

## III. REPORTS

### **Seminar report: “International dialogue on English language teaching” Institute of Applied Linguistics of Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland and Department of Foreign Language Education of Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy University in Burdur, Turkey, 26<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

Conducted within an intimate and supportive environment, the academic seminar “International dialogue on English language teaching” organized by the Institute of Applied Linguistics of Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznań, Poland, and the Department of Foreign Language Education of Burdur Mehmet Akif Ersoy University in Burdur, Turkey, was an event which provided its participants an opportunity to discuss and reflect on selected current topics in the field of English language teaching from both theoretical and practical perspectives. Held online on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2021, the event enabled scholars, students, and teachers from different countries, and backgrounds to share and benefit from each other’s insights, studies conducted, and experiences in respect of the field of English language teaching.

After the introduction of the seminar by the organizers: Dr Joanna Kic-Drgas and Prof. Dr. Ferit Kılıçkaya, the first presenter of the event, Prof. Dr. Gülge Seferoğlu, who is a faculty member of California State University, San Bernardino, was introduced by Prof. Kılıçkaya.

Prof. Seferoğlu preceded with her presentation entitled “What Characteristics do Effective English Language Teachers Possess?”. First, she underlined her passion for teaching and being a teacher due to the positive and powerful feelings she gets out the profession. Prof. Seferoğlu went on to discuss the controversial subject of what makes a good teacher by emphasizing the fact that no list, or set of categories could satisfactorily be considered the absolute answer to that question. As the subjectivity of the various answers would be challenging to consider, she showed that each suggestion should be evaluated since the case is context-sensitive. Since this subject is more personal than a simple fact, she discussed her own values, standards, ethics, and ideals that drive her teaching, which were stated as being engaging, encouraging, and empowering students, as well as diversifying values and successful analysis of student profiles. In addition, she provided details about her own approach, being passionate, a role-model, trustworthy, sincere, humble, and confident. Nonetheless, she put forward the broader idea that instead of making a list we should acknowledge the basic understanding that “People are the core” and “We are stronger together” which could guide us towards being a “good” teacher for our students. By quoting Thomas Carruthers’ saying that “A teacher is the one

who makes himself progressively unnecessary.”, she drew attention to the common mistake whereby teachers instinct pushes them towards making the students heavily dependent on them. As a result of this reliance, studies often indicated that students’ ability, knowledge, and development in education are heavily dependent on “teacher learning”. Based on all those aspects, she put forward another general aspect of a “good teacher” that of a life-long learner. Since the global pandemic made digitally-mediated/distant-teaching more prevalent, this aspect gained even more attention in today’s conditions. Moving forward to more widely accepted perspectives, Prof. Seferoğlu discussed the standards of teachers from a variety of commonly respected institutions and communities, such as The Economist, University of Southampton, Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, and TESOL. Referring to all the existing frameworks for teacher education, she diagnosed how they could be used for the benefit of personal development. To illustrate the realization of the frameworks, she presented one of her former students’ PhD theses, titled “Investigating Perceived Competences of English Language Teachers in Turkey with Regard to Educational Background and Experience”. The research showed that participants mentioned language proficiency as one of the most important competences a good teacher needs to possess, along with other personal traits. This, once again, shed light on the complex nature of teacher characteristics as the personality aspect of it, is troublesome to assess. To illustrate overlapping ideas on the concept of a good teacher and the understanding of the factor of personality in respect of it, she provided some brief information about studies on the subject. Among that research, she stressed a different perspective on the topic, by sharing the findings of a study which she helped to conduct. The study was entitled as “Qualities and Qualifications of EFL Professionals: What Do Intensive English Program Administrators Think?” and, by asking administrators what they looked for when hiring language teachers, they found that administrators sought language proficiency, self-reflection, character, and pedagogical knowledge. In addition to those aspects, they specifically emphasized the importance of “in-class presence”, which was explained as the superordinate term to describe the all-in-one traits of a teacher within the teaching/learning environment. Finally, after reviewing and discussing several aspects from different scholars and teachers in the field, Prof. Seferoğlu shared her own perspective upon the topic. She described “good teachers” as being daring, driven, and resilient. To sum up the discussion, she concluded her presentation by quoting from the novella *The Little Prince*, “That which is essential cannot be seen with the eye. Only with the heart can one know it rightly.”

After finalizing the first presentation with a question-and-answer session with Prof. Seferoğlu, Dr Joanna Kic-Drgas introduced the second presenter of the event Roger Griffin, who is an MA student in the teaching English as a second language program at California State University.

Roger Griffin preceded with his presentation entitled “Why Academic Freedom Challenges in China Matters to English language Teaching in a Global Context”. First, he underlined that it was crucial to examine China because it appeared to be the prominent area of fast changes and the largest centre of the international students. After quickly overviewing the outlines of his presentation, he defined academic freedom as the freedom to teach and learn, conduct research freely, ability to voice options, and to take responsibility for the social ramifications. He further linked the subject with English language teaching as academic freedom functions

like a tool to openly explore, pursue, and discuss challenging, sensitive, and controversial issues. He indicated that in the cases of academic freedom being limited or not existing at all, nation-wide or even global changes would follow. He started discussing those changes in the history of China. He stated that, starting with the period of 1947–1997, the limitations, such as a punishment and reward mentality became dominant and that free speech in public was strictly restricted, with the higher education system completely closed for four years. Despite the restrictions, China still has the largest education system in the world. During the period of 1998–2003, the Higher Education Law came into effect, which included some specific articles which made university presidents responsible for all teaching and research activities, leading to the restriction of research and teaching of sensitive matters, as well as imposing Marxist, Leninist, Zedongist, and Xiaopingist ideologies upon curricula. After that, the times of 2003–2013 came with even more limitations, such as filtering publications, government surveillance, detentions, dismissals, and private communication tracking. He went on to show that from 2013 to 2017 limited freedom was allowed on topics which could not in any way be related to governmental, international, or political issues. Yet, the confusion of openness and suppression persisted. Coming to the recent years, he mentioned the Hong Kong Security Law, which led to controversial issues related to objectivity and transparency by giving examples of students who got into trouble due to their social media activities. Finally, after the revision of historical changes in China in respect of academic freedom, Griffin clarified the connection between language teaching and the developments mentioned, by suggesting that language teachers should understand the challenges that originated in China, and which have spread worldwide with the help of exchange and international degree programs, and be indulgent towards those students regarding self-censorship, and adjust our approaches and methods to create a harmonious and stress-limited environment, especially on topics the students do not feel enthusiastic about discussing, caused by the possible consequences of being judged and even punished. He concluded his presentation by putting forward the main idea that a teacher needs the necessary skills to be able to navigate the students' cultural nuances during their time of adaptation to a new environment, and this mostly depends on the likeability of the teacher, because the aura of the teacher should make students feel welcomed, so that this process could be eased and diversity embraced.

After finalizing the second presentation with a question-and-answer session with Roger Griffin, Prof. Dr. Ferit Kılıçkaya introduced the last presenter of the event, Rachel Nahlen who is, also, an MA student at California State University.

Rachel Nahlen, in her presentation entitled "Native Speakerism: Prevalence, Implications, and Support of Non-native Speaker Model", underlined how native speakerism was described and defined by other scholars. She illustrated the common belief that native speakers of English are perceived as superior in the most areas, yet no accent could be privileged over others. She brought a double-sided perspective to the consequences of native speakerism. First were the challenges for native speakers; that is, some students or even other teachers might believe that since English is their native language, native speakers might not have bothered to learn the grammatical and linguistic rules of the language; therefore, people did not take them seriously in a professional sense. Second were the difficulties for non-native speakers, that is, the lower probability of getting hired, since the private sector favours native speakers over non-natives

for the sake of better advertisements for the “customers”, in this case, parents. Regarding the issue of prevalence, she presented some small-scale research in which she took part, together with some colleagues. The research analysed English language teaching advertisements from Asia, Central and South America and they counted the number of times “Native speaker, Citizenship, Education, Teacher experience, and Age” were mentioned in those commercials. She shared the findings that in Asia and Central / South America, native speakerism and education factors were strongly highlighted. When they examined the advertisement profile of Asia, they found out that citizenship was the most favoured characteristic, by a wide margin. When only Central and South America were given focus, the criterion of age was the most prominent one among all others. After the findings, she summarized the implications which she and her colleagues had agreed on. These implications were that there were discriminatory hiring processes, favouring native speakers, biological factors (nativeness, citizenship, and age) given top prominence in each area, and non-natives given no opportunity to even apply for the positions. Her own suggestions to overcome the prioritization of nativism were to raise awareness of the issue, and to support non-native colleagues. In addition, she promoted the “Non-native Speaker Model” to harmonize language learning classrooms with the rich variety of accents from all over the world and have students realize the fact that no accent could be superior over others as the growth of English language depends on its diversity. She also drew attention to the issue that this model could be implemented to help students overcome their drawbacks on not being confident with their accent, therefore, ending up having communication complications. Regarding the application of the suggested model, she offered that teachers could make use of digital media platforms such as YouTube to give voice to the diverse nature of language, having discussions with non-natives to foster empathy, and providing opportunities to have dialogues with students to address biases and prejudices, including native speakerism. Finally, after all the descriptions, findings, and suggestions; she concluded her presentation by saying that the awareness of native speakerism is more well-known than before but still not prevalent today. To be able to resist this ideology, she suggested that a variety of accents should be integrated in our classes, as well as supporting, respecting, and welcoming them, to eliminate the unjustified ideologies once and for all. The presentation followed with a question-and-answer session to give participants the opportunity to reflect their own opinions and ask their questions to the presenter.

Considering all the informative and impactful presentations described so far, it is apparent that the seminar was a notable and enlightening event which enabled its presenters and participants to share their insights and experiences, provide useful ideas, practical knowledge, and valuable perspectives in the field of English language teaching.

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