

The Changing Landscape of English Language Teaching and Learning
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Abstract

The aim of this chapter is to survey the major changes that have had an impact on English language teaching and learning over the last fifty years. Given the enormous changes that have taken place in that time, and world-count limitations, the survey is necessarily selective and personal. It highlights the contexts and people who have had an impact on me in the fifty years I have been involved in the field, before focusing on current concerns and future prospects. The chapter is framed by several axioms. The first, is that ELT is part of the educational landscape. We must think of ourselves as educators first, and language teachers second. Second, is the dilemma of equipping learners with the knowledge and skills for surviving (and hopefully thriving) in a world which is changing at a bewildering pace, thanks to the combined forces of technology, globalization, the so-called knowledge explosion, pandemics, and mass displacement of peoples due to human conflicts and the natural disasters brought about by climate change. I see hope in the young graduates and early-career teachers I'm privileged to work with in different parts of the world, and spend most of the chapter articulating the skills, knowledge and dispositions that might help them become productive members of a crucial, but undervalued profession.

Introduction

When Eli Hinkel invited me to write the opening chapter of the Handbook, she told me that the audience and focus would differ from previous handbooks to which I had contributed. The principal audience would be pre-service, in-service, and early-career teachers of English working in a diverse range of global contexts. The chapter had to be reader-friendly, accessible, and teacher-oriented. She wanted a state-of-the art overview of current and future trends and developments in second language teaching and learning focusing on the people and contexts that constitute language teaching and learning in different parts of the world. The topic was daunting. Numbers alone speak to this. For example, estimates of the number of students engaged in learning English range from 1.5 to 2 billion.

Over the last 50 or more years, there has been substantial diversification and fragmentation in the field, driven partly, but not exclusively, by

globalization and technology. When I started teaching in the early 1970s, several binary distinctions circumscribed the field: EFL vs ESL; native speakers vs non-native speakers; general vs specific purpose English; children vs adults; and private vs public sectors.

These days, binary distinctions are far too crude. In terms of ‘language people’, we have students, teachers, program administrators, researchers, academics, curriculum designers, policy makers, materials developers, publishers, leaders of professional and academic organizations, owners of private language schools, volunteers working with immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers – the list goes on. Any one of these groups could be further broken down. Learners, for instance, can be classified in terms of age (from early childhood to seniors); level of education (no formal education to Ph.D.); level of proficiency (beginner to advanced); legal/political status (foreign overseas students, immigrants, refugees); reasons for learning English (very general to very specific).

Contexts are as variable as people. Andy Curtis makes the point that every context is a unique mix of lesson, location, students, and teacher (Curtis, 2015). Years ago, context referred to whether teaching occurred in countries where English is the dominant language (ESL) and contexts in which it is a foreign language (EFL). This distinction has long been seen as inadequate, lumping together countries as diverse as Poland, Brazil, and Japan. In the 1980s, Braj Kachru proposed a three-circles model of English. The Inner Circle consists of countries in which English is a first language for most of the population. The Outer Circle includes those former colonies of England such as India, Pakistan, and Singapore where English is the second (and in some cases the first) language of large numbers of citizens. The Expanding Circle consists of countries in which English is learned and used as a foreign language. (Kachru, 1990). Although influential at the time it was proposed, Kachru’s model was increasingly criticised. His characterization of Inner Circle countries underplayed the multilingual reality of their populations. For example, a quarter of all children in the United States are born to mothers who use a language other than English in the home (Garcia & Freede, 2010). Additionally, as noted above, the Expanding Circle category failed to capture significant contextual differences between the countries falling into this category. (For a detailed critique of the Kachru model, see Jenkins, 2014.)

One core contextual variable is purpose. There are various reasons for learning English. Young learners in non-English-speaking countries have no particular purpose other than that it is on the school timetable or because parents insist on it. These programs are known as General Purpose English (sometimes facetiously called TENOR courses – Teaching English for No Obvious Reason). For older learners, the major purposes are for education and employment: Vocational English; English for Specific Purposes (ESP); English for Academic Purposes (EAP), and so on. In 1960, West proposed another contextual

variable: the availability of educational resources, drawing a distinction between resource-rich countries and those that are under-resourced. Interest in this variable has been revived with the publication of books and articles, and conferences devoted to the subject. (Coleman, 2018; Curtis 2021; Christian & Bailey, 2021; Kuchar & Smith, 2018). Later in the chapter, I will discuss the issue of equity. The existence of resources is one thing, access to those resources is another.

Although the chapter is populated with people and contexts, they are woven into the fabric of the chapter, rather than appearing in separate sections. My purpose is to tell the story of the changing landscape of English language teaching and learning. Selecting a broad topic enabled me to focus on the people and contexts that shaped my own evolution as a teacher, teacher educator, researcher, curriculum developer, and writer. In writing the chapter, I was mindful of the intended audience, and attempted to present complex concepts, themes, and perspectives in an accessible yet non-trivial manner.

I embark on the chapter with the premise that language teaching is part of education, that we are educators first and language teachers second. I therefore begin by addressing a fundamental philosophical and political question: *What is education for?* How we answer the question will determine how we go about dealing with practical issues: what content should be covered, what learning experiences should be provided for the learners, and how we will know what worked and what didn't (Nunan, 2017).

I synthesize what past philosophers of educators have had to say on the question before describing how globalization and the inevitable instability it brings, the knowledge explosion, and the impact of technology have forced present-day educators to look for different answers from those that were appropriate for former generations. I also look at resistance to change and point out that in education a significant innovation can take up to 30 years to take root.

The sheer pace of change in all areas of life, social, political, and economic, have created a dilemma for educators who are charged with preparing the present generation for an unknown future. One response to the dilemma has been an attempt to redefine education in terms of skills / competencies rather than the mastery of content, much of which will be obsolete by the time learners graduate from school. I describe the 21st century competencies movement and argue that language education has an important place within that movement. I'm not wedded to the phrase '21st century competencies', particularly as we are almost a quarter of the way through the century. However, I agree with key principles such as a shift of focus from teachers and input to learners and output. I address these principles in greater detail in the body of the paper.

I then turn back to the 1970s, when the nature of language was being reconceptualized as a resource that enables us to communicate rather than as a

body of content to be mastered. Those who advanced this view argued that, for language educators, the question should no longer be ‘what language content do my students need to learn?’, but ‘what resources and skills do my learners need in order to communicate competently?’ Although it would take years for this view to have an impact in many educational systems, the shift in focus from knowledge acquisition to skills development was more-or-less what the 21st century competency movement would argue for thirty years later. I’m not arguing that content is irrelevant, although, over time, some becomes redundant and has to be updated or replaced. It’s a matter of balance, as I pointed out some years ago in a piece on the need for an integrated approach to syllabus design (Nunan, 2017).

Having surveyed past and present shifts in the educational landscape, I look to the future. This is a tricky business. As I have said, we don’t know what the world will be like five years from now, let alone in thirty years. Epidemiologists apart, who could have predicted the pandemic that would sweep the world in 2020 and change all our lives? In looking forward, I draw on an important summit meeting that took place in Athens, Greece, in 2017 which addressed the future of TESOL as a profession.

Throughout the chapter, the word ‘profession’ and its offspring, ‘professional’ and ‘professionalism’ occur over twenty times. In the penultimate section of the chapter, I revisit a question I posed two decades ago: *Is language teaching a profession?* In interrogating the question, I pull together the key themes running through the chapter.

What is education for?

I begin the substantive part of the chapter with what might seem a lofty question. If you are a pre-service or early career teacher, you may think that the question isn’t one for you, it’s one for higher-ups such as university professors and boards of education. I would encourage you to think otherwise. It’s a relevant question for anyone with a stake in education, which means anyone who pays taxes. Parents with school-age children are, or should be, vitally interested. Politicians, who spend vast amounts of our tax dollars on education certainly are, as are the media

The question is particularly relevant for those of us who are actively engaged in education. It will shape subsidiary questions relating to syllabus design (what content should I provide for learners and how should I sequence it?), methodology (what learning experiences should I to provide for my learners?), assessment (how will I know how well my learners have done?) and evaluation (how will I know how well the elements that constitute courses, including me the teacher, have served the learners, and what can be improved?).

The ‘lofty’ question has been approached in different ways. One set of arguments focuses on society, and societal needs. These include the notion that the purpose of education is to produce workers with the knowledge and skills to

contribute to the growth the economy; to preserve and pass on the cultural values of society; and to induct learners into domains of knowledge. Another set focuses on the individual, arguing that the purpose is to foster personal growth and development, that learning is an end in itself and should be pursued for its own sake, and that the end of education is to equip citizens to lead fulfilling lives (Myhill, 2021). This might be called the ‘personal emancipatory’ perspective.

Those who argue that the purpose of education is to turn out productive workers, do so on the grounds that educational institutions are funded by the broader society and should serve the needs of that society. The principal proponents of this argument are politicians, and business and industry leaders. We could label this perspective the ‘utilitarian’ argument. On the surface, it might seem a reasonable view. However, as I point out in the next section, it begs the question of what knowledge and skills will be relevant in a rapidly changing world.

The argument that the purpose of education is to preserve and pass on cultural and societal values is a conservative one. It assumes that these values are relatively stable and agreed upon by most of the population. However, few modern societies are so consensus oriented. Even in past eras, it is the values of the dominate culture that are embedded in the educational system. ‘Dominant’ does not mean the largest cultural group. In many contexts, it refers to a cultural elite that, through economic superiority and entrenched power, is able to impose its cultural norms on less privileged groups.

The knowledge domain view is closely allied to the cultural preservation position. Proponents of this view see the primary purpose of education as the development of the intellect through a liberal education founded on knowledge-based subjects such as, mathematics, the physical sciences, the human sciences, history, morals, religion, fine arts, literature, and philosophy. Each of these knowledge domains has its own particular way of looking at the world. Each has its own body of knowledge generated through unique principles of inquiry or ‘rules of the game’. The rules for generating scientific knowledge differ from the rules for generating historical knowledge. These knowledge domains have their own intrinsic value and should be studied for their own sake. (Dearden, Hirst & Peters, 1972). Peters, a principal proponent of the knowledge domain school, drew a distinction between education (acquisition of abstract knowledge and higher-order reasoning abilities) and vocational training (knowing how to drive a truck or plumb a house). School curricula consist of disciplinary domains such as “science, mathematics and history ... not bingo, bridge and billiards. Presumably there must be some reason for this apart from their utilitarian or vocational value.” (Peters, 1966:144). Fifty years before Peters, John Dewey argued that the purpose of education was not to inculcate subject knowledge but to develop critical thinking skills that would equip students for lifelong learning; a view that was generations ahead of its time (Dewey, 1916).

More recently, the cultural preservation and knowledge-domain positions have been attacked for their outmoded 19th century concepts of knowledge and their exclusive focus on Western civilization and traditions (Oance & Bridges, 2009).

Dewey's views on education were complex and multifaceted, and much of his writing is as relevant today as it was 100 years ago. His progressive and liberal views put him firmly in the 'personal emancipatory' camp, although they were controversial in his native America. In Britain, two philosophers of education, John White and Richard Pring are worth mentioning. White, a former student and later colleague of Peters, is broadly sympathetic to the notion of knowledge acquisition for its own sake, although he also argues that the purpose of education is to equip people to lead happy flourishing lives, meet basic needs such as health and food, find interesting work, and form lasting relationships (White, 2010). White's stance incorporates elements of the vocational and liberal traditions. He points out that they are not mutually exclusive, and that the curriculum can, and should, incorporate both utilitarian and non-utilitarian ends.

His perspective is shared by Richard Pring, whose work I first encountered in the 1970s at the University of Exeter, where I was a graduate student and Pring was Professor of Education. In an article entitled *What is education for?* he says, "One needs to argue for the kind of personal development and fulfillment which we believe to be worthwhile, and for the kind of society which, through educating young people, we think worth creating." (Pring, 2010: 98). This statement mirrors and reinforces White's position. Pring also reiterates the need for educational systems to be renewed to reflect the changing needs of society and emerging concepts of what it means to be educated.

... not any kind of learning is thought of as 'educational', but only that kind of learning which is considered to be valuable – which leads to improved and more intelligent understanding of the physical, social and economic world in which we live. Therefore, just as those worlds change (society and the economic conditions have changed considerably in the last twenty years) so we need constantly to review our view of the 'educated person'. (*Ibid*)

In this section, I have provided a brief and admittedly subjective response to the 'lofty question' that heads it. In the next, I take as my point of departure Pring's comment on the need for education to keep pace with societal and economic change and examine the phenomena that forced a shift in the educational landscape in general, and language education in particular.

Forces for change

Education is inherently conservative. When responding to the ebb and flow of economic times, the demands of industry, the pace of social change, and the disruptive power of technology, it is anything but nimble. In the 1970s, Lawrence Stenhouse pointed to this conservatism as one reason why it took

approximately 30 years for innovations to take root (Stenhouse, 1975, 1978). Many years later, in some respects not much has changed. Over 30 years ago, I published a book proposing that tasks be a central organising principle for language programs (Nunan, 1989). The idea continues to bemuse many new to language teaching.

At the beginning of the 21st century, this conservatism was increasingly criticised by business and government leaders who argued that education systems were failing to produce graduates with the skills, knowledge and dispositions corporations and industry required to survive and thrive in an increasingly globalised world (Soland, Hamilton, & Stecher, 2013). These criticisms and calls for curriculum renewal prompted educational bureaucracies to reconsider the purposes for education and the knowledge and skills required of citizens in the 21st century (see, for example, Ministry of Education, Singapore, 2014). At the same time, academics were formulating their own proposals for change. As long ago as 1966, Jerome Bruner argued that it should be "...self-evident that each generation must define afresh the nature, direction, and aims of education to assure such freedom and rationality as can be attained for a future generation" (Bruner, 1966: 23). He identified several phenomena that made change crucial. Fundamental was the information explosion which had led to a revolution in our understanding of human physical, cognitive and social development, as well as on the nature of the learning process. He argued that the role of the teacher was not to transmit facts, which would soon become redundant, but to scaffold the learning process through guided, inductive procedures. Focus in the classroom should be on the learner, not the teacher, there should be "more learning, less teaching (Bruner, 2006)". Bruner's work influenced my own thinking on the centrality of the learner to the learning process (Nunan, 1988, 2013a) and experiential, task- and project--based language learning (Nunan, 1989, 2004). His notion of scaffolded learning has been developed and applied to language learning and teaching by educators such as Pauline Gibbons (Gibbons, 2014).

Given Bruner's astonishment at the pace of change in the 1960s, what would he have made, fifty years on, of the baffling rate at which it comes at us, and the dilemma it presents educators? Ken Robinson explained the dilemma as follows:

We all have a huge, vested interest in education, partly because it's education that's meant to take us into this future that we can't grasp. If you think of it, children starting school this year will be retiring in 2065. Nobody has a clue ... what the world will look like in five years' time, and yet we're meant to be educating them for it. ... So, the unpredictability is extraordinary. (Robinson, 2006)

In his talk, Robinson criticised the hierarchical nature of school curricula, which place mathematics and science at the top, and the creative arts such as music and dance at the bottom. In his view, the hierarchy, which had evolved

and been perpetuated over centuries, should be reversed, with creativity at the top.

Educators working in a range of contexts in different parts of the world have proposed responses to the dilemma. These responses have emerged in various guises and with differing labels: 21st century Competencies / Skills; New Learning / Literacies; ‘SMART learning’ and so on. Despite differences of emphasis, they share several principles. (Principles which Bruner took to be “self-evident” fifty years ago!) Fundamentally, the curriculum had to move beyond the transmission of information and the mastery of content. The focus had to shift from teachers and input to learners and outcomes. These outcomes should be specified as competencies, that is things learners should be able to do at the end of the instructional process. Cope & Kalantzis, 2015; Kalantzis & Cope, 2012; Soland, Hamilton, & Stecher, 2013; Ministry of Education Singapore, 2014; Ackoff & Greenberg, 2008 all agree that the measure of success must be learner outcomes, not teacher input. In the next section, I will sketch out what this shift in focus from teacher input to learner output might look like.

Competency-based education

A competency is a statement of the attitudes, dispositions, and behaviors that an individual should display at the end of a course of instruction. I say, ‘at the end of a course of instruction’ rather than ‘as a result of instruction’, because the latter implies a direct causal relationship between instruction and learning. There must be some sort of a relationship. If not, what would be the point of teaching? However, the relationship is complex and indirect, and mastery is a developmental, not an all-or-nothing, process. This is true of all subjects, none more so than language. Memorizing and regurgitating grammar rules and identifying violations of a rule in a grammar test is called declarative knowledge. Gradually acquiring the ability to use a grammatical feature to communicate effectively and appropriately in a range of different contexts and content domains requires procedural knowledge, a very different matter from declarative knowledge, involving speech processing and production. For a discussion of this complexity, and the multiple factors involved in procedural mastery, see Goldschneider & DeKeyser (2001). Elsewhere, I have described language acquisition as an organic rather than a linear process: in metaphorical terms, it is more akin to growing a garden than building a wall.

There is nothing new in the idea that the curriculum should be specified in terms of learning outcomes. According to Eisner (1967: 250 – 51) “a belief in the usefulness of clear and specific educational objectives emerged around the turn of the (19th) century with the birth of the scientific movement in education.” Midway through the century, Ralph Tyler developed his self-styled ‘Rational Curriculum Model’. It was a clever label because a person objecting to the model ran the risk of being accused of irrationality. The model has four

basic steps. The first of these is the specification of behavioral objectives. Next comes the creation and sequencing of learning experiences. The final steps involve evaluating the curriculum and revising those parts that fail to achieve the prespecified objectives (Tyler, 1949).

The model had a significant impact on curriculum development. In 1972, Valette and Disick developed an approach to the teaching of modern languages based on performance objectives. They used the term ‘performance’ rather than ‘bahavioral’, as the latter was associated with behaviorist psychology, which was largely discredited by the 1970s.

‘Performance’ also captured another essential feature of the approach. Learner outcomes had to be visible, students having to demonstrate through observable performance that learning had taken place. Verbs such as ‘appreciate’ and ‘understand’ were unacceptable because they couldn’t be seen in learner performance, and therefore presented a major challenge when it came to assessment.

Formal performance objectives [were] meant to include three elements: (a) a *performance* or *task* statement, (b) a *conditions* statement, and (c) a *standards* or *criterion* statement. The task element specifies what learners are to do, the conditions statement specifies the circumstances and conditions under which learners are to perform the task, and the standards statement specifies how well the task is to be performed. The following statement illustrates a three-part objective. *In an authentic interaction* (condition), *the student will request prices of shopping items* (task). *Utterances will be comprehensible to a sympathetic native speaker* (standard). (Nunan, 2007: 423)

The objectives movement had its critics as well as its champions. There is no space here to review the debate in detail. I have done this in several publications, including my 2007 paper. (Comprehensive critiques can also be found in classic rebuttals such as Eisner, 1967, and Popham, 1972). Here, I will mention only two criticisms, because they are pertinent to the 21st century competency movement. Providing a list of formal, three-part objectives of the type illustrated above for an entire curriculum is unrealistic, although sample objectives in the early stages of instruction can be useful for sensitizing learners to intended learning outcomes. An exhaustive list would spawn hundreds, if not thousands of objectives, and could lead to sterile, mechanistic instruction. Second, it can, and has been argued, that education is successful to the extent that it leads to outcomes that can’t be predicted in advance, a point the Eisner made in his critique over fifty years ago:

... the outcomes of instruction are far more numerous and complex for educational objectives to encompass. The amount, type, and quality of learning that occurs in a classroom, especially when there is interaction among students, are only in small part predictable. The changes in pace,

tempo, and goals that experienced teachers employ when necessary and appropriate for maintaining classroom organization are dynamic rather than mechanistic in character. (Eisner, 1967: 254)

Eisner goes on to state that his critique is pertinent to some subject areas, but not to others. In his opinion, it is perfectly possible to prespecify precise learning outcomes for mathematics, languages, and the sciences, but not for subjects such as the arts that require creative, and therefore non-predictable responses. I agree with most of what Eisner has to say but would argue that the above quote is applicable to all subjects including mathematics, languages, and the sciences. Years ago, Henry Widdowson (1983) persuasively pointed out that, as language educators, we need to develop in our learners not only communicative competent (Hymes, 1971, 1972) but also communicative capacity, which requires creativity, resourcefulness and the ability to produce novel utterances and texts. (Jones, 2020).

While the 21st century competencies movement and the objectives approach in its various guises and iterations take as their point of departure learning outcomes, that's about all they share. Competencies can encompass dispositions that are not directly observable. The movement also accepts diversity of outcomes. "Diversity, not uniformity of learners and their responses to instruction, is not only desirable, it is inevitable and ... must feature at the core of our thinking about education." (Kalantzis & Cope, 2012: 9)

I will illustrate competencies with reference to Soland, *et al.* (2013). Their model is comprehensive and comprehensible. The authors identify three broad categories of competency: cognitive, intrapersonal and interpersonal. Cognitive competencies include mastery of core academic content such as mathematics, science, language arts, foreign languages, history, and geography, critical thinking, and creativity. Interpersonal competencies are those that are needed to relate to other people. They include communication and collaboration, leadership, and global awareness, which they describe as 'intercultural empathy'. The final cluster are competencies that reside within the individual. These include having a 'growth mindset'; learning how to learn, that is, a student's ability to determine how to approach a problem or task, monitor his or her own comprehension, and evaluate progress toward completion; and intrinsic motivation (see, also, Mercer, MacIntyre, Gregersen, and Talbot, (2018). (Following on from the previous discussion, I would move creativity to this category and add resourcefulness.) A student who understands his or her own learning processes is better able to self-motivate, respond to teacher feedback, and develop stronger self-perceptions of academic accomplishment. The final competency Soland *et al.* identify is 'grit', an ability to stick with a task until it is completed, or to persist with a problem until it is solved.

The centrality of language to 21st century education

None of these competencies can be realized without language. Although, in schemes such as that proposed by Soland, *et al*, language is identified as a cognitive competency along with other knowledge domains, it is fundamental to all competencies. Communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking / reasoning for example, are not possible without language if we expand our view of language to include non-verbal communication, self-talk and so on. There is also renewed interest in language for subject teaching. Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and Content-Based Instruction (CBI) had been around since the 1970s. Current interest, and the development of new perspectives on integrating language and content has been prompted, at least in part, by a recognition of the centrality of language in an increasingly integrated and globalized world. (See the contributions in the collection edited by Snow & Brinton, 2017).

Following on from the above, I would point out that language differs from the other cognitive competencies in that it has no substantive content. While we can talk about grammatical rules in the abstract (declarative knowledge), in actual use (procedural knowledge), the experiential content has to come from elsewhere: everyday life, for example speculating about the cause of an accident, or some other subjects on the curriculum, such as science, in which students will need to carry out tasks such as describing the steps involved in carrying out an experiment. When we talk or write, it has to be about something. To this extent, language is a sort of parasite.

The ability to communicate effectively in a wide range of personal, educational, and business contexts across a range of cultures is a core competence. The term competence has a long (and contentious) history in linguistics and language education. In his book *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*, Noam Chomsky (1965) drew a distinction between competence (the implicit linguistic knowledge of the ideal native speaker) and performance (the use of this knowledge to communicate). Chomsky's aim was to develop a theoretical account of the mental mechanisms underlying language. He was not concerned with language learning and teaching, and was quite explicit in stating that his work had nothing to say to language educators. Not surprisingly, those who saw language as a social tool objected to Chomsky's mentalist approach. They argued for the study of language in context, and proposed the notion of 'communicative competence', a term first coined by the sociolinguist Dell Hymes (1967, 1972). Hymes pointed out that Chomsky's linguistic competence was only part of broader 'communicative competence'. The concept of communicative competence was further developed by Canale and Swain (1980) and Canale (1983) who identified four key elements of communicative competence. These were linguistic, discourse, strategic and sociolinguistic competence. Since then, there have been many developments and debates about the concept and the relationships between communicative competence,

communicative performance, linguistic proficiency and so on. (See for example, Bachman, 1990; Bachman and Palmer 1996).

At the same time, the British linguist, Michael Halliday was developing his own model of language as communication. Through this model, he sought to make explicit the systematic relationships between linguistic form and communicative function, and his model came to be known as systemic-functional linguistics. The statement, '*Language is what language does*' (language is the way it is because of what it does), captures the essence of his approach. (Halliday, 1973, 1978, 1985).

A seismic shift in the language teaching landscape

The expanded view of language had implications for language teaching. If the ability to communicate competently in a second or foreign language requires more than linguistic competence, that is knowledge of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, these other aspects have also to be at the heart of teaching and learning. Language educators had to address the question of what is it that learners need to be able to do functionally in a second language. In fact, one of the earliest textbook series to embrace this new view of language was called *Functions of English* (Jones, 1977). Initial attempts at designing communicative courses and materials were rather crude. In fact, they didn't look so different from the courses they replaced. Units of work were given functional rather than grammatical labels, so a unit entitled *The simple past* might be relabelled *Describing what you did on your vacation*. However, for a time, the exercises and drills remained much the same as those that underpinned audiolingualism.

The so-called 'communicative revolution' created challenges at all levels of the curriculum from syllabus design (selecting and sequencing content) to methodology (selecting and sequencing learning experiences) to assessment (determining what learners are able to do during and at the end of a course of instruction). It was no longer acceptable to adopt a 'one size fits all' approach to syllabus design. Different learners would have different communicative needs and purposes according to the context and situation in which they were learning. This diversity needed to be reflected in the content of the course. Another problem was that syllabus issues (the *what*) and methodological ones (the *how*) could no longer be so easily separated. Communication was a process. Learning was no longer a matter of mastering a body of content but of acquiring complex, procedural skills. Indirect assessment of content through traditional 'pencil and paper' tests had to be replaced by direct measures of students' spoken and written communication skills. This shift in focus from content to process preceded a similar shift by the 21st century movement by about 25 years, (although it lagged by a decade Bruner's call for such a shift).

These challenges led to a flurry of activity on the part of applied linguists along with debates between traditionalists who wanted to maintain the status quo, and those advocating change. In his book on language syllabus design,

David Wilkins argued that despite their seeming differences, various syllabus options could be divided into two categories: synthetic syllabuses and analytic syllabuses. A synthetic syllabus consists of the individual linguistic elements (sounds, words, and grammar) that make up the language. These are “taught separately and step-by-step so that acquisition is a process of gradual accumulation of parts until the whole structure of language has been built up.” (Wilkins, 1976: 2). Despite major differences in their assumptions about the nature of language and learning, the grammar-translation and audiolingual methods are both synthetic. In contrast, analytic syllabuses are organized around concepts that are non-linguistic in nature. Content-based, task-based, project-based and text-based syllabuses are all analytic in nature (Snow & Brinton, 2017).

The seismic shift in my own professional development occurred at about this time. It was stimulated by my years as a graduate student and teacher in the UK: the scholars I read, the mentoring and guidance from teachers such as Richard Pring, and encounters with extraordinary people such as Bruner. The vignette rounding out this section describes one experience that shifted my own language teaching landscape.

In the 1970s, I left university in the UK with postgraduate degrees in English language teaching, and curriculum studies, a depleted bank account, and a brain buzzing with all I’d learned during my years of study. Itching to return to the classroom, I applied for a number of summer school positions. After several rejections, I received an offer from Bowthorpe Hall in Norwich, a school run by the Bell Educational Trust. I accepted immediately. The Trust was known for the professionalism of its teachers and its tolerance for progressive ideas. When I arrived at the school, I learned that there was no set curriculum. I was at liberty to structure my course in any way I wished. All that the school required was a title and a brief course description. Students would be guided by these when selecting courses from the range on offer. That afternoon, I looked through the student files. Most were Europeans aged from 18 to 26, and the majority were studying a diversity of subjects in a range of institutions. Not surprisingly, a good many expressed interest in language, literature, cultural and media studies.

The library, containing reference books, class sets of coursebooks and a range of other resources, occupied a corner of the teachers’ common room. It was here that I found the inspiration for my course – a class set of Edward Albee’s play, “*Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*” That became the title of the course. When Dave Allan, principal of Bowthorpe, saw the title and course description he was intrigued and sought me out in the teachers’ room.

I explained the details of the proposed course. We would explore in depth all dramatic, literary, and linguistic aspects of the play. We would watch the film starring Richard Burton and Elizabeth Taylor, and on one weekend we

would travel to London to see the stage version. During the course, the students would select a key scene from the play and turn it into a self-contained mini-play which they would perform at the end of the course for anyone who wanted to come along.

Planning the course in this way had been stimulated by my desire to try out ideas related to communicative language teaching and analytic syllabus design. A decade later, as I began writing about task- and project-based teaching and learner-centeredness, I remembered this course, which the students had loved, having arrived at the school expecting more of the same traditional language instruction they had experienced in their home schools and universities. I realised, the course had all the basic principles of TBLT and PBL. TBLT developed in the 1980s as a set of procedures for realizing the principles of communicative language teaching in the classroom. It is classified as analytic because the syllabus is organized around tasks based on student needs, not on an inventory of grammar items. Two book-length treatments on TBLT appeared in the late 1980s: an edited collection by Candlin and Murphy (1987), and a single authored monograph by me (Nunan, 1989). In that book, and a substantially revised second edition (Nunan, 2004), I pointed out that TBLT was not a single method, but a family of approaches sharing several key principles. Tasks focus students on exchanging meaning rather than manipulating grammatical forms. As part of a teaching cycle, there are opportunities for students to focus on form, but this is in the service of achieving task outcomes. The approach makes explicit for students the nexus between grammatical form and communicative function in ways that decontextualized grammar patterns drills do not. In completing tasks, students resourcefully generate their own language rather than regurgitating models provided by the teacher or a textbook. In keeping with language use outside the classroom, the outcome will be something that goes beyond language itself: information about the departure time of a flight, a cup of coffee, the acceptance of a dinner date and so on. Importantly, in-class tasks will have a principled relationship to target or real-world tasks.

Projects can be thought of as 'super-tasks'. They contain similar characteristics as tasks but will be larger in scope. The *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* project took about 45 hours to complete and culminated in the performance of a mini play. In working towards the project outcome, students engaged in many tasks, such as collaboratively writing a plot summary. These had outcomes in their own right but were undertaken in the service of the larger outcome. The advantage of a project-based approach is that it has a greater coherence than one constructed around a sequence of discrete tasks. Both task- and project-based learning are also ideal for fostering the development of 21st century competencies, particularly communication, collaboration, creativity, and the development of learner autonomy (For greater elaboration, see Mercer & Dornyei, 2020; Nunan, 2017.)

The future of the profession

In 2017, the TESOL International Association held a summit on the Future of the TESOL profession in Athens, Greece. Guided by a steering committee chaired by past TESOL President Denise Murray, and a reference panel, the Summit was two years in the planning. I was fortunate to be invited to serve on the committee, which included a diverse international membership.

The initiative was unique. In order to obtain views, perspectives and experiences from the field, discussion groups were established on a Summit website based on the themes of Futurology, English in Multilingualism, Reimagining English Competence, and the Profession as a Change Agent. Each of these was to be explored through three guiding principles: Inquiry, Equity, and Professionalism. By inquiry, we meant that TESOL practice and policy should be inquiry-based, with practice informing research as well as research informing practice and policy. Further, inquiry should include voices from a range of stakeholders. Through equity, we expressed the belief that English is an additional language and should not supplant the home language(s). We noted that TESOL occurs in many different contexts around the world with varying practices, cultures, and access to resources. Quality instruction was not available to disadvantaged groups in many parts of the world and this was an issue that the steering committee wanted the Summit to address. Professionalism was the third guiding principle. Professional development should promote sustainable, continuous, collaborative, and coherent activities and focus on positive change and innovation rather than academic outputs. We then identified speakers to fill the twelve speaking slots, each exploring one of the themes through one of the guiding principles. Speakers represented different TESOL communities around the world. The following matrix sets out the speakers and their assigned areas.

	Inquiry	Equity	Professionalism
Futurology	Sue Garton	Asmaa Abu Mezied	Greg Kessler
English in multilingualism	Li Wei	Joe Lo Bianco	Robinah Kyeyune
Reimagining English competence	Anne Katz	Giselle Lundy-Ponce	Ahmar Mahboob
The profession as a change agent	Constant Leung	Franklin Tellez	Misty Adonou

The initial task for each speaker was to post questions on the website to stimulate discussion and debate in the months leading up to the Summit and to engage with online participants in the ensuing discussions. Following the

Summit, they were tasked with producing a 1,500-word position paper on their chosen area, which was informed by the Summit discussions, as well as their understanding of current knowledge. These papers, along with weblinks, are included in the reference list at the end of the chapter.

The Summit format was organised around twelve discussion sessions corresponding to the twelve slots in the matrix. Each session was initiated by a fifteen-minute presentation by one of the speakers followed by round-table discussions of questions posed by the speakers during their presentations. As far as possible, each of the discussion tables contained a cross-section of stakeholders who attended the Summit. These included policymakers, professional organizations, teacher educators, materials and assessment writers, publishers, administrators, teachers, and researchers. At the end of each discussion period, there was a plenary session in which a rapporteur summarized the main points raised at their table. The entire Summit was webcast live and, following the event, made available on the TESOL website.

The web discussions, presentations and roundtables yielded an enormous amount of data, which was subsequently summarised and synthesised by the steering committee and used as a basis for the publication of an Action Agenda. The Agenda (TESOL, 2017) identified five priority areas. Each of these included a rationale and a list of recommendations for action to be undertaken by stakeholders as well as the broader TESOL community. In the rest of this section, I will summarize each of the priority areas.

Priority 1: Strengthen the status and visibility of the profession

There has been an explosion in the demand for English as an additional language programs in diverse contexts around the world. Along with this has been an increasing professionalization of TESOL through teacher preparation programs at pre- and postgraduate levels, career-long professional development opportunities provided by associations such as TESOL and IATEFL, and the emergence of a robust applied research agenda. Despite these initiatives, a consistent message on the online discussion boards as well as at the Summit itself was the fact that, TESOL as a profession is consistently undervalued, if not completely ignored, by policy makers, politicians, and some private sector interests who see English language as a commodity to be sold rather than as a resource for global communication. Perpetuation of the myth that native-speaker status is all that is required to teach a language subverts the efforts of language educators to advance the cause of TESOL as a profession. The Action Agenda calls for TESOL professionals to claim and promote their expertise through steps such as disseminating TESOL professional knowledge and resources to stakeholders who influence the profession and increasing the visibility of the profession through social media.

Priority 2: Redesign English language education programs to foster global engagement

Another issue that generated considerable discussion and debate at the Summit was the use of the learners' first language in learning a second, and subsequent languages. The English-only movement has become deeply entrenched over many years for political and ideological reasons. A persistent argument is that in many contexts the language classroom is the only place in which learners have an opportunity to practice their English and, with the use of the L1, this opportunity is diminished. Although, with an increasingly interconnected world and the ubiquity of technology, this objection has lost much of its potency. (Choi, 2017; Choi & Ollerhead, 2018, Li Wei, 2017).

A growing body of research has challenged this 'monolingual mindset'. In his article on myths about early childhood bilingualism Genesee (2015), argues that second language learners' most valuable resource is their first language. Fielding and Harbon (2020) point out that there is no empirical support for the monolingual position. In their own research, they found that primary (elementary) students in bilingual programs outperform peers in monolingual programs on standardized tests of literacy and numeracy. Multilingual teaching strategies enable students to activate the prior knowledge and experiences they have acquired through their home language (Cummins, Bismilla, Cohen, Giampapa, & Leoni, 2005). A similar outcome is reported in (Kirsh, 2018). Helping young (4 – 7-year-old) develop their multilingual repertoires facilitates the development of 21st century competencies such as communication skills and knowledge construction. In his contribution to the Summit, Li Wei called for the development of instructional decisions and practices informed by a multilingual mindset. He urges teachers to remember that the goal is "not trying to replace the learners' L1 and make them into another monolingual. We are developing more bilinguals with the flexibility that multilingualism gives them." (Li Wei, 2017:3). (See also recent of empirical studies showing the advantages of students' fluid use of languages in academic learning settings: Choi & Liu, 2021; Herrera, 2017; Preece, 2020; Wu & Lin, 2019).

Priority 3: Mobilize leaders to confront and embrace the challenges and complexities of English language education

English language teaching and learning can no longer be seen as an activity isolated from content and context. As indicated earlier in the chapter, it (and, indeed, any additional language) is well-placed to develop key 21st century competencies. While communication is the obvious example, others include interpersonal collaboration, cultural awareness, intrapersonal autonomy, learning skills, and creativity. Other candidates could include critical thinking, multiliteracy, and digital literacies (Christison & Murray, 2020)

Bringing together the notion of 'wellbeing' (which, they see as

a central aim of education) and language education, Mercer, MacIntyre, Gregersen, & Talbot (2018) argue for a broader role for languages within educational systems, pointing out that

“... language education specifically is an ideal context with which to develop wellbeing competence...language education typically aims for more than narrowly defined linguistic competence and it often involves many aspects of the individual” (Mercer *et al.*, 2018:21)

Significant advantages accrue to those who are competent in English and other languages used for international communication. However, access to quality language education, indeed *any* education, is not available to all. Conflicts around the world have destroyed the hopes of education for over 100 million children (Mezied, 2017). Figures indicate that in the world’s poorest countries literacy rates hover at around 30%, and significantly lower than that for women. (UNESCO, 2015). The Action Agenda argues that TESOL professionals, working either in their home countries or abroad, are well-placed to address the issues of social justice, equity, and human diversity that affect their learners’ access to high- quality English language education. Teachers and teacher educators should be provided with “appropriate, affordable, and ongoing opportunities for lifelong professional learning” so they have the skills and knowledge to act as change agents, and advocates for their students (TESOL 2017:15).

Several speakers who work in under-resourced contexts shared the strategies they have developed to act as advocates and effect change. For example, Franklin Tellez, described his efforts to change policy makers’ perceptions that the role of language teachers is to stand in front of the class and instruct their learners to “listen and repeat”.

Public and private institutions involved in Education believe that our role is only teaching English. As TESOL professionals we have let them understand through our leadership, and professionalism that we go beyond the traditional “repeat after me teaching”, [to] be agents of change in the classrooms, in the communities and in our countries. (Tellez, 2017: 2)

Priority 4: Expand capacity for inclusive and comprehensive research

The rationale for this priority is “practice and policy must be research based, meaning that research should inform practice and policy as much as policy and practice should inform research.” The Action Agenda argues that the findings of robust research, “especially when those findings offer conclusive answers to relevant questions” be widely disseminated to all sectors of the TESOL community” (TESOL 2017:7-8). Two such findings have been dealt with above: one relating to the value of the L1 to L2 acquisition, and the other relating to teachers’ having appropriate qualifications and pedagogical skills, not when or how they learned English.

The Action Agenda points out that much research deals with questions that are of interest to academics but doesn't provide solutions to pressing teaching problems. It argues that we need collaborative, action-based research in which practitioners are partners in, rather than, recipients of research. Also noted are that many teacher education courses are superficial and based on linguistic models that are 200 years out of date (Mahboob, 2007). As a consequence, many graduates go into the workforce with an inadequate knowledge of the fundamentals of language and how to teach it.

Priority 5: Cultivate a culture of innovation that is responsive to global trends
The Summit identified six megatrends that made innovation and change imperative. There are few surprises in the trends: a massive shift of populations from rural to urban areas; the technology and science-driven knowledge explosion; increasing inequity due to uneven economic development; political tension driven by nationalism versus globalization; climate change; and forced migration due to political conflict. As we saw earlier in the chapter, these trends have increased demands by governments and business for an English proficient workforce. Individuals see English proficiency as the key to personal, professional, and economic advancement. However, as we have also seen, access to quality English education is not equitably distributed. The Summit called on stakeholders such as professional associations, teacher education institutions, binational centres, nongovernmental organizations, and publishers to “act with foresight when change is expected, create accountability measures for their actions, use the appropriate media to educate interested parties, and share success stories and challenges through effective channels.” (TESOL 2017:20).

Is language teaching a profession?

In 2001, as I was coming to the end of my four-year term in the TESOL presidential line, I published an article entitled “Is language teaching a profession?” Drawing on work carried out by the TESOL Board of Directors at the time, I proposed four criteria for answering the question:

- the existence of advanced education and training
- the establishment of standards of practice and certification
- an agreed theoretical and empirical base, and
- the work of individuals within the field to act as advocates for the profession.

I concluded my article with the following statement:

Is TESOL a profession? The answer to this question is: It depends on where you look! It is possible to find language teaching institutions in different parts of the world which fit none of the criteria set out in this paper. However, it is also possible to find institutions and associations that are actively committed to advancing education and training, to

developing standards and certification, to supporting the development of theory and research so that a disciplinary base can be established, and working as advocates to influence broader communities in ways that are positive for second language learners. Nunan, 2001: 8)

In this section, I revisit the question in the light of developments that have occurred in the two decades since I wrote the paper. (Occasionally I will slip back to earlier decades.)

Advanced education and training

The 1960s saw the birth of two associations which were to play a significant role in the professionalisation of the teaching and learning of English as an additional language. The International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language (IATEFL) was founded in the UK, while TESOL International was established in the United States. Each association has an annual conference with a variety of professional development events including plenaries, colloquia, workshops, and other types of parallel sessions. Professional activities at the conference and throughout the year are facilitated by elected committees, known as Special Interest Groups (SIGs) in IATEFL and as Interest Sections (ISs) in TESOL. These include professional meetings and more localized conferences, often jointly planned with local affiliates. Other professional growth opportunities are provided by publications of various kinds, from newsletters and journals to books and applied research reports. Despite criticisms of elitism, cultural imperialism, and the cost of membership / conference attendance, both associations have had a significant, positive impact promoting a sense of professional identity, mentoring new teachers, and providing opportunities for career long professional development, a point that was endorsed by the Action Agenda.

Advanced education and training refers to comprehensive university programs at undergraduate and postgraduate levels (TESOL, 2017:7). In the 1970s, such programs in English language education were not widely available. In Australia, despite its large immigration and refugee program, there were none. I had to travel abroad to get the language teaching education I needed. These days, a wide variety of programs is available in a range of modes: part-time, full-time, face-to-face, online and blended. The Internet provides advanced education and training opportunities for language educators working in parts of the world where postgraduate programs are not readily available. This is particularly true of under-resourced contexts.

Standards of practice and certification

The development and promotion of standards of practice and certification/accreditation is the second criterion for defining a profession. Standards of practice and certification go together. Without the imprimatur of a

body (usually a governmental or educational bureaucracy) which has the legislative authority to certify them, standards have no 'teeth'. Professional associations have a leading role to play in the development of standards, in liaising with certifying bodies, and in the training and appointment of accreditors. In the 1990s and 2000s, significant progress was made in the language education field thanks to the initiatives of professional associations. For example, TESOL International established working groups to develop standards in key areas. For example, for different learner groups: *Pre-K-12 English Language Proficiency Standards*; for teachers: *Standards for ESL/EFL Teachers of Adults*; and programs: *Standards for Adult Education ESL Programs*. For more detail on the nature of standards, see the paper I referred to earlier (Nunan, 2007).

TESOL was also instrumental in establishing a commission for the accreditation of English Language Programs (CEA). This happened in 1999 following a recommendation of a Board of Directors task force. TESOL provided operational and financial support to get the Commission started. Four years later, it was recognized by the U.S. Secretary of State as the national accrediting agency for English language programs and institutions.

An agreed theoretical and empirical base

Over twenty years ago, Donald Freeman argued that, in contrast with other professions, teaching does not constitute a discipline because it doesn't have a commonly agreed on set of research procedures or 'rules of the game' for creating and testing knowledge. He added that:

Teachers are seen - and principally see themselves - as consumers rather than producers of knowledge. Other people write curricula, develop teaching methodologies, create published materials, and make policies and procedures about education that teachers are called upon to implement" (Freeman, 1998: 10).

I would argue that diversity of approach and debate on appropriate research procedures is healthy. Lack of involvement by teachers in research is more of a concern. As I mentioned earlier in the chapter, if teachers are not involved as collaborators rather than consumers of research, the disconnect between research and practice will persist. This is not to say that all research conducted by academics is irrelevant, nor that research should be mandatory for all teachers. Many lack the time to add research to their busy schedules. Others say they lack the expertise. Collaborative engagement and mentoring between teachers, teacher educators and researchers can help build research skills (Barkhuizen, 2019; Xerri, 2019; Nunan, Black & Choi, 2019). The International Research Foundation for English Language Education (TIRF) also provides a wealth of resources on their website for those interested in teacher research (www.tirfonline.org).

Advocacy

The final criterion for determining professionalism is advocacy. This area is controversial. There are some who argue that advocating for our profession is inappropriate for professional associations as it represents political activism and (probably more to the point) that it might threaten their not-for-profit status. I find this a little odd. Everything has a political dimension. Even the decision not to advocate for teachers, our students, and the profession in general, is political! It is also not true for associations in other professions. Medical Associations in many countries are formidable advocates for their profession and their leaders are regularly invited by the media to present their case for a particular cause. This happens much less often when it comes to education. As Misty Adoniou (2017) points out, politicians don't listen to teachers, but they listen to parents because parents vote. One of her strategies for influencing politicians and policy makers is to work through parent and teacher associations.

The Action Agenda provides a rationale along with strategies through which TESOL professionals who work with immigrants and refugees can advocate for social justice and equity for their students, as well as achieving greater visibility for the profession. I refer you to the Action Agenda, and well as position papers by the Summit speakers, for more detailed examples of these strategies.

Based on the four criteria I have proposed, there is enough evidence to support the proposition that TESOL is a profession, if not an academic discipline. That said, there is much to be done. Significant progress has been made in developing standards of practice and certification in some contexts but not in others. We need to continue efforts to foster collaborative research initiatives between teachers and academics. While progress has been made in advocacy, we continue to face challenges in making our voices heard. As I write this chapter, planning is underway for staging a summit on advocating for the profession.

As indicated earlier in the section, there has been an explosion in the number, variety, and quality of university programs since I started teaching. In many contexts, a master's degree is becoming a prerequisite for entry to the profession.

That said, I want to raise a concern in the provision of postgraduate language education programs. At the risk of being accused of overgeneralizing, there are too many newly-minted graduate teachers entering the profession with an inadequate knowledge of language (Mahboob, 2017). Universities themselves are only partly to blame. The root of the problem lies in the failure of school systems to provide all students with a systematic introduction to English language. (Obviously, my comments are confined mainly to school systems in Anglophone countries in which English is the medium of instruction.) I'm not arguing for a return to transmission teaching accompanied by the dreary, decontextualized parsing and analysis exercises to which I was

subjected as a schoolboy - although through such exercises, I did develop a thorough understanding of the structure of English, along with the metalanguage to talk about it. When my teacher pointed out that a particular sentence in an essay lacked a finite verb, I knew what she was talking about, where the problem lay, and how to fix it. A detailed, contextualized introduction to the fundamentals of language underpinned by a functional model of grammar, can be taught through the scaffolded, inductive procedures promoted by Bruner all those years ago. As he said, through such procedures, even relatively young learners can be led to form powerful generalizations in core subjects such as language, mathematics, and science. The problem is that the type of language course I have in mind is no longer seen as core (Nunan, 2013b).

As a consequence of failure at the school level, many students are admitted to postgraduate TESOL programs lacking the procedural and declarative language knowledge required to be an effective language teacher. This knowledge cannot be acquired in a couple of thirty-hour graduate courses, where they will be jostling with a plethora of other courses. It's highly unlikely that school systems will address inadequacies in English language study any time soon. Universities will have to deal with the problem themselves – assuming they accept there is a problem. One option would be to set prerequisites, as is the case with teacher preparation programs for other subjects. However often, when prerequisites are set, they are wholly inadequate. The prerequisite at one prestigious university is a single unit of foreign language study. Whatever the merits of a semester's study of Japanese or German, they do not include the detailed knowledge of English required to be an effective teacher of the subject.

Prerequisites for students preparing to teach mathematics, science and other courses usually include having an undergraduate major in the subject in question (which, in turn, implies having studied the subject throughout high school). In the case of English, the assumption appears to be that if you can speak the language, you can teach it, an assumption that I challenged earlier in the chapter.

In English-speaking countries, I sometimes encounter the objection that, "I don't plan to become an English language teacher, so why should I have to study the subject in school?" My response reflects the orientation I have taken in this chapter. Our responsibility as educators is to equip our students with the knowledge, competencies, and dispositions to deal with an unknown future. One of the core competencies listed by Soland *et al.* is mastery of core academic content. They name mathematics, science, language, foreign languages, history, and geography. (There are others of course, such as music, visual arts, and religion.) These represent ways of knowing the world, and an educated person will have at least a basic grounding in a range of them. As they progress through the education system, students will have an aptitude and

affinity for some subjects, and not others, they will pursue those for which they have an aptitude throughout their schooling and (usually) into university, while dropping others. My argument here takes me back to Peters, Pring and others who argued the case for ‘knowledge for its own sake’, a case that is derided by utilitarians: politicians, policy makers, and many engaged in the education ‘industry’. But not by all. I end this section with a quote by Derbra Myhill who argues for the value of studying the structure of one’s language for its own sake. In the unknown future to which Ken Robinson alerted us, for those who find themselves embracing language teaching as a career, it will not only be *valuable*, but also *useful*.

Curiously, the contested history of grammar teaching has been preoccupied with whether learning grammar improves learners’ attainments in reading and writing, but there has been no serious consideration of the value of grammatical knowledge in its own right. Yet, in every jurisdiction, the school curriculum determines what bodies of knowledge are valued and, in most cases, this is not simply on utilitarian grounds, but on a cultural judgement about what constitutes a broad and balanced education. Knowing the periodic table or the history of medieval England are unlikely to be *useful* knowledge to most adults, yet they may well be *valuable* knowledge. Grammatical knowledge of the structure of your own language could very plausibly be argued as equally valuable knowledge. (Myhill, 2021: 38-39)

Conclusion

In keeping with the intended audience for this edition of the Handbook, I have attempted to provide an account of the changing landscape of second language teaching and learning that is reader-friendly and accessible without glossing over the complexities of language education. Themes addressed in the chapter include the purposes and political nature of education, conceptions of language, knowledge and learning, the paradox of equipping young learners for an unknown future, and the notion of language teaching as a profession. We have seen that, while landscapes change, they change slowly, interrupted by occasional seismic shifts. This is true of the themes in the terrain I have traversed. Each is contested, on one side by those pointing to the imperative for innovation and change, and on the other, by those who argue for the preservation of traditions that have served us well in the past.

The account is a personal one, reflecting my fifty years as a teacher, teacher educator, researcher, curriculum developer and author. It is populated by the people who have influenced my thinking and professional development, either in person or through their writing. It also reflects the widely varied contexts in which I have been privileged to live, teach, and learn.

These days, I hold advisory and consulting positions at universities in several countries. I also get to evaluate graduate programs and examine doctoral

theses. Prior to travel restrictions imposed by the current pandemic, I had the opportunity to meet many graduate students. With few exceptions, their passion for teaching, interest in applied research, and desire for ongoing professional development auger well for the future of the profession. However, on graduating and entering the workforce, they find a very different professional world from the one they anticipated. Non-teaching time is consumed, not by professional work such as lesson planning and student consultations, but administrative chore: form-filling, producing reports of dubious relevance, and attending meetings at which inconsequential issues are debated at length. Worse, they embark on their career brimming with enthusiasm, only to have it blunted. One young teacher said to me, “I approached my department head with an idea based on the capstone project I completed at the end of my degree. I was told to forget about all that rubbish I was taught at university.” “I was told exactly the same thing,” I replied. “And that was fifty years ago.”

There are steps that early-career teachers can take to counteract this dismissiveness. Not all senior teachers are cynical and jaded. If you have embarked, or are about to embark on your teaching career, seek out a mentor, who might be a more experienced colleague or a former university teacher. Mentorships can be critical in helping new teachers survive the first year or two of teaching. Joining a local teachers’ association and becoming involved in activities such as attending conferences and writing for newsletters is another. Sign up for online seminars and symposia offered by international associations. IATEFL, for example, has an outstanding webinar program. Join an online action learning or action research network and take advantage of the research skills you developed during your studies.

These are just a few of the steps you can take to make the notion of career-long professional development a reality and to contribute to your personal and professional wellbeing (Mercer, 2021). They will help to counteract burnout, and the cynicism of others, and through them, you can become part of the global community of TESOL professionals.

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