


Educational sociolinguistics: towards a pedagogical model for teaching *Englishes* instead of English

Sociolinguística educacional: por um modelo pedagógico para ensinar *Englishes* em vez de inglês

Sociolingüística educativa: hacia un modelo pedagógico para enseñar *Englishes* en lugar de inglés

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ABSTRACT: The current global status of the English language as a lingua franca has been running several discussions in the realm of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) (ANJOS, 2019; 2017; SIQUEIRA, 2020; DUBOC; SIQUEIRA, 2020). Accordingly, many research works, mostly those of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) (JENKINS, 2009; SCHMITZ, 2012), corroborate the need for new orientations for TEFL based on native-speaker standards. In this paper, we argue that the insertion of Educational Sociolinguistics into the TEFL reveals to be an advantageous pedagogical convergence: As Educational Sociolinguistics sets a pedagogical framework for language teaching under a variationist perspective (VERHOEVEN, 1997; CREESE, 2010; COAN; FREITAG, 2010), as such theoretical perspective is capable of triggering shifts in the TEFL once it leads to addressing relevant issues related to language diversity, which contributes to inhibiting linguistic discrimination upon non-standard varieties, such as those referred to under the ELF label. By analyzing core concepts of ELF and Educational Sociolinguistics, this theoretical research calls EFL teachers to teach “Englishes” – not only (standard American or British) English.

KEYWORDS: Educational Sociolinguistics. TEFL. ELF.

RESUMO: O presente estatuto global da língua inglesa tem pautado diversas discussões no âmbito do ensino de inglês como língua estrangeira (ANJOS, 2019; 2017; SIQUEIRA, 2020; DUBOC; SIQUEIRA, 2020). Dessa forma, muitas pesquisas da área, sobretudo as que abordam o inglês como língua franca (JENKINS, 2009; SCHMITZ, 2012), corroboram a necessidade de novos direcionamentos para o ensino de língua inglesa praticado com base em padrões linguísticos do falante nativo. No presente trabalho, advoga-se que a adoção da Sociolinguística Educacional, no ensino de inglês como língua estrangeira, revela-se como uma vantajosa convergência pedagógica: como a Sociolinguística Educacional estabelece um modelo pedagógico para o ensino de línguas sob perspectiva variacionista (VERHOEVEN, 1997; CREESE, 2010; COAN; FREITAG, 2010). Essa vertente se mostra

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capaz de estimular mudanças no ensino de inglês, na medida em que subsidia a abordagem da diversidade linguística, o que contribui para combater o preconceito linguístico em relação a variedades não padrão, como as que têm sido reunidas sob o rótulo de inglês como língua franca. A partir da análise de conceitos basilares relativos à noção de inglês como língua franca e à Sociolinguística Educacional, este artigo teórico incita professoras e professores de língua inglesa a ensinarem “Englishes” – e não apenas a variedade padrão do inglês americano ou britânico.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Sociolinguística Educacional. Ensino de inglês. Inglês como língua franca.

RESUMEN: El actual estatuto global del idioma inglés ha guiado varias discusiones en el contexto de la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera (ANJOS, 2019; 2017; SIQUEIRA, 2020; DUBOC; SIQUEIRA, 2020). Así, muchas investigaciones en el área, especialmente aquellas que abordan el inglés como lengua franca (JENKINS, 2009; SCHMITZ, 2012), corroboran la necesidad de nuevas orientaciones para la enseñanza del inglés basadas en los estándares lingüísticos del hablante nativo. En el presente trabajo se sustenta la adopción de la Sociolingüística Educativa, en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera, como una convergencia pedagógica ventajosa: cómo la Sociolingüística Educativa establece un modelo pedagógico para la enseñanza de lenguas desde una perspectiva variacionista (VERHOEVEN, 1997; CREESE, 2010; COAN; FREITAG, 2010), esta vertiente es capaz de estimular cambios en la enseñanza del inglés, ya que apoya el enfoque de la diversidad lingüística, lo que contribuye a combatir los prejuicios lingüísticos en relación a variedades no-estándar, como las que se han recogido bajo la etiqueta de inglés como lengua franca. Basado en el análisis de conceptos básicos relacionados con la noción del inglés como lengua franca y la sociolingüística educativa, este artículo teórico alienta a los profesores de inglés a enseñar “Englishes”, y no solo la variedad estándar de inglés americano o británico.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Sociolingüística Educativa. Enseñanza del inglés. Inglés como lengua franca.

Introduction

Since the 70s, Sociolinguistics has arisen as an important paradigm to promote the understanding of linguistic variation and change: There have been several studies demonstrating that all natural languages undergo variation and change motivated by social factors, such as the speaker’s gender, social class and level of schooling (see COULMAS, 1997; LABOV, 1972; 1994; ECKERT, 2000).

The relevant finding brought about by Sociolinguistics has affected not only the area of linguistic description, but they also have influenced the teaching of languages. Therefore, due to the effort of several scholars to operationalize some

tenets of Sociolinguistics into a pedagogical framework (VERHOEVEN, 1997; BORTONI-RICARDO, 2004; CREESE, 2010; COAN; FREITAG, 2010; ZILES; FARACO, 2015, to mention a few), Educational Sociolinguistics has come out as a pedagogical version of the classic sociolinguistic studies.

One of the greatest benefits that Educational Sociolinguistics offers to language teaching is the recognition of the variable status of any language, which may broaden students' understanding of how languages actually function in society. Indeed, the teaching of a language under a variationist perspective is necessary to mitigate linguistic prejudice, since this is a type of social discrimination that is based on the idea that languages are homogenous and solely represented by a standard model.

It would appear, however, that sociolinguistics' pedagogical principles are not taken into account in the field of Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). Although discussions on English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) – that is, an intercultural-based linguistic variety that is unattached to native-speaker-oriented models (JENKINS, 2009; SCHMITZ, 2012) –, have dominated the theoretical domain of foreign language teaching, recent literature on this field appears to ignore the contributions of Educational Sociolinguistics to the acceptance of non-standard varieties.

Looking at this panorama, the present article investigates how Educational Sociolinguistics can be advantageous for TEFL. As already mentioned, the approach of ELF has been a topic of frequent discussion in the field of TEFL. As this is an approach that accounts for the uses and the emergent grammatical system of English globally spoken by non-native speakers, the ELF model can be further explored in a pedagogical ground aligned with Educational Sociolinguistics.

By analyzing core concepts of ELF and Educational Sociolinguistics in order to explicit convergent grounds of both branches in the realm of TEFL, this theoretical research seeks to arise a pedagogical reflection to take full advantage of conducting TEFL under a variationist perspective by assuming insights from Educational Sociolinguistics.

To this end, the following section discusses the nature of English as a lingua

franca construct and pedagogical outcomes of its geographic and cultural decentralization. The following section sheds light on the relationship between linguistic variation and ELF-oriented pedagogy. The paper concludes by showing how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers can use Educational Sociolinguistics' tenets to open a greater avenue for variationist-based language teaching as well as the benefits that can result from such pedagogical practice.

TEFL: trends and challenges

English is globally spread, which means that its presence is recognizable all over the world throughout different instances, such as academic activities, commercial practices, tourism, online interactions, and so on. As such, the use of English as a tool for broadening communication has become an indisputable requirement imposed by globalized world dynamics. As a result, learning English is a desirable achievement for many people in non-English-speaking countries, a fact that makes TEFL popular worldwide.

Nevertheless, even though English has been decentralized in geographic and cultural terms, its teaching is still mostly native speaker-centered as course syllabuses are conceived as a guide to learning Standard accents: British Received Pronunciation (RP) and General American English (GA). A number of studies have reported this teaching paradigm has negative effects on learners' motivation because they feel obliged to make great efforts to obtain accuracy in using English-native speaker grammar (JENKINS, 2009; ANJOS, 2019; SIQUEIRA, 2020, to mention a few). Of these effects, the learners' confidence can be diminished by the frustration of not being as accurate as the ideal native speaker who is designed by textbooks, for instance. In this, the native-speaker-oriented TEFL is assumed as an attractive marketing strategy to sell English courses that promise students "consistent" methods for them to speak English like an American or a British.

Despite what is designed by most course and school syllabuses, as a global language, English is widely spoken by people from different linguacultural origins,

allowing them to communicate efficiently as it functions as a lingua franca, that is, a common communication code mainly used by non-native speakers (JENKINS, 2009). As such, English acquires the status of a decentralized language, which means that it is not an exclusive linguacultural property of any particular group, being, on the contrary, shared across several nations and peoples.²

Despite the recognition of English global position, the fascination over native standard varieties attests to the hegemony of native-speakers accents, resulting in an English teaching paradigm that resists legitimating non-native varieties. A key point regarding the fascination around native standard varieties is that this is not a linguistic issue, but a historical and social one: The prestige of a linguistic variety is determined by the view towards the historical and social background of its speakers – not by the linguistic usage itself. In this sense, if speakers of a certain variety of English are viewed, for instance, as posh and educated, such variety is to be taken as a standard. On the other hand, if a variety of English is used by speakers who are not prestigiously viewed, it is considered to be a disruptive linguistic model.

Consequently, non-prestigious varieties undergo linguistic prejudice – which, in turn, is one of the instances of social prejudice, as suggested above – while standard varieties are regarded as a reference for all communication's demands and eventually learning. Factors responsible for attributing social prestige to language varieties are intrinsically linked to the ideological mindset known as coloniality.

According to Quijano (2005), coloniality is the ideological counterpart of colonialism: Despite having been concluded as a military and political regime, colonialism remains as an ideological system that preserves, in diverse circumstances, the prestigious view around colonizers' references.

As colonialism, in the modern world, was conducted by the Europeans, elements that remind of them are deemed as superior in different senses whereas those of non-European background are rejected and viewed as inferior. This

²However, it is important to point out that the notion of ELF does not deny the diachronic formation of English as a language that came from a specific geographical spot and ethnic group. What is advocated by the concept of ELF is that, due to its globally spread, several varieties of English have emerged and they must not be deemed as deficient with regard to the standard of native-speaker varieties (SCHMITZ, 2012).

explains, among other aspects, the fact that American English³ and British English have been believed to be the best varieties to support TEFL. That is why, regardless of the consolidation of ELF, most English course syllabuses continue to favour native speakers of the two most prestigious English-speaking countries – The USA and The UK.

At this point, it is clear that the colonialist perspective on TEFL shows influences beyond the linguistic issue. Because this perspective conveys a range of cultural references of historically prestigious nations, students tend, on the one side, to overvalue such references, and, on the other side, to belittle references of their own cultures as they were not as “civilized” as those of presenting in the textbooks, for instance, as Anjos (2017, p. 120) argues:

[...] the colonialist ideology manifests itself in the pages of English-language textbooks by subverting realities, since many English-language textbooks choose to omit minority cultures issues and reproduce hegemonic ways of being, acting and thinking, which favours the triggering of which Anjos (2013) decided to call 'overvaluing attitudes towards foreign language and culture'. (ANJOS, 2017, p. 120)⁴.

In spite of colonizing forces, the vast pieces of evidence that English has undergone a process of cultural decentralization are pushing for changes in English language pedagogy. Hence, English language teacher education is welcoming approaches that dislocate the teaching of English from a “universal” occidental base to local bases. These approaches, thus, are in line with a decolonizing conception of pedagogy (QUIJANO, 2005) and contribute to building up students’ motivation as they aid in lessening the pressure on them to pursue native-speaker linguistic performance to be considered good language users.

The studies and reflections on current circumstances of the globally spread of

³ Although it was a colony of Britain, the USA plays the same “colonizing” role as Britain because of the European phenotypic traits of its population as well as the international prestige this country has as a result of their economic development.

⁴ From the original: “...a ideologia colonialista manifesta-se nas páginas dos livros didáticos de língua inglesa, para subverter realidades, já que muitos livros didáticos de língua inglesa optam por omitir questões das culturas minoritárias e reproduzem modos de ser, agir e pensar das hegemônicas, favorecendo o desencadeamento do que Anjos (2013) convencionou chamar de atitudes de supervalorização em relação à língua e à cultura estrangeira.”(ANJOS, 2017, p. 120).

English point to a range of tenets that must be assumed in EFL teacher education in order to prevent language pedagogy from corroborating colonizing practices. That is to say, English can be taught apart from the cultural scope of its historical roots by building up a learning context in which this language is described from a local point of view – not from the “universal”/ “occidental” one –, considering its variable nature as a language that circulates worldwide, which means that it has undergone several changes to fulfil specific communicative demands of a large number of communities.

In summary, the tenets that lead towards new and decolonizing trends in TEFL recommend that teachers: i) have an in-depth look at all aspects that constitute the scenario they teach in: students’ necessities, aspirations, and cultural background as well as the role English plays in their local culture; ii) reflect on their practices critically so that they can question established theories and build an adequate framework to support the demands of their learners; and iii) adopt the critical pedagogy in order to make students able to think on their own, empowering them to critically cope with hegemonic cultural waves (see ANJOS, 2017).

According to Siqueira (2020), the insertion of ELF into an EFL setting determines the decolonization of the latter since such integration promotes a shift from an Anglophone-centered perspective towards an intercultural one, which appears to be appropriate to respond to new demands imposed by the current denationalized character of English language.⁵ The author stresses the role of teachers’ pedagogical autonomy to make changes into EFL arena through the adoption of ELF practices as a way to decolonizing TEFL:

As part of this decolonization process, we also need to encourage teachers to start questioning and disputing ELT practices that under an ELF perspective are to be proven incomplete, outdated, or obsolete. They are to have access to the latest findings in ELF in order to carry out their own empirical research studies, plan and conduct their lessons, as well as critically assessing the materials that come to their hands, with that inclusive perspective in mind. (SIQUEIRA, 2020, p. 9).

⁵ Siqueira (2020) delivers some very illustrative activities designed under the ELF-EFL integration. By adapting activities from standard EFL coursebooks, he shows how ELF awareness can be implemented into them so that such activities broaden their scope, assuming thus a decolonizing perspective to teach and learn English.

Therefore, the process of TEFL decolonization can be carried out by the adoption of ELF-oriented pedagogy in such a way that the hegemony of native-speaker standard varieties is being questioned to give room for the diversity of *Englishes*. To this end, EFL teacher education must welcome not only decolonizing pedagogical perspectives, but also to come closer to branches of Linguistics that prop into linguistic variation and change, as discussed in the next section.

Linguistic variation and TEFL

It is a scientific fact that all natural languages in the world vary and change (LABOV, 1972; 1994). It means that they have different linguistic forms to mean the same thing and they undergo change over time. Linguistics – the science which investigates languages – has attested to variation and change phenomena in an enormous number of languages: Even languages that do not have a writing system, such as many indigenous languages spoken in very isolated Amazonian communities from South America, exhibit complex processes of language variation and change.

An example of linguistic variation can be observed in the usage of verb tenses in any language. In Brazilian Portuguese, for instance, there are two different forms to express the future, a simple and a periphrastic one. The Portuguese simple future is expressed by adding morphemes, such as “-ei”, to the root of a verb whereas the periphrastic form is realized by putting an auxiliary verb that carries future meaning before the main verb, such as “ir”. In this, in Brazilian Portuguese, the forms “*amarei*” and “*vou amar*” mean the same: “I will love”. This is then an example of linguistic variation since they are different linguistic forms that express the same meaning. More specifically, this is a case of morphosyntactic variation, i.e., a type of language variation that occurs at the morphosyntactic dimension, affecting, for instance, the word order or agreement patterns in a sentence.

It is interesting to present language variation and change from a morphosyntactic point of view as it shows that differences among languages are not

only a matter of accents: Phonology is one of the linguistic levels from which variation can emerge. Therefore, the differences between European and Brazilian Portuguese – or between American and British English or even between Cockney and Yorkshire English – are not restricted to pronouncing words and sentences differently, because they can also be morphological, syntactic, semantic, or lexical differences, i.e., variation. Hence, the classification of the language variation depends on the linguistic level that is focused on.

In general terms, language variation is explained by geographic, social, and situational factors. The language change, in turn, is the variation accounted for in distinct periods of time. It is important to highlight that there is a strict relationship between both phenomena, because every language change presupposes a previous stage of variation, in other words, every change in a language comes from variation. This process can be summarised as follows : A and B are two different linguistic forms to express the same meaning; so A and B represent a language variation. If the usage of A increases so that the usage of B becomes archaic or non-existent, a language change is thus accomplished.

The great majority of the cases of variation are socially perceived as a mistake. Owing to the ideal of language firmly established into standardizing grounds, people have a strong tendency to believe there is only one accurate variety as if it is homogeneous and not changeable. With this picture in mind, speakers overvalue standard varieties, claiming that they must be protected from “deterioration”, and discriminate against the non-standard ones, judging them as disruptive.

Viewing language variation and change negatively is an issue that points out the necessity to discuss both phenomena as a scientific fact, which is of great relevance to the understanding of how language functions. Especially at school, it is important to give room for discussions based on Linguistics, in order to clarify that language variation and change are not a threat to the continuity of a language but are inherent features which make a language renew and then continue functioning.

In the realm of TEFL, discussion on linguistic variation has arisen as one of the topics regarding ELF pedagogy: As a lingua franca, English is used by non-native

speakers from diverse cultures. Accordingly, the cultural and social heterogeneity which characterizes the large number of non-native communities that are increasingly using English is a trigger for many changes in its grammar and lexicon.

As Jenkins (2009) explains, ELF is an umbrella term that includes several varieties of English containing “linguistic forms that it shares with ENL [English as a native language], but it also contains forms that differ from ENL and that have arisen through contact between ELF speakers, and through the influence of ELF speakers’ first languages on their English” (JENKINS, 2009, p. 201).

A full description of ELF grammatical features has not been achieved yet. ELF shares a common ground with ENL; however, particularities in terms of grammatical uses of ELF are of great interest to identify its branches and different sub-varieties within these (JENKINS, 2009, p. 202). This attempt to discover branches of ELF – just as there are branches of ENL (North American English, Canadian English, Australian English and so on) – requires an accurate investigation to define whether a grammatical feature is an ELF idiosyncrasy or an error, which may be a tricky point.

That is why ELF studies distinguish “between *difference* (i.e. from ENL) and *deficiency* (i.e. interlanguage or ‘learner language’), and does not assume that an item that differs from ENL is by definition an error” (JENKINS, 2009, p. 202). Still, because, obviously, there are ELF non-proficient speakers/learners, errors exist in ELF.

The distinction between error and ELF variant must be made from observable factors concerning linguistic processes of variation and change such as systematicity, frequency, and communicative effectiveness. Of systematic and frequent features exhibited in ELF, there are, for example, the countable use of items that are considered uncountable in ENL (e.g. *informations*, *advices*) and the drop of 3rd person marking in present tenses verbs (e.g. *he play*, *it cost*) (JENKINS, 2009, p. 201).

This line of thought calls attention to the need for a convergence between pedagogically applied discussions on language and linguistic description as both branches can feed on one another with various theoretical and methodological tenets. In the arena of Sociolinguistics, for example, there are several descriptions of varieties in terms of variable social and grammatical uses. To take these descriptions

into consideration to build up a program to teach English apart from the traditional standardization might be of great relevance to offer students a clear outline of language variation by assuming, of course, an adequate set of pedagogical methods. One way to promote this convergence is by adopting Educational Sociolinguistics in the field of TEFL, as the section below explores.

Educational Sociolinguistics: legitimating *Englishes* in the classroom

Since the 1980s, fruitful dialogues have been carried out between linguistic theories and language teaching (VERHOEVEN, 1997; BORTONI-RICARDO, 2004; CREESE, 2010; COAN; FREITAG, 2010; ZILES; FARACO, 2015, to mention a few). Especially with the consolidation of Variationist Sociolinguistics (LABOV, 1972), pedagogical concerns regarding linguistic variation have emerged as an inescapable topic in the field of Linguistics.

Also referred to as Pedagogy of Linguistic Variation, Educational Sociolinguistics is a branch of Sociolinguistics that establishes a pedagogical approach to teaching languages by considering and legitimating different varieties, not only the one that is addressed as “correct” for enjoying social prestige. Hence, such an approach proposes that, in parallel with the teaching of the standard variety, vernacular varieties should be included in syllabuses, in order to provide students with a diverse linguistic spectrum for them to expand their communicative repertoire (see VERHOEVEN, 1997; COAN; FREITAG, 2010).

By bringing about research on variable linguistic phenomena into language lessons, this pedagogical facet of Sociolinguistics has provided important contributions to building up a more functional-descriptive language teaching, replacing, in this sense, the normative-classificatory perspective that traditionally guides language teaching dedicated to the learning of standard linguistic norm. Consequently, Educational Sociolinguistics enables language teachers to engage in the fight against linguistic prejudice. With this picture in mind, Coan and Freitag

(2010) assert that “the school cannot ignore sociolinguistic differences. Teachers and students must be aware that there are two or more ways to say the same thing [...] This respectful attitude in dealing with socio-cultural and linguistic differences is a commitment of the teachers. (COAN; FREITAG, 2010, p. 180)⁶.

The insights brought about by Coan and Freitag (2010) are made necessary for any type of language teaching. In the case of TEFL, for example, the proposition of not ignoring sociolinguistic differences opens a greater avenue for ELF, a variety of the English language⁷ that

[...] questions and challenges NS [native speaker] hegemonic norms, it legitimizes variation, it belongs to all those who use it in daily interactions, it is not inextricably linked to a national culture, it encompasses both native and non-native users from the most diverse linguacultural backgrounds. (DUBOC; SIQUEIRA, 2020, p. 241).

Anjos (2019) states that the ELT based on the native speaker’s norm – which thus ignores the sociolinguistic diversity of the English language – is outdated because it neglects the so-attested fact that English has become the language of worldwide communication, demanding new and broad approaches for its teaching. By referring to Farrel and Martin's (2009) work, Anjos accounts for the inappropriate native-speaker pedagogy for ELT pointing out reasons as follows:

1. to insist on teaching the (supposed) standard English might devalue other varieties of English in the world, because it still persists this notion that any form of English different from this standard is inferior and
2. teaching the standard English might provoke discrimination, because some employers, for instance, might discriminate speakers of other varieties of English, which are not hegemonic. (ANJOS, 2019, p. 18).

The aspects that lie behind the attitude of devaluing and discriminating against non-standard varieties of a language have been long clarified by Sociolinguistics as it

⁶ From the original: “a escola não pode ignorar as diferenças sociolinguísticas. Professores e alunos devem estar conscientes de que existem duas ou mais maneiras de dizer a mesma coisa [...] Essa postura respeitosa no trato das diferenças socioculturais e linguísticas é um compromisso dos professores” (COAN; FREITAG, 2010, p. 180, grifo dos autores).

⁷ Duboc and Siqueira (2020, p. 241) state that ELF-oriented research work takes into account the premise that “ELF is a function of the English language, not a variety”. Nonetheless, in this paper, ELF is regarded as a particular English **variety** that, since it emerges from language contact, **functions** as an international code for communication, especially among non-mother tongue speakers.

is a branch of Linguistic devoted to explaining how social factors imply language variation and change as well as how social evaluation determines discrimination upon certain varieties. This is an insightful point that makes evident the indispensable role Sociolinguistics should play in TEFL.

As shown below, Creese (2010) points out three issues on Educational Sociolinguistics that reinforce its potential to reframe TEFL:

[...] first, the necessity of teachers and students to understand the role language plays in social and institutional life so that they might be more critical consumers and producers of knowledge; second, the necessity of understanding the local and situated use of language, in order to provide evidence to counter ideological hegemonies in education which fail particular groups of students; third, a socially constituted view of linguistics is put forward which emphasizes meaning-making rather than purely “formalistic models of language which are out-of-date in theoretical linguistics” (Stubbs 1986, p. 5). (CREESE, 2010, p. 34).

Aligned to the aforementioned issues, Verhoeven (1997) acknowledges the importance of Sociolinguistics for language education by asserting that

[...] the postulate of equal opportunities for children requires that no varieties are discriminated against. To this end, language variation among children must be recognized as valuable. All children, including monolinguals, have to learn a broad range of language varieties to facilitate effective communication in the social situations they will encounter. (VERHOEVEN, 1997, p. 400).

The words of Verhoeven, although referring to children's language education, can be generalized to different school years and teaching areas (e.g. TEFL), since they explicitly have a core pedagogical orientation set by Educational Sociolinguistics, that is to say, language teaching needs to be committed to the principle that, since all language varieties are valuable, the linguistic diversity is eligible as content for language classes, be their mother tongue or foreign language classes. The teaching of language under a variationist perspective is then of great importance to achieve two main socio-pedagogical goals: i) to inhibit linguistic discrimination upon non-standard varieties and ii) to develop students' sociolinguistic

competence, which enables them to use the variety that is called for different types of situation.

In the domain of TEFL, these goals can be reframed as follow: i) to inhibit linguistic discrimination upon non-standard English varieties, including ELF and vernacular varieties that, even belonging to the inner circle, do not display the same grammatical pattern as the hegemonic ones (e.g. General American and Received Pronunciation) and ii) to enable students to use the adequate English variety for the communicative context they are in by developing their sociolinguistic competence. In this sense, Educational Sociolinguistics calls for EFL teachers to teach “Englishes”, not only (standard American or British) English.

Concluding remarks

The global status the English language has acquired triggers important TEFL issues. Of these issues, the need for redrawing the native-speaker-oriented TEFL has been enhanced in the field, mostly by scholars concerning ELF-aware teaching. As discussed in this paper, the insertion of Educational Sociolinguistics into the TEFL framework reveals to be an advantageous pedagogical convergence to open a greater avenue to address language diversity in TEFL.

Nonetheless, it appears that the great majority of research work on EFL – or on related approaches such as English as a Global/International Language, World English(es) and so on – do not support their framework by acknowledging (Educational) Sociolinguistics. It is comprehensible that the debate on the globally spread of English is primarily concerned about the cultural and pedagogical impacts of such process; however, as language is a nuclear-debated object, that is, a linguistic system, it is not plausible to disregard issues that are related to the intra-linguistic facet involved in the worldwide dissemination of the English language. Therefore, there is a lack of linguistic description in the field of TEFL.

In view of that, one can wonder: Why does linguistic description need to be accounted into a pedagogical field? The answer is clearly given by Educational

Sociolinguistics. When one says, for example, English should be taught from a non-native speaker's point of view, it would be reasonable to set linguistic characteristics for what is meant to be a non-native variety by making explicit phonological and morpho-syntactic features that particularize such variety.

Sociolinguistic research work is one of the most important resources that provide an in-depth outline of how language varieties function in grammatical and social terms, which is of great value to language teaching in general. In the case of TEFL, the outline provided by Sociolinguistics can be used for several purposes, such as i) to describe non-standard English varieties by making explicit their convergent and divergent grammatical features with respect to standard varieties ; ii) to point out the relationship between internal and external (e.g. social context) factors that explain language variation and change; iii) to raise students' awareness that language variation is a natural – and inevitable – process, not a problem or threat for communication and iv) to conduct TEFL practices based on scientific arguments to sustain the legitimacy of any English language variety, including the students' learning variety, which gives them confidence and fosters their learning.

One point that is worth mentioning is the impact that Educational Sociolinguistics causes on EFL teacher education. In addition to pedagogical methods, the description of different language varieties requires, to a certain extent, knowledge of (socio)linguistic frame such as the distinction among levels of a language (phonological, syntactic, semantic, etc.), notions about internal and external factors that trigger language variation and change and so on. Accordingly, EFL teacher education must be (re)conceived, broadly speaking, into a pedagogical module and a (socio)linguistic one in order to provide a full background for EFL teachers to achieve the goals set by Educational Sociolinguistics. This is one of the insightful points that this paper brings to the surface, but should be explored in the future.

Another fundamental point that confirms the pedagogical importance of Educational Sociolinguistics refers to its potential to promote a decolonizing language teaching: As this pedagogical framework aims to ensure language teaching under a variationist lens, it promotes a non-hierarchical view of language varieties. As such,

with respect to TEFL, taking Educational Sociolinguistics into consideration can reinforce that native-speaker-hegemonic English must not be the only eligible variety to teach, but also non-standard varieties, e.g. ELF. By questioning the social and historical asymmetry that, on the one side, overvalues certain varieties and, on the other side, underrates several ones, Educational Sociolinguistics contributes to the decolonizing agenda.

The theoretical discussion that was conducted in this paper hopes to shed (initial) light on the advantageous encounter between TEFL and Educational Sociolinguistics so that further research will be raised on the topic, namely, research works based on authentic TEFL practices with the purpose of testing pedagogical methods for the convergence addressed here.

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