunities, minimizing perceptual mismatches, facilitating negotiated interaction, promoting learner autonomy, fostering language awareness, activating intuitive heuristics, contextualizing linguistic input, integrating language skills, ensuring social relevance and raising cultural awareness (cf. *ibid*, 39-40). Furthermore, multilingual ELT is an opportunity to decolonize conventional perceptions. Nevertheless, this paper reveals the complexity of this topic and the significance for English language teachers to not only acknowledge the guidelines but internalize the entire necessity and constitution of a postmethod and postcolonial pedagogy.

Obviously, such a shift cannot take place overnight, "to decolonize has to be a *process* of learning with and through difference" (Phipps, n.d. 11; emphasis added). In fact, the word *difference* might be the keyword in this entire subject as Kumaravadivelu, the pioneer of postmethod pedagogy's main intention is to "[s]tart seeing the world *differently*" (The Encyclopedia of Applied Linguistics, 2012; emphasis added). This should not remain only his intention but influence teachers', students' and every global citizens' attitude so that we can all together begin to decolonize our minds.

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Appendix

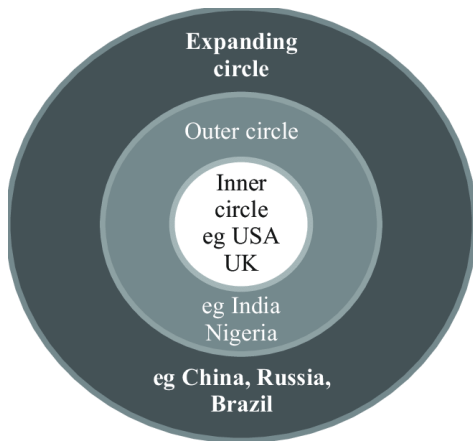


Figure 2.3.3 (Crystal 2003, 61)

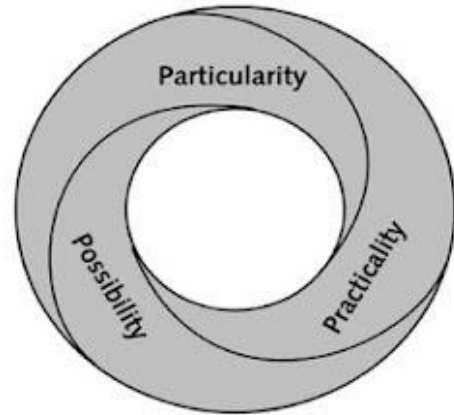


Figure 3.2 (Kumaravadivelu 2003, 37)

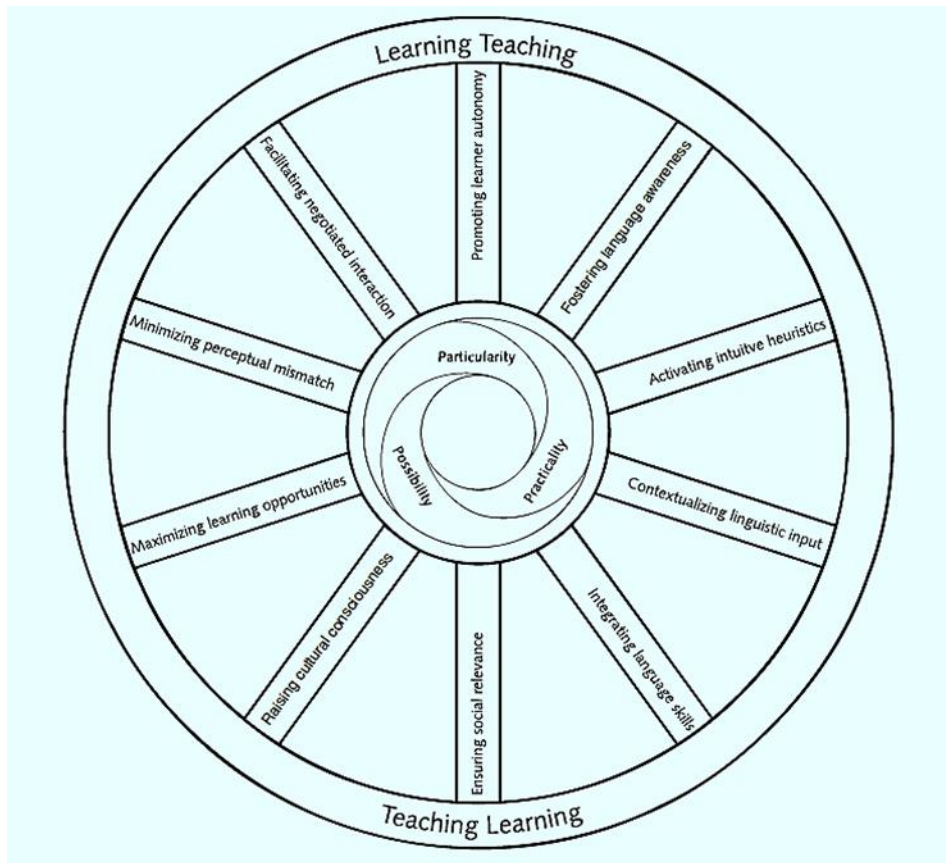
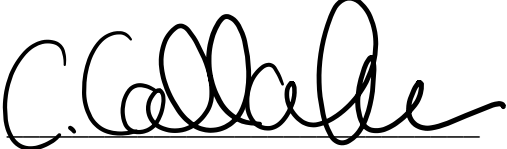


Figure 3.3 (Kumaravadivelu 2003, 41)

Statement of authorship

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Date: 10.09.21

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Callahan', written over a horizontal line.

Signature: Carolin Callahan